Pluralizing Plagiarism

Pluralizing Plagiarism

IDENTITIES, CONTEXTS, PEDAGOGIES

Edited by
Rebecca Moore Howard
and
Amy E. Robillard

Boynton/Cook Publishers
HEINEMANN
Portsmouth, NH

Boynton/Cook Publishers, Inc.
361 Hanover Street
Portsmouth, NH 03801–3912
www.boyntoncook.com

Offices and agents throughout the world

© 2008 by Boynton/Cook Publishers

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any electronic or mechanical means, including information storage and retrieval systems, without permission in writing from the publisher, except by a reviewer, who may quote brief passages in a review.

The editors and publisher wish to thank those who have generously given permission to reprint borrowed material:

Portions of Chapter 9, "We Never Wanted to Be Cops," by Chris Anson originally appeared as "Student Plagiarism: Are Teachers Part of the Problem or Part of the Solution?" by Chris Anson. From *Essays on Teaching Excellence* (2003–2004). Reprinted with permission of The Professional and Organizational Development Network in Higher Education.

Cataloging-in-Publication data is on file at the Library of Congress.
ISBN-13: 978-0-86709-595-1
ISBN-10: 0-86709-595-4

Editor: Charles I. Schuster
Production management: Karina Felizardo, SPi
Production coordinator: Vicki Kasabian
Cover design: Night and Day Design
Typesetter: SPi
Manufacturing: Louise Richardson

Printed in the United States of America on acid-free paper
12 11 10 09 08 VP 1 2 3 4 5

For our friend Candace Spigelman,
whose work in authorship and
whose belief in students and teaching
will continue to inspire us.

Contents

Introduction: Plagiarisms
Amy E. Robillard, Illinois State University
Rebecca Moore Howard, Syracuse University 1

1 Man Bites Dog: The Public, the Press, and Plagiarism
Michele Eodice, University of Oklahoma 8

2 Situating Plagiarism as a Form of Authorship: The Politics of Writing in a First-Year Writing Course
Amy E. Robillard, Illinois State University 27

3 Time Is Not on Our Side: Plagiarism and Workload in the Community College
Kami Day, Johnson County Community College 43

4 Where There's Smoke, Is There Fire? Understanding Coauthorship in the Writing Center
Tracy Hamler Carrick, Colby College 62

5 One Size Does Not Fit All: Plagiarism Across the Curriculum
Sandra Jamieson, Drew University 77

6 Plagiarizing (from) Graduate Students
Rebecca Moore Howard, Syracuse University 92

7 "Thou Shalt Not Plagiarize"? Appeals to Textual Authority and Community at Religiously Affiliated and Secular Colleges
T. Kenny Fountain, University of Minnesota
Lauren Fitzgerald, Yeshiva University 101

8 Intertextuality in the Transcultural Contact Zone
Celia Thompson, University of Melbourne
Alastair Pennycook, University of Technology, Sydney 124

9 We Never Wanted to Be Cops: Plagiarism, Institutional Paranoia, and Shared Responsibility
Chris M. Anson, North Carolina State University 140

10 Beyond Plagiarism
Kathleen Blake Yancey, Florida State University *158*

Afterword: Plagiarism, Difference, and Power
Bruce Horner, University of Louisville *171*

Contributors *179*

Introduction

Plagiarisms

Amy E. Robillard *and* Rebecca Moore Howard

Plagiarism is a problem. The blogger Olvlzl (2007) expresses a widely shared sentiment: "The great crisis facing this foundation of democracy, itself, is that someone has been at the cooky jar, someone's been stealing their snickerdoodles. The great flood of plagiarism is the real danger that faces the nation, with front page stories and network news segments presenting in indepth report on the rolling crime wave." The BBC suggests that we might be facing an "epidemic" of student plagiarism (Epidemic 2004). Concern about plagiarism is so acute that the job of Roderick McDavis, the president of Ohio University, is reported to be in jeopardy (Students 2007), in part because a plagiarism scandal in the university's graduate engineering program occurred on his watch (Phillips 2006). The *Los Angeles Times* announces that instructors are reluctant to assign research papers "because the Internet offers a searchable online smorgasbord of ready-made papers" (Jones 2006). On the listserv WPA-L, William Fitzgerald (2007) reports that some of his Rutgers students are reluctant to post their papers in a place where other students might find and appropriate them. A high school in Virginia adopts the plagiarism-detecting service Turnitin.com, and some of the students file suit (Robelen 2007). Nor is the problem confined to the United States; Schmidt (2004) confirms the decline of the research paper, and *The Scotsman* reports that instructors are so overwhelmed by the task of dealing with plagiarism that they are ignoring it (Schofield 2006). Eighty percent of colleges in the United Kingdom subscribe to Turnitin.com, the plagiarism-detecting program (Conference 2006). And the call for proposals for an Amsterdam conference calls plagiarism detection an "exciting and future-oriented topic" (2nd call 2007).

People are proposing solutions to the problem. Like many other colleges, Newman University offers an online plagiarism tutorial for its students (Web-Based, n.d.). Susan McLeod (1992, 11–13) emphasizes the teaching of documentation conventions. Ann Lathrop and Kathleen Foss (2005, 164) assert the need for teachers to work with their students throughout the writing process. Rebecca Moore Howard (1993, 240–43) describes summary writing as a means of fostering critical reading practices that are essential to successful writing from sources. James Brown (2001, 169) recommends teaching source use as a "critical skill" while emphasizing the role of audience in determining what needs to be cited. The Council of Writing Program Administrators (2003) urges the design of "contexts and assignments for learning that encourage students not

simply to recycle information but to investigate and analyze its sources." Alice Drum (1986, 242) advocates "a holistic approach, a recognition that plagiarism involves a student, an instructor, and the structure within which the two interact." Edward M. White (1999, 209) focuses on the need for faculty development. Donald McCabe urges institutions to foster a climate of integrity (Hansen 2007). Dierdre Mahoney (2002, 225) advocates putting a plagiarism policy in course syllabi. Richard Posner (2007, 82–83) believes in plagiarism-detecting services. Tucker Carlson (2002) endorses zero-tolerance punishments, and Gillian Silverman (2002, 12) models the instructor's eternal, unrelenting vigilance.

Yet even though the problem of plagiarism is so frequently and energetically described and decried, and even though the solutions offered are enthusiastically promoted, plagiarism continues. Even when we institute what seem to be sensible, accessible plagiarism policies; even when we institute honor codes; even when we purchase and use plagiarism-detecting software; and even when we develop plagiarism-proof assignments—the problem persists.

In one respect, we must recognize that plagiarism—excessive collaboration with other, unacknowledged texts—has long been with us (Constable 1983; Simmons 1999) and will long continue to be (Hutcheon 1986; Meltzer 1994; Stewart 1991). There is no "solution to" or "prevention of" plagiarism; there are only good measures to be taken. We must also recognize that although part of what is now characterized as an "epidemic" of plagiarism is indeed significantly attributable to writers' easy access to copious text (Atkins and Nelson 2001), it is also significantly attributable to *readers'* easy access to copious text. Like nothing ever seen before, readers and writers today have equal access to the same texts. Thus readers can detect and recognize writers' appropriations from sources like never before.

What this book argues, though, is yet another aspect of the plagiarism phenomenon: To date, the academy's depictions of the problem, and the solutions offered, are universalized. They assume that one definition and one set of solutions apply in all circumstances.

This is an astonishing fact, given how much we know about the circumstantial specificity of writing. At one time, writing instruction was based on the notion of transcendental "good writing." Composition classes conveyed the characteristics of this good writing to students, who were then expected to produce those characteristics in their writing. The days of the "ideal text" are, we hope, long gone, but the product approach to the teaching of writing seems to persist in universalized approaches and responses to plagiarism. In this universalization, plagiarism is a feature of the text that can be detected by machines; a conception of writing as social activity is denied in favor of simplistic definitions and simplistic responses.

And plagiarism is indeed a form of writing. It may be an outlawed form of writing, but writing it nevertheless is. To acknowledge this is to begin to come to terms with the extent to which composition scholars have willingly contributed to a universalized conception of plagiarism.

This book argues that plagiarism must be pluralized if we are to ethically and productively apply our nuanced knowledges about writing to this form of authorship. We know, for instance, that one size does not fit all when it comes to writing pedagogy; we know that writing instructors must take into account the spatial, temporal, and cultural contexts in which they teach as well as the populations of students in their classrooms. The same must be done in our approaches and responses to plagiarism.

In the search for solutions, scholarly publications have neglected the specificity of and variations among the many sites at which plagiarism occurs—sites such as four-year-college writing programs, community colleges, secondary schools, international classrooms, multicultural classrooms, writing-across-the-curriculum programs, writing centers, libraries, distance education, graduate education, and popular media. Instead, most scholarly publications on plagiarism mirror mass media's attempts to adduce universalized representations, definitions, preventative measures, policies, and punishments.

While the contributors to *Pluralizing Plagiarism: Identities, Contexts, Pedagogies* share in the culturewide concern about plagiarism, they recognize that it is not a unitary phenomenon that can be successfully addressed from a single perspective. Rather, plagiarism is a complex, unstable issue that must be considered from a variety of viewpoints and at a variety of sites. Clarity and stability cannot be brought to the textual field labeled "plagiarism," but teachers and the culture at large can come to understand what is at stake in plagiarism and how best to approach the topic *with* students rather than *for* or *about* students. Such work can lead to coalitions of writers and educators who can implement curricula that take students' textual work seriously and that encourage students to take writing, texts, and learning seriously.

The authors of these chapters demonstrate that our safe definitions and methods of prevention and detection do not always travel well. In "Man Bites Dog: The Public, the Press, and Plagiarism," Michele Eodice demonstrates the astonishing yet unsurprising extent to which the media shape the public's attitudes toward plagiarism. Implicating academics for their passive collusion with the media's messages, Eodice challenges writing teachers to take on the increasingly challenging task of communicating their expertise in public forums. Drawing on her own attempt to do this work, Eodice reminds us just how difficult it is to communicate nuanced views to an audience accustomed to digesting news in sound bites. Simplistic definitions of plagiarism as theft make such sound bites compelling, and it is in part for this reason that Amy E. Robillard suggests in her chapter that we work with students to categorize plagiarism as a form of authorship rather than as a type of crime. In "Situating Plagiarism as a Form of Authorship: The Politics of Writing in a First-Year Writing Course," Robillard suggests that one way teachers can avoid positioning themselves as plagiarism police is to engage students in a wider investigation into the politics of writing. Plagiarism positioned in relation to other forms of authorship, including book reviewing, political polemic, and literary forgery, becomes more than

simply the lazy or criminal student's way out. Instead, plagiarism becomes but one of a number of textual practices that elicit media attention from cultural critics ever concerned with the consequences of mass literacy.

In "Time Is Not on Our Side: Plagiarism and Workload in the Community College," Kami Day outlines the ways in which community college teachers' workloads often place heavy limits on the amount of time they can devote to keeping current on plagiarism scholarship. Drawing on Basil Bernstein's distinction between the pedagogical relay (scholarship of the field) and the relayed (the ways that that scholarship is taken up pedagogically), Day demonstrates that community college teachers often focus on the relayed without enough knowledge of the relay. Citing community college teachers' tremendous influence on textbook publishers, Day encourages community college teachers to insist on more complex representations of plagiarism in some of the most popular writing textbooks.

For many years, composition scholars have adhered to a distinction between the collaborative writing of classroom-based peer groups and the collaborative learning that takes place in the writing center. In "Where There's Smoke, Is There Fire?" Tracy Hamler Carrick revisits and revises that distinction, asserting the value of tutor–tutee collaborative writing. Supervisors of peer tutors, Carrick says, must adopt a flexible approach to these concerns, helping tutors negotiate the tension between coauthoring and collaborative learning, rather than simply endorsing one and outlawing the other. In addition, Carrick calls not just for training peer tutors but also for respecting their situated decision making. Revisionism is at work in Sandra Jamieson's chapter as well, as she explains the ways in which historical developments in writing across the curriculum have led educators to overgeneralize about plagiarism. Jamieson's research into discipline-specific practices reveals that although instructors across the curriculum may endorse universal definitions of and policies for plagiarism, those universalisms may actually contradict the textual conventions and practices that are sanctioned in the disciplines.

Because "correct" textual practices are widely regarded as a basic writing "skill," instructors are especially indignant when graduate student writers transgress. Rebecca Moore Howard regards writing from sources as a matter of lifelong development; it should be explicitly taught even on the graduate level. Howard raises, too, another aspect of plagiarism with regard to graduate students: the practice of faculty mentors' appropriations of graduate students' intellectual work. An academy that takes plagiarism seriously will respect the intellectual property of graduate student writers.

Kathleen Blake Yancey brings these issues to the conceptual space of research practices in composition and rhetoric. She describes research as conversational practice, asking how our practices for acknowledging intertextuality might impede or assist the researcher. How can researchers find something that they can claim as "their" space and "their" contribution to the

conversation? How can they come to understand sources as having been written by authors-in progress rather than static author-functions who can too easily become icons or straw[wo]men? How might researchers adopt a multicontextual approach rather than one dedicated to finding and filling in gaps? Yancey's conclusions are valuable not only for researchers but also for those who review research: she sketches an ethics of reviewing whose implementation would palpably advance the field of Composition Studies.

Challenging the widely held assumption that religiously affiliated colleges and universities need rely only on defining plagiarism as immoral to prevent plagiarism, T. Kenny Fountain and Lauren Fitzgerald suggest instead that these institutions' emphasis on the importance of community might be more effective in preventing plagiarism. Their chapter, " 'Thou Shalt Not Plagiarize'?: Appealing to Textual Authority and Community at Religiously Affiliated and Secular Colleges," describes a pedagogy for a first-year course that draws on notions of textual authority and belonging. Fountain and Fitzgerald advocate interrogating with students' socially situated conceptions of community and textual authority in an effort to help students understand that writing and citation are communitarian acts rather than individual ones.

Celia Thompson and Alastair Pennycook explore the concept of intertextuality and its relationship to the politics of knowledge and writer identity in the context of transcultural classrooms. Drawing on data collected from college students studying in Australia, they consider how multiple strands of knowledge combine to produce desired meanings across texts and readers. They highlight the value of reflexivity as a means of exploring the intertextual nature of writing as an ongoing complex process through which students create and assert different writer identities. Theories of identity that take account of sociohistorically constructed sets of power relations can enable educators to gain insights into the kinds of conflicts and cultural differences that international students experience as they struggle to become authors of the academic texts that they produce. Thompson and Pennycook argue that the more instructors understand how students in general and international students in particular describe and contest their own learning experiences, especially when this may involve resistance to institutionally validated expectations and conventions, the better equipped they are to navigate through the transcultural contact zone together with their students.

The meaning of any textual event, including one potentially classified as plagiarism, is determined not by foundational categories and decontextualized procedures but by the people involved in the event, the ways in which they construct their writerly identities, and the ways in which their writerly identities are constructed by their social situation. That social situation, the context in which the textual event occurs, exerts its own defining force on the event. This does not lead us to discard institutional plagiarism policies; far from it. 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. Chris Anson concludes this volume, though, with a call for reflection and reflexivity on the part of those who write and implement plagiarism policies. As the first ten essays in *Pluralizing Plagiarism* demonstrate, we cannot assume a moral frame for every act of transgressive intertextuality. Instead, as we work with institutional policies to interpret a potentially transgressive text, we can best understand that text when we factor in the identities of its writers and readers and when we pay close attention to the context in which the text was produced and circulated. *Then* we may be well positioned to respond appropriately and productively. And *then* we can construct responsible pedagogy that engages student writers in appropriate and responsible uses of source texts.

References

Atkins, Thomas, and Gene Nelson. 2001. "Plagiarism and the Internet: Turning the Tables." *English Journal* 90: 101–104.

Brown, James. 2001. "Plagiarism and Student Acculturation: Strangers in the Strange Lands of Our Disciplines. In *Voices from the Classroom*, 166–70. Aurora, Ontario: Garamond.

Carlson, Tucker. 2002. "That's Outrageous: Reading, Cheating, and 'Rrithmetic." *Reader's Digest* (July): 39–42.

"Conference to Tackle University Plagiarism Problem." 2006. *The Guardian*, October 17. http://education.guardian.co.uk/higher/news/story/0,,1924352,00.html.

Constable, Giles. 1983. "Forgery and Plagiarism in the Middle Ages." *Archiv fur Diplomatik, Schriftgeschichte, Siegel-und Wappenkunde* 29: 1–41.

Council of Writing Program Administrators. 2003. "Defining and Avoiding Plagiarism: WPA Statement on Best Policies." http://wpacouncil.org/node/9.

Drum, Alice. 1986. "Responding to Plagiarism." *College Composition and Communication* 37: 241–43.

"Epidemic of Student Cheating?" 2004. *BBC*, June 30. http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/education/3854465.stm.

Fitzgerald, William. 2007. "Students Fearing Plagiarism if They Post Papers to an Online Course System." WPA-L, May 5. http://lists.asu.edu/archives/wpa-l.html.

Hansen, Liane. 2007. "The Honest Truth About Cheating. Interview with Donald McCabe." *NPR*, May 6. www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=10033373.

Howard, Rebecca Moore. 1993. "A Plagiarism *Pentimento*." *Journal of Teaching Writing* 11: 233–46.

Hutcheon, Linda. 1986. "Literary Borrowing . . . and Stealing: Plagiarism, Sources, Influences, and Intertexts." *English Studies in Canada* 12: 229–39.

Jones, Terrill Yue. 2006. "If This Were a Term Paper, You Might Have Seen It on the Web." *Los Angeles Times*, June 17. www.latimes.com.

Lathrop, Ann, and Kathleen Foss, eds. 2005. *Guiding Students from Cheating and Plagiarism to Honesty and Integrity: Strategies for Change*. Westport, CT: Libraries Unlimited.

Mahoney, Deirdre. 2002. "Strategies for Discouraging Plagiarism." In *Strategies for Teaching First-Year Composition*, 224–25. Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English.

McLeod, Susan H. 1992. "Responding to Plagiarism: The Role of the WPA." *WPA: Writing Program Administration* 15: 7–16.

Meltzer, Françoise. 1994. *Hot Property: The Stakes and Claims of Literary Originality*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Olvlzl. 2007. "Feet of Clay Words of Steel." Weblog entry. *Echidne of the Snakes*, May 12. http://echidneofthesnakes.blogspot.com.

Phillips, Jim. 2006. "OU Sends Warning Letters About Plagiarism to Former Students." *The Athens News* (July 17).

Posner, Richard A. 2007. *The Little Book of Plagiarism*. New York: Pantheon.

Robelen, Eric. 2007. "Online Anti-Plagiarism Service Sets off Court Fight." *Education Week* 4 May. www.edweek.org/ew/index.html.

Schmidt, Sarah. 2004. "Term Papers Axed to Obliterate Plagiarism." *Canada.com,* March 31. www.canada.com.

Schofield, Kevin. 2006. "Tackling Plagiarism 'Too Much Work' for Lecturers." *Scotsman.com*, June 22. http://news.scotsman.com/education.cfm?id=911552006.

2nd call for papers: SIGIR'07 workshop PAN. Discussion group entry. 2007. *comp.ai*, May 12. http://groups.google.com/group/comp.ai/browse_thread/thread/96edeea4cc79fa7c/bfa92d2f9e0319b6#bfa92d2f9e0319b6.

Silverman, Gillian. 2002. " 'It's a Bird, It's a Plane, It's Plagiarism Buster!' " *Newsweek* (July 15).

Simmons, Sue Carter. 1999. "Competing Notions of Authorship: A Historical Look at Students and Textbooks on Plagiarism and Cheating." In *Perspectives on Plagiarism and Intellectual Property in a Postmodern World*, 41–54. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Stewart, Susan. 1991. *Crimes of Writing: Problems in the Containment of Representation*. New York: Oxford University Press.

"Students, Faculty Are Divided Over Future of OU President." 2007. *Vindy.com,* May 13. www.vindy.com/content/national_world/340230591965792.php.

Web-Based Plagiarism Awareness Tutorial. n.d. Newman University. www.newmanu.edu/sss/writingcenter/Plagiarism/Plagiarism.html.

White, Edward M. 1999. "Student Plagiarism as an Institutional and Social Issue." In *Perspectives on Plagiarism and Intellectual Property in a Postmodern World*, 205–10. Albany: State University of New York Press.