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Thinking Along With Foucault (Book Review of 'Ways of Reading: An Anthology for Writers,' 5th ed., edited by David Bartholomae and Anthony Petrosky)

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Roundtable

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Thinking along with Foucault

Jeffrey P. Cain

Although I did not have a phrase for it at the time, I spent a year or so in the early 1990s as a devotee of "initiation" pedagogy.[1] Possibly because I was undergoing my own ritualized encounter with professional discourse, I loved the method by which *Ways of Reading* endeavored to negotiate and theorize a cogent middle ground. The book seemed calculated at once to help students and to challenge them, providing for rigor as well as opportunity. In time, however, I found that, despite interesting and energetic class discussions, only a few of my students generated writing that displayed a grasp of the concepts that we had been examining. When I moved from teaching "regular" freshman composition to basic writing, I drifted away from *Ways of Reading*; I wanted a text that offered "more structure," so I used Mike Rose and Malcolm Kiniry's (1998) *Critical Strategies for Academic Thinking and Writing: A Text with Readings*.

I remember feeling that I had learned what I could from the experience of teaching with *Ways of Reading*. I thought that perhaps the selections were simply "too hard" for my first-semester students (and much too difficult for basic writers). Later I concluded that the methodology in *Ways of Reading* was benevolently manipulative; it purported to empower students even as it lured them into the inescapable web of assimilation into academic discourse. Resistance was encouraged but futile. Yet neither the view that *Ways of Reading* is the ultimate embodiment of common ground in the contact zone, nor the opposing idea that it is an intellectual game of *Survivor*, in which those who fail to grasp difficult academic writing get graded off the island, seems appropriate. The *Ways of Reading* methodology—for it is much more a system than it is a book—challenges teachers as much as it does students, a fact that I did not understand when I first began using it.

Since then I have come to believe that, like it or not, I must start a composition class with the students' cultural and intellectual constructs in mind. To assess a textbook's potential to build on those constructs, I have found it valuable to approach the text from a student's point of view. For the purposes of this article, I will therefore cast myself as both teacher and student (not a difficult feat in these latter days of postmodernism), admitting, of course, that my persona as essay writer lurks in the background as a deconstructive third term. What would it be like, then, to assign myself a question from *Ways of Reading*, write a response to it, and consider the results?

The teacher part of this imaginary experiment lasts only a couple of seconds, because *Ways of Reading* provides well-developed writing prompts as well as longer, carefully sequenced assignments. A suitable example occurs after the excerpt from Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*, "Panopticism." The third prompt in the "Assignments for Writing" displays many of the precepts characteristic of the *Ways of Reading* pedagogy (344–45):

Perhaps the most surprising thing about Foucault's argument in "Panopticism" is the way it equates prisons with schools, hospitals, and workplaces, sites we are accustomed to imagining as very different from a prison. Foucault argues against our commonly accepted understanding of such things.

At the end of the chapter Foucault asks two questions. These are rhetorical questions, strategically placed at the end. Presumably we are prepared to feel their force and to think of possible answers.

> Is it surprising that the cellular prison, with its regular chronologies, forced labor, its authorities of surveillance and registration, its experts in normality, who continue and multiply the functions of the judge, should have become the modern instrument of penality? Is it surprising that prisons resemble factories, schools, barracks, hospitals, which all resemble prisons? (pp. 341–42)

For this assignment, take the invitation of Foucault's conclusion. No, you want to respond, it is not surprising that "experts in normality, who continue and multiply the functions of the judge, should have become the modern instrument of penality." No, it is not surprising that "prisons resemble factories, schools, barracks, hospitals, which all resemble prisons." Why is it not surprising? Or, why is it not surprising if you are thinking along with Foucault?

Write an essay in which you explore one of these possible resemblances. You may, if you choose, cite Foucault. You can certainly pick up some of his key terms and examples and put them into play. You should imagine, however, that it is your turn. With your work on Foucault behind you, you are writing to a general audience about "experts in normality" and the key sites of surveillance and control.

This assignment suggests open-ended exploration, rather than a closed and singular interpretation of correct "meaning." Also, it invites the students to incorporate personal experience into their framing of the discourse and encourages them to "write back" to the text, either with or against the grain. In this instance, though, writing with the grain of Foucault is almost posthyp-notically suggested: "No, you want to respond, it is not surprising. . . ." Nev-ertheless, the clear expectation in *Ways of Reading* is that the act of writing a response will generate new knowledge of Foucault's text and its relation to the student's subjective experience of institutional culture. The teacher's resource manual points out that "Panopticism" is only a long fragment, a chapter from *Discipline and Punish*, and that the idea is not to produce more Foucault scholarship but to put "unauthorized" student writers into a relationship with a few of Foucault's ideas to see what happens.[2]

My response to this assignment focuses on the possibilities of affinity between the institutionalized use of *Ways of Reading* and the idea of "panop-ticism" by considering the architectural resemblances between prisons and schools. However, the traces of panopticism that emerge from an examination of parts of the *Ways of Reading* system by no means constitute the system's totality. In fact, I wish to suggest that one of the more prepossessing aspects of *Ways of Reading*, viewed as a pedagogical phenomenon, is the distinct intentional, narrative, and ontological gap between the editors and their own text.

Foucault begins by discussing the phenomenon of the plague and then developing the idea of the ever-functioning, all-seeing eye, the "inspection" used to combat disease. "The gaze," he writes, "is alert everywhere" (315). By means of quarantines, guards, and supervising intendants, officials kept the diseased part of the population separate from the healthy; thus they sought to prevent the spread of the plague by exercising their authority, which in turn depended on surveillance and bureaucratic reports made to higher authori-ties. The plague serves as the trope of disorder and confusion; juridical author-ity deploys itself ostensibly to combat evil and disease through a municipal process of inspection, registration, and exclusion. In fact, Foucault writes, part of the model of society's disciplinary mechanism is the social and literal construction of a space "in which all events are recorded, in which an uninter-rupted work of *writing* links the center and the periphery" (316; emphasis mine). However, Foucault then shows a historical progression from early modern disciplinary projects, stemming from the plague, to a more general-ized vision of therapeutic discipline, which he finds symbolized in Jeremy Bentham's nineteenth-century concept of the Panopticon.

Bentham envisioned the Panopticon as an architectural machine for promulgating various forms of order and discipline: *Ways of Reading* reproduces his illustration of a "Penitentiary Panopticon," or prison (318). The basic structure is a tall tower in the center of an encircling building, a bit like a distorted or inverted version of the familiar model of Shakespeare's Globe Theatre, inasmuch as the well-to-do people in the galleries become the objectified inmates on panoptic display. Windows in the central observation tower correspond to opposing windows in the inner wall of the encircling cells. Foucault points out that the design works by means of an asymmetrical relationship between center and periphery, since the cells are backlit by windows in the exterior wall of the ring, but venetian blinds in the tower make it impossible for the inmates to know whether or *when* they are being watched. The basic principle will be familiar to anyone who has taken an examination while a proctor suspiciously stood watch behind the students' backs, from the rear of the classroom.

Foucault insists repeatedly on the historically inescapable fact of the Panopticon's relevance to educational methodology. "All that is needed then," he writes, "is to place a supervisor in a central tower and to shut up in each cell a madman, a patient, a condemned man, a worker, or a schoolboy" (318–19). Moreover, if schoolchildren are subjected to the Panopticon, there is "no copying, no noise, no chatter, no waste of time" (319). Yet, despite the fascinating simplicity of Bentham's conception of a closed architectural unit, an even more powerful and subtle aspect of the Panopticon transcends the merely physical: the idea conveys as much a paradigm of social interaction as it does a form of institutional building.

Bentham's main contribution, then, was to take the disciplinary model of the quarantine, which tended to exclude and immobilize its objects (the diseased, the indigent, the mad, the criminal), and turn it into "a generalizable model of functioning; a way of defining power relations in terms of the life of everyday men" (325). Furthermore, Foucault notes, panopticism is "polyvalent in its applications; it serves to reform prisoners, but also to treat patients, *to instruct schoolchildren*, to confine the insane, to supervise workers, to put beggars and idlers to work" (325; my emphasis). For example, it could be used to "try out pedagogical experiments" in which orphans were educated in seclusion and then observed as teenagers when they were finally introduced to other children. The empirical possibilities are endless:

One could verify whether, as Helvetius thought, anyone could learn anything; one would follow "the genealogy of every observable idea"; one could bring up different

children according to different systems of thought, making certain children do not believe that two and two do not make four or that the moon is a cheese, then put them together when they are twenty or twenty-five years old; one would then have discussions that would be worth a great deal more than the sermons or lectures on which so much money is spent. (324)

Again, Foucault points out that "whenever one is dealing with a multiplicity of individuals on whom a task or a particular form of behavior must be imposed, the panoptic schema may be used" (325). Finally, in a series of subtle observations, Foucault traces the historical and cultural process by which the efficiencies of the disciplined society are transformed into, among other things, the familiar paradigm of academic "disciplines," with a suitable discourse community obtaining for each. This transformation occurs during the eighteenth century, when "the formation of knowledge and the increase of power regularly reinforce one another in a circular process":

First the hospital, then the school, then, later, the workshop were not simply "reordered" by the disciplines; they became, thanks to them [the disciplines], apparatuses such that any mechanism of objectification could be used in them as an instrument of subjection, and any growth of power could give rise in them to possible branches of knowledge; it was this link, proper to the technological systems, that made possible within the disciplinary element the formation of clinical medicine, psychiatry, child psychology, educational psychology, the rationalization of labor. (339)

Thus panopticism's main features all involve normative thinking; its object is the disciplinary reform of the indigent, the mad, the criminal, or, in the case of educational theory, the unenlightened.

The teacher's resource manual for *Ways of Reading* (Bartholomae and Petrosky 1999) articulates a similar, metaphorically architectural vision of the composition classroom as a disciplinary space. Part 1, subtitled "Teaching with *Ways of Reading*," begins with a brief story of the editors' journey toward what was to become their system of instruction. This tale is told in the first-person plural, so we, as readers, easily imagine ourselves in quiet and intimate conversation with fellow instructors. "Our students," the editors tell us, "felt powerless in the face of serious writing, in the face of long and complicated texts—the kinds of texts we thought they should find interesting and challenging" (1). Only after years of work and thought did the editors discover the solution to our shared dilemma. The answer to the social problem of propelling students from their acculturated torpor toward what they *should* be doing lies not in the students themselves, not in the reading material, not even

in the teacher, but in the *classroom*, which is not just an architectural partition of space but a figural site in which the act of composition transpires: "The problems our students had lay . . . in the classroom—in the ways we and they imagined what it meant to work on an essay" (1). "We" are the center. "They" are the periphery, disordered and powerless before the inscrutable, all-encompassing text, the unwitting novices who must be supervised and molded into good academic citizens.

The significance of this contiguity of classroom as space and *classroom* as a trope for the system that assimilates students into the socially desirable community of academic discourse will not be lost on readers of Foucault. The technologies of reading, discussing, and writing promulgated by *Ways of Reading* result from the deep structure of this figure, which provides a benevolent infusion of panopticism into the scene of composition. In fact, the "Sample Course Description" helpfully reprinted in the manual (11) and on the *Ways of Reading* Web page (www.bedfordbooks.com/waysofreading/Syllabi.htm) tells the students as much:

> I [Bartholomae] want to foreground the ways in which your writing takes place in relation to the writing of others. My goal, as your teacher, will be to make that relationship interesting, surprising, and productive. These meetings between the past and the present, writing and a writer, those places in your essays where you work with someone else's words and ideas to my mind represent the basic scene of instruction; they are the workplaces, the laboratories, the arenas of what is often called a "liberal" education.

Writing connects the classroom's center and periphery, because it takes place on the open space of the page, "not in some private, internal mental space" (11). In the Panopticon there is no private or internal space, because everything is under observation; everything is *monitored*. Thus the classroom becomes a "workplace" for the production of text, a "laboratory" for educational experimentation, or an "arena" in which students contend for the laurels with one another, the professor, or perhaps the hydra of academic discourse.

"Who's the Boss?" the resource manual asks brightly, and the answer to the rhetorical question is, "You are, of course" (Bartholomae and Petrosky 1999: 4). Whether writing or speaking, students *perform* discourse, and "the job of a teacher is to encourage, monitor, and evaluate those performances" (4). There can be, of course, no performance without a corresponding gaze. The voice of the all-seeing teacher as supervisor resonates through the syl-

labus, exerting authority by suggesting that he or she wields a cryptic, visionary power. "The subject of this course is writing," intones the voice. "Writing, as I think of it, is an action, an event, a performance. . . . You will be practicing your art by working on specific projects. I will be looking over your shoulder, monitoring your progress, and, at various points in the semester, assessing the work you gather together in a portfolio" (11). The voice reveals that there will be three assessment points, but it does not let the students know exactly when they will be observed, only that assessment will occur at some time "around the fifth week, the tenth, and at the end of the term" (13). In the efficient application of panopticism, the ground of supervisory power is not perpetual vigilance but the possibility of being watched unexpectedly at a guilty or indigent moment. The syllabus sternly warns students that they might be under observation at any time: "If your work seems thoughtless or quickly done, I will notice. I have taught writing for many years and I know when writers are working hard and when they are fooling around. I will tell you if I think you are fooling around" (13). The final remark reminds us that, unlike discipline based on fear of the plague, which practices exclusion, panopticism relies on "branding" to reform its objects.

Assuredly, the students will spend time alone working on their writing. Nevertheless, that time will be subject to bureaucratic review, since class sessions are largely devoted to discussing the essays of the students, whose names have been erased from the headers. At any rate, the supervisor reminds us that there will be extensive "group" work: "I will divide the class into groups of three. Few writers work alone; they rely on friends and colleagues to listen to ideas, to read drafts, and to help with copyediting. You will be responsible for commenting on one group member's essay or draft each week. When you do, you are to sign your name to your comments" (Bartholomae and Petrosky 1999: 13). Most professional writers, however, collaborate not because they have been divided into groups of three but because they *choose* to collaborate. Names on documents suddenly become important as the students begin to function as minor bureaucratic intendants who, with their reports, help ensure that no detail escapes the central supervisory gaze. Discipline (such as the "discipline" of composition) cannot afford to allow unauthorized, uninvestigated gatherings of individuals. Foucault remarks quite clearly on this aspect of power relations:

Discipline fixes; it arrests or regulates movements; it clears up confusion; it dissipates compact groupings of individuals wandering about the country in unpredictable ways; it establishes calculated distributions. It must also master all the forces that are formed

from the very constitution of an organized multiplicity; it must neutralize the effects of counterpower that spring from them and which form a resistance to the power that wishes to dominate it: agitations, revolts, spontaneous organizations, coalitions — anything that may establish horizontal conjunctions. (335)

All discipline, Foucault demonstrates, uses verticality and partitioning — architectural concepts — to extend and consolidate power. Thus the panoptic classroom's division into groups of three serves as a vertical allocation of prerogative that supersedes informal coalition, providing for neatly planned spontaneity.

Assessing my own exercise, I am afraid that I have spent too much time citing Foucault and not enough time writing about "experts in normality." What follows from my look at Foucault's analysis, however, is that the pedagogy of *Ways of Reading* is much more an artifact of the cultural extension and construction of institutional power than it is the creation of Bartholomae and Petrosky. In fact, they seem wittily aware of the irony implicit in including certain reading selections. Nowhere is this awareness more apparent than in the section of the resource manual that deals specifically with "Panopticism" (Bartholomae and Petrosky 1999: 73):

In our teaching (and in the assignments in *Ways of Reading*), we have tried to invite students to make connections between the technologies of power revealed by Foucault and those common to the classroom and its practices, turning attention to the *controlling* idea of the standard classroom rhetoric or to the ways in which writing is normalized by American instruction. The summary assignments, for example, ask students to think of "mastery" as both an achievement and a problem, and to connect writing techniques with other techniques of political control.

This passage does not evince the supervisory voice of the teacher; instead, it seems like an inducement to see "experts in normality" in the reflections of our professorial selves. Bartholomae and Petrosky write that asking their students "to think both generously and critically about English as a scene of discipline" encourages "acts of ventriloquism," in which students might play the role of professor, correct a paper, and then comment on how following a teacher's corrections often makes the writing *worse* (73). This ventriloquism, they say, offers a certain "subversive pleasure" (73), not just for the students, one would like to think, but for the editors, too.

Bartholomae (1996: 11) has clarified his own position on some of these matters: "The composition I am talking about is not a consensus or a specific professional (or 'disciplinary') agenda." It sounds as though Bartholomae has

rejected, at least for the moment, the idea of composition as a "discipline" in Foucault's sense of the word. However, he then remarks that "when I refer to composition, I mean the institutionally supported desire to organize and evaluate the writing of unauthorized writers, to control writing in practice, and to define it as an object of professional scrutiny" (11). What he offers, therefore, is a *critique* of the institutional practice of composition, as distinct from the agenda peculiar to "the control of composition professionals" and "the conflicts that take place at meetings or in journals" (11). Composition "is not summed up in the journals, and it has an off-and-on-again relationship with the 'key figures' in the field" (12).

Given Foucault's analysis of disciplinarity as a function of what was originally architectural or municipal space, Bartholomae's thoughts on the definition of composition display a keen awareness of the tenuous position of the critic both within and without the coded hermeneutic circle of composition studies. In an intriguing paragraph on narrativity Bartholomae (1996: 14) mentions that he is "increasingly drawn to the metaphor of space in talking about writing. Some sentences create space a writer has to fill; some sentences are careful to hide or overlay a writer's space, the space where the writer needs to come forward and write rather than recite the text that waits to be written." The practical outcome of Bartholomae's concern with space in writing and in the classroom is that he sees certain topoi as silenced by professional discussion:

We are extraordinarily hesitant to argue about what writing is good and what is bad. . . . We can talk for hours about empowering writers without raising the fundamental questions of power as they are represented in discourse. We move the furniture in the classroom, collaborate on electronic networks, take turns being the boss, but we do not change writing. It is still the same old routine. (16)

Toward the end of his essay Bartholomae returns to the activity that I found so attractive when I first encountered *Ways of Reading*, the difficult, perhaps unavailing attempt to theorize a middle ground: "I want to try to imagine a way for composition to name a critical project, one that is local, one whose effects will be necessarily limited, but one, still, of significant consequence" (24).

Bartholomae, like the rest of us, is seemingly implicated in the complex, coded web of conflicting signs, anxieties, desires, frustrations, contradictions, politics, ironies, jokes, and fears that institutional composition instruction comprises. The relationship between supervisor and inmate is reciprocal.

"'By every tie I could devise,' said the master of the Panopticon, 'my own fate had been bound up by me with theirs'" (Foucault, qtd. on 324). Neither has the activity of commenting on the system of composition allowed me to escape it, since the pedagogy of *Ways of Reading* contains the very method that I have used here as a key to its codes. To answer the original question of prompt number 3, then, it is not at all surprising that "prisons resemble factories, schools, barracks, hospitals, which all resemble prisons." At least, it is not surprising if you are thinking along with Foucault.

Notes

I am indebted to Irvin Peckham for sending me a copy of the manuscript of his article on *Ways of Reading*. I would like to thank Tom Kerr for allowing me to read his unpublished paper on student resistance to *Ways of Reading*, presented at the 2000 Conference on College Composition and Communication. I am grateful as well to Roberta Staples for her help in reading and revising the manuscript of this article.

1. For a penetrating analysis of the problems of initiation pedagogy as exemplified by *Ways of Reading* see Peckham 1996.

2. For a sustained, sophisticated discussion of the broad implications of Foucault's thought for the composition class see Spellmeyer 1993. In his epilogue Spellmeyer offers an intriguing interpretation of Bartholomae's now famous debates with Peter Elbow (261–75). In "Writing with Teachers: A Conversation with Peter Elbow" Bartholomae (1995) inveighs against representing the classroom as a utopian space, a stance clearly consonant with his selection from Foucault. It is possible, nevertheless, to see the deployment of academic discourse in *Ways of Reading* as utopian indeed, if issues of class and elitism are considered.

Ways of Reading as Signifying Regime of Signs

Tom Kerr

On arriving at Long Island University Brooklyn Campus (LIU-Brooklyn) in 1998 as director of writing in training, I found David Bartholomae, Anthony Petrosky, and Bedford/St. Martin's *Ways of Reading* established in the Writing Program as one of two readers from which first-year composition instructors could choose. Both the text and the theory and methodology underlying it had been the basis several years earlier of radical and much-needed reform in the English department's writing program. Battles had been fought and won, and Bartholomae and Petrosky's pedagogical remedies to the asymmetrical relationship between basic and/or first-year writers and academic discourse helped usher in a more enlightened era. As a cultural war machine, the anthology is not without a distinct positive value, but its peacetime, long-term benefits as a first-year composition text are much less certain.

From discussions I have had with colleagues at various institutions, I gather that teachers' motives for adopting *Ways of Reading* are similar: it reflects current academic trends, has political dimensions, dovetails with their own intellectual interests, holds the promise of jolting some students out of their middle-class consumer or other brand of complacency, and seems, in general, to be refreshing, a "smart and interesting" composition text, as I have often heard it described, that refuses—make no mistake about it—to underestimate anyone's intelligence. These and other reasons for using *Ways of Reading* in first-year composition classes are compelling, and one does not have to be an interdisciplinary scholar or fresh out of graduate school to appreciate, if not admire, the depth and breadth of Bartholomae and Petrosky's project. The fact remains, however, that something altogether different from the editors' (and unsuspecting teachers') intent often unfolds as the text is deployed in classrooms, where it is apt to yield more dutiful conformity than critical creativity and, as likely as not, leave the audience dumbfounded. Indeed, I have spoken to a number of former users for whom the glow wore off quickly. Offering *Ways of Reading* to first-year students as an entrée to academic discourse and culture, while perhaps exhilarating in theory, seems a bit like trying to teach student pilots how to fly a single-engine Cessna by having them log hours in a space-shuttle simulator, an environment far more complex than

the cockpit of the plane they need to fly. More time is spent studying the intricacies of the super-advanced instrument panel than actually piloting the craft. Instructors may appreciate the stimulating experience, the challenge, of teaching Cessna via space shuttle, especially if they would rather not be teaching Cessna at all, but students are likely to be overwhelmed.

The first edition of *Ways of Reading* appeared in 1987 as an oppositional alternative to methods that its editors considered either soft (i.e., developmental, overly reductive) or solipsistic (i.e., based on so-called romantic notions about the nature and power of the individual and individual expression). It presumed that students should and would learn the powerful and power-giving strategies and structures of academic discourse by reading, talking, and writing about "real" texts, especially longer works and sophisticated interdisciplinary essays such as Michel Foucault's "Panopticism" from *Discipline and Punish*, Susan Bordo's "Hunger as Ideology" from *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body*, and Mary Louise Pratt's "Arts of the Contact Zone," all of which still appear in the fifth edition (along with twenty-one other similarly challenging texts). Premised on a total-immersion model of literacy acquisition, described at length by Bartholomae and Petrosky (1986) in *Facts, Artifacts, and Counterfacts: Theory and Method for a Reading and Writing Course*, the text was and is designed as a virtual baptism into the order of academic discourse, which Bartholomae and Petrosky view as redemptive of the mundane and predictable "familiar world" we all otherwise inhabit. They have, in their words, chosen "selections that invite students to be active, critical readers, that present powerful readings of common experience, that open up the familiar world and make it puzzling, rich, and problematic" (vi). They also view academic discourse as powerful, their method cum text as a means of acquiring that power. "You can't begin to feel the power a reader has," they continue, "until you realize the problems, until you realize that no one 'gets' Geertz or Rich or Griffin or Wideman all at once" (vii).

This assumes, of course, that "the problems" will not be entirely overwhelming and implies that one will or should eventually get Geertz or Rich or Wideman: that to do so is, as Martha Stewart might say, a good thing. *Ways of Reading* is nothing if not intellectually disciplined, strict, no-nonsense. Indeed, the method informing the essay selections, together with the editorial apparatus, resolves into a kind of postmodern tough love, and the pedagogical processes and classroom consequences of the book amount, more or less, to a fourteen-week multicultural boot camp for students who have been too long isolated in the 'burbs, have watched too much TV, have swallowed too many

mainstream pronouncements about everyday life in America, and need a good jolt in the brain — at least if we want them on our side, if we want them eventually to become good critical thinkers, good writers, and all-around good intellectual eggs. *Ways of Reading* could keep a good interdisciplinary graduate seminar hopping for at least a semester and leaves first-year students with little doubt that they are entering a brave new world of decidedly asymmetrical relations.

After wrestling with *Ways of Reading* for two semesters at Virginia Tech, where I had first encountered it in 1993, and determining that the text's pedagogical costs outweighed its benefits, I was nonplussed to discover it, then in its fourth edition, thriving at LIU-Brooklyn, an institution socially, economically, and geographically light-years removed from Virginia Tech. Two universities and their student populations could not be more different. A rural Research I institution with high admissions standards and a predominantly Anglo, middle- and upper-middle-class student body, Virginia Tech caters to students from relatively privileged backgrounds, most of whom take a college degree for granted. LIU-Brooklyn, a private urban university with a de facto open-admissions policy and a predominantly black, Latino, and/or immigrant student population, caters to relatively underprivileged students, for whom getting a college degree may be a long shot, an achievement (of desire) that one realizes in spite, not because, of one's socioeconomic circumstances. The average student at LIU-Brooklyn, whose familiar world is often quite different from that of his or her English instructors, is bound to read Richard Rodriguez's "Achievement of Desire," included in *Ways of Reading*, with more lived insight than the average student at Virginia Tech. I do not want to suggest, however, that *Ways of Reading* belongs more at a place like Virginia Tech, whose students may be better prepared to grapple with essays and excerpts intended for experts and/or highly educated audiences, than at a place like LIU-Brooklyn, whose students may be less well prepared for the interdisciplinary regimen; but the presence of such a text and its obligate methodology at such far removed, radically different places should give us pause.

The two institutions are constituted by very different sets of complex relationships: between teachers and students, students and texts, teachers and texts, the institution and the surrounding community, and students and higher education. Discovering *Ways of Reading* at LIU-Brooklyn, where I had arrived after teaching for three years at Virginia Tech in the South and one year at Syracuse University in the North, left me with that sinking feeling you get when, having traveled by car from one end of the country to the other, you

pull expectantly off the highway, only to find the same Applebee's, the same McDonald's, and the same Days Inn you had harbored a fantasy about leaving far behind. One significant difference is that corporate restaurants and motels interpellate bodies; corporate books, which *Ways of Reading* has certainly become, interpellate minds. Standardization, corporate profit, and the reading against the grain that Bartholomae and Petrosky champion make strange bedfellows indeed.

Bedford/St. Martin's refused to reveal the sales figures for *Ways of Reading* or the numbers of copies printed in a particular year or currently (they maintain a predictably clandestine corporate relationship to the truth), but according to the dust jacket of the fifth edition, *Ways of Reading* has been adapted at more than four hundred colleges and universities in its previous editions. From such scanty information, it is impossible to say exactly how many copies of the book find their way into classrooms in a given year, but one can make an educated guess, and my calculations indicate that between one-quarter and one-half million students contended with *Ways of Reading* in their first-year writing classes in 1998–99. Even if these figures are inflated, the text is clearly spawning thousands upon thousands of academic relationships, some unquestionably less advantageous, less pedagogically appropriate, than others. While a precocious first-year engineering student at Virginia Tech might, for example, draw on his or her excellent high school education and high analytic aptitude to scratch the surface of Jane Tompkins's "'Indians': Textualism, Morality, and the Problem of History," first published in *Critical Inquiry* (a highly specialized journal for literary scholars with multiple degrees), a Haitian immigrant whose first language is Creole and who received a high school diploma from a substandard New York City high school will not have much luck. Bordo's "Hunger as Ideology" might be worth the struggle and mean something more to white suburban students, especially women, than it will to urban black, Latino, and even Russian students, who do not necessarily view weight as "unbearable." For many in its highly diverse audience, *Ways of Reading* will prove largely inscrutable, strangely irrelevant, or profoundly intimidating.

Consider, for example, the bulk of the students confronted with *Ways of Reading* at LIU-Brooklyn. In a typical first-year writing course, six or seven out of twenty students have immigrated to the United States in the past fifteen years or so from virtually everywhere, including Haiti, Jamaica, the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Pakistan, Vietnam, North or South Korea, the Philippines, and Russia (the list goes on and on). Four or five students were born and raised in America but spoke a language other than English at home.

Three or four more students were born and raised in America speaking Black Vernacular English at home, and three or four were born in America and raised in homes where the linguistic norm was so-called standard English. Typically, these twenty students have had very different educational experiences, both here and abroad. Some have endured (or enjoyed) highly disciplined, authoritarian regimes, while others have endured (or enjoyed) a K–12 adventure in which structure and discipline were entirely beyond the overtaxed resources of the system. One or two students attend class religiously, often contributing much to class discussions without ever buying the books or doing a homework assignment. Poverty or impossible lives outside school are often to blame. One or more students are apt to vanish during the semester without a trace—no warning, no explanation. Occasionally, a student is incarcerated. Acquaintances, friends, and family are not infrequently victims of violence. Several students, aged sixteen to forty and up, are single mothers, and at least one or two of the younger men are fathers. Eighty percent of the students pay for school with complicated financial aid packages and/or student loans, and the other 20 percent work forty-plus hours a week. For many if not most of the students, LIU-Brooklyn is the site of an urgent, if sometimes premature or ill-fated, struggle to improve their own and/or their family's socioeconomic conditions. Compared to the lives of the students I knew at Virginia Tech, the lives of LIU-Brooklyn students are difficult, their own familiar worlds often excessively "puzzling, rich, and problematic."

In 1993 *Ways of Reading* was also the war machine of choice at the center of curricular reform at Virginia Tech, where the audience, the apparently ideal one for this book, comprised kids from the 'burbs—the victims of consumer culture, "affluentia," the ones lulled by Hollywood, Madison Avenue, and their mainstream schooling into facile ways of seeing, thinking, and reading. Fresh out of graduate school and freshly anointed in the mysteries of critical theory, I embraced *Ways of Reading*, assigning my first-year students what I held to be the headiest, most mind-boggling essays in that edition. I saw the text as a way not only of reading but also of proselytizing and subverting the mind-numbing, consumer/capitalist/fascist/sexist/racist/classist ideologies that surrounded us in the form of American mythologies and mass culture. Dispensing with much of the editorial apparatus—especially the intertextual sequencing of assignments, which I found cumbersome—and all but a few of my favorite essays, which I organized around the Foucauldian theme "technologies of the body," I solemnly performed the semester-long rite of initiating students into the rituals of academic discourse. Improbably arguing in their introduction that "the challenges [that the readings in the

anthology] present . . . do not make them inaccessible to college students . . . [and] are not specialized studies" (9), Bartholomae and Petrosky advocate what they call "strong reading," which calls for readers to slough off their "timidity and passivity" and take "the responsibility to speak their minds and say what they notice" (7). With no small effort and much impromptu (and reluctant) explaining by me, the strongest reader in the house, my students, with wildly varying degrees of strength, did manage to read the texts. They also managed to extract key concepts and apply them in essays on relevant, self-selected and assigned topics. With much finessing and fudging with regard to the rhetorical, historical, theoretical, and even cultural contexts of the essays, these Virginia Tech classes went reasonably well. Students engaged texts, thought critically, produced interesting (that all-important quality) if somewhat constipated essays, and came away knowing as much about "technologies of the body" as many Madison Avenue advertising executives. Of course, I could count on almost all Virginia Tech students to get with the program: buy books, come to class, arrive on time, do assignments, follow instructions, and make all the prescribed moves. Their own bodies, after all, had been put through all the dominant American cultural ringers, and they were thoroughly schooled in schooling.

While many Virginia Tech students resisted conversion to the wonders of academic discourse through studied nonresistance, by playing along, resistance at LIU-Brooklyn to the "open[ing] up [of] the familiar world" that Bartholomae and Petrosky promise is apt to take other, less predictable forms. The power of colonizing agents to stymie and shame is partly a function of their mere presence and is rarely rendered entirely harmless by the colonized. But the long-term consequences of invasive, universalizing signifying regimes such as *Ways of Reading*—and here again, I have in mind the corporate apparatus that both exceeds and includes the book—can be largely mitigated by the opposing forces of local culture, by what Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1987: 118) might call "countersignifying regime[s] of signs." It is not without irony and with the intention of fighting fire with fire that I invoke Deleuze and Guattari's work in the service of a case *against* decontextualized and disembodied academic discourse. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, the second volume of their two-volume meditation on all manner of relationships spawned by capitalism (the first volume is *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*), stands as perhaps the most carnivalesque and most ludicrous postmodern romp through intellectual history produced in the frenzied academic theorizing of the last thirty years. If its authors did not illuminate, as they do, the nature of power and our multifaceted relationships

to power in its protean forms, creating a unique and useful lexicon in the process, the work might not merit serious attention. Even so, one must pick and choose bits from the text, taking what is useful for the occasion and leaving the rest; Deleuze and Guattari themselves insist on such pragmatism. Likewise Bartholomae and Petrosky promote partial, fragmentary, and pragmatic readings of the dense texts they have collected. I appreciate such a postmodern relationship to texts—I could not conduct the present critique otherwise—but there is much to be said for rhetorical awareness and sensitivity, for tailoring one's discourse to suit the rhetorical situation, including audience, purpose, and context—all the dimensions of meaningful relationship that are pedagogically indispensable and, essentially, beyond the theoretical and corporate purview of *Ways of Reading*.

In any case, Deleuze and Guattari's analysis of semiotic systems offers one way to evaluate the defensive rhetoric of tough love that, like the skein of a Trojan horse, conceals the true nature of *Ways of Reading* and effects the opening of the classroom gates (for to oppose its transcendent rhetoric is to risk the appearance of soft-mindedness, even anti-intellectualism). In the chapter "On Several Regimes of Signs" Deleuze and Guattari lay out a scheme for describing semiotic systems and the different regimes of signs (i.e., meaningful processes and structures) that constitute them and for understanding how these systems and regimes behave under different circumstances. In general, they take issue with prevailing structuralist and poststructuralist linguistic theory, but their analysis is well suited both for a critique of beguiling semiotic regimes like *Ways of Reading*, which may not be or do what they purport, and for a description of the forces that tend to disrupt such systems.

Deleuze and Guattari assert that there are four distinct regimes of signs, by which they mean both signifying—that is, purely linguistic—and semiotic, that is, extralinguistic, regimes. The four regimes account, they argue, for how centralized, or "despotic," power tends to organize itself and how, conversely, it may be undermined, resisted, or transformed. They include a presignifying regime, a signifying regime, a countersignifying regime, and a postsignifying regime. While the presignifying and the postsignifying regimes both refer to nonverbal semiotic modes of communication and action that defy signifying regimes altogether, and while they may be useful in thinking about the ways that both students' and teachers' bodies and lived experiences disrupt oppressive signifying systems, I will confine my discussion to the signifying and the countersignifying regimes.

A signifying regime is structured like Saussure's linguistic regime of

signs. It is highly abstract and purposefully limited in its abstraction. In the signifying regime, which is always the dominant, a sign refers to a sign, ad infinitum. As Deleuze and Guattari (1987: 13) put it: "Nothing is ever over and done with. . . . It's made for that. . . . [It's a] tragic regime of infinite debt. . . . There is a whole regime of roving, floating statements, suspended names, signs lying in wait to return and be propelled by the chain." In other words, it is difficult, sometimes impossible, to avoid, escape, or extricate one's own meaning from a signifying regime. Such regimes include Platonism, the two-party political system in the United States, the Western canon, the American discourse on family values, the rhetoric of American law and order, network news, distance learning, Microsoft, and the Bible. These are all regimes composed of a steadfast center and unsteady margins, of intensive centralization and standardization, of insiders and outsiders, of *us*es and *them*s. The model of academic discourse and culture reflected in *Ways of Reading*—that of the insider teacher and the outsider student wanting in—is also an example of a signifying regime.

A countersignifying regime, on the other hand, takes up a position outside and opposed to a signifying regime; it comes into existence apart from the system that it counters and "itself determines functions and relations, . . . arrives at arrangements rather than totals, distributions rather than collections, . . . operates more by breaks, transitions, migration, and accumulation" (118). Countersignifying regimes include the Declaration of Independence, jazz, the Internet (especially in its early stages), postmodern architecture, gossip, open-access cable channels, and custom course readers (assembled by teachers to suit local contexts). Of course, no regime is stable, and countersignifying regimes and signifying regimes can reverse positions, depending on the context. While *Ways of Reading* was clearly conceived and deployed as a countersignifying regime, for instance, it has, for reasons both intrinsic and extrinsic, long since collapsed into a formidable signifying regime. In the ever-expanding anthology (903 pages and counting), where texts have been extracted from highly specific, often specialized contexts, and where a few of these decontextualized texts are replaced in each subsequent edition by others like them, where the names of the academy's current high priests and priestesses are perennially invoked, one ends up precisely, and especially from a student's point of view, with a "whole regime of roving, floating statements, suspended names, signs lying in wait to return and be propelled by the chain."

In my experience, LIU-Brooklyn writing students and teachers resist —or are apt to resist—the kind of academic discourse embodied in *Ways of Reading* via a countersignifying regime of signs that opposes the dominant

regime in several ways, most of them nonlinear, indirect, thickly encoded, and intuitive. In the process of countersignifying, students may well succeed in preserving themselves, their self-esteem, and the already rich and complex familiar world (local culture/place/source of strength and power) that *Ways of Reading*, in its antirhetorical arrogance, elides. Here is a short list of the sorts of "breaks, transitions, [and] migration[s]" I have in mind as countersignifying strategies, conscious and unconscious, that LIU-Brooklyn students employ and that have everything to do with the politics of location, with complex personal histories:

1. The multiple, multicultural vocabularies, syntaxes, and grammars of LIU-Brooklyn students constitute a formidable obstacle to basic translation of many if not most of the texts in *Ways of Reading*. Reading as the intellectual challenge described by the editors is not immediately at issue; first comes the challenge of reading as a process of deciphering words, idioms, syntax, grammar, and conventions. LIU-Brooklyn students thus meet and challenge the complexity of *Ways of Reading* directly with their own linguistic complexity.
2. A piece may be so daunting or alienating in its level of abstraction and interdisciplinary allusion that students will simply disengage, either following along the surface as well as they can or disappearing altogether, literally or figuratively.
3. Students may subvert the editors' explicit intention of reading powerfully—by doing exactly what they are asked to do, by producing the desired "interesting" result, by making the complex connection they are supposed to make, say, between text A and text B: antiresistance as resistance. *Fronting* is another word for it.
4. Students also buck the system by not enjoying the work, the challenge, by not getting into "the heady fun of academic life, the real pleasure of thinking, reading, and writing" (ix). Rejecting pleasure proffered by another is always a good strategy of resistance.
5. Students may take their stand by misreading so extravagantly that you must conclude either that you have failed miserably or that they have become authors themselves.
6. Some students resist by attending class irregularly, by arriving late every day (taking back a little of their own time), or, exhausted from work, by sleeping in class or by skipping class to avoid falling asleep.
7. Others resist simply by not buying the book.

Not that students, at LIU-Brooklyn and elsewhere, do not resist other signifying regimes in like manner, but the "more is more," jump-in-to-learn-to-swim principle informing *Ways of Reading* spawns countersignifying responses that

are uniquely exclusionary, that tend to increase the distance between students and the academic ways of reading and writing championed in the text.

In staggeringly ironic contrast to many of the selections it contains, *Ways of Reading* has no embodied politics of location (Adrienne Rich's presence in the anthology notwithstanding) and exhibits little or no sensitivity to the rhetorical situations of students and teachers laboring and learning in exquisitely unique local environments. Having metamorphosed over thirteen years into a colonizing agent sponsored by corporate interests, *Ways of Reading* epitomizes twenty-first-century globalization: it goes where it likes and does what it can, all the while flattening difference in the guise of cultivating it, intimidating students (and many teachers) in the name of empowering them, and, contrary to its own mission, reproducing an academic culture of shame that thrives on intimidation and exclusion. Or so holds this one way of reading *Ways of Reading*—against its grain.

Resisting the "Ideology of Certainty"

Bonnie L. Kyburz

Before I launch into a description of my "encounter" with *Ways of Reading*, I need to provide some context for my experience. I will limit this description to a few key features, characteristics of my present reality and local situation that I find relevant to my reception of and quick resistance to David Bartholomae and Anthony Petrosky's book. First, I am writing program coordinator at Utah Valley State College (UVSC), where, legend has it, many students are simply doing time in "generals" before moving up the hill to attend Brigham Young University (BYU), a private, religious institution created and maintained by the Mormon Church. Since a large majority of UVSC students are members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (LDS), it seems only natural that many of them desire membership in the BYU community. For at BYU Mormonism defines the campus experience, and there, allegedly, the difficult tensions that emerge from encounters of the mind in the context of a secular school are less trying and demoralizing to the carefully developed, rigidly controlled worldview of the Mormon student in Utah Valley (where both BYU and UVSC are located). In short, I have worked to shape the

UVSC Writing Program against a conflicted political and ideological land-scape. Even as I have attempted to create a curriculum that encourages stu-dents to discover the concepts of agency and praxis in a dominant culture described as hierarchical and patriarchal, I have worked to create forums and curricula for the Writing Program that engage students of faith in ways that do not deride, disallow, or otherwise limit the roles of faith in their intellectual lives.

It is true that the LDS church defines "hegemony" in Utah Valley, and thus my "faith" project might be described in Freirean terms as "heresy," but it is more productively described (also in Freirean terms) as "cooperation," which "leads dialogical Subjects to focus their attention on the reality which mediates them and which—posed as a problem—challenges them" (Freire 1970: 149). Put simply, I draw on Freire with the awareness that his work is complexly articulated through a heteroglot of conflicts and tensions rather than reduced to a simple dualistic tension between oppressor and oppressed, dominant and subordinate, good and evil. Thus I am not working "for" or "against" the (dominant) LDS church or "for" or "against" (subordinate) lib-eratory ideology when I attend to faith issues at this state school. Besides, "faith" is not the problem I see in Utah Valley. Fear is the problem.

In part, it is the problem of fear that I find implicitly informing *Ways of Reading* in the shape of assumptions about the fears of incoming students and their ostensible need for guidance into the big, wide world of "readers" and "writers" (as though these terms inherently and exclusively suggested "aca-demic" readers and writers). Perhaps this fear is also felt by Bartholomae and Petrosky, as it is by many of us who have taught literature and eventually found ourselves teaching composition. We feel safe with what is "proven," familiar.

As a graduate teaching assistant (TA), I would have been overjoyed to use the carefully structured, familiar *Ways of Reading*. The readings are provocative, "long, powerful, mysterious pieces" (vi). The "Questions for a Second Reading" do the work of both analysis and explication: "The ques-tions we [the editors] have written highlight what we see as the central textual or interpretive problems" (vii); plus, as a bonus for the busy TA, Bartholomae and Petrosky provide ready-made prompts. The "assignment sequences" do the work of synthesis and application: "In the assignment sequences, your reading is not random. Each sequence provides a set of readings that can be pulled together into a single project" (782). What is more, if you go astray, the editors are there to put you back on the right track: "Note: Freire would not want you to work passively or mechanically, as though you were merely fol-lowing orders. He would want you to make your mark on the work he has

begun" (787). In "Working with the Assignment Sequences," Bartholomae and Petrosky provide students with suggestions for practice in imitation, the uses of figurative language, and much more.

Yes, I would have had little work to do beyond grading papers written in response to these carefully circumscribed "ways of reading" and the assignments that Bartholomae and Petrosky have crafted in response to those "ways." But today I am careful to avoid meticulously crafted, emphatically sequentialized textbooks, for I recognize in many of them an ideology of certainty, an ideology that has the capacity to contribute to "*Herrschaftswissen*, knowledge for the sake of domination" (Best and Kellner 1997: 200). I am not completely innocent, of course, and many other composition textbooks and readers offer fairly systematic approaches to teaching writing. Lately, however, I want to give up control. "Never completely, though," I hear myself thinking. Why not? Perhaps I seek to control my students' experience in part out of fear, a fear we all recognize, that the particular ways of reading we once adopted to advance in the academy will not continue to undergird a system of prescribed reading and writing strategies that shape our professional and financial lives, and so we attempt to reproduce them ad infinitum. So it appears with *Ways of Reading*.

As you might guess, much of my critique centers on Bartholomae and Petrosky's approach to "guidance." Their textbook leaves little room for a problem-posing pedagogy in which *students* generate questions and problems for exploration in thought, dialogue, and writing. Rather, *Ways of Reading* seems to represent the controlled and controlling approach that Freire (1970: 47) resisted: "Attempting to liberate the oppressed without their reflective participation in the act of liberation is to treat them as objects which must be saved from a burning building." It is certainly problematic to discuss college students as "oppressed," and yet if we are to engage theoretically with the concept of pedagogy, we discover validity in the oppressor/oppressed model as it appears to exist in (higher) education. Bartholomae and Petrosky avoid this theoretical pitfall, "forging" ahead in their approach, self-assured in their assumption that students want to be "saved" and that "we" are the ones to save them. As the editors advance their "ways," they seem to work with a concept of "we," a concept of "community," that is never fully articulated or systematically examined and critiqued.

Revisiting some of Bartholomae's solo work reveals the problematic nature of a self-assured stance with regard to an allegedly lucid and defensible notion of community. Recalling Bartholomae's (1985) "Inventing the University," Joseph Harris (1997: 147) argues that *community* is

for Bartholomae a kind of stabilizing term, used to give a shared sense of purpose and effort to our dealings with the various discourses that make up our community. The question, though, of just who this "we" is that speaks "our language" is never resolved. And so while Bartholomae often refers to "various branches" of the university, he ends up claiming to speak only of "university discourse in its most generalized form."

This "generalized" notion of "writing" and "community" shapes *Ways of Reading*, yet Bartholomae and Petrosky frequently privilege an unproblematic insider's awareness of these generalizations. They situate *Ways of Reading* as a work that intends to "engage and direct students as readers" (ix), to "provide examples of all the various uses of reading in academic life" (12), and they suggest that the textbook's "assignment sequences are designed to give students a feel for the rhythm and texture of an extended academic project" (viii). I am left wondering—especially as I am witness to a variety of theories and practices that claim to embrace, for example, hybridity in written texts—to what sort of generalized "rhythm and texture" they refer. I ask because I want to situate the community that Bartholomae and Petrosky imagine as a community that does not exist (at least not in composition today).

A "community" that we have called "composition" has for nearly forty years cohered by grounding itself in writing process theories. However, Gary Olson (1999: 8) argues that

the problem with process theory . . . is not so much that scholars are attempting to theorize various aspects of composing as it is that they are endeavoring (consciously or not) to construct a model of the composing process, thereby constructing a Theory of Writing, a series of generalizations about writing that supposedly hold true all or most of the time.

Olson notes postprocess arguments regarding the irreducibility of writing to a single, generalized theory, his contention that "writing—indeed all communication—is radically contingent, radically situational. Consequently, efforts to pin down some version of 'the writing process' are misguided, unproductive, and misleading." For Harris, "community," like generalized theories of "writing" for postprocess theorists, is not a clearly defined category of lived, situated experience. Harris (1997: 100–101) notes that

most of the "communities" to which other current theorists refer exist at a vague remove from actual experience: The University, The Discipline, The Academic Discourse Community. They are all quite literally utopias—nowheres, meta-communities—tied to no particular time or place, and thus oddly free of many of the

tensions, discontinuities, and conflicts in the sorts of talk and writing that go on everyday in classrooms and departments of an actual university. For all the scrutiny it has drawn, the idea of community thus still remains little more than a notion—hypothetical and suggestive, powerful yet ill-defined.

It seems clear that in *Ways of Reading* Bartholomae and Petrosky operate within such an idea of community, the sense that "we" share their knowledge regarding "the rhythm and texture of academic life" (18), regardless of the infinite differences and inequities, conflicts and skewed power relations, that actually describe such a life. They seem to feel that "we" also share unified ideas on the kinds of reading and writing we should teach our students, a belief that resists an awareness of the historical conflicts and tensions that have shaped our work in composition.

I understand that what Bartholomae and Petrosky are doing is in fact laying bare the often occluded academic practices we find useful in so many disciplinary contexts. That they are doing so as concerned fathers is somewhat distressing, and yet what they are doing is probably helpful to many students. The most disturbing problem is that they advance this project in first-year composition, where many students—especially in open-enrollment institutions—are simply not literate in the sense of having mastered a variety of approaches to thinking about and generating effective texts and where fewer restrictions may be more helpful than *Ways of Reading* sets out—in a climate embracing ambiguity and hybridity—for learning to write *academic* texts, all under the rubric of "writing."

I am troubled first that Bartholomae and Petrosky begin with extremely dense and complex—what they call "rich and meaty" (v)—texts, underscoring an Old World appreciation for "the good life" and a fatherly invitation that persists in the tone and method of *Ways of Reading*. I see them using language (perhaps unconsciously) that taps into the ways in which men are traditionally figured as active, as those who can (really) get things done, and I am troubled by their attempt to "capture" (5) particular meanings in a text.

Beyond the gendered concepts that contribute to their overly confident, paternalistic tone, I am troubled by Bartholomae and Petrosky's assumption that students are "haunted" (vi) by their lack of skill. They assume that students experience fear in view of their teachers' allegedly mystical knowledge and power. (This posture makes people outside the academy howl in disgust; have we not learned this yet?) Maybe what students experience is simply disdain, which leads to complicity in the power relations between teachers and students. This is part of what Ira Shor (1996: 12) calls the

"Siberian Syndrome," in which students assume a stance that represents "their subordinate and alienated position, which drives them to seek the remote seats of any classroom they inhabit." For Shor, "students are creative, intelligent beings, not plants or blank slates or pegboards for teacherly hammering" (12). Thus what Bartholomae and Petrosky might read as fear may be read instead, according to Shor, as "one form of student agency in the contact zone of mass education" (13). In the classrooms I imagine responding to the method deployed in *Ways of Reading*, there is a clear sort of contact zone, circumscribed by the walls of The Academy, which is unproblematically assumed to be a shelter from ignorance, from prior ways of reading. And so we have no contact zone at all.

Allowing students some room to have a sense of input into the processes of reading and writing, Bartholomae and Petrosky argue that students might not read well by seeking the ideas of others but that they might find it "necessary and even desirable to begin on [their] own" (9). Yet they foreclose this possibility when, for example, they explicate Adrienne Rich's essay "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision." They explain that Rich writes to a complex person, "not a term paper writer," and that while she speaks to a particular audience, she "refers *most accurately* to women readers" (9; emphasis mine). Bartholomae and Petrosky go on to say that "it is us, the men who are in the act of reading this essay, who feel and respond to this pressure" (9). In what ways do they give students the sense that they can "begin on [their] own," when their own example of what this might mean leaves little or no room to do so? I understand that Bartholomae and Petrosky are offering examples that may be useful as model ways of reading, yet they consistently undermine the very methods they suggest with paternalistic gestures, with a wink and a nod implying that it may be more productive to move beyond the question of Rich's meaning, as though their own reading were clearly the correct one.

Ways of Reading is saturated with a language of power, military conquest, violence, domination, and elitism. I am disturbed that the editors want to "direct the work of reading" (vii), that they believe they can identify what "good readers" (viii) are and should be, that they mean to teach students to be "strong, aggressive" readers (5). I am troubled that they believe they can teach students to enact all the ostensibly unproblematic pleasures of the frontiersman, the hunter. I am bothered that they rigidify and militarize the act of reading by suggesting that they will teach students to "forge a reading" (4). I am disturbed by the ways in which they admonish students to become "creatures of these essays" (in the way that war makes us less than human), to learn to

enjoy the "captivity" that comes from allowing a text to "dominate our seeing, talking, reading, and writing" (5). I am bothered that they ask students to "give [themselves] over" to an essay (11).

For Bartholomae and Petrosky, these metaphors apparently are perfectly acceptable, even natural. In fact, they argue strongly that "the issue is not only *what* students read, but what they can learn to *do* with what they read" (v). In stark contrast, Victor Villanueva Jr. (1997: 477) argues that, "rather than teach students *how* to think, which can too easily mean *what* to think, Freire would have us show them *that* they think." I believe that first-year composition should be, at least in part, about the *that* rather than almost exclusively about the *how* and the *what*. From my perspective, a liberatory, active, student-centered pedagogy provides students with opportunities to comprehend this *that*. At UVSC this is very important work, given the limitations on "private" thought with regard to certain public questions that have already and without question been "answered" by the LDS church.

I realized early on that at UVSC a liberatory, active, student-centered pedagogy would have to be instrumental if I were to serve our students by creating forums for inquiry, spaces in which they might use their writing to explore, to test ideas, to create dialogues, to express conflicts and tensions, to seek resolution of those tensions, to resist, to find power—in other words, to engage with the "habits of mind" and the material practices we think of when we think of "educated" people. I could say that my goal is in part to use liberatory pedagogies to help students become "intellectuals," "academics," or, as Bartholomae and Petrosky might have it, "bright and serious" students (14). But I want to avoid positioning myself too clearly with the familiar disciplinary jargon in terms of *the kinds of people we want to make of our students*, because I want to resist the totalizing, self-assured, paternalistic tone I detect in *Ways of Reading*. What is more, I want to make clear that my goal in composition classes is not to make academics of my students; that choice I leave to them. Surfacing these choices is part and parcel of the liberatory pedagogy I have sought to bring to UVSC.

So it is from the vantage of a liberatory educator situated in a deeply religious culture that I critique the paternalistic elitism I find throughout *Ways of Reading*, a characteristic ironically juxtaposed with selections by, sequences for, and suggested ways of reading the works of Gloria Anzaldúa, Susan Bordo, Michel Foucault, Paulo Freire, Mary Louise Pratt, Adrienne Rich, and Virginia Woolf. It seems to me that the selections in *Ways of Reading* present arguments for resistance to the very practices and beliefs, methodologies and myths, that it deploys.

The Life of the Author

David Bartholomae

When Tony Petrosky and I handed in the first draft of the first edition of *Ways of Reading*, our editors were concerned about the book's mode of address and asked us to reconsider. In the preface and introduction we referred to ourselves as "we" and referred to our students at the University of Pittsburgh. In the assignments, too, we said "we," and we referred to students, this time other teachers' students, as "you." We highlighted our presence as authors and teachers. For our editors, there were two related concerns. We had violated the conventions of the textbook, where authors disappeared and the words appeared to come from above or afar or some space beyond human limit. More important, we were inserting ourselves into other people's classrooms, and that seemed wrong—too pushy, too invasive, somehow a breach of the social contract invoked when a teacher uses a textbook in a classroom. Teachers, our editors felt, would lose their priority if they had to deal with a Bartholomae and a Petrosky when they handed out assignments and presented the readings. This was one of the most serious criticisms we encountered when we handed in the first draft to Bedford.

     We did not make the changes because we felt that the textbook should, in fact, announce its presence as a book. We thought it would be more useful as a teaching instrument if a teacher, whether an experienced teacher or a new teaching assistant, could locate the language and arguments in the book (in the introduction, in the odd cast of the assignments, in the choice of the selections) in the names Bartholomae and Petrosky, as though the language and arguments belonged to those figures—not figures in the field of English studies but authors on the page, whose interests were not necessarily those of the people reading, teaching, or using the assignments. This would allow a teacher, for example, to say, "Here they go again," fronting the question of who "they" are and what they are going on about.

     We considered it pedagogically useful to be present rather than absent as the writers of the textbook. We stand by that decision today. We did not pretend to be innocent. To turn Jeffrey P. Cain's words back to the book, its authors are decidedly "implicated in the complex, coded web of conflicting signs, anxieties, desires, frustrations, contradictions, politics, ironies, jokes, and fears that institutional composition instruction comprises."

     Let me add, I am grateful for the way Cain reads the textbook and the

instructor's manual in relation to some of my other scholarly work. I see it all as part of the same project. For one thing, Tony and I and our colleagues taught all of the selections that went into the first five editions, so, to speak for myself, I have been working on the book regularly as I have taught my own composition courses. But the decision to write a textbook was also motivated by a desire to work out theoretical questions in practice (questions represented in "Inventing the University" [Bartholomae 1985]) and to see if I could write to a much broader audience and in a form and language that would serve the work of student writers and their teachers.

Moreover, the book was the product of our desire to anthologize significant works of contemporary nonfiction that had not been collected in either composition readers or belletristic collections—critical writing, experimental nonfiction, scholarly writing, academic essays. *Ways of Reading* openly invites students to read the textbook in relation to the arguments of the writers it anthologizes, and it offers itself as the object of critical attention. It should come as no surprise, then, as Bonnie L. Kyburz notes, that "the selections in *Ways of Reading* present arguments for resistance to the very practices and beliefs, methodologies and myths, that it deploys."

The book is there to be read with or against the grain, and it can be written (as these reviews suggest) into various narratives, including narratives of liberation or oppression. Tom Kerr's narrative is predictable:

Having metamorphosed over thirteen years into a colonizing agent sponsored by corporate interests, *Ways of Reading* epitomizes twenty-first-century globalization: it goes where it likes and does what it can, all the while flattening difference in the guise of cultivating it, intimidating students (and many teachers) in the name of empowering them, and, contrary to its own mission, reproducing an academic culture of shame that thrives on intimidation and exclusion.

The book will be read as books are. As far as textbooks are concerned, this one could be seen as an advance in the genre. The book has proved its ability to make work possible, particularly the work of writing, and to make it possible for many people over time and in a wide range of settings. We believe that it is good work, and many have said or shown that it can be. If it is put to use in projects of intimidation and exclusion, that is a shame and certainly runs counter to its stated goals, but the book cannot control its uses. It makes public how Bartholomae and Petrosky teach, what they teach, and what they value. Making practice public is a difficult project, both harder and riskier than much of what passes as academic writing. As George Levine (2001: 14) says in "The Two Nations," his

lead essay in the inaugural issue of *Pedagogy*, "The reality of engagement with students makes the already difficult questions . . . even more difficult than they seem at the level of high theory, in graduate seminars, at international conferences."

Our textbook has been an important project for us. We are honored that it has had so many thoughtful and generous readers.

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