

you can “mirror” your source, it will build a connection with them. Be a good listener and ask for clarification if you don’t understand something.

Remember that the best interviews are face-to-face. Avoid email interviews, if possible, though Harris adds that celebrity interviews are heading in this direction.

In terms of teaching moments, Harris emphasizes the placement of periods and commas inside quotes and warns against the growing misuse of half-quotes. Both of these are problems for most students.

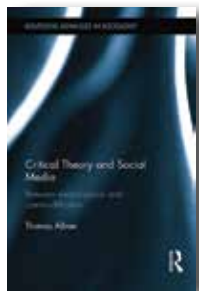
On the critical side, I’m concerned that the high cost of *The Craft of Quoting* will prohibit its use. And given that this is a book on quoting, I’m surprised that Harris does not attribute the source of the quotes he uses throughout the book as graphic design motifs. These things being said, I still appreciate the book very much.

Charles R. Crawley

Charles R. Crawley is a lead technical writer at Rockwell Collins and an adjunct professor at Mount Mercy University, both in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. He is not a journalist and could not play one on TV, but he does appreciate good journalism.

Critical Theory and Social Media: Between Emancipation and Commodification

Thomas Allmer. 2015. New York, NY: Routledge. [ISBN 978-1-138-80876-8. 214 pages, including index. US\$145.00.]



Allmer’s *Critical Theory and Social Media: Between Emancipation and Commodification* is a pioneering study combining critical theoretical and empirical research in the context of digital and social media. This work’s overall aim is discovering the constraints and emancipatory potentials of new media, as well as

assessing to what extent digital and social media can strengthen the idea of the “digital commons” and a common-based information society (p. 9). Grounded on Karl Marx’s critical theory and dialectics, this study approaches the main research questions through three parts: analyzing theoretical foundations, presenting a large-scale empirical case study, and suggesting techno-social revolution.

Allmer claims in the first part of his book that in capitalism, technology and media are the “objects of labor and direct forces of production” (p. 42); he also inveighs that capital subsumes the whole society into the production process. Instead of exhibiting the emancipatory potentials, social media and Web 2.0 are essentially “space of capital accumulation” (p. 45) under the control of private corporations to facilitate the commodification processes.

Digital capitalism involves a core question of Internet privacy and surveillance. Adopting the critical political economy approach, Allmer focuses the economic and political issues surrounding Internet privacy and surveillance, and suggests considering the larger societal context of class, ideology, commodity, and exploitation in public discourse. He further points out that the profit-oriented social media, which jeopardize the commons into the logic of capital, produce the antagonism between communicative opportunities and privacy and surveillance threats (p. 97).

Part II of *Critical Theory and Social Media* introduces the empirical research to study users’ knowledge, attitudes, and behavior towards surveillance and privacy of social media. Researchers conduct a survey among Austrian college students (N=3558), asking their perceived advantages and disadvantages of social networking sites. Research results show that economic surveillance (for example, personal profile data accessed by employers, commercial selling of personal data, and receiving spam) is a main social media threat, but only 4.9% of the participants are aware of its commodification.

The quantitative data analysis and research results support Allmer’s argument that corporate social media, the space of capital accumulation, serves as ideological platforms to facilitate commodification. He also points out that the leading public discourse that social media are new, open, and bring about more democracy is a pseudo-proposition and manipulated by social media owners to strengthen their ideological agenda. The new social media users, in contrast, are a spatially and socially fragmented class and are not able to challenge the asymmetrical and hierarchical client-server network. Allmer proposes the peer-to-peer computer network, which has information and communication commons, to be the substitute and the gateway to real social media and human liberation. *Critical Theory and Social Media* is a valuable model for scholars in media and communication studies, digital

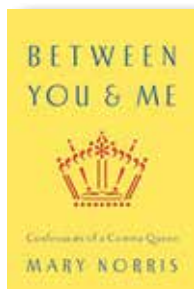
society studies, and beyond to reconsider the problem of emancipation and control.

Lin Dong

Lin Dong is a PhD candidate in Rhetoric and Composition in Georgia State University. She has broad research interests in cross-cultural and international rhetoric and communication, especially in technical and professional communication in global contexts. She is currently writing her PhD dissertation on international crisis communication from a sociotechnical aspect.

Between You & Me: Confessions of a Comma Queen

Mary Norris. 2015. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc. [ISBN 978-0-393-35214-6. 228 pages, including index. US\$15.95 (softcover).]



Between You & Me: Confessions of a Comma Queen is not like any grammar book I've ever read; and I enjoyed it more than any grammar book I've ever read. Norris has cleverly folded her advice into entertaining, and often very funny, stories of her experiences working at *The New Yorker*. As readers might

surmise, "comma queen" is Norris' cheeky version of her job title. "Query-proofread" is a more exact description of what she does in preparing pieces for the magazine. Despite her decades on the job, Norris claims that "everybody makes mistakes" (p. 12) and confesses she has a "need to visit the grammatical equivalent of a chiropractor" (p. 13) regularly. This book is "for all of you who want to feel better about your grammar" (p. 14).

It's not just the humor that makes *Between You & Me* so enjoyable for me. Somehow Norris has managed to single out just those knotty problems that I, and probably many other readers, still grapple with sometimes: whether to use "who" or "whom," how to decide if it's between "you and me" or between "you and I," when to hyphenate, or how to fix dangling participles. Drawing on examples from such diverse areas as literature, pop culture, the Internet, auto mechanics, plumbing, Brazilian soccer, and the history of dictionaries, Norris illustrates how she and her

cohorts have worked through grammar questions to reach the conclusions she wants to pass on to readers.

Each chapter of *Between You & Me* delves into a different topic. Some are to be expected—spelling, punctuation, parts of speech. To brush up on these, you can pick out a chapter, but you won't find bullet points. Norris embeds advice within the narrative. Two chapters cover subject matter outside the realm of many English language advice books. One addresses workarounds for the lack of a gender-neutral third-person-singular pronoun in the English language (he/she). The other tackles profanity in print.

Norris ends *Between You & Me* with a chapter about her love of pencils, which endeared the book to me even more, because of the tactile satisfaction writing with pencils provides me. Her description of the history, lore, and technology of pencils and pencil-making was a revelation.

At first glance, this book may seem to trivialize the study of grammar because of Norris' irreverent attitude. But she is deeply serious, not only about the English language and its proper usage, but about her quest to help readers understand how the language works and use it more appropriately. To that end, Norris adds a bibliography of other helpful books.

If you're an editor, a fan of *The New Yorker*, want to review some fine points of grammar, or just enjoy a good read and a good laugh, *Between You & Me* is the book for you. I recommend it.

Linda Davis

Linda M. Davis is an independent communications practitioner in the Los Angeles area. She holds an MA in Communication Management and has specialized in strategic communication planning, publication management, writing, and editing for more than 25 years.