Review
Pluralizing plagiarism: Identities, contexts, pedagogies

by Rebecca Moore Howard and Amy E. Robillard (Eds.). (2008). Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook.

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Studies exploring understandings of plagiarism now make up a sizeable contribution to the study of academic literacy. Universities have increased efforts to reduce plagiarism, just as access to information has increased way beyond what was possible just a few years ago. The editors of *Pluralizing plagiarism: Identities, contexts, pedagogies*, Rebecca Moore Howard and Amy Robillard, acknowledge that much attention has been given to plagiarism, but they argue that the academy offers a monolithic definition of the problem of plagiarism and "one set of solutions in all circumstances" (p. 2). They point out that writing is no longer taught as the one generalised model of "good writing" and much is now known about how standards for writing are subject specific, yet plagiarism is responded to in generalised simplistic ways. Hence, they argue that responses to plagiarism need to be more nuanced, and plagiarism must be pluralised.

Pluralizing plagiarism: Identities, contexts, pedagogies is a collection of different perspectives on the problem of plagiarism, yet there is a commonality to the contributions. The writers are respectful of the complexities of the problem; they make sense of these complexities with theory, and they situate their concerns in the reality of practice. This focus on practice and the examples of what people say are highlights of the book. Not so enthralling was the length of some of the chapters – they would have benefitted from being shortened, and some readers will be disappointed that there is no index. These quibbles do not detract from the valuable contribution this collection of ideas makes in broadening and challenging perspectives about plagiarism.

Amy Robillard and Rebecca Moore Howard's introduction and Bruce Horner's afterword work particularly well to hold the contributions together. In addition to a summary of the chapters, Robillard and Howard also comment that plagiarism is a constructed text, and it requires a writer, a reader and a context. They acknowledge the role of policy in framing how we deal with plagiarism and declare that:

> Institutional plagiarism policies define the textual objectives of all writers in the college, and they provide the tools with which instructors and students navigate a textual event, determining its acceptability and consequences. (p. 5)

Horner brings together the ten chapters of *Pluralizing plagiarism: Identities, contexts, pedagogies* by reminding us of the political nature of plagiarism and alerting us to the danger of being ignorant of some of the political characteristics, even when there is recognition of the plural character of plagiarism. He frames his deconstruction of

approaches to understanding plagiarism from a reader's perspective of difference. He explains how such perspectives can elide the ways plagiarism is political, which invites the readers of his text to reflect on how they could have framed their explanations of plagiarism in ways that have limited discussion.

The first chapter by Michele Eodice situates the discussion beyond teaching and learning and draws attention to how the American press has framed plagiarism as moral outrage. She argues for academics not to allow the media to take over the discussion and for academics to be more engaged. Good advice, but I wonder if this focus on the moral platform is more prevalent in the US than in other regions such as the Asia Pacific. Similarly, Chris Anson in "We never wanted to be cops" claims that student plagiarism is interpreted "through a lens of criminality" (p. 140), which doesn't fit with the educational approaches currently being taken on by many Australian universities. Regional differences aside, Anson's application of Biggs' three level model as an approach to student plagiarism provides a useful way to both understand and transform teaching and learning practices.

Amy Robillard, in "Situating plagiarism as a form of authorship: The politics of writing in a first-year writing course", writes about practice and the value of co-investigation. In taking her students with her on an investigation, she moves beyond approaches to plagiarism which are mired in explorations of why students plagiarise. Her stance could lead other researchers to consider if many of the questions we ask students about plagiarism are futile? If students are not engaged with the university they will say whatever is convenient, and if they do care they could say whatever they think their lecturers want to hear.

Another issue ripe for critique is the writing advice and direction given to students. Tracy Hamler Carrick, in "Where there's smoke, is there fire? Understanding co-authorship in the writing center", raises the issue of co-authoring when writing tutors help students. Student tutors are less common in Australia, where academic language and learning advisers/lecturers are more likely to work on an individual basis with students. Nevertheless, the issue of how much direction should be given to students seeking help should be of interest to any instructor working with individual students. This is an area underexplored in the teaching and learning research of the Asia Pacific region. Sandra Jamieson also raises an issue which invites further research. In her chapter, "One size does not fit all: plagiarism across the curriculum", she makes a strong case that universities disadvantage students when they focus on academic integrity, instead of explicitly teaching discipline specific conventions.

Celia Thompson and Alastair Pennycook also write about what is involved in learning the conventions of citation. "Intertextuality in the transcultural zone" opens with the student 'Frieda' telling us that in Australia she feels she is not given license to write her own opinion. Thompson and Pennycook take a respectful stance in their analysis of what Frieda and a number of other international students say. Their text, with its interweaving of student voice, research and theory is a sophisticated example of intertextuality. Thompson and Pennycook analyse citation in academic writing and explain that,

> …intertextual borrowing cannot be adequately dealt with either in terms only of detection and prevention or of simply teaching the correct citation practices but can be best understood as one aspect of textual construction that is deeply embedded in a wide variety of cultural, textual, and academic practices that are centrally concerned with questions of language, education, knowledge and identity. (p. 128)

Rebecca Moore Howard and Kathleen Blake Yancey write about practices in working with graduate students. Howard's chapter, "Plagiarising (from) graduate students",

reviews attitudes to student plagiarism and the practices of "appropriation" of students' work. Her examples and reports of incidents tell the story of exploitation of graduate students; her recommendations are practical. Kathleen Blake Yancey in *Beyond plagiarism* analyses the idea of research and gives a fascinating account of models of research practice, leaving us with questions about how these fit with "the integrity of the central concept of 'intertextuality'" (p. 168).

The question of morality and plagiarism is put into context in "Thou shalt not plagiarise': Appeals to textual authority and community at religiously affiliated and secular colleges". T. Kenny Fountain and Lauren Fitzgerald were able to use the context "to see the shortcomings of moral arguments against plagiarism" (p. 103); for an example, see their critique of how "academic integrity" is used (p. 106). Like the other contributors to *Pluralizing plagiarism: Identities, contexts, pedagogies,* they situate their research in practice.

All the contributors to *Pluralizing plagiarism* are concerned about education. They have not presented simple solutions for dealing with cheats, detecting plagiarism or reducing opportunities for plagiarism. Rather, in the context of the university with its readers and writers, they analyse the problem of plagiarism by exploring how students learn to write academic texts, and they review teaching practices and actions, and consider how students can engage in constructing texts with appropriate use of sourced texts. The contributors are also making a stand to reduce the focus on the sensational, and instead to situate the discussion about plagiarism in pedagogy.

Reviewer

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