



Review: The (Dis/Re) Locations of Composing

Reviewed Work(s): *From Form to Meaning: Freshman Composition and the Long Sixties, 1957-1974* by David Fleming; *Interests and Opportunities: Race, Racism, and University Writing Instruction in the Post-Civil Rights Era* by Steve Lamos; *Retention and Resistance: Writing Instruction and Students Who Leave* by Pegeen Reichert Powell; *Rhetoric of Respect: Recognizing Change at a Community Writing Center* by Tiffany Rousculp; *Transnational Literate Lives in Digital Times* by Patrick W. Berry, Gail E. Hawisher and Cynthia L. Selfe

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John Scenters-Zapico

Review Essay

The (Dis/Re) Locations of Composing

From Form to Meaning: Freshman Composition and the Long Sixties, 1957–1974

David Fleming

Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh P, 2011

Interests and Opportunities: Race, Racism, and University Writing Instruction in the Post–Civil Rights Era

Steve Lamos

Pittsburgh: U of Pittsburgh P, 2011

Retention and Resistance: Writing Instruction and Students Who Leave

Pegeen Reichert Powell

Boulder: Utah State UP-UP of Colorado, 2013

Rhetoric of Respect: Recognizing Change at a Community Writing Center

Tiffany Rousculp

Urbana: NCTE, 2014

Transnational Literate Lives in Digital Times

Patrick W. Berry, Gail E. Hawisher, and Cynthia L. Selfe

Logan: Computers and Composition Digital P/Utah State UP, 2012. Web.

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As I started my journey into this review, I quickly realized an appropriate title capturing the experiences. These books lead us on journeys, never linear, into an array of composing locations: the halls of rhetoric and writing programs, dusty archival basements, old forgotten meeting minutes, off campus community writing centers, foreign countries, and the disruptive conflicts among travelers—teachers, administrators, students, and the general public.

I began my own voyage with David Fleming's *From Form to Meaning*, and I was surprised with the way his historical study hooked me in. In his acknowledgments, Fleming observes that "the freshman writing course I teach and direct today is not all that dissimilar from the 1960s course I describe in this book" (ix); later in the Introduction he expands on this point, stating that first-year composition has not changed much in "its basic purpose and configuration . . . over a span of 125 years and across diverse terrain in North American postsecondary education" (1). Fleming paints an ironic picture of first-year composition. As Harvard president Derek Bok in 2006 states, "No other single course claims as large a share of the time and attention of undergraduates" (2). As we observe Fleming's research unfold, we see Bok's statement validated, yet we also hear what we all know well: first-year composition is a hotbed of power for a few, and in the University of Wisconsin–Madison's case (hereafter referred to as Madison) a few faculty wanted all the power over their subordinates yet did not want to improve the course. This latter stance eventually left Madison without a functional composition program.

Fleming asks, how could a course like first-year composition become so widespread across all types and sizes of schools? The class is driven not by rules and needs of the academy, but by "perceived social and cultural needs" and "anxiety among the general public about the ability of young people to write correctly" (4). He argues the outside pull and push on first-year composition is greater than we credit, pointing to newspapers, politicians, the media's literacy crises, and so on, all of which claim an interest in first-year composition, that is, for students to write well. These outside influences contributed both to composition's minimal pulse at Madison and its eventual resuscitation. "This study," Fleming states, "tells us new things about the history of freshman composition," particularly in regard to the tumultuous years between 1967 and 1970 (22). Fleming's view is that our theories and pedagogies did not cause educational change; the sociocultural movements of the 1960s, "massive cultural, demographic, political, economic, and institutional change," altered higher education (24).

In "A Prehistory, 1848–1948" Fleming includes historical details so we see how first-year writing was taught during this time and how it compares to the way we teach today. Importantly, first-year composition "was oriented to public communication . . . and was thus more the culmination of the undergraduate curriculum than its gateway" (29). "The Postwar Regime, 1948–1968," is a time of composition enrollment explosion across the country, when schools like Madison used "homegrown materials" such as Ednah S. Thomas's *Evaluating Student Themes*. Anticipating some of today's TA training programs, two important composition leaders at Madison in the 1950s, Lacy and Thomas, "developed a well-run and multifaceted training program for TAs, which included a four-day orientation before fall semester started" (51). Fleming sees this period as peaceful, but brewing in the background were "a large, unappreciated underclass of 'comp women'" and TAs teaching the classes (57).

In "Faculty Withdrawal, 1966–1969," change arrived, in 1968, when Madison's two-semester composition sequence was reduced to one. Of interest is Fleming's focus on the mixed-role identity all TAs experience even to this day: "despite the teaching responsibilities being thrust on them, TAs were still seen primarily, by their own professors and the university itself, as students, dependent, in theory at least, on the supervisory power and intellectual tutelage of the faculty" (84). At the same time, TAs wielded power in a context where poor grades could result in male students fighting in the Vietnam War. Knowing this, TAs wanted to do away with grades. The climax of the chapter is the vote to "abolish English 102 and 181, effective at the end of the 1969–70 academic year," which carried by a vote of 27–8–4 (148). Articles about this rupture appeared in local newspapers, including the student-run *Daily Cardinal*, where one article argued that the real reason to terminate the class was "to eliminate the TAs' power base, punish them for their classroom experiments, and exact revenge against unruly insubordinates" (163). In 1970–96 Madison's Freshman English becomes a "small remedial writing program" (173). Fleming attributes the national "literacy crisis," functioning as a means to highlight what was happening in society at large and how this affected local writing, as the driving force to bringing writing back. While Fleming's research is compelling, I also wanted to hear from students to get their take on their experiences before, during, and after the rupture, which would add to the thick detail of the exciting history he already narrates.

Fleming concludes by reiterating his thesis: "what [continue] to lend the course cultural resonance and institutional instability today" are the social

and cultural influences on schools. He introduces three key terms to capture first-year composition:

- *Generality*: a course without content in the academic sense, teaching students skills, habits, and dispositions rather than substantive knowledge
- *Universality*: first-year comp is seen as meeting the needs of all students, a course common to all, bringing all sorts of diversity together
- *Liminality*: drawing from anthropologist Victor Turner, the “middle place in social life that contains profoundly transformative possibilities” (205).

As useful as the terms may be, they would have been more helpful had they been introduced earlier in the book and used to tease out its arguments.

While Fleming shows us the micro-macro movements of social influence in a large first-year composition program like Madison's, Steve Lamos focuses on the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) and basic writing (BW) at another tier-one school, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (hereafter referred to as Urbana-Champaign) while examining their relationship in the post-civil rights era.

I had difficulty with the structure of this book; it jumped back and forth, making it difficult to follow the stream of arguments Lamos puts forth. With this challenge in mind, I start at the end of *Interests and Opportunities* where Lamos spells out three key trends:

- “White racism has been both a powerful and a persistent influence over high-risk/BW discussion and activity across every significant time period during the last forty years” (161).
- “At least some measure of change has occurred within the context of high-risk/BW activity despite the power of white racism” (161).
- “Lasting race-based change within high-risk/BW has been generated more effectively and with longer-lasting consequences within periods of interest convergence than within periods of divergence—largely because periods of convergence have been accompanied by white mainstream federal, state, and institutional support” (162).

In “The Development and Evolution of High-Risk Writing Instruction,” Lamos reviews the large sums of money put into “high-risk programs” and dis-

cusses the high-risk student who came to universities in the 1960s. He sets into motion the argument that “contemporary high-risk/BW programs are presently perceived as antithetical to the needs and goals of mainstream four-year institutions” because they appeal to mainstream standards (4), *mainstream standards* here referring to “mainstream whites” in an uncritical fashion. I did not know who mainstream whites would have been then or now, and the author never makes any type of argument or attempt at defining these omniscient bad guys who seem to control everything. Instead of seeing his work as the complicated growth and change of nascent EOP/BW programs with diverse population needs, he settles on making a whole group the bad guys. In sum, Lamos sets the stage early in seeing that high-risk/BW activity is an attempt to maintain mainstream white interests (7), which see the integration of minorities as fine as long as they learn mainstream ways in academic institutions.

Lamos lays out two key conceptual terms early in the book:

- “During periods of convergence,” some egalitarian change takes place within institutions, yet it is “bounded in important ways by mainstream concerns regarding the need to preserve racialized standards, including Standard English” (8).
- “During periods of divergence, such change was thwarted or even undone, often through direct appeals to these same racialized standards” (8).

If we understand how convergence and divergence work, we hold the “key to theorizing new strategies for contemporary ‘story-changing’ work” (8). While I get his point per “racialized standards” in the two bulleted points above, what I felt Lamos needed to consider throughout his study is that these were early attempts at integration. But more challenging for me is, despite all the criticisms he levels toward EOP and germinal scholarship from the time, he never comes up with any story-changing alternatives or suggestions.

Lamos situates his work at Urbana-Champaign in EOP Rhetoric, where the school worked to desegregate what was first called “Project 500,” a program to recruit and admit five hundred African American students. This program was designed to address “the many problems that accrue to being a black student with marginal preparation and skills enrolled at a highly-selective white university” (17). He uses archival materials and interviews individuals involved in the creation of these programs to make sure that often-undocumented

information is included, yet this project could have included more primary sources to bolster his arguments.

In "The Late 1960s and Early 1970s," Lamos states that "high-risk programs may have been proliferating at this time, but they were often resistant to changing standard notions of curriculum, of student recruitment and retention, or of merit itself" (17). While this claim may be true, Lamos never discusses what these changing standards and merit were and where they were being applied. Instead, he continues, these programs satisfy "[m]ainstream white needs" (28) and were created to "preserv[e] status-quo higher-educational practices in the face of perceived threat" (28). I have a hard time imagining an institution like Urbana-Champaign admitting students and creating programs to help them succeed while planning at the same time to ward off an ostensible threat. I can buy into the argument that EOP did an inadequate or poor job, and I think Lamos does try to make this point, but always couched in the view that the programs were to preserve the white mainstream status quo. He explains the role of mainstreaming these students as well as the need to be aware of their own languages and their strengths, a view all very much in line with current research and theory not available then. In "The Mid 1970s," Lamos argues that nationally "this era also found many mainstream whites increasingly convinced that these troubles were caused by an overemphasis on issues of race and racism within the Civil Rights Movement and other race-conscious reform efforts of the late 1960s and early 1970s" (56). Time and again his view is that race-based change reverts to mainstream white-based needs and criteria. Most people involved in the civil rights movement would find this view challenging, I believe, because it sounds as if what they gained was a result of white-based needs and criteria.

In attempts to help these new students on campus, two types of disciplinary reaction were common. The first dismissed all race-conscious high-risk efforts as racist and unnecessary while also pushing for a return to "color-blind basics." The second, often under the heading of basic writing, "appeared initially to defend the race-conscious goals of many high-risk programs in the face of literacy crisis critique." These two views, Lamos argues, "ultimately demanded a shift away from race consciousness and toward color-blind cognitive approaches to meeting students' perceived needs" (62). Drawing from decades-old scholarship, Lamos critiques Shaughnessy's research and approach: "She also made mention of 'formal correctness' in ways that began to suggest the role of standards and Standard English within BW instruction" (67), and she "insisted throughout most of *Errors and Expectations* that attending to students' racial

background within the context of instruction was unnecessary” (67). Again, I find the fault here in not placing the scholarship or the changes of the time in their historical time frame.

In “The Late 1970s and Early 1980s,” Lamos steps out into society, bringing in the *University of California Regents v. Bakke* case, enforcing his approach of employing relevant social materials from the period. He also pulls from Ed White and Leon Thomas’s work published in *College Composition and Communication* at the time: “White and Thomas ultimately stressed the centrality of white mainstream standards within EPT and the picture of competence that it painted” (100). In “The Late 1980s and Early 1990s,” we find racial issues and tensions were the backdrop for what became the “culture wars,” fought on many mainstream campuses and in the mainstream media over the nature of ‘multicultural’ curriculum and other related efforts” (118). The use of *mainstream* in so many ways muddies Lamos’s arguments over and over. Here he could use some examples of what he means by mainstream media and examples of what was said. Lamos then begins “The Late 1990s to the Present” by using Nicole Pepinster Greene and Patricia J. McAlexander’s work stressing that schools are cutting back on remedial services and focusing on research, while “lower-ranking students are increasingly channeled to the less selective two-year institutions, which are also often attended by students for financial or family reasons” (151). Lamos wants the best of both worlds. His focus on only tier-one schools and not “the less selective two-year institutions” (a premise is that these are inferior) or even excellent schools that are not tier one per Carnegie measures is elitist sounding; I sincerely doubt this is his intent, but this is the message that is delivered. Perhaps, again, if he made the claim that he would focus on only highly selective schools for reasons A and B, his arguments would be easier to understand.

Interests and Opportunities concludes that everything seems to be “profoundly limited by the power of white mainstream racism at nearly every turn,” and “egalitarian improvement has occurred despite the power of white racism” (176–77). In the end, I found Lamos’s study limited by its organization and underdeveloped claims.

Peegen Reichert Powell’s *Retention and Resistance: Writing Instruction and Students Who Leave* focuses on the effects of retention efforts at universities and the possibility that first-year composition can serve as a site to deal with students who leave. As a faculty member at Columbia College Chicago (hereafter called Chicago), Reichert Powell ties her arguments to the stories

of three students from Chicago whom she interviews over an extended period of time. While this sample is too small to draw extensive understandings, her book causes us to pause and look at the specific and the personal in front of us, allowing us to extrapolate and come to conclusions about the experiences and paths of students who leave school.

Reichert Powell begins by reminding us that in 2009 President Obama identified retention as a major initiative for his administration, characterizing retention as “the ability of an institution to keep students enrolled until graduation, and the federal government maintain[ing] standards and definitions for calculating and reporting institutions’ ability to do so” (3). The conversation about retention also

entails significant questions about whether higher education is a right or a privilege, about an institution’s or an instructor’s responsibility to individual students, about what and how we teach when we know students may leave. It is this larger, admittedly messier, discourse, and especially the ways this discourse intersects with my work as a writing teacher, that I am concerned in this book. (3)

This clearly summarizes what the book covers, mixing and weaving the various claims throughout, and as Reichert Powell forecasts, her ideas do get tangled up at times. She begins by asking, why do students leave? She concludes from her study the reason is money, family, or they just disappear; we’ll never know because there are many reasons. However, as she argues, this question and its answers are not the way we need to address students who leave.

Using metonymy, one of Burke’s master tropes, with the idea that we attach some incorporeal or intangible to the corporeal and tangible, Reichert Powell argues that retention is an example of such metonymy. We make retention tangible to student success and failure and, more specifically, “butts in seats” (5), but, she continues, “at some point, we simply can’t reduce student success and failure, the value of higher education, or the purposes of our courses, to a set of numbers” (5). With metonymy driving her method, she seeks “out those breaking points, exploiting them, and not only critiquing the potential damage this figure can wreak but also reversing the reduction and identifying some of the real issues hidden therein” (5).

Her compositionist perspective is on retention, so her focus is not on ordinary solutions or critiques of retention solutions; instead we should help “each student who is willing and able to persist” (6). It is this claim that she unfolds throughout the book, eventually connecting retention with first-year composition. Reichert Powell suggests that despite the widespread belief in

transfer of composition skills from one year to another, to other classes, or from students who miss school for a period of time, “rarely, if ever, do skills transfer from one context to the next in the way our pedagogy and curriculum assume they will” (13). While many in the field would at least partly take issue with this claim, her attack is required for her larger argument to be effective: we need to pay attention to our students in the here and now.

How do we do this in our composition classes? Reichert Powell calls for a *kairotic* pedagogy. While I believe her idea is solid—*kairos* has a deep history for those schooled in historical studies—she would be well served to review this history briefly as well as tease out more of how it has been used as a pedagogy in composition studies (13). *Kairos* is typically a rhetor’s or teacher’s interpretative responses in a specific setting and how he or she works them in a timely way. Reichert Powell looks at *kairos* as the forces at work at the institution and in students’ lives. In the end, though, we need an actor, a teacher, to reply to institutional demands and student experiences. This idea would have been stronger if she had shown us some examples of *her* being *kairotic* with a class or a student.

Since we are asking the wrong retention questions, Reichert Powell suggests we ask, “How can we redesign higher education generally, and our writing pedagogy and curricula specifically, so we can educate every single student in our classrooms, even those who might leave?” (21). This is a noble gesture. Yet I wonder if changing the curricula would be a way to effect improvement or change, and if it does, what would it look like, and how would it be measured? Again, a brief pilot class or concrete example would help me grasp what she is advocating.

In “A Story of Retention Research” we meet Reichert Powell’s first student participant, Helen, and with her the author begins a critique of current administrative approaches to retention. The 1980s saw schools informed by total quality management, which views students as consumers (35), and this informs retention scholarship by viewing “a student like Helen as a problem to be solved. Her story reminds us that positioning students within the framework of ‘problem-solution’ is inadequate, unproductive, and possibly unethical” (37). Reichert Powell’s argument against this form of administrative shortsightedness will resonate with most readers’ institutional experiences. As is the case with the other two participants who appear later in the book, I wish that we learned more about these students—demographically, personally, and how they are consequences of the retention system.

Reichert Powell next advocates that we stop thinking of our first-year courses as preparation for the future and stop the *chronos* or chronology in our curriculum—that is, students first “learn this so that then they can learn that” (49)—and instead suggests that we design courses for what students need right now. If she had not been *chronos* oriented, she wonders what would have been different if she had treated Helen’s circumstance as an opportunity to “‘be creative’ and as a ‘challenge to invent’ both rhetorical and pedagogical actions that could have been ‘uniquely meaningful within these circumstances’” (50). From this example she advocates “seeing teaching through the lens of *kairos*: What is going on in my students’ lives right now to which we might use writing as a meaningful response?” This appears to be advocating an adaptive pedagogy to each student, and her use of *kairos* reinforces this. From this she then asks, what types of campus and community activities are happening now in which my students might be interested?

In “The Seduction and Betrayal of the Discourse of Retention,” Reichert Powell applies critical discourse methodology, arguing that “a single program, single staff or faculty member, or single institutional effort could address all students’ unique situations and thus prevent large numbers of students from leaving” (52). While I admire this enthusiasm, addressing all students with many unknown reasons for leaving seems impractical, and I don’t see how such an idea could possibly come to fruition. In “The Possibility of Failure” Reichert Powell returns to the discourse of retention, explaining students’ reasons for leaving. Many schools use Vincent Tinto’s model on retention, and her critique of it is well reasoned and supports her experiences. Pointing out that his work draws from Emile Durkheim’s study of suicides, and that the analogy implies that leaving college is permanent and without reversal, she argues that this is not the case (94), and schools following this view do nothing to change how they address retention.

In “Beyond Retention” Reichert Powell examines the question of transfer, what our students learn in our classrooms, take away, and use at other schools. No matter what the reason is for students’ leaving, she believes “that trying to keep students is unethical to them and it also supports only the financial and ideological interests of those in power” (106). At this point Reichert Powell asks an important question we need to ask ourselves: “What role does writing instruction, especially in the first year, play in a college education? Is it preparation for future college classes? Preparation for citizenship, work, life, beyond college? Or something else altogether?” (106–07). Because we have no

stable target or goal for our classes, she asserts, we cannot succeed. Instead, her approach is to focus on what her students are doing right now, not what they will be doing when they leave the course (118). I was not sure how she differs from many composition instructors who tie into current and civic events; I wondered how she knows if her approach is better than what many in the field practice anyway.

Reichert Powell asserts, “My argument here seems to work against any attempts I might make to spell out what just such a pedagogy might look like, or to describe in detail what it might mean for a curriculum to be inventive in the face of radical particulars of our students’ lives” (120). I found this claim particularly difficult. It is one thing to critique a problem like retention and another to merely suggest we need to be creative in how we respond to or reform it. I felt this was her moment to make some suggestions, yet they never came. She does mention types of courses that can get students engaged, such as *Freudian Legacies* or *Interpreting Slavery*—both interesting—but many of these types of classes were taught before the focus on retention developed. Moreover, are these topics of interest to each student? What would she do, for example, if she teaches *Freudian Legacies* and has a few students uninterested in the subject? Would this be addressing her primary argument of teaching to the here and present?

At the end of this book I was again perplexed, as Reichert Powell tells us:

Those students who are most at risk for leaving after a semester or two—the underprepared, the basic writers, those pulled away for any of the myriad reasons students leave—are the least served by the kinds of pedagogies that isolate narrow skills (skills such as punctuating phrases or practicing subject-verb agreement), even though these populations of students are most likely to encounter such pedagogies. (132)

While I know some schools take such a current-traditional approach, my assumption is most do not. Last, throughout the book Reichert Powell argues that we need to teach to students’ here-and-now needs and sees our belief in a transfer of skills as a useless task, which it is if we follow the current-traditional approach she mentions at the end of the book. Moreover, she contradicts this very message: “to me it implies the difficulty of asking questions about transfer, of trying to design a course that prepares students for the writing they will do in the future” (133). She had argued throughout the book just the opposite of this, that we need to adapt *kairotically* to the here and now of our students, and *not* worry about what they do later.

While Reichert Powell's book examined the research behind retention and attempted to offer another way to address it, Tiffany Rousculp's book is about her attempts to adapt, to be different, and yet to serve anyone in her community in terms of writing needs. This task is admirable, and the book is her hands-on journey as first co-director and then sole director of the Salt Lake City Community Writing Center (SLCCWC).

Rousculp grounds her book and approach to the SLCCWC in eco-composition theory, and early on we get a hint of the ecology SLCCWC visitors experience. The difference of her SLCCWC program draws on the "look" of people when they visit the SLCCWC. As she explains, it "may have been the expression of this moment: the loss of one's current sense of self and the onset of another" (xviii). In other words, they have entered an unexpected and unanticipated ecosystem of writers. She begins with "Recognizing the SLCC Community Writing Center" with details and a history of it, as well as her mission; she sees the center and its activities as "writing with" her clients, akin to Thomas Deans's preference of *writing with* the community.

The SLCCWC mission expands to get at the diverse audience it hopes to attract: "The CWC was founded with the mission to support, motivate, and educate people of all abilities and educational backgrounds who wanted to use writing for practical needs, civic engagement, and personal expression" (6). It was in this section that I thought about the tie to Reichert Powell's goal of working for students in the here and now, in practical and non-academic discourses. Rousculp was doing just that in her SLCCWC and with a variety of people from all educational and social walks of life.

In "Evolving a Discursive Ecology: A Rhetoric of Respect," Rousculp defines what a rhetoric of respect is. It "differs from sometimes patronizing responses to difference or conflict (e.g., 'tolerance' or 'acceptance') that mask simmering disdain. Respect implies a different type of relationship, one that is grounded in perception of worth, in esteem for another—as well as for the self" (24–25). Her notion of a rhetoric of respect opens her eyes to see broad "ramifications of 'school literacies' and 'literacy' in general" (29). An important realization she makes at the SLCCWC was why people do or do not stick with it: "In the drive to 'empower,' I had forgotten what Stuckey, Rose, Freire, and Shor had taught me: people have full and complex lives outside of the time I spend with them" (53). We might call this audience recognition, and Rousculp learns some great lessons along the way; the lessons are clear examples of why people outside of school or the mainstream might want to write. Rousculp learns that writing is not more important than other things in students' lives.

With the focus on ecosystems Rousculp encounters a dilemma when the SLCCWC has the opportunity to move to a “better” location. Here she discusses the importance of location, moving from an art space in a poorer area to a location in the main branch of the city library in 2006. While I understood all the reasons why the move was good (air conditioning, safety, etc.), the author comes across as apologizing for a gentrification move. I accept her reasons for the better location, but I was left wondering what happened to the ecosystem analogies she nicely teases out at times. When one species leaves an ecosystem, that ecosystem changes, a new one is impacted by the move, and species evolve or perish.

In “Shifting Relations, Transforming Expectations,” Rousculp continues the theme of distancing herself from privileged academic discourse in order to appreciate and recognize the people who use the SLCCWC. Drawing from Paula Mathieu’s book *Tactics of Hope: The Public Turn in English Composition*, she realizes “such academic measurements of community partnership outcomes risk replication of the hegemony that higher education already holds over the larger community. I knew this—and still fell right into this way of thinking” (90–91). Becoming aware that real world, school, and workplace have unique writing demands and criteria, Rousculp worked toward “developing relationships based in a rhetoric of respect for multiple discursive ecologies, of which ours was an option, a choice, a possibility to contribute to collaborative change” (115).

In “Engaging Place: Acclimation and Disruption,” she concludes with an obvious central concern of eco-composition: place. The SLCCWC discovered people “learned on their own terms, in their own time frames, for free” (132). From my perspective, she does not give enough credit to place: “Although the CWC was a place, most (if not all) of its programs were place-less, crafted to adapt to the particular partners, contexts, and audiences with which we were working” (143). Are these not “crafted,” or as we might say, “adapted,” to place and audience need? I also felt she overdid the need to push away the discipline informing the center and the readers of her book. In the end Rousculp recognizes that our rhetoric and writing studies (RWS) communities have a way to write, as does any other discourse community. She discovered that community members can write and print what they wish, but if they want to enter another discourse community they must adapt to it, or as she poetically expresses, “if they wish to vibrate the web of a discursive environment, they must acknowledge and respond to the norm” (152).

Our last book under review is published by the Computers and Composition Digital Press/Utah State University Press, which in expanding their digital

offerings, are also presenting enhanced, creative ways that authors use digital media to represent their ideas innovatively and practically. *Transnational Literate Lives in Digital Times* is no exception. Patrick W. Berry, Gail E. Hawisher, and Cynthia L. Selfe state early their “project is to understand the digital literacy practices of a generation of students with transnational connections.” To achieve this, they focus on thirteen people from a larger group of participants, sharing their stories in words, images, audio, and video clips the participants coauthored with them. The goal is to reveal “cultural tracings—albeit fragmentary and incomplete—of how individuals inhabiting transnational contexts learn, take up, and use digital communication technologies to extend their communicative reach, to maintain their social and cultural identities, and to construct their worlds.” This e-book lives up to these goals. Berry, Hawisher, and Selfe’s methodology is important for young scholars to study if they wish to conduct primary qualitative research using digital means to reveal a thicker fabric of literacy experiences. As has become protocol for most projects conducted by Selfe and Hawisher (and now Berry), they always work to personalize the participants by including them as coauthors, if possible, in the work.

Berry, Hawisher, and Selfe begin with eight guiding principles extrapolated from this study that serve as guides to navigating the stories in the chapters. Transnational participants, the authors observe,

- Used digital networks to navigate and communicate across geographically discontinuous communities
- Shared and employed complex, nuanced, and culturally situated understandings of technology’s affordances and limitations
- Often possessed a rich set of linguistic resources (e.g., bilingual or polyglot) that helped define and situate their cultural adaptation
- Were highly dependent on their cultural ecologies in determining their attitudes toward digital technologies and their use
- Often saw that their parents valued education and that this influenced them to study
- Self-sponsored or were directly sponsored by friends when learning a technology; parents often were indirect sponsors
- Valued cultural diversity and benefited from and contributed to curricula supporting this

- Believed digital media (video, audio, email, images, texting, mobile phones, social networking sites) and repositories for them were necessary for understanding literacy experiences and researching them

As with Reichert Powell and Rousculp, Berry, Hawisher, and Selfe understand that to learn about students' literacy practices we must step outside of our campuses and into the confluences that make up borders: "In other words, we need to move beyond the classroom while holding on to pedagogical concerns." The authors step out of and back into campus from the start to finish of their book, bringing their findings back to the academic community. They realize that a whole world of literacy practices is out there, hidden to us if we do not jump in; and that we are academics and must convey our discoveries to like-minded researchers and teachers. Another technique these authors do very well is to juggle back and forth among the sociocultural macro and micro societies of the participants.

Berry, Hawisher, and Selfe begin all the chapters with an overview of the aims and what they accomplish. For instance, in Chapter 2 we find: "These stories provide rich glimpses into individuals' localized literacy practices within particular cultures and their circulation within global contexts, as well as into their uses of digital communication technologies for both local and global exchanges." Moreover, we know we are stepping into their lives at a crucial turning point—when they attend college. The researchers stress that these stories are an "alternative to the national triumphalist narratives," and to create a rich primary fabric of stories full of experiences drawn from the participant, Berry, Selfe, and Hawisher use a balance of mini-clips by their coauthors. All the chapters consist of mediated literacy histories of two to four coauthor participants. At the end of all the chapters, Berry, Hawisher, and Selfe compare and contrast the coauthors' experiences with literacy learning and technology with useful summaries, such as "In some respects, Mirza was always more intimately involved with computers than Gorjana." These dialogues interact with the coauthors' text and videos in a way that keeps us on track and making connections to the themes of the book.

As an alternative way to present the participants' experiences, the coauthors, in Chapter 3, include less verbal writing as if to lead us to watch the videos expanding on the text, begging us to view the primary source. I like this as a technique because I wonder how much readers would otherwise experience these primary clips. Because much of what the primary authors do is interpret

the coauthors' experiences in the context of the larger sociocultural milieu, they also reflect on their interpretations, opening up their ideas to engagement. Chapter 4 is insightful because, while we may be aware of how widely English is employed around the globe, the coauthors' stories bring the experiences to the personal. I found the participants' stories refreshing in that they step into realms we all know are part and parcel of our literacy practices but never think about. For example, as coauthor Vanessa states in her video, "writing an essay implies reading, eating, thinking, eating, revising, eating," and we watch as her paper emerges on the screen. Chapter 5 slightly breaks the flow of the book, as it is an expansion on a prior publication, "Literacies and the Complexities of the Global Digital Divide," by Selfe, Hawisher, Oladipupo (Dipo) Lashore, and Pengfei Song. While coauthors Lashore and Song digitally adapt to expand on their work, they "continue the process of reporting on a series of literacy narratives that we have collected from people with transnational connections, many of them having come to the United States for tertiary-level study." While the chapter employs various levels of media integration, it is retrofitted, and the images and videos are less integrated with text than in the other chapters. The chapter also emphasizes the role of literacy sponsorship and gateways in countries with limited resources.

As I finished reading Berry, Hawisher, and Selfe's fascinating e-book, I realized that, as we explore this form, I would like to see more scholars have available the full unedited versions of these rich videos produced from this type of research (as well as other such books published by CCDP).

To complete my review of these five books, I found Fleming's volume a welcome surprise; felt as if I were reading a mystery novel while also learning from a rich chapter of composition history. Though Lamos's project showed potential, I felt it needed tighter organization and key concepts better developed. Reichert Powell's work on retention provides an interesting exploration of how composition can help us rethink the way we address students who leave school, which would have been more helpful had she let us know at the start that she was speaking about current-traditional approaches to composition, and had she shown us some ways she used *kairotic* pedagogies to teach here and now students, as she calls them. Rousculp's book is a good read for anyone who has served as a WPA or writing center director: she worked hard to be a different director and to serve her community of writers. Berry, Hawisher, and Selfe's work explores the literacy experiences and practices of a group of international students here in the United States, in their home countries, and

in the myriad niches where they compose along the way. The layout, structure, and coherency of the book makes reading and viewing it a joy.

All five books made me aware of why I entered our field some thirty years ago. Composing is an important part of our lives, and it lives with us wherever we are. It is with us in heat and cold and good and bad and in many sites, as we see in these five books accounting for my colleagues' experiences dislocating/relocating life and composition.

Work Cited

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