Failure Pedagogies: Learning and Unlearning What It Means to Fail, edited by Allison D. Carr and Laura R. Micciche. Peter Lang, 2020. 275 pp.

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> [I]f we can teach students that failure is a process, is a fact, and is an opportunity for reflection, then maybe failure could be used as a powerful tool for teaching. (Carr and Micciche 59)

Failure of any kind in the educational setting can be a provoking incident for trauma or change that carries a level of risk that may halt or sideline forward momentum. When considering failure in the classroom, I see each loss as a type of risk. To fail—or attempt to succeed—is to take a risk, which is akin to bell hooks's assessment of risk in the classroom: "When we all take risks, we participate mutually in the work of creating a learning community. We discover together that we can be vulnerable in the space of shared learning, that we can take risks" (21). The safer the environment is for failure, the greater the potential is for growth. It is this desire for growth that underlies the purpose of Allison D. Carr and Laura R. Micciche's edited collection, *Failure Pedagogies: Learning and Unlearning What It Means to Fail.*

Failure Pedagogies provides critical narratives that examine failure in its many "sweaty concepts," as it is interpreted and internalized within the individual, in the classroom, and at the institutional level (Carr and Micciche 2). The book breaks down failure into three categories—embodied failures, palpable failures, and pushy failures—framed by interchapter essays "that foreground how commonplace, routine experiences within higher education accumulate to reveal systemic failures" (Carr and Micciche 4). Each section includes a collection of unique writings serving to illustrate not just examples of failure, but also the rhetorical creativity for identifying, analyzing, and processing failure experiences.

The first section, "Embodied Failures," includes six chapters, many of which attend to the failures students may encounter as they write and use language to articulate their lived experiences, and others of which attend to how instructors and institutions may hinder student growth. Growth is only possible through calculated risk-taking; however, if students and instructors alike are afraid of failing, the educational environment becomes ill-equipped for learning. The chapters in this section discuss specific fears in terms of novice writings, such as using clichés (Caddie Alford), getting caught plagiarizing (Kate Pantelides), and avoiding confusion in writing (Alba Newmann Holmes and Kara Wittman). Each of these chapters illustrates failure as it is embodied within the student and how it is articulated in their work; within the instructor and how it encourages distrust towards students and frustration with the institutions they teach in; and within the institutions themselves and how failure moti-

vates developing and enforcing standards of practice. Pantelides writes, "We fear that we will fail. This fear displaces the conversations we should have, about the importance of good research questions, about understanding critical conversations, about taking risks" (49). Through these articulated discussions, students, scholars, and instructors may find insight into having those critical conversations, encouraging risk-taking to translate failure into successful means of growth inside and beyond the classroom.

Next, "Palpable Failures" includes works that explore failure as a tangible experience as it shapes the trajectory of life and experiences. Many of the five chapters in this section touch on the intersections of race, gender, and socioeconomic status as they influence and are influenced by the institution of education and the failures it perpetuates. Educational institutions are wrought with politics that can stifle staff and students alike, but the degree of impact may be more profound on the individual who is already at a disadvantage, such as those who come from marginalized and/or low-income communities. These individuals need to have resilience to overcome not just the failures of their own making but the failures against them of the institutions that they are part of. The reader is invited to remove failure bias toward students as it only serves to hinder their ability to achieve success on their terms (Anne Dalke); be an advocate for students who suffer from the inequities and injustices tolerated within institutions (Shari J. Stenberg and Stacey Waite); and be willing to utilize non-normative, pedagogical approaches that "navigate" new pathways to student success (Gavin P. Johnson and Ryan Sheehan). The failures discussed in these chapters are palpable, as they're real and experienced in daily living.

The last section, "Pushy Failures," shifts the focus slightly from education-only rhetoric and includes writings that highlight the value failure has on social justice and discourse within the social realm. While all four chapters in this section speak to ways in which failure can be "pushy," or uncomfortable enough to ignite immediate action and change, two chapters specifically highlight failures from social advocating bodies as they contend with government and social issues. For example, Chapter 12, "Persevering Even When 'We Are Full of Mad': A Lesson in the Value of Incremental Progress," discusses the women's movement and its ongoing fight to secure equality. The failure of the movement, according to Julie Myatt, is that "they do not go far enough toward securing adequate representation and parity for women and others marginalized by white, heteronormative patriarchy" (178). It's a "pushy" failure to communicate efficiently, to have the right voice speaking the right words to the right audience. To counter this, Myatt argues that "we must … be willing to cross the aisle and partner with unlikely allies—we must acknowledge that we need all the help we can get" (188). This discussion examines how the movement needs to learn from its failures to stop the dance and, instead, gain ground on securing equality for women across the United States. In Chapter

15, "Narrativizing Dis/Ability: Deconstructing Institutional Uses of Disability Narratives," Adam Hubrig calls for "feralizing" disability narratives (233). Institutions have been using disability narratives at the expense of the people they are intended to help that end up stigmatizing and delegitimatizing their actual needs. To counter failure, sometimes quick decisive action is called for. Hubrig urges disability rights advocates and those in the disability communities to take action by "deploy[ing] feral narratives, narratives that institutions would be wary to reach out and touch because they bite back. Feral disability narratives might, as disability rights activists continue to do, narrativize and map the systematic failures of institutions to highlight institutional culpability" (233). The idea of "feralizing" or making something wild and untouchable, conjures the desire to take immediate action, to move forward and quickly towards success rather than hang back and strategize.

Failure is part of the process of growing and learning. Recognizing what it is and how it impacts us and our way of articulating our lived experiences is crucial for success. *Failure Pedagogies* gives students and educators that needed perspective to recognize that some failures aren't as obvious nor are they as detrimental as perceived. We can choose to embody our failures and let them derail us from our goals or embrace the failures of an institution that doesn't recognize our individuality or let others' hypocrisy define us. Or we can recognize the failures for what they are, who they belong to, and how they can shape our decisions and then use them to catapult ourselves in new, and potentially, better directions. *Failure Pedagogies* expands these narratives and gives voice to these opportunities for growth. It provides educators with practical considerations for building safe learning environments that allow for risk-taking, highlighting where biases may lie and providing insight on how to take failure and use it for success. While the writings in this book do well to emphasize how students and educators can succeed in light of failing, what it doesn't do is address how failure can be successful at the institutional level. One of the major driving forces behind perceived failure articulated throughout the writings in *Failure Pedagogies* is that institutions drive the standards that educators and students find themselves falling short of. There is no emphasis on how failure may be interpreted and used to change these standards, either from a negative or positive standpoint. It may be obvious that failure means enforcing more regulation on education but whether it is or not is not fully articulated here. Regardless, *Failure Pedagogies* is worthwhile for any educator or student to read, as it does well in iterating that not all failures are the same nor are they indicative of being a failure.

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Works Cited

hooks, bell. *Teaching Critical Thinking: Practical Wisdom*. Taylor and Francis, 2010.