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Abandon voice? Pedagogy, the body, and late capitalism

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Introduction

The concept of voice—despite a good deal of important criticism and strong arguments that it be abandoned—continues to be one of the most powerful metaphors we have for thinking about agency and authorship in politics and education. In what follows, we examine the ongoing debate over voice, in order to explore its usefulness for resisting certain tendencies of globalization of capital and Empire. Specifically, we are interested in the possibilities that voice offers to theorize and enact pedagogies that honor the human body and its life in schools and classrooms.

This article is written after the style of the classical sonata. The first section introduces the concepts of our piece and begins their elaboration. The second section, much slower than the first (in a sonata, it would be the *Adagio*), breaks the concepts apart by showing their cracks and points of weakness. The third section, faster and with the humorous tone of many of Beethoven's third movements, invokes what has come before, but in a way that prepares for what is to come. Then, the final section begins, bringing with it a triumphant surging toward the future. The concepts in all four parts are *the same*, even though they undergo important changes during the second and third sections of the essay. But the tone in the fourth part is, by necessity, entirely different. Gone is the slowness, the patience, the backward gazing of previous sections. This final section is a furious race toward a future still to come, and the concepts are put in the service of that future.

We chose to present the article in the form of a sonata for several reasons. The first has to do with the temporal structure of our argument, an argument that—because it is cleaved in time—demanded several voices from us. The first section is a recounting, by Timothy Lensmire, of his past conceptual work on voice. The second section is a present-moment reading and assessment, by Nathan Snaza, of responses to Lensmire's work. The final sections find us speaking together, first in making sense of the past and then in imagining and moving toward a future. The article moves through past, present, and future, and we are not the same as we once were, not the same as we might be. It did not make sense for us to hide this realization by smoothing over these disjunctures in time.

Our text presents the concept of voice as moving and changing. It was necessary to approach the concept from different registers, from different angles (refracting differently each time). The concept is never worked out once and for all, but takes its meaning from the accumulation and juxtaposition of approaches. In this way, no part of the article can be understood apart from the whole. It is a matter of understanding that the concluding part of the argument, which rushes toward the future, is already there at the beginning (even if muted, undeveloped).

Finally, because our article concerns itself with voice, we needed a form that appertained to sound—to speaking, to listening, to the play of voices across time. We proceed from the assumption that, when one speaks, one says more than one can know. Other voices then enter to draw out, to comment on, to negate, and to urge these aspects of enunciation that are always ahead of conscious intent. We needed to play, to sound, in order for this to be read.

Voice

Voice has been written about and conceptualized in varied and sometimes conflicting ways (Elbow, 1994; Yancey, 1994). As part of a larger project that reconstructed progressive approaches to the teaching and learning of writing, I analyzed and criticized two influential conceptions of voice. The first—*voice as individual expression*—has been put forward by advocates of writing workshop¹ or process writing approaches, such as Lucy Calkins (1986) and Donald Graves (1983). Writing workshop advocates emphasize students' desire to express their selves in writing, and how traditional writing instruction frustrates this desire. Voice, to these educators, points to the unique expression of the unique individual. To find your voice, you burrow deep into subjectivity, to discover your authentic, unique nature. The workshop conception of voice is linked to a traditional Enlightenment conception of self, in which the self is stable, unitary, and autonomous.

The second conception of student voice—*voice as participation*—comes from advocates of critical pedagogy. These advocates, including Paulo Freire (1970), Henry Giroux (1988), and bell hooks (1994), emphasize that schools and society often function to silence certain individuals and groups. To them, silence points to oppressive conditions that keep certain people from speaking and being heard. Thus, in critical pedagogy,² voice signals participation, emphasizes playing an active part in the social production of meaning. In contrast to writing workshop advocates, critical pedagogues assume a social self, assume that the self is in-process, embedded in social context, and created out of the cultural resources at hand (for detailed accounts of both conceptions of voice, see Lensmire, 1998; 2000).

Although workshop and critical pedagogy versions of voice differ in significant ways, they also share important similarities. Both seek to humanize teaching and learning in schools in the acceptance and affirmation of student voice. Both encourage the active exploration by students of their worlds, rather than passive submission in the face of teacher control and knowledge. Unfortunately, both also share at least two serious weaknesses.

First, neither has come to grips with what conflict among voices means for the actual production of speech and writing within classrooms. Possibilities for conflict—between teacher and students, among students, and within individual students—persist in workshops and classrooms inspired by critical pedagogy, even if these advocates write in ways that deny it.³ In the end, neither workshop advocates nor advocates of critical pedagogy embed student voice in the immediate social context of the classroom. Workshop advocates embed voice in the inner context of the author's intentions and desires; when the social context of the workshop is considered at all, it is only as a friendly one that supports individual students' expression. Critical pedagogues embed voice in politics and history writ large, rather than within the local meanings and relations—the micropolitics and microhistories—of particular classrooms. Somehow, the sweaty, painful struggles over meaning that characterize life in society are left at the classroom door of critical pedagogues.⁴

Second, both workshop and critical pedagogy advocates render student voice as surprisingly static and undeveloping. I say "surprisingly" because these conceptions of voice are an integral part of calls for change, growth, the transformation of schools and society. In part, this second weakness can be linked to the first—a sense of student voice as dynamic or in-process can be lost when the complexities and struggles of actually speaking and writing in classrooms are ignored.

In response to these problems, I developed—with the help, especially, of Mikhail Bakhtin (1981, 1986)—an alternative conception of voice, where voice is conceived of as a project involving appropriation, social struggle, and becoming. The notion of appropriation emphasizes the activity of the self in the face of cultural resources. That is, the concrete individual does not stand passive before the experiences, languages, histories, and stories that confront her, but assimilates and does work on these resources in crafting a self and a voice. The work of appropriation, however, is not easy, and involves confronting at least three social struggles in the development of students' voices.

The first is the struggle to use something old to do something new. That is, the struggle to invest words, phrases, styles, and structures that have been used before—the given of convention and tradition—with new meaning, a meaning that is adequate to the student's goals for expression and the demands of the particular speech or writing situation with which he is confronted. The second social struggle is the student's struggle to please or satisfy multiple, living audiences who reward and punish his efforts. Students, especially those in progressive and critical educational spaces in which the teacher's authority is decentered and real-life purposes for writing are valued, confront not just the teacher as audience, but also peers and possibly parents and community members. These audiences may want different things.

The third social struggle, then, is the struggle to choose. Students are confronted by a complex language inheritance, and they struggle to choose among and to redirect old words to new meanings. In the appropriation of certain cultural resources (and not others), and in the particular ways they rework these resources, students stand with and against certain meanings and values, stand with and against certain audiences, in a social setting marked by asymmetries of power (not only across the teacher-student relation, but also across the pecking order of peer popularity and influence).

Although these social struggles put the project of voice at risk, they are also the very possibilities for growth and change. The new arises out of the struggle with the old, out of the struggle to please self and other, out of the struggle to stand with and against others and their words. Becoming, then, is the final aspect of my conception of student voice.

In making becoming part of the project of voice, I was emphasizing that students and teachers needed to choose, needed to value, what John Dewey (1938) called growth or the reconstruction of experience—the continual movement to "experiences of a deeper and more expansive quality" (p. 47). In terms of the project of voice, becoming can be thought of as the refusal, in our speaking and writing, to merely repeat the old. Instead, we are aiming for the reconstruction of the old, in the service of the ongoing renewal of our perspectives on the world and our places within it.

In this work of criticizing and re-imagining voice, I learned from and drew on earlier writers (e.g., Ellsworth, 1989; Gilbert, 1991) who argued that we would be better off if we abandoned voice for metaphors of story/text. I did not, however, abandon voice. Nor did I engage directly the question of whether voice or story/text would be more fruitful for our educational theorizing and practice. Kamler (2001) does engage this question, with considerable intelligence (and considerable use of my criticism and reformulation of voice). In the next section, Nathan traces her arguments and discusses why, in the end, she abandons voice.

Story

In her *Relocating the personal: A critical writing pedagogy*, Kamler (2001) provides the reader, in the last chapter, with instructions on how to read the book, instructions that in some sense necessitate a re-reading of the text:

Readers can engage with the specificity and locality of the writing produced in each case and read these against their own contexts for commonalities and differences. They can bring a critical lens to the particular strategies and teaching dilemmas that arise in each chapter, selecting those that are appropriate, rejecting others, considering how these might be written differently. It is the writer's hope

that these strategies prompt the reader to develop other critical writing practices (appropriate to their own locations) and a greater self-consciousness about how such practices affect both the writer's subjectivity and the text she writes; how the stories support, undermine and struggle with other stories (p. 174).

This paragraph (and many like it) enacts what the better part of the book argues for theoretically: the writer is present in the text, but in the form of a third person pronoun which must be read as unique to the production of *this* text. Kamler, as writer, uses the third person in a self-conscious, distancing move that produces certain effects (and affects) within the subjectivity of the writer; the reader (again distanced – the third, rather than the second, person) is invited to approach the text *as text*, to accept parts and reject others, to adopt *strategies* to different locally necessitated interventions, to read with different *lenses*. Such a paragraph forces the reader to go back over the text and to approach it with skepticism and an eye toward practice. The book is to be read, this paragraph tells us, not as a book *about* writing but as a toolkit for re-thinking our own practice (through re-reading the book).

From the perspective of an English teacher in the United States, one locally specific trait of Kamler's text is immediately apparent, and has far-reaching consequences for how the book is read: the Australian engagement with literacy studies is markedly different than our own. While the theoretical apparatus Kamler deploys is familiar to us (systemic functional grammar, writing workshop, New Literacy Studies, critical pedagogy, poststructuralism), there is a striking sense that these philosophies have had a much more profound effect on the practice of Australian teachers. Most importantly for us, we have to recognize that while a large number of English teachers in Australia took on writing workshops with passion and rigor, for political, ideological and institutional reasons it has never been the dominant practice of writing teachers in the United States. While writing workshop has enjoyed a privileged place in university curricula, it has always functioned as a subversive and counter-hegemonic tactic in the face of high stakes performance assessments that de-facto directly equate performance on a single text with the *Being* of students.

This helps us to explain several difficulties that attend reading Kamler within the American scene. One begins to notice that the theoretical arguments she makes are often exactly the same as some of the more critically minded evocations of "voice," but that at the moment of pronouncing on what metaphor to use she always falls on the side of "story." The way in which this argument develops is complex. This paragraph, from the second chapter of the book, for example, sounds strikingly similar to Lensmire's work:

I will argue in this chapter for a notion of voice that is situated—not singular but multiple—a notion that calls on both writing workshop and critical pedagogies

but which is relocated by feminist and poststructuralist theorizing... It is to argue for a notion of voice that is always located—always related to a particular context—and to reject a call for the voice that will simply empower she who writes. Ultimately, my aim is to argue for a notion of the personal which is not simply equated with voice (p. 36).

Up to the last sentence, this paragraph does not differ markedly from Lensmire's text. The last sentence marks the beginning of a reversal that will require an un-writing of the previous sentences that accounts for the structure of the entire book. Initially, the aim is to argue for "a notion of voice" but by the end of the paragraph the aim is to argue for a "notion of the personal" that is not equated with voice, or not "simply." It is this shift in metaphor that will become the most obvious import of *Relocating the personal: A critical writing pedagogy*.

Kamler approvingly takes up the main arguments of Lensmire's book, particularly his reading of the failures of writing workshop and critical pedagogy. At the final moment, one might say the *most important moment* when Kamler is about to enact her metaphorical metathesis, she distances herself from Lensmire: "While his concern is not to reduce self to voice, his reconception assumes that 'voice is an aspect of the self, but not the whole self'... This leaves me asking, which part, and with what consequences?—particularly when he remains committed to (a somewhat romantic) 'flourishing of student voices in school'" (p. 44). First admitting that Lensmire is being romantic here (he certainly is), Kamler's question about consequences, which apparently must proceed from a question about 'parts' of the self (different from Lensmire's "aspects"), is important. The closest Kamler comes to specifying exactly which *parts* is when she writes that "voice itself is a metaphor of the body—located in the throat and vocal chords—and therefore difficult to disconnect from the body of the person writing" (p. 43). Because of this, "it seems to me more prudent at this point in time to not use the metaphor of voice... This is not to dismiss its significance, history or even some of the goals associated with its use in a number of critical, democratic and emancipatory projects. It is to argue that we need other discursive means to disrupt the link between person and voice— and voice and authentic experience" (p. 44).

Three things are important in the argument of this paragraph. First is that Kamler is making a diachronic argument. She is not claiming that voice as metaphor is to be rejected *tout court*, but that at the moment of her writing there are pressing political, institutional, and pedagogical reasons to use some other metaphor. Second, she is drawing an amazingly close correlation between the physical body of a writer and notions of identity. This must be read in light of the mind/body binary that has structured Western thought since (at least) Plato's *Phaedo*. While an earlier metaphysics posed the mind (as *pneuma*, *Cogito* or *Geist*) as the realm of authentic experience and knowledge, Kamler is mounting a

reading of the binary where the body in its materiality is the bearer of truth and authenticity. Third, and this will help us connect the other two, Kamler precedes the sentences just quoted with the following assertion: “As a feminist linguist and critical discourse analyst who takes seriously the power of metaphors to shape what it is possible to think, it seems...” (p. 44). Kamler grounds herself within several discursive traditions at once and stakes the necessity of her argument on her own discursive subject position. Why does this matter? Kamler’s self-referential positioning here allows us to map the locality of her pronouncement in precisely the way she asks us to at the end of her book. And it allows us to read the book as an attempt to intervene in a particular spatio-temporal nexus.

Before venturing a hypothesis on why Kamler formulates the rejection of voice for story as she does (when she does), let’s first summarize the acutely valuable contributions her theory makes in the discourse of writing pedagogy. Firstly, Kamler “would disconnect the personal from notions of transformation that are too large, too self-congratulatory and have too much of the conversion narrative about them” (p. 47). This is both an attempt to make sense of the post-modern collapse of the metanarrative (see Lyotard, 1989) and an attempt to stand with teachers against the cultural demand that they somehow change the world through their pedagogy (at the current moment, this is the discourse of the so-called “Superteacher”).

Secondly, she makes powerful use of spatial metaphors, once again following an important shift in cultural theory (see Deleuze and Guattari, 1987; Foucault, 1978).⁵ Thirdly, she brings writing pedagogy into conversation with important new movements in literacy studies, particularly Critical Discourse Analysis, the New Literacy Studies, and the work of Gunter Kress on “Designing.”⁶

Fourthly, she calls attention to the ways in which teachers can hide behind notions of voice in order to control students: “Calls for students to publicly reveal or even confess information about their lives and cultures in the presence of others—including teachers—can be not only voyeuristic but dangerous, a form of surveillance to see if students produce the right voices” (p. 41; see Foucault, 1978, on the relation between confession and control). This concern links very closely to Elizabeth Ellsworth’s (1989) concern that “acting as if our classroom were a safe space in which democratic dialogue was possible and happening did not make it so” (p. 315).

For these reasons, Kamler’s (2001) pedagogy is “to use story rather than voice as a metaphor of the personal” (p. 176). This shift in metaphor “allows for a more textual orientation than voice, a closer attention to text and textuality, a different treatment of the person (who writes) and the personal (the text they write). Metaphors of textuality... are more productive for a critical writing

pedagogy because they foreground practices of *representation, labour and analysis*" (p. 177).

These three practices are homologous to the three theoretical assumptions that support Pam Gilbert's (1991) rejection of voice in favor of text:

1) writing is not tied to a voice, a presence, or an ultimate meaning; 2) discursive power networks are constructed and serve to organize social and cultural practice; and 3) reading is predominantly a social activity that involves learning a set of arbitrary cultural practices which privilege certain meanings (p. 209).

The first of these argues that student writing is a *representation* of a student's experience and not the experience itself. Further these representations can and will privilege certain meanings and version of authorial identity at different times and for different reasons, making *any* inference about the author as a person impossible. The second of these argues that writing is socially mediated and controlled *work*, work that must meet certain criteria and that involves participation in a set of social practices which we refer to as "writing." Further, for Kamler, "metaphors of textuality make the labour of the writer more visible and less naturalized than metaphors of voice" (p. 177). The third of these assumptions argues that the act of *reading* a text necessitates a critical stance toward the language use, and it reminds us that reading is always produced within a politico-historico-hermeneutic tradition.

Given the proximity of Kamler's argument to Gilbert's, to Ellsworth's, and to Lensmire's, we might wonder whether this proximity, this Being-alongside, is important. We think, finally, that it is paramount. In his analysis of what characters are up to in Dostoevsky's novels, Mikhail Bakhtin (1984a) finds that:

All that matters is the choice, the resolution of the question "Who am I" and "With whom am I?" To find one's own voice and to orient it among other voices, to combine it with some and to oppose it to others, to separate one's voice from another voice with which it has inseparably merged—these are the tasks that the heroes solve in the course of the novel (p. 239).

We agree that these are the important questions, and not just for Dostoevsky's characters, but for us: Who are we? With whom do we stand? We think Kamler's rejection of voice, in a voice that sounds so very much like Lensmire's up until the last but most important moments, is best understood as an answer to these questions. When Kamler prefers not to use voice *at this point in time*, we can imagine her in a room, talking to Lensmire for a while, but finally moving away to stand with Gilbert and with Ellsworth. At the moment when Kamler is writing, for various political, institutional and pedagogical reasons, *standing with*

these other writers, standing *away* from Lensmire, is an important gesture of solidarity. Kamler's stance (we begin to see how the body shows up in our metaphors about argumentation) is that the feminist and poststructuralist critique of voice needs to be better *heard*, needs to be given more ground (to stand on). Our interest is in standing as well. We imagine ourselves in a room with Kamler, and then in comes Peter Elbow (we'll see why). Our move here, the stand we take, is not only that it matters immeasurably with whom we stand, but also that we pay attention to where we stand and why.

Both Voice and Story

If we imagine Elbow (1994) in conversation with Kamler and Lensmire—he can play the part of the kind, somewhat bemused, elder (maybe a favorite uncle)—we would hear him trying to calm things down, hear him asking us to take a few steps back in order to grant both story/text and voice legitimacy and significance. For Elbow, story/text and voice are two ways of looking at discourse, and we need both:

The textuality metaphor highlights how discourse issues from other discourse (seeing all texts as "intertextual"), while the voice metaphor highlights how discourse issues from individual persons and from physical bodies. The text metaphor highlights the visual and spatial features of language and emphasizes language as an abstract, universal system; the voice metaphor highlights sound and hearing rather than vision, and it emphasizes the way all linguistic meaning moves historically through time rather than existing simultaneously in space... We benefit from both metaphors or lenses and lose out if either is outlawed (p. xiv).

Having said this—having given Kamler and Lensmire each a smile and pat on the head—Elbow goes on, however, to argue the importance of voice as metaphor. He does this, he says, because of his "own interests and because it is a kind of underdog in the scholarly world" (p. xiv). It is difficult to assess the underdog claim, and Elbow feels no need to defend it. His "interests" include exploring and enabling writing and the teaching of writing. In pursuing these interests, Elbow finds the voice metaphor helpful, and he hopes to help others be able to embrace and use the metaphor. He thinks that with a little work, most objections to voice might evaporate: "It is this fear and avoidance of the term voice that I hope to remove" (p. xiii).

While first noting that the metaphor of voice tends to link texts to bodies, link meaning to sound (and sound to the distinctive sounds that particular bodies make), Elbow (1994) then develops and clarifies five meanings of voice that are,

in the end, qualities of texts. In other words, he develops and celebrates a conception of voice in which the scene is imagined as the reader confronting a text which has these qualities (or not). Sometimes the reader is a teacher or friend:

In order to stabilize and solidify the concept of voice in writing, I think we need to distinguish the five different kinds of voice I have spelled out here. But once we have had our critical conversation about voice in writing so as to make the concept more solidly understood and widely accepted, I don't think that we'll always have to be so fussy about distinctions. We'll be able to say to a friend or student, "I hear more voice in these passages; something rich and useful and interesting is going on there; can you get more of that?" and not necessarily have to make careful distinctions between audible, dramatic, distinctive, authoritative, and resonant voice. There are substantive differences between the various kinds of voice in writing—but more often than not they go together. And surely the richly bundled dimensions and connotations of the human voice are what hold them all together (p. xvii).

We think that Elbow is largely successful in what he tries to do in this essay. It is an extremely smart piece that helps us understand aspects of the two metaphors, helps us clarify troublesome aspects of voice as a metaphor, and helps us imagine an alternative way to approach voice that avoids at least most of these troubles. Part of Elbow's solution is his insistence that there is no good reason to have to choose, once and for all, between voice and story/text. Both are helpful, powerful metaphors that the writer or teacher can deploy when appropriate. Kamler's (2001) book is replete with examples of the skillful deployment of the story/text metaphor in her own teaching—none perhaps more dramatic than when she asks a woman who has read a narrative about the death of her husband if she may treat the woman's story *as text*. Elbow argues that the voice metaphor may be similarly, helpfully, deployed. For him, the problem of voice or story/text pretty much evaporates in practice—we should use what helps.

What is interesting, and somewhat of a surprise, is how much Elbow's conception of voice seems linked to the already-produced text. Maybe this is unfair, or a bit of a caricature—in the above quote, for example, there is an already-produced text, but this text is also not finished. That is, Elbow's conception of voice is probably best characterized as an intervention in the writing process: a helpful tool at that moment when the writer considers what she has written and tries to figure out what is good and what is not, or when a teacher tries to help a student revise his text.

The surprise is that this is very much the moment at which Kamler wants story as the metaphor, so that the work of textual construction/design can occur. She imagines voice being ineffective as an intervention, because it too closely

links self to text and leaves the teacher with nothing to say (because to criticize the text, in this situation, is to criticize the person, their life, its worth). Elbow thinks that we can intervene, helpfully, with voice, because he thinks that we can point to aspects of texts and talk about them meaningfully with the meanings of voice he develops.

Once this similarity between Kamler and Elbow is recognized, we realize that Lensmire and the critical pedagogues, and probably even workshop advocates, are often worried about something else when they write about voice. This something else is probably why Lensmire's conception of voice, while seeking to get closer to the ground of students-actually-writing in classrooms, seems relatively abstract and ultimately unhelpful to Kamler when she imagines talking with students about their texts.

Kamler and Elbow—one favoring text, the other voice—are in agreement that what is at stake is a way of reading texts that is helpful for the revision/working of already-produced texts. But Lensmire (although he was not aware, at the time, that this is what he was doing) is worried about production a few steps back. He is worried, in the end, about the beginnings, the conditions, of the production of texts. This separates him from Kamler and Elbow, and links him to the critical pedagogues (who point to voice in opposition to conditions of silencing) and even the workshop advocates whom Lensmire is usually criticizing. Graves (1983), after all, is also worried about silencing and frames his writing workshop pedagogy this way:

Children want to write. They want to write the first day they attend school. This is no accident. Before they went to school they marked up walls, pavements, newspapers with crayons, pens or pencils . . . anything that makes a mark. The child's marks say, "I am."

"No, you aren't," say most school approaches to the teaching of writing (p. 3).

We can certainly be friendly, like Kamler was to Lensmire, like Elbow was to the story/text people, and say that what is at stake here are two moments of production: Kamler and Elbow worried about revision as continued production (a continued production that can be halted, damaged, by inadequate or wrong-headed teacher interventions with the wrong metaphor) and Lensmire worried about something closer to the beginnings of production (for goodness sake, we understand that all of this is recursive).

But we must be clear: Ours is a different sort of both/and position than Elbow's. Elbow wants both voice and story/text because each can be helpful in different situations. For us, we need both because they theorize, are worried about, different moments in the production of texts in schools.

At the level of classroom or school, it seems that we should always be extremely worried about the conditions of production (and not just response to already-produced texts). Progressive and critical critiques of schooling vary, certainly, but one way or another they all point to students being rendered objects of the control of powerful others. Dewey is worried, among other things, about passivity, about students being stuck in desks with meaningless tasks; Freire about the activity of learners being reduced to organizing and filing the deposits of knowledge given to them by the teacher.

The student body can be made to produce. The problem is whether the production is of any worth, serves any purpose, other than to enable the teacher to evaluate, classify, and sort the student.

So maybe we should pay attention to voice, inasmuch as it helps us worry about conditions of production in school.

The Body

A number of critics, including Giorgio Agamben (1993, 1998, 2000), and Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (1994, 2000, 2004) have argued that the present moment of global capitalism is characterized by the prominence of something called “biopower.” This notion, taken from Foucault (1978), refers to a relationship of the body to both the circulation of capital and the formation of subjectivities that appertains to that global movement. For Agamben (1998),

The development and triumph of capitalism would not have been possible...without the disciplinary control achieved by the new bio-power, which, through a series of appropriate technologies, so to speak created the ‘docile bodies’ that it needed (p. 3).

It does not surprise us that the phrase “docile bodies” comes from Michel Foucault’s (1979) examination of the disciplinary functions of schools, prisons, and other panoptic institutions (see especially pp. 135-170).

In what seems to be the most important recent attempt to theorize global capitalism from within a tradition of poststructuralist Marxism, Hardt and Negri (1994, 2000, 2004)⁷ expand on Foucault’s notions (drawing heavily on the work of Gilles Deleuze) to describe how this biopower functions to create subjects in a “postmodern” information economy. Their jumping off point is Deleuze’s notion of a society of control—Hardt and Negri (2000) write:

We should understand the society of control, in contrast [to the disciplinary society] (which develops at the far edge of modernity and opens toward the postmodern) in which mechanisms of control become ever more ‘democratic,’

ever more immanent to the social field, distributed throughout the brains and bodies of the citizens... Power is thus expressed as a control that extends throughout the depths of the consciousness and bodies of the population—and at the same time across the entirety of social relations (pp. 23, 24).

The name they give this power of social control which operates directly on subjects through their bodies and consciousnesses is biopower, which “thus refers to a situation in which what is directly at stake in power is the production and reproduction of life itself” (p. 24).

It would be a mistake to understand this operation of power directly on the body as in any way removed from the questions of communication and information. Indeed, what characterizes the current moment of global capital more than anything else is the centrality of communications, what Hardt and Negri call “immaterial labor,” which includes “communicative, cooperative and affective labor” (p. xiii). In other words, at the present moment,

Communication not only expresses but also organizes the movement of globalization... If communication is one of the hegemonic sectors of production and acts over the entire biopolitical field, then we must consider communication and the biopolitical context coextensive (pp. 32-33).

Thinking how this connection between the production of immaterial, communicable labor and the operation of biopower opens possibilities for political action is, according to these recent authors, the most important task of our present moment. This task takes on several names but represents the same project. Agamben calls it “the coming community,” literary theorist Cesare Casarino will call it “communism,” Hardt and Negri, like John Dewey before them, call it “democracy.”

In a recent book on Melville, Marx and Conrad, Casarino (2002a) goes quite far in making the connection between the body, writing, and resistance to global capitalism explicit. We think it’s important to note how Casarino links the body, desire, collective cooperation and representational practices:

The desire of communism [democracy] is corporeal, erotic, sexual... if this desire is not lived in the body, it is not lived at all...this desire opens up the body to the space of collectivity rather than entrapping it into the private prison of interiority... this desire is always a desire for new modes of being-in-common and for new modes of moving, living, and loving bodies... Writing always points to its unthought, to its unreachable underside, to its immanent outside, to that world of passion, affect, and desire that leaves its traces in writing like so many scars” (pp. 182-3).

There is, it seems to us, no way to either effectively conceptualize the present moment or to imagine forms of resistance to global capitalism's bloody domination that does not begin with such a project of imagining the body, sociality, and representational practices (here, writing) as entirely immanent to each other.

Beginning from this conceptual project, Hardt and Negri (2004) are led to call this resistance "biopolitical production" which is always opposed to biopower:

Biopolitical production is a matter of ontology in that it constantly creates a new social being, a new human nature. The conditions of the production and reproduction of the social life of the multitude, from its most general and abstract aspects to the most concrete and subtle, are developed within the continuous encounters, communications, and concatenations of bodies (p. 348).

Multitude is the name given here to the creative power that resists Empire.⁸ Biopower is the name of that force which, vampire-like, feeds off of our creative and cooperative capacities to keep itself alive, thereby leaving us alienated and exploited. In other words, "Biopower stands above society, transcendent, as a sovereign authority and imposes its order. Biopolitical production, in contrast, is immanent to society and creates social relationships and forms through collective forms of labor. Biopolitical production will give content to... democracy" (Hardt and Negri, 2004, p. 95).

Several things about such a conceptual project seem important to us. First, in terms of empirically observable acts—creative, cooperative, full of desire—there is no difference between liberatory acts and acts that serve the interests of global capital. Second, any act no matter how counter-hegemonic can be subsumed by capitalism (Deleuze and Guattari make this very clear in the two volumes of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, 1983, 1987). Third, capitalist exploitation presumes and, indeed, requires that we always work together to create, move and love. The means of resistance are always present, always already in our grasp: we just need to recognize that this power inheres in our social lives. Fourth, we must cease to think of our lives as separate from the operations of capital. It no longer makes sense to imagine, for example, schools as "preparing" humans to "enter" the economy. Students, like teachers, are *always* directly part of the global economy through their production of communication, affect, and forms of subjectivity. School "and" society is a false dichotomy; school *is* society.

The "romantic" notions of writing workshop and critical pedagogy advocates begin to seem less naïve when read in this light, although all the criticisms presented earlier in this paper stand. Take, for example, Giroux's (1992) concept of "border pedagogy," which engages the "need to create pedagogical conditions in which students become border crossers in order to

understand otherness in its own terms, and to further create borderlands in which diverse cultural resources allow for the fashioning of new identities within existing configurations of power” (p. 28). Two things are important about such a conception. The notion of agency given here is immediately social. As Hardt and Negri (2004) demand, “we have to rid ourselves of the notion that innovation relies on the genius of the individual. We produce and innovate together only in networks. If there is an act of genius, it is the genius of the multitude” (p. 338). Further, Giroux’s formulation presents the means of resistance as situated entirely within the existing mechanisms of domination and exploitation, or, “within the very logic of profit and work in which they remain buried alive” (Casarino, 2002a, p. 180).

What this means, concretely, for writing pedagogy is less a matter of specific instructional interventions and more a matter of the compass we set for our teaching, our interactions with students, and the standards we use to understand the social and intellectual developments taking place. It means, above everything else, that before the moment of consumption, of teachers or students *reading* texts as text, there is the moment of production. This moment is the appearance of biopolitical production, or, in Marxian terms, of “living, form-giving fire” that is labor (Marx, 1973, p. 361). This is in no way to minimize the necessity of critical evaluation of our practices, texts, and relationships. It is simply to acknowledge the immense power we have to create such things in the first place. Even the moment of critical appraisal takes for granted that, learning from our critical practice, we have the power to try again, to build something else. We cannot, as educators or as humans, ever forget that we have this power.

It also means that we cannot afford to separate what we do in our classrooms from matters of the body. We cannot forget either the ascription of social knowledge into our bodies, or the productive capacities of our bodies to modify and intervene in modes of sociality. At the beginning we said that Kamler chose “story” over “voice” because voice could not be disassociated from the body. We think that it is precisely this proximity to the body that makes the metaphor of voice important at the present moment. What’s more, we are not proposing using voice as simply another attribute of the text (as Elbow does). Our intent is to recall, at every possible moment, the inseparability of the body, social practices, and thought. One guide here, whom Hardt, Negri, and Casarino draw on heavily, is Baruch Spinoza, the 17th century Dutch philosopher whose thinking makes possible a large amount of post-1968 radical philosophy (including the work of Althusser, Lacan, Deleuze and Guattari, and Antonio Negri⁹). It is not a coincidence that one of Deleuze’s (1988b) books on Spinoza bears the subtitle “Practical Philosophy.” Spinoza’s philosophy is practical because it is concerned with living, with the day to day movement of social subjects in the world.

Deleuze (1988b) reminds us that “Spinoza offers philosophers a new model: the body” and that this model “is a matter of showing that the body surpasses the knowledge that we have of it, *and that thought likewise surpasses the consciousness we have of it*” (pp. 17, 18). Most importantly, “there is... a philosophy of ‘life’ in Spinoza; it consists precisely in denouncing all that separates us from life, all these transcendent values that are turned against life, these values that are tied to the conditions and illusions of consciousness” (p. 26). The appearance of what Deleuze is calling “life” has a name: *joy*. Casarino (2002b) puts this philosophy this way:

In the beginning was the encounter and the encounter was good. But this means that the encounter had to be actively made and judged good, and that it was neither good nor bad but rather purely potential to begin with (p. 123).

This seems to us like a perfect model for writing pedagogy. Our bodies and our thoughts, which are one and the same and which always exceed what we can know of them, produce texts, relations, and ideas. Only after the moment of production can we judge whether they are worthy or not. And there is a single criterion for this judgment: does what is produced lead to more joy (life) or more sadness?

This is not at all unlike the philosophies of Dewey or Bakhtin. Although Lensmire wrote about writing using these two philosophers before, this is not (exactly) the same moment in their thought that was seized upon. Let us look at Bakhtin’s (1984b) notion of the grotesque body:

Contrary to modern canons, the grotesque body is not separated from the rest of the world. It is not a closed, completed unit; it is unfinished, outgrows itself, transgresses its own limits. The stress is laid on those parts of the body that are open to the outside world, that is, the parts through which the world enters the body or emerges from it, or through which the body itself goes out to meet the world (p. 26).

The metaphor of voice, unlike the metaphor of text, calls attention to one such aperture, one such zone where the body and the world are *in no way* separate.¹⁰ It is for this reason that Hardt and Negri (2004) take up Bakhtin’s work on carnival to describe one appearance of the multitude: “*The protests, in other words, are also street festivals in which the anger of the protesters coexists with their joy in the carnival. . . . The multitude in movement is a kind of narration that produces new subjectivities and new languages*” (p. 211). Here, again, we see the direct link between the body, the social, narration, language (representational practices), and joy (life).

Let's look also at Dewey, who defines democracy as a "way of life." In "Creative Democracy – The Task Before Us," Dewey (1951) writes:

When I think of the conditions under which men and women are living in many foreign countries today, fear of espionage, with danger hanging over the meeting of friends for friendly conversation in private gatherings, I am inclined to believe that the heart and final guarantee of democracy is in free gatherings of neighbors on the street corner to discuss back and forth what is read in uncensored news of the day, and in gatherings of friends in the living rooms of houses and apartments to converse freely with one another (p. 392).

Democracy is the creative project of the Being-together (physical proximity) of friends to make sense of the world.¹¹ Here too we see the same links. And here Dewey also seems to see the necessity of standing with those we care about.

We don't deny that a metaphor of text is necessary. There is no way to conceive of a truly critical and hermeneutic reading without acknowledging textuality as such. However, before we are readers, before we experience the pleasure of the text, there must be a moment of the pleasure of production, where the body (which is always already the social body) produces in an expression of joy. *That* moment must be attended to right now. It seems to us that voice, through the corporality of its reference, can never cease to remind us of this.

Notes

¹ Typically, children compose very little in schools. The writing that is done is tightly controlled by the teacher who initiates writing tasks; determines audience, purpose, and format for the writing; and acts as the sole audience and evaluator. The purpose of such school writing is often to display academic mastery in evaluative contexts. In contrast, writing workshops—popularized initially by the research and writing of Graves and his associates at the Writing Process Laboratory of the University of New Hampshire starting in the late 1970s—emphasize providing opportunities for students to engage in and practice the craft of writing. A central theme within such approaches is *student ownership*: students have wide powers to determine the topics, audiences, purposes, and forms of their texts. With the support of the teacher and numerous opportunities to collaborate and share texts with peers, children are supposed to gradually become more and more able to realize their intentions in text. Workshop approaches are part of a more general and varied push—that includes composition scholars such as Elbow (1973) and Murray (1985)—to teach writing 'as a process.' Process writing approaches conceive of writing as a complex cognitive and communicative act, framed by a purpose, and made up of various recursive

phases or stages, such as drafting, revision, editing, and publishing. See Willinsky (1990) and Shannon (1990) for discussions of these approaches as heirs to earlier progressive education efforts. Drawing on Kliebard (1995), Shannon argues that progressive literacy educators in North America, over the past 100 years or so, have tended to fall into two (often overlapping, sometimes conflicting) groups. One group emphasizes—and grounds its theorizing and suggestions for practice on—the individual and her development. The second group sees the goal of literacy and education to be the remaking, the social reconstruction, of society, and its proposals for transformed schools emerge from this broader purpose. Advocates of workshop and process approaches to teaching writing, for Shannon, fall firmly in the developmentalist group.

² Stanley Aronowitz (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1991) and Peter McLaren (1994), among others, have also been important for my understanding of voice and critical pedagogy. It seems that Giroux (1986, 1987, 1988), however, has given the most explicit attention to developing the idea of voice among critical pedagogues, and, consequently, my characterization of voice in critical pedagogy is based largely in his work. Obviously, advocates of critical pedagogy do not speak in a monolithic voice. Indeed, Giroux himself moves, and learns, and changes. In the fourth section of this article we cite a *later* Giroux—the work on voice by Giroux cited in Lensmire (1998, 2000) was produced mainly in the 1980s. That said, I believe that much of the scholarly and popular writing on voice is captured, without too much violence, by the two conceptions of voice recounted here. Thus, while both are abstractions of more varied articulations by multiple writers, they also point to quite common uses of voice in educational and political writing.

³ At first glance, it seems silly to assert that advocates of critical pedagogy are blind to conflict. For they are not. The cultural politics perspective these theorists bring to their work on voice assumes conflict across and within the border lines of social groups in society, assumes struggles over identity, meaning, authority. Furthermore, critical pedagogues know that asymmetries of power give dominant groups the advantage in these struggles. Thus, conflict penetrates deep into the discourse of critical pedagogy. Unfortunately, it often does not penetrate to the level of face-to-face (or in your face) interactions in the classroom. And while advocates of critical pedagogy recognize asymmetries of power across classroom participants (specifically, teacher and student), they have, as Elizabeth Ellsworth (1989) notes, "made no systematic examination of the barriers that this imbalance throws up to the kind of student expression and dialogue they prescribe" (p. 309).

⁴ There are, of course, important exceptions—for example, Lewis & Simon (1986), Weiler (1988), and McLaren (1994). Work such as this leads to more

complex renderings of *pedagogy* within work on critical pedagogy. But it doesn't seem that such work has led to serious revisions of the idea of student *voice*.

⁵ For more on spatial thinking and education see Grossberg (1993), as well as the special issue of *Pedagogy, Culture and Society*, "Space, Identity and Education," edited by Carrie Paechter (2004).

⁶ See, for example, Street (1984); Barton, Hamilton, & Ivanic (2000); Kress (2003); Rogers (2003); and Gee (1999). See also Gee (2000) and Fairclough (2003).

⁷ While the importance of Hardt and Negri's (1994, 2000, 2004) project seems indisputable, their project itself is not. Some important recent contributions to the debate include Virno (2004), Passavant & Dean (2003), and Balakrishnan & Aronowitz (2003). See also the debate between Brennen and Hardt & Negri in *Critical Inquiry* (2003, 29 (3)).

⁸ The "multitude" for Hardt and Negri (2004) is, most simply, "the living alternative that grows within Empire" (p. xiii). Because of the grounding in poststructuralist, post-colonial and feminist philosophy, Hardt and Negri propose that multitude replace concepts such as "the people, the masses, and the working class" (p. xiv). They write: "The multitude, in contrast [to these other concepts], is many. The multitude is composed of innumerable internal differences that can never be reduced to a unity or a single identity—different cultures, races, ethnicities, genders, and sexual orientations; different forms of labor; different ways of living; different views of the world; and different desires" (p. xiv). Multitude, the subject of the eponymous book, is the political force animated by biopolitical production that can fight the biopower of Empire.

⁹ For more on the importance of Spinoza in this post-1968 thought, see (especially) Deleuze (1998b, 1992), Negri (2000), and Montag & Stolze (1998).

¹⁰ In a reading of Bakhtin's work on speech utterances along with *Rabelais and His Word*, Tom Friedrich (2003) writes:

The utterance is inseparable from the grotesque body, which shares similar features of intention toward and re-accentuation of words—the official world, its institutions, its monologic discourses intended to venerate and legitimize the status quo—as utterances. Simply put, if the utterance involves a speaker's intention toward a word, the grotesque body is the one who intends. The grotesque body is the body shot through with influence, embracing heteroglossia, struggling with others' words, destroying hegemony and replacing it with the actions of the folk-for-itself, a face absolutely free (p. 6).

Friedrich's paper, "Carnival utterance, carnival body, carnival pedagogy: Using Bakhtin to work toward a theory for creating liberatory, institutional spaces for male writers," is very important in that it links the utterance to the body in a novel way.

¹¹ Hardt and Negri (2004) discuss Dewey in *Multitude* (see pp. 196-202). They write that:

One resource in modern philosophy for understanding the production and productivity of the common can be found in American pragmatism and the pragmatic notion of habit... Habits are ... never really individual or personal. Individual habits, conduct, and subjectivity only arise on the basis of social conduct, communication, acting in common. Habits constitute our social nature (p. 197).

While Hardt and Negri “can already recognize a concept of multitude emerging from this pragmatic notion of habit” (p. 198), they ultimately find American pragmatism limited by its grounding in modernity (economic, philosophical, artistic, etc.). The shift to a *postmodern* understanding of habit, for Hardt and Negri, comes most obviously with the notion of “performance” in the sense developed by Butler (1990, 1993).

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