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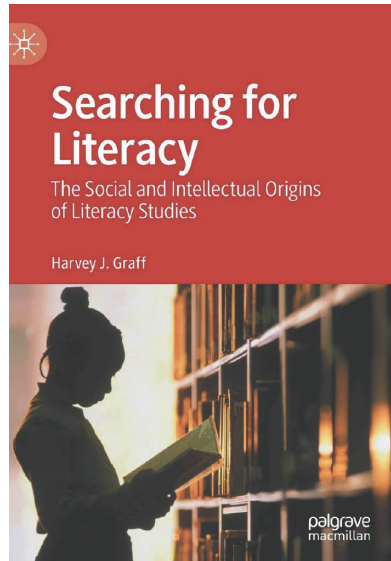
Searching for Literacy: The Social and Intellectual Origins of Literacy Studies

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“**W**hat is literacy studies? Where does it fit when we consider the cartography of academic disciplines? Does it develop out of sociolinguistics?” This is the broad shape of a few questions I heard during a seminar a few years ago. The graduate students who asked were keen to locate their discipline and their intellectual work. An eminent literacy studies scholar in the room replied sternly and tautologically that “literacy studies is literacy studies”—as opposed to reminding them of the field’s rich interdisciplinary background. Yet, the students’ questions are important exactly because of the field’s interdisciplinarity. The broadness of literacy studies can lead to significantly different notions of the discipline’s basic object and history. How do historians of literacy converse with elementary-level phonics teachers? In what departments do they work and do these departments cross-list their courses? Should they? Moreover, the more recent popularization of the concept ‘literacies’ has meant that it is not always clear what is being referred to by literacy or its pluralization. One of the central messages of Harvey Graff’s new book *Searching for Literacy* is to go “back to basics” (3). These ‘basics’ he refers to and rethinks will probably be most familiar to researchers trained in New Literacy Studies (NLS) and ‘literacy as a social practice’ lineages—i.e., a conjoining of socio-culturally oriented interdisciplinary work on literacy in society that emerged through groundwork in the 1960s and 1970s, before becoming theoretically schematized in the 1980s. Alongside input from linguistics, anthropology, and psychology, Graff’s work in history from the 1970s onwards was foundational to NLS. Graff apparently does not favor this ‘new’ moniker, yet central to the purposes of his book is an effort to “renew” approaches to literacy studies most closely associated with this research intersection (172). *Searching for Literacy* is an important and unique book, offering by far the most encompassing “Social and Intellectual Origins of Literacy Studies” both within this said purview and beyond it. The book is also much more forthrightly critical than previous disciplinary histories, with most of the founding scholars in the field receiving significant and at times abrasive critique. Numerous



new frameworks are proposed that will prove useful for researchers. In short, this is a book that should be read by anyone with a stake in literacy studies research or an interest in literacy.

Chapter one introduces three points which underpin the book: literacy now, interdisciplinarity, and historicizing literacy studies. Graff begins by highlighting peculiar combinations of importance and ambiguity that notions of literacy have long retained in the “popular and political imagination” (3). What is literacy exactly, what is it for, and for whom? From social and critical theory to mainstream and corporate settings, expanding uses of this term ‘literacies’ is problematized likewise. Originally meant to situate varieties of literacy against acontextual and ahistorical understandings, Graff argues the term has lost theoretical and political meaning. Conceptual differences between multiple literacies and multiliteracies are addressed in the book, but these tend to be conflated in Graff’s general criticisms of ‘literacies.’ Counter to increasingly metaphorical references to ‘literacy’ and ‘literacies,’ Graff stresses that “definitions of literacy must be anchored in reading and writing across languages, symbol or sign systems, media, and domains of communication” (5). Renewed programmatic definitions of literacy based on this and related premises are forwarded throughout the book (5, 24). Epistemologically central here is an increased emphasis on *relationships* (e.g., semiotic, practical, historical)—differently, for example, to entrenched dichotomies (oral versus literate, illiterate versus literate, etc.), and to tententially focusing on one mode over another (e.g., writing over reading). To what extent are speaking, reading, and writing researched in their relationships to each other? Graff suggests not as fully as they should be. Besides being a literacy studies scholar, Graff is an interdisciplinary scholar, offering theorizations on relationships across research fields. In chapter one he scales interdisciplinarity, from “disciplinary clusters (humanities, arts, social sciences, etc.)” to “dynamic interplay—critical and complementary—between disciplines (linguistics, anthropology, psychology, etc.)” (20). Further levels could be added here, but this viewpoint offers a useful relational and historicizing perspective. Whilst NLS is one example of an interdisciplinary research area, which Graff’s historical work focuses upon, he argues neither NLS nor literacy studies have drawn sufficiently on theory and practice from history. Historical approaches forwarded through *Searching for Literacy* provide a corrective, “with more attention to a longer chronological span of intellectual and socio-cultural development” (15), where literacy is approached through a “multi-focal historical lens. . . mov[ing] between the wide angle and the close focus, the larger and the local” (15). Graff outlines key historical periods and processes in chapter one then expands in this same vein in subsequent chapters, namely chapter seven.

Chapters two through four focus on the main disciplines that have informed literacy studies according to Graff: linguistics, anthropology, and psychology. Although each chapter retains its respective disciplinary focus, significant interdisciplinary crossover in these chapters is noteworthy—where, for instance, linguistics necessitates discussion of anthropology, psychology, and history.

Chapter two focuses on linguistics and relationships between orality and writing through that discipline, which have informed literacy studies. Graff’s criticism

focuses on two main areas: first, insufficient theoretical and historical attention on the complexity of relationships between modes; second, long standing ideological dichotomies and their impacts. Graff summarizes these two interconnecting points as a “conundrum” (29). That is, where “the word . . . has long been said and written in different traditions and forms. But our knowledge of this—after the fact—necessarily comes through writing . . . [as well as] through centuries of translation and conflicting interpretations” (29). Graff affirms this set of relationships needs to be explored. However, he adds, “in the place of those relationships, we have a long legacy of formulaic divides surrounding [e.g.] ‘from oral to written or literate’ that also presume . . . an evolutionary trajectory” (29). Here readers are reminded of the primitive versus civilized binary consolidated through colonial-modernity, how this became framed later as a literate versus nonliterate binary, and how in turn educational-political institutions posited literacy’s role in abstract-analytical thinking as a causal factor explaining ‘developed’ versus ‘under-developed’ economies and societies. Graff is rehearsing well-established criticisms in literacy studies here. However, he is arguing how these issues remain far from resolved, how they require attention in recontextualized and translated forms, and how doing so would connect contemporary concerns back to their social and intellectual foundations, and ground literacy studies disciplinarily.

One of Graff’s corrective orientations is towards studies of orality. He argues most literacy studies have failed “to take orality seriously” (33), and even sociolinguists who do so, do not sufficiently emphasize “the dynamic and dialectical interactions between and among speech and writing (and other modes of literacy)” (33). These links Graff argues are fundamentally important for understanding the meaning and uses of literacy. It is interesting that he turns back to Ruth Finnegan—not regularly cited contemporarily in literacy studies, but an early pioneer of critical and expansive understandings of multimodality. Graff cites, but does not discuss directly, the more commonly referenced work on multimodality by Gunther Kress and colleagues. Finnegan is a classicist as well as an anthropologist, who specializes in oral literature amongst other areas. In this lineage Graff also draws attention to the seminal work of Milman Parry and Albert Lord and the oral foundations of Homer’s *Odyssey*. These are rich sources for researchers to draw inspiration from—with examples that add complexity to notions of orality and literacy, and of composition, performance, and cultural transmission. More familiarly, Graff suggests that literacy researchers should look back more closely at Shirley Brice Heath’s ethnographic research—e.g., beyond her conception of literacy events. He highlights an infrequently cited quote emphasizing orality, wherein Heath states: “examination of the contexts and uses of literacy in communities today may show that THERE ARE MORE LITERACY EVENTS WHICH CALL FOR APPROPRIATE KNOWLEDGE OF FORMS AND USES OF SPEECH EVENTS THAN THERE ARE ACTUALLY OCCASIONS FOR EXTENDED READING OR WRITING” (94, capitalization in the original). In the trajectory from Dell Hymes’ and his colleagues’ work on the ethnography of communication into the ethnography of literacy, Graff argues orality gets “all but lost” (54). Heath’s work is held up as an exception.

Graff's focus in chapter three concerns anthropology and the anthropological turn in literacy studies, which is closely associated with the NLS. If this was a "turn" in literacy studies, Graff argues it was a "return" for anthropology. That is, although anthropologists such as Jack Goody, Brian Street, Shirley Brice Heath, and others framed anthropological approaches to literacy for late twentieth century researchers onwards, Graff reminds readers that understandings of literacy were central in founding anthropology as a discipline—from early modern distinctions between so-called primitive and civilized thought to much older archaeological-anthropological cross-cultural comparisons of writing systems and social systems. In short, Graff affirms in chapter three that while the influence of ethnographic approaches on literacy studies has been extensive, the broader disciplinary influence of anthropology has been insufficient. Through critically reengaging anthropology, and through rethought ethnographies of literacy that are more anthropologically ethnographic, literacy studies would consolidate and develop empirically and theoretically, according to Graff. As throughout the book, central to Graff's criticisms here are modernist and structuralist legacies of dichotomous thinking which remain prominent in literacy studies, where literacy remains, Graff claims, "a determinant of differences" (71). He apportions blame not only to Jack Goody and other "great divide theorists," who receive renewed criticism, but also to NLS researchers, particularly via influences of linguistics in anthropological and ethnographic literacy studies. The social anthropologist, Brian Street, Graff argues, is more interested in linguistics than sociology, economics, or history, for example. Graff does not mention both Goody and Street were English literature students prior to anthropology, which accounts for their continued interest in language. The suggestion is such ethnographic work on literacy would benefit from more emphasis on "complex human relationships" (74), and increased sophistication concerning "relationships" between literacy in theory and practice (72). Graff criticizes Street for his influential NLS distinction between "autonomous" and "ideological" models of literacy—i.e., another example of a binary division (albeit a didactic one) that drew attention away from how all models of literacy are ideological. For Graff, such foundational problems in the NLS reverberate through subsequent work. So, for instance, the premise of Deborah Brandt and Katie Clinton's well-known 'limits of the local' critique of Street and others' social practice perspective, itself falls into another false dichotomy. While acknowledging the age of the work, Barton and Hamilton's similarly influential "situated literacies" framework also receives criticism. Graff asks here "is it enough simply to say that literacy is 'situated' and that studies of literacy must be 'situated in context' without making more specific statements of a conceptual, comparative, and critical nature?" (94). Though scholars in this lineage might take issue that this suggestion is not already central to their thinking, Graff offers specific critique on each of Barton and Hamilton's axioms which will be useful for researchers drawing on this framework. In sum, while Graff's criticism is often harsh in this chapter, his motive is to move this work forward.

The problem is conceptual and, even more fundamentally, epistemological.
The crux of conceptualization pivots on the relational—dynamic, dialecti-

cal, mutually reshaping, plural—oral *and* literate, texts *and* contexts, local *and* ‘other’ dimensions and origins . . . A renewed interest in the anthropology [and] ethnographies of literacy could focus more or less simultaneously on practices of reading and writing across media and on modes of understanding and communication across cultures, places, times, and other lines of differentiation and aim to develop theories of literacy based on those patterns of similarities and difference. Literacy—reading and writing as activities, not static attainments—would be conceptualized and studied as both theory and practice, in a dynamic relationship to each other. Such research would be parallel or at least systematically constructed, designed with collaboration and comparison in mind. (87–91)

In chapter four Graff addresses psychology. In one direction, he critiques cognitive psychologist David Olson’s understanding of the “consequences of literacy” (building on Eric A. Havelock, Jack Goody, and others) (107–110). In another direction, Graff recalls attention to the cultural psychology of Sylvia Scribner, Michael Cole, and Barbara Rogoff as a way forward. Chapter four is extremely useful for researchers as a framework of discussion points and questions, which are practically applicable in a similar fashion to Barton and Hamilton’s framework of literacy as social practice. Graff forwards these under the heading of “A Cultural and Social Psychology of Literacy” (123–127). Chapter four begins by historicizing psychology in philosophy, theology, and politics. This offers a counterpoint to popular, often ahistorical, representations of psychology in education as ‘cutting edge’ science (neuropsychology, etc.). Graff makes the trenchant observation that commonplace cognitivist versus culturalist debates will never be fully resolved, because “too many strong assumptions interfere with observations on subjects that typically are hard to study and harder to assess” (108). This is important for humanities and social science researchers working on literacy to remember in an increasingly high-tech world.

Chapter four continues with extensive criticisms of Olson’s theories on “the impact of reading and writing—as a ‘technology of the intellect’—on the mind or the brain” (107). This is a renewal of long-standing critique made by Graff, Finnegan, Street, and NLS scholars, amongst others. However, there is more depth and stronger criticism herein, alongside contemporary contextualization of these debates. “Have humans evolved from an oral to a literate and now to a digital mind? Is that a good or a bad thing? Of none of this is there direct or persuasive evidence” (109) affirms Graff, after fifty years of historical research on the topic. The basic idea of Olson and his colleagues’ evolutionary theory of literacy and mind suggests that “the invention of the Greek alphabet and/or Western writing systems more generally led to changes in the human brain” (108). From there, a more complex argument is forwarded about how, put simply, meta-linguistic awareness resulted from literacy, and meta-cognitive awareness resulted in turn. This is, then, for them, a linear West-leading path, towards the abstract thinking, scientific advances, and social systemization of the modern world. Literacy is the building block. But all of this is deeply ahistorical for Graff, who asks, for example, “how do they know that preliterate or nonliterate people were incapable of reflecting on their own thought processes?” (110). In Ol-

son's book *The World on Paper: The Conceptual and Cognitive Implications of Writing and Reading*, Graff points out that such basic historical questioning of "what world?" or "whose world?" is never really considered (Graff 113). Despite Olson's explanations of the development of Western "written culture," and a contemporary "literacy episteme," this research never accepts the argument that "practice is shaped, not by literacy by or in itself, but rather by institutions and the uses of literacy" (117). In response, Graff draws our attention back to Paulo Freire, Lev Vygotsky, cultural psychology, and other approaches that emphasize complex dialectical relationships. The cultural psychologist Barbara Rogoff summarizes this well where she lists: i) "literacy is an excellent example of the levels of relationship between the cognitive skills of the individual, the cultural technologies employed, and the societal institutions in which skill with technologies is practiced and developed," ii) ". . . variations in the purposes and practices of literacy appear to be closely related to the skills that individuals using a technology gain from its use," and iii) ". . . such variations are embedded in societal arrangements of human activities [which also change]" (Rogoff 54–55).

Chapter five covers literature and composition, but emphasizes reading. This emphasis is corrective. Graff argues literacy research has been disproportionately focused upon writing. Moreover, whether studying writing, or reading, or both, he claims there has not been sufficient focus on how these interrelate. Graff goes as far as to say that "the future of literacy studies, and of literacy, lies in the reconnection of reading and writing and their movement together" (152). Two of the book's programmatic points are forwarded in conjunction here, with Graff affirming "reading is the missing link in understanding, teaching, and practicing writing... [as] orality is the missing link in understanding literacy" (145). He suggests there has been a kind of writing fallacy in literacy studies, based on ideological models and practical ease. Together these lead to assumed understandings of reading which are incomplete. Graff reminds readers that "we know about and study reading through written records. In other words, writing provides the evidence of reading. That allows us to study what people read, but not how they did so and with what impact or influence" (146). Both this what and how are complex and at times contradictory. Graff discusses literary and historical work on, for example, the African American diaspora and English working classes, where writing and reading are central to processes of "social control *and* self-expression *and* self-determination" (149). Notice here the 'and' rather than 'versus.' Differently, Deborah Brandt's work on literacy and 'the rise of writing' in the U.S. is criticized by Graff for reinforcing unhelpful binaries. Brandt argues, for example, that there was a shift from an "eighteenth- and nineteenth-century era of 'mass reading literacy,' sponsored by church and state, [to] a more recent era of the ascendancy of 'mass writing literacy'" (151). It is this kind of explanation of literacy in history that Graff flags and interrogates throughout the book, where a non-dichotomous view and broader range of literatures and social histories would undo Brandt's too convenient distinction. Graff suggests a broader and more relational view helps us to contextualize, for instance, how commonplace rhetoric on the existence of a 'literacy crisis' and 'new' literacies associated with digital media have antecedents that go back centuries. He summarizes here that "a renewed understand-

ing and appreciation of reading must move between typical studies of the availability of print or other reading material and ideologies in support of certain kinds of reading and censure of others, on the one hand, and actual practices, valuations, and influences of reading, on the other” (155).

Citing literary theorist John Guillory, Graff forwards two important concepts for reading in literacy studies—*translation* and *misreading*. The former concerns “the capacity of a reader to re-understand the world of a text by translating these words into a new frame of reference or intelligibility” (Guillory 9). The latter concerns how this “. . . process of interpretive reading is self-corrective and implies the necessity or inevitability or misreading or misinterpretation” (Guillory 9). Graff argues this kind of misreading is a key to reading development from school into university. Another conceptual framework forwarded in chapter five concerns “written culture” (a term used by Goody and Olson). Graff redefines three interlinking categories: deconstructing, re-conceptualizing, and reconstructing written culture (173–174).

This approach means seeing written culture as historical and contradictory; as dynamic and developmental; as founded in reading and writing broadly construed; as constituted and conducted as oral and written; as collective and individual; as variable and based in both continuities and changes; and as constituted by contradictions and resistance, and conflicting structures of authority. (174)

Chapter six is titled “Many Literacies, Other Visions” and is the core of Graff’s criticism. Yet, for me, it could have offered more clarity, especially from a disciplinary and theoretical perspective. The main problem it addresses has been discussed for over thirty years. That is, where the pluralized term ‘literacies’ becomes so broad it loses theoretical and political coherence. To understand how this occurred, a critical review of the differing uses and histories of the term seems fundamental, as occurs with other key terms in the book. Although Graff alludes to theoretical differences between multiple literacies, multiliteracies, literacy as metaphor, as analogy, and other related versions, he never really defines, differentiates, and historicizes these lineages. Consequently, when he talks about ‘many literacies’ in different ways, it is not always clear what he is referring to. To mention just one example, some work under the name ‘health literacies’ is based on theoretical approaches that emphasize reading and writing across modes and media. Elsewhere, references to ‘health literacies’ are found that have nothing to do with literacy or literacy practices at all—but Graff’s critiques on such ‘literacies’ here in chapter seven, as elsewhere in the book, often seem to be conflated. It is helpful for researchers to understand the history of the concept of multiple literacies, for instance, in its development through, for example, the anthropology and sociolinguistics of language varieties, into literacy studies, and how this interacted with educational policy and identity politics from the mid-twentieth century onward. ‘Multiple literacies’ retention of fundamental notions of reading and writing in their relationships with other modes and practices involves significant differences to certain multiliteracies and multimodalities research. Recently, for example, one founding multimodality theorist suggested the NLS might be renamed New

Communications Studies (NCS)—that is, eradicating an assumed redundancy for the term literacy. Similar arguments have been made via recent work in the field of graphic pluralism. These approaches seem in conflict with Graff’s mission of historicizing complex, relational, and recontextualized understandings of literacy and literacy studies.

Besides these criticisms, chapter six includes much useful material and important criticisms of the commercial appropriation of ‘literacies.’ Graff emphasizes the need for more historical and especially critical-theoretical work on digital literacies in literacy studies. To do so he suggests engaging more extensively with ‘critical studies of digital media in cultural studies, media and journalism studies, and political economy’ (197). From literacy studies, he highlights how ‘great divide theories’ and ‘literacy myths’ have been recontextualized through contemporary discourses on digital technologies. However, the main contribution of chapter six concerns another proposed framework, this time aimed at developing more cohesive comparative research on ‘literacies’ in literacy studies.

One way of beginning . . . lies in identifying a small number of major forms of literacy that extend beyond traditional alphabetic literacy and may include some digital forms . . . In calling for their recognition, I argue for sustained study and exploration of their relationships to other forms of literacy. Herein lies the foundation for new, cross- and intermedial and modal forms of reading and writing, literally, metaphorically, and analogically. (202)

These five areas identified and defined in chapter six are visual, numerical, scientific, performance, and dance-movement literacies (203–215).

Next, in chapter seven Graff discusses history and he offers the caveat that all issues in the book have a “historical foundation: materially, epistemologically, and discursively” (227). As a rare academic that is both a historian and interdisciplinary scholar of literacy studies, Graff’s advocacy of history for non-historians is important. History is a given in socio-cultural studies of literacy (e.g., via historical framings of ‘context’ relating to places, practices, and people). But this often seems intuitively done, rather than grounded in theory or literature on history. How many literacy researchers would be able to articulate methods, approaches, or concepts from the field of history? Many could do so via linguistics, anthropology, psychology, and education, among other areas. But why less so, I suspect, for history? Even in well-established research approaches such as Barton and Hamilton’s literacy as social practice framework, Graff argues it is the historical component which is by far the least theorized. *Searching for Literacy* and especially chapter seven offer a wealth of material for development in this respect. “The history of literacy matters” begins Graff, but too often “dichotomies have substituted for relationships, assumptions for evidence and arguments” (227). In both direct and disguised ways, “literacy is linked to perceptions and expectations of change, when its experience is certainly as much associated with continuities” (227). The concept that Graff defines in most detail in chapter seven is “myth” (229–234). This is the foundation of his long-standing work on the “literacy myth . . . [i.e.] the belief, articulated in educational, civic, religious,

and other settings, contemporary and historical, that the acquisition of literacy is a necessary precursor to and invariably results in economic development, democratic practice, cognitive enhancement, and upward social mobility” (229). His response to this ideology, deeply embedded within Western modernity, is that “only by grounding definitions of literacy in specific, contextualized, and historical particulars can we avoid conferring on literacy the status of myth” (230). In chapter seven, Graff gives an overview of the development of literacy in historical studies and more specific historical studies of literacy. Alongside ‘relationships’ another key word repeated here is ‘complexity’ in history, and how this can emerge through an awareness of historicity, whereby the “conceptualization, assumptions, and expectations we bring to considerations of reading and writing are revised radically when literacy is revisioned historically” (237), and in turn where “historical analysis and interpretation often have great power in stimulating fresh views, novel questions, and new understandings” (229). So, for instance, whilst multiple literacies, multilingualism, and visuality are frequently associated with twentieth and twenty-first century developments, Graff points to work on literacy in the middle-ages and renaissance that has much to teach us about these lineages. Graff offers an overview of work in historical literacy studies and explores a wide range of phenomena that sets up comparative frameworks with contemporary issues, from literacy’s “relations with class, gender, age, and culture. . . [to] economic development, social order, mobility and stratification, education and schooling” (255). Graff asserts that “recognizing the history of literacy and its relevance to non-historians is at once a first step and a paradigmatic one” (260). He is correct. History in literacy studies can be approached in many ways, as this book illustrates, but whichever way, more significant engagement with history is fundamental.

Searching for Literacy is divided into two parts. Part one, chapters one through seven, end with an epilogue that brings together the main arguments of the book into a five-point pathway for a “revised, renewed literacy studies” (271)—one that is critical, comparative, and historical. These five pathways are headed as follows: i) Literacy and literacies are relational and dialectic; ii) Historical awareness is fundamental, iii) Context gives meaning to literacy and creates the ground for its study and practice, iv) Translation is inseparably intertwined with matters of literacy, v) Negotiation provides an especially human approach to the study and practice of literacy and literacies.

Pathways one through three will sound familiar to socio-culturally oriented literacy researchers, but Graff has suggested throughout the book that going back to basics as previously described is necessary. The foci of points four through five are the two interrelated concepts of ‘translation’ and ‘negotiation’ that Graff advocates for in chapter six. Translation is a historically and interdisciplinarily sensitive term which Graff argues “promotes learning from [a] wide range of theories,” bringing together like terms, and reducing the need for neologisms (-trans-, -inter-, etc.) (273). Graff builds on Elizabeth Birr Moje and her colleagues’ terminological development from ‘hybridity’ to ‘navigation’, but Graff argues that “the concept, theory, practice, metaphor, and notion of negotiation [are] more fitting, flexible, relational, and deeply

human than notions of navigation or hybridity” (273). Translation and negotiation interlink as a research lens.

Following the epilogue, three short texts are appended as part two, chapters nine through eleven. Chapter nine summarizes and adds detail to ground covered in part one, concerning the development of the NLS in the 1970s, and what Graff considers the problematic proliferation of ‘literacies’ and resurgent ‘literacy myths’ evident contemporarily. Chapter eleven critiques in more detail ‘financial literacy,’ discussing a marketing campaign in the U.S. named FL4ALL “devoted to corporate profit-making” (293). Chapter ten is more innovative, addressing an issue of the utmost importance, and one both popular and scholarly audiences are seeking to understand. Graff discusses here what he terms “an unprecedented ‘new illiteracy,’ . . . [where] historical continuities are shattered by, first, the call to ban books in innumerable circumstances; second, the banning of written literature without taking the expected step of reading it; and, third, calls for not only banning but also burning books” (287). Together, he claims these constitute a kind of “a movement for illiteracy not a recognizable campaign for approved or selective uses of reading and writing” (287–288). Historical precedents of such bans and burnings stretch back from the 1960s U.S. civil rights movements to the sixteenth century reformation (to name just two). Graff notes a significant difference, however, where in these previous examples, actors “prided themselves on their direct familiarity with the explicit contents of that which they wished to ban (or even burn). They used their literacy in their brazen efforts to control the uses of others’ literacy. Today’s banners and burners, by contrast, are the new illiterates, achieving a rare historical distinction” (290). If there was ever a research topic that would benefit from the sophisticated approach to literacy studies that Graff lays out in *Searching for Literacy*, this seems it.

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