
Inkshed

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11.2 December 1992

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Inkshed provides a forum for its subscribers to explore relationships among research, theory, and practice in language acquisition and language use. Subscribers are invited to submit informative pieces such as notices, reports, and reviews of articles, journals, books, textbooks, conferences, and workshops, as well as polemical discussions of events, issues, problems, and questions of concern to teachers in Canada interested in writing and reading theory and practice.

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EDITORIAL INKSHEDDING

We are doubly pleased with this issue of *Inkshed*; first, because until quite recently it looked like this was going to be a very slim volume indeed and, second, because late submissions added quality as well as quantity. The newsletter starts with a slightly revised version of the Ph.D. proposal that Graham Smart submitted to McGill. We asked Graham if we could publish the proposal because it offers a superb discussion of contemporary notions of *genre* and an extensive bibliography on the subject. In addition, it seems to us a model of research into workplace writing. Not surprisingly, the proposal has been accepted, and we are delighted that Graham will be working with us here at the Centre for the next few years.

The second piece in the newsletter, by Neil Besner, explores the topic of *invention*, the theme of the Inkshed 10 conference. This is followed by two pieces that address difficult questions of pedagogy and power. Roger Graves comments on some of the challenges to composition studies posed by radical French feminist thought, and Judy Segal wrestles with the problems that arise when the teacher attempts to share power with her students. By the way, if you respond to Judy's call for mail, please send a copy of your story to us and we'll publish it.

Finally, there are two important announcements: Jamie MacKinnon reports on **new dates** for Inkshed 10, and Susan Drain provides an update on CASWAR's constitution.

Subscriptions

If you received a subscription form with this issue, you have not yet paid for the 1992-93 *Inkshed*. As we mentioned in the previous issue, we will be asking people to re-subscribe at the same time each year; this is the second and last notice for this year.

CCCC

In the February issue of the newsletter, we would like to publish an Inksheddors' guide to the Conference on College Composition and Communication. If you are presenting at CCCC, please send us a copy of your proposal or a brief description of your presentation and the time of your session.

We would also like to get some sense of the topics people want to address during the Canadian Caucus. We have only an hour, and we will need to discuss the proposal for the Canadian Caucus-sponsored session for 1994. If you would like to get something on the agenda, let us know.

Jane Ledwell-Brown
Anthony Paré

The Ecology of Genre:

A Proposal to Study the Interaction between a Family of Workplace Genres and its Socio-Textual Environment

Recently I submitted a Ph.D. research proposal to the Centre for the Study and Teaching of Writing in McGill's Faculty of Education. What follows is the major part of the proposal. I'd very much appreciate any comments or suggestions *Inkshed* readers might have.

Theory and research in composition studies began to attend to the social context for writing in the late 1970s. Bazerman (1979) introduced the notion of the "written language community," a network of writers and readers sharing a common literary tradition. Bizzell (1982) called for composition studies to look beyond the composing processes of individual writers to study the rhetorical conventions of "discourse communities," social groups defined by shared patterns of thought and language use. In elaborating the concept of the discourse community, theorists in composition studies have drawn on various disciplines, including sociolinguistics (Gumperz, Heath, Hymes), philosophy (Foucault, Kuhn, Rorty, Toulmin), the sociology of science (Latour & Woolgar, Mulkay), psychology (Vygotsky), anthropology (Geertz), and literary criticism (Bakhtin, Burke, Fish). At the same time, researchers using naturalistic methods have explored the social dimension of writing in a variety of community, school, and workplace settings (Scribner & Cole, 1981; Herrington, 1985; Odell, 1985; Paradis et al., 1985; Doheny-Farina, 1986; McCarthy, 1987; Lunsford & Ede, 1990). As a social theory of writing has developed (Reither, 1985; Faigley, 1986; LeFevre, 1987; Clark, 1990), the study of genre has become increasingly central. Genre has provided a nexus for inquiry into a number of issues, including how knowledge is socially constructed through writing, how novices learn a discipline's rhetorical conventions, how individual writers and social institutions interact, and how professions develop particular rhetorical repertoires.

Theory-building by Carolyn Miller, John Swales, and Charles Bazerman has provided a framework for studying the social dimension of genre. Miller (1984) proposed that genres be reconceived as typified rhetorical actions evoked by recurrent situations within a society, and pointed to the significance of nonliterary as well as literary genres. Swales (1988, 1990) located genres more locally, associating them with the discourse community. According to Swales, a discourse community develops a set of genres to perform the repeated rhetorical actions needed to accomplish its goals. Bazerman (1988) emphasized the epistemic, or knowledge-creating, role of genre: in "knowledge-generating communities," genre is a collective strategy for regularizing, and making more effective, the writing and reading underlying the production of knowledge.

The work of Miller, Swales, and Bazerman has encouraged research into the use of genre in various academic and workplace settings (Freedman, 1987; Berkenkotter et al., 1988; Winsor, 1989; Campbell & Jamieson, 1990; Myers, 1990; Devitt, 1991; Paré, 1991; Smart, 1992, forthcoming; Schryer, 1990, forthcoming; Paré & Smart, forthcoming). This research has shown that genres perform a number of social functions: they act as mechanisms for enhancing reader/writer transactions that produce knowledge within a community, as vehicles for initiating newcomers into a group's ways of knowing, as agents of both stability and change in the rhetorical conventions linking individuals and institutions, and as recurrent elements in the discourses that professions develop for carrying out their work. To complement this increased understanding of the social functions of genre, composition studies needs to develop a fuller picture of the "ecology of genre," that is, of the mutually shaping relationship between genres and their social settings. To this end, scholars in the field (Bazerman, 1988, 1992; Devitt, 1991, 1992) have called for naturalistic inquiry that would explore the interaction between particular genres and the "socio-textual worlds" (Swales, forthcoming) they inhabit. Such inquiry would both contribute insights to a social theory of writing and provide writing instructors with knowledge they need to help students develop the "local expertise" (Carter, 1990) required to recognize and control specific academic and workplace genres.

The Proposed Study

The proposed study will explore the ecological relationship between genres and their socio-textual environment in a particular workplace setting, the Ottawa head office of the Bank of Canada. Employing a naturalistic approach, the study will examine a family of genres used by a discourse community of analysts, managers and executives for producing and interpreting a form of corporate knowledge known in the Bank as "written analysis."

The research site

As a central bank, the Bank of Canada's primary role is to formulate and implement Canadian monetary policy. At the top of the Bank's hierarchy are fifteen executives who are responsible to an external board of directors for ensuring that the institution performs effectively. The executives make decisions on the broad objectives of monetary policy, as well as on how best to pursue these objectives. They also make, or recommend to the board of directors, decisions concerning the Bank's internal administration. Traditionally, the executives have been economists who have risen through the ranks. Of the current group, fourteen were trained in economics and one in business administration.

Below the executives in the Bank's hierarchy are twelve departments where approximately 250 analysts and managers, in addition to performing operational duties, carry out analysis for the executives. In four of these departments, on what is known as the "policy side" of the Bank, staff conduct analysis related primarily to monetary policy; in the other eight departments, on what is known as the "administrative side," staff specializing in areas such as finance, computer technology, auditing, data-processing, and personnel matters perform analysis related to the institution's internal administration. Each department is directed by a group of managers, headed by a chief, that is responsible for ensuring that documents prepared for the executives meet their needs.

The theoretical framework

Over the last ten years, first as an in-house writing instructor in the Bank and then as its Coordinator of Writing Training, I have researched writer/reader transactions among the institution's analysts, managers, and executives. More recently, I have begun to investigate the role of genre in the knowledge-producing activities of this discourse community.

Using methods such as observation, interviews, reading protocols, text analysis, and audio-recording of meetings, I have gathered data which, when considered through the lens of a social theory of writing, suggest a provisional theoretical framework for the proposed study. This framework includes three components: a socio-textual definition of genre; a view of how the Bank's analysts, managers, and executives employ a family of genres to produce and interpret corporate knowledge; and an ecological conception of genre to serve as a construct for studying the relationship between this family of genres and its environment.

A socio-textual definition of genre

On a conceptual level, genre will be defined as a broad rhetorical strategy enacted, collectively, by members of a discourse community in order to perform social actions that support their larger goals. (While different genres clearly perform a wide range of social actions, the proposed study will focus on the knowledge-producing function of a particular set of genres.) It will be assumed that a genre can be empirically observed as a distinctive profile of regularities across three dimensions: a set of written texts, the composing processes involved in producing these texts, and the reading practices used to interpret them.

Genre and the production of knowledge

The Bank's analysts, managers, and executives can be viewed as a knowledge-generating community. This community employs a family of genres to regularize, and increase the effectiveness of, the writing and reading underlying the production of corporate knowledge used for resolving issues of monetary policy and internal administration.

The executives approach issues through a process of "collegial . . . discussion and debate," as one of the executives put it. Whether the issue is, for example, how to respond to an impending legislated change in the Canadian banking system that could affect the implementation of monetary policy, or whether a proposed computerized data-processing system would be cost-effective, the executives' discussion usually follows much the same pattern. First, the issue is defined and its implications are carefully explored; then the advantages and disadvantages of alternative courses of action are assessed; and finally, a consensual decision is reached. Because of a strong belief in the epistemic force of writing, the executives depend on what they refer to as "written analysis," much of it produced by analysts and managers in the Bank's twelve departments, to focus and structure their discussions of issues. The executives' belief in the epistemic value of writing has two facets. They believe that written analysis provides them with a necessary foundation for in-depth discussion of complex issues. The executives also believe that if the Bank's analysts and managers are to provide useful input on issues, they need to use the writing process collaboratively to develop and test ideas.

The executives obtain written analysis from the departments to support their discussion of monetary-policy and administrative issues in different ways. They receive a regular flow of periodic documents, e.g., on a daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, and annual basis. Frequently, they will also ask a department to research a specific question and write up its findings. In addition, departments will sometimes take the initiative in examining and reporting on issues known to concern the executives. In all three cases, analysts and managers collaborate to develop written analysis by gathering, manipulating, and interpreting quantitative data which reflect economic or administrative events. In its various instances, written analysis performs one or more of the following functions: identifying and interpreting trends in historical, current, or projected data; proposing, evaluating, or suggesting modifications to a conceptual model for interpreting data; defining a problem, along with its causes and consequences; assessing the advantages and disadvantages of alternative courses of action; and recommending, justifying, and planning for a particular action.

Written analysis is developed, conveyed, and interpreted through an always-evolving family of genres, each of which provides the executives with the specific form of knowledge they need for discussing a particular type of monetary-policy or administrative issue. Genres currently contributing to discussion of monetary policy include, for example, the "note to management," which describes and interprets current economic or financial trends in Canada or other countries; the "briefing note," which summarizes economic activity in Canada, the U.S., or overseas during a six-week period; the "research memorandum," which presents macroeconomic work of a theoretical, often econometric, nature; and the "staff economic projection," which provides forward-looking analyses of the Canadian, American, and global economies.

Examples of genres currently contributing to discussion of the Bank's internal administration are the "automation proposal," which presents a cost-benefit case for developing a computerized information system for processing data in some area of the Bank's operations; the "project-update report," which describes progress, resource expenditures, problems, and strategy in project work; the "stewardship document," in which a department reports on its accomplishments over the past year and outlines initiatives planned for the year ahead; and the annual "mid-term plan," which sets out the Bank's priorities for the next five-year period.

Regularities in texts, in the analysts' and managers' composing processes, and in the executives' reading practices reveal the structure that the community's genres bring to the intellectual activity underlying the production and use of written analysis. Certain regularities in texts, composing processes, and reading practices occur across all genres, while other regularities are genre-specific. Texts in all genres exhibit a similar underlying rhetorical structure. Typically, a document begins with an introduction that identifies a particular monetary-policy or administrative issue, places this issue in a historical or conceptual context, states the purpose of the communication, and presents an overview of the argument. Next, the argument is presented in full, with its selected quantitative data, its economics-based reasoning, and its supporting references to other community texts. Texts within any single genre enact this common structure through a unique configuration of communicative functions and linguistic forms.

The composing processes used by the analysts and managers in preparing written analysis for the executives are also regularized significantly. In all genres, composing processes are patterned by a similar cycle of writer/reviewer collaboration. Typically, following a briefing from a manager on an issue, an analyst gathers and evaluates relevant data and composes a draft for review. The analyst then incorporates rounds of spoken and written feedback from the manager into successive revisions until the latter is satisfied. At this point, another round of collaboration usually occurs, involving the analyst, the manager, and a more senior reviewer. Finally, when the chief of the department decides that the document has been refined sufficiently, it is sent on to its executive readership. Within single genres, regularities in an experienced analyst's rhetorical manoeuvres are linked to discourse structure as well as to a genre's particular pattern of relationship to other genres.

Reading protocols and interviews with the executives suggest that the reading practices they use to interpret documents prepared by the analysts and managers are also significantly regularized, both across and within genres. These regularities relate to three aspects of the "reading event" (Rosenblatt, 1985): the way the executives select particular texts to read; the procedures they employ in negotiating their way through a text; and the interpretive frameworks - - mental schemata of specialized concepts and other previously acquired knowledge (Rumelhart, 1980; Van Dijk & Kintsch, 1983) - - they use to construct knowledge from the discourse.

The ecology of genre

Cooper (1986), drawing on Myers (1985) and Lewontin et al. (1984), has proposed an ecological metaphor for writing that portrays the writer as enmeshed in a set of socially-constituted systems - - systems of purposes, ideas, cultural norms, interpersonal interactions, and textual forms. These systems are interconnected and evolving, and the relationship between writer and system is reciprocal. Cooper suggests that this metaphor represents a powerful heuristic for studying writing in specific social settings.

Similarly, my preliminary research at the Bank of Canada suggests that an ecological conception of genre can serve as a useful construct for studying how particular genres, as broad rhetorical strategies for producing knowledge, are embedded within their socio-textual environment. This research suggests that the genres used to produce written analysis in the Bank can be viewed as interacting with five systems - - systems of business functions, organizational roles, collaborative arrangements, conceptual models, and computer technologies. Each of the three observable elements of a genre - - its texts, composing processes, and reading practices - - can be seen to intersect with these systems.

The first element of the socio-textual environment to be examined in the proposed study is a system of business functions. The Bank's mandate is defined in the "Corporate Framework," a schema of the institution developed in the late-1980s to systematize the Bank's planning and budgeting processes and to rationalize the development of automated systems and data-bases. The Corporate Framework identifies five major business functions: conducting monetary policy; providing banking services to the public, government, and financial institutions; issuing bank notes; administering Government of Canada debt; and managing the Bank as an institution. For each of these functions, the Corporate Framework also defines a particular set of business activities. In making decisions on issues related to these business functions and activities, the Bank's executives depend on written analysis prepared by analysts and managers.

To orchestrate the activities involved in carrying out its business functions, the Bank has developed a system of organizational roles. This system of roles, defined formally through organization diagrams and job descriptions as well as informally through convention, specifies responsibilities for different positions, delineates working relationships among the individuals in these positions, and distributes authority among the different levels of the hierarchy. According to the Bank's system of roles, analysts and managers are responsible for producing various types of written analysis for the executives, as a kind of surrogate thinking; the executives, in turn, are responsible for using this analysis in making monetary-policy and administrative decisions.

The Ecology of Genre

The Bank has also developed a system of structured collaborative arrangements to facilitate the production of written analysis. Within work-units, committees, and project-teams, analysts and managers engage in various institutionally-prescribed forms of collaboration as they prepare documents. Each form of collaboration involves a particular pattern of interaction that, to use a distinction made by Lunsford and Ede (1990), is situated on a continuum between the "hierarchical" and the "dialogic."

In producing written analysis, managers and analysts deploy a system of specialized conceptual models. These models can be divided into four categories: organization-mapping models, such as the Corporate Framework; econometric models, complex sets of mathematical equations used for various kinds of economic analysis; project-management models, which are used by project teams to plan and coordinate their activities; and data-flow models, which are used by staff in developing automated information systems.

The final element in the socio-textual environment to be examined in the study is a system of computer technologies that supports certain of the conceptual models mentioned above. For example, econometric models are supported by a computer network that includes individual work-stations, desktop-publishing software, and software for accessing databases and creating graphics. Similarly, the project-management model and data-flow models used during automation projects are supported by another configuration of hardware and software.

Genres interact with these five systems in an interconnected way, of course, rather than with each system in isolation. For example, analysts and managers whose roles include responsibility for producing the "staff economic projection," which provides the Bank's executives with written analysis needed for conducting monetary policy, use computer technology to manipulate econometric models, following a particular collaborative routine. And project teams responsible for producing "automation proposals" that provide the executives with written analysis needed for managing the Bank as an institution use a computer-supported project-management model to coordinate their collaboration and a software package to diagram data flows.

Viewed in the light of theory from sociology, the relationships that connect writers and genres with the systems described above can be seen to be reciprocal and evolving. Merton's theory of social structure (1968), as discussed by Bazerman (1988), would suggest that while the systems shape the activities of writers working within genres used to produce written analysis, the writers in turn influence these systems through their rhetorical choices. Similarly, the structuration theory of Giddens (1984), as interpreted by Bazerman (forthcoming), Miller (forthcoming), and Berkenkotter and Huckin (forthcoming), would imply that while writers are influenced by institutionally-sanctioned genre conventions, they also continuously challenge and modify these conventions.

The research questions and methodology

The proposed study will examine the issue of how the family of genres used to produce written analysis in the Bank of Canada interacts with its socio-textual environment. Using the provisional theoretical framework described above, I will investigate how these genres - - to be observed empirically as profiles of regularity across texts, composing processes, and reading practices - - are linked to systems of business functions, organizational roles, collaborative arrangements, conceptual models, and computer technologies

The study will employ a naturalistic approach, as described by Goetz and LeCompte (1984) and Lincoln and Guba (1985), on the assumption that qualitative methods are particularly effective for investigating the social dimension of writing in specific settings (Kantor et al., 1981; Emig, 1982; Doheny-Farina & Odell, 1985; Faigley, 1985; Reither, 1985). In using such methods to look at the genres of a particular professional community, I will be following the lead of researchers such as Freed and Broadhead (1987), Barabas (1990), Cross (1990), Myers (1990), Herndl et al. (1991), Paré (1991), Stygall (1991), and Doheny-Farina (1992).

The research will be organized around five questions, with previous scholarship providing a starting point for inquiry in each case.

1. *How do the Bank's major business functions evoke the genres used to produce written analysis?*

Bazerman (1988), Swales (1988, 1990), Winsor (1989), and Devitt (1991) have illustrated how a professional community's mandate generates its genres. Miller (1984) has suggested that a social group will come to recognize recurring situations in its ongoing activities and develop typified discourse in response.

In the proposed study, I will investigate how the Bank's business functions and related activities lead to recurrent situations and repeated rhetorical functions, thereby evoking particular genres. Various types of data will be collected: internal documentation such as the Corporate Framework Reference Manual, the departments' annual stewardship documents, and the Bank's mid-term plans; external Bank publications such as the Annual Report, public information booklets, and recruitment and orientation material; interviews with managers; and a broad selection of documents representing various types of written analysis. One procedure for collecting documents will be to ask six individuals from different parts of the Bank to provide me with copies of the documents they write for an executive audience over the course of a year. I will also make the same request of a project team, committee, work-unit, and department.

The aim here will be to construct a "genre map," to use a term employed by Van Nostrand (forthcoming). Organized around the Bank's business functions and activities, this genre map will include a taxonomy of document types, as well as the recurrent situations, writers, and readers associated with each of them.

2. *What clusters of organizational roles are associated with particular genres?*

Foucault (1976) has discussed how a culture's underlying social order regulates its discourse, and conversely, how discourse can influence the social order. More specifically, in studies of workplace writing, Paradis et al. (1985), Smart (1985), Barabas (1990), Herndl et al. (1991), and Paré and Smart (forthcoming) have shown that within an organization the continuity of specified roles serves to regularize the writing, reading, and social interactions involved in the creation and use of documents. Doheny-Farina (1986), on the other hand, has demonstrated that social interactions occurring during the production of a business document can alter the roles of the individuals involved.

I will add a further dimension to the genre map described above by identifying the configuration of organizational roles associated with each genre. These roles will be inferred from organization diagrams, observations, and interviews with analysts, managers, and executives.

3. *What different types of collaborative arrangements structure the composing processes associated with various genres?*

Paradis et al. (1985), Doheny-Farina (1986), Reither and Vipond (1989), and Cross (1990) have demonstrated the importance of collaborative writing in the production of workplace documents. And Lunsford and Ede (1990) have shown that such collaboration can take quite different forms, in terms of the interactions involved.

I will identify and describe different types of institutionally-prescribed collaborative arrangements among analysts and managers within work-units, committees and project teams, and match these collaborative arrangements against genres. The data collected will include observations, interviews with analysts and managers, and Bank documentation outlining roles and work relationships.

4. *Within specific genres, how do specialized conceptual models intersect with texts, composing processes, and reading practices?*

Bazerman (1988) and Smart (forthcoming) point to the interplay between a community's shared conceptual models (with their various symbolic forms such as written language, mathematics, and

diagrams) and its genres. Scribner and Cole (1981), Witte (1992), and Ongstad (forthcoming), drawing on theorists such as Bakhtin (1981, 1986), Halliday (1978) and Vygotsky (1962, 1978), show how social groups use written language interactively with other types of symbols in creating knowledge.

Here, I will begin by familiarizing myself with one example from each of the four categories of conceptual models mentioned earlier. I will examine the Corporate Framework, an organization-mapping model; an econometric model called RDXF; a project-management model known as the Information System Delivery Series; and a data-flow model being used in a current automation project. In each case, I will look at available documentation on the model, as well as any on-line representations, and will interview people who use it in their work, all with the aim of developing a good technical understanding of how the model functions. Then using observations, interviews, reading protocols, audio-recordings of meetings between writers and reviewers, and text analysis, I will investigate how the model influences the texts, composing processes, and reading practices associated with a particular genre.

5. *How do the computer technologies that support conceptual models influence writers' composing processes within particular genres?*

Yates (1989) and Yates and Orlikowski (1992) have examined the relationship between technology and workplace genres. They show that an organization's technologies can exert a strong influence on the production and use of documents.

First, looking at user guides and interviewing analysts and managers, I will examine the technologies that support econometric models, project-management models, and data-flow models. Then, using observations of writers and further interviews, I will investigate how these technologies influence composing processes within various genres.

As reflected in the questions above, the study will focus primarily on how systems of business functions, organizational roles, collaborative arrangements, conceptual models, and computer technologies exert an influence on genres. However, I will also attend to obvious evidence of influence in the other direction, that is, I will note cases where writers working within particular genres contribute to change in the environment.

I will begin by collecting data at the Ottawa head office of the Bank over a 12-month period. This will allow me to observe the interaction between genres and their environment over full cycles of the Bank's daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, and annual business activities. In gathering data from analysts, managers, and executives, I will focus on a group of approximately thirty informants. As indicated above, various kinds of data will be collected, allowing for triangulation of evidence (Denzin, 1978): field-notes from observations of analysts, managers, and executives at work; audio-recordings of interviews, reading protocols, and document-related meetings; documents, in both draft and final form, representing various types of written analysis; reviewers' annotations on drafts; internal documentation describing the Bank's business functions and activities; and external publications describing the Bank's mandate and operations.

Field-notes will be collected using a method suggested by Shatzman and Strauss (1973): observations will be recorded, with interpretive comments immediately added. Interviews with analysts, managers, and executives will be both structured and unstructured, as described by Lincoln and Guba (1985). Reading protocols will be collected following a procedure developed by Waern (1979) and used by Smart and Woods (1985, 1986), Dias (1987), Haas and Flower (1988), and Ledwell-Brown (work in progress). Audio-recordings of interviews, reading protocols, and document-related meetings will be selectively transcribed. Bank documents will be analyzed for regularities in their argumentation, communicative functions, and linguistic forms using techniques of discourse analysis such as those described in Bazerman (1988), Van Dijk and Kintsch (1983), Huckin (1992), Meyer (1975), Toulmin (1958), and Widdowson (1979, 1983).

As suggested by Goetz and LeCompte (1984), the data will be analyzed as they are collected. This will allow me to use my preliminary interpretations to guide the research as it proceeds. At regular intervals, I will convey these interpretations to informants among the Bank's analysts, managers, and executives, and include their reactions as additional data.

In the first stages of analysis, I will focus on the separate relationships between knowledge-generating genres and each of the five systems that constitute the socio-textual environment. However, as I proceed further I will attempt to develop an integrated picture of how the genres interact with the environment as a whole.

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Invention and its Discontents:

A Polemical Free-Write

I'm thinking about invention in the classroom - - about the *practice* that issues from invention theory from the writing student's point of view. Of course several problems immediately arise: I doubt that I can really know what my students' experience of invention is, and I cannot really know what its results are either; but I can certainly speculate about both.

Let me provide some context. I'm teaching in our Writing Program for the first time this year, an experience that I am fascinated by and one that I've been looking forward to for several years and that is every bit as interesting as I thought it might be, but in very different ways. Several of us here at the University of Winnipeg teach expository writing courses at several levels in the English Department, but, as some Inksheddors might know, the University also started up a Writing Program six years ago. The people in our Program teach several writing courses, at least one of which is required for almost all entering students. One of these thirteen-week courses, Fundamentals of Rhetoric, is team-taught and based upon the Writing Program's *Coursebook* (1992), which has many different kinds of invention exercises embedded in each assignment. I'm just finishing teaching the course this week, and I have been intrigued by the ways in which my students do and do not seem to be able to benefit from invention work of various kinds.

The ways in which I believe that invention does *not* benefit these students (and I recognize that beginning with these observations reveals something significant about my perceptions of invention) have to do primarily with their creation or understanding of *audience*. I perceive these students' major difficulties with their first assignment in the course, for example - - an essay about personal

experience, a piece of narration -- to have been, essentially, problems connected with their inability to conceive of their readers. I perceive the many kinds of invention exercises in our *Coursebook* -- exercises faithfully worked through by these writers (who are required to hand in all invention work for all of their writing assignments) -- not to have helped them to conceive an audience, and I believe that this difficulty with audience is no minor element, but rather, a difficulty that reveals itself in prominent and significant ways in the texts these students wrote.

I can quickly summarize the kinds of invention exercises that we had them work through in class, in groups (the course is organized around collaborative work in groups that remain consistent for thirteen weeks). I should explain that all these particular invention exercises are prefaced by a section -- the first section of the *Coursebook* -- entitled "Invention" and subdivided into a section on "techniques" and another on "exercises." The three major purposes of invention techniques, as explained in this section of the *Coursebook*, seem straightforward:

First, she [the writer] uses invention techniques to generate as many ideas as she can about her topic so that she has a wealth of raw material to use in her writing. Second, she uses invention techniques to explore that raw material, to discover its possibilities, and to find out which of her ideas offer the richest veins of meaning. And, finally, she uses invention techniques to work out the structure and development which will best reveal that meaning. (7)

The invention exercises that students work through follow a process that begins with an exercise entitled "Defining the Task" that has them begin by responding to practical questions about the length of the essay and the completion dates for invention and drafting work and continue by defining categories like "purpose," "point of view," "kind of voice," the "main idea for the paper," and "audience," among others.

The next invention exercise focusses on the student "choosing a story" and imagining that series of events in detail. Then students tell their story to their groups, responding to questions in order to clarify points or events if necessary; each story gets told in different tenses and from different points of view. The next series of exercises is directed at students "discovering the significance" of the story and "capturing the details," followed by writing two drafts, the original and the "problem solving" draft, which are discussed and worked on in various ways in the groups. Readers and writers respond at this point to a series of questions about the drafts; and the final exercise has students work through a "checklist for editing and proofreading."

Now my first response as I looked through these exercises in relation to the assignment -- an assignment, incidentally, that is quite similar to the one that I often begin with in writing courses that I teach -- was to admire the thoroughness, the detail, the careful sequencing of exercises, the apparently comprehensive nature of the whole process, and to try and anticipate how these invention strategies might affect or inform the final essay. I didn't know what to expect, actually, having never used these particular strategies in this way, or at least this systematically, before.

The papers, accompanied by all the invention work, came in, and I met with each of my students to discuss their essays. I was fascinated by these essays -- and fascinated, too, by the students' descriptions of their perceptions of their writing, descriptions that seemed similar to my own *and* to confirm the comments of their groups throughout the invention stages described above. Virtually without exception, these narratives had two major problems: first, they were written as if they were directed to the writers themselves (so that, for example, the writing often assumed that the reader knew as much about the incidents being related as the writer did), and second, the "transitional event" (that is, the event that the narrative focussed on, the event that changed the writer's life in a significant way) was not marked in any way -- either by development, or by positioning, or by

explicit reference -- that would enable a reader to apprehend the significance of this transitional episode. The group response to the essays, like mine, often pointed to the first of these difficulties, the problem with audience.

I recognize that there is a host of other variables at work here, and at several levels. But what intrigues me is that, at one and the same time, these writers do *not* seem to learn about audience through this invention process, and that they *know* that they need to conceive of a reader different from themselves.

So let me ask two pedagogical questions: how do you "teach" audience? And how do rhetorical variables such as audience and purpose -- variables at the centre of the way that I teach writing -- intersect (or *not* intersect) with the kinds of invention processes I've outlined above? And where should we situate such questions -- pragmatic questions about what *use* a student can make of invention strategies -- in our discussion of theories of invention? I recognize that these questions are not innocent, and that at this point I probably have no business calling this a "free-write"; I've been back to the beginning too many times. But let the title stand. And the questions.

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Writing as Unlearning

Perhaps because so many of *Inkshed's* subscribers have a background in Education faculties, the phrase "writing as a mode of learning" operates as a kind of commonplace scarcely worth troubling ourselves with. It was with just such a view that I encountered Lynn Worsham's essay, "Writing against writing: The predicament of *écriture féminine* in composition studies" (1991). In this essay Worsham examines the French feminist movement and its current and potential effects on composition studies. To describe what she sees as the taming of the radical feminist writings of Julia Kristeva, Luce Irigaray, and Hélène Cixous, Worsham constructs an analogy comparing French feminist writings to radical subcultures. According to the terms of this analogy, French feminist thought is to mainstream academic culture as radical subcultures are to mainstream culture. Worsham pursues this analogy to argue that academic culture domesticates and neutralizes radical thought in a process similar to the way mainstream culture makes commodities out of the symbolic paraphernalia of subcultures. To accomplish the domestication and neutralization of these signs and symbols, mainstream culture empties them of their radical meanings (fascist, anti-establishment attitudes) and fills them with trivial irrelevance (safety-pins as fashion statements). In such a way earrings have become commonplace for men (though not among Inkshedders), and *écriture féminine* has become *de rigueur* among compositionists (though, again, not so popular at Inkshed as at the 4 C's).

All this serves, really, as a lead up to Worsham's final paragraph, which I would like to reproduce whole before examining the implications it may have for readers of *Inkshed*:

The purpose of refashioning composition as cultural criticism, however, is not to stay within an epistemological justification but to liberate a different way of feeling, another sensibility. Our emphasis should shift from the notion of writing as a mode of learning to that of writing

as a strategy, without tactics or techniques, whose progress yields "unlearning." This result does not mean that writing produces ignorance; rather, it produces a sense of defamiliarization vis-à-vis unquestioned forms of knowledge. Writing would no longer function primarily as an agency in the articulation and redistribution of power; instead, it would become an indispensable agency for making the world strange and infinitely various. Barthes calls this experience *sapientia*: "no power, a little knowledge, a little wisdom, and as much flavor as possible" (478). Students may discover ways to make something of what has been made of them; they may begin to discover and to invent the "flavor" of life in a society whose general tendency is toward conformity. Scholarship in composition, in the meantime, should examine ways in which culture is reproduced in its theory and in its practice - - with a view toward becoming a site for the production of difference. (101-102)

Writing as **unlearning**. As making something out of what society has made of us. At the risk of sounding a little too cute and post-structuralist, learning to write must be - - simultaneously - - both part of a learning through writing as well as unlearning the subjectivity imposed on students through expressivist (i.e., intensely personal experiences as primary or only basis for knowledge) pedagogies. As I understand Worsham's use of the term, "unlearning" begins with a critical consciousness that reconsiders "who is me" not as a series of personal choices but within the framework of the very limited choices available to many students. Students' personal responses to texts and personal essays may very well not "empower" them if their experiences are "not appropriate material" (Hunt quoting Straw, *Inkshed* 10.5: 11) and not valued in the writing classroom or the larger society.

In addition to questioning personal responses to texts, "unlearning" also questions academic discourse as presented in the writing texts and writing classrooms of many readers of *Inkshed*. It isn't enough to argue that students need to value their personal responses to texts. They need to ask, and we need to ask, "what person (subject) is being asked to respond?" and "what is an appropriate response?" before they can move on to make critically-informed choices about who they want to be and in fact who they can be within the institutional structures we all live. Making such a decision - - or at least asking questions about who they can be - - foregrounds issues of power, gender, and control in our classrooms and institutions. These choices are all the more important when we recognize that masculine discourse exercises considerable power over the kinds of texts and the subjects for discourse allowed in our institutions. "Unlearning" may also be just as necessary for collaborative pedagogies that focus on the "social" and "group" commitment over the "difference" Worsham values. Students need to value their own responses to texts and the difference these responses will produce, but they also need to think about where this self came from and how they want to change it or how it has been changed through the enunciation of their difference. In this way they "unlearn" through writing and gain a fuller sense of their (constricted) place in the world.

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Worsham, Lynn. (1991). Writing against writing: The predicament of *écriture féminine* in composition studies. In P. Harkin and J. Schiller (Eds.), *Contending with Words: Composition and Rhetoric in a Postmodern Age* (pp. 82-104). New York: MLA.

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Pedagogy, the Rhetoric of Failure, and a Call for Mail

It's not as if I didn't know that my rhetorical theory course had gone well and my course on theories of literacy had gone badly. But when I read my student evaluations, I felt my whole pedagogical world turn upside-down. I had *lectured* (almost relentlessly) in the rhetoric course; the evaluations praised me in a most satisfying way. I had decentred the literacy class; the evaluations said I had been insufficiently directive, insufficiently informative, even insufficiently organized.

While I might have concluded from this only that I was better at lecturing than I was at "conducting" a group (maybe that was the problem - - that I was orchestrating too hard or not hard enough), I concluded instead that I'd better explore the myriad reasons for the failure of this class, looking not only to myself, but also to the curriculum, the students, the subject matter, and the institutional context for us all.

And that is the background to the CCCC proposal I wrote last spring. What follows is the proposal itself. I'm soliciting herewith stories of the experiences of other Inkshedders in the decentred, nonperformance classroom. Let me know, if you send me something, if it's all right to "use" your story in my paper. No matter if it's not; my main reason for asking you to write is that I have a lot to learn.

The CCCC session is called "Genre and Power." My paper is called, "Unseating the Classroom Lecture":

The essays in our professional journals and the presentations at our conferences offer a number of narratives of success by those who have re-viewed models of teaching. For example, James Reither and Doug Vipond and Jane Tompkins have written eloquently about their reapproaches to the classroom, calling on student resources and collaboration to enable learning. While accounts of such successes are inspiring, they leave a number of questions unanswered. The main one is "why do *some* of the best considered attempts to redefine the roles of teachers and students *fail*?"

The occasion for this paper is the failure of my 1992 course on theories of literacy for third and fourth year university students. In the course, I attempted - - by using, for example, small group discussion, student generated topics, student self-evaluation, and a kind of hypertexted reading list - - to remove myself from the center of learning. My attempts were met largely by student uneasiness and what seemed a real desire to have me *lecture*.

This paper will describe the course in question and explore the possible reasons for its failure, looking at the institutional context for the course as well as student and teacher contexts, student and teacher expectations, and student and teacher motives. The paper will suggest that the lecture as a hegemonic genre is so firmly entrenched in the academy that efforts to diffuse power in the classroom can meet student resistance in part because no genre is in place to accommodate relinquished power - - at least no genre with conventions so well-established that all students are comfortable with (or even trust) the move.

In keeping with the desire of the conference to foreground action, this paper will address some unwanted slippage between theory and practice.

Please write to me at the Department of English, 397-1873 East Mall, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC V6T 1Z1.

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INKSHED 10: Date Correction and Further Information

In the Call for Papers in the October *Inkshed*, the wrong dates were printed for the 1993 Inkshed conference.

WHEN: The conference will be held from the evening of Thursday, June 3, to noon on Sunday, June 6. This places Inkshed 10 in the middle of the Learned Societies, and allows Inkshedders to attend a variety of other conferences of interest. Two groups, the Canadian Association of Teachers of Technical Writing and the Canadian Society for the Study of Rhetoric, have conferences from May 30 to June 1. The Association of Canadian College and University Teachers of English (ACCUTE) conference is May 30 to June 2. The Canadian Society for Studies in Education (CSSE) have a conference June 10-13.

WHERE: Inkshed 10 will be held at The Opinicon, a resort at Chaffey's Locks on the Rideau canal system, north and a little east of Kingston, Ontario. The Opinicon is an old, family-owned resort with beautiful grounds. Chaffey's Locks itself is a tiny (one store?) village. By car, Chaffey's Locks is just over three hours from Toronto, and about three hours from Montreal. Further transportation details, including arrangements for a bus from Ottawa, will be announced later.

A registration form for Inkshed 10 will appear in the next *Inkshed* newsletter.

Jamie MacKinnon
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CASWAR: Constitution Committee Update

The Constitution Committee has begun the task set it by the Banff conference to draft a constitution which as far as possible will represent the real spirit of Inkshed as well as the practical details of constituting ourselves officially.

The "real spirit of Inkshed" we think we've grasped pretty well: it is by and large what was expressed in the October 1991 Progress Report (*Inkshed* 10.1: 3-7) and affirmed at the Banff conference (see Business Meeting Report, *Inkshed* 10.5: 26-27).

The challenge facing the committee is to translate that spirit and vision into the language beloved of (and required by) the civil servants who oversee the creation of non-profit corporations under the Canada Corporations Act. There are, to put it bluntly, minimum legal requirements couched in terms which sound inimical to Inkshedders, committed as we are to "bottom-up" principles and community building, rather than hierarchies and centralization. Nevertheless, I think we are making progress toward a constitution which both will pass official scrutiny and allow the flexible and responsive structures we want.

You will have a chance to judge for yourselves when the proposal is published in a forthcoming newsletter. Meanwhile, the committee is still at work on the draft, and is always ready to receive your comments. The committee members are Sandy Baardman, Ann Beer, Susan Drain, Jacqueline Howse, Barbara Powell, Jim Reither, Alayne Sullivan, Wendy Strachan, and Stan Straw.

Comments sent to Susan will be circulated to the whole committee.

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