Book Reviews

Teaching Readers in Post-Truth America, by Ellen Carillo, Logan: Utah State UP, 2018, 144 pp.

What Is College Reading?, edited by Alice S. Horning, Deborah-Lee Gollnitz, and Cynthia R. Haller. The WAC Clearinghouse, 2017, 304 pp.

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In 2006, I earned a graduate certificate in teaching post-secondary reading at San Francisco State University by taking courses on theories of reading and integrated reading and writing. Notably, only a few of our texts included post-secondary reading research because, quite simply, not much research had been conducted. Instead, we read research from education about readers in K-12 environments. Those readings we were assigned with a post-secondary emphasis tended to align with reading theories in education, but mostly focused on literature, such as Louise Rosenblatt's transactional theory of reading, which posits the act of reading involves a transaction between reader and text, both being changed by the act. Similarly, one of the most influential texts for my own teaching was Glynda Hull and Mike Rose's 1990 "'This Wooden Shack Place': The Logic of an Unconventional Reading" that described how the schema, or background knowledge, of a basic writing student can result in an interpretation of a poem that is different than the teacher's interpretation, the teacher having a different (and more socio-economically privileged) schema, background, experience from which to pull.

Within this generally literature-focused research on K-12 reading, a few scholars, such as Charles Bazerman, Christina Haas, and Linda Flower, were researching *rhetorical* reading practices. These researchers used methodologies common in education research, like think aloud protocols, and education-based theories, like schema theory. This reading research in composition and rhetoric from the 1980s and 90s integrated seamlessly with education, which worked well to prepare teachers for the integrated reading and writing classrooms that were becoming more and more common in community colleges and four-year universities. Unfortunately, this promising work did not result in much sustained research beyond the 1990s.

In 2005, Patricia Harkin traced the historical and theoretical explanations for this dearth of post-secondary reading research. The short of it: as rhetoric and composition professionalized into a discipline, reading research was deemphasized in favor of writing (Harkin). Writing became the discrete area of study (Salvatori and Donahue). The divide can perhaps best be seen in

the Gary Tate and Erika Lindemann debate of 1993 about the role of literary texts in composition classrooms. The debate did not open the conversation to how students read, but instead on what they should or should not read. The word "reading," according to Salvatori and Donahue, became invisible for 17 years, even disappearing as a category for presentation proposals at CCCCs, until recently.

Seven years ago, reflective of the resurgent interest in reading, Mike Bunn, Ellen Carillo, and Debrah Huffman began a special interest group on reading, and reading can now be found as a presentation proposal option at CCCCs. Salvatori and Donahue have described this revival as "baffling," but now current post-secondary reading researchers have begun to build a good understanding of the diverse contexts of readers and reading, moving us past the Tate-Lindemann debate and into questions of *how* students read and *how* reading affects their writing (199). Several studies add to Hull and Rose's early work by examining reading in the basic writing classroom (Goen and Gillotte-Tropp; Smith; Sweeney and McBride); other research adds to early work by Haas and Flower who use research to describe how students read in first-year writing classrooms, whether it be reading like a writer (Bunn), reading reflectively (Carillo), or reading rhetorically (Downs). Some recent post-secondary reading research has also taken up growing trends in writing research, like transfer (Lockhart and Soliday) and threshold concepts of reading (Sweeney). Collectively, these studies bring us, as teacher-scholars, toward a better understanding of post-secondary readers. These researchers recognize that we benefit by looking beyond our theoretical and methodological frameworks to ask new questions or challenge previous ways of thinking. For example, the interest in learning transfer, from educational psychology, has transformed reading pedagogies to include metacognition to support movement to other disciplines.

A reconnection of education and composition and rhetoric is vital to post-secondary reading research as it allows us to deepen the complexity of our studies but more importantly move past the deficit model thinking of reading (i.e., why students don't or can't read). While this is an understandable and well-documented concern, composition and rhetoric has more to gain from understanding how students read in different contexts. Two new books--Ellen Carillo's *Teaching Readers in Post-Truth America* and Alice Horning, Deborah-Lee Gollnitz, and Cynthia Haller's edited collection *What is College Reading?*—help us do just that, as they reflect the connection between education-based K-12 reading research and composition- and rhetoric-based reading research from the 80s and 90s. By embracing that stance, these books allow us to map several trends in post-secondary reading research that intersect with current research trends in education: rejection of the deficit model, expansion of interdisciplinary potentials, and acknowledgement of disciplinary literacy.

The primary way these texts connect post-secondary reading research to K-12 education is by addressing how that K-12 education affects how students read in college. In chapter two, "Theoretical First Principles," Carillo argues that students taught under the confines of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) are less equipped for reading in an information-rich society, especially one with a rise in political divisiveness and post-truth culture, a culture in which an opinion often seems to be worth more than facts. To make reading assessment-friendly, CCSS encourages text-centered analysis, minimizing the importance of the meaning that a reader brings to the act of reading, thereby rejecting Rosenblatt's transactional theory. In other words, Hull and Rose's student would not have been successful under this curriculum. To prepare students to participate in an information-rich democratic society, Carillo teaches empathic reading, which she describes in chapter three, "Cultivating Empathic Reading, Readers, and Researchers." For Carillo, empathy is not just asking students to open themselves to others' perspectives but also to identify with and mirror those perspectives as a comprehension strategy. While I have reservations about Carillo's argument that reading fewer literary texts in favor of more explicitly rhetorical texts creates less empathetic readers, I do find merit in her arguments that the way reading is taught in the CCSS curriculum makes students less prepared to read with empathy. In chapter four, "Modeling Reading through Annotation," Carillo demonstrates how she uses annotation to guide students toward empathy. She recommends teachers use public annotations now available as models, for example journalists annotating political speeches online, or tools that allow multiple students to annotate one text. These activities highlight for students that reading is a social act. Along with making reading processes visible with annotations, Carillo chooses texts for shared annotations that allow students to see what it looks like to open up a question and linger, rather than rushing to judgment. I found this chapter especially helpful as it gives concrete tools for helping students read with empathy and openness.

In *What is College Reading?* Justin Young and Charlie Potter's "Reading about Reading" further strengthens our understanding of the K-12 context and how it might affect college readers. They argue that higher education faculty and administrators "must proceed with a clear understanding of the wide range of P-12 pedagogical approaches to literacy" so they can build a bridge from those literacy practices to college practices (118). These pedagogical practices include phonics, direct instruction, whole language, constructivism, and balanced literacy. Young and Potter claim that material differences between high school and college contexts, with No Child Left Behind demanding approaches that have been scientifically verified and CCSS promoting close reading, make it difficult for students transitioning to college. Typically, the reading instruc-

tion promoted in high school is the type that produces short-term, measured results: direct instruction, or explicit demonstration and practice of skills. However, constructivism, an approach that values the meaning the reader constructed and that we embrace in composition and rhetoric, is dismissed in high school environments. In response, Young and Potter provide strategies for post-secondary reading teachers to bridge the gap from high school's direct instruction focus to college reading that demands deeper, rhetorical reading across the disciplines. These strategies include a balanced literacy approach that teaches students to analyze, retain, and apply complex academic material, while also engaging students' personal experiences, or schema, with literacy and classroom learning. Young and Potter close their essay with a key point: "communication between the two groups [P-12 and post-secondary educators] is not common or easy" (132). However, both Carillo and Horning et al.'s collection do an effective job of establishing the context that often remains invisible to better strengthen those connections.

The most prominent trend in these books is the sound rejection of the deficit model of reading. Composition and rhetoric scholarship has done, I suggest, an effective job of rejecting the deficit model of writing; however, these efforts seem to be more difficult with reading. Carillo offers an intriguing perspective on this point. In chapter three, "Cultivating Empathic Reading, Readers, and Researchers," Carillo argues that teachers need to consider how students' emotions, when reading, affect the meaning students construct. Therefore, teachers should consider both triggers when choosing texts and also the potential violence in asking students to play Peter Elbow's believing game with hateful texts. Beyond that main argument, Carillo also reflects on empathic reading practices in composition and rhetoric, such as the empathic reading that Mina Shaughnessy modeled of student error in writing or that Hull and Rose modeled in their reading of a student's unconventional interpretation of poetry. Carillo celebrates the history of empathic reading in composition and rhetoric research. In doing so, Carillo offers an interesting lens to consider post-secondary reading research, suggesting we might see it as falling on an empathic continuum. This chapter left me wondering, as researchers, are we recognizing the range of ways we construct meaning and knowledge through our studies?

Some of the studies in the Horning et al. collection are examples of empathic research or empathic approaches to teaching reading. My favorite study was Martha Townsend's "High-Profile Football Players' Reading at a Research University" because it challenges the deficit model of reading by using in depth interviews and data triangulation to paint a detailed picture of student readers. In a qualitative case study that relied on interviews and standardized tests, Townsend finds that student-athletes have a rich reading life. She details their

preferences and passions as they relate to reading, describing students who do excel at and enjoy reading (though science and math were more difficult for the students). Townsend argues that reading and writing instructors may want to reconsider overwhelmingly negative stereotypes they have about athletes, but I would extend that to stereotypes about reading and readers more generally.

Townsend also recommends that WAC practitioners "delve more deeply into the excellent literacy research" in education to understand how context mediates readers and texts, thereby strengthening those connections between composition and rhetoric and education (112). Similarly, many of the studies focus on helping teachers create opportunities for more empathic reading across the curriculum. In "The Un-Common Read," Jennifer Maloy et al. demonstrate how a Common Read program can foster a reading community for community college students. While most Common Read programs are used for a pre-fall orientation, Maloy et al. integrate the texts into faculty development and year long cross-disciplinary events and assignments. Through this approach, they find that students make more and stronger connections between the text and their courses. In their description of how the reading is discussed, how it moves across disciplines and contexts, and how it is used to pull community college students into the community of college, I was struck by how effectively the program supported the empathic reading for which Carillo advocates.

There are several more examples of approaches to teaching empathic reading and helping students move beyond CCSS ways of reading in Horning et al.'s collection. In "Multiliteracies and Meaning-Making," Mary Lou Odom demonstrates how digital reading can aid student development of new practices that will help them with college reading—just as composition teachers have adjusted college writing for digital genres, like blogs and wikis, so too can they adjust college reading. Odom notes what Carillo and Young and Potter highlighted with the K-12 context: students read a lot, but they may come to school with inaccurate views of what reading in college means. However, Odom finds that when teachers adjust their writing prompts for reading assignments, they get different results. She advocates that teachers change from using writing to check for completion of reading and instead focus on engagement (e.g. write a blog to react to a part of the reading). For example, a professor of conflict management asked students to respond to a reading by critiquing one of their past negotiations in a memo to themselves. This teacher's adjusted assignment helped students use technology to make text-to-world connections but also highlighted how students are ready to do the reading expected in college.

While moving beyond the deficit model is one trend these books embrace, they also signal an expansion of our current theoretical frames to education, psychology, educational psychology, and disciplinary literacy as a way to bet-

ter understand reading. In chapter five, "Moving Forward," Carillo suggests composition and rhetoric look to psychology to deepen our understanding of reading. Psychologists have shown that emotion and beliefs are bound up with one another. Therefore, Carillo says, if we teach critical reading, we must teach students about cognitive emotion theory to expand their, and our, understanding of how people are persuaded: through logos *and* pathos. Second, Carillo advocates we look to education psychology as it supports argument writing that includes listening, empathy, and reflection—all practices that can deepen argument writing and challenge the post-truth culture. Third, Carillo continues the argument that we can improve our teaching by looking to psychology-—not only to improve argumentation, but also to deepen our understanding of the psychological dimension of reading. For example, psychologists have found that we use systems like confirmation bias, cognitive dissonance, and information avoidance to protect ourselves.

Disciplinary literacy is the last and, I argue, most promising new direction for post-secondary reading research. Several of the chapters in *What is College Reading?* use this new frame. Over the last decade, the shift to the CCSS curriculum expanded disciplinary literacy research in education, as educators sought to better prepare middle school and high school teachers across the curriculum to teach reading and writing in their content areas. Disciplinary literacy researchers study the different "conventions of disciplinary knowledge production and communication" or how scholars in various disciplines read and write in ways that reflect their shared epistemologies (Moje 37). Several chapters in *What is College Reading?* embrace disciplinary literacy—studying reading practices in various disciplines.

In "Utilizing Interdisciplinary Insights to Build Effective Reading Skills," William Abbott and Kathryn Nantz use disciplinary literacy to help honors students connect to reading assignments. They ask students to read texts from economics and history, finding that by combining the two disciplines and creating inspired writing assignments, students are better able to use the readings and explore the different processes of reading based on the discipline. For example, students found that economic arguments and graphical analysis required "considerable time to master" while history texts had to be "skimmed and organized around themes" (149). Laura Davies also uses disciplinary literacy to teach students how reading demands change among genres shared in a discipline. In "Getting to the Root of the Problem," she demonstrates how reading improved when she taught science students to pre-read, read, and post-read as part of a recursive practice. Students read a variety of genres common in the sciences—research article, popular science trade book, magazine article, and textbook. Through detailed descriptions that teachers will appreciate, Davies shows how the reading activities and assignments change for each genre and at

each stage of the process. The complexity of reading processes in her classroom support the argument that teaching reading must continue into the disciplines as students continue to refine how they make and share knowledge. These two chapters expand our understanding of post-secondary reading as more than just rhetorical reading in composition courses, and instead demands that as teachers we consider how reading expectations might change in other disciplines as students read like historians, scientists, or economists.

Some chapters illustrate how disciplinary literacy theories can support reading across the curriculum efforts. In "Writing to Read, Revisited," Chris Anson uses a meta-analysis from education researchers Graham and Herbert to help teachers across the curriculum engage students in deeper, more intellectual readings through writing assignments. These assignments must motivate and engage students, have creative pedagogical energy, require cognitive complexity, and position reading in a richer social space. For example, requiring a summary of a text will not engage students. However, creating a scenario and asking students to engage in a debate on the reading will require a deeper engagement.

Like Anson's study, Pam Hollander et al.'s study in "Creating a Reading-Across-the Curriculum Climate on Campus" emerges after a discovery that faculty across the curriculum were dissatisfied with student reading. While Anson offers teachers tools for changing low-stakes writing assignments, Hollander et al. offer a strategy for building a reading-across-the-curriculum climate on campus. They turn to research by literacy and reading education scholar Zhihui Fang to learn about reading like a scientist, then interview science professors and hold discussions with them to reflect on what worked and did not work in the science classrooms. This on-campus dialogue within a discipline is a useful model for Hollander et al. and one that could be repeated on other campuses and in other disciplines. Collectively, these chapters push reading research beyond a focus on composition classrooms to consider how reading practices change in new contexts and epistemologies. Embracing disciplinary literacy theories decidedly moves us beyond the research from the 80s and 90s; moreover, this disciplinary approach brings us back to the connections between education and composition and rhetoric that further strengthen our research methodologies and classroom pedagogies.

During my time as a graduate student of post-secondary reading, the classroom pedagogies that I could imagine were populated by students like the one Hull and Rose taught, students who needed support or better scaffolds for reading difficult texts in the composition classroom. However, these books mark a shift to trends that push those of us who research and teach post-secondary reading to imagine more: the enduring pedagogies I learned in the early 2000s, but also the changing contexts, epistemologies, and genres that will challenge our students when reading in the post-truth culture, in their disciplines, and

in their professions. As we continue forward, I hope these trends continue to get more attention. For instance, Carillo makes several claims that could evolve reading instruction, but it would be helpful if researchers could do the empirical research needed to see how an empathic approach to reading changes college students' reading practices. Researchers might ask, for example, How does the annotation activity change student reading? How does empathic reading transfer to reading of public texts? How does empathic reading transfer to various disciplines? Overall, these books demonstrate how much we have to learn by looking at and reflecting on the literate lives of college students, in the composition classroom and, most importantly, beyond.

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