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ABSTRACT

The goal of genre theory is to construct useful similarities between different texts. It is the meaning-making practices of a community, and particularly its system of intertextuality that determine which possible similarities will count as significant. Whether educators approach genre as a rule or a resource is a moral choice. Rules restrict, determine, and prescribe. Resources empower. What distinguishes a rule from a resource is that a rule is given to the user, not to be altered by him or her, whereas a resource comes under the power of the user. In this sense, the study of genre does not restrict so much as it empowers. Communication and database interfaces, program conventions, e-mail genres, bulletin board genres, multi-user domains, hypertext navigation, hypermedia authoring--it is not too soon for educators to start thinking about the multimedia genres of these new communications media. They must identify and analyze the essential skills of multimedia literacy. They must also give some thought to the problem of the narrative. Narrative is not a genre in itself, as it is far too general; it could be more accurately described as a discourse strategy. Finally, genre studies raise interesting alternatives between genre-based literacy instruction (popular in Australia) and whole language instruction. While the former is more analytical and less intuitive, the latter is more creative and less critical. (Contains 35 references.) (TB)

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GENRE AS A STRATEGIC RESOURCE

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Genre as Descriptive Tool

Both the literary and the linguistic concepts of *genre* are extremely useful tools for thinking about how we make meaning with words. If there is a controversy today over the use of genre notions in the school curriculum (e.g. Reid 1987), it is over genre as a *prescription* for learning or writing rather than over genre as a simple *descriptive* tool.

The goal of genre theory is to construct useful similarities between different texts. Any two texts are both alike and unlike in myriad ways. It is the meaning-making practices of a community, and particularly its system of intertextuality (cf. Lemke 1985, 1993a), that determine which possible similarities will count as significant. There are many grounds for saying that one text is somehow relevant for the interpretation of another (Lemke 1985), and one of these is that the texts are instances of the same genre. Nevertheless, it is unwise to reify the notion of a genre, to separate it from the meaning-making practices that make it useful, that foreground certain structural and semantic similarities among texts. Genres do not come before texts, they do not determine texts. Genres have the force of any social institution: they constitute a normative order in relation to which we make sense of texts and judge texts. Construing a text as being of a certain genre activates expectations about that text for readers in a particular community.

Literary notions of genre range from the formalist to the pop cultural. What do all Petrarchan sonnets, all Limericks, all classic Russian folktales (cf. Propp 1928) have in common? And what do all detective mysteries, all science fiction fantasies, all modern romance novels have in common? The notion of genre in literary studies must be more protean and fluid to ground the similarities that define such very different classes of texts. Are there one, or several identifiable genres of autobiography? of the newspaper editorial? of the courtroom jury summation? of the scientific research article? Surely we do not use exactly the same criteria to classify these different kinds of texts as alike, but just as surely there are some such criteria, explicit or implicit.

Literary theories of genre focus on similarities in plot and style. The more formalist models emphasize similarities of organization, especially ritualized or routine forms and formulas. "Once upon a time there was ... / And they lived happily ever after." The more pop cultural models emphasize the cultural functions of the text as a whole and its numerous conventions, signals to the reader that activate genre expectations.

In literary genres the conventions may not be so much organizational or formulaic as simply a set of highly probable combinations of features, only some of which need occur, and which might occur at many possible points in the text. There are some things we expect in any detective story (a crime, a mystery, more than one plausible suspect, a detective role, a resolution of the mystery, etc.), and some things that might surprise us (extended passages from a novel one of the characters is writing that has nothing to do with the resolution of the mystery, the inclusion of a proof of a mathematical theorem in symbolic notation, the detective role being filled by a two-year old, long passages in stream-of-consciousness style that do not advance or explicate the plot, etc.). None of these is *impossible*, but they are less likely, less expected. They will be noticed as unusual features and they will have to prove themselves, to justify themselves, or we may judge the text to be inappropriately written or somehow unsatisfactory.

Linguistic models of genre, from those more to those less influenced by literary studies (cf. Bakhtin 1986; Hasan 1984, 1989; Martin 1989), have tended to adopt the formalist stance. What texts of these sorts of genres have in common is foremost a similarity of structure, of their functional organization into parts, each of which has an identifiable function in the whole, and secondarily similarity of patterning in semantic, lexical, and grammatical choices of forms within these parts. Texts of verbal art are rarely as constrained as these strict linguistic definitions of genre require, but many other kinds of texts in our society are, from bureaucratic forms and documents to technical expositions.

In a semantic theory of text (e.g. Halliday 1978; Halliday & Hasan 1989; Lemke 1988, 1994) we recognize that every text is more likely to deploy some of the resources of the language than others simply because it is situated: it is about some topics rather than others, it constructs or acknowledges some relationships between author and reader rather than others, some attitudes of author toward text content, and it is organized suitably for some medium of communication. Insofar as these are invariant for the whole text, we can define a linguistic *register* (e.g. Gregory 1967, Gregory & Carroll 1978, Halliday & Hasan 1989) which characterizes the text. But as we get more specific about each of these features, we realize that texts of any length are semantically inhomogeneous: they shift topic, they take different stances toward readers and content at different points, they may adapt differently to their medium, use different strategies of organization. The linguistic notion of genre is just barely adequate to

describe these patterns when they are common to many texts. When they are more unique, as they often are in literary texts, a different approach may be more effective (cf. Gregory & Malcolm on phasal analysis).

I have tried to make clear some of the uses and limitations of genre as a descriptive tool, because this is the origin and justification of the concept. But now I want to consider some further issues: genre as resource rather than rule, the responsibility to critique genre conventions, multimedia genres, and the problem and opportunity of narrative as a master genre.

Genre as Resource

If genre theory only provides us with normative rules that dictate how we must write to be acceptable to someone with the power to make their judgments matter to us, then genre merely mediates a semiotic tyranny. There are those who argue that traditional expository and technical genres are in themselves useful tools for reasoning, argumentation, and specialist communication. We will examine this position in the next section. There are others who argue that the world is cruel and unjust and we must prepare students to make their way as best they can. Genre conformity becomes either a necessary price to be paid for economic opportunity or perhaps a weapon to be turned against its designers.

All these views of genre, I believe, overlook something subtle, fundamental, and important about the role of genres in the meaning-making activity of a community. They view genre from the perspective of the choices we make about organization and wording. From that perspective, seen as it were from below, from the word's-eye view, genre is a master, a system of rules demanding obedience, a tyrant. This perspective is typical of linguists who know far more about word-meaning, about sentence grammar, perhaps about text organization, than they do about cultural formations, about the meanings we make with whole texts, about the meanings we make with the interconnected historical web of texts in our community.

Discursive, semiotic formations in a community are repeated and recognizable types of meanings-made. They are genres across media: office towers and grand residences in architecture, Nativities and Crucifixions in painting, symphonies and concertos in music. They are characterized not just by their usual features, but by the conditions of their existence, and by their typical uses in the community (the best discussion is in Foucault 1972). Understanding such a genre, whether written, built, or sung means understanding not just what it is, and what we do with it, but how we read, see, or hear it against the background of others of its kind. Genres are a resource for making meanings.

How is *this* story subtly or not-so-subtly similar to and different from these other stories? this explanation similar to and different

from other more or less like explanations? When, as writers we make allusions to other stories, or citations to other texts; when, as readers, we seem to catch the echo of another story or we read critically with another exposition in mind, we are using genre as a resource (cf. Threadgold & Kress 1988 on intertextual discourse resources). When we consciously invent or innovate, when we judge a text by the standard of others of its kind, we use genre as a resource. We would be crippled in our ability to make meaning with texts if every text was written and read in splendid isolation from every other one. We are crippled in this way if we do not know how various communities weave their great webs of interconnection among the texts which circulate within them.

Genre is potentially the great unifying theme of the language arts curriculum, across all subject specialties. It enables us to relate the grand themes that characterize a culture, a community, a period, to the forms of and in its texts. It enables us to teach students about the expectations of readers, and the strategies of writers. It enables us, and them, to go up and down the scales of organization of meaning: from the sound and connotations of a word or syllable, to the typical grammatical constructions used for a given semantic function in a particular kind of text, to the possible options in the overall organization of such a text, to the implicit and explicit connections of that text to others, to the origins, history, and uses of that kind of text in the community. It can do this for literature, it can do this for history, it can do this for natural science and mathematics. It is a great resource for generating and discussing the possible meanings we can make, the possible texts we can write, the possible discourse formations we can make use of.

It is also a great curriculum-generating resource, and as such it imposes heavy professional responsibilities for its ethical use.

The Politics of Genre in the Curriculum

Whether we approach genre as rule or as resource is a moral choice. Rules restrict, determine, and prescribe. Resources empower. Of course one can say paradoxically that rules are resources, but then they are resources for the rulers, and not for the ruled. Of course it is true that with no rules there is no possibility of meaning, but what makes rules generative for meaning is their transformation into resources.

I am not interested here in elegant semantic games. What distinguishes a rule from a resource is that a rule is made by another, is enforced by the power of that other, and cannot be effectively criticized or changed unless that power, and not just the rule itself, is challenged. A rule is a *given*, but a resource is something that has been fully *given* to us: it comes under the power of the user, it can be used or not, abused or not, flaunted or not, changed or not, as the user finds useful.

To teach genres without critique is not only unethical, it is intellectually faulty. The critique of a genre is what makes it into a resource. It is only when we understand the origins, history, and social functions of a genre, i.e. its politics, that we are empowered to make intelligent, informed decisions in our own interest about how we shall use it or change it. As a cultural formation, a genre must be embedded in its contexts. We must know how it could have been otherwise than it is, how it could still become otherwise. We must understand the conditions of its existence and form, the alternatives that surround it, even if only in imagination.

Empowerment in this sense is subversive of power and authority. A teacher, a curriculum, a Board of Education loses power when students are truly empowered. A culture, a system of norms, loses in authority when its origins are exposed, its arbitrariness identified, its alternatives formulated. A rule becomes simply a common practice, one that must be justified again in each instance of use. There is a common intellectual deceit in the teaching of rules: we teach that things are as they are because these traditional ways work best, because they are functional. No practice is optimal in all situations, or even in very many; no rule can be justified globally. The only universal rule is: It Depends.

If this seems a frightening or irresponsible stance toward rules and authority, we should consider why. Suppose students decided that they did not wish to write as we instruct them? On what are they basing their decision? On the limited experience and the narrow community of their lives in and out of school. They are not in a position to appreciate the difficulty of getting a large community to accept their innovations. They are not in a position to understand the usefulness to the community, and to themselves, of reliable conventions of expression. They are not in a position to weigh a political critique of a rule or a genre form against the practical benefits of conformity.

And why are they not in this position? It is certainly not a function of their biological age in most cases, and if it is a function of their lack of experience, that is not an inevitable lack. Our society systematically excludes the school-age population from most of its activities. It systematically infantilizes them by depriving them of participation of any kind in most of its institutions and activities. What schools provide may be useful, in part, but cannot make up for this severe social deprivation. School-age citizens are political cripples because we make them so, and that is why it is frightening to imagine them taking a genuinely critical intellectual stance toward any part of the curriculum. That is why it seems dangerous to genuinely empower them.

Genre and Multimedia Literacy

Students can gain some access to the wider world of social institutions and activities. For many years now they have had a vicarious ac-

cess through television, and some of them are beginning to gain a more substantive access through computer technologies. Television viewing, rather like reading, may seem to be participation in another activity when it is really just participation in the activity of viewing or reading. There is of course also the important sense in which in reading or viewing we in part actively use otherwise unfamiliar discourses and conventions to make sense of what we see, hear, and read.

With the advent of relatively inexpensive computer-based information and communication technologies, and the provision of not only vast amounts of multimedia information, but a vast diversity of interactive programs for doing things with that information, participation in "computing" is becoming potentially indistinguishable from participation in a wide range of social activities. Through this interactive medium, students can partly escape both the limits of the curriculum and their exclusion from the bulk of social life. They can begin to appreciate the diversity of viewpoints and interests in the community as a whole, the scale and sheer weight of numbers that constitutes social inertia, and to some extent the complexity of power relationships in the community as a whole. Such students can become more politically and socially sophisticated in their judgments about genre conventions -- provided they have the means to participate in these new forms of activity.

That too is a matter of genre. Communication and database interfaces, program conventions, email genres, bulletin board genres, multi-user domains (MUDs), hypertext navigation, hypermedia authoring -- these are all matters of the new hypermedia literacy (cf. Lemke 1993b and references therein). It is not too soon for us all to be thinking about the multimedia genres of these new communications media. We need to identify and analyze the essential skills of multimedia literacy (and master these ourselves). These genres are still being born. Ours is the historical era of their origins; a critique of their emerging forms entails a critique of our own social and discursive orders. Innovation and competing alternatives are very realistic and feasible still. Our students will contribute, one way or another, to the future forms of these future genres.

How can we usefully combine text with graphics, sound, animation, and video? What can analysis of genres past tell us about the likely directions and possible innovations in ways of making these combinations in genres yet to come? What will happen to our narrative genres in the more fluid reading space of hypertext? What will happen to our expository genres as they become visually richer and less static in their forms of presentation? How will we think differently as we become accustomed to the non-linear, branching, multiple possibilities of hypertext writing? None of these matters are written in our stars; our actions and judgments, the relations of power and resources in our community, our interdependencies on one another -- these will determine the multimedia future.

So many of our recent technologies have defined their users as passive that we are not accustomed to the idea that individual innovators

might in fact play a greater role in the development of future conventions. Hypermedia authoring is an extension of the technology of writing itself. It is writers who will create these new genres, not software designers. It will not be simply the rich who can afford these new illuminated manuscripts, but almost everyone. Neither will there be severe economic limitations on who can be a producer. Anyone will be able to publish their own text, their own art, their own music, for anyone who is interested, free or at a price. Unless the present powers-that-be act to restrict input to the communication system (probably initially through censorship laws), this one new technology could well overturn the economics and politics of many enterprises and communities. We should be teaching our students not just how to get in, but what to watch for from those who would keep them out.

The Problem of Narrative

Narrative, a *problem*? Our childhood friend, schoolmate, intimate of our diaries, favorite jokes, and tales of joy and woe? If any genre is for us a *resource*, it is narrative.

Is narrative a genre? As we have seen, the notion of genre is protean and flexible, but narrative stands at the very limit of what might be taken to be a genre, certainly in linguistic terms. What do all narratives have in common? Not even the past tense, not even a chronological order of events in the telling. Certain specific *kinds* of narrative are certainly genres of one sort or another, but narrative as such is more a discourse strategy, a modality of meaning-construction, something much more general than a genre. The narrative mode can be found in one form or another in many very different genres. Even the description of a scientific experiment, or of the procedures for a technical process, can be considered a sort of narrative. Narrative can penetrate into almost any genre, it is a tool, a way to make many kinds of meaning.

What is the narrative mode? Most fundamentally, I believe, narrative is a way of making meaning that creates the dynamic relations of actions or events. Its smallest unit is such an action or event, defined generally in terms of its *actants* (cf. Greimas 1983) or participants, animate and inanimate, the processes in which they engage, the circumstances in which these processes occur. But what is distinctive about narrative is how it brings these units into relation with one another: it connects them so that some of them are interpretable as being conditions for the possibility of others. This is the origin of our ideas of cause-and-effect, of narrative time and sequence, of development. It exploits or constitutes one of the basic text-forming resources of the language, one of the basic ways in which it is possible to make a set of otherwise separate clauses, each with its own process, *cohere* into a cohesive whole (cf. Halliday & Hasan 1976). In the narrative mode of meaning-making, we create relations among events such that some events seem to make other events either more possible or more meaningful. In the narrative way of understanding life or reality,

events change the world and make other events possible or more likely. This is a fundamentally dynamic view of the meaning-world.

Narrative is defined not just by what it is, but by the other modes of meaning-making that contrast with it. I believe we can identify a pure dialogic or conversational mode, distinct from narrative, which exploits or constitutes another way to make text cohere. In this mode, the units are speech acts, and the relations between them are purely dialogical or exchange relations, each entails or expects the other in a pair or more complex sequence, as with questions and answers, instructions and compliances, insults and counter-insults, accusations and defenses, proposals and responses. There is a third mode, as well, that of exposition or explanation, in which the units are propositions, theses, arguments, possibilities. These units are abstracted from particular events, they are generalities, abstractions. They are made to cohere by a logic of relations, not a dynamics of events or a reciprocity of exchanges (cf. Halliday 1989, Halliday & Martin 1993, Lemke 1992). These are not the only possibilities; they may be very widespread culturally, but they are still culture-specific.

Real stories, real conversations, real explanations frequently produce the coherence of their texts by combining more than one of these idealized modes or strategies of meaning-making. I have introduced them in order to situate narrative in a wider discourse world. The problem of narrative is that narrative alone is not enough and that our fluency with narrative may incline us to overrely on it, to substitute it for the others, to dismiss them as superfluous or optional.

Conversation, not narrative, dialogue, not monologue, is the original form of meaning-making with language (and perhaps more generally). We learn narrative later, but we still learn it early enough that it becomes a part of us. Conversation and narrative are probably the two dominant means by which we co-construct our own and others' personal sense of identity, our Selves (cf. Bruner 1990, Halliday 1975, 1993). Our conversations easily embed narratives, our narratives easily embed conversations. Many of us can, in conversation, easily and creatively glide between narrative and exchange. Fewer of us can as smoothly or creatively embed dialogue in our narratives; the narrative mode is less second-nature to us. There are many great conversationalists, there are few great story-tellers or novelists.

The third modality is the one we learn last, or at least the one we master latest. It, too, has its early precursors, in the logic of descriptions, of lists, of reasoning, of answers to Whys. As Piaget and many others (e.g. Sigel 1993) have pointed out, the rudiments of logic begin very early for us. The basic logical relations are part of the common resources of every language (e.g. Halliday 1985: 112-127), and are used very early. But they are used within the text-organizing frameworks of narrative or exchange; they are used locally, they are dependent on the other strategies, and they are used mainly to connect concrete things, actions, events. What comes later is their more autonomous use, the ability to make long texts (like this one) that

cohere mainly because of their semantic operation, and especially their application to abstractions and generalities.

The third one is the only one we learn mainly in school. The third modality is the basis of academic, intellectual written discourse: of criticism, of philosophy, of historical analysis, of social and natural science. This modality is historically recent and very specific (which is not to say unique) to European culture (cf. Halliday's essays in Halliday & Martin 1993). It has its origins in the discourse of philosophy and theology, and these evolved it seems from originally more dialogic (cf. Plato's and Galileo's dialogues) and perhaps narrative modes (see Halliday on early science). The discourse of canon and civil law doubtless played their parts as well.

What is important for my argument here is that abstract exposition is least easily grafted upon the conversational and narrative competence we acquire early and master most thoroughly. The subjects that rely most on it, such as natural science and mathematics, are most difficult for most students. The learning of almost all academic subjects requires that students be able to fluently and fluidly move back and forth among all three modalities, embed any of them in any other, and combine the meaning-making strategies of all three. Very, very few students acquire this much meta-linguistic competence.

I believe that one reason that they do not is because the third critical modality is vastly under-represented in the only branch of the curriculum in which language competence is explicitly developed: the English and Language Arts curricula. One can argue, of course, as I have argued, that teachers of other subjects have a responsibility to focus on the role of language in making meaning in their subject (Lemke 1990). It is English and Language Arts teachers, however, who are best prepared at present to give students much of the help they need in this. Perhaps joint projects in the spirit of Language-Across-the-Curriculum, combining the language sophistication of English and Language Arts teachers with the specialist insights of teachers of other subjects, would be ideal.

Even short of such an ideal, however, we must ask why the expository modality is so underrepresented in the present curriculum. Analytically, it is simply because the genres that rely on it the most are relatively absent from the English and Language Arts curriculum, and the genres that rely on it least are over-represented there. The English and Language Arts curriculum is text-rich and genre-poor. The prose texts of greatest and most recognized verbal artistry in our cultural tradition, especially in the modern period, are narratives, narratives with embedded dialogue, and dramatic dialogues. But these span only a small fraction of all the important genres of our community. Why are the expository genres under-represented?

This question has often been addressed (e.g. Kress 1982, Martin 1989). The answers range from the circumstantial and historical (the curricula focus on a literary canon that favors narrative, teachers are

themselves less comfortable with analyzing expository texts, expository texts require more specialist knowledge) to the political and ideological: expository genres are the genres of power and so are reserved to more elite students, either taught only at the top of the academic ladder or not taught at all, so that only those from the most privileged backgrounds will be likely to pick them up without help at school.

In all these senses, narrative is a problem for a genre-aware curriculum. It is not, however, just a problem, for narrative is indeed a resource. It is not simply that its texts are a resource, as I have argued above, or that the genres that make use of it are a resource as well. It is also that narrative can be a resource for learning the abstract-relational mode of meaning-making, and for learning its genres. This is in fact one of the great challenges of modern education: to build on our understanding of the similarities and differences among these three fundamental modes to help students master all three and learn to combine and interconnect them.

I have proposed elsewhere that we consider a *comparative* study of narrative and expository texts on related themes (Lemke 1992). Both narrative and expository genres accomplish many of the same functions, but do so by different means and with different degrees of specialization. If we can help students understand that what one can just barely do, the other does easily, and that there are some things each does well but differently, we greatly increase the chances that they can see how to juggle these modalities of meaning-making across the curriculum.

The conversational mode of meaning-making is deeply embedded in the oral discourse of the classroom, far more so than either of the others (e.g. Lemke 1990). We can argue about the forms this conversation should take (e.g. Lemke 1990: Chap.7; Wells 1993, Tharp & Gallimore 1988), but it will remain central to classroom meaning-making (and probably to computer-based learning as well). One of the specialties of this modality is argument and counter-argument (borrowed by the expository written genres, who are not really as good at it, hence the success of Plato's and Galileo's expository dialogues). The exchange mode can encourage critique or it can inhibit it. The analytical mode can reveal the hidden assumptions, foreground alternative possibilities. The narrative mode can make examples of those alternatives vivid enough to be translated into action and practice. As a strategic resource of critical pedagogy, a genre-aware curriculum has much to recommend it.

The "Genre vs. Whole Language" Debate

Since I am so often asked about my position in the debate between the Australian "Genre-based Literacy" school and the advocates of "Whole Language" philosophy, I thought I would add a brief statement here.

Both of these approaches combine a linguistic awareness of language, a sense of social commitment, and an emphasis on practical results. Both agree on the most fundamental fact about language: that it is always language-in-use, that every text has a context of situation, with a history, in a culture, as part of a social activity or practice. Both agree that texts whose only context is an arbitrary curriculum task are inferior as learning contexts to texts, to be written or read, that have a wider social context. Both agree that the goal of language arts education, or at least of higher critical literacy, is for students to be able to use written language for their own purposes in real social contexts.

The differences, I think, arise over two points. One is a matter of emphasis in teaching methodology. The Genre-based approach is more analytic, it teaches students to dissect a text into its component parts, and to construct a text from its component parts. It emphasizes an explicit understanding of the parts, their relations to one another, and the functions of part and the whole in their contexts. The Whole Language approach is more synthetic, it relies on the progressive construction and interpretation of more complex whole texts in their contexts of use.

Analysis without synthesis does not lead to better writing, just to better commentary on writing. Synthesis without analysis leads to writing that is more intuitive, more automatic, but also often less critically and reflexively self-aware. Analysis shows us more possibilities than we usually care to consider; without a complementary holistic approach, we become like the millipede who cannot walk because it is too aware of the complexity of the problem of coordinating all those legs. A holistic approach without analysis leaves us dangerously short of alternatives and points of critical interception when we do need them. No experienced teacher, whatever his or her philosophy, is going to go to either extreme. Neither do the originators of these two approaches intend that they should, but each approach is open to oversimplification by those who only partially understand it.

The second difference is one of political strategy. The originators of both of these approaches are critical of the status quo in our societies. They feel acutely the social injustice around them. They earnestly want students to become more empowered, especially students from less socially and economically privileged backgrounds. They believe that critical literacy is an important part of this empowerment. Genre-based approaches try to identify and teach the "genres of power" in their curricula, and that means particularly expository genres. For middle-class students some of this is superfluous; they acquire the rudiments of these genres "around the dinner table" as it were.

More tellingly, it is not simply these genres that confer power, but certain subtle "dispositions" in the use of language (cf. Bourdieu 1991, or Hasan & Cloran 1990 on "semantic orientations") that may not be so easily taught in any explicit fashion. Nevertheless, for many students, there is no other direct way to begin an apprenticeship into

the alien expectations of middle-class culture and its literacies. "Genrists" suspect holistic approaches of perpetuating an "invisible pedagogy" (cf. Bernstein 1971, 1975) which continues to give the advantage to middle-class students and does nothing to level the playing field. Some Whole Language advocates seem to believe, and may well be correct, that only "immersion" in middle-class literacy practices will produce the desired results.

More radical postmodern critical literacy theorists, perhaps including me, are less than happy about any curriculum which devotes more effort to passing on middle-class literacies than to critiquing them and seeking to broaden, add to, or change them. Personally, I would like to see everybody profit from a greater diversity of kinds of literacy: more genres, more reading practices, more ways of writing, more legitimate stances for evaluation and interpretation. I hope I am not so naive as to assume all of these would just peacefully co-exist. People will argue more than ever over their relative merits. I would just like to see a world in which no one was in a privileged position to back their arguments with force or the threat of pain or deprivation. I don't think I will.

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