STYLE, IDEOLOGY, AND DOUBLE-CONSCIOUSNESS: TEACHING WRITING TO 'OTHER PEOPLE'S CHILDREN' A REVIEW ESSAY

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Flannery, Kathryn T. *The Emperor's New Clothes: Literature, Literacy, and the Ideology of Style*. Pittsburgh Series in Composition, Literacy, and Culture. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh, 1995. 240 pp.
Delpit, Lisa. *Other People's Children: Cultural Conflict in the Classroom*. New York: New Press, 1995. 206 pp.
Cope, Bill, and Mary Kalantzis, eds. *The Powers of Literacy: A Genre Approach to Teaching Writing*. Pittsburgh Series in Composition, Literacy, and Culture. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh, 1993. 286 pp.

Language Education, therefore, must pay special attention to the ends of language use, in the firm conviction that the means will largely take care of themselves.

—John Mayher

It is the oppressor's language, but it is all I have to talk to you.

—bell hooks

In the opening essay to *Other People's Children,* Lisa Delpit questions the progressive philosophy of the graduate education she had completed. What she needed to understand, she tells us, is why teaching language "holistically," using a "process" approach to writing that focused on improving "fluency," and having students work independently in an "open" classroom had such differential effects on her white and black students:

> My white students zoomed ahead. They worked hard at the learning stations. They did amazing things with books and writing. My black students played the games; they learned how to weave; and they threw books around the learning stations. They practiced karate moves on the new carpets. Some of them even learned how to read, but none of them as quickly as my white students. I was doing the same thing for all my kids. What was the problem? (13.)

The problem raised by Delpit forms the heart of this essay. Since the 1960s, progressive theory and practice in the teaching of writing have established their dominance at all levels of education, not only in the United States but throughout much of the English-speaking world. In many ways the legacy of the 1968 Dartmouth Conference in the United States and the 1975 Bullock Report in the United Kingdom, what John Willinsky terms "the new literacy," has transformed the way we conceptualize work in the classroom, relationships among students and teachers, and relationships between students and their texts. Simply put, the new literacy has produced a model of classroom life that is student-centered, student-directed, and activity-oriented, that values process over product, practice over lecture, inquiry over information-giving, learning over testing—and above all, meaning over form.

And yet, as Delpit's words suggest, something has gone seriously wrong in this project. The very groups of students intended to benefit the most from these practices have not responded to them. How could this be? If these authors are correct, the causes of this predicament lie buried in the nature of the success of progressive reforms. Despite the insistence that the dichotomy between form and content is resolved in the authenticity of the writer's voice, the language theories from which these reforms emerged have, in fact, maintained their polarization. Historically, this polarization has been institutionalized in the dichotomizing of literature and literacy within and between academic departments and in the succession of education and language reform movements. Rather than resolving the dichotomy, this notion of authentic voice embedded in progressive pedagogies has simply reversed the poles in the latest cycle of a continuing debate.

Each of these three books, Delpit's *Other People's Children: Cultural Conflict in the Classroom,* Bill Cope and Mary Kalantzis's collection *The Powers of Literacy: A Genre Approach to Teaching Writing,* and Kathryn T. Flannery's *The Emperor's New Clothes: Literature, Literacy, and the Ideology of Style,* seeks to address the goals still unreached by contemporary, progressive pedagogies. While each of the three volumes focuses on a slightly different aspect of language pedagogy, each attempts to analyze the failures in terms of the social uses of various kinds of literacies: in Delpit's case, the (language) codes of power; in Cope and Kalantzis's offering, the most highly valued genres; and in Flannery's case, the literacies of style in literature.

Codes, Genres, and the Plain Style

Simply put, the problem that Delpit confronted is that the notion of authentic voice embedded in progressive pedagogies obscures not merely the ways in which various social groups encode linguistic forms differently, but more importantly, the effects of those differences on the meanings produced in those codes. A heterogeneous society creates multiple modes of discourse. There exists, then, more than one kind of authentic voice—and more than one kind of meaning. Social groups differ in the ways that they produce, understand, and value modes of discourse. For instance, they attach different meanings to those conventions that distinguish writing from speaking—such as in the way that each relates language forms to situational context. Differences in race and class can affect what counts as a "good" story or what counts as a "demand" vs. a "request;" they can affect whether elaboration or concision is more valued in the "same" situation (Heath).

Moreover, the notion of authentic voice obscures sociopolitical differences among codes. Some "voices"—namely those used by members of dominant cultural groups—are more powerful than others. Schools, however, equate language competence with ability to employ what Delpit terms "codes of power." Thus, those children who have been immersed in dominant codes (because they belong to the dominant culture) come to school already equipped to interpret and produce those codes; those from nondominant groups are not so equipped. To

ensure that all students have access to the dominant codes, Delpit calls for forms of explicit, direct instruction on "'skills' *within the context* [emphasis in original] of critical and creative thinking."

The connections among "codes," "cultures," and "power," in their relation to literacy, are central to developing an effective pedagogy that will provide all students with the discursive resources needed to survive in industrial society but without alienating nonmajority children from their "home" discourses. Delpit goes on to characterize "codes" in a way that deliberately blurs distinctions between conventions of language and nonlinguistic conventions:

> The codes or rules I'm speaking of relate to linguistic forms, communicative strategies, and presentation of self; that is ways of talking, ways of writing, ways of dressing, and ways of interacting. (25)

Most important within this framework are two fundamentally different orientations to text—whether spoken or written. Borrowing from Ong, Olson, and Goody and Watt, Delpit (91-104) argues that members of nondominant cultures, especially African-Americans, are socialized within "oral" codes, whereas members of dominant cultures are socialized within "literate" codes, what David Olson has characterized as "essayist literacy" (Olson). As Olson describes it, the contrast "can best be described as one of increasing explicitness, with language increasingly able to stand as an unambiguous or autonomous representation of meaning" (258). That is, as one moves from what he calls "utterance" to "text," the formal features of the language become more explicit; this formal explicitness functions to produce a fully explicit meaning.

The distinction involves much more than following the conventions of "Standard Written English," however. "Oral" codes rely chiefly on narrative forms—conversations, storytelling, verse—to produce meaning; literate codes rely on analytic forms—statements, arguments, essays. Oral codes summarize meanings as proverbs and aphorisms; literate codes, as premises and conclusions. Oral codes derive correct

meanings through "oral tradition—" they are memorized from generation to generation; literate codes derive correct interpretations "intertextually," through a literate tradition. Oral codes rely on shared intentions and experience to produce shared understandings; literate codes rely on the formal properties of sentences and the rules of logic to produce correct conclusions. Oral codes characterize truth in terms of wisdom or values; literate codes, in terms of the correspondence between statements and observations. Oral codes are oriented toward the persuasive and interpersonal functions of language; literate codes, toward the ideational.

Olson claims that this distinction marks a developmental, even an evolutionary, trend: "My argument is that there is a transition from utterance to text both culturally and developmentally" (258). Thus the development of essayist literacy is an unqualified "good," both because of its cultural inevitability and because of the way it enables individuals to transform experience. The decontextualized nature of literate forms of education enables learners to develop into independent thinkers, while oral forms of education, because of their reliance on context, foster dependency. Literate forms of education are, therefore, empowering; they "authorize" learners to produce new knowledge.

A great deal of scholarly literature has rejected essayist literacy as an empirical reality. But, as Olson himself acknowledged, "Whether or not all meaning can be made explicit in the text is perhaps less critical than the belief that it can" (277). "Essayist literacy" describes an orientation towards—a way of valuing—language use as much as, if not more than, it describes features of language. And, it is a belief to which schools and other institutions of the dominant culture subscribe. They treat all language as if it were "text." It is in this sense that "essayist literacy" constitutes what Delpit terms a "code of power." It is the code through which the work of the dominant cultural groups gets done. It is not too much to claim that it is the code that authorizes one to get a hearing. "To be successful in the white man's world"(as one parent reported to Delpit), students from nonmajority cultures *must* learn this code (29).

Delpit's use of the notion of essayist literacy rejects the developmental premises in Olson's work, however. Rather, difference and conflict are the key elements of this view. Oral and literate codes are fundamentally at odds with each other in their formal features, social functions, and their uses. They are two conflicting ways of making sense of the world. Further, the nature of the conflict is profoundly political. Use of literate codes does not mark a higher stage of intellect or culture; yet oral and literate codes do not coexist with each other on equal terms. Rather, their intersection marks the terms on which dominant and dominated groups can relate to each other. We may celebrate language diversity; but the party is fraught with conflict.

This conflict can create real turmoil in nonmajority students who are explicitly taught to use dominant codes. During the years Delpit spent at the University of Alaska, Native Alaskan teachers and parents repeatedly worried that the public schools were "making our children into robots" (101). Teaching native students an "essayist" orientation also taught them to distrust themselves and their own cultures. However, such teaching need not reproduce a system in which nonmajority students must deny the identities embedded in their oral codes in order to survive in the dominant culture. To the contrary, developing the ability to "code-switch" can be a tool for resistance to and transformation of the dominant culture.

This argument turns on its head the usual contrast between oral and literate codes as a distinction between "context dependence" and "context independence." Literate codes actually foster a different kind of dependency—a kind of formal dependency, if you will, on the veracity of the written word, indeed dependency on "form" generally. To the extent, in essayist literacy, that form is content, the formal properties of texts function (or are deemed to function) like behavioral "cues." They are intended to elicit the same response from readers every time a writer produces them. For that reason, "traditional" teachers insist on canonical uses of words and on arbitrary distinctions in usage; it is even why they insist on adherence to arbitrary rules of formatting (e.g., "Put your name in the top left hand corner of your paper."). More generally, that is the function of such school rituals as rigidly timed

classes and activities—to "discipline" students, as learners, "to be dependent on external sources for direction, for truth, for meaning. It trains children to seek meaning solely from the text and to seek truth outside their own good sense" (Delpit 101-102). Decontextualized forms of learning foster depersonalized forms of knowing and of social relations. In literate cultures, one trusts "the tale, not the teller."

In oral communities, such as the Native Alaskan, these concepts are alien, even threatening. One trusts the teller, not the tale. Oral codes encourage trust in one's own experience and of others in one's community over the written word. Yet, it would be wrong to conclude from this fact that oral communities cannot think abstractly. They *value* abstraction less than they do their own perceptions and those of their peers. From a political perspective, such a choice makes a good deal of sense. To the extent that literate knowledge is that which has been authorized as such by the dominant culture, literate knowledge often functions as "official" knowledge. One of the criticisms of E.D. Hirsch's *Dictionary of Cultural Literacy*, for instance, is precisely that its contents produce and reproduce "official" knowledge. Oral forms—stories and the like—enable members of the nondominant culture to resist that authority. Thus Delpit insists that the value of oral codes must be maintained in classrooms. Like literacy, orality is also not simply a "good" in and of itself. Its value is its ability to challenge the hegemony of official knowledge.

Delpit goes on to argue that essayist literacy can also function in the same way for nonmajority peoples. Dominant cultures do not "own" essayist literacy; they merely hold on to it as if they do. It can, however, be turned around.

> Individuals have the ability to transform dominant discourses for "liberatory" purposes—to engage in what Henry Louis Gates calls "changing the joke and slipping the yoke"; that is, using European philosophical and critical standards to challenge the tenets of European belief systems. (162)

Instead of essayist literacy transforming or destroying individuals from minority groups, those individuals can use it to transform social conditions.

The notion of voice implicit in Delpit's work, then, is that of an inherent tension between oral and literate orientations towards making sense of the world. This tension is textualized in the ways we organize our linguistic resources when producing or interpreting texts. Though students from nonmajority backgrounds are more likely to have grown up learning an oral orientation as their first, or home discourse, these students can learn the dominant discourses if taught them explicitly. Moreover, these students need not reject their home discourses but can use them as resources to resist the power of dominant discourses. Indeed, the conventions of the dominant discourses themselves can be used as strategies of resistance.

Utterance, Text, and Genre

Like Delpit's notion of code, the notion of genre developed in the collection edited by Cope and Kalantzis rejects the premises of authentic voice pedagogies. Rather, texts mean what they do because of the social work they perform.

> Genres are social processes. Texts are patterned in reasonably predictable ways according to patterns of social interaction in a particular culture. Social patterning and textual patterning meet as genres . . . . Individual speakers and writers act within a cultural context and with a knowledge of the different social effects of different types of oral and written text. (Cope and Kalantzis 7)

In this framework, intentions are generic, not individual. We divine meanings from the textual patterns we construct. The patterns that we are likely to construct depend upon the cultural background we bring to a situation—our expectations about how a text is formed to produce a certain kind of meaning in this situation. Even to challenge or oppose the "conventional" meaning requires a writer to engage those conventions. Thus, the meaning of a text depends on the way that the structure of a text engages—conforms to and deviates

from—generic conventions. The way an individual combines conformance and deviation creates a situated, rather than authentic, voice.

This notion of genre specifies relations between oral and literate codes in terms of the kinds of discourses privileged in the "culture of industrial modernity" (Cope and Kalantzis 68). In this culture, essayist literacy is produced and reproduced in the discourses of science and literature, i.e., those discourses that reorganize the concrete, commonsense knowledge of everyday life (an oral code) into abstract, theoretical knowledge (a literate code)—the "uncommonsense" learned through schooling.

Within the sciences, this reorganization is carried out through discursive processes such as classification and a focus on nominal groups or noun phrases. All discourses classify, but the classification system of the sciences "makes use of specialized knowledge, not just in terms of naming different [entities], but also in terms of how they are related to each other" (Martin 133). Consider, for instance, the scientific discourse of marine biology. Analyzing a report on marine mammals given orally at the annual meeting of the Canadian Wildlife Federation, Martin notes that what we call "whales" in everyday life are here renamed "Cetacea." This renaming is not simply a matter of jargon; rather the term "technicalizes" meaning, so that the category is now distinguished as one type of "placental mammal." This renaming has important implications farther down the taxonomy, in that it results in the uncommonsense treatment of dolphins and porpoises as subcategories of Cetacea. Commonsense understandings, founded on our experience of size, shape, color, movement, and so on, would not ordinarily categorize dolphins this way. It is in this sense that classification in scientific discourses transforms our experience of the world.

Similarly, scientific discourses use nominal groups, especially the linguistic process of nominalization, transformatively, as in the following sentence:

> The environmental movement was the key catalyst in focusing public attention on the issues. (Martin 128)

Note, first, just the length of the noun phrase that follows the verb "was." At ten words, it is almost twice as long as the average utterance in informal conversation. More important, it organizes information very differently from the ways that oral codes do. This phrase relies primarily on forms of subordination, or hypotaxis, as with the two prepositional phrases. It also relies on nominalization, or "grammatical metaphor," as in the phrases, "environmental movement," "key catalyst," "focusing public attention." If the sentence above were unpacked and rephrased in an oral version, it would read something like the following:

> The environmentalists protested, and so they (which) encouraged the public to react, and so they considered the issues.

In this unpacking, the three nominalizations become full clauses, while the connections change from metaphoric redefinition of an abstract concept (movement is a catalyst) to events related chronologically (and so). These grammatical processes thus function to transform representations of things and events into representations of abstract concepts, to transform chronological relations into hierarchical relations, and to transform narration and description into explanation. Even at the level of fine text structure, codes of power rely on specific kinds of grammatical processes not found in oral codes to transform concrete representations of lived experience into abstract representations founded on culturally specific forms of knowledge.

Like Delpit, the various authors in *Powers of Literacy* are deeply suspicious of the effects of this transformation on our social lives. In particular, they are concerned with the ways that these linguistic processes function transparently. Not only do they transform representations of lived experience, but they seem to naturalize that transformation. Depersonalized ways of knowing are too easily equated with knowledge itself. Also like Delpit, these authors argue that the tensions between oral and literate orientations in various genres can enable writers to construct multiple voices and to use the dominant codes as

strategies for critically producing and interrogating essayist texts.

The marine biology report, for instance, was given by a scientist to a large group of mostly nonscientists, who were interested not in scientific classification but in ways to preserve marine mammals from extinction. Speaking as a marine biologist with an interest in the environmental concerns of the audience, the speaker juxtaposed commonsense and uncommonsense descriptions of the mammals within the same linguistic representation, as in "the Sperm whale, *which grows to about the size of a boxcar*"; "the Narwhal *with its unicorn-like tusk*"; and "the Pilot or Pothead whale, *which is commonly stranded on beaches*" (Martin 134). In each instance, the speaker uses the biological term as the "head noun," or name of the animal, and uses commonsense terms (in italics) to elaborate that name. This juxtaposition of scientific classification and commonsense description enables him to articulate both "voices" and to identify with his audience, yet keep the scientific voice in the more important position.

Keeping the scientific voice more prominent is not just a matter of prestige. Insisting on a scientific mode of classification was equally important to accomplishing the agenda of the conference, which was to take the United States to task for allowing its native peoples and tuna fishermen to kill more whales than even the commercial whaling nations. To make this argument, however, dolphins and porpoises had to be counted as whales. And only a system of scientific classification could ground this claim. Thus, the speaker was able to use the "objectivity" of the dominant discourse as a tactic for resistance.

Literature also transforms experience, but it does not rely on the grammatical processes used in the discourses of science. Elsewhere in *Powers of Literacy*, Anne Cranny-Francis documents ways that notions of genre can be used with literary texts. What concerns Cranny-Francis here is the way that appeals to a universal notion of good style underwrite particular values without ever invoking those values explicitly. Literature judged "great," in this view, exceeds the constraints of any genre. Its values simply mirror those of life itself. Especially in romantic and realist texts, this dichotomizing of

form and content functions to "conceal or elide their conventionality" (91).

Writers can and do, however, identify and use those conventions to subvert them. At the end of *Middlemarch,* for instance, the heroine, Dorothea, marries Will Ladislaw, who has earlier expounded on how difficult it is for men to live with women. Such an ending simultaneously meets the conventions of realist fiction that the heroine enter a heterosexual marriage and puts it into question. It is not necessarily the case, implies this ending, that such a union will result in their living "happily ever after" (Cranny-Francis 94). The opening line of *Pride and Prejudice,* "It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife," functions in much the same way. In the very act of universalizing the conventional wisdom, the use of the modal verb (*must*) interrogates that universality. Similarly, the science fiction of Ursula LeGuin uses the conventions of the genre to question the values underlying it. For example, the conventional character of the "alien observer" is transformed, in *The Left Hand of Darkness,* into a strategy for putting into question the discourses about gender relations that the genre takes for granted.

Historicizing Genres and Codes

Excepting the genre analysis of literary texts, the relationship between oral and literate orientations to text operates in these frameworks as a binary opposition. Literacy is closely identified with the specific social processes of essayist literacy that are realized in distinctive patterns of linguistic structure—particularly the use of hypotaxis and nominalization, often termed the nominal style. These same social processes are in turn identified with the ways that dominant groups in industrial societies make sense of experience. Thus, essayist literacy, as realized in the nominal style, seems to be the linguistic mechanism that mediates access to the dominant society.

Flannery's history of the "plain style" complicates this notion considerably. As Flannery writes, "The same style or, put differently, the same stylistic designation serves different

masters. It is overdetermined, and its very resistance to a single definition makes it more malleable and enhances its utility" (7). Fields as divergent as business and the humanities have identified the same qualities supposedly inherent in essayist literacy with an emphasis on verbal styles—including an emphasis on parataxis and the avoidance of nominalization and long noun phrases generally. In other words, what Flannery later terms "style talk" has, since it inception, functioned as a

> . . . rope—a symptom of and displacement for talk about other issues, in particular issues of class difference. Whether that style talk centers on nominal or verbal versions of the plain style, the agenda remains the same—to regulate social, economic, and cultural access in an era when such regulation no longer turns on the distinction between literacy and illiteracy. (Flannery 113)

For Olson, the initial figures in the development of essayist literacy are Francis Bacon and The Royal Society of London. Drawing on Bacon's work, the 1662 charter of the Royal Society set forth guidelines for writing texts in what was then an emerging discourse. These guidelines charge scholars in the new sciences to adopt a "close, naked, natural way of speaking—positive expression, clear senses, a native easiness, bringing all things as near the mathematical plainness as they can, and preferring the language of artisans, countrymen, and merchants before that of wits and scholars" (Francis Bacon, qtd. in Flannery 136) Writing is to function as "pure denotation, without history, without figuration, as unmediated sign of the natural world" (Flannery 5).

Yet even in its origin, essayist literacy, as inscribed in the language of the charter, embodied contradictions that tied it to cultural and class conflict in the very terms that emphasized its own universality. Essayist literacy is to be simultaneously "natural" yet "mathematical," a "native" style that resides only in the language of a particular group, a language *of* scholars that rejects the language used by scholars. Most important, the "plainness" of its meaning was not to be decipherable simply by anyone—only by those with the proper training and

background. The very groups to which this style supposedly belonged would have to be taught to use it (Flannery 136).

The notions of code and genre discussed thus far have documented how these qualities (and the contradictions underlying them) have been yoked to the nominal style of essayist literacy in the sciences to regulate social and cultural access. But, these same qualities have also been yoked to the verbal style identified with literary and humanist discourses to do similar regulatory work. In the twentieth century, for example, the "readability movement" in business and education has identified these same qualities with the features of a verbal style. This movement, best identified with the work of Flesch and Gunning, emerged out of work by behavioral psychologists on intelligence testing and the scientific management of learning. In its beginnings, it responded to the influx of lower class children to the schools as a result of heightened enforcement of compulsory schooling laws. Its goal was to increase the accessibility of elevated literature to these children by developing graded materials based on some statistical standard. That is, "accessibility" was defined, not in terms of strategies whereby children might struggle with the difficulties inherent in such literature, but in terms of rewriting the literature so as to eliminate the possibility for struggle.

The standard for rewriting these materials used many of the linguistic features identified with oral codes and verbal styles. Texts should rely on familiar, everyday vocabulary, and avoid "hard" words. The length of words, phrases, and sentences was to be kept at a minimum. Sentences should avoid subordination and contain few clauses. This kind of reform was basic skills with a vengeance, grounded in positivist beliefs about fixed levels of intelligence and the efficacy of assembly line instruction. As a reform, such rewriting did less to enhance social mobility than it did to "mark the gap in what were taken to be inherited abilities" (Flannery 42-44). The verbal style of these materials thus constructed the terms on which lower-class children could relate to their middle-class peers and on which they could relate to the texts of high culture. That is, the verbal style conventionalized the terms on which lower and middle class children were deemed to be related as differences in intelligence. It also conventionalized the way that lower-class

children could relate to high-culture texts. Far from transforming the commonsense experience of readers, their rewritten verbal style transformed literary texts into their readers' commonsense.

Styles of Reform, Reforms of Style

Given the complexity of the ways in which the notion of voice or style has been used as a regulatory device, it is not surprising that progressive reforms relying on this notion have been equally complex. At least two versions of progressivism—the "pedagogy of modernism and experience" and the "pedagogy of postmodernism and difference"—have emerged out of Dewey's educational pragmatism (Kalantzis and Cope 45, 48). Each version views relations between language use and social life very differently. The project of modernist pedagogy is to socialize students into the "confident culture of industrial progress," to teach the values of "an activist relationship with the natural world, the risky experimentation and creativity at the heart of society drawn by its own technological dynamism" (45). Education, then, is a unifying force, bringing us together in a shared endeavor. Indeed, only through education "can the centrifugal forces set up by the juxtaposition of different groups within one and the same political unit be counteracted" (Dewey, 21-22; qtd. in Kalantzis and Cope, 47). The nature of modernist reforms is profoundly functional; writing is to articulate the "authentic voice" that speaks the confident tones of a unified people.

By contrast, the authentic voice of postmodernist pedagogy is deeply moral in nature. Postmodernist pedagogy denies the reality of such unifying forces. In direct opposition to the Enlightenment rationality at the heart of modernism, fragmentation, diversity, and variation form the basis of its pedagogy. There is no privileged culture, no master narratives. If there is no "metanarrative" to unite us, then pedagogy must emphasize the individual, whose knowledge is "personal or relative to the individual's [unique] experience" (48). Writing thus functions to celebrate difference in the myriad discourses that learners bring to the classroom—to give voice to those discourses and, in doing so, to overturn the hegemony of the

dominant discourses privileged in a class and race-based society.

Though the authenticity of the voice to be produced by these reforms differs dramatically, modernists and postmodernists alike emphasize the importance of giving students opportunities to use language in "real" situations, for authentic purposes. Forms of direct teaching and instruction in basic skills or Edited American English are consistently proscribed. But, the rationale for these policies differs dramatically. Given the functionalism in their view, what is at issue for modernists is the effectiveness of the practice. Didactic teaching is bad because, supposedly, it cannot bring about compliance. Students do not learn the rules simply because teachers insist that they must. Like the effective manager in industry, the effective modernist teacher must be "a watcher and helper" (Dewey and Dewey, 172; qtd. in Kalantzis and Cope, 47). For postmodernists, given the moral nature of their reforms, what is at issue is the end that a practice serves. Lecturing and other forms of transmission pedagogy are bad because they suppress student voices. In a postmodernist framework, the teacher must play some role in the development of learners' voices, but this role is to be transitory. As much—and as soon—as possible, students should begin to work independently, or in "teacherless" groups, on projects of their own choosing. Like the state, the function of the teacher is to wither away.

The opposition to basic skills differs along similar lines. Given the functional nature of their project, modernists have no quarrel with the goal of teaching all students "the 'correct' acquisition of the standard English which served a practical purpose in industrial society" (Kalantzis and Cope, 47). It is the *means* that they resist. Because of its emphasis on fragmented lists of formal rules, basic skills instruction must be ineffective at accomplishing this socializing goal. Given the moral orientation of their project, postmodernists oppose basic skills because of the ends they serve. All discourses, all dialects, all forms of language use being inherently equal, teaching a single form as a standard oppresses the unique voices of marginalized learners. The transformation of the larger society must begin with the transformation of the classroom.

The tensions between the functionalist and moral natures dividing modernist and postmodernist reform efforts have, in fact, been a recurring phenomenon in the history of pedagogical reforms invoking some notion of a plain style. This history is crucial to understanding how the progressive reform efforts outlined above serve the interests of groups other than those that the efforts represent. Historically, reforms that are primarily functionalist have tended to privilege form over content; reforms that are primarily moral in nature have tended to privilege content over form. Yet, both kinds of reform have served to displace talk about social differences onto talk about language differences. Both modernist and postmodernist reforms, Kalantzis and Cope remind us, have themselves responded to what they term the "traditional pedagogy of a classical canon." This pedagogy originated with the sixteenth century French scholar Petrus Ramus, who " 'invented' the modern textbook" (Kalantzis, *et al.* 42). Its rigid organization (the way that it formalized the social practices of rhetoric as precepts to be taught didactically or its rigid spatial arrangement of text) implied a very specific orientation to the locus of meaning as residing "objectively" in the form of the text (Kalantzis, *et al.* 42). It is just this emphasis on form over content that today's progressives identify with the interests of authoritarianism.

Surprisingly, however, Ramus's textbook began as an antiauthoritarian effort at pedagogical reform, one that could "bring reason to bear in teaching divine truth" (Flannery 145). At the time of its introduction, the Ramist appeal to a rhetoric that would "unite dialectic and knowledge with rhetoric, thought with language" (Flannery 144) formed the basis on which arguments challenging or defending the hierarchy of the emerging Church of England would be judged. Thus, Puritan reformers would attack Richard Hooker's defense of the humanist values on which the hierarchy warranted its authority, not on the basis of the text's content, but on the grounds that the style of the text deviated from Ramist precepts. And Hooker's reply defended his text in the same terms, that its style was natural, "making full use of the gifts of reason bestowed upon him by God" (Flannery 146). The irony is that Hooker appeals to the naturalness of his style to warrant

the rationality of its content, and thus the reasonableness of authoritarianism in the teachings of the established church. Little more than three hundred years later, F. R. Leavis would redeploy this appeal to a natural style in the writings of those such as Hooker to argue for the reasonableness of a secular version of this authoritarianism in the teachings of national universities (Flannery 133).

Nineteenth century reforms have continued to embody the tensions between functionally and morally motivated reforms. In both Great Britain and the United States, the 1890s were rife with economic and technological changes, massive social and demographic changes—even arguments over the secularization of education in the universities. These conflicts in turn produced a literacy debate that turned on opposition between the acquisition of functional skills and moral values, between the reading of canonical texts in their entirety for "meaning" and the reading of textual excerpts for "form," and between pedagogy as science and pedagogy as art. Not surprisingly, this opposition produced reforms that called for very different kinds of curricula, very different kinds of faculty, and very different lands of disciplinary practices. Yet, despite these great differences, Flannery concludes that the conflicts among these various curriculum reform efforts were commonly united in their desire to regulate social access through regulating access to forms of literacy (Flannery 92).

In this sense, curricular reforms have always served a gatekeeping function. In the 1890s, for instance, the Scottish rhetorician Alexander Bain introduced his curricular reforms as progressive, designed to *increase* access to Britain's universities. To counteract the moralism of the dominant approach to the teaching of writing, one that emphasized the supposed "organic" connections between discursive styles and "the soul of the nation," (an approach he saw as intellectually oppressive and socially exclusive), Bain advocated a scientific approach that would be "governed by 'the great principle of Division of Labour,' [that is] 'the separation of the language from the matter'" (Bain, *Education* 357, qtd. in Flannery 104). This division would simultaneously emphasize the practical effects of a piece of writing, while supposedly separating those effects from the ideas represented in the text. In this manner, students

could use excerpts from the "best of what had been written" to learn the "correct" forms for communicating ideas.

Yet, Bain's reforms simultaneously enabled and disabled the very kinds of students he claimed to represent. On the one hand, his functionalist approach enabled ever larger numbers of middle-class students to study in higher education institutions. On the other hand, that same functionalism restricted the kinds of texts that students could read and write and the uses to which those texts could be put. In doing so, Flannery concludes, his reforms actually reproduced the same hierarchical relations between the elite upper classes and the middle classes that had heretofore been demarcated by distinctions between literacy and nonliteracy. In Bain's reforms, "content" was, in effect, reserved for the upper classes and eliminated only for the middle classes. Thus, the social hierarchies inscribed in the opposition of "high" to "low" forms of literacy were reinscribed in the opposition of content to form, and finally institutionalized in the opposition of Composition to Literature.

Reinscribing Voice: a Pedagogy for Postmodern Democracy

The texts reviewed here are themselves related dialectically. The terms *code* and *genre* operate quite differently from Flannery's use of the term *style*. The former terms operate primarily as an explanation: social and cultural differences in the features of and orientations to texts explain why some social groups perform better in schools than do others. In Flannery, by contrast, style is as much the thing to be explained as it is an explanation:

> We know it when we see it, but what is it that we are seeing? And perhaps more importantly, what does focusing on style as a formal feature of texts or as a neutral linguistic practice allow us not to see? (4–8)

Flannery's skepticism that *style* is an empirically available term reminds us to view carefully reforms that treat stylistic differences as a cause rather than as a symptom of social

disparities. Social inequalities have been produced, not by language differences, but by social conflict. Yet, especially in *Powers of Literacy*, there is that same tendency that Flannery critiques so forcefully to displace talk about issues of race, class, gender, and ideology onto talk about language differences. It remains the case, however, that white, male high school graduates earn more, on average, than black, female college graduates. Such disparities argue strongly that curriculum reform will not eliminate conflicts grounded in social differences.

To say this does not mean that differences in language use realized as differences in the production and interpretation of texts do not exist or that they are unimportant. To the contrary, the work on code and genre reviewed here insists that "textuality, the meaning and value of a text, is created in the reciprocal social relations that writers and readers construct in their language" (Brodkey 96). Texts and their features function as sites of conflict or struggle among participants. The intersection of linguistic and social processes create a space within which ideational content and social relations are defined, constructed, and contested.

If codes of power contain within themselves the possibilities for substantive transformation, the ways that these works textualize the notion of voice offer real potential to develop a transformative pedagogy of "inclusion and access." The notions of genre and code place language at the center of the curriculum, but *maintain* tensions between form and content. They acknowledge the profound difference it makes to say something one way rather than another; yet, these notions neither valorize nor demonize that difference. Most important, such difference is used dialectically on behalf of "liberatory" goals—to engage students in an inquiry into the ways that social differences produce, and are reproduced, in language differences.

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