

**MOR02216**

**'HERE BE MONSTERS':  
EMERGENT DISCOURSES OF HYBRID IDENTITY IN STUDENTS'  
HYPERTEXTUAL CONSTRUCTIONS**

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Paper presented at the national conference of  
the Australian Association for Research in Education

Brisbane, Queensland, Australia,

December, 2002

It has been argued (Luke, 2002) that Critical Discourse Analysis needs to expand its range into studies documenting genres which offer new forms of representation and identity. Janks (2002) has also suggested that Critical Language Awareness teachers need to take their students beyond the cognitive and analytical into more playful, affective modes of engagement.

Taking up these arguments, this paper first analyses a recent form of textual configuration - literary (fictional, auto/biographical) hypertext - which already deconstructs its own unitary meanings and discourses. It then explores the hypertextual representations of multiple, fragmented selves in the multimodal hypertexts of tertiary education students. Finally the paper traces the ways in which the practice of this electronic mode of collage leads many of the students beyond their reluctance to engage with poststructuralist discourses about textualised subjectivity. (The persistence of more humanist discourses of identity in some cases is also noted.) The paper concludes by noting the implications of this kind of practice for critical language awareness pedagogy.

## **'HERE BE MONSTERS':**

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#### **Departure points**

This paper builds on recent work of Allan Luke (2002) and Hilary Janks (2002). Both authors critique some of the norms of critical literacy, critical language awareness and critical discourse analysis - from a position as "insiders", whose writing has long advocated a critical literacy practice. I too have researched, taught and published as an exponent of critical literacy (e.g., Morgan, 1997). And in this paper I too suggest ways in which critical literacy, as "ideology critique", may be supplemented, hence transformed. Unlike Janks, I will not concern myself with jokes in media texts, to suggest a way forward. And unlike Luke, I will not confine myself to recommending new courses of action, but will report on my own pedagogical experiments and the exploratory, experimental texts of my undergraduate students.

Before I situate my thinking in relation to the work of Luke and Janks, I must provide a brief overview of the relations among critical literacy, critical language awareness and critical discourse analysis. The three share an inheritance, drawn broadly from neo-Marxist critical theory (Althusser, Adorno, Habermas), critical linguistics (Fowler, Kress and Hodge) and Foucaultian theories of discourse and power/knowledge (Foucault, 1972, 1980). And all three follow an emancipatory agenda, based on modernist views of enlightenment through rationalist critique of the social.

The underpinning theories and orientation of the three forms of analysis and action may be broadly defined as follows:

Critical theories of literacy ... share the view that society is in a constant state of conflict, for the possession of knowledge (hence power), status and material resources is always open to contest. Struggles to define the world and claim its goods are carried out by unequally matched contestants, for certain social groups have historically controlled the ideologies, institutions and practices of their society, thereby maintaining their dominant position. But

since these are socially and historically constructed, they can be reconstructed. One of the chief means of such re/construction is language. Therefore critical literacy critics and teachers focus on the cultural and ideological assumptions that underwrite texts, they investigate the politics of representation, and they interrogate the inequitable, cultural positioning of speakers and readers within discourses. They ask who constructs the texts whose representations are dominant in a particular culture at a particular time; how readers come to be complicit with the persuasive ideologies of texts; whose interests are served by such representations and such readings; and when such texts and readings are inequitable in their effects, how these could be constructed otherwise. They seek to promote the conditions for a different textual practice and therefore different political relations than present social, economic and political inequalities as these are generated and preserved by literacy practices within and beyond formal education.

Morgan, 1997, pp. 1-2

**Critical discourse analysis** (hereafter CDA) concerns itself with the dialectical relations, or mutual constitution, of society and discourse (discourse being understood as a form of social behaviour manifested in and through language). It examines the ideological effects of language use by tracing the power which groups and individuals exercise in, over and through discourses. Its sphere of focus is social practice, understood as a relatively stable form of social activity involving diverse social elements (including activities, subjects, objects, time and place, forms of consciousness, values and discourses) which are dialectically related. This focus on social practice permits the analyst to "shuttle" between perspectives of social structure and social action or agency. In order to carry analysis through to the micro-level of textual detail, Fairclough (1989, 1992b, 1999) and others (cf. Titscher, Meyer, Wodak & Vetter, 2000) draw on the systemic functional linguistics of Halliday (1985).

That "wing" of CDA which concerns itself with the pedagogical application of these theories and forms of analysis is **critical language awareness**. It overlaps very extensively with critical literacy. The emphasis in much critical language awareness work on a linguistically oriented approach (Fairclough, 1992a) is explained partly through its advocates being students of Fairclough's work and aligning themselves with the critical linguistics movement in the UK.

**Critical literacy** (Lankshear, 1997; Morgan, 1997; Muspratt, Luke & Freebody, 1997) has drawn also on the broader, more sociologically oriented critical pedagogy movement emanating from the work of Giroux (e.g. 1983, 1988) and McLaren (1995), who have assumed the mantle of Freire (1970; cf. Freire, and Macedo, 1987). Nonetheless, a number of critical literacy theorists and practitioners, especially in Australia, have also drawn on functional linguistic analytical tools (e.g. Kamler, 1997; Threadgold, 1987). While originally defined as a "radical" educational idea, in Australia critical literacy has recently moved from the political margins to become a key concept in the curricula of some states, notably Queensland (Luke, 2000). (It is this move which has in part prompted the pedagogical experiment I report on here.)

Responding to the critiques of more culturally oriented reader response theorists, poststructuralist literary theories and more recent feminist, postcolonial and other theorising, critical literacy analysts have recently become self-conscious about the more naïve, even oppressive potentialities of their enlightenment project, and have sought to accommodate these criticisms (e.g., Ellsworth, 1989; Luke and Gore, 1992; Morgan, 1997). It is in this context that the work of Luke and Janks is situated, and it is to these two whom I now turn.

In his paper, "Beyond Science and Ideology Critique: Developments in Critical Discourse Analysis", Allan Luke (2002) argues that "new conditions of economic and cultural globalisation have created theoretical and empirical challenges for CDA", and that "these will require that CDA augment its strong focus on ideology critique with the study of texts that model the productive uses of power and discourse in new conditions" (p. 96). For my purposes here, one of Luke's most telling critiques is in his point that (p. 104)

Because CDA has been more or less tied to linguistic modes of analysis, it has had great difficulties dealing not only with multimodal texts, issues of embodiment, place, and those things experienced corporeally and physically. It has even greater difficulty dealing with the unsaid and the unspeakable, that which is not present in visible linguistic traces. Even for an ideology critique, the silent and the absent, represented in terms of euphemism and implied intertextual references, can have powerful political effects.

More specifically, he sets an agenda for the next generation of CDA: it must understand the contingent relationship between discourse change and changes in corporeal, spatialised and material conditions of postmodern life; it must study new emancipatory uses of discourses in new contexts; it must address blended forms of representation and identity; and it must find tools to go beyond analysis of printed alphabetic texts. Ultimately, for Luke, CDA must "analytically deconstruct, in poststructuralist terms, positive and productive configurations of power/knowledge in discourse" (p. 105).

Without aspiring to address all these items in one paper, I will point to one way in which I have attempted to shift the emphasis to the productive, to explore a new, digital, form of textual practice, a new, multigeneric (hence intertextual) genre. This practice offers new possibilities for the representation of hybrid identity, constituted by a number of discourses, and a means of textual appraisal different from CDA. And it works with the affective and embodied, rather than simply privileging the rational and critical.

This last point, about engaging the affective and embodied, is taken up by Janks (2002) in her paper (originally a keynote address to the AERA Conference in Perth, 2001), "Critical Literacy: Beyond Reason". Here she suggests that critical literacy or critical language awareness teachers need to take their students beyond the cognitive and analytical into more playful, affective modes of engagement with text. Janks repeatedly talks of what is "*beyond* reason", of "*pleasure rather than* reason", of how "*desire and identification work against* reason" (emphases added) - rather problematic binary oppositions which evidently derive from her need to supplement reason with what has traditionally been its other. But this binary is of course too simple to explain the complex interrelated working of thinking/feeling and of imagination/critique. Indeed, elsewhere in the paper Janks discusses a suite of advertisements characterised by "intelligent humour", which she claims are useful in teaching us (and our students) how to combine critique with pleasure and play.

My approach is rather different from Janks'. Certainly I too acknowledge the importance of working with identity investments, and with the pleasure that texts offer. I too acknowledge that our most powerful intellectual and moral engagements are impelled and given direction by emotions. Like Misson (1999, 2000, 2001), I am keen to investigate the kind of (critical) literacy teaching practice which reinstates the personal, the imaginative, the emotional and aesthetic (but not in old ways according to superseded models, such as "personal growth", "reader response" or "process writing" pedagogies). Where I differ from Janks and Misson is in utilising a potentially transgressive (hyper)textual form to focus on aspects of identity formation through social discourses and habitus.

## Self as text: undergraduate students' literary hypertexts

### *Rationale for the subject*

This half-semester subject, called "Literature in Teaching (Hypertext)", aims to question the emphasis on "personal" response and "self"-expression in much literary education from the 1980s until the present, characterised as the "personal growth" model. This has persisted as a "common sense" among many of my preservice English education students. By contrast, I aim to introduce them in this subject to the views of poststructuralists (and poststructuralist feminists - e.g. Gilbert, 1989, Kamler, 2001) on discourses and their effects on our selves.

By discourses, I am drawing on that tradition of theorising and analysis which derives broadly from Foucault (1972, 1980), and which has been taken up by poststructuralist sociologists, including feminists (e.g. Weedon, 1987), postcolonial theorists (e.g. Bhabha, 1994; Said, 1978; Spivak, 1987), and sociolinguists such as Gee (1990; Lemke, 1995), as well as by the CDA practitioners mentioned above. For these theorists, discourse is understood not simply as a form of language or as language in use, but as a social practice through which people are inducted into ways of valuing, stances and points of view which reflect and produce the interests of a group. By these means, discourses construct particular forms of social identities, or subjectivities - and any one person may inhabit a number of discourses, taking up therefore a range of subject positions and ways of being. That is, given the range of available discourses one inhabits, according to poststructuralists there can be no coherent, unified, essential individual who is the source of all the meanings s/he makes, but a postmodern subject: in process, situated in and by their world and its multiple discourses.

It should be noted, however, that "discursive practices are accomplished not only through language, but through bodies, through ways of moving, dressing and talking, and through ingrained bodily dispositions or habitus" (Kamler, 1997, pp. 373).

Any emphasis on the discursive sociality of the self needs therefore to be supplemented with reference to *habitus*. In Bourdieu's (1990) terms, habitus is the institution made flesh: "Between the child and the world, the whole group intervenes ... with a whole universe of ritual practices and utterances, which people it with meanings structured in accordance with the principles of the corresponding habitus" (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 76). Particular performances of selves are produced and constrained by particular contexts: "Performance always involves a labour of making the self, a muscular, emotional labour, a labour of constructing memories for the body, which 'brands' the materiality of the body and leaves its corporeal traces in the text of performance" (Threadgold, 1997, pp. 132-33; cf. Butler, 1993).

Central to this undergraduate subject, then, is the tenet that while the self has been regarded in western ideology as the supremely private aspect of our being, it is instead highly social, discursively negotiated and experienced through learned bodily dispositions. Therefore, like Bruner (2001), I believe that certain forms of autobiographical writing and reading can enable us to explore not only the cultural construction of personal identity but also the (re)construction of our social culture. And where these autobiographies focus on the disciplining and (sometimes transgressive) performance of embodied selves, there is scope for a richly rearticulated understanding of one's selves.

Certainly the stories we tell ourselves about who we are, who others are, how we are to be related, and how we got to be who we are - these help to organise us within our culture. (Such stories may of course offer an unproblematized, coherently developing self.) We learn to tell such stories in particular ways, to understand and assess them within and beyond formal education - and this is part of the important work of enculturation (Bruner, 1996). This

half-semester subject, then, offers a different framing, through its explicit foci on the material and discursive construction of the self and its narration in a hypertextual medium. These foci have enabled me to analyse the extent to which my undergraduate students were willing and able to develop an autobiographical account without resorting to a tale of processes of coherent, single self-development resulting in a logically inevitable end-point (or *telos*) (cf. Freeman, 1993).

### *A few words about hypernarrative*

It was my belief that the hypertextual medium (via the Storyspace program), with its spatial display of nodes and links, offered an ideal environment in which students would be encouraged and enabled to lay out for exploration their multiple, discursively constituted, positioned selves.

For the purposes of this paper, I draw on the analysis of Jane Yellowlees Douglas (2000) in which she identifies the key ways in which hypertext narratives are not like print narratives. First, hypertextual narratives have no singular, definitive beginnings and endings, nor fixed sequences of events; as stories they are structures which may explore different possible (even mutually exclusive) pathways and embrace contradictory outcomes. Next, readers of interactive narratives can proceed only on the basis of the choices they make, to follow this link or that. Furthermore, hypertext narrative segments exist in a network of interconnections mapped in a virtual 3D space. And any hypertext narratives have many possible orders in which they can be read, with which the reader makes a coherent sense. For this reason, the language in hypertext narratives appears less determinate than the language which appears on printed pages, since nodes (segments of the text) may be approached by different routes, hence appear in more than one context. (For further discussions of literary hypertext, see also Joyce, 1995; Landow, 1997; Aarseth, 1997; Johnson-Eilola, 1997.)

### *Content and organisation of the subject*

The cohort of approximately thirty students (in 2002) began by reading some short first-person fictions (Adams, 1979; Moorhouse, 1985) and hypertexts (Jackson, 1995, 1997; Fisher, 2001), including the work of a previous student (Cooney, 2001). These texts in various ways explore the constitution of selves (or subjectivities), the inscription of bodies through a range of discourses, and the institutions and knowledges within which those discourses are situated. I theorised the fictions by the introduction of a range of current literary concepts, including discourses, genre, intertextuality, narrative (point of view, conventions), collage, and reading practices. These concepts were further explored by means of selected readings (e.g. Landow, 1999; Morgan, 1993).

The students and I considered also how memory reconstitutes past experiences (according to available discourses), and the ways in which remembered events may be further shaped when retold in writing. In this way we identified distinctions, not just continuities, between the self that is remembered to have experienced particular events, the narrating self (the writer) and the narrated self (the "character" who is written about).

At the outset, I set the parameters for the students' written explorations: these were not expected to be confessional nor to encompass their "whole" lives. Thus, as the students approached their hypertextual writing, we identified various possible forms of autobiographical organisation other than according to chronology: event hub, hollow centre, cycle or spiral, and the like (as defined by Bernstein, 1998, and Murray, 1997). For if narrative is a specific mode of constructing or constituting reality (Bruner, 1991), like reality it can take many forms. Indeed, while the students' work included narrative, along with a range of other genres within the nodes, the form of organisation of the whole text could better be

characterised as a collage (Landow, 1999), a mode which Ulmer (1992) argues is now newly ascendent, rivalling chronological narrative and argument. (The map view of the Storyspace program, which is used to create and organise nodes or writing spaces, encourages the visualisation of the text as a collage of nodes.)

The module therefore offers preservice secondary English teachers a sequence which is different from the norm in English classrooms where critical, imaginative or personal writing is linked with reading (the latter sometimes called re-creative writing or dependent authorship). There the sequence is usually response to and/or analysis of text (authored by others) followed by the writing of analytical exposition or narrative. Here, by contrast, self-writing also becomes a text for (associative, imaginative, critical) rereading and rewriting - in the same space, since students append reflections within their autobiographical hypertexts.

In all these ways, then, the organisation of this subject goes beyond the CDA focus on other-authored, public texts as intentional codes, to the agentive practices of text participation, use and design (Kress, 2000).

### **The students' work: textualised selves**

Let me note at the outset that the great majority of the students, in this as in other years, testified to their enjoyment in the writing task. From their testimony, this pleasure in textual performance is due to what the students perceive as their "licence" to write in ways and on subjects which are not usually permitted in a Bachelor of Education subject.

The students identified a range of constituent discourses, too many to list here, which ranged from more "primary" discourses (Gee, 1990) of family and friends to the more formally institutionalised discourses of university study and part time work in service industries. They explored both discourses *of* particular groups or institutions and *about* particular subjects (e.g. in a discourse of friends, a discourse about consumerism; in a discourse of a sports team, a discourse about commitment, and so on). And (with the help of the Storyspace mapping facility) the students presented selves that were not only discursively situated but also thereby distributed across different locations of place and time - were both fragmented and linked. As Geoff noted,

After reading *My Body*, I adopted Jackson's style of writing by linking memories, but instead of using body parts to link memories I used discourses to activate my memory. As I wrote it was as if this other person had experienced all these events, as I felt I no longer identified with my previous selves, but the more I wrote those selves began to gel into the person I am today. Just as Jackson's body parts are deconstructed using hypertext, *we can also construct an identity using links.* (emphasis added)

A number of students experimented with changing narrative viewpoints to trace the co-constitution of a self through discursive interactions. Here Chris explains the working of a set of nodes in her hypertext:

I began writing about a memory that I had about when I had done something that my mother did not agree with. I began to tell the episode from the point of view of an outsider looking in. From there I began to think about the thoughts of others around me at the time and came up with the idea of using different genres to present the different points of view. Therefore I included a journal entry, to present my personal feelings. A separate text describing the

situation when my mother became aware of what I had done was included and the thoughts that would have been running through her mind also. The memory of that situation grew as I added more and more dimensions to it. In getting my tongue pierced I had shocked my mother who had certain views about what kind of girls get that done. I wanted to incorporate the most obvious situation when the discourse of what a "good girl" was had impacted on my life.

Many of the writers explored the positioning that came with particular discourses, even (in the following instance) with the gendering of naming:

There are several examples of discourses present in my hypertext and one example is the notion of how names are gendered. I am often questioned regarding my name and I felt that I should include this in my hypertext. In this node I wanted to question what is perceived as a girl's name and a boy's name. Regularly people mistaken me for a boy because of my name, it is not that they mean to, it is just the discourse present in our society influencing what constitutes a girl's name. Mine is not a girl's name. I used a first person narrative, closed text to illustrate this, therefore presenting my view of the situation. This also prompted a memory of a particular situation when I was put on a boys list in primary school.

Chris

Some students explored contestations among discourses, even in the same episode (not just across nodes). Here is one student, from the Torres Strait, describing some oral history research she undertook when at school:

My uncle told and explained things to me, even people from the universities in Australia and oversea who came to study the Island history never got as far as I did, because of the blood ties I had to the land. The white people only got information as far as the surface and white people cannot find these things because they have not ties to the land. Everything is spiritual at this particular place, there are preserved bodies, like those of the egyptian mummies, burial and ritual sites and other spiritual artefacts. The white people only stole what they could find, when people were unaware of their intention, the rest was hidden and the bushes would only make way if you have blood ties to that particular place. The place knows, who is blood and who is not blood....

That night when I arrived home, I questioned my mother about the things my uncle had told me about. Mum beat the living daylights out of me and said everything was pure evil, it was related to witchcraft and sorcery. She said the people were slaughtered and killed and never to be found again.

Rita

This same student in another node presents a self which is a cultural and discursive hybrid:

Living righteously for God, worshipping him and living for Jesus, my husband, my children, education, owning my own home, teaching overseas and one day be under the ministry of Reinhard Bonnke in Africa. Anything is possible in Jesus Name. My ultimate goal one day is to build a beautiful Mexican hacienda on one of the beautiful beaches in Bamaga, where my furniture would come from Mexico and things woven and made in the Torres Strait



Way. Coconut weavings of baskets, vases, fruit bowls etc.... Believing in God, and living a successful and fulfilling life, trusting in his word from the word and applying them to my life, my husband, and my children's lives.

Rita

A number of students focused also on the performative, embodied aspects of social discourses. One student explored her embodiment of punk (tattoos, and in-your-face behaviour), as well as its discursive construction by both participants and opponents of the subculture. And another writer, Karen, told of her attempt, as a young girl, to get out of the swimming pool as men did, by pulling themselves upright out of the water to balance at the edge on rigid arms, then to swing a leg up on one side, and so to straighten up to a standing position. She described her humiliation at being unable to emulate this feat, lacking men's upper body strength, and traced there "a discourse of femininity and physical competition with men. Although I desired to get out of the pool in the style the boys did, I learned it wasn't possible."

Independently of one another, three students in the class of 2002 deliberately and paradoxically left a gap where their present selves might be located. One drew on the discourse of palmistry to structure her hypertext according to the lines of the hand, and project into the future a range of possible sometimes incompatible lives, realised according to discourses that privileged the pursuit of family, career, money, fame, or lifestyle. The reader could then trace these lives back to the absent but implied present self, in whom these discourses are competing. As the writer, Sophie, comments,

By basing my hypertext on past and future, I have noticeably left a silence in my story regarding the present. The opening page invites the reader to deduce what they can about my present based on events in my past and predictions of my future. I found that in trying to write my autobiography it was easier to write about memories of the past and to imagine my future than it was to analyse myself in the present.... I intentionally left the present as a gap, one I hope that my hypertext will invite the reader to question or attempt to fill in.

A second student, Hannah, involved the reader in a quest (a journey) to find the "home" discourses of the travelling self who communicates from various locations overseas in various modes - including postcards and abbreviated reverse charge phone calls. "In 'Ticket to Ride'," she notes, "I was able to present my life as one defined by place rather than time."

And a third student, Thomas, invited the reader to discover the "real" identity of a young man (suspected criminal or not?) by poring over a set of written observations and various collected documents (shopping lists, phone-tapped conversations and the like) left behind by an undercover investigative agent who has gone missing. This body of evidence is now being handed over to another operative, who has therefore two people to pursue. And this is the task that the reader too takes on, as she explores the documents. In so doing she discovers that the first investigator has badly misunderstood the situations involving the Thomas figure because he is not an insider to various discourses (the shift worker at the Night Owl, for instance, or the lover of pop music). So the reader begins to piece together a distorted picture of Thomas (and therefore to infer the "real" situation) while also inferring what happened to the naïve investigator. It is an amusing and assured hypertextual game, in search of an elusive self who cannot definitively be known, least of all to a discursive outsider. It is a self, moreover, whose constituent discourses and habitus are caricatured by

the conventions of the police investigative genre that constitute characters according to certain norms. As Thomas notes,

The storyteller is highly paranoid and suspicious of the suspect whom he refers to as Sticky Fingers (named after a Rolling Stones album) and has a strong level of formality and paranoia. By turning the most banal of rituals such as going to the toilet into a major conspiracy, the narrator is quick to assume that the suspect's daily activities are somehow connected to illegal activity. This allows me to use gaps and silences creatively. That is, I am relying on the reader to supply common sense meanings and connections to the text based on their cultural assumption of the suspect. By being culturally aware of the unspoken evidence, it allows the reader or "investigator" to anticipate where the next link may take them and build a library of the suspect's traits.

Other students as well as these organised their autobiographical hypertexts according to a range of patterns, to lay out their shaping discourses. One writer presented a photo of his wallet, which opened to show all the cards and photos therein; another depicted her corkboard at the centre of her hypertext; another "exploded" a doodled drawing into the components of his life (interests, conceptions, values) which his imagination suggested to him; and yet another presented the cover of a passport and a series of maps as a way in to the discovery of new selves through travel. These forms of hypertext organisation might be characterised as "mosaic narratives" rather than "narratives of multiplicity" (a distinction made by Yellowlees Douglas, 2000, pp. 55 ff.). That is, the tesserae gradually build up a "whole" picture, rather than offering alternative versions of a self.

However, in some cases where the students were constructing a collage, an arrangement of disparate materials - here, of texts in different genres, some collected rather than invented - the writers were explicit about their use of these materials to position their reader in a variety of relations to the subject matter and the writer(s). One student, Rachel, noted,

It was not until I had written fifteen modules, all of which were short stories, that I realised the monotony of this form and forced myself to experiment with the forms and genres of the piece, to put any gaps created by the dominant discourses to my advantage. The result was pieces like "Quite the Vacation", where I play with the reading practices of the text in the form of a phone call; the concept of poststructuralism in "Putt-Putt", to question the ethics of the Australian/English competitiveness; or the intertextuality of "Stranded at the Caltex", which incorporated the genre of shipwreck films like *Castaway*.

In addition to utilising the spatiality of the map display, and the multigeneric possibilities of collage, a number of students used links from one node to another to undercut any stability of discursively positioned self. For instance, Penny noted that

Whilst sometimes seeming inappropriate pathways to follow, the links have been constructed so that a "play on words" sometimes occurs to challenge readers to make a connection and/or to create an element of humour in the hypertext. For example, clicking on "Human Resource Issues" within the Academic History node will link the reader to the "Profile of Relationships" I have encountered, creating contrasting points of view in academic and personal discourses as to what "Human Resource Issues" means to me.

## Only skin deep?

To what extent did the students take on board these poststructuralist concepts of the discursively constituted subject in their personal and (self) analytical writing? Were there students who sought to recuperate this new form of textual practice and self-representation for more traditional, modernist-humanist understandings, in accordance with an older discourse of a single identity?

Only one student, Edith, defined her hypertext as "a clear representation of my life and my humanistic characteristics," noting the means she had used to position her readers to align themselves with this dominant reading:

When writing something for each writing space, I used imagery an effective methods to draw the audience into my life. I have positioned the reader/s to feel sympathy ofr the trials and tribulations in my life, and to feel renewed hope and inspiration when they read about the triumphs in my life. In addition to this, the dominant / preferred reading was framed in such a way that the audience would walk away feeling a range of emotions not only towards me and my life, but also about the people I have mentioned and talked about in my writing.

Interestingly, the remaining students did not seem offended by the notion of a dispersed, discursively constituted self. Since they inhabit a world which they can understand as a (series of) networks, rather than a fixed, hierarchical structure, their sense of the relationships that define their selves is accordingly more shifting and diverse. Nonetheless, a number of students still represented themselves as defined according to a range of institutions such as family, school, church, and community (institutions which some postmodern analysts would tell us have broken their hold on us). So too in their writing some students presented a centrally conscious, core self which could be identified across various events, phases, locations, experiences and discourses.

Sophie's sometimes ambivalent, even contradictory, comments sum up this position:

I believe that the true self is a combination of three elements - how you see yourself, how others see you and how you truly are. If I were to write about myself, it would only be to present one of these elements and therefore the text would be biased to my point of view. By incorporating a variety of memories, different points of view and more choice for the reader, I hope to allow them the opportunity to construct their concept of me without being biased by how I see myself....

Another print text convention I enjoyed being free of was [a consistent] point of view. In a print autobiography, a reader does not get the truth, but they read the truth as constructed in the memory of the writer. Hypertext allows for one story to include many different points of view and I enjoyed trying to construct myself from different perspectives.

As she tells it, Sophie shifts between a position of how she sees herself, and one in which others view her. Such decentering is a valuable exercise; but it is in the end still the writing self who writes from others' viewpoints. Nor does she tease out how "what you truly are" is possible, given what she elsewhere acknowledges, that the "truth" of the self is reconstructed in memory.

According to Britzman, Santiago-Valles, Jimenez-Munoz and Lanash (1993, p. 196), cited by Janks (2002, p. 20),

The commitment to rationality - and to rational persuasion - ... actively erases the complex, contested and emotionally charged investments students and teachers confront when their subject positions are called into question.

"Emotionally charged investment" was apparent only in the case of the Torres Strait Islander woman, who wrote:

Being dark skinned, identified as the ideal Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, when the topics of indigenous issues arise in the lectures or tutorials, the whole class automatically assumes that particular person to come up with all the explanations, answers and ideas because its the colour of your skin and the Aboriginality traits that makes out you know everything. WHAT ABOUT THOSE WHO TEND TO HIDE THEIR IDENTITY BY THE COLOUR OF THEIR PALE SKIN AND THEIR NOT SO ATSI LOOKING FEATURES, THEY TEND TO BLEND PERFECTLY WITH THE REST OF THE CLASS WHILE YOU'RE SINGLED OUT AS THE SO CALLED ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLAND STUDENT OR PERSON. Sometimes you wanna say, hey! yes I do identity myself as being both Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island, but I have been bought up only knowing more about being a Torres Strait Islander, I cannot answer for an Aboriginal person. I would say myself, while another so called ATSI student just sits there staring at you, acting like that topic or issue does not concern them. But when it comes to the government hand outs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, Abstudy, ATSIC home loans, ASSPA, special university entry to different career paths and other educational institutions, I can sure tell you that these so called ATSI people or students are first to state their identity and claim those government handouts. WHAT ABOUT SPEAKING UP FRONT ABOUT THEIR IDENTITY? (emphases in original)

Rita

The rest of the class, belonging to the mainstream, "unmarked", category, encountered no such challenges and seemed for the most part contented to identify with the selves offered by the discourses of their society and culture - and to desire the attainment of the selves these offered. Indeed, in this subject I did not ask the students to call their selves into question - except in acknowledging their multiplicity and their constitution by discourses. And here too, it must be said that many of the students emphasised their (situated) agency as the protagonists in their stories.

### **... Or getting under their skin?**

The hypertext form and the writing assignment brought changes to the writers that neither they nor I had anticipated:

My education may also have contributed to my distaste of the discontinuous narrative when reading the other hypertexts. I am a firm believer that all stories must have a beginning and an end, though it was this lack of continuity that allowed me as a writer to be more adventurous.

The process [of hypertext writing] allowed me to realise the habits that I have formed, as a writer, that are the result of the dominant discourses of my life. I

acknowledge now the influence my friends and family have over my social relations and interpretations, and how this has limited my writing's experimentation as well as restricted my subject matter, throughout the hypertext. Whilst we are taught to think dialectically about social relations, it is difficult to carry this objective criticism into our own work. For me the hypertext medium has bridged this gap....

Rachel

Here, very interestingly, a new medium and the new form of narrative it encourages make possible challenges to the comfortable narrativisation of self of those "primary" discourses. Like this student, others too have been invited by the pleasures of the text and the permissions granted by the form and the assignment into engaging with theory and analysis of the selves they have invested in:

The medium of hypertext allowed me to present more than one view of a particular situation easily. The reader is positioned so that they can switch between memories and points of view as effortlessly as you would do if you were remembering something yourself. This in turn illustrates how we ourselves switch between discourses when in different selves - adopting different roles and engaging in the required discourses. The theme of wearing different jewellery and the attached memories, which are all tied to discourses, illustrates how I see myself "wearing" and adopting different discourses.

Chris

While some theorists might quibble with the idea that subjectivities, or even discourses, are as easy to put on and take off as an item of clothing, nevertheless, the reworking of memory fragments and of selves is interesting testimony here to Chris's developing understanding.

For even by inscribing aspects of their selves in the hypertextual space the students have been opening themselves up to new ways of thinking and knowing. The map itself, and the nodes and links, can be a different manifestation of cognition and re/cognition:

In reading the required texts, I was given various ideas for my writing and I experimented with different writing conventions. The text links allow the reader to follow the memories as if they are having them. Memories do not come in chronological order; they are more random and fragmented, often leading to completely different memories that fit into different contexts. I found that the links give the reader choices that would not otherwise be available in the print text medium. I did not have a particular outline for my hypertext. I just experimented with the hypertext medium and my hypertext grew and developed accordingly.

Chris

This is very different from the customary teleological direction of an autobiography. The fragmentation of the form, its discontinuity, conveys a sense that a life, like a work, is in progress:

I love the idea of giving the reader a chance to walk with me through segments of my life without being drenched with knowledge. The added bonus to hypertext is you can come back later and keep reading. Unless you

set out to, there will be new pathways to encounter and even new spaces - you won't necessarily uncover the whole piece in one reading.

Karen

It might be said, then, that this form of autobiographical writing is performative: a particular kind of (distributed) self is brought into being in the hypertextual telling. Moreover, this is a self whose memories are themselves discursively constituted, as Julia discovered:

Sitting down to write my hypertext I was extremely worried about incorporating an array of discourses into the text. What I didn't realise as I thought about the important matters in my life was how memories themselves flow back in a myriad of discourses.

The idea behind my hypertext was simplicity itself. I thought about the things in my life that I feel most strongly about, wrote about them, and the links followed my extended memories and emotions. Writing about my partner, Jessica, took me on a trip that included my first inclinations towards homosexuality, my first contact with another woman and the moment when I confronted my mother with my sexuality. The discourses I was so fearful of emerged in themselves as I remembered and found an old diary entry of my own and a letter written to me by my first female love interest, Mel.

Consequent upon such acts of telling is the reader's performance: let us not forget that the very hypertextual form permits not only different storyings, but ongoing diverse readings. A multiplicity of links can enable the reader to trace connections not previously made by the writer. Thus some threads in the weave may be loosened, even as other threads are drawn.

It is undoubtedly too much to expect of a short seven-week module that all students will be able to completely re-thread the nexus between past and present, draw on different discourses to tell other stories and change their subjectivities. Indeed, it would be naïve or oppressive of me to expect or demand Road-to-Damascus revelations. We all have psychic investments in the discourses that most deeply constitute us.

As indicated by the foregoing analysis, very few students have wanted to pour old wine into new bottles. More were prepared to experiment with form, and let the form constitute the storied self. The textual play, and the students' subsequent reflections, have taken the students to a new space, even if the norms of a conventional life-narrative remain as a shadowy anti-text (Brockmeier, 2001). As my students found when they entered the hypertextual environment, "somewhere between reporting and fiction writing, autobiography challenges the limits of generic definition through its *bricolage*-like bravado" (Gilmore, 1994).

### **Fiddling while Rome burns? Implications for the practice of CDA and critical literacy**

The pedagogical experiment I have been discussing would not be recognised as "normal" critical literacy or critical language awareness practice. It did not involve detailed micro-level linguistic analyses of any texts. Nor did my teaching take an explicitly critical stance to discourses (beyond perhaps our explorations of their constitutive work, and some students' self-chosen focus on matters of gender, race or class). It did not focus on social and political issues involving overt or covert misuse of power.

Critical literacy advocates would argue that ultimately students need a theorised, critical, understanding of the social and cultural, political and economic dimensions of discourses. I concur with this ideal end-point. But I argue that teachers need to start with engagement, exploration, and play (including the kinds of "writing back" through parody and the like identified by Janks, 2002). And this too is part of the development of a self: those students were imagining themselves to be the kind of person who writes, and reads, this kind of autobiographical hypertext.

To situate this pedagogical experiment more positively in relation to CDA, let us return to the critique by Luke (2002, p. 104), with which we began: "Because CDA has been more or less tied to linguistic modes of analysis, it has had great difficulties dealing ... with ... issues of embodiment, place and those things experienced corporeally and physically." The focus in this experiment on personal narrative is one with which CDA has not primarily concerned itself. But as the students' work quoted above suggests, this has enabled them to explore just such matters of (discursively constituted) embodiment and to begin their analysis in both narrative and expository modes. As I hope to have shown in this paper, changing the forms and subjects of "life stories" can be a useful supplement to the more usual practices of critical literacy discourse analysis. Indeed, the processes and products of my classroom could be considered an instance of what Luke (2002) calls for as a key task of CDA - the poststructuralist deconstruction of positive and productive configurations of power/knowledge in discourse and the identification of instances of emergent discourses of hybrid identity generated by learners.

## **Note**

My thanks to Craig Amos, Serena Craker, Emma-Jane Henke, Rebecca Hunt, Kelly Irvine, Kym Jeffries, Sylvia Reuben, Kim Stewart, Kathleen Timms, Catherine Wall, and Stevie Weber, of the Literature in Teaching class of 2002, and Tim Cooney, of the class of 2001, from the Faculty of Education at Queensland University of Technology, all of whom have given me permission to quote from their hypertext writing. Pseudonyms have been used in the text to protect the anonymity of the students whose words are quoted.

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