

7-10-2007

Identity Politics: Postcolonial Theory and Writing Instruction

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Identity Politics: Postcolonial Theory and Writing Instruction

by

Toni P. Francis

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
Department of English
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Date of Approval:
July 10, 2007

Keywords: Discourse Community, literacy, dialect studies, appropriation, pedagogy

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my grandmother, Mactille Darroux,
and to my father, Eustace Francis.
May their memories always fill me with purpose.

Acknowledgements

This dissertation would not have been possible without the dedicated mentorship of Dr. Debra Jacobs, whose kind and supportive editorial assistance went above and beyond my already lofty expectations. I am also indebted to my husband Rafael deComas, and my two children Makeda and Fidel, as well as my Mother, Rita Grey; their love and support gave me the strength and the resources to complete this lengthy and time-consuming project. Rick Michaels, Esq., who donated my first computer, deserves special recognition as well.

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ABSTRACT

In this dissertation I intend to apply postcolonial theory to primary pedagogical and administrative concerns of the writing program administrator. Writing Program Administrators, or WPAs, take their responsibilities seriously, remaining cognizant of both the negative and positive repercussions of the pedagogical decisions that take shape in the scores of composition classrooms they administer. This dissertation intends to infuse the WPA position with the ethos of scholarly praxis by historicizing and contextualizing the field of composition, and by placing the teaching of writing within the historical memory of slavery and colonialism. Sound WPA research is theoretically informed, systematic, principled inquiry that works toward producing strong writing programs. This dissertation provides such inquiry, drawing the field's attention to the reality of postcoloniality and presenting an understanding of the work of composition as informed by and complicit in the history of racialized forms of oppression. From this context, the dissertation analyzes three major issues faced by the WPA: the debate over standardized discourse, the influence of the job market on pedagogical decisions, and the (de)politicizing of the composition classroom. In the following sections, these issues will be related directly to critical theories from postcolonial and composition studies that assist in articulating the issues of identity politics, hegemonic struggle, interpellation and

interpolation, subaltern voice, and hybridity that are so crucial to writing program pedagogy and administration in the postcolonial age, for it is my argument that the writing classroom is a crucial site of contention in which the politics of identity are manifested as students appropriate and are appropriated by discourse.

Chapter One: Postcolonial Theory and the Field of Rhetoric and Composition

Every writing pedagogy is situated within a theoretical framework, whether overtly or covertly so. While politically covert pedagogies may attempt to avoid infusing their classrooms with particular theories, what often happens as a result is that they infuse their classrooms with a kind of theory fear, and theory avoidance becomes the covert ideology. Students learn from their teachers, and particularly from their writing teachers; if David Bartholomae is correct, they appropriate and are appropriated by ideologies as they attempt to acquire discourses and reproduce them in the classroom setting.

This notion of appropriation is of crucial significance to writing pedagogy. If, indeed, the business of writing instruction is the business of appropriation, then the writing instructor has a great responsibility. It could be said that the writing instructor, and the writing pedagogy, serves to construct the identities the students appropriate. Some crucial questions arise from the notion of appropriation. Significantly, in more recent treatments of appropriation in postcolonial and Marxist theory, this issue has spurred debates about the role of language in the construction of identity. Questions of identity appropriation cannot be answered from a position of theory avoidance. Theory can help writing instructors to analyze more closely the cultural, social, professional, and scientific identity constructs that they expect their students to simulate.

The subject of simulation, of course, is a weighty one steeped in the mysterious nature of writing pedagogy. Recent writing assessment theory attests to the difficulty of

delineating exactly what writing instructors are looking for when examining and evaluating writing (White, Gerrard). Mechanical elements certainly are the easiest to codify, rubricize, systematize, and technologize; however, the rhetorical and critical elements of academic discourse are far more challenging to taxonomize, more political to publicize, and more damaging to ignore. I contend that a writing pedagogy that embraces theory will do more for students than one that ignores it. Ideology is at work all the time, whether we want it to be or not. What writing instructors need is writing pedagogies informed by theories that draw attention to this issue of appropriation and its relation to the teaching of writing.

Postcolonial theory is one viewpoint that can effectively inform writing pedagogy because postcolonialism fosters inquiry on and analysis of this matter of appropriation and allows for an historical as well as pedagogical perspective on the issue. The critical lens of postcolonialism allows compositionists to maintain a historical perspective, to embrace rather than reject the problematic past, and subsequently to recognize the weaknesses of the inherited discourse of colonialism, which include our historical tendencies toward oppressive and often genocidal extremes. Ultimately, the postcolonialist perspective allows compositionist the ability to shift the paradigms of traditional practice toward a more generative alternative to neocolonialism. In the following chapters, postcolonial theory provides a useful analysis of the role language plays in the perpetuation of hegemonic dominance, as well as in the hegemonic efforts to challenge and to reconfigure power relations.

Because postcolonial theory relates language use to historically produced forms of power, postcolonial studies politicizes language instruction in ways that urge responsible

writing program administrators to reconsider current/traditional pedagogical positions. Postcolonialism poses some overwhelmingly difficult challenges to writing program administrators. These challenges require a reconfiguration of power relationships both pedagogical and administrative; a reevaluation of the historically-produced foundations of standardization; as well as a return to the difficult exercise of determining what exactly are the goals and outcomes of effective writing instruction and how and by whom should these goals be determined. The following chapters of this dissertation will present three such challenges, each time offering postcolonial theory as a useful resource for addressing problems in writing programs. This first chapter, "Postcolonial Theory and the Field of Rhetoric and Composition," provides an overview of postcoloniality and its relation to language and language appropriation.

In this chapter, I define the postcolonial condition by historicizing the discipline of postcolonial studies. I relate postcoloniality to the history of the United States by defining some of the primary voices of the African American rhetorical canon as postcolonial theorists and by presenting treatments of America as the postcolony. In addition, I introduce hegemonic struggle as a primary concern of postcolonial theorists, noting the difficulty with which theorists grapple with voicing the cares of the oppressed in the language of the oppressor.

Chapter 2 applies the prevailing postcolonial concept of identity as discursively constructed, and extends the implications of this concept by distinguishing between Athusser's notion of interpellation, wherein subjects are hailed into repressive power structures, and Ashcroft's notion of interpolation, wherein subjects seize the discourse of power and systematically dismantle the structures of dominance. I also consider the ways

in which appropriating a discourse may be detrimental to a student's original discourse and discourse community.

In Chapter 3, I examine the attempts made by compositionists to define and defend discourse communities. I also analyze new rhetoricians' approaches to the problematic charges of race and ethnicity bias in writing instruction. I argue that, given the connections between language and ideology, as well as language and identity, the teaching of writing involves a manipulation of students' identities that is in many ways political. I also contend that it is the responsibility of the WPA to respond to the identity politics at play in language programs.

In the final chapter, postcolonial theory serves as a useful resource for attending to three major challenges the WPA must face: the resolution for Student's Right to their Own Languages, the pressure by the corporate marketplace to determine the goals of writing instruction, and the efforts by those inside and outside of English departments to construct the writing classroom as a politically-free arena. Throughout the dissertation, but particularly in these chapters, I insist that, whether in relation to culture, subjectivity, profession, or class, identity appropriation poses a central concern for writing program administrators that is directly relevant to all the challenges presented. I also argue that is impossible to address fully the breadth of the appropriation issue while ignoring the politics involved in language instruction. It is my contention that postcolonial theory assists compositionists in embracing the political weight of the role of the Writing Program Administrator.

POSTCOLONIALITY: A TERM IN CONTENTION

The term “postcolonial” or “post-colonial” has come to be so in vogue among critical theorists that it is difficult to pin down a single meaning of the term. This difficulty is not one that critical theorists consider a problem. In fact, in many ways a floating signifier, the term “postcolonial” is embraced by theorists who shun attempts to package their innovative and often subversive challenges to traditional conceptions of reality. Critical theorists are self-reflective, discursively prepared to respond to the many arguments for retaining traditional and often ahistorical and apolitical approaches to economic, social and pedagogical structures of power.

Ania Loomba is a leading postcolonial theorist who has produced some of the most enlightening analyses of postcolonial issues in the Early Modern period. Loomba is also the editor of one of the most prominent and most interdisciplinary postcolonial anthologies produced of late. Loomba believes that the diversity of approaches to postcolonial studies is often attributed to its diasporic space. From this space emerges “separate historical trajectories of conquest and resistance” that consequently yield alternative and sometimes conflicting critiques of western imperialism and processes of neocolonialism. Additionally, disciplinary foundations and emerging theories attaining prominence in disciplinary fields also influence the shape that postcolonial studies takes. Postcolonial studies includes multiple critiques of colonial residual practices, discursive transactions, textual productions, ideologies, economies and political policies produced in an “array of area studies, each with a differing sense of its place within (or angle of remove from) the prevailing conceptions of the postcolonial (Loomba, et al 6).”

Loomba's work is important because it represents the multitude of methods and approaches that fall under the disciplinary umbrella of postcolonial studies. Loomba's co-edited anthology is an example of the myriad approaches to and applications of postcolonial theory in the academy. At the same time, the collection reveals those aspects of postcolonial studies that make it an integrated theoretical methodology. As Loomba notes, "Although the volume reflects a range of views and attitudes, many of its contributors find common cause by reasserting the importance of the oppositional political energies that originally animated decolonizing intellectuals the world over in the twentieth century" (5). This oppositional politics can be found in general treatments of postcolonial studies.

Typically, "postcolonial" refers to concepts, critiques, and analyses that reject and attempt to reconfigure or transform those realities produced through the historical mechanism of colonialism. "Postcolonial" can refer to a critique of colonialism, a rejection of colonialism, or at times simply the recognition that one cannot exist outside of the structures that colonialism has set into place, though this is rarely regarded as a simple matter. Deepika Bahri and Couze Venn provide divergent metaphors for postcoloniality that illustrate the breadth of possibility in this signifier. Bahri, whose work on the politics of rhetoric applies postcolonial theories to rhetorical education considers postcolonialism in spatial terms, where the "postcolonialism" refers to a moment of "emblematically philosophic rupture with European modernity" (74). Couze Venn, whose critiques of modernity and Occidentalism focus strongly on identity, believes "postcolonial" refers to a "virtual space, a space of possibility and emergence [

...] a potential becoming,” where postcolonialism becomes a doorway “towards a future that will not repeat existing forms of sociality and oppressive power relations” (190).

Bahri in particular provides a plethora of metaphors for postcolonialism: “it is a moment, a movement, a method, a message, a mirage, a misnomer.” Although, alliteration aside, this list is rather dizzying, it reveals the contrariness of postcoloniality, by nature anti-foundational due to its tenet of social transformation, yet consistent in its agenda, allowing for a number of possible means by which to achieve the transformation of colonial forms of domination. Bahri explains that postcolonialism is a misnomer because, “the colonial movement repeats” making “post” somewhat suspect (74). Perhaps if we actually attain a temporal as well as spatial *postcoloniality*—that is, if we reconfigure the world in such a way that the ideological traces of the colonial past no longer have any residual signifying power whatsoever—then “postcolonial” will also lose its signifying power and we will need a new sign for the times. As of yet, however, *postcoloniality* lies at the tip of the theorists’ fingers, and it is in the stretching to reach it that the work of postcolonial studies is done.

The work of postcolonial studies, though varied, always involves this reaching toward an alternative, transformed reality. This reaching, as it is understood, is not a passive reaching, but a proactive probing of any and all means and possibilities that will uncover and uproot the foundations that uphold colonial forms of power and domination long after the official condemnation of its myriad atrocities. According to Bill Ashcroft, who has produced some of the leading scholarship in postcolonial theory and colonial historicism, the term “post-colonialism” was coined in the historical and political science fields, following World War II. Ashcroft, in many ways the institutional voice of

postcolonial studies, argues that at that time the term “post-colonial” had a “clearly chronological meaning, designating the post independence period.” Ashcroft continues, stating that by the late 1970s postcolonialism had found its way into literary criticism, where it was employed to analyze “various cultural effects of colonization” (9).

In the developmental stages in the academy, Ashcroft argues, postcolonial studies was a methodology used to “address the cultural production of those societies affected the historical phenomenon of colonialism.” With this methodology, theorists were able to “analyze the many strategies by which colonized societies have engaged imperial discourse.” They also strove to “study the ways in which many of those strategies are shared by colonized societies, re-emerging in very different political and cultural circumstances” (7). Such methodology has provided a refreshing injection of ethical purpose in the academy, insisting on attending to residual colonialism in all disciplinary areas. This move became particularly pervasive following Edward Said’s critique of Orientalism, the academic discipline Said makes largely responsible for the wholesale construction of the nonwestern world as Other.

POSTCOLONIAL TRANSFORMATION

Said’s probing into the historical formation of this academic discipline laid bare the unsavory relationship between colonialist power—with its ideology of European supremacy—and disciplinary knowledge—with its specious pretences at objectivity. In response to the unrelenting onslaught of evidence proving that the knowledge produced in the academy is far from objective, academic disciplines have been made to acknowledge that they are steeped in the ideological underpinnings of their own

historical, economic, and social contexts. As a result, strong academic programs have chosen to consider strongly their own postcolonial contexts and to construct methodological practices that are informed by the kinds of critiques of Eurocentrism and neocolonialism that postcolonial studies provides. But postcolonialism is not merely a defense against charges of neocolonialism. Postcolonial studies, for many, is a means by which to engage academic disciplines in the intellectual movement of reformulating and transforming the very patterns of life.

According to Bahri, “postcolonialism’s facility in engaging questions of transnationality and hybridity combined with its engagement with poststructuralism, its rearticulation of the questions of power and knowledge and its persistent challenge to western modes of thought have all contributed to its success in the academy and to an interest in its relevance to other disciplines” (71). Vaidehi Ramanathan’s scholarship examines the interplay of divisive ideologies and analyzes the role of vernacular languages in the postcolonial world. Ramanathan believes that it is important in postcolonial studies to “revisit, remember and question the colonial past, while simultaneously acknowledging the complex reciprocal relationship of antagonism and desire between the colonizer and colonized” (1-2). This approach to postcolonial studies is in practice in a variety of manners in the many disciplinary applications of postcolonial theory.

In English studies, Gary Olson and Lynn Worsham have co-edited a collection of scholarly articles and interviews on race and rhetoric that illuminate the ways in which postcolonial theorists and rhetoricians have grappled with the intersections of language, rhetoric, and hegemonic struggle. Gary Olson and other compositionists find postcolonial

theory useful for “illustrating how colonial impulses come into play between students and teacher as well as between members of different races and ethnic groups, affecting how learning occurs, or doesn’t, how students relate to peers and to teachers (“Encountering” 89). Additionally, composition has been highly influenced by the work of Paulo Freire, a rhetorician who could arguably be defined as a postcolonial compositionist. Drawing much-needed attention to the relationship between writing instruction and the maintenance of oppressive structures of power, Freire’s concept of banking education has stressed the importance of language as a key to hegemonic agency. Freire’s work continues to be appreciated in composition, where American Freiristas are challenging traditional notions of teacher authority, student agency, and pedagogical aims as they attempt to empower their students in their writing classrooms (Berlin, Giroux, hooks, Lankshear, McLaren, Shor, Villanueva).

Concurrent with the growth of postcolonial studies has been a careful and well meaning self-criticism that continues to strengthen the discipline of postcolonial studies even while seemingly dismantling it. Critics like David Scott and Frederick Cooper have drawn attention to the need for more stringent treatments of history in postcolonial studies and more focus on the overall agenda of postcolonial studies. Cooper’s historicist approach to empire and coloniality is proactive, searching out new possibilities for alternatives to neocolonialism in contemporary social practices. Cooper appreciates the centrality that postcolonial studies places on the colonial past. Cooper, however, is concerned that postcolonialism has “tended to obscure the very history whose importance it has highlighted.” The historicist wrestles with the habit he finds in postcolonial studies of narrowing the colonial experience into a generic period, “located somewhere between

1492 and the 1970s, which has been given the decisive role in shaping the postcolonial moment” (401). For Cooper, such “generalization can homogenize too far (as in abstracting coloniality from the lived experience of people in colonies).” Neither is the opposite likely to be the solution. “Demarcation,” Cooper continues, “can be misleading, separating modern empires from those prior or contemporaneous to those of 19th century Western Europe” (416).

What Cooper ultimately calls for is “comprehensive historical analysis,” which he believes “might help sketch out likely fields of struggle, might help to look for conjunctures where power relations were most vulnerable and to probe limits of power beneath the claims to dominance” (417). His hope is to move postcolonial studies out of the abstract realm where “intellectuals condemn the continuation of invidious distinctions and exploitation and celebrate the proliferation of cultural hybridities and the fracturing of cultural boundaries” (401). Instead of keeping postcolonialism reflective and generalized, Cooper requests an active engagement with the history of colonialism that makes the practice more productive by focusing on specific historical moments in which communities grappled with traditional forms of power. Here, he believes, is where hegemonic forces make themselves known. Cooper’s work is useful when attempting to place American power structures, like education, within the context of postcolonial history and the history of slavery.

David Scott, a social constructionist, also provides useful scholarship for reconsidering the inheritances of the colonial world. While acknowledging the difficulties involved in operating outside of historically constructed dominant forces, Scott’s critiques of modernity envision a postcolonial future. Scott attempts to reinvigorate

postcolonial studies by critiquing the ways in which, having become the new paradigm, postcolonialism seems to have lost its transformative edge. Scott wonders “whether the historical context of problems that produced the postcolonial effect as a critical effect has not now altered such that the yield of these questions is no longer what it was.” For Scott, this would mean consequentially that postcolonialism may have “lost its point and become normalized as a strategy for the mere accumulation of meaning” (92). Critics such as Scott caution against postcolonial studies becoming merely another disciplinary apparatus, abandoning its transformative agenda for the fulfillment of the academic status quo. For this reason, Scott warns that, “unless we persistently ask what the point is of our investigation of colonialism for the postcolonial present, [...] what the argument is in which we are making a move and staking a claim, unless we systematically make this a part of our strategy of inquiry, we are only too likely to slide from a criticism of the present to ‘normal’ social science” (399).

For these critics, postcolonialism seems at the brink of absorption by academic disciplines that threaten to efface the overt agenda of postcolonial transformation that is at the very heart of the postcolonial project while incorporating the general historicist practices of postcolonial studies. Thus postcolonial studies risks becoming a strategy for “investigating the trace of colonial effects in our postcolonial time” without any cause other than investigation itself. For postcolonial theory, investigation, historicism, and inquiry cannot be enough. These intellectual practices must yield change. They must serve to transform those practices that serve to maintain the ideologies and structures of the colonialist project.

English Studies is a discipline well in need of the transformative power of postcolonial theory. Long suffering under critiques of class and race preference, the field of composition would be served well by those rhetoricians willing to apply postcolonial historicism and postcolonial theory to the field of composition. The field needs leaders who recognize rather than ignore the historical complicity that English has shared in perpetuating colonial forms of dominance. The following chapters address this complicity by linking the composing act with hegemonic struggle, linking discursive practice with social representation, and linking sound WPA work with historical and political responsibility.

POSTCOLONIALITY AND THE UNITED STATES

While postcolonialism has a strong foothold in the social and literary theories produced in the New Worlds, America is often excluded from its domain in general considerations. Principal voices in the field tend to be located in more obvious postcolonies like those of the Caribbean, where Fanon has contributed a solid foundation with his critique of the ideological dangers of white supremacy in the context of the formation of neocolonial worlds. Postcolonialism is also greatly indebted to Edward Said, whose literary and pedagogical analyses explore and reveal the ideological underpinnings of white supremacy's continued sway on the intellectual mind, as well as, of late, Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak, whose critiques of postcolonial studies have expanded the ways in which postcolonial theorists approach the discursive construction of those individuals represented as, amongst other signifiers, the colonized, the o/Other, or the subaltern. Applications of postcolonial theory in America are strong in the discipline of

critical race theory as well as in historicist critiques of American education and language policies.

America has produced its own legacy of critiques of the colonialist tradition and its normalizing discourses, as well as its own theories on the possibility of a world beyond that envisioned in the discourse of colonialism. Frederick Douglass's many anti-abolitionist tracts are receiving new attention of late, not for their contribution to antislavery efforts alone, but for the evidence they provide of early and effective hegemonic interplay between the discourse of slavery and that of a burgeoning postcolonial discourse. Douglass's insistence on a world that rejects the ideologies that would make slavery an acceptable option represents a contradiscourse of American postcolonialism. In addition, rhetoricians and compositionists have recently begun to analyze the extensive African American essayistic tradition in America, another realm in which the dissemination of proto-postcolonial discourse takes place. American rhetoricians of late have discovered that the African American rhetorical tradition serves as a very useful resource for stimulating interest and efficacy in student writing, particularly from students of color who have rarely gained access to essays of this kind in their composition classes (Logan, Royster).

DuBois surely receives the greatest recognition in conceptions of American postcolonialism. DuBois's theories on the identity politics of the post-slavery era in America have been largely influential on a great many postcolonial theorists around the world. DuBois's theories, however, are often revised when applied to contemporary social structures. DuBois argues that the central issue for African Americans of the post-slavery era is that of identity politics, which he defines as life behind a veil. The

realization of one's racialized identity is, for Dubois, at once "a gift, a second sight" and at the same time a "double consciousness." The gift of second sight allows the racialized individual a view of the world as the discourse of America would paint it, communicated through the rhetoric of liberty and justice. At the same time, the second sight is the view of the world of neocolonialism, the underside of America—the world of racial hierarchy. Double consciousness suggests that the racialized Other exists in a world that "yields no true self-consciousness," where one always "looks at one's self through the eyes of others" who look on in contempt and pity (615). For DuBois, the end of slavery is to be celebrated, but an equal level of gravity is needed to attend to the permanence of the racialized world.

DuBois's concept of the color line is essential to postcolonial critique. While America may not share the same conditions and experiences in the global postcolonial landscape, the black experience in America is a postcolonial one that relates closely to the historical experiences of the postcolonial world. Placing American social theories on race and history in the realm of postcolonial theory assists in reorienting American social issues so that they are understood from the perspective of the history of slavery and the development of a racialized society.

Recent such reorientations in the field of education include Asa G. Hilliard's staunch critique of continuing colonial practices found in the stratification of race-based educational structures. Hilliard historicizes the stratification of race in educational funding, planning, and practice in the post-integration era. In so doing, Hilliard shines a bright light on otherwise ignored connections between racial disenfranchisement and public education in America.

Postcoloniality and American Education

While America would like to situate itself as one of the oldest and strongest democracies in the world, the democratic ideal that Americans hold so dear is far from realized in all of the social, political, and economic factors of life in America. Hilliard's work is important in presenting the historical, sociological, as well as educational and economic research which reasserts every day that oppression, in the form of inequality, persists in America. As Hilliard is willing to note, "for the greater portion of the nation's history the frequently verbalized commitment to the very ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity has been realized by only a small subset of the total United States population—i.e., northern and western Europeans, and even them with some exceptions" (36). Hilliard argues that the colonial system "has existed in our nation during virtually all of its history [and] has guaranteed privilege to certain cultural groups, but oppression of some others." Hilliard continues by asserting that "every facet of the social system has been mobilized to produce the society that both the privileged and the oppressed experience; education is merely one facet of that complex social system" (Hilliard 36).

As a facet of the system of colonialism, Hilliard argues that educational structures maintain economic and social hierarchies of power, by providing economically stratified access to critical education and higher education while limiting students of historically undervalued communities to sub-standard education. This is achieved through various methods, Hilliard points out, including funding schools and teachers by property taxes on communities, stratifying access to resources in new technologies and new knowledges,

and privileging the discursive conventions of the ruling class with the mark of authenticity and, in some cases, intelligence.

American scholars in the field of composition have also found it useful to reorient the field of English studies to more closely consider its ties to the history of slavery and colonialism. Ira Shor and Paolo Freire have infused American composition theory with an allegiance to providing for students the critical pedagogy necessary to transform historically embedded forms of oppression. They, and others, are strongly concerned that in classroom instances, teachers whose own perceptions of reality are inhibited by the discourse of racism are more prone to transfer colonialist ideology into the minds of their students and seal their fates as objects of an inevitable and unbreakable system.

“Schools,” Ira Shor argues, “are one large agency among several which socialize students; they can confirm or challenge socialization into inequality. Teachers can reinforce student alienation from critical thinking by confirming the *curricular* disempowerment of their intelligence” (“Inequality,” 413). This is evidenced in the impact that archaic notions of white supremacy have had on the direction academic knowledge has taken in the past. As Hilliard points out, “It was not the shortage of information that produced the widely accepted myth of the intellectual superiority of Europeans over other populations in the world; it was the propensity to prefer propaganda over scientific information that kept otherwise truth-seeking individuals blindly attracted to racist thought” (40-1). As a result of such examples of racism in education as phrenology, for instance, American people still rest on assumptions such as white supremacy to sustain the oppressive realities of inequality.

While America may be proud of the battle won for equality with the case of *Brown versus the Topeka Board of Education*, the result has been far from an end to racial inequality. While physical factors such as desegregation and integration have been attended to, and that loosely and under stringent enforcement, psychological and epistemological factors either had not been considered or were dismissed by legislature. Education can serve to perpetuate the oppressive ideologies inherited from the history of colonialism by maintaining a traditional curriculum and structure that ignores the reality of neocolonialism in America.

Historically, curriculum changes were not made in the post-integration era to integrate the knowledge that teachers in segregated black schools were providing their black students in the curriculums of desegregated schools. Nor did they make any attempts to integrate Black Vernacular discourse. Instead, black students were “privileged” to enter the “gates of knowledge” (white schools) and accept white education as the means to professional scholarship. The authority of colonialist ideology, ethics and discourse were not questioned in the implementation of integration. Hilliard addresses the realities of *de facto* segregation that arose following the *Brown* verdict. “The law could not and did not deal with the minds that produced segregation in the first place,” Hilliard argues, “nor the extent to which overt and covert behavior was directed toward perpetuation of the status quo” (40).

Considering that “no credible evidence exists to dispute the fact that, given the same educational treatment, all groups will succeed in school subjects equally as well,” Hilliard argues that “there is no democratic reason for America to restrict quality education to privileged groups and leave poor education to the ‘other’” (Hilliard 43). As

one of America's early postcolonial composition theorists, Ira Shor provides staunch examples of privilege and oppression in American schools by relating pedagogical resources such as class size and dialogue with economic social structures. In Shor's analysis, the consequences of limited school funding on student empowerment are highly problematic. They suggest a strong correlation between state power, educational funding, and political hegemonic dominance.

According to Shor and Freire, "The right to have a small discussion begins as a class privilege. The more elite the student the more likely that he or she will have a personalized discussion contact with the professor or teacher. For the rest, there are large classes mixed with recitation sections staffed by poorly-paid instructors, or large classes in underfunded public schools" (12). Shor relates the model to the banking model of education Freire critiques in Brazil, where peasant workers, kept illiterate through class restrictions on the privilege of education, find no means to political empowerment.

Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is an early example of postcolonial composition, operating in South America. This critique of traditional education was later adopted in differing manners by Shor and other American compositionists, who were eager to infuse the work of writing instruction with student empowerment and a critical consciousness that allowed students to see the world through the lens of the history of oppression and use language to produce real structural changes in the world and in their lives. Shor prefers Freire's dialogical pedagogy to traditional recitation because he believes that in the dialogic teaching method there is less chance of indoctrination and more chance for democracy. With dialogue facilitated in all schools, "teachers and students would have to confront our own experience in small-group, democratic

communities” (Shor and Freire 13). In this way, students and teachers would address issues more closely than they do in traditional educational systems in which the teacher lectures and the students listen. The students would also participate verbally in their own understanding of how the world works and why.

In the dialogical classroom Shor and Freire promote, ideology is the subject, and both teacher and student grapple with its history, function, and place. Shor describes dialogic pedagogy as “*for* freedom and *against* domination, as cultural action inside or outside a classroom where the status quo is challenged, where myths of the official curriculum and mass culture are illuminated” (Shor and Freire 12). This pedagogy serves as a means to break the patterns of oppression perpetuated in America’s educational curriculum and give students and teachers the power to question the realities of everyday life in the system of privilege and oppression. “Efforts at critical desocialization,” Shor contends, “could serve to illuminate the myths that support the elite hierarchy of society, to invite students to reflect on their own conditions, and to challenge them to consider how the limits they face might be overcome” (Shor, “Inequality,” 413).

Hilliard’s postcolonial critique of post-integration education and Shor and Freire’s critique of depoliticizing practices in non-privileged schools both argue strongly against traditional educational practices in America. Both also place American education al practice within the realm of the postcolonial, making education complicit in the perpetuation of colonialist forms of dominance and privilege. Traditionally, integration in America was considered a blessing to the African American community, but the decision to standardize education came at a hard price.

Instead of taking inequality for granted and going along the business of education for “progress” (for the privileged few), as has historically been the case in America, a more democratic and postcolonial approach to integration must restrain from assimilating students from marginalized groups into the alienating and self-defeating pathologies fostered in the discourse of colonialism. Instead, a democratic, postcolonial approach to integrated scholarship must encourage students’ participation in revealing and breaking down the residual effects of colonialism and slavery. This approach must also acknowledge the validity of the vernacular discourses of these communities and must provide those Englishes with the same credibility that “Standard” (white middle class) American English chooses to insist on for itself.

America the Postcolony

Hilliard argues that “School leaders must have a clear and accurate description of how inequity functions in the educational system, as well as a valid theory of its origins. It is the *dynamics* of inequity that the educator must understand rather than the mere fact of inequity itself” (41). Postcolonial critique in America, then, demands an understanding of the present in light of the past. It demands a memory of slavery that brings with it a recognition of the ways in which things are much the same. In addition, it demands an agenda that insists on change. Barnor Hesse, a Diaspora theorist, is interested in the role of memory in postcolonial contexts. Considering the social and cultural function of the postcolonial memory of slavery, Hesse claims that this active recollection of the colonial past serves as a “critical excavation and inventory of the marginally discounted, unrealized objects of decolonization and the political consequences of their

social legacies.” In these practices, Hesse finds a means by which to recognize the failure of decolonization to materialize, whilst maintaining the pursuit of a world without colonial ideological and material inheritances. Postcolonial memory, then becomes an ethics, “triggered by an awareness of the discontinuities of decolonization and global justice and the continuities of racism and global inequalities” (165).

The postcolonial memory of slavery is central to much of the postcolonial work being done in America, often considered the quintessential postcolony, as in many ways it has presented itself as the globalized model of decolonization. At the same time, America is a troublesome example of a postcolony, because, while it emerges out of the slavery system, its ties to slavery were not severed in the same manner as those of the colonies of the vast empires of the colonial period. Rather, in America, slavery continues to ease away, at times violently rejected, yet often latently existing in the bureaucracies and in the everyday mundane realities of postcolonial America. Hence the effects of slavery are still present in the vastly globalized world. Postcolonial theorists struggle to place the globalized construct of America within the context of the history of slavery in order to recognize the ways in which America exists as both colonizer and colonized, housing in close quarters both oppressor and oppressed. America has historically existed in this contradiction, claiming itself the bastion of human liberty and freedom while relying heavily on a systematic and dehumanizing exploitation of labor.

For Ashcroft, postcolonial critique must focus on America’s command of and continuation of the discourses of colonialism and slavery. He contends that, “The key to the link between classical imperialism and contemporary globalization in the twentieth century has been the role of the United States, which enthusiastically assumed command

of imperial rhetoric.” Ashcroft adds that, “more importantly, US society during and after this early expansionist phase initiated those features of social life and social relations which today may be considered to characterize the global: mass production, mass communication, and mass consumption” (213). The globalizing power of America makes it of great interest to postcolonial theorists, particularly those interested in the globalizing nature of the discourse of colonialism and its proliferation in the educational structures of the postcolony.

POSTCOLONIAL THEORY AND HEGEMONIC STRUGGLE

Discussions of globalizing discourses can often be fraught with linguistic pitfalls that emerge rapidly in any discussions of power, dominance, and group identity. Post-Marxist theorists warn that in attempts to represent the concerns of “the oppressed,” the dangerous dichotomies of master-slave, rich-poor, male-female paradigms tend to repeat themselves because theorists’ constructions of oppressed groups often rely on the same binary oppositions that have produced the structures they would dismantle. Foucault and others reject top-down notions of power, as do postcolonial theorists who choose to recognize the ways in which power historically has been shared on all sides in the history of oppression. Theorists drop into pitfalls when they paternalize oppressed groups and place themselves in the position of determining their fates, taking on the usurped role of master and perpetuating the dichotomy. Paternalistic treatments of dominant forces often serve to maintain existing power relations by normalizing the same practices and merely shifting slightly the identities of the beneficiaries; the “oppressed,” then, remain oppressed.

Other pitfalls lay waiting for those who would dichotomize power relations in their analyses of the history of colonialism. Often treatments of oppressive forces in slavery and colonialism leave slaves with no power whatsoever. Hence scholars tend to discredit early African Americans' forms of power, including those discourses honed from syncretic appropriations of spirituality and philosophy, those rhetorical measures, both public and private, that served to subvert the hegemonic discourse of the plantation, and those discourses of change that have continuously proved the efficacy of African American agency. It must be understood that an oppressive force could not operate without an equal force working against it. Power is multifaceted, some aspects overt, others covert, but each responsible for producing reality and shaping change. The more attention we give to subaltern forms of power, the more discursive presence we give those powers. With the growth of this presence, change occurs more rapidly.

One of the most difficult pitfalls in treatments of hegemony at this time occurs when theorists attempt to voice the concerns, needs, and values of "the oppressed." Homi Bhabha is one of the major postcolonial theorists who critique essentialist notions of identity, preferring to accentuate the hybridity of the postcolonial identity and emphasize the multiplicitous and contradictory nature of ethnicity. Bhabha and postcolonial historicist John Comaroff grapple with the politics of representation involved in naming the other. The problem of "minoritarian identification," as Bhabha and Comaroff name it, can be quite tricky; navigating around this problem involves, "getting beyond the polarized geographic of majority vs. minority, where it is assumed that the political desire of the minority is to achieve the hegemonic majoritarian position" (17). These

assumptions of the self-appointed voice of the minority reduce the minority population, it is argued, by imagining for them their agendas and ends.

Ashcroft address the problems involved when theorists define the discourses and identities of the minority as silenced. “The danger implicit in colonial discourse theory as with postcolonial theories of subject formation,” Ashcroft asserts, “is its frequent insistence on the totality and absolute efficacy of the ‘silencing’ effects of colonialist representation, which, it is sometimes argued, envelops and predetermines even the conscious acts of resistance which seek to oppose and dismantle it” (46). Speaking for the silenced minority identity, then, the theorist, or the revolutionary, or the authoritative discourse unwittingly silences those identities and populations, simultaneously preserving the dichotomous epistemology of the existing social structure.

“Hegemony” has become a useful term for rearticulating power relations because the focus here is not on a top-down format of power, at least not solely, but also on those forms of power that emerge in the everyday and provide sources of agency and power that are ignored often in treatments of oppressive structures. Antonio Gramsci’s construction of the organic intellectual is one subaltern identity that postcolonial theorists find helpful when wrestling with minority identification and hegemonic dominance. Gramsci’s definition of hegemony provides for many post-Marxist and postcolonial theorists a means by which to recognize and articulate that discursive agency is available and utilized more freely than imagined. The manipulation of power and the articulation of that manipulation occur constantly in the realm of discourse, where ideological forces are continuously at play. As Louis Althusser indicates, while repressive state apparatuses maintain a large degree of material control, repressive material conditions have

historically proven to be far more malleable than conditions sustained by means of ideological state apparatuses. Gramsci identifies ideological forces operating outside of the realm of the state apparatuses, by drawing attention to the “organic intellectual,” at work in the world and in many ways an active political agent.

In his attempts to “reach a concrete approximation of reality,” Gramsci analyzes two structural levels of society, that of civil society and that of the State, and determines that “these two levels correspond on the one hand to the function of ‘hegemony’ which the dominant group exercises throughout society and on the other hand to that of ‘direct domination’ or command exercised through the State and ‘juridical’ government.”

Hegemony works alongside domination, but is not the same thing. While the State exercises dominant power through material, juridical apparatuses, civil society disciplines individuals through hegemonic measures, working to ensure “spontaneous consent” to existing State power. This consent is at the heart of postcolonial and post-Marxist treatments of Gramsci, because the disciplining of consent is an ongoing discursive struggle. Thus, hegemonic struggle involves the attempt to reconfigure the existing hegemony and produce change as well as the attempt to keep things the same. Gramsci identifies traditional and organic intellectuals at work in hegemonic struggle, with traditional intellectuals trained to work (in whatever disciplines they enter) as “deputies” of the dominant group. The primary task of these traditional intellectuals is to do the ideological work necessary to produce “spontaneous consent” in the social world. Organic intellectuals operate outside of Gramsci’s academic mill, confronting and contesting the ideologies of the existing dominant hegemony. This kind of work, the intellectual work that burgeons out of the community and into the world—rather than the

intellectual work that is proscribed for the individual by the State and injected into the community—is what Gramsci defines as “organic.”

Change occurs as new intellectuals struggle to transform the hegemonic discourse and change the predominant way of thinking. For this reason, Marxist critic Walter Adamson argues that for Gramsci, genuine education depends both on the ‘elaboration’ of intellectuals tied to the working class to provide it with ‘organic’ leadership, and on the creation of institutional settings in which workers can raise themselves to a ‘philosophical’ (as opposed to mere ‘commonsense’) view of the world’ (142-43). Gramsci explains that “one of the most important characteristics of any group that is developing towards dominance is its struggle to assimilate and to conquer ‘ideologically’ the traditional intellectuals.” Gramsci adds, however, that “this assimilation and conquest is made quicker and more efficacious the more the group in question succeeds in simultaneously elaborating its own organic intellectuals” (10). Locating and defining organic intellectuals is still a difficult task, but hegemonic struggle becomes a useful term for approximating reality without resorting to dichotomies of power. When hegemony is defined as struggle, with all parties seizing and manipulating power, we run less risk of reducing reality to one aggressive dominant force acting on a passive oppressed. Dominant forces remain, of course, as postcolonial history will attest, but hegemonic struggle allows us to recognize and appreciate the effective rhetorical strategies and worldviews that thus far have moved us away from genocidal forms of oppression.

CONSTRUCTING THE COUNTERHEGEMONY

Hegemonic struggle is important to debates on language and language instruction because theorists often question the efficacy of State-mandated discourses to speak the concerns of organic intellectuals. Postcolonial language theorist Arjuna Parakrama is interested in postcolonial applications of Gramsci as a useful means by which to identify alternate forms of hegemonic struggle. Parakrama believes that language can provide the resource for producing an archaeology of such discursive struggle. Resisting systematic structures of perceived state dominance, Parakrama argues that too often “counter-hegemony or alternative hegemony has been explained only in terms of organized and systematic, even class-based, resistance.” But the theorist finds these treatments of power unsatisfying and incomplete. “It seems to me,” continues Parakrama, “that not-quite-so-organized forms of subversion and resistance perform, on the long term, similar functions, though the ‘turnover rate’ is far greater” (60). In other words, socialization involves active disciplinary control as evidenced in State apparatuses such as the judiciary government, but it also involves blind “spontaneous” consent borne from seemingly passive hegemonic pressures emerging in ideological apparatuses like mass cultural media. At the same time, being a member of a social world also involves dissatisfaction and disagreement, affinity for difference, and consent to counterhegemony borne from shared experiences of discontent, and shared alternative forms of agency.

These counterhegemonic practices are of great interest to Parakrama, who attempts to track the discursive progress of such practices and finds in the English language a useful record of hegemonic development. As a result, Parakrama laments Gramsci’s lack of attention to the relationship between standardized national languages

and the successes and failures of organic intellectuals in their counterhegemonic pursuits. For Parakrama, “it would seem that even for someone as astute and theoretically sophisticated as Gramsci, the standard or national language succeeds in hiding the continuous process of hegemony-dehegemonization-passive revolution-hegemonization that takes place in and through language as in the ever-so-gradual, yet bitterly fought, changes in usage and in the widening acceptable variation of General American English. (62).

Along with postcolonial critiques of representation in global communities, Guyatri Spivak’s critique of postcolonial constructions of the “subaltern”—a term she prefers to “postcolonial” or “ethnic minority” because of its reference to “the sheer heterogeneity of decolonized space”—has been influential at raising the level of trepidation with which we identify and speak for social groups and their representative discourses (310). While, for some, Spivak’s critique seems to encompass a massive dismantling of postcolonial studies, for many, the ardent call of “making the Subaltern speak” has resulted in a much appreciated self-examination as well as a rearticulation of the postcolonial subject.

In mainstream postcolonial studies, Ashcroft speaks for a great many theorists standing strong following the wave of Spivak’s critique, when he argues that “the phrase ‘the subaltern cannot speak’ need not imply that the subaltern is silenced and has no voice whatsoever.” For Ashcroft, the phrase “suggests that the voice of the subaltern does not exist in some pure space outside the dominant discourse.” Ashcroft agrees with Spivak that “the subaltern can never speak outside the discourse of power” but he insists that “*all language is like that*” (46). Ashcroft still believes that the subaltern can have

access to the dominant discourse and use this discourse to transform the prevailing hegemony.

Spivak may be more cautious about the possibility of subaltern agency in colonialist and patriarchal discourse, where she finds far too much interpretation involved in voicing the intentions, agendas, and concerns of subaltern subjects. But at the same time, in Spivak's own critique, in her specific example of Bhubaneswari Bhaduri, this woman does achieve voice, but only within Spivak's work. In the theorist's honest attempt to question whether she can communicate the subaltern, she does so and rearticulates the identity and agency of the oppressed, but that agency is so removed from the moment of the discursive act, that empowerment is difficult to accept. Subaltern discursive acts have to contend with representational politics which tends to articulate their attempts at agency in ways that efface their desired intentions and weaken the power of such acts. Spivak sees the subaltern's road to hegemony as a long one, but a necessary one. "Unless we want to be romantic purists about 'preserving subalternity'" Spivak states, noting the contradiction in terms, "this is absolutely to be desired" (310).

Traveling the long road to hegemony means working to dismantle structures of thought that maintain objectifying forces, including those that would bind subjects' identities to predetermined constructs of race, gender, and class. For Bhabha and Comaroff, "agency" exists in rejecting such identities and searching out possible subjectivities outside of the prevailing cultural narratives. As a result, agency is recognizable in "the process of negotiating or translating differences," where agency "becomes individuated and instantiated in and through the process of deciphering a collective project whose 'identity' is not identitarian—it does not try and conserve the

totality or continuity of race or gender or culture.” Bhabha resists identitarianism by utilizing the concept of hybridity, which Philip Leonard believes is more preferable to Bhabha “because it allows him both to challenge hegemonic conceptions of cultural identity and to question tendencies in postcolonial theory to perceive strict and unyielding divisions between a metropolitan centre and a colonial periphery.”

In his attempts to de-center minoritarian identity, Bhabha critiques these divisions that, as Philip Leonard points out, “for him treat the centre as unilaterally possessing power, and see the marginalized as inert, dispossessed, and disarticulated” (132-3). Bhabha and Comaroff prefer to articulate minoritarian agency, which they see as “‘genuinely protective’ in the sense that its identifications are open to historical contingency and its affiliations are genuinely open to the agnostic and antagonistic process unleashed in the search for solidarity” (17). Skirting the irresponsibility of transcendentalism, yet disallowing historical determinism, this agency seems to involve a recognition of historically constructed categories of identity, along with a healthy distrust of the rigidity of such categories. What binds these contradictory perspectives and makes agency possible, is the additional ardent attempt to rearticulate the reality of social unity.

Hegemonic struggle is located most strongly in the intellectual’s discursive work in the world, be that intellectual traditional or organic. James Berlin recognizes the discursive nature of knowledge production, when he argues that, “knowledge is not a static entity located in the external world, or in subjective states, or even in a correspondence between external and internal structures.” Berlin’s work endeavors to redefine knowledge by shifting the traditional focus of knowledge and reality as objective sensory perceptions or subjective personal responses. Instead, Berlin argues for

transactional rhetoric that locates knowledge in discursive transactions where reality, meaning, and value are mediated. Not to be mistaken for relativism, Berlin's discursive transactions are laden with forms of power, struggling for hegemonic dominance in the given linguistic moment and resting on established avenues to those powers.

"Knowledge," Berlin insists, "is dialectical, the result of a relationship involving the interaction of opposing elements" (*Rhetoric* 166). In Berlin's discursive transactions a plurality of ideologies are at play; each linguistic exchange becomes, "a given historical moment displaying a variety of competing conflicts, although" he warns, "the overall effect of these permutations tends to support the hegemony of the dominant class" ("Rhetoric" 479) As organic intellectuals grapple with the hegemony of the dominant class, their efficacy with discourse will assist in their efforts, and, if Parakrama is correct, those efforts will leave a mark on the landscape of the language.

Hegemony allows for a more realistic treatment of power, and it makes everyone more accountable. The redistribution of power allowed in treatments of hegemony allows us to explore alternate forms of power; they also allow us to recognize forms of agency available in the social world. Stuart Hall finds the idea of hegemony useful as well for articulating the real. Hall's work in cultural studies has been influential in reconfiguring post-Marxist theory of social formations. Hall's analyses of social narratives continue to define "the different areas of social life [that] appear to be mapped out into discursive domains, hierarchically organized into *dominant* or *preferred meanings*." For Hall, these dominant meanings work like interpretive apparatuses that allow often for spontaneous consent to hegemonic dominance. Hall prefers this discursive model for articulating social life because, "then, we are not talking about a one-sided process which governs

how all events will be signified.” Instead, the play of dominant meanings in the discursive event “consists of the ‘work’ required to enforce, win plausibility for and command as legitimate a *decoding* of the event within the limit of dominant definitions in which it has been connotatively signified” (172). This discursive work can become the primary focus of postcolonial composition education, where hegemonic struggle lies at the heart of composing acts.

The discursive work suggested in Hall’s social analyses become the basis for the composition pedagogy heralded by Henry Giroux, a rhetorician that insists on critical pedagogy that engages students in a public discourse of citizenship and democracy. For Giroux, attention to hegemonic struggle is valuable because, “as old borders and zones of cultural difference become more porous or eventually collapse, questions of culture increasingly become interlaced with the issues of power, representation, and identity” (*Living* 96). Students must be prepared to participate in the discursive work of culture and they must understand that they cannot as easily rely on asserting dominant ideology without question. They must also learn to appreciate the ways in which attention to hegemony opens up avenues to discursive power for them and for the communities they represent. Writing programs focused on hegemonic struggle expand traditional text-centered perspectives of the composing act, using language proficiency as a means by which to empower students with the discursive knack necessary for critical intervention in the world’s discursive domains.

While hegemonic struggle releases postcolonial theorists from the shackles of the master-slave paradigm, strong post-Marxists appreciate the measures taken to preserve an understanding of the persistence of material forms of dominance. With hegemonic

struggle comes hegemonic dominance, often supporting the status quo and perpetuating historically produced traditions, social formations, and institutions. Parakrama's suggestion that an archeology of English could track hegemonic struggle is intriguing. It suggests even more strongly that vernacular discourses house concentrated counterhegemonic forces. The following chapter will explore the connection between language and identity, and consider the social consequences of linguistic stratification.

Chapter 2: Identity Politics and Writing Instruction

Traditional writing program administrators seldom address the political implications of promoting the appropriation of “academic” or standardized discourse. Thus the significance of subaltern discourse is somewhat lost in traditional writing programs that view nonstandardized Englishes as “substandard.” By ignoring the connections between language and identity, and between linguistic stratification and social stratification, these programs also leave themselves open to scolding accusations of race, class, and gender privilege. The relationship between language and identity is explored in this chapter, with specific focus on identity appropriation. Defining identity as discursive, I argue in this chapter that historically formed discourses house narratives that construct subjects in ways that serve or challenge the social order. Not all narratives are equally sanctioned, however, and writing programs tend to sanction those discourses that serve the existing dominant hegemony. Placing discourse appropriation in the context of conflicting arguments on the efficacy of the English language at communicating postcolonial concerns, the chapter argues for the validity of nonstandardized discourses on the basis of their counterhegemonic value.

IDENTITY AND SUBJECTIVITY

Identity politics are at play in every discursive transaction. Identity is negotiated and determined contextually in each linguistic interaction. This discursive conceptualization of identity bears greatly on English studies. By making the English classroom a monolingual space wherein only standard English is acceptable, writing programs have rejected not only the forms of expression possible in the academic space, but also the identities that would voice those expressions. By de-legitimizing the narratives of non-privileged communities, these programs de-legitimize the identities that are constituted in those narratives.

Couze Venn differentiates subjectivity and identity by equating subjectivity with positionality. For Venn, “the term subjectivity refers to the entity constituted as a position with regard to real processes and mechanisms of constitution of subjects.” Venn qualifies this definition by turning to current theorizations, and argues that subjectivity is “located by reference to general norms of behavior and disposition specified in discourses and technologies of the social.” Venn also notes the “other side of sociality, outside direct state interventions, in which subjectivities emerge.” So here subjectivity amounts to positionality or location within particular discourses, those enforced by the social order, as well as those resisting said order. Identity, for Venn, “refers to the relational aspect that qualify subjects in terms of categories such as race, gender, class, nation, sexuality, work and occupation, and thus in terms of acknowledged social relations and affiliations to groups” (79). Subjectivity, then, it would seem, operates alongside or in tension with identity in any given discursive transaction, producing possibilities within particular narratives of action.

In hegemonic struggle, identity manifests itself in allegiances to discursive constructions of reality. As Venn indicates, “Subjectivity and identity are necessarily interrelated. [...] Together they institute subjects as specific selves.” This approach to identity “is guided by the recognition that in the background of the problem of identity one finds quite basic questions about the ‘who’—of action, of agency, of lived experience, the one who answers the call to responsibility—about belonging and ontological security, questions that are as old as the emergence of human self consciousness” (78). Venn continues by arguing that analysis of subjectivity and identity “directs attention to the linguistic, discursive, technical, temporal, spacial and psychological reality of the processes and to the locatedness of identity and subjectivity by reference to their imbrication or embeddedness within the technico-material space of culture in which they are staged” (80). In other words, identity always consists of subjectivity within particular historically formed cultural narratives. Any treatment of identity, then, must include a strong consideration of language, narrative, ideology, history, and material conditions. At the same time, any treatment of language, and language instruction, must include a strong consideration of identity.

SUBJECTIVITY AND RACIALIZED IDENTITY

Hegemonic struggle determines the master narratives and socially enforced discourses that serve to construct the material conditions of everyday life; thus, hegemonic struggle is a battle for the subjectivities of individuals and social groups. The discourse of colonialism maintains a language of racialization that has proven not only violently destructive to human cultural unity, but also violently resistant to subversive

hegemonic transformation. Within the discourse of colonialism, subjectivity is determined by racial markers. Helen Scott's historical analysis of the construction of racialized identities sheds more light on the relationship between colonial discourse and the persistence of racial hierarchies. Scott argues that the ideology of race has its roots in the simultaneous emergence of the "ideology of the individual, personal liberty and freedom" along with the intensification of slavery at the end of the seventeenth century. Rejecting previous notions of biological race as a notable identity construct of the Early Modern period, Scott contends instead that, in the slavery era, "the ideology of race served to justify the denial of rights to slaves [as] defenders of slavery categorized blacks as a 'subhuman' group consequently undeserving of bourgeois rights" (173). Thus the construction of the black identity as dehumanized served to protect the human rights America was so proud to provide for its white citizens.

The systematic construction of race is the manifestation of the defensive efforts the white community took to vouchsafe for itself the new subjectivity of the authentic individual. Scott notes that this defensive strategy included a "new criterion of status, located in natural differences, readable in external characteristics." Scott attests that, "from this moment on, differences in skin color, once regarded in much the same way as other human differences such as size and hair color, and certainly far less important than religion or status, acquired terrifying significance." The historical intersection, then, of burgeoning American individual freedom and liberty, on one hand, and increasing reliance on human slave labor, on the other, called for a rhetorical manipulation of the American concept of the free individual, one that would celebrate all of the promises of American freedom, and yet maintain the system of human exploitation on which it rested.

The dichotomy of the black and white identities served just such a purpose, exploiting human labor by denying humanity, and communicating it all within a discourse bent on celebrating freedom and liberty. From this time on, Scott states, “blackness and whiteness were taken to be absolute indicators of identity: to be white was to be ‘free’ and to be black a ‘slave’” (173).

The construct of the black identity provides in this chapter not only an exemplary model for introducing the discursive nature of identity and subjectivity, but also a particularly relevant example of the identity politics at play in the discourse of colonialism. Postcolonial historicist David Goldberg traces the development of racialized discourse and argues that “all the concerns with racial classification schemas marking social thought from the late seventeenth century onwards accordingly are about the insistence on epistemological order in the face of the unknown, of control in the face of the anarchic—in general, of order in the face of disorder.” Faced with the daunting evidence of the expansion of racializing discourse concurrent with the growth of the modern period, Goldberg can only define the state of modernity as “the state of imposed order naturalized” wherein the state becomes “not simply consistent with racial classification schemas, but perfectly conducive to—in a sense dependent upon—them” (98). Within the colonialist discourse of plantation capitalism, racialization perpetuated the social hierarchy that was normalized in the everyday narratives and everyday practices of race-based labor exploitation at its most debased, i.e. slavery. Following the emancipation of slaves in the United States, the discourse of plantation capitalism still remained for many a master discourse, determining and constructing the identities of

African Americans as slave labor, as dehumanized subjects, as objects of sympathy, shame, or amusement.

Concomitant with the discourses of colonialism and their racializing subjectifications, discourses of resistance have emerged that continually challenge the conceptualizations of black and white identities that were prevalent in the ideology of white supremacy. The discursive struggle for the emancipation of slavery, for the voting rights of black citizens, for the human and civil rights of African Americans, for equitable economic compensation for exploitative labor practices, still continues to be one that is fraught with the kind of difficulties that are borne from speaking from a distance. That is, emergent, or proto-postcolonial rejections of colonial constructions of reality historically wrestle with constructs that are heavily entrenched—bureaucratically, economically, ontologically—and violently defended. The standardized, legitimized and normalized defenses of colonialism, slavery, and plantation ideologies are in many ways still vying successfully for hegemonic dominance.

Unfortunately, in the process of hegemonic struggle, discourses resisting the ideological forces of white supremacy often continue to utilize racializing practices. These would-be contradiscourses work hard to deconstruct the racial subjectivities presented in the discourses of colonialism. Yet in doing so they often maintain the black-white dichotomy by constructing alternative essentialized identities operating on the same binary identities that produce the tropic figures of the discourse of white supremacy. For example, in the Black Power Movement, White Slavemaster and Black Slave were resignified as White Devil, Black Brother; the significations changed, yet the binaries

remained the same. The difficulty of evaluating the identity and efficacy of contradiscursive acts will be explored further in the following chapters.

IDENTITY AND POSTCOLONIALITY

Colonizing and resistant discourses struggle for representative power and hegemonic dominance. The struggle for hegemonic dominance is more clearly articulated with theories that reject binary oppositions and instead recognize the plurality of discourses that participate in naming reality. Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of heteroglossia is useful for redefining the interplay of discursive formations that constitute individual identities in linguistic transactions. Hegemony involves a multitude of discursive agents who may be working in contention in a Bakhtinian heteroglossia, consistently reconfiguring reality as some epistemologies attempt to anchor social, economic and cultural formations, and others work to destabilize those formations. Some of these worldviews are proliferated in the mainstream and channeled through all available communicative resources; others are voiced from the margins, often outside of bureaucracy and outside of standardized, legitimized discourses.

Bakhtin's conception of the "centripetal forces of the life of language" presents a discursive world in which these epistemologies operate in the midst of heteroglossia. "At any given moment of its evolution," Bakhtin argues, "language is stratified not only into linguistic dialects in the strict sense of the word (according to formal linguistic markers, especially phonetic), but also [...] into languages that are socio-ideological: languages of social groups" (1999). Thus the stratification of social groups is directly related to the stratification of languages in a given socio-cultural formation. For Bakhtin, stratification

and heteroglossia “insure the dynamics” of linguistic life; the two constituting the centripetal and centrifugal forces of linguistically determined reality. Bakhtin notes that, “alongside the centripetal forces, the centrifugal forces of language carry on their uninterrupted work; alongside verbal-ideological centralization and unification, the uninterrupted process of decentralization and disunification go forward” (1199).

Bakhtin’s heteroglossia is far from an even exchange between social unity and the forces of change. Rather, his attention to stratification and to socio-ideological forces draws attention to the contentious nature of the interplay of discourses. This attention to the power relations inherent in language is also evident in Bakhtin’s explanation of the dialogic nature of language as, “a struggle among socio-linguistic points of view” rather than “an intra-language struggle between individual wills or logical contradictions” (1200). Socio-linguistic points of view, or ideological forces, articulate themselves and are disarticulated in discourse transactions, or utterances, which, for Bakhtin, constitute “points where centripetal as well as centrifugal forces are brought to bear” (1199). Bakhtin’s heteroglossia provides a useful metaphor for the postcolonial world because in the reality of postcoloniality, the discourse of colonialism struggles to maintain itself in spite of the multitude of discourses consistently deconstructing it, revealing its tendencies towards debasement and presenting the world with new approaches to social relations, ethical practices, and human purpose.

The sociolinguistic stratification Bakhtin brings to light also reveals that heteroglossia exists in an unequal field of play. Particular sociolinguistic groups have greater expressive power in heteroglossia; their discourses may also have greater authoritative power. At the same time, while utterances from all sociolinguistic groups

are voiced in heteroglossia, not all are heard. Linguistic identity reflects social stratification in important ways. Particular forms of discourse are deemed more legitimate, more academically advanced, more influential. In the discourse of colonialism, the language of the colonizer maintains the position of the standard, and thus maintains the identity of the colonizer *as* the standard, and the superior. While attempts have been made of late to resignify the language standardized and assessed in American educational institutions, the connection between academic discourse, “proper” English or “correct” English, has historical significance that will linger as long as the role of writing instruction in the sociolinguistic stratification of African Americans remains underappreciated. What is now being heralded as “academic discourse,” is often no different from the discourse of the white middle class who continue to benefit from the class stratification produced in the slavery era. The prestige attached to standardized English stems from the prestige attached to the white identity the language constructs.

LANGUAGE AND INTERPELLATION

The possible connections between the standardization of white middle class discourse and the construction of the privileged white identity are of great significance to English studies. In a field where discourse standardization is often becoming the primary task at hand, rhetoricians must politicize the standard and consider the possibility that, by standardizing a discourse that flourished in the era of slavery and colonialism, they may be assisting in fomenting the ideologies that sustained the hegemony of those times. Louis Althusser’s definition of ideology as a function assists in exploring the relationship between language, identity, and ideological formations. For Althusser, “all ideology has

the function (which defines it) of ‘constituting’ concrete individuals as subjects” (1503). Althusser’s famous thesis that ideology interpellates individuals as subjects suggests strongly that discursive activity is highly ideological. At all times, ideology is working to produce social consent to particular social formations. Althusser is particularly interested in dominant power structures, which he argues are sustained through repressive and ideological apparatuses that draw individuals, actively or passively, into accepting existing political, economic and social relations as inevitable.

From its inception, postcolonial scholarship has expressed interest in the problematic connections they find between language and colonization. Mahatma Gandhi expressed great concern that the colonizing discourse present in the English language would interpellate Indians as subjects of European colonial domination. For this reason, Gandhi was a strong defender of Vernacular discourses. According to Ramanathan, “Gandhi’s call for freedom and national unity was indivisibly tied to his views on language: he consistently maintained that a new, liberated India could only fully emerge if it fully and completely enhanced the Vernaculars and gave up being enslaved by all things British.” For Gandhi, this included “the crucial instrument of colonization, namely the English language” (qtd. in Ramanathan 23). Within the context of colonialism, standardized language becomes an interpellative force, perpetuating the association between European discourse and the standard, the correct, the authoritative language and in that way normalizing and disciplining the hegemonic dominance of European imperialism and white supremacy.

Peter McLaren has produced strong critiques of traditional practices in writing instruction as well as innovative applications of critical pedagogy. McLaren, like the

postcolonial theorists before him, expresses his unease with the interpellative powers of language. McLaren argues that these interpellative powers are directly tied to particular ideologies protected by and perpetuated in authorized discourses. Calling on postmodern theory, McLaren warns against adopting notions of language as capable of imparting “hidden and invariant truth,” preferring to recognize the social contexts of truth and knowledge, and the linguistic nature of those contexts: “it stands to reason that language does not simply incarnate reality without implicating agents in relations of power—usually through totalizing systems situated in the dominant regimes of truth, in which interpretive strategies are employed to classify the way ‘we’ understand the social and cultural practices of ‘they’” (77). All reality then—including and especially the reality of identity—is constructed in language, and hence in the interplay of power relations as they are constituted, enforced, and subverted in discursive acts. Even experience must be viewed as subjective, as McLaren notes: since “experience is largely understood through language, and language shapes our views and actions, it follows that experience does not guarantee truth, being always open to conflicting interpretations.” For McLaren, this means that “experience is not some fixed essence, some concrete reality that exists prior to language. [...] Rather, experience is constituted by language” (79).

If we accept McLaren’s postmodern assertion that reality is constituted in language, then Gandhi’s particular concerns are heightened. Standardized colonizing discourses, then, would not only serve as the authoritative and correct discourse, but also as the prevailing and sanctioned perspective from which to understand, interpret, and respond to experience. Standardizing discursive acts seems a useful method for policing

not only language speaking practices, but also language thinking practices. Hence, colonialist discourse can situate racialization as the primary metaphor for identity and reality, and can normalize the practices that serve to sustain the system of racial stratification as a seemingly intractable social system.

Postcolonial theorists are highly concerned with the interpellative function of language, and well they should. World renowned British linguist David Crystal agrees that, in a postcolonial world, “it is inevitable that there should be a strong reaction against continuing to use the language of the former colonial power, and in favor of promoting the indigenous languages.” These arguments hold some weight for Crystal because “they are all to do with identity, and with language as the most immediate and universal symbol of that identity” (125). Identity is at the heart of language; language formations and conventions constitute social identities that can be defined as discourse communities. The idea of discursive communities is at this time one of the most acceptable means by which to define and determine group solidarity without essentializing individuals with bio-determined classifications.

Politics of representation emerge when educators decide for the larger population what language will best suit the public expressions of individuals’ identities, cultures, and concerns. Choosing the discourse sanctioned for public expression may be tantamount to choosing the points of view, ideas, and concerns that may be expressed. Discourse encompasses more than accents, expressions, and usage conventions; underlining all of these linguistic idiosyncrasies are worldviews that serve to make the discourse alive and active in the minds of the users the discourse appropriates and in the world the discourse constructs. One standard language—representative of one privileged discourse

community—cannot in the same manner speak the culture and concerns of a community threatened, demonized, and othered by that privileged community. Instead, subaltern communities must couch their expressions of themselves in the discourse of those that, as DuBois expressed so well, “look on in amused contempt and pity” (615).

This concept of language as the avatar of identity complicates language instruction and standardization, particularly in the context of postcoloniality. The implications for Drew include an expansion of traditional approaches to the writing process “to include not only students’ invention, drafting, and revision practices, but also the practice of analyzing the cultural forces that are necessarily constitutive of the academic texts they will produce” (416). Patricia Bizzell’s inquiries into the effects of cultural background and student acquisition of academic discourse has been highly influential in politicizing language standardization. Bizzell believes that it is ethically imperative that compositionists consider strongly the cultural implications of language instruction. Both Bizzell and David Bartholomae use “discourse community” as a metaphor for the various linguistic groups that their writing students represent and the disciplinary groups those students encounter in the academy. Bizzell agrees with Bartholomae that, regardless of background, “the student who is attempting to master academic discourse is attempting to pass for a member of a particular cultural group.” Failure to share this common stock, Bizzell continues, “is one of the most salient ways a student destroys his or her ethos in the world of college intellectual life” (36-7). What this means for teachers of academic discourse is often an imperative to take the “writing problem” seriously as an issue of ineffective interpellation.

This issue of interpellation leads Bizzell to the understanding that “students’ thinking may need remediation as much as their writing,” an observation which could easily lead to problematic conclusions of the kind that cognitive development theorists have had so stringently critiqued. Accepting the interpellative nature of writing instruction for Bizzell means accepting that “our teaching task is not only to convey information but also to transform students’ whole worldview.” Here Bizzell is simply being honest about the interpellative element of language instruction, and while she offers no alternatives to changing students’ worldviews, she does acknowledge that what we do in the classroom may very well be ideologically questionable.

The ideological component of writing instruction holds profound purport for writing program administrators. As Bizzell indicates, “if [interpellation of students’ worldviews] is indeed our project, we must be aware that it has such scope. Otherwise,” she contends, “we risk burying ethical and political questions under supposedly neutral pedagogical technique” (75). But questions remain whether mere awareness is enough. Postcolonial compositionists still remain skeptical about whether the awareness Bizzell calls for will be enough to contend with the interpellation that seems inevitable when students of English appropriate a discourse so historically entrenched in the colonizing mission, particularly at the rate and number that composition students are made to digest standardized discourse. Comprehensive interdisciplinary research of a difficult nature would be required to answer such questions. This research would involve ethnographic studies and discourse analyses of home discourse communities, academic disciplinary communities, and additional discourses communities into which students are initiated. It would also include pedagogical analyses of the classroom, the teacher, and the writing

program, as well as post-hoc analyses of students' worldviews, agendas, and applications of discourse in the public sphere.

Of course it would still be very difficult to determine the degree to which standardized discourse specifically was attributable to any interpellative changes in the students—even if it is the students themselves who attribute interpellation to language education. Change is part of the learning process, and college is an arena for drastic changes in students' points of view. Yet if such studies indicated a large-scale movement of allegiances from minoritized discourse communities to that of the dominant elite—so much that it amounts to discursive genocide—then educational institutions would have to be held accountable for the role they play in snapping the minds of students away from the ties that bind them to their cultural communities.

Interpellation politicizes discourse appropriation and turns writing programs into ideological state apparatuses, hailing students into the discourse of the status quo. Because identity is so largely discursive, “discourse community” has become a prevailing metaphor for constructing individual identity and group solidarity and for identifying the social and historical forces at play in student success and failure rates in the writing programs. The connection between discourse appropriation and ideological interpellation is further explored in the following section, where Althusser's determinism is challenged by theories that suggest that the English language may not be solely an avatar for historically repressive ideological structures. In many ways postcolonial theory suggests that writing programs may very well be able to defend English as a discourse of critical engagement and contrahegemonic agency.

INTERPOLATION AND CONTRADISCOURSE

While Gandhi's, Parakrama's and others' concerns about the interpellative nature of standardization are salient and necessary, the blatant contradiction inherent in their cries for Vernacular over standardized dialects is, of course, evident in the very language in which their cries are spoken, i.e. Standardized English. The facility of the English language to colonize subaltern discourses is often interrogated by theorists who are quite adept at communicating this information in the very discourse they contend makes it near impossible. It is a paradox of a most disturbing nature; time and time again, postcolonialists, from Fanon to Malcolm X, manage to make the most perspicuous and well considered critiques of colonial domination and the most credible defenses for the abandonment of the discourse of colonialism, all in the blasted discourse of colonialism. Ashcroft believes that, "underlying the dispute over the most effective form of discursive resistance is the question: Can one use the language of imperialism without being inescapably contaminated by an imperial worldview?" The answer, I believe, is no.

Just as one cannot speak of a world outside of the West, one can no longer speak of a discourse that is not contaminated by imperial worldviews. To do so is to pine for antiquated monumentalized worlds that exist merely in Western influenced imaginations. The *level of contamination*, however, is what is at stake in the appropriation of discourse. After all, degrees of contamination depend upon the volume of the contaminant—in this case, with the girth of the colonial project, quite immense—as well as the volume of the contaminated—here, with the ineffectively tallied body of postcolonial peoples—relatively large as well. Contamination also depends on the density of the materials at the areas of contact. Some portions may be more porous and absorbent, others rigid and

intractable. It is difficult to make broad predictions about contamination; instead, one usually has to wait, like watching the waters recede from the streets of New Orleans, to know just how deadly the damage is.

The discourse of colonialism and its ideology of white supremacy negate resistant discourses by claiming authority on reason, on aesthetics, on identity and seem at times to be bent on discursive monopoly. The consequence of such a monopoly would be linguistic extinction for many discourse communities. The concurrent rhetorics of demonization, feminization, and social hierarchy at play in colonizing discourses only serve to perpetuate the association of shame with vernacular discourses, and with the communities these discourses represent. Against these odds, however, postcolonial theorists can present a growing discourse of resistance at play in the hegemonic struggle of the colonial and postcolonial worlds. It is difficult, however, to pin down just when this discourse is most effective and most constructive. It is still uncertain whether the speaker achieves greater praxis or agency when the discourse of resistance is uttered in the Vernacular, or in the standardized language. Also difficult to ascertain is whether the discourse of resistance bourgeons from the Vernacular language, or from a syncretic heteroglossia, or whether the discourse of resistance would even exist without the vernacular language. These uncertainties necessitate further inquiry into the relationship between identity and discourse appropriation.

The link between language and identity is still quite nebulous, which makes staunch accusations of ideology interpellation difficult to prove. According to Ashcroft, while discourse appropriation should remain a concern for postcolonial theorists, there's no need, he believes, for an alarmist rejection of the English language. Ashcroft

deconstructs Althusser's interpellation model to argue that in the case of colonized subjects, there is as much evidence of "interpolation," wherein colonized subjects appropriate the discourse of colonialism and use it to counter its debilitating effects.

It is important to note the distinction between the terms interpellation and interpolation. Interpellation refers to the ways in which ideology hails individuals into subject positions of prevailing narratives; interpolation refers to the means by which individuals use the discourse and narratives of prevailing ideology to interrogate and dismantle ideological structures from within. For Ashcroft, "interpolation counters Althusser's proposition of the *interpellation* of the subject, by naming the process by which colonized subjects may resist the forces designed to shape them as 'other,'" thus providing access to "counter discursive agency" (47). Ashcroft and others take issue with the disempowerment of the interpellation model, which, they argue, deny the hegemonic forces at play in power relations, and thus reinforces top-down models of power that deny subaltern agency.

Ashcroft's argument is important because he places attention on power relations, insisting that forces of interpolation are not necessarily equal to those interpellative forces at play in hegemonic dominance. While interpolation "reverses Althusser's concept of 'interpellation' by ascribing to the colonial subject, and, consequently, to the colonial society, a capacity for agency," Ashcroft states, "this agency is effected within relationships that are radically unequal" (14). But Ashcroft can, at times, appear rather naive about the appropriation of discourse, and he skirts the issue that, for colonized subjects, there still is little choice in the matter.

Contesting the idea that the “apparently dominated culture and the ‘interpellated’ subjects within it” are being “swallowed up by the hegemony of empire,” Ashcroft argues that these subjects are “quite able to interpolate the various modes of imperial discourse to use it for different purposes, to counter its effects by transforming them.” Hence, some minoritized students are able to utilize disciplinary discourse to bring the concerns and interests of their community to the academy, as the growth of postcolonial studies attests. Ashcroft is comforted by the idea that colonized subjects have access to interpolation, and he believes that this makes language instruction crucial for the transformative work he sees for them. “Language,” he argues, “is key to this interpolation, the key to its transformative potential” (14). For Ashcroft, “the interpolation of imperial culture and the appropriation and transformation of dominant forms of representation for the purposes of self-determination, focus with greatest intensity in the function of language” (56).

With such importance placed on language, it is surprising that Ashcroft is unwilling to politicize language and standardization. His sunny approach to appropriation leaves language as an innocent tool it be used in whatever manners best serve the user, but language is far more complex than this suggests. While I agree that “post-colonial subjects in their ordinary dialogic engagement with the world are not passive ciphers of discursive practices,” I am not willing to accept that they are not constructed as such, and it takes a keen critical mind to deconstruct the identities that dominant discourse will construct for colonized subject (48). The playing field is far from equal, and there are far too little examples of Ashcroft’s transformative subjects in comparison with the scores of standardized, colonized subjects participating in postcolonial realities.

In many ways, Ashcroft's arguments can be understood as a valiant attempt to deconstruct traditional hierarchies of power and place further attention on the forms of power available to colonized subjects, in order to keep from silencing their efforts at seizing agency and relegating them to the position of oppressed, impotent, Other. The reality is that colonized subjects *do* seize agency in a number of ways, including through the linguistic power of colonial discourse. As McLaren notes, "all language, according to Freire, works to reproduce dominant power relationships, but it also carries with it the resources for critique and for dismantling the oppressive structures of the social order" (73). And even Ramanathan is willing to support the idea of postcolonial hybridity, "which by its nature implies nativizing, i.e. appropriating the colonizer's language (in this case English) to fit and reflect local ways of thinking, knowing, behaving, acting, and reasoning in the world (vii-viii).

Ashcroft is correct in arguing for the cultural capital of colonial languages, but caution is called for as well, because in appropriating these languages, colonized subjects have a greater chance of being interpellated than they have of interpolating and transforming the discourse of colonialism. In other words, in appropriating a discourse, it is still highly likely that students will become appropriated by the discourse. Apart of Geneva Smitherman's publication of *Talkin' That Talk*, postcolonial theorists who speak their allegiances to the discourses of postcolonial communities successfully have done so in the discourse of colonialism. Attempts are being made to infuse the discourse of the standard with expressions from subaltern discourse communities, hence the basketball reporter's comment, "he was a little vanilla on that play." These remarks, trivial as they may seem, spark fires in hearts of postcolonial language theorists, who wish to see in

them the possibility of appropriation in the other direction—perhaps, if interpellation and interpolation go hand in hand, language standardization can involve creating a national English that represents all of its Englishes, and all of the assumptions, interests, and expressions of all of its communities, not merely those privileged by the historical formation of colonial power.

The following chapter examines discourse appropriation in the composition classroom and historicizes the standardization debate still contested in the field of English studies. Utilizing the discourse community model of individual and collective identity, I present evidence of the politics of interpellation latent in traditional writing instruction that debases vernacular Englishes. I then argue that postcolonial approaches to composition have to reconcile their appreciation of difference with the field's urge toward uniformity.

Chapter 3: Discourse Appropriation and the Politics of Writing Instruction

In this chapter, postcolonial theory provides a historical scope from which to consider the politics of identity and the politics of language standardization. In this chapter I argue that language standardization reproduces social stratifications constructed in colonialist contexts and thereby perpetuates colonialist worldviews and realities. I explore the metaphors of discourse and discourse appropriation commonly applied to language and language instruction and consider the significance of discourse communities to subaltern identity and agency. I then interrogate the role of the writing program in constructing student's identities and argue that postcolonial theory is useful for addressing responsibly the highly political project of language standardization.

DISCOURSE COMMUNITIES AND LANGUAGE WAR

The sociological problem of language standardization is in many ways an issue of interpellation. At the heart of the language war is an ideological war, in which competing points of view engage in hegemonic struggle. As discussed previously, hegemonic struggle is by no means equal; ideological and state apparatuses serve to construct and perpetuate particular ideologies and epistemologies as the standard. In the postcolonial world, the academy is just one apparatus that maintains the traditionally privileged language of the colonial world. In the discursive war for hegemonic dominance, the

academy's preference for the discourse of the white middle class maintains the traditional privileging of whiteness.

Patricia Bizzell's work on discourse communities is relevant to the construction of discourse standardization as a language war because Bizzell acknowledges the discrepancies between worldviews, agendas and conventions of academic discourse communities and those of a large number of students. According to Bizzell, social groups at work together on the same project "modify each other's reasoning and language use in certain ways." These ways eventually achieve conventions that serve to bind the groups into discourse communities. These discourse communities share worldviews and agendas. Importantly, Bizzell points out that, "an individual can belong to more than one discourse community, but her access will be unequally conditioned by her social station." In this way, participation in a discourse becomes far less innocent as writing instructors often make it appear to be. Access to academic discourse is easily available to those predisposed to the discourse through early interaction with the community of speakers of standardized discourse. The composition course often plays the role of "gatekeeper," limiting access to academic agency to those who already share the discourse, worldview, and agendas of the privileged class.

Bizzell expands on the connection between discourse and worldview. She argues that "the mature exercise of thought and language capacities takes place in society, in interaction with other individuals, and this interaction modifies the individuals' reasoning, speaking, and writing within a society." This modification is, in reality, the mechanism of interpellation. Individuals' identities are shaped in discourse transactions as they learn the familiar ways of their particular discourse communities. Bizzell insists

that the concept of a discourse community is far more complex than general socialization. These communities are not merely “groups who have decided to abide by certain language-using rules.” Instead the idea of a discourse community implies not merely speaking, but interpreting, understanding the ways of knowing that are shared amongst the group, the understood, implied, epistemological foundation of what is understood, the what-goes-without-saying. These are the conventions that are at the heart of a discourse, and while they remain hidden in implication, Bizzell suggests that they are the real conventions that determine success in many writing classrooms.

Discourse conventions include “social mores and taboos as well as speech patterns and style” and perhaps for this reason Bizzell insists that English studies investigate the language stratification more seriously. For Bizzell, knowledge of discourse conventions implies acceptance of the highly political nature of language instruction, where particular discourses are enforced and others are disenfranchised. It is important that Bizzell includes attention to reasoning in her definition of discourse conventions. Discourses shape subjects’ ways of thinking, continually steering their ideas more closely to the particular work of the group.

Not everyone in composition theory is satisfied with the discourse communities model of the writing classroom. While new rhetoricians are pleased with the attention these models place on linguistic difference and student success in writing programs, some still consider Bizzell’s and Bartholomae’s treatments of the issue dichotomized and oversimplified. Debra Jacobs critiques the loss of the concept of voice that she believes was too hastily discarded in the rejection of expressivism. Jacobs is concerned by discourse communities theories that restrict writer’s identity and agency. In these models,

Jacobs argues, writers can only achieve praxis by “becoming an insider in a power structure.” Jacobs reclaims Platonic and Aristotelian notions of voice as the self acting socially, and applies Bakhtin’s concept of the individual participating in heteroglossia in order to present a social identity for the self that is not passively co-opted by master discourses, but instead actively intervenes in the interplay of discourse. Thus, Jacobs’s conception of voice “recognizes discourse as situated both rhetorically and socially.” Jacobs rearticulates voice in order to shift away from inner-directed notions of personal self-expression, while also avoiding outer-directed constructions of the writer as a “thoroughly collectivized self whose intentions, means, and ends—in short, whose voice—are invented by the community” (“Voice” 82).

M. Jimmie Killingsworth argues against the trend toward pastoral conceptions of discourse communities. For Killingsworth, “the term discourse community can lead an analyst astray by prompting an uncritical acceptance of ‘community’ as a ‘natural’ element or transcendental category.” Careful of the politics of representation, Killingsworth provides a useful caution against pastoral conceptions of community; since all communities are socially constructed, “the act of identifying communities is never innocent” (110). Killingsworth would like a conceptualization of discourse communities that takes into account the negative as well as positive influences of discourse communities on the minds of those who seek or are coerced into membership.

Killingsworth identifies the juxtaposition of discourse communities as an invasion in which outside “interlopers within an established discourse community want to recreate the community by importing values and practices from previous experiences, from different places.” This language battle takes place outwardly in the local discourse

community, and inwardly as the individual interloper clashes with the global dominant discourses that attempt to construct the individual's identity. Killingsworth states that, "in dialectical combat, the interlopers will eventually either conform to the established requirements of the new community or change the community to accommodate their own perspectives" (120-21). Here again, interpellation works in contention with interpolation as discourse communities intersect in the discursive transactions of lived reality. In the classroom, the established requirements of the academy serve one community, while others strive for membership. These new members must either change to meet the requirements of the discourse or attempt to change the discourse to reflect their entry into membership.

While Bizzell insists that writing instructors must acknowledge the politics of policing standardized discourse while disenfranchising speakers of nonstandardized English, she also searches for a means by which to defend academic discourse as the language that traditionally has bound those members of the discourse community of the academy who share in the pursuit of scholarship. Bizzell imagines the discourse community of the academy as a site of self-criticism and debate than shuns unanimity: "Unlike many other human communities, the academic community has embodied in its discourse the conventions to ensure that dialogue cannot long remain silent" (139). Hence, Bizzell prefers to defend the need for a "standard language of academic discourse," that provides the "educated ethos" of the schooled, edited, credible speaking, writing subject. "Writers who use Standard English fluently," Bizzell insists, "show that they have been in school, that they have learned to take pains with their work—in short that they have received the training necessary to the academic community's rigorous

intellectual tasks.” For Bizzell, this justification of standardization avoids “claims that other forms of English are cognitively inferior to the standard form.”

Bizzell’s optimism about academic discourse conventions, however, border on naive at times, perhaps because she, more than many compositionists, is so honest in revealing the fact that all discourse communities, including academic discourse, are historical constructs that are linguistically equal, but ideologically divergent. Bizzell argues that, “discourses exist by virtue of sharing certain assumptions, protocols and practices that enable them to deal collectively with their experiences in the material world.” Yet regrettably, Bizzell does not acknowledge the many ways in which this discourse she heralds is steeped in assumptions, protocols, and practices that serve to maintain racialized forms of oppression constituted in the community’s historical experience in the material world (140, 144). Instead, Bizzell asserts idealistically that “the academic community undertakes communal thinking projects for the larger society,” and insists that “the object is not to get people to think alike, but rather to get them to think together about a challenge that has emerged in interaction in the world” (144). While this is what Bizzell would like to believe is the goal of writing programs, few have achieved such goals thus far. The grandiose notion of academic discourse still has not been actualized, but this romantic notion continues to perpetuate the social injustices of linguistic stratification.

Xin Liu Gale provides an analysis of discourse appropriation in the writing classroom that problematizes the discursive hierarchy Bizzell and others confirm when they get “carried away by their belief in the righteousness of their own ‘national discourse.’” Citing Derrida’s treatment of the multi-situational effects of rhetoric, Gale

contends that “in the writing class, whether a certain discourse has a positive or negative effect on student s depends on how the teacher and students are related to this discourse—politically, economically, socially, culturally, and linguistically—and how they interact with this discourse.” For Gale this complicates Bizzell’s academic discourse argument because “to argue convincingly whether one discourse is preferable than the others requires an examination of the relationships of various discourses in the classroom and an analysis of the ways in which they interact with one another” (64). Bizzell does call for more attention in writing instruction to the very nature of discourse conventions themselves, suggesting the need for attention to the politics involved in discourse appropriation. Yet her defense of academic discourse calls for, rather than produces, a well-needed historical analysis of the understated discourse conventions and worldviews that constitute the historically produced “educated ethos.” Any such analysis would surely require close attention to the material conditions from which the ethos arose, including the historical condition of slavery and colonialism.

While defenses of language standardization abound in the field of English studies, postcolonialist studies still remains in disagreement over the efficacy of the language of the colonizer to communicate the concerns, the critiques, and the self-affirmations that constitute the myriad discourses of postcolonial discourse communities. For Bill Ashcroft, Standard English does retain a level of neutrality, and colonial discourse can serve as a useful tool for the postcolonial to interpolate the traditionalist configurations of power and transfigure social structures. Ashcroft believes that “mastering the master’s language has been a key strategy of self-empowerment in all postcolonial societies.” Focusing on the “cultural capital” dominant languages contain, Ashcroft argues that the

very position of the “‘proper,’ the ‘correct,’ the ‘civilized’” can be appropriated by colonial subjects, and that this appropriation can be a form of empowerment (58).

Interpolation has been largely accepted as a reality in postcolonial studies. Citing Fanon’s famous declaration that, “to speak a language is to take on the world,” Ashcroft finds much weight in the idea of “taking on,” because, he argues, “there can be no doubt that a colonial language gives access to authority.” Ashcroft expands Fanon’s ideas by defining the act of appropriation as one-sided, arguing that when the speaker takes on the language, the language does not take on the speaker. Instead, for Ashcroft, the access to authority gained through the process of appropriation does not come about as a feature of the language itself, as if “through a process by which the speaker absorbs, unavoidably, the culture from which the language emerge.” In other words, rather than discourse appropriation creating a cultural clone whose access to authority comes at the price of her or his own agenda, Ashcroft finds that discourse appropriation can result in a “comprador identity” that emerges “through the act of speaking itself, the act of self-assertion involved in using the language of the colonizer” (57).

Interpolation should not be heralded without some concern. Certainly the acceptance of interpolative possibilities does not negate the reality of interpellation. The problem with Ashcroft’s and Bizzell’s sanguine treatments of standardized English appropriation, for instance, is evidenced in Elaine Richardson’s exploration of the case of Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas. Richardson finds Justice Thomas’s scant words on his early education enlightening in regard to his present political participation in the shaping of the American Justice system. Thomas’s educational experience was riddled with self-shame over what he referred to as his “Gullah,” the version of Black Vernacular

English spoken in his community. Richardson strongly believes that “the general societal devaluation of Black people’s language and culture helped to shape Thomas’s language attitudes” (41). This argument represents some efforts by rhetoricians to track the debilitating effects of language stratification on student solidarity with their home discourse communities.

In Richardson’s analysis, Justice Thomas’s example reveals that, in losing the language war to standardized discourse, non-standard discourse communities are losing the ideological war with white supremacy. Thomas’s insecurities about speaking the language of his community in the authoritative world of the classroom, his eventual appropriation of standardized discourse, and the concurrent adoption of that selfsame degrading of BVE contributes greatly to his lack of solidarity with the concerns of the African American community. For Richardson, “Thomas is the product of a consciousness that has Black people working their way into the system, adopting or adapting dominant cultural values, gaining education and training that elevates them to the positions inside of government where they can affect change, and carrying out policies to benefit Black people as a group” (41). This worldview shares much with those arguments made by Ashcroft and others in defense of the appropriation of standardized discourse as a means toward empowerment. The problem is that while maintaining colonial discourses as “the standard, the correct, the authoritative,” those defenses so stigmatize postcolonial languages such as BVE, that the agenda of postcolonialism is sacrificed. Successful appropriation the conventions, assumptions, and worldviews of standardized discourse often comes at the price of the vernacular. Justice Thomas’s example reveals how often academic discourse silences the transformative agenda of the

postcolonial and replaces that agenda with a strong solidarity with the status quo that does not empower the original discourse community in any way.

Justice Thomas is a very interesting example of this problem of academic interpellation because this African American Judge would seem so empowered and so successful, in other words an exemplary example of the access to social acceptance and accomplishment that Standardized English is supposed to provide. However, as Richardson points out, Justice “Thomas’s silence does not allow him to fulfill this role. He appears to many to have forgotten the lessons of struggle and history, suppressing his non-institutionally sanctioned Gullah (and the values of cultural equality that it represents) for institutionally sanctioned silence and the voting behavior of an arch-conservative.” (41). Here then lies the disparity between the dream of empowerment through standardized language appropriation and the reality of cultural colonialism.

Richardson’s examination of Justice Thomas’s early language education and later voting patterns reveals the long term damage that may be caused by the attitudes teachers share about non-sanctioned discourses while teaching students to appropriate the standardized discourse that emerged from a history of racialized oppression. “As language educators and scholars in this increasingly complex society,” the compositionists warns, “we must stay abreast of the source of our own language attitudes, as they may help us to revise our pedagogical approaches and influence the language attitudes and policies of future justices of the supreme Court” (41-42).

Arguments defending standardization place themselves in very dangerous situations, resting often on rather shaky, ideologically-laden ground. The linguistic reality is that there is no sustainable evidence of the superiority of standardized discourse;

instead, the arguments quickly become a defense of historically determined conventions of speech, born from traditions that can no longer be heralded. Parakrama problematizes the academic defense of the so-called standard by placing the pursuit of universal discourse in postcolonial terms. “The universal support for an educated standard” Parakrama writes, “which has remained unquestioned in the discipline, displaces issues of class, race and gender in language. It is due to this insensitivity to the social dynamic as struggle against hegemony that linguists can defend postcolonial English on the grounds of neutrality” (21). The neutrality argument fails when standard English is placed in a historical and linguistic context. In both contexts, standard English cannot maintain itself as an innocent bystander in the language war.

In light of the history of colonialism that has produced the standardized discourse constructed and perpetuated in the academy, and in light of the reality that this standard is in no way superior to any other form of English, discourses that directly engage in hegemonic contention with the worldviews of the colonial world have more weight, more value, and more esteem than those who preserve them. They should therefore be appreciated in the academy and should not be categorized as sub-standard. Parakrama finds little worth in arguments that standardized English is merely a tool, and therefore neutral, open to a variety of competing ideologies. Instead, Parakrama argues that “pleas for neutrality of English in the postcolonial context are as ubiquitous and insistent as they are unsubstantiated and unexplained” and suggests that the neutrality argument is specious, and laden with a hidden agenda of neocolonialism. “It is as if the neutrality of English is a metonym for the neutrality of linguistics itself,” the theorist argues, “so that there is more at stake in this displaced valorization.” For Parakrama, it would seem that

the neutrality of the colonial language is dependent on the neutrality of colonialism itself, and that this in turn obtains the “neutrality-objectivity-scientificity of the derivative discourses of colonialism” (26).

This unquestionable authority granted standardized English, as official discourse of “objective” scientificity, becomes yet another means by which standardization conceals its ties to colonial forms of power. As Parakrama explains, “Standard languages, despite all disclaimers to the contrary, discriminate against minorities, marginal groups, women, the underclass, and so on, albeit in different ways, in the subtle manner that our ‘enlightened’ times call for, since overt elitism is no longer tenable.” Placing the debate at the heart of a Gramscian war of ideology, Parakrama argues that, “the neutrality of Standard Language/Appropriate Discourse has thus become a useful way of dissimulating hegemony” (41). Standardization here is tied closely to interpellation, not only through the insistence on one way of speaking, thinking, and uttering, but also through the demonization of nonstandardized, postcolonial discourses. The dissimulating of hegemonic struggle operates in the writing classroom by means of uniformity and through shame.

The idea of a standard seems innocent enough; we all need to share a common discourse in order to aid effective communication, maintain reliable conventions for universally understood texts, and facilitate language adoption by new members of the English speaking world. However, the language of “the standard” is grounded in a language of superiority, and the chosen standard derives from a discourse community that historically actively determined itself—wrongly, but violently—the standard of racial, intellectual, and authoritative superiority. All of these determinations remain invisible,

yet palpable in the ardent defenses of standardization, in the heartfelt insecurities of postcolonial discourse communities, and in the countless failing grades that drive members of those communities in droves away from the dream of transformative scholarship.

In the following sections, the possibilities for agency and interpolation are explored in the context of the composition classroom. I consider the choices available to writing program administrators to fight linguistic colonization and dehegemonizing forces in their writing programs. I also explore the pedagogical measures compositionists are taking toward those ends. This is a very difficult endeavor, however. Because education is so strongly steeped in the history and structure of colonialism, the colonialist zeal continues to inform the teaching of writing, both from within the discipline and from without in the social world. I believe that writing program administrators must interrogate their writing programs and consider the position their programs are taking on the language war.

DISCOURSE APPROPRIATION AS LINGUISTIC COLONIALISM

Much of the published scholarship in composition theory has shifted, of late, from the issue of appropriation that was so crucial to compositionists of the postcolonial Freirean pedagogical school to more apoliticized treatments of student expression. As writers like Patricia Bizzell and Zebrosky argue for a political critique of language instruction and its cultural impacts, their attempts to draw attention to the indoctrinating effects of English instruction have left them open to accusations of indoctrination. The result, unfortunately, has been an impasse that has paved the way for a second wave of

expressionist rhetoric, advocating in the expressivist vein of Peter Elbow that students “think for themselves” and suggesting that a “teacherless classroom” can be devoid of indoctrination. Expressionism still, however, spends too little time theorizing and almost no time politicizing the teacherless teacher’s obligation to assess students’ writing. With a pedagogical approach that dismisses assessment, assessment tends to remain in the current-traditional paradigm, legitimizing white normativity, standardizing the discourse of the status quo, and keeping the gate slammed shut against the tide of would-be scholars whose discourses bear the marks of class and kin.

The critiques of current-traditional pedagogy that seemed so crucial and groundbreaking in the 80’s have yet to change the paradigm of current-traditional composition scholarship, as Bizzell’s application of Thomas Khun seemed to promise. While we’ve all been made to understand that discourse is central to knowledge construction and to identity construction as well, teachers of writing seem hesitant to accept the responsibility that this knowledge demands. The direct relationship drawn between thinking and writing and between language instruction and identity construction presents such a challenge to writing pedagogy that the field seems unable to fathom what to do from here. This impasse may also stem from the contradictory nature of the field of rhetoric and composition itself, on one hand an ancient theoretical practice, mapping out the relationships between language, identity, power and knowledge; and on the other hand a modern administrative practice of employing cheap, inexperienced labor to ill-preparedly instruct and assess an ever-increasing body of thousands, less and less prepared each year.

Perhaps it is no surprise that the balance between the contradictory but concurrent interests in critical scholarship and mass education in the field is mediated by both a sense of wild expressivist abandon and stubborn current-traditionalist adherence to rules of grammatical micromanagement. One only has to imagine a first year graduate student on the first day of teaching composition—anthologized reader in one hand, grammar handbook in the other, in between a quick confident pace blurring the frantic darts of the eyes—to understand the political delicacy of such a balance, particularly in the context of postcoloniality. The reality is, however, that in the context of postcoloniality, a blind approach to the politics of writing instruction is insufficient and less than admirable.

If compositionists are indeed searching for alternatives to outdated cognitive models, then they must accept the reality that language instruction is political. Writing instructors train students to write and foster students' skills at thinking. This work affects students' thinking in numerous ways, some more generative than others. In addition, the teaching of writing is a means by which to police writing; through assessment, writing instructors normalize particular agreed-upon and often discretionary linguistic patterns and forms. These assessments serve to determine entry into and exclusion from classes—both academic and social. We are trained, some more than others, to teach students to think, and to express those thoughts in writing; ignoring this responsibility does not make this process go away. Rather, students are still taught to think and express thoughts—but “Whose thoughts?” is left unquestioned. This is the questionable element of discourse appropriation that is often unconsidered in writing pedagogy. In policing language we invariably police expression. Modes of expression constitute discourses and discourse

communities, some sanctioned and legitimized through mechanisms such as education, and others Othered, disenfranchised and chastised into the margins.

Bartholomae's concept of "appropriating (and being appropriated by)" discourse is intriguing to this postcolonial analysis of composition 's challenges. As discussed earlier, Bartholomae's use of discourse community as a model for the writing classroom offer a means by which to discuss classed, racialized and gendered identities without the problematic pitfalls of essentialism. Identity, here, is an intersubjective social formation that is primarily discursive and, naturally, historical. That is, not "natural" in the biological sense, but in the sense that discourse is produced in historical sequence, so that what is known is resultant of what has been known, and so that how we know ourselves is necessarily the result of how we have been discursively defined in the past. Thus is the nature of discourse; while it binds us socially through shared understandings of reality and our places within it, discourse also binds us psychologically to the ideological underpinnings of the epistemic past.

The idea of binding, however, is not as severe as connoted in a binding legal contract; all contracts, after all, can be renegotiated, strengthened, or at times, violently, even maliciously broken. In many ways, however, the concept of history as a contract can be maintained. The resonances of the past serve to maintain power relations that privilege those to whom historical circumstances has granted authority; they serve as well to construct the social codes that can exist within those necessarily protected relations, and to provide a sense of order that can be policed by necessary bureaucratic and penal measures. At the same time, we, the present subjects, by existing in a world produced through the machine of history, are de facto signees of the ideological formations and

decrees that precede us. We can change, reconfigure, even subvert our inheritances of history, but we cannot operate outside of their reach, for our realities can only exist within historically produced realms of discourse.

Within realms of discourse, subjects can achieve agency, though agency is available in different discursive forms and access to forms of agency remains more available to some and less to others. Typically, the most recognized forms of agency have been primarily understood in terms of written discourse, though Bhabha and others caution against locating hegemonic agency simply in the manipulation of technical and textual literacy. Agency involves active participation in the discursive interactions—verbal and written—that constitute hegemonic struggle. However, with the ever expanding growth of textual and technological hegemony in globalized culture, written texts do serve to produce historical record, contemporary policy, and linguistic standard.

The written text plays a strong role in construction of historical reality, as written discourse and written version of reality often serves as the primary records of history. The written text is purposely inefficient, however in recoding the historical balance between the dominating force of inherited hegemonies produced by imperialism, colonialism, and patriarchy on one hand, and the transformative contra-discourses that have been managing, through subversive discursive practices, to wrest the human world from the barbaric grips of colonialist ideologies.

Bhabha is correct to draw our attention to the non-textual hegemonic victories found in the discursive practices of everyday life. However, rhetoricians and postcolonial theorists must address the materiality of written discourse. They must analyze the ways in which historically produced hegemonies are perpetuated through the control and

proliferation of authoritative discourses and written texts and through the practices of exclusivity that continue to restrict these discourses to those privileged by the dominant hegemonies. It is this exclusivity that makes education complicit in the continued influence of the age of slavery. The exclusivity encouraged in language standardization wrests the writing classroom from the comfortable construction of the democratic “contact zone.” No longer considered the bastion of democracy and equal opportunity, education instead has come to be defined as the gatekeeper, maintaining class barriers by policing and standardizing forms of discourse, and by stratifying knowledge and pedagogical aims along class lines.

Hegemonic struggle occurs in many forms in many areas at once. Power is shared and contested by both organic and traditional intellectuals. The tension between interpellation and interpolation make it difficult to pin down and define the powers at play in discursive transactions. The visibility and materiality of standardized and textual discourse leaves it language open to charges of overt indoctrination. Meanwhile, the discursive efforts that reconfigure hegemonic formations are not often sanctioned, recorded or institutionalized. Hence, interpellation tends to be easier to claim than interpolation, which reveals itself, ironically, in accusations of interpellation. The following pages of this chapter will situate writing program administrators at the crossroads between interpellation and interpolation and will investigate the politics of this location.

COLONIZATION AND IDENTITY POLITICS IN WRITING PROGRAMS

When writing instructors engage their students in the process of discourse appropriation, they participate in identity politics. Whether facilitating interpellation or interpolation, the teaching of writing involves the construction of students' subjectivities. This politics should not cause writing instructors to avoid the issue of appropriation in the classroom. Rather, they should make it the subject matter of the course, and allow students to acknowledge the ways in which discourses actively appropriate while being appropriated. Bartholomae is on the right track; college writing is much like joining a community, learning its conventions and subject positions, its ideologies as well as its mannerisms—the fact is, the two go hand in hand. It is when these discursive idiosyncrasies become second nature that one truly evinces mastery of a discourse—when the speaker is no longer trying to “carry off the bluff.” But depending on what one does with this mastery, internalization can be called many things, from interpellation and colonization, to interpolation and hegemonic agency.

The writing instructor is in a curious position, at once the colonizer, disciplining language and privileging the discourse of the status quo, at the same time the revolutionary, equipping discursive agents with the tools to dismantle the prevailing system. In either case, the position of the writing instructor is highly political; perhaps this is why the implications of pedagogical decisions in the field of composition are so widely theorized. Debra Jacobs provides a useful critique of the discourse appropriation model that often dismisses the importance of process in writing classrooms. Jacobs explores the “vexing relationship between, on the one hand, the role of emancipatory classroom teacher, and, on the other, institutional disciplinary authority,” and contends

that a return to process pedagogy will assist in “disrupting the ‘flows’ of power and control in the writing classroom” (668, 673). Jacobs cautions against the current rejection of process pedagogy in critical writing programs and argues that writing instructors and students should attend to the process by which ideas are considered, shaped, and communicated in academic discourses. These kinds of “in(ter)ventional practices,” Jacobs contends, infuse the classroom with critical inquiry by “intervening in quotidian (uncritical) consciousness” and “opening up possibilities for *processual* acts of cognition.” This critical approach to writing and thinking processes helps to avoid the interpellative forces at play when students are asked to write for teachers.

The interpellative force of education needs constant attention in language pedagogies that critique, evaluate, and grade students’ reflections on reality. Composition and postcolonial studies are alike in their preoccupation with appropriation, as well both should, given what we now know about epistemological formations and hegemonic dominance, as well as what we know about language and identity. Bahri believes that both fields have a “vested interest in examining issues of authority and power as sources of psychological and social conflict” (71). For Bahri, the impetus for postcolonial studies in composition is in the classroom, where both students and teachers are increasingly representative of postcolonial cultures. The postcolonial teacher, especially, injects the field with new concerns, both pedagogical and theoretical. As Bahri indicates, “increasingly, postcolonial theory deals not only with the impact of colonial education on individual and collective postcolonial identity but also addresses the politics of education in the Anglo American academy where many postcolonial critics now find themselves” (69).

Bahri is quite interested in the presence of “the third world postcolonial, the authentically ethnic teacher who bears, wittingly or otherwise, the welcome flag of visible diversity.” Quite pragmatically, Bahri declares the presence of postcoloniality by declaring the presence of postcoloniality; it’s here, because *it’s here*—because *I’m* here. “The presence of [the third world postcolonials] along with that of a more diverse student body at a time of growing interest in diversity,” Bahri believes, has brought postcolonial issues to the table in the field of rhetoric and composition, “coloring the field” in surprising ways (68). While postcolonial theory has recently found a place in postcolonial theory, however, Bahri voices some concern about the efficacy of postcolonialism in composition, and considers whether the “contained radicalism of constructs such as the postcolonial, authorized by institutional sanctity, and altogether too suspiciously welcome in the academy,” should give those in composition studies more than a moment of pause”

The postcolonial position in composition can place theorists in the awkward position of “searching for an Other.” It is well worth considering the political position one takes when speaking on behalf of postcolonial subjects that do not define themselves as such, or those that would much prefer to identify with what, in postcolonial constructs, could only be defined as the authoritative oppressor. It is equally important to consider the political position of the postcolonial teacher—marked by difference—at once representative of the history of racial rule, working within the dominant discourse to dismantle and transform the hegemonic structure, at the same time spokesperson for the dominant discourse, prime example of the appropriated colonized other.

The conflicting roles of the writing instructor compel postcolonial compositionists to delve into the politics of identity and to examine obsessively the politics of appropriation. We are certain that we have the potential to do great cultural damage when we teach our students to appropriate the dominant discourse in place of those of their upbringing; we know our courses have the potential to change not only what they write, but how they think, and—scariest of all—who they are. And we know that this is not something we can ignore. But when we attempt to articulate these real and vital concerns—much like the postcolonial theorists who fall into pitfalls—we often run the risk of diminishing our students’ power even further.

Calling on the postcolonial theorists who avoid the pitfalls of representative politics, Gary Olson argues that, “postcolonial theory can illuminate how despite students’ attempts to empower themselves by learning to inhabit subject positions, and despite our own efforts to facilitate this process, we construct students as other, reinforcing their position in the margins where it is doubly difficult to gain the kind of empowerment we ostensibly wish to encourage” (“Encountering” 89). Here is where the self-reflective nature of postcolonial theory can assist in laying bare our vulnerable position of working with and against the social order at once. Lu appreciates the postcolonial studies in composition because it provides a reminder that “to proclaim oneself a radical worker inside US English Studies is to confront its official function in global and international domination” and “to wrestle with our complicity with the compulsion of English to ‘help’ the so-called Third world, minority, student, or basic writers by creating and legislating their ‘needs’” (10).

Complicating the politics of writing instruction further is the legitimization of “standard English,” a discourse that is so increasingly challenged and decontextualized, that for many it is growing obsolete outside the parameters of the college classroom. British linguist David Crystal has analyzed the growing fluctuations in the English language with great curiosity, and finds the implications of these fluctuations difficult to decipher. Also of keen interest to Crystal is the tension growing between “the need for intelligibility and the need for identity [that] often pull people—and countries—in opposing directions. The former, “Crystal argues, “motivates the learning of an international language, [...] the latter motivates the promotion of ethnic language and culture.” Crystal’s investigation have led him to conclude that “conflict is the common consequence when either position is promoted insensitively.” These conflicts can have even greater implications when they arise in American schools, which are responsible for educating nearly four times as many mother-tongue speakers of English as any other nation in the world.

Analyzing the relationship between cultural identity and national language, Crystal admits that the rejection of English in any nation would have important consequences for the nation’s identity, and “it can cause emotional ripples (both sympathetic and antagonistic) around the English-speaking world. While few such rejections have occurred, and where they have occurred the populations have been too few to have a “notable impact” on the status of English, Crystal sees on the horizon the potential for quite a notable impact in America, where, he argues, “on grounds of population size alone, a major change in the sociolinguistic situation could turn ripples into waves.” For this reason, Crystal believes that “the future status of English must be

bound up to some extent with the future” of the United States, from whence “so much of the power which has fueled the growth of the English language during the twentieth century has stemmed” (127).

According to Crystal, “Standard” English supports urgings for intelligibility by balancing the pull imposed by the need for identity that has been “making New Englishes increasingly dissimilar from British English” (178). Crystal is careful not to discredit these “New Englishes,” nor insinuate that they should be in any way delegitimized—at least not openly. “It seems,” he begins, “that if a community wishes its way of speaking to be considered a ‘language’ and if they have the political power to support their decision, there is nothing which can stop them doing so. The present-day ethos,” Crystal admits (reluctantly?) “is to allow communities to deal with their own internal policies themselves, as long as these are not perceived as being a threat to others” (179) What results in the field of linguistics is hands thrown up into “the winds of linguistic change,” and a close investigation and codification of the mounting chaos—or the blooming heteroglossia—of English in the postcolonial era.

Britain especially is observing closely the unpredictable winds of change in the English language, as they have been for many more centuries than the United States can brag. However, Crystal readily admits that, “when even the largest English-speaking nation, the USA turns out to have only about 20 percent of the world’s English speakers, it is plain that no one can now claim sole ownership.” This reality in many ways serves to define English as a global language: “its usage is not restricted by countries or (as in the case of some artificial languages) by governing bodies.” So it seems that English has no owner.

Perhaps as a “free agent,” English has the freedom to prove its efficacy for any project and sign with one team today, and an opposing one the next, and, perhaps, it can even switch sports. What linguists are not often willing to do however, is articulate the ways in which history plays a strong part in the directions the winds of change take. By throwing their hands up in the air, linguists may evade the dangerous work of sociolinguistic manipulation, which could, in this tense climate constitute a kind of cultural genocide. In this way they stand on safer ground than the compositionists, whose hands are in the thick of language politics, grappling with the academy’s impulse for standardization and the postcolonial impulse for difference.

Writing programs consist of contradictory agendas. Writing program administrators work to produce linguistic uniformity in order to foster mutual intelligibility in the academy. At the same time, critical writing programs work to produce critical thinking in order to foster hegemonic agency in their students. These conflicting agendas complicate the role of the writing program administrator and leave writing programs open to charges of insensitivity, irresponsibility, and indoctrination. Writing programs place themselves in a better position to respond to these charges when they take the time to historicize their practices and to embrace the reality of identity politics. It is my contention that when writing program administrators accept the reality of identity politics in their programs, they can defend their pedagogical and administrative decisions more strongly and thus can withstand the outside forces that attempt to determine for them their goals and objectives. The following chapter addresses some of the outside pressures on writing programs and provides postcolonial methods for responding actively to the constant attempts to colonize the writing classroom.

Chapter 4: The Writing Program Administrator

The Writing Program Administrator works in a world of great possibility and great limitation. In the previous chapter, the writing program administrator was often described as existing in tension between contradictory agendas, or at a crossroads between the discourse of the academy and that of the student. The WPA must function well under pressure, and under great levels of visibility. WPAs must cope not only with the pressures of scheduling, staffing and monitoring a vast number of courses each semester, but they must also cope with the concerns voiced from departmental, university-wide, and nationwide complaints about the quality of student writing.

Writing programs are often the scapegoats for rants about the quality of education as well as complaints about educational disenfranchisement of minoritized groups. I believe that one of the first steps to handling the pressures of the WPA position is to cope with the identity politics that constitutes WPA work. Accepting the identity politics of writing instruction requires that WPAs recognize and defend their own political positioning. It also requires WPAs to situate and defend their political positionings within the context of prevailing historical and social theories on language and identity. This self-reflective work will lead to more responsible and defensible pedagogical practice and will better equip WPAs to face the difficult challenges posed by students, parents, professors, administrators, and legislators who would all like to believe that they know how best to run a writing program.

POSTCOLONIAL APPROACHES TO WPA WORK

When grappling with the politics of identity, writing program administrators often take what they consider the safe route, avoiding any overt implications of complicity or accountability when possible and responding in traditional ways that don't draw too much attention. Even new paths in WPA work are frequently offshoots that quickly merge back into the old traditions of marking grammar, genre, and style conventions and ignoring the politics of language stratification and ideological interpellation at work in such methods. New pressures from inside the field of composition are challenging the bliss of political ignorance enjoyed in current-traditionalist programs. Forced out of the beaten path, proactive WPAs have looked to theory to provide the new roads that will address and respond to the politics of writing instruction. Postcolonial historicism lays bare the relations of power lurking behind the interplay of subjectivity, sanctioned discourse, hegemonic struggle, and the teaching of writing. Postcolonial theory provides WPAs with direction, leading them through the murky depths of colonial history, drawing attention to the resonances of colonialism still at work in the writing classroom.

Jeanne Gunner provides a history of the formation of writing programs in higher education that is useful for placing WPA work in the context of identity politics. Gunner argues that writing programs are ideological sites that are often laden with traditionalist values and assumptions inherited from their original practices and from the prevailing ideologies that were at play in the formation of educational pedagogy and administration. For Gunner, since writing programs and WPAs often enter after disciplinary apparatuses are already in place, they are rarely directly involved in the initial formation of writing program goals, pedagogical directions, and ideological viewpoints. Instead, writing

programs “come to existence in the wake of culturally sanctioned assumptions about language and in the fullness of already established cultural and institutional values.” This can be highly problematic for the WPA, as it makes any attempts at change an uphill battle against administrative structures and cultural norms that are already entrenched in the very foundation of the writing program. Consequently, Gunner adds, “theories that come into being within, or are imported into established writing programs are already discursively constrained: they will comply with or be contained by the larger ideological structures and purposes of the program” (*Ideology* 9).

Placing this problem in the context of postcoloniality, oftentimes, the “culturally sanctioned assumptions about language” entrenched in writing programs are uninformed and unethical notions based on antiquated hypotheses about the intellectual incapacities of classed and racialized discourse communities. These are the kinds of writing program foundations that make it possible for Ira Shor to declare that writing instructors participate in forms of apartheid. Too often the ideological underpinnings that produce educational apparatuses in advance of writing programs are steeped in the discourse of racialization.

Cornel West has produced some of the most cogent and substantial analyses of racializing practices in America. West’s analyses include critiques of educational apparatuses and writing programs that continue the racializing agenda. West argues that, “the initial structure of modern discourse in the West ‘secretes’ the idea of white supremacy.” West refers to this “secretion” as “the underside of modern discourse,” an inevitable historical consequence (“Race” 71). The cultural secretion of white supremacy serves to explain to some degree West’s assertion that, “the notion that black people are

human beings is a relatively new discovery in the modern West.” Certainly the history of language stratification has been largely informed by the discourse of white supremacy. The sooner WPAs accept the grounds upon which the stratification of language rests, the sooner they can go about the work of dismantling the policies and practices that still rest on those grounds. But as Gunner suggests this work is fraught with difficulty. West would agree that changing racialized assumptions in the academy will take a great deal of time and energy. As of now, West contends, “The idea of black equality in beauty, culture and intellectual capacity remains problematic and controversial within prestigious halls of learning and sophisticated intellectual circles” (70).

The ideology of white supremacy informs writing instructors’ insistence on defining Black Vernacular English speakers’ difficulties with appropriating standardized English as cognitive deficiencies. It informs writing instructors’ refusals to recognize and validate the breadth of linguistic research exposing standardized discourse as a social construct with rules and conventions that exist in all varieties of English and with stylistic and structural elements that, when compared with other English varieties are, frankly, nothing special (Smitherman, Delpit and Dowdy, Swearingen, Richardson). Where standardized American English becomes special is in the sociolinguistic world, where the preference for and enforcement of this variety of English maintains not so much a standard of verbal communication as a standard of social stratification wherein white discourse and colonialist constructions of the world, the self, and the Other are standardized.

The standardization of white middle class discourse is enforced in the writing classroom, where appropriation of standardized discourse determines the economic

possibilities and limitations for many African Americans. In addition, appropriation involves a self sabotage, as African Americans are asked to take on a discourse steeped in white supremacy. This appropriation is offered as the greatest means by which to achieve hegemonic agency in the struggle to eradicate the residual hegemonic forces of the discourse of white supremacy. This promise is rarely fulfilled, however, by those countless students who are quickly appropriated by the discourse of white privilege as they shamefacedly attempt to rid themselves of the mark of Other.

Gunner openly recognizes the ideological underpinnings of writing programs and argues that in doing so, writing program administrators are in better positions to be agents of change, and to challenge and transform those ideological positions that, while instrumental in producing the present conditions in many writing programs, prove themselves ineffective at addressing the reincarnations of colonialism and white supremacy that persist in present social formations, reincarnations that require still more ardent resistant rhetorics of the kind that historically have primarily bourgeoned from nonstandardized varieties of the English language. Accepting as truth that, “the writing program has a more cultural than academic agenda, and the WPA is as much directed by this agenda as he or she is the director of it, Gunner argues that “real change can follow only if we recognize that the form of the writing program is conservative and inherently hostile to systemic change” (“Cold” 30). This recognition should not lead to resignation, but rather to an urge to equip oneself as much as possible with the kind of ethical grounding that the agenda of postcolonial transformation provides.

By exposing the underlying ideological structures in a writing program, WPAs form agendas of change by avoiding the attempted invisibility of privilege and social

stratification inherent in writing program administration in the postcolonial era. Gunner suggests that “an agenda of a WPA change agent might be to support program changes that are potentially structural and systemic rather than static.” WPA change agents, Gunner suggests, can “help deconstruct common program practices that form the elements of writing programs generically [and, in so doing] undertake program changes that reintroduce difference and tension as dialectical elements” (38). Such approaches would resist the de-legitimizing practices that historically have perpetuated the disenfranchising of African American discourse communities.

Gunner’s WPA agent of change is reminiscent of the “new kind of cultural worker” Cornel West argues is emerging in academic, cultural, aesthetic and scientific fields. West connects this new cultural worker to a “new politics of difference” entering the discourses of these fields. “These new forms of intellectual consciousness,” West attests, “advance reconceptualizations of the vocation of the critic and artist, [...] reject the abstract, general and universal in light of the concrete, specific and particular, and historicize, contextualize and pluralize by highlighting the contingent, provisional, variable, tentative, shifting and changing.” Very much a postcolonial politics, this new cultural politics of difference “consists of creative responses to the precise circumstances of our present moment—especially those of marginalized First World agents” and attempts to shift the course of the status quo from within the institutionalized discourses that construct and enforce disciplinary culture (“New” 119-20).

These new constructions of intellectual work grow from the postcolonial project of social transformation through historical contextualization and materialist critique of still existent colonialist structures of exploitative power. They are quite in kin with

Edward Said's notion of humanistic investigation, which he argues, "must formulate the nature of the connection [between knowledge and politics] in the specific context of the study, the subject matter, and its historical circumstances" (*Orientalism* 15). Postcolonial discourse appears to prove useful in secreting critical interruption of the naturalized flow of colonialist forms of racialization and exploitation.

WPAs like Andrea Greenbaum arm themselves with theories that serve to ethically and politically ground their arguments for innovative transformations of traditional WPA practices and policies. Considering the value of postcolonial studies in writing program administration, Greenbaum appreciates the ways in which "postcolonial scholarship, like cultural studies and some composition theory, attempts to interrogate the function of agency, history and asymmetrical power relationships." Greenbaum believes that postcolonial theory can assist WPAs by "tracing a variety of colonial relationships, including cultural and aesthetic forms, as well as offering a critique of the institutionalization of the objective and scientific disciplines and their claim on neutrality and 'truth'" ("What" 75-6). Hence, postcolonialism offers a context in which to challenge the authority of problematic foundational conceptions in traditional writing programs.

While the idea of transformative change in WPA work is refreshing, some compositionists believe that for the WPA, change is near impossible to implement. While Sharon McGee, for instance, supports the transformative agenda for WPA work, she has trepidations about the occasion for widespread structural change. McGee agrees that "for WPAs, understanding the way in which power is constructed and channeled within universities is important." But McGee is not convinced that the transformative agenda is available to all WPAs. McGee supports her reservations by pointing out that

investigating power relations is “often not something that WPAs are trained in or have time for, and they may forget about it because of its invisibility” (61).

Transformation is difficult to imagine in an administrative position such as the WPA that is so accountable to outside forces. Carrie Leverenz makes a similar claim about the limited possibility for change in WPA work. According to Leverenz, “writing program administrators certainly feel the ethical nature of what they do, but it also seems clear that, as a profession, we have not done a good job of conveying the ethical import of this work to others within our institution or without” (113). Leverenz highlights the ethical considerations that are often allowed to remain invisible in writing programs and argues that, “WPAs have a responsibility not only to act ethically in their individual dealing with others, but also to advocate for and enact policies that are ethically responsible” (107).

Avenues for change emerge when WPAs respond proactively to the challenges they face from outside pressures. When WPAs decide to meet the challenges of respecting Student language rights, resisting vocational pedagogies, and avoiding student indoctrination head-on, they serve their students well. Preparing for these challenges involves historicizing the field’s treatment of the issues involved in each challenge. I believe that the primary issue at stake with all of these challenges is the construction of student identity.

CHALLENGE 1: STUDENTS’ RIGHTS TO THEIR OWN LANGUAGES (SRTOL)

WPAs work hard to respond to the concerns of students, fellow professors and administrators and to implement pedagogies that they feel best serve the needs of their

students. While it is difficult to please everyone, the tradition of student-centered pedagogy helps WPAs to ground their decisions in ethics that they can easily defend. In regard to language rights, WPAs have made great efforts to act responsibly and respond to growing linguistic diversity in American classrooms and in the global world. Henry Giroux, for example, provides a definition of sound educational leadership includes a public language that “would refuse to reconcile schooling with forms of tracking, testing, and accountability that promote inequality by unconsciously ignoring cultural attributes of disadvantaged racial and class minorities.” Instead Giroux wishes to infuse “the vocabulary of educational leadership” with “a language which actively acknowledges and challenges those forms of pedagogical silencing which prevent us from becoming aware of and offended by the structures of oppression at work in both institutional and everyday life” (*Living* 24). This vocabulary is useful for defending WPA policy against pressures to adhere to social policies that contradict ethical as well as scientific grounds.

Recent linguistic theory has had an impact of literacy theory as well, where cognitive development theories are challenged for leading to injustices wherein “white, middle class children sustain themselves in their transition to school by clinging to language customs of family and community, [however] this same process for others is called context-dependence, the dangerous source of certain failure” (Brandt 109). Education—particularly writing instruction—does not occur on a level playing field. So-called non-traditional, or non-dominant groups are at a disadvantage in English education because their dominant discourses are not those of the community the academy chooses to standardize. For this reason, while those whose dominant discourse is the standardized discourse will appear more at ease with the discourse, representatives from non-dominant

will appear to struggle. But is this so? Is this argument always sound? Or are we making Others of our subaltern students.

Certainly the economic landscape of the social world will attest to the growing disenfranchisement of African American discourse communities, and those of other minority groups in America. Postcolonial research presented here and in previous chapters attests to the role education and language instruction has taken in the perpetuation of the color line. Ramanthan believes there is cause to denounce the practices and policies inherent in language education and to champion linguistic freedom. “English is entrenched, “Ramanthan believes, “in the heart of a class-based divide (with ancillary ones of gender and caste as well) and issues of inequality, subordination and unequal value seem to revolve directly around its general positioning with Vernacular languages” (vii). More specifically, Ramathan draws attention to the infrastructural weight that is given to the preservation of class-based discourse and argues that, “powerful macro-structures—including institutional policies, larger state and nationwide policies and pedagogical materials—do align with each other to shape, produce and perpetuate power-knowledge inequalities between those who have access to English and those who do not” (2). In the macrostructure of American higher education, writing programs perpetuate inequalities between those who have early access to the standardized discourse of the white middle class and those who do not.

The systematic nature of standardization is worthy of historicism. It is interesting to note that the spread of English occurs as rapidly as the spread of Empire. Parakrama too suspects the discourse of standardization and its agenda of universality; historicizing the analogous process of the development of standardized language,” Parakrama deduces

that the emergence of print was in many ways the downfall of hegemonic prestige for racialized, feminized, classed, and otherwise subaltern discourses. For Parakrama, standardization of the discourse of the economic elite was “facilitated, no doubt” by the prestige of print, but more importantly by the economic access to the technologies of print. “There is much less access to non-standard forms of language in published material,” Parakrama notes, “so ‘models’ of this writing are unavailable for would-be practitioners.” With the growth of new print technology, then, came a resurgence of hegemonic status available through the proliferation of *expensive* technologies of communication, along with a systematic standardization of the discourse of print, thereby strengthening the universality of the class-based discourse and weakening the means to new forms of communicative agency. As a result, Parakrama points out, “unlike the spoken varieties, non-standard writing, even when systematically and consistently divergent from the ‘norm’ as when it reproduces non-standard speech, has little legitimacy except in restricted and specialized ‘creative’ contexts” (12-13). When the discourse of colonialism was granted authority, it was also granted the authenticity of print. Even now, very few texts, save Smitherman’s *Talkin’ that Talk*, present non-standardized discourse in expository texts for academic contexts.

The de-legitimizing of non-standardized discourses and discourse communities is difficult to trace without awakening discomforts regarding race-based assumptions and stereotypes borne from the discourse of colonialism. Yet inasmuch as the results continue to restrict non-standard English speakers’ access to economic, academic, and political agency, WPAs should openly address the politics of standardization and universality at play in every writing program, even though this may mean getting uncomfortable. As

Parakrama asserts, “the standard is in effect, and is based, however loosely, on shared assumptions and on a network of mechanisms such as the school system, a common historical narrative and, perhaps most importantly, the conservative consequences of printing and communication technology which literally fixes the language” (16). The detrimental consequences of these assumptions will persist as long as the standard is maintained without critical interrogation.

The politics of standardization places great responsibility on writing programs to respond to the political weight of language stratification and to question the implications of the standardization agenda in the pedagogical aims of their writing programs.

Parakrama cautions that, “Given the fact of the operation of a standard in language communities, linguists (and others) should work towards broadening the standard to include so-called uneducated usage (in speech *and* writing) in order to reduce language discrimination” (42). I must admit I would have preferred a less contradictory designation than “so-called uneducated” for the discourse of the subaltern—particularly to defend its introduction into the discourse of the educational arena. However, broadening the standard seems called for when educators can no longer voice any credible defenses for maintaining white middle class English as the standard, save those resting on historical traditions embedded in ideological formations that are highly suspect, or those resting on communication technology’s penchant for mass reproduction of any discourse that can afford it, simultaneously disseminating universalized discourse and dominant cultural hegemony.

Broadening the standard also protects writing programs from complicity in racist denigration of non-standard languages and moves the teaching of language away from the

colonialist agenda of differentiating the language of the colonized as dialect and normalizing white culture and discourse as language. The case is even clearer in the United States, where standardized English would claim itself a language, yet determine Black Vernacular English a dialect. This is, of course, linguistically ridiculous, yet it is still alive in cultural assumptions about this postcolonial language. David Crystal explains the phenomenon of dialects by claiming that they emerge to “give identity to the groups which own them (144). As these groups grow, whether in size, in prestige, in technological prowess, they may choose to promote their dialect as an autonomous language. Crystal states that in order to do so, the community must have “a single mind about the matter;” also the community must have enough political-economic ‘clout’” to achieve respect for the language by outsiders” (179). Unfortunately, in his treatment of American languages, Crystal does not address southern dialects, let alone Black Vernacular English, but his criteria are relevant to an analysis of the development of Black English nonetheless.

Black English is not much younger than standardized American English, yet its journey toward recognition as a language has been fraught with the same history of disenfranchisement, disregard, and de-legitimization as the members of its discourse community. Jan Swearingen’s analysis of teacher attitudes toward Ebonics, “the speech,” she argues, “of many black inner city students,” illuminates the issues involved in promoting a vernacular to the position of autonomous language. Swearingen examines two cases in Ann Arbor, Michigan and Oakland, California in which African American communities attempted to make Black English visible and credible in national arena. In the case of Ann Arbor, where parents of 25 African American children sued Martin

Luther King Elementary School for failing to educate their children, the initial *problem*,” according to Swearingen, “was that there were in place special segregated programs for Black English speakers;” these programs included remedial tracks for the 13 percent African American populations who were often placed in these courses upon entry into the schools. In some cases, Swearingen notes, “Blacks who were not Black English speakers had been placed in such tracks before they had opened their mouths, without being tested” (240). In the case of Oakland, California, school board members passed a resolution to recognize Ebonics as a language and to encourage discourse analysis of Englishes in the classrooms. The resolution also encouraged teachers to educate themselves on Ebonics as well.

Both cases resulted in ferocious debate on the legitimacy, credibility, and, yes, the intellectuality of Black English, often coupled with understated ruminations of the same about Black English speakers. Reviewing the proliferation of editorials responding to the Ebonics debate sparked in Oakland, Swearingen is left to conclude that these retorts “manifest an astonishing degree of resistance, misunderstanding, distortions, dismissal and thinly veiled racism” (243). In such a climate, Crystal’s criteria seem far out of reach; however, lest we give the detractors more weight than they deserve, what the Ebonics debate did manage to do was place Black Vernacular English on the national scale, not merely as a signifier of the remedial, as it was too often determined, but as a language, vying for its place amongst other dialect-turned-languages, like American English. Angry at the charges of “professional crackpotism” thrown at linguists for supporting the Oakland School Board’s decision, Swearingen answers, “how quickly we forget that

American English was regarded as defective British English well into the twentieth century, and many Brits still consider it so” (240).

The disenfranchisement of Black English not sustained in the field of linguistics where the language enjoys equal linguistic standing with all other Englishes. Nor can it be strongly sustained in the field of Composition, as Black English can now be placed equally amongst all discourses. The reality of the failure of Black English to establish itself fully manifests itself in the social world, where Black identity, Black experience, and Black English have all been historically denigrated in the discourse of colonialism. Lee Campbell and Debra Jacobs define this denigration as a social stigma, sanctioned by traditional approaches to language instruction. The linguist and compositionist contest the tendency of writing programs to stigmatize non-standardized discourse communities in order to normalize and authenticate the discourse of the privileged white middle class. Campbell and Jacobs share their concerns regarding the lack of distinction among “grapholectal, dialectal, and historical discourses” and contend that such distinctions would “eliminate the hypocrisy of stigmatizing the differences we celebrate” (“Stigmata” 100).

Campbell and Jacobs also examine the history of the call for standardization, tracing the movement’s shift from the hands of compositionists concerned about global intelligibility to the realm of public discourse and legislative policy where the standardization of English has become a sounding board for a great many issues that have little place in higher education. The theorists also note the ease with which public supporters of standardization reject the body of linguistic research that denies the efficacy

of these ardent defenses of standardized discourse as inherently intelligent. (“Standards Movement”).

The public denouncement of science for the comfort of the dominant class’s own self-serving assumptions is regrettable, particularly when those assumptions are so detrimental to a population of Americans that so enrich the country’s history. But the debate is revelatory, indicating the “tragic lack of connection between what academicians know and do and what the public understand” and between what scientists know to be true, and what the hegemony prefers to be true. By revealing the de-legitimization of Black English so openly, the debate has made public the inaccurate yet readily available suppositions about the discourse of the Black American community and about the discourse of the white middle class community as well. It has also made public the historical relationship between Standard English preference and the perpetuation of the culture of white privilege. As Swearingen mentions, “a traditional and very effective vehicle for enforcing the learning of Standard English within as well as outside African American communities—practiced by white and black teachers and parents—has been the depiction of Black English as broken” (243).

The devaluation of Black English seems to often go along with Standard English education, was what the Oakland School board endeavored to circumvent, or at least openly address. But in doing so, they made visible a critical arm in the ideological mechanism of the colonialist discourse, one that had been steadily operating within the ideological apparatus of education to perpetuate the social stratification of the racialized world constructed in the context of colonialism. The assumptions, worldviews, and stereotypes of colonialist discourse still, for many, allow the “easy reduction of Black

English to the status of gutter talk,” which Swearingen believes is a fear-driven, racist denigration of a language and culture that has contributed to our language and culture a wealth of terms and concepts, including denigration (243). Interesting that “denigration,” “demonization,” and the “color line” are notable African American additions to American English.

Defenses of standardized English draw attention to the need for universal understanding, and amongst these theories, some possibilities emerge. Patricia Bizzell rejects the “oppressive claim that other forms of English are cognitively inferior to the standard form,” but prefers to hold on to the concept of a standard by promoting academic discourse, shared amongst intellectuals, and representative of a community “that have been in school, have learned to take pains with their work—in short, that have received the training necessary to the academic community’s rigorous intellectual tasks.” For Bizzell, the cultural capital of the “educated ethos” of standardized English usage is well worth passing on to composition students, to facilitate their academic progress as well as their hegemonic agency. Bizzell addresses the decontextualized, “school” quality of her Standard English, but insists that this adds to the discourse’s and the speaker’s credibility, regardless of the fact that academic discourse is “a language that nobody speaks” (140).

School English may work well for participation in school writing activities, but students question whether standardized academic discourse really serves their communicative needs best. In addition to the history of racialization and the decontextualization that make standardization problematic, Victoria Cliett presents evidence of a growing plurality of Englishes that may soon make the issue of

standardization a moot point. Even though standardization tends to bring along with it “reduced tolerance of language varieties,” Cliett observes that “the economic and cultural capital of English opens the door for varieties other than the standard to become accepted through the codification process” (70). What is resulting is a propagation of “World Englishes, a term Cliett believes “allows for a variety of standard Englishes, many of which are comprised of forms and patterns that problematize the traditional notion of non-standard English in the United States.” These new Englishes indeed broaden the standard of English usage and may very well shift the English teacher’s agenda from local and national interests to larger global responsibilities.

This global focus may be just what is needed to wrest writing programs from its traditional racialized foundations. Cliett advises against a “focus solely on a domestic concept of ‘standard English’ [which, she believes] would be to teachers’ disadvantage in the changing cultural and global landscape [because] the concept of ‘standard English’ is more complex than the English teacher’s traditional notion of ‘correct’ and ‘incorrect’ language” (67). Instead, Cliett warns that, “in the face of the global recognition of language diversity, it is imperative that English teachers address the pedagogical and curricular changes that multilingual and multidialectal classrooms demand” (73). This imperative can serve as yet another means by which WPAs can argue for transformative writing programs that interrogate the relationship between language and identity and extend the standardized academic language beyond the narrow distinction of white middle class discourse.

A relatively early response to language diversity occurred in the 1970’s when the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) published the

Students' Right to Their own Languages (SRTOL) Resolution. Joining the burgeoning struggle for language rights, this resolution by CCCC intended to “heighten consciousness of language attitudes; to promote the value of linguistic diversity; and to convey facts and information about language and language variation that would enable instructors to teach their non traditional students—and ultimately all students—more effectively” (Smitherman 20). This resolution grew from an acknowledgement of the changing populations in composition classrooms and from the ardent desire to provide these students with sound education that did not detract from their connections to their home languages and home identities.

The SRTOL Resolution also grew from a growing respect for the knowledge that these students were bringing into the classrooms, and an effort to make that knowledge accessible to the academy. Smitherman also believes that the SRTOL Resolution “was formulated to address the contradictions developed in the midst of [a snowball of] major paradigm shifts first in the social order, then in higher education, and finally in English studies (26). These shifts challenged the field of compositions, posing questions such as, “Why should linguistic minorities have to learn two languages and majority members of society get by on one?” and “charging the field with “linguistic domination” (23). The CCCC response is to be heralded for its early decision to value the languages students bring into the classroom, and for its foresight in regard to the ever-increasing heterogeneity of the English-speaking world. CCCC took the challenge head-on insisting that compositionists make the effort to understand the linguistic rights of their students. While the SRTOL Resolution is not universally accepted even in the CCCC community, and even though the resolution was not ratified by the National Council for Teachers of

English (NCTE), it has managed to sanction the efforts of those who would support the rights of non-standardized discourses. The SRTOL resolution, for Smitherman, provides the organizational policies that can serve as “weapons that language rights warriors can wield against opponents of linguistic democratization” (35).

Compositionists have responded to the SRTOL Resolution in meaningful ways. Tom Fox has produced self-reflective ethnographies of his composition classrooms that delve into the conflicts of class, cultural and linguistic difference at play in the teaching of writing, Fox rejects traditional deficit theories of language diversity and instead requests “a language pedagogy that conceives of students as contributors, as people with valuable social and linguistic backgrounds that can help their understanding of reading and writing, as people who, if the learning context permits, have the ability to think critically and analytically about language use” (107).

One of the major concerns of the drafters of the resolution was to facilitate the inclusion of the perspectives, innovations, concerns, and interests of students from discourse communities often rejected from participation in academic scholarship. They hoped that by allowing student language rights, they could encourage critical engagement in writing acts without the concomitant shame or anger that often accompanies traditional writing instruction. Rhetoricians like Keith Gilyard and Elaine Richardson value the SRTOL Resolution for the opportunities it presents for WPAs to legitimize compositionists’ efforts to get critical Black students actively engaged in hegemonic struggle (50-51). The writers also appreciate that the SRTOL Resolution fueled an interest in the African American rhetorical tradition and a reevaluation of the efficacy of African American discourse, which they believe is a useful resource for instilling in

African American writing students an interest in and precedence for engagement in public discourse. “By making the African American rhetorical tradition the centerpiece of attempts to teach academic prose to African American students, especially those characterized as basic writers,” Gilyard and Richardson contend, “we believe that we increase the likelihood that they will develop into careful, competent, critical practitioners of the written word.” They both support this pedagogical strategy because it seems as if, unlike the experiences with the decontextualized examples of writing presented in remedial classes, and or with the alienating examples presented in current-rational and expressivist writing courses, “students seem to become more vested in improving their writing when it is directly and functionally connected to issues that are of immediate concern to them” (50). Far from a denouncement of standard English, the SRTOL resolution is an expansion of the standardized discourse—one that recognizes the linguistic right of all Americans to contribute to the hegemonic discourses that communicate the American cultural experience.

The SRTOL Resolution is a great leap in the direction of ethically responsible educational leadership. It reflects the efforts that rhetoricians are making to confront and contend with the identity politics at work in the teaching of writing. The Resolution also suggests the kind of transformations that are possible in the field of English studies when educators are willing to engage in self-reflective, self-critical historicism for the sake of their students. This self-reflexivity proves itself useful in the following chapter as well, as WPAs face the growing pressure to conform to market demands for vocational training in higher education.

CHALLENGE 2: MARKET PRESSURES ON WRITING PROGRAMS

WPAs experience pressures from all sides, but arguably the most difficult of these pressures are those of the market which exerts its force through parents, administrators and students themselves. Placing English studies in a rhetorical tug of war of “dissonance between the nineteenth century liberal arts model and the twenty-first century commodity model of education,” Scott Leonard examines the “raging torrent” of public discourse on English studies in higher education. Leonard laments the increase of “words like *productivity, producer, consumer, inputs, and outputs*, cropping up in the market’s demands for job training in English Studies (53-54). He urges compositionists to reject the ways in which “the academy is being reimagined by legislators and university administrators not as a zone where art for its own sake is to be appreciated, nor where ideas, however insurgent against prevailing opinion or time-honored tradition, are to be articulated and debated, but rather as a vocational and technical training facility for the postindustrialist future.” These efforts, he believes make education “a commodity for sale and *for use*” and hence universities easily become “corporations or factories that *produce* an education” for the marketplace (53). This model of educational leadership contrasts harshly with the transformative agenda envisioned by Giroux and others as the agenda of the writing program.

Berlin shares his concerns that, students are more likely to acquire the abilities and dispositions that will enable them to become successful workers than the abilities and dispositions to make critical sense of this age. He critiques “current-traditional rhetoric, with its positivistic epistemology, its pretensions to scientific precision, and its managerial orientation” which he finds compatible with the mission of the university to

maintain the status quo and preserve the position of the dominant class (480). The attempts by corporate structures to dictate the pedagogical measures that would produce for them the ideal employable corporate subjects should be treated with a great deal of caution, not only by educators concerned about capitalist interpellation, and by students concerned about market exploitation. But these new measures should cause alarm for would-be employers themselves, who should question the efficacy and legality of these ill-considered requests for docile bodies and who should be wary of seizing the responsibility of creating pedagogical aims and objectives out of the hands of those who make education their primary concern. Generally, corporate pressures on education could be considered an arm of yet another form of imperialism: capitalist domination.

It is difficult for WPAs to find a solid ground from which to defend their pedagogical aims against the insistent demand for vocational training in higher educations. While the agendas of Arts and Sciences programs can serve to bolster departments from training students merely to participate in their possible jobs—while giving them no guarantee they will actually be placed in those jobs—instructors and WPAs still find it difficult to ignore the increasing concerns that students learn more technical and professional writing and less introspective and analytical writing in composition courses. In many ways, the subject that the market is requesting that academies produce for them is Foucault's docile body, ready to be manipulated by the systems of power in the particular domain that social stratification and the disciplinary apparatus of education have determined.

Corporate and legislative pressures would have writing programs make docile bodies of their students by interpellating them —before they even complete their

schooling—into the subjectivities available in the social relations produced by corporate capitalism. Michel Foucault’s analysis of the emergence of the disciplinary apparatus sheds much light on our understanding of social relations and, specifically, on the constancy of those relations. While the scope of Foucault’s analysis covers Europe during the enlightenment era, much, of course, can be compared with present day forms of discipline. Foucault managed to prove not only that individuals are socially constructed according to the needs and desires of the existing means of production, but that those individuals, through a system of observation, normalization and examination, are made to discipline themselves and each other for purposes not of their own design—purposes that could be considered self-jeopardizing. Of the emergence of systems of surveillance, for example, Foucault writes, “although the workers preferred a framework of a guild type [...] the employers saw that it was indissociable from the system of industrial production, private property, and profit” (175). These “three Ps” would become the determining factors in subject formation. With production, property, and profit determining the necessary subjects for the existing and seemingly unchangeable market, students lose all access to agency and become subject to the will of the market, which—with the three Ps guiding its way—shares no interest in the workers who are not meant to be the primary beneficiaries of their own labors.

Voicing concerns in the feminist movement about the limitations of Foucault’s analyses, Teresa de Laurentis argues that, “by ignoring the conflicting investments of men and women in the discourses and practices of sexuality, Foucault’s theory, in fact, excludes, though it does not preclude, the consideration of gender” (3). To this slight critique of Foucault’s much-appreciated work, I would add the exclusion of race and

class, both of which de Laurentis mentions but does not thoroughly explore in her analysis of the role of gender in the technology of selves. Race and class, however, deserve attention in any analysis of subject formation in present times. As W.E.B. Dubois has suggested, postcolonial societies are structured and classed along a color line that leaves no individual outside of race. Foucault's theories provide a means to investigate the ways in which postcolonial societies are classed and racialized, and the ways in which post colonial subjects are made to class and racialize themselves within the various ideological disciplinary apparatuses they encounter.

Education continues to be indispensable to any archaeology of social formations. As previously discusses, educational apparatuses constitute subjects early and continue to hone students' subjectivities through a number of disciplinary measures. Jean Anyon's sociological study of social class and education provides useful research for analyzing the role of education in the internalization of American class hierarchies. While Anyon's analysis does not focus directly on race, recent histories of American education and American economics reveals the many ways in which race and class coincide in the stratification of schools. Schools are typically funded by property taxes and, in short, high populations of people of color exist in what Anyon defines as "working class schools;" far lower populations exist in middle class schools; and a negligible amount can be found in affluent schools. In Anyon's study of five schools at differing class levels, Anyon notes specific and highly problematic differences in the types of education children receive—differences that relate directly to the social classes into which the students live. These differences add up, for Anyon, to a "hidden curriculum" in education that serves to maintain existing relations of power. While all students are disciplined and learn to

discipline themselves, the disciplinary mechanism used in American secondary education is not as homogenous as Foucault's seventeenth and eighteenth century models appear to be. Rather, the modern American model allows for greater or lower levels of docility depending upon the particular positions the students take in the hierarchies of race and class.

The problematic connection between the stratification of society in corporate capitalism and the stratification of educational resources in public schools Anyon's study certainly reveals the ways in which the subjectivities of children (the new Americans) are constructed in relation to and for the sake of industrial production, private property, and profit. The results of her work also suggest that varying degrees of docility are arranged along the existing hierarchy of race and class. For working class students, "work is following the steps of a procedure [which] is usually mechanical, involving rote behavior and very little decision making or choice. [In addition,] teachers made every effort to control the movement of the children" (529-30). These students not only learn how to follow orders, but how to receive them with little opposition. They are not expected to make decisions, but rather to abide by those decisions made for them.

In middle class schools, the main concern for these students was "getting the right answers [which] are usually found in books or by listening to the teacher" (Anyon 531). While these students are expected to make some choices and decisions amongst possible answers provided, their participation does not include questioning the nature of the answers themselves or the teachers' choices. In other words, these individuals must accept an existing objective reality and learn the methods and practices with which to "make the grade" in this reality. Students here are also made comfortable with

decontextualized work: “assignments are perceived as having little to do with their interests and feelings; [...] doing well is important because there are thought to be *other* likely rewards: a good job or college” (532-3). While a level of docility still exists in the subjectivity constructed for this population of students, the teacher does attempt to negotiate with students rather than give orders. This would suggest an increase in self-discipline in this sector where the possibility of reward is considered more accessible.

For students of the executive elite, “work is developing one’s analytical intellectual powers, [and] a primary goal of thought is to conceptualize rules by which elements may fit together in systems and then to apply those rules in solving a problem” (537). Here, students are outfitted with all of the intellectual tools that would facilitate an understanding of and the means by which to change, among other things, existing power relations. Here the world is not made up of fixed rules to memorize. Anyon notes that, “while right answers are important in math, they are not ‘given’ by the book or by the teacher but may be challenged by the children” and negotiated until consensus is reached (536). Students experience far more freedom in these schools as well; their movements are neither regulated by the teachers nor by the bell. Hence, the students of the affluent class are provided the means and methods by which to analyze reality and shape it however possible to fit their needs. They are expected to practice self-discipline with little enforcement necessary.

The disciplinary apparatus, more closely analyzed, serves multiple purposes and produces multiple forms of docility, ranging from passive to active agents in the social structure. Anyon concludes by arguing that “differing curricular, pedagogical, and pupil evaluation practices emphasize different cognitive and behavioral skills in each social

setting and thus contribute to the development in the children of certain potential relationships to physical and symbolic capital, to authority, and to the process of work” (539). Placed along the class and color line, the disciplinary apparatus provides increased access to agency for those who would seem to need it the least, and decreased access to those who would use their intellect to oppose and destroy existing configurations of production, property, and profit. Foucault’s theory of discipline still stands, but attention to class and race assists in making visible the means by which race and class are internalized, disciplined and perpetuated in emerging American subjects. This attention also serves to make Foucault’s relevance to market pressures even more alarming, as less and less agency is provided for those students who would benefit from the critical education that could reconfigure the market and their predetermined disenfranchised positions within it.

Capitalist commodification of education should be approached with an awareness of the recent critiques of corporate capitalism that have emerged in the academy. Herbert Schiller’s critique of capitalist culture may shed some light on the debilitating consequences of adopting the agenda of the capitalist market in writing program policies and practices. Schiller argues that the postmodern and postcolonial era has given rise to a new form of imperialism that he defines as cultural domination. His analysis of current international policies and practices suggests that imperialism has not been eradicated but instead has morphed itself into a transnational economic structure that continues to support the global expansion of western cultural dominance. Instead of accepting notions of the postmodern as a movement away from imperialist forms of rule, Schiller is convinced that we are not experiencing the end of imperialism. Rather, he provides much

evidence that suggests that with the spread of culture through control of forms of communication and education, a new kind of imperialism has emerged with even less resistance than the old.

Cultural imperialism works through the control of communications, and therefore of information. As Schiller insists, “cultural production has its political economy” (319). What he means by this is that cultural products do social and political work. This is so in any culture and with any cultural product. All cultural products serve to shape and inform individuals and their relationships to the worlds in which they live. What western—and primarily American—corporate cultural products produce is a global consumer society, one that places value in purchase power rather than political power, one that depends upon corporate advertising and western news sources not only for information, but for the very means by which to understand their societies as cultures. These cultural products and sources, increasingly under multinational control, still do the cultural work of constructing subjectivities in the social world, but unfortunately, the cultural forms and models are no longer the products of the international communities that absorb and internalize them. Even in the cases where nonwestern people control their own media, media itself has been so concretely defined in western terms that only an essentialized reading of these attempts could suggest that they are examples of anything but western imperialism in “blackface.” Schiller illustrates this point with Olivera’s analysis of Brazilian soap operas whose purposes are to “sell goods made by transnational corporations” (327). This is yet another example of postcolonial cultures being appropriated by capitalist discourse. Just as the cultural arena has been appropriated by

the capitalist market, so will the academy be if disciplinary programs are not willing to insist on maintaining hegemonic power in the academic arena.

By kowtowing to market pressures, educational institutions are turning education into a commodity that is packaged, processed and available for sale based on its use value. Susan Willis' analysis of commodity packaging and the reification of consumer capitalism sheds some light on the process of cultural domination that Schiller exposes. Paying attention to the growth of advertising and mass marketing in world communities, Willis argues that mass commodity packaging "enables commodity producers to have greater control over consumption and a more systematic means of exploiting the consumer" (335). Packaging and advertising serve not only to perpetuate consumer spending; they work to produce the consumers themselves: "postmodern advertising assumes a consuming subject capable of being interpellated" (335). This process of interpellation is the real work of consumer packaging and advertising. Willis relates the lure of the package to the construction of desire in consumer culture and argues that commodity packaging serves to reify consumer capitalism. This is the kind of work that Schiller refers to as cultural imperialism. Cultural imperialism in the academy manifests itself in writing programs where students are made to consume vocational education and are consequently constructed as workers rather than scholars.

Cultural media and educational policy serve to create cultural norms, some of which are more obvious than others. The proliferation of the privatized, corporate model, for instance, makes itself known not in the message of the media, but in the media itself. Amongst other forms, Schiller notes that "cultural domination means also adopting broadcasting systems that depend upon advertising and accepting deregulatory practices

that transform the public mails, the telephone system, and cable television into private profit centers” (320). This shift away from public funded media transmission and government-regulated programming to privatized cultural production not only serves the purpose of providing multinational corporations with easier access to international communities’ forms of cultural production, but it serves as well to normalize corporate economies and capitalist consumer culture. This last purpose, largely implicit and invisible, is the driving force of corporate capitalism itself—for the global multinational market economy to succeed, capitalism must become second nature. As educational institutions adopt the corporate model, they institute covert forms of corporate capitalism by teaching for the workplace. At the same time, even more speciously, the corporate model of education implements covert sponsorship of corporate capitalism by making it appear as a predetermined reality.

The cultural products of consumer culture, including the corporate commodity of vocational higher education, serve to create consumer subjects; more important than what emerging consumers buy is what these non-westernized peoples *buy into*. The ideology of western imperialism is inherent in the discourses of consumerism, capitalism, and multinational globalization and these discourses are standardized in the available forms of cultural production. The interests of the citizens of non-western nations are no longer invoked in the discourses and cultural products they consume and subsequently reproduce; rather, the interests of multinational corporations and western imperialist economies are invoked, interests that in no way serve the citizens of these non-western nations.

Corporate capitalism, while advertising promises of the “American dream,” exploit the labor, capital, and resources of non-white Americans and non-western nations; and westernization, speciously attractive in American advertisements, is a myth that continues to lure nations and their citizens into predetermined hierarchies that depend upon and perpetuate their positions as second class world citizens with minimal economic and political power. As long as the west insists upon making the world’s citizens understand themselves through the framework of corporate capitalism, then global business markets—for the sake of profit—will continue to exploit with ease the historically constructed economic inequalities between worlds, the resulting indigent labor pool in non-western nations, and the diminishing natural resources in non-western lands. These forms of exploitation, and particularly the inequalities upon which they rest, are of great interest to Schiller, who suggests that “it is still the growing disparities between the advantaged and disadvantaged countries, as well as the widening gap *inside* the advantaged and disadvantaged societies that constitute the fault line of the still seemingly secure world market economy” (331). Schiller is also concerned with the “ecological disaster in the making” which may bring an end not only to the corporate business system (life as we know it), but to the planet’s ecosystem (life in general). Schiller asks that we dispel the myth that postmodernism is the end of imperialist domination and instead recognize imperialism in its new form—the invisible message of western dominance stamped on any and all forms of global cultural production.

Against the backdrop of this ardent critique of the culture of capitalism, it would seem more fitting for writing instructors to prepare students for the global world, rather than the corporate world and give them the discursive strategies for operating both inside

and outside of the capitalist market. Leonard and “most university professors “hope that the facts, methods, and hands-on experiences that we make available to our students will stimulate them to a self-conscious engagement with their worlds. An admittedly abstract goal,” Leonard admits, “but no more so, “ he argues, “than the goal of manufacturing ‘job-ready’ workers—as if job readiness were just one, static thing” (57). Given these and other critiques of the pressures of capitalism proliferating from analyses of globalization in the academy, it is only expected that theorists such as Berlin would argue that “trying to adjust the college curriculum exactly to the minute configurations of the job market is out of the question” (*Rhetorics* 50). This would involve too powerful a dependence upon, and ultimately a faith in an economic structure that can no longer hide behind a discourse of positivism.

CHALLENGE 3: (DE)POLITICIZING WRITING INSTRUCTION

The discipline of writing operates in a fishbowl; more than any academic requirement, save History of Civilization it is argued, the Composition course receives more attention and more pressure from outside forces. WPAs face departmental pressures from committees with micromanaging fellow professors in literature and technical and professional writing programs. They suffer with university-wide backlash from frustrated departmental professors who feel they shouldn’t have to teach writing. They contend with pressures from students, parents legislatures and a variety of focus groups bent on instituting policy changes to support their personal agendas. Working amongst all of these forces, sometimes against, sometimes in the background, WPAs deal with the demands of visibility by remaining focused on the needs of the student.

Student-centered approaches to writing instruction still remain largely bipolar, however; on one side, the expressionist mode is introspective, allowing students the chance to examine themselves and express their thoughts and ideas, on the other side, the epistemic mode is extra-spective, or outer-directed, allowing students the chance to examine their world and to question and examine their place within it. For postcolonial theory, transformative scholarship would involve both introspective and outer-directed approaches to writing pedagogy. The postcolonial tradition demands an agenda of transformation that cannot be achieved through expressionism as it is currently understood.

Expressionism, from the perspective of postcolonialism, has become synonymous with escapism, and any writing pedagogy that asks students to “search inside to express themselves” lends itself to questions such as “in what format do they communicate what they find?” “How do you grade identity?” “How do your expectations determine what ‘selves’ they express?” These questions are tacitly active in expressionist classrooms as students attempt to learn to express their identities in a fishbowl—in the classroom setting amongst others, visible and responsible. What the writing instructor brings to the expressionist classroom determines in many ways just how it is that these questions are answered. The expressionist classroom is not acontextual, though often decontextualized. The fishbowl is nestled at the bottom of the sea, and just as the sea of students, faculty members, parents, administrators and legislators filter through the writing program, so the writing instructor’s pressures, concerns, ideologies, and epistemologies filter into the students’ linguistic constructions of themselves.

Taking an active role in facing the responsibility involved in teaching self-expression, compositionists grapple with pedagogical pressures, often from students themselves, to ignore self-expression entirely and focus on practical applications of particular writing tasks suitable for determined future endeavors—often not those endeavors compositionists are as quick to assume for their students. We reduce our students when we lowball them, imagining for them small futures that require simple writing tasks and little attention to their potential transformative power. Self-evaluation has always had a place in composition because writing is cognitively linked to thinking, and thinking is discursively linked to identity. The issue with identity and expressionism produces contentions because constructions of identity have changed in recent years.

Far less the autonomous ego imagined in modernist modes of self-expression, the new self is intersubjective, existing interchangeably in contextual linguistic transactions, amongst historically constructed social narratives. Expressionist rhetoric must, if it wishes to consider itself a mode of self-expression, take the self out of the body and into the world. Doing so would involve, however, getting political, and hence, expressionism tends to shield itself—and hence *the* self—from analyses of context. Such analyses would necessarily address the ideological forces students bring to the classroom, the social forces inside and outside of the classroom that construct students' identities, and the interpellative forces of discourse standardization.

By ignoring these forces, expressionism lays itself to open to critiques from rhetoricians such as James Berlin, for whom “expressionist rhetoric is inherently and debilitatingly divisive of political protest, suggesting that effective resistance can only be offered by individuals, each acting alone.” It is this focus on the individual that Berlin

finds unsatisfactory. “For expressionist rhetoric,” he argues, “the correct response to the imposition of current economic, political and social arrangements is resistance, but resistance that is always construed in individual terms.” The result of this focus on individualism, Berlin would argue is that, while the conflation of self-expression and individualism may yield for some “self-expression in intellectual or aesthetic pursuits,” unfortunately for many the result is simply consumer behavior, and individual self expression is identified with the consumption of commodities (487). Long after Berlin’s revelations about the dangers of expressionism’s focus on individualism, the practice still remains much the same with little attention to the political implications of teaching self-expression.

Expressivism continues to be condemned by critical compositionists who wish to infuse writing programs with hegemonic agency. Gary Olson shares his concerns with the resurgence of acontextual expressivism that he believes is highly counterproductive. “The attempt to drag composition back to its expressivist roots,” Olson states, “constitutes a direct assault on a two-decade long tradition of substantive theoretical scholarship.” But what is more crucial to Olson is that this assault is on “a particular *kind* of work: that which attempts to lead the field *away* from the debilitating preoccupation with individual psychology, ‘genius,’ ‘talent,’ and ‘creativity’ and *toward* a recognition of how and why dominant discourse enacts a kind of violence on many of us.” Among those of us at stake in the violence of dominant discourse, Olson lists “women, minorities, and members of other groups who do not share fully, if at all, in the privileges that society reserves for the few” (xii). Certainly, students in writing programs would be

listed in those many of us, and that kind of work would seem most beneficial for the kinds of transformative scholarship postcolonial studies would like to achieve.

Expressivist and current-traditional rhetorics often leave themselves open to charges of positivism, charges that they tend to perpetuate the status quo, leaving students no avenues for making the kind of structural political changes that would make the world a better place. This positivism, in postcolonial terms could be defined by Barnor Hesse as de/colonial fantasy, “stimulated by a compulsion to imagine the Western nation, or at least the one ‘we’ live in, as having resolved or avoided any disruptive legacies of the failures to decolonize.” Hesse sees masses of contradiction in de/colonial fantasy; riddled with escapism and defensive self-preservation, de/colonial fantasy “assumes in advance what it desires to deny. Correspondingly, it conceals the relation of this liberal-democratic disavowal to the West’s contemporary formation” (160). What this fantasy denies is the reality that “cultures of imperialism are still defining the social orientations of Western liberal democracies.” For Hesse, “it is as if decolonization never took place, that it remains interrupted and incomplete.” Positivism dwindles in the face of postcolonialism because of this failure of decolonizing mission to materialize—a failure Hesse argues “is constitutive of what we should now understand as the postcolonial condition” (159). WPAs interested in transformative pedagogy must move beyond the kind of de/colonial fantasy that expressivism allows.

When calling for investigations of politics in writing pedagogy, rhetoricians must be prepared to provide those same investigations of their own pedagogical practices. Rhetorics that problematize apolitical pedagogies promote awareness of ideology and student subjectivity necessarily leave themselves open to the self-same critique by their

detractors. As the charge goes, “You’re so worried about indoctrination, but aren’t you indoctrinating students yourselves, this time instead of with the prevailing dominant paradigm (as you call it), with antiestablishment rhetorics from Marxist, Feminist, even Black Nationalist camps?” The answer is yes, and no. Educators are always indoctrinating students; that can’t be controlled. But what can be controlled is exactly what gets indoctrinated. For strong WPAs, what gets indoctrinated is a keen sensitivity to this very issue of indoctrination.

New approaches to rhetoric and composition make indoctrination, interpellation, identity appropriation and subjectivity central to their work in order to examine responsibly the ways in which education always involves indoctrination. Teachers are, after all, employed to instill knowledge in the minds of students; that is the tradition for which we earn respect and longevity. But along with knowledge comes an understanding of power, one that provides an epistemic positioning from which to understand one’s place within prevailing power structures. Such is the nature of education, as suggested by Freire’s analysis of “banking education,” his redefinition of the word as action, and his agenda of praxis—change—as the ultimate pursuit of composing acts. The knowledge/power relation is revealed as well through Foucault’s concept of the “panopticon,” through his analysis of disciplinary strategies and the perpetuation of epistemic powers, and through his focus on the manipulation of visibility and observation in disciplinary apparatuses such as education.

Instilling knowledge, any knowledge, is by no means a ideologically free exercise, as Freire’s and Foucault’s theories on the hierarchical apparatus of education and its role in enforcing epistemic presence strongly suggest. There is, in fact, far more at

stake than some educators care to realize. When WPAs take the responsibilities of education seriously, however, they can choose to instill in students more than a clueless acceptance of things as they are and their proscribed places in the so-called “natural order.” Rather, we can instill in them a cognitive hyperawareness of indoctrination, a critical apparatus for examining the ideological underpinnings of discursive realities in given linguistic transactions, and some critical methods for invigorating their composing acts with their own agendas that answer to their own concerns about the state of the world and their seemingly proscribed positions within it.

Accepting indoctrination helps compositionists to be more open and more responsible about what they indoctrinate into students. Some believe that it makes them even more responsible than those who would pretend that they could avoid it. Susan Jarratt finds the charges of indoctrination weak because their intentions are often sacrificed in their very pleas: “The language used is an artful rhetorical maneuver of reversal: accusing your adversary of your own wrong. What’s missing in this discussion” Jarrett notes, “is the *freeing* of speech—bringing to voice knowledges, experiences, and histories for whole bodies of people previously unheard” (36). This freedom is what epistemic rhetoric strives to attain—the introduction of critical reflection on discourse and identity, reflection that will better enable students to navigate and interpolate discourse without being consumed by the ideological forces inherited in the history of those discourses at play in the social and academic worlds.

Just because writing pedagogies are informed by prevailing theories does not necessarily mean that the point of informed writing pedagogies is to teach theory. The point is still to teach writing, and the objective is still student-centered. Zebrosky believes

that teaching is not about “indoctrinating the student, either into the ruling-class ideas of the time or into the teacher’s position, no matter how correct that view may be.” Instead Zebrosky’s pedagogy fosters dialogue, and “potentially creates a space” where he can share his views, “commitments and positions” with students, “inviting them to understand the positions, but also to challenge them and to work on making new structures and positions, developing new knowledge about and perspectives on language and power” (“Syracuse” 93). The argument for epistemic rhetoric is an argument for a kind of introspection—that is, a study of the self and self-expression—that involves all aspects of the individual’s, or the student’s, reality, not merely that self—that construct—that best fits the academy’s stringent adherence to traditionalist conventions and assumptions, or best fits the market’s particular labor needs at any particular moment, or even best fits the student’s media-influenced, solipsistic fantasies of modernist individualism and capitalist consumerism.

Displacing the innocence of current-traditional and expressionist pedagogical modes is a politics that informs the field of composition and insists upon a recognition of its role in perpetuating forms of overt dominance that remain long after the disestablishment of covert dominance. But this pedagogy of public discourse is not entirely without precedent. Many critical theorists argue that critical pedagogy is a return to the classical Isocratean notion of rhetorical scholarship. Norman Clark’s reading of Isocrates paints this classical rhetorician as a critical agent, concerned about the effect of rhetorical pedagogy on the public intellectuals of the day. While Frank Walters is equally interested in Isocrates’ attention to preparing students to participate in and contribute to the nation’s political future, Walters does find need for a critique of Isocrates’ initial

individualism, which makes his application to postcolonial contexts somewhat problematic.

In response to calls for a “redefinition and renaming” of the practice of rhetorical theory, Clark applies Isocrates’ arguments to the current field of critical theory in efforts to bridge the gap between dogmatism and relativity. Paying close attention to the “call for critical rhetoric,” Clark finds use in Isocrates’ definition of the rhetorician as a social servant. Specifically, Clark calls attention to the increased importance of locality and contingency in rhetorical theory, while voicing his concerns about “potential dangers in the present conceptualization of critical rhetoric.” (111). Clark cites Bertrand Russell’s caution for humility in philosophy and his concern about prideful claims of “Truth.” Clark assures that his reference to Russell is not an attempt to equate “critical rhetoric with social irresponsibility,” nor to prescribe a search for Truth. Clark wants to perpetuate the “dissociation of rhetoric from dogma;” he also wants to caution against the arrogance that he finds in some critical rhetorical practice. But Clark also locates arrogance in relativistic approaches to rhetoric: “If left completely unchecked,” he claims, “radically relativistic critique can slip into ungrounded self-expression.” (111)

The problem with relativism involves the relationship between the rhetor and the audience, a relationship too long unconsidered. For Clark, “this relationship must be specified; otherwise, critical rhetoric denies its own position as a practice within a culture.” Clark believes that a clarification of the rhetor-audience relationship will redefine the role, or “face,” of the rhetor. He suggests that a “careful study of a politically active intellectual should help us better visualize the practice of critical rhetoric in order to manage the dialectic between doxa and self-expression.” Clark chooses to examine is

Isocrates, rather than Aristotle, because, “Isocrates is arguably one of the original critical rhetors.” More relevant for Clark are the ways in which Isocrates managed to “balance the demands of the community with the demands of critique.” Isocrates, according to Clark, grounded his rhetorical work in the community in which he lived and practiced. This, for Clark, makes Isocrates an exemplary model for the new critical theorist: “He practiced rhetoric in a time when solutions had to be proposed, when he had to offer visions of how his community should be.”

Because of the local and contingent approach to the writing act, Isocrates is presented as a rhetor embedded in the community, thoroughly and proactively aware of the relationship between rhetor and audience. Supporting this argument with evidence from Isocrates’ texts, Clark “offer[s] Isocrates as someone who links the theory and practice of critical rhetoric.” Clark names service as the principle tool enabling Isocrates to succeed at linking theory and practice—a linkage that, for current rhetorical theorists, appears almost impossible. But Clark finds use and a sense of hope in the idea of service: “critics offer to the communities they serve a provisional course of action,” he argues; “service checks the critic’s slide into radical relativism by turning the critic’s attention away from self-expression and toward the community.” Specifically, Clark argues that, “the perspective of service focuses on how critique and proposed courses of action will serve the community” (112). Clark uses Isocrates to illustrate and articulate this idea because of Isocrates’ definition of what he calls the “*critical servant*.”

The idea of the critical servant places a social responsibility on the students’ discursive proficiencies and implicates writing instruction in the construction of civic agents. Clark’s arguments rely on two simultaneously existing definitions of service that

he finds in Greek texts and particularly in the texts of Isocrates. He classifies Isocrates' numerous terms for service into "two clusters, headed by the words *opheleia* [meaning help, aid, service] and *douleia* [servitude, subjugation, bondage]." Clark analyzes Isocrates' use of these two terms to suggest that, "Isocrates' conceptions of the role of rhetors in society was inextricably linked to an understanding of practical, useful political service." Discussing Isocrates' pragmatic approach to politics and service to the community, and citing *Nicocles*, Clark avers that Isocrates' role for intellectuals would include "point[ing] the government and the people in the direction of the greatest benefit and 'giv[ing] directions on good morals and good government.'"

Student agency is closely linked to ethical positioning as students learn to use language to construct the world discursively in ways that will serve the populace. Clark's connection of service to *opheleia* aids in the argument that, according to Isocrates' *Panegyricus*, "the duty of critical servants was to toil 'in private for the public good and [train] their own minds so as to be able to help [*ophelein*] also their fellow-men.'" (113) Also important to service, for both Clark and—he would argue—Isocrates, is lived experience, that which places rhetor in community and that which builds the relationship between rhetor and audience. Clark claims that "Isocrates made lived experience a necessary and vital part of the life and education of the critical servant in politics." What lived experience offers for the critical theorist is the kind of pragmatism that Clark believes Isocrates proposed; lived experience necessitates providing a useful course for action. In other words, reflection and critique are not useful unless they lead to an answer to the question, "What do we do next?" Without a course of action, critique risks becoming relativistic. Lived experience grounds theory in practice. Hence, *opheleia*, for

Clark, suggests that “the critical servant serves by proposing a practical, useful course of action to the community.” (114)

Clark’s definition of *douleia* as servitude provides a balance for the purpose-driven element of critical service which, because of its pragmatism, he states, “could fall prey to the snares of pride and arrogance” (115). *Douleia*, then, places the rhetor as responsible to the people. In light of Clark’s definition, the rhetor is in servitude to— is subjugated by—the people. “The strongest connotation of service,” he states, “urges the critical servant to place the good of the people first, to subjugate his or her will to the good of the people” (116). This hierarchy avoids the arrogance that Russell cautions against because the intent of the critique is always for the good of the people, and not the good of the rhetor herself/himself. Thus, the rhetor takes the role of the servant. More precisely, Clark adds that, “servitude as *douleia* is a giving over of one’s will to fulfill the important function of addressing the needs of the community” (116).

Critical pedagogy attempts to produce critical rhetors who take on the world and intervene in its interpellative strategies. Clark’s definition of the critical rhetor is necessarily a social one, but one that does not completely diminish the rhetor’s individual identity. For Clarke, “the agency of the critical servant is obtained by understanding the agent’s subjectivity as a combination of the individual and the social” (117). The critic is neither autonomous nor a flatterer. The role of the rhetor is neither to placate the community with what it desires to hear, nor to laud over the community with self-gratifying observations. Rather, the rhetor imbeds herself/himself within the community and notes what would be best for the common good. Clark argues here that this work demands attention to history and also asserts that, “knowledge and power come from the

critic's reading, interpretation, and re-making of the community's history" (117). He uses Isocrates' work to demonstrate this intellectual and critical practice and argues that Isocrates "interprets the history of a community, showing how past choices led to present conditions, [and] from this interpretation, the critical servant then points a way to a new course of action. Clark does state, however, that this course of action is always contingent. Rather than making claims to universality, critical servants "work to ground their knowledge in the present community [and are always aware that] knowledge is tied to the community; it is always temporarily relative, always situationally contingent, and always subject to further critique or revision" (118). In other words, knowledge is kairotic.

What Clark attempts to do with Isocrates is create a new, or rather recreate an old, metaphor for the rhetor: that of the servant. For Clark, "serving the needs of the community stops the rhetor's potential slide to radical relativism and self-expressive critique, while critiquing the acts of the community keeps the rhetor from becoming a slave to dogma" (121). As a servant of the people, the common good becomes the driving force and the intent of the rhetorical critique. This role also demands an application of history, which situates critical practice in the community itself and grounds theory in the community's particular context. Clark lays out the work of the critical rhetor: "the critic throws him- or herself into the community, learns from its history, experiences its beauty, and offers to that community an enriched vision" (121). Clark notes that Isocrates is not an ideal human being. He also carefully places him within his own historical context and, anticipating critique of Isocrates as an exemplar, suggests that critics "look for the transformative possibilities in discourses, beyond the limited uses to which they have

been put.” While he draws attention to the fact that Isocrates did not extend his energies to liberation of women or slaves, Clark argues that, “Isocrates’ critical service came in the openings he created as his discourse questioned some cultural givens (even as it accepted others).” Here Clark returns to the perception of any critical theory as ideal and cautions against such an idea. He discusses the importance of problematizing and states that “future critics will find that all discourses, including those that have broken some bonds of domination, serve to strengthen other bonds” (122) This, he argues, should not impede the practice of critique and the attempt to transform the world for the good of the community. For Clark, Isocrates serves to support the observation that, “critical service can wed the aesthetic and the practical in criticism and enrich the lives of people in our communities” (123).

(Re)Creating new metaphors for student writers from old, established ones assist compositionists in attaining the ethos of the traditional without retaining history’s many debilitating inheritances. Isocrates serves well for calling on the ancient definitions of the rhetor as “the good man speaking well” to argue for the training of social agents, and not corporate products. While Frank Walters finds much of use in Isocrates’ rhetorical *paideia*, he is also concerned with the concentration on individualism to be found in some of Isocrates’ older work. In the attempt to embrace the more useful aspects of Isocrates’ pedagogical philosophy, Walters provides historicism. By analyzing Isocrates’ *Panegyricus* and making a comparison to *Against the Sophist*, written ten years later, Walters manages to draw some interesting connections between Isocrates’ shift away from individualism toward a more community-centered rhetoric and contemporary rhetoric’s turn from expressivism to critical pedagogy. For Walters, just as Isocrates

shifts from elitism to communal pragmatism, rhetoric is shifting from the individualism to social constructivism. Citing Victor Vitanza, Walters argues that in the *Panegyricus*, “Isocrates endorses the ‘anthropocentric worldview’ and [...] espouses the ideology of individualism” (155). Walters opposes this view and judges Isocrates, here, as “profoundly anti-democratic.” *Against the Sophist* gains for more respect from Walters who argues that here, “the anthropocentric worldview is shrouded in doubt. Isocrates now endorses, it seems, a democratic pedagogy consistent with positions taken by contemporary epistemic rhetoricians” (155).

The Isocratean influence appears in many writing pedagogies geared toward discursive participation in citizenship or democracy. Walters sees much of the work of contemporary rhetorical theories such as James Berlin and Susan Jarratt in Isocrates: “Isocrates posits alternate sites of discourse production in which boundaries between individual and community constantly shift;” this construction of reality presents the individual as one participating in the shaping of identity and the construction of individuality (156). Walters cites Kate Ronald to suggest that a primary concern in Greece at this time was the tension between individual and reality. Walters places Isocrates within this struggle between individual and community in order to investigate Isocrates’ “epistemic turn,” citing “what Dionysius of Halicarnasus saw in Isocrates as a turning ‘away from treatises on dialectics and natural philosophy’ to a concentration ‘on writing political discourses on political science itself’” (156). Isocrates’ attention to persuasion is the primary indicator of his shift to what is now considered epistemic theory. Regarding epistemic rhetoric, Walters suggests that, “its dominant concern, as it was for Isocrates, is to reconfigure the relationship between individual and community

within an epistemic environment that encourages the individual's participation in the social construction of knowledge but at the same time grants the individual the space within which to convert cognitive insights into discourse" (157). Isocrates' interest in students' taking persuasive action in the leadership of the nation is placed in direct opposition to his earlier attention to the philosopher as elite individual and knower of all truths. As Walters notes, "by turning rhetoric away from speculative philosophy to politics, Isocrates converted speech into an epistemic enterprise by which public discourse conceived, debated, and determined reality" (157).

While the notion of the critical agent can be linked to the Isocratean notion of the rhetor as public servant, rhetoricians must still be careful about appropriating Isocrates, and Athens, wholeheartedly to support their own rather different agendas. Walters is wary of his own connections between Isocrates and new rhetoric even as he suggests it. His concerns are with the inconsistency between the political perspectives of Isocrates and those of the contemporary rhetoricians. Many of Isocrates' perspectives on individuality suggest a level of elitism that Walter's finds—if not unacceptable—well worth critique. Noting that Isocrates' "ideal orator is an elitist," he argues that this element of Isocrates' *paideia* "misrepresents the general drift of Isocrates' rhetorical theory" (157). Walters' history of Athens' oratorical culture serves to place Isocrates' notions of the elite in perspective with the political context of the nation. Isocrates' "pedagogy and the rhetorical theory it articulated drew extensively from a culture which valued speech as both a practical and philosophical necessity;" as the masses participated in *isegoria*, Isocrates grew concerned about training philosophers to aid the nation in making the right decisions. That Isocrates places those decisions in only the hands of the

elite is what Walters finds “anti-democratic,” arguing that “they can no more be ignored than Athens’ own anti-democratic exclusion of women, slaves, and foreigners from citizenship.” Noting the inconsistency between these views and the democratic drive of new rhetorical theory, Walters notes that “it is an aspect of Isocrates’ thinking which can be assimilated, uneasily if at all, into contemporary rhetorical studies only so long as his epistemological skepticism accompanies it” (158).

Even while the shadow of ancient Greece would seem to deter from new rhetoric’s democratic zeal, Walter attempts to salvage Isocrates as a credible contributor to the cause. As he analyzes Isocrates’ “epistemological skepticism,” he attempts to reclaim the classical Greek rhetorician in order to form a connection to classical tradition. He cites Welch and Rummel who “underscore a divided epistemology in Isocrates in which the elitist pretensions of the individual are absorbed into the pragmatic interests of the community.” In this way, Walters argues, “In Isocrates’ thinking, communal pragmatism serves as the orator’s outward sign of inward wisdom” (160). So while Isocrates trained his students in the rhetorical abilities to communicate the best political courses of action for the nation, he also trained them, in recognizing and strengthening those forms of style that would be most convincing to the polis. As Walters notes, for Isocrates, “the writing process brings the writer into contact with the public world, and crucial to the success of the project is an eloquence that gives meaning and coherence to the writer’s thought” (166). For Walters’ this is the ultimate saving grace of Isocrates. This construction of the writing process eliminates the individuality of expressivism by inculcating it with purpose.

The public turn in rhetoric and composition is in many ways a return. Invoking ancient rhetoric not only authenticates these efforts to shift writing pedagogy from the workplace to the public sphere. Calling on ancient rhetorical education also reinvigorates the teaching of writing with a stronger sense of purpose by placing it in the problematic political world of public discourse. Walters relates Isocrates' turn to the exchanges between expressivist rhetorical theorists, such as Peter Elbow and Donald Murray, and epistemic rhetoricians, such as Berlin and Patricia Bizzell. He supports Berlin's theories of rhetoric as a way of knowing and, citing Jeffery Bineham, argues that, "Rhetoric exerts a powerful social influence; it is the means by which interpretation becomes knowledge; it is the community's rationale for the social construction of reality" (168). He cites James Berlin as "representing one important phase of the modern epistemic return" from expressive forms to writing as "a public and communal enactment of a political interaction." He continues to treat Isocrates skeptically, but does conclude that "Berlin and Isocrates are [not] too far apart, for Berlin also recognizes that students who write (or who are taught to write) within a social epistemic paradigm enact political interactions in terms of their own experiences" (169).

While Isocrates may have been less concerned with the social influences of the dominant paradigm on his orators, his attention to writing as political, for Walters, is worthy of note in a defense of epistemic rhetoric. "The contemporary epistemic return," he notes, "focuses, as it did for Isocrates, on politics, though the difference may now be that more emphasis is given to promoting self-awareness of one's situatedness as a prelude to joining the wider community where the respect for difference includes a respect for others' situatedness" (160).

As one example of such self-awareness, Henri Giroux among others has explained that “whiteness can no longer remain invisible as a racial, political, and historical construction.” Instead, he believes that “the privilege and practices of domination that underscore being white in America can no longer remain invisible through either an appeal to universal norm or a refusal to explore how whiteness works to produce a form of ‘friendly’ colonialism” (105). The relationship between whiteness and the teaching of writing is historically embedded in the history of slavery, but this is not a history that is comfortably included either in the history of language instruction in America, or in the practice of it. Instead composition reposes more often in the fragmented world of postmodernism, dabbling with forms of writing with little attention to forms of expression, or in the bureaucratic world of the market, dictating, commodifying, and authorizing forms of discourse while demonizing and disenfranchising others, all the while privileging or dooming the communities these discourses represent; either world is safe as long as it remains decontextualized, ahistorical, and apolitical. But this is fantasy, for in reality, as Blitz and Herbert put it so well, “the view, the cultic faith that our studies of texts, of writing techniques, of scientific principles, and of art forms, are nonpolitical is deluded” (15).

Stepping away from the delusion of apolitical writing instruction, rhetoricians have found great comfort in the transformative possibilities available in the classroom once the teacher openly and responsibly acknowledges the politics at play in the writing classroom. Julie Drew believes that contextualizing writing is the most useful way of facilitating students’ critical engagement in the writing classroom. Rejecting notions of “good writing” as innate talent, Drew suggests that “educating students to tackle with the

theoretical concept of writing-within-competing-social-forces, and helping then to explicate the particular social forces within which they write, is one way to directly address the concerns of those who would teach writing as a democratic project” (414). This democratic project both protects students from teacher indoctrination by focusing on indoctrination itself, and strengthens students’ writing skills by making writing an active engagement with the social world.

This seems to be the direction that composition is taking, following Patricia Bizzell’s prediction that the field is in a paradigm shift that will lead it to pay closer attention to the contextual nature of language and language instruction. Cautioning against allowing applications of Thomas Kuhn to resort to simple scientism, Bizzell argues believes that the field of composition should “work toward a new paradigm that allows us to examine the ways in which language sharpens and directs critical analysis of the historical situation in which we and our students and our society find ourselves” (52).

Attention to politics in the classroom is in many ways far less political than ignoring the tacit politics that are at play in all classrooms. What Bizzell is asking for is a pedagogy of discourse analysis “that would foster responsible inspection of the politically loaded hidden curriculum in the composition class.” This class, to better suit the needs of all students—rather than the historically privileged standardized discourse community—would politicize the composition classroom by “pointing out that discourse conventions exist” and she adds, by making it clear to everyone that the classroom is actually already politicized (99).

The study of discourse would include not only the simulation of prescribed discursive formations, but also the investigation of the formation of various discursive

formations. Henry Giroux agrees with the call for discourse analysis. Instead of a focus on academic discourse however, Giroux argues for an education for democracy, one that teaches students that, “the relationship between knowledge and power can be emancipatory, that their histories and experiences matter, and that what they say and do can count as part of a wider struggle to change the world around them.” For Giroux this type of teaching requires a relearning for educators as well, who will require “a language that makes them sensitive to the politics of their own location” and one that would necessarily rearticulate the role of administrators, teachers, and other cultural workers, making them all “self-conscious of the historically contingent nature of their own theories, methods, and modes of inquiry” (25).

This “language of historical perspective” Giroux evokes infuses the educator with a stronger sense of purpose than that proscribed by existing social forces. Instead, this perspective is perceived as “an awareness that the way things are is not the way they have always been or must necessarily be in the future.” Here, the necessary historical inquiry of this perspective inevitably links the educator’s pursuits to “the imperatives of moral and political agency” because to have the historical perspective “is to locate ourselves and our visions inside of rather than outside of the language of history ad possibility” (28). For Giroux and others, the historical perspective—one that, understandably, would include the postcolonial perspective—places educators on stronger ground than the foundation of traditional hierarchical structures that are, albeit slowly, dismantling under the pressures of critical analyses of historical forms of power.

The paradigm shift Bizzell observes in the discipline of English studies suggests that this is a new era for composition, one that can prove itself of great service to

students, to the field of English studies, and to the world at large, by integrating not just students' docile bodies into the world, but their active minds, brimming with their own experiences in the world, and their own perspectives and ideas on how to make the world a better place. Educational leaders, such as WPAs are taking seriously the responsibility of preparing these students to participate actively and responsibly in an epistemic world. Giroux's historical perspective hopes to provide educators with "a language of critical imagination, one that both insists on and enables them to consider the structures, movements, and opportunities in the contemporary order of things and how we might act to prevent the barbaric and develop those aspects of public life that point to its best and as yet unrealized possibilities" (29).

Historicizing writing instruction not only reveals the political underpinnings of policies and practices; it also provides useful examples for arguing against the perpetuation of ineffective pedagogies and suggests possible avenues for transformative change. Knowing where we came from can sometimes help us see where we're going. Susan Jarrett agrees that educators should be self-reflective, and understand the political and ideological positioning that they invariably bring to the classroom. For Jarratt, responsible educators are ready at rhetorically important moments, to demonstrate not only our particular opinions on subjects, but, "more important, how we derived them—how they may be connected to personal histories and social positions and how each of us will necessarily be limited in assessing those histories and views." Here Jarratt acknowledges the difficulty of such work and realizes that this difficulty is what strengthens the pedagogies of silence prevalent in current-traditional and expressivist rhetorics. But the compositionists asserts that "that difficulty should not prevent us from

taking seriously our role as public intellectuals to make formation of political consciousness the subject of literacy education.” Promoting the role of the public intellectual does not equate with indoctrination in Jarrett’s analysis; rather, she “rejects the charge that liberatory pedagogy is somehow more intrusive or manipulative than what it seeks to replace.”

What Jarratt has noticed in liberatory pedagogies is a penchant for dialogue, inspired, more often than not, by Freire’s critique of banking education as well as by Foucault’s historical analysis of the panopticon. Rejecting top-down structures of learning, these so-called “political” teachers instill in students a sense of participation in discursive transaction by privileging public, shared dialogue that intervenes in discursive constructions of reality and that questions the rigidity of discursive formations. Jarrett’s pedagogy is interesting because it is blatantly, unapologetically political. She realizes that, “when teachers make their own political and ethical commitments to social change part of the course, students who have internalized a model of education as the transaction of ‘objective’ knowledge may feel an uncomfortable dissonance,” but she does not believe that this is cause for seizure of liberatory education. She acknowledges that “speaking openly about ethics can create for students a painful awareness of the absence of a strong community consensus about right and wrong in our huge, diverse social system,” but also attests that, “it can also provide a source of relief, pleasure, and challenge in confronting these anxieties” (36).

It is difficult to test indoctrination, finally, but that does not mean we must ignore its presence. For rhetoricians concerned with indoctrination, dialogue and active participation in discourse serve as a more comfortable means by which to ethically work

in within the educational apparatus. Zebrosky, who infuses his composition courses with cultural studies, believes that “Dialogue is the key to success.” For this reason, he argues that “it is not possible or desirable to pretend that politics does not exist in the very pores of the classroom, the curriculum, and language studies,” and adds quirkily, “Language is not neutral. If it were, it’d be dead.” This somewhat facetious remark is sage in many ways; the English language is laden with historically produced contentions, sycretisms, worldviews, and hierarchies that are constantly at play in its epistemological work in the world. All of these elements are always and everywhere political, and the language does live in the highly political arenas of discourse.

To educate students to participate in arenas of discourse, then, requires a hearty commitment to politicizing discourse itself. This work is being done in various and sometimes disparate configurations within the field of English studies, just as it is practiced actively, yet differently, in the field of postcolonial studies. As with applications of postcolonial theory in other academic disciplines, the pursuit is what is important, the ethical and historical positioning provides the direction toward an end that is not entirely known, but strived for.

This striving is commendable to postcolonialists like Said, whose brave investigations of racializing practices in the formation of Orientalism as an academic discipline have forced educators out of the comfortable authoritative positions of unquestionable vessels of truth. For Said, the recognition of the truth of Orientalism’s political origin and its continuing political actuality necessitates “the obligation on intellectual as well as political grounds to investigate the resistance to politics of Orientalism, a resistance,” Said notes, “symptomatic of what is denied” (199).

The voicing of new truths about the political underpinnings of educational disciplines is difficult work, but it is of greatest value to students who would rid the world of oppressive forces. As a result of his uncovering of the oppressive history of an academic discipline, for Said, “the role of the intellectual is not to consolidate authority, but to understand, interpret, and question it;” in this work he finds “another version of the notion of speaking truth to power” (502). Said’s educational agenda here is similar to what the new rhetoricians are calling for—active student participation in learning, with an open understanding of the historical and ideological positioning of the students, the teacher, and the discipline. “What I try to impart in students,” Said offers, “isn’t so much reverence for authority or above all for what I say as a teacher.” Here Said appreciates the flexibility of his position in the humanities, and asserts that there is “a terribly important thing that one can teach at the same time that one teaches a field or a subject or a discipline.”

Harking back to the shift in rhetoric and composition, Said joins the call for creating in students “a sense of critical awareness, a sense of skepticism, that you don’t take what’s given to you uncritically, [...] namely, a kind of healthy skepticism for what authorities say” (501-2). Said finds place for this kind of disciplinary work in American academies in particular, because, “compared to most African, Asian, and Middle Eastern universities, the American university constitutes a relatively utopian space, where we can actually talk about the boundaries of the academy,” yet he is not idealistic, noting the debilitating “tendency in the academy to focus upon membership in a guild” which he argues “tends to constrict and limit the critical awareness of the scholar” (500-01). Working within these boundaries, scholars can insist on a pedagogy that opens up

students' possibilities rather than limiting them to establishment-produced and politically mute constructs; navigating the boundaries, however will prove dangerous without a strong sense of one's political location as well as a strong sense of the relationship between that location and historically produced structures of power. Placing one's historical perspective within a discourse of ethics will also serve to bolster educator's positioning against charges of indoctrination as those ethics will often stand on firmer ground than those of ideological and political invisibility.

Chapter 5: The Promise of *Postcolonial* Work in Writing Program Administration

The operating principle that guides this project can be stated simply: sound writing programs are theoretically informed. Nothing innovative can come from a writing program that turns a blind eye to the prevailing theories on language, identity, social formations, and historical circumstances. Theory is a useful resource for WPAs. Theory provides methods for contextualizing the many challenges that occur and reoccur in the history of writing instruction.

The challenges WPAs face may have far more to do with historical formations of power and exploitation—and with the institution’s role in perpetuating those formations—than with the victims of writing program failures, though they often receive the blame, the failing grade, and the kick out of the academic door. Theory provides perspective, rather than direct solutions or quick fixes. Theories hold “explanatory power” that “helps us understand the problems, situations, and contexts of our work, thus positioning us to make decisions and take actions based on a richer understanding of their implications” (Weisner and Rose 189). Specific theories such as those from postcolonial studies not only provide broader contexts from which to understand given situations, but postcolonial theory also provides an agenda of transformation that is highly valued in the new politics of difference manifested in the active work of the WPA agent of change. Postcolonial analyses of writing instruction draw attention to the identities at stake in the interplay of language and it gives writing instructors keen insight into the

politics of language stratification and linguistic colonialism. Lisa Ede's WPA theory invites political positionality as a meaningful way of producing responsible and engaging writing programs. Ede values the self-reflexive perspective that theory provides.

"Because we are all influenced by assumptions, practices, and forces of which we can only partly be aware," Ede argues, "scholars in composition cannot address issues surrounding the politics of our location in the academy solely or primarily at the level of theory, but must rather inquire into our own practices and into the ideologies that ground them." Ede believes that "theory can certainly inform and aid this effort" (184).

Postcolonial theory provides a useful context by which to probe the ideological interplay and the identity politics that are often kept invisible in the traditional paradigm still existing in much of the work of writing program administration. Placing WPA theorizing on the challenges to writing program administration within the context of postcolonial studies also serves to defend the weighty scholarly work that is part and parcel of sound writing program administration.

The administration of an agency-focused writing program requires a great deal of scholarly vigor, as WPAs must negotiate the contentious space that is the intersection between encouraging hegemonic struggle and enforcing language discipline. The project presented here provides such grounding, taking seriously the ideological impact of the discourse of colonialism and racialization on the current structure of writing programs and on the options WPAs have embraced in the past to address these challenges.

Postcolonial theorizing will also serve to introduce new options that aid WPAs in producing transformative strategies that foster positive changes in the structure of their writing programs, and in the discursive agency of their students.

The work of postcolonial theorists like Edward Said has greatly influenced academic disciplines by exposing their historical connections to epistemological forms of violence that perpetuate human denigration. Said's notion of liberal humanism involves investigating the academy's complicity in forms of domination that continue to silence or at least mask the ardent efforts by subaltern groups to engage in hegemonic struggle with the forces of colonial dominance. In Homi Bhabha's homage to Edward Said, he heralds Said's "commitment to 'humanistic resistance' (Said's term) to what appears to be the performative function of narration in 'maintaining rather than resolving the tension between the aesthetic and the national, using the former to challenge, reexamine and resist the later in those slow but rational modes of reception and understanding which is the humanist's way'" ("Adagio" 11).

This humanistic resistance can be applied to the work of the WPA as a means by which to articulate the ways in which WPAs as theorists and practitioners can resist the decontextualizing forces in traditional writing instruction—forces that insist on displacing writing from action, and ideas from the larger world. By maintaining the tensions between the individual composing act and the hegemonic forces at play in every historical moment, WPAs can create strong writing programs that better prepare students not only for intellectual and theoretical pursuits in academic disciplines, but also civil and transformative pursuits in the discursive spheres of the social world.

Agendas such as these do not come in neat packages that can be offered up to the student consumer or the market investor. Instead, this kind of work bridges the old notion of rhetorical scholarship as training the public agent to participate in discourse with new approaches to composition that investigate and dismantle the debilitating aspects of

inherited discourses. Involving as it does the dismantling of systems, this kind of work is necessarily difficult and to track systematically. Questioning Said's insistence that the work of humanistic resistance is "slow but rational," Bhabha concedes that, "in making visible the complex and conflictual relations of part and whole—overdetermination, liminality, translation, displacement, minoritization, domination—slowness articulates the movement that exists *between* the space of words and the social world. Slowness also "strengthens our resolve to make difficult and deliberate choices relating to knowledge and justice in the face of contingency, silence and mortality" (11-12).

Slowness is not easily understood or welcomed in the fishbowl world of the WPA, where everyone calls from all sides for accountability, action plans, and results; but shifting the focus of a writing program to reside within the context of the history of colonialism can slow things down somewhat. The context of postcoloniality allows for pedagogical agendas that encourage minoritarian discourses. Bhabha envisions a disciplinary agenda that "creates opportunities for oppositional writing—the resistance of the part to the hegemonic whole—in the process of constructing subaltern solidarities" (12). Certainly slowing down the role of the WPA can pull the field out of the wave of positivism that has so strongly drawn it into the realm of the corporate marketplace. Slowing down may allow the field to lean in other directions that gear the field toward reach for a *postcolonial* world, finally rid of residual colonialism. Said's humanistic resistance is a useful means by which WPAs can take the time to articulate the historical, ideological, and political positioning of their programs, to question whether those positions serve the needs of the students, the academy, and the larger world, and to rearticulate writing programs to better attend to the realities of postcoloniality.

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