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A pedagogoy of stewardship : discourse, theory, and emotion in teaching literature
by Sandra Jean Lagerwey

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Enghsh
Montana State University
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Abstract:
Literary studies within the English discipline has very little scholarship on pedagogical theory, that is, not only the what and how we teach, but also why. This thesis develops a pedagogical theory for teaching literature based on the principles of stewardship. These principles emphasize social responsibility and creating possibilities for student participation and agency. Three key pedagogical principals are outlined that together construct a space for stewardship in the literature classroom. These principles focus attention on discourse and discursive practices, theory for both teachers and students, and the role of emotion in the classroom In order to most fully meet the demands of stewardship, which requires action in combination with reflection, this project applies both the framework of stewardship and the pedagogical principles to the practice of teaching two specific texts, Macbeth, by William Shakespeare, and Fools Crow, by James Welch. The result is a pedagogical theory for teaching literature enacted through context-specific practice.

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by

Sandra Jean Lagerwey

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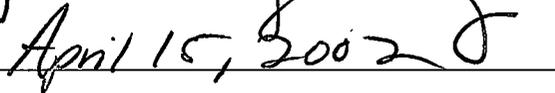
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ABSTRACT

Literary studies within the English discipline has very little scholarship on pedagogical theory, that is, not only the *what* and *how* we teach, but also *why*. This thesis develops a pedagogical theory for teaching literature based on the principles of stewardship. These principles emphasize social responsibility and creating possibilities for student participation and agency. Three key pedagogical principals are outlined that together construct a space for stewardship in the literature classroom. These principles focus attention on discourse and discursive practices, theory for both teachers and students, and the role of emotion in the classroom. In order to most fully meet the demands of stewardship, which requires action in combination with reflection, this project applies both the framework of stewardship and the pedagogical principles to the practice of teaching two specific texts, *Macbeth*, by William Shakespeare, and *Fools Crow*, by James Welch. The result is a pedagogical theory for teaching literature enacted through context-specific practice.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

"The first of them that eldest was, and best,
    Of all the house had charge and governement,
    As Guardian and Steward of the rest:"
                    --*The Faire Queen*, Book 1, Canto 10

Project Aim

The English discipline has a need and hunger for pedagogical discussions. In the introduction to the first volume of the recently published journal *Pedagogy: Critical Approaches to Teaching Literature, Language, Composition, and Culture*, the editors describe the essays comprising the first issue as "represent[ing] a starting point: they engage the idea of devoting our scholarly energy to teaching. Because there is little tradition of critical work on teaching, we lack a language for speaking about it" (Holberg and Taylor 5). The present project also aims to engage itself at that starting point-- contributing to a discourse that develops scholarly discussions about teaching in the English discipline. It does this by first building a conceptual framework around a pedagogy of stewardship. Next, three key pedagogical principles are outlined that together construct a space for stewardship in the classroom. These principles focus attention on discourse and discursive practice, theory for both teachers and students, and the role of emotion in the classroom. Finally, this project applies the framework of stewardship and these principles to the practice of teaching two texts, *Macbeth* and *Fools Crow*, in a literature classroom.

Admittedly, any project that concerns itself specifically with pedagogy, especially one that seeks to be heard at academic levels, faces a number of difficulties. One of the

most troubling obstacles is the de-valuing of pedagogy that occurs in higher education. Because pedagogy involves a "practical" realm, it is often stigmatized as less "academic" than those areas of study that can avoid the stigma of practice. Within the academy, a hierarchical system values those who seek "pure" knowledge over those who deal primarily with "applied" knowledge. Pedagogy is viewed at worst as not worthy of serious study and at best as an object of serious study, but an area in which one focuses at the risk of losing status in the academy. George Levine comments on the system of values at work in the academy by writing, "Prestigious professional journals virtually never publish material on the teaching of literature. Essays about teaching are often regarded as the academic equivalent of 'how-to' literature, not intellectually strenuous, not, somehow, very serious" (7-8).

Thinking about education as not "very serious" may be a result of the ways in which education continues to be gendered today as Jane Roland Martin, a specialist in the philosophy of education, argues in *Coming of Age in Academe*. She concludes that one of the reasons for devaluing education is the cultural association of education (in addition to nursing and homemaking) with women and thus also the home and family. The association of these practices with the private realm "sullies them"; it also stains those who choose to make them their area of specialization. According to Martin, "a discipline has only as much status as its objects of study, and each scholar has only as much status as his or her discipline," thus, those whose object of study is teaching (which is culturally associated with women) are tainted with "second-class citizenship" (53). Perhaps, then, the lack of academic material that focuses on pedagogy reveals the stigma attached to scholarship related to it.

In addition to the devalued status of pedagogy in most scholarship, other obstacles complicate discussions of pedagogy. These include a wide range of issues from a teacher's own insecurities to students' resistance to non-traditional means of instruction to the

obvious problem that strategies that work for one teacher might not work as well for another. As Marshall Gregory notes, "Few teachers feel that they have either the intellectual or professional grasp of teaching that they have of curriculum" (69). In some cases, we may resist discussing subjects of which we are insecure. (Understandably so, since in many cases pedagogical training isn't necessarily a part of the Ph.D. process, while in secondary educational training, pedagogy is typically equated with methodology.) Furthermore, in *Teaching to Transgress*, bell hooks comments that progressive pedagogical practices face critique from both inside and outside the academy; as a result, some teachers are fearful of trying non-traditional pedagogies in their classrooms (143). Other instructors may not see need to theorize pedagogy because their habits are deeply ingrained, and they see no need to change structures that, after all, served well in their own education.

Need for Theorizing Pedagogy

Combating the gendered, hierarchical treatment of pedagogy begins with efforts like that of the scholarly journal *Pedagogy*, where contributors bring their ideas and struggles with the practice of teaching to a larger public audience. Forums like these can prompt a re-vision of the scholarly worthiness and importance of pedagogy. At the same time, teachers reading and writing in these spaces become more invested in their own practices and development of pedagogical theories. In part, through theorizing practice, educators become more conscious of the structures, discourses, and practices that both enable and disable them as educators. Thus, as we begin to theorize, discuss, and publish what it is that we do *in the classroom*, we may begin to reframe the ways in which pedagogy is seen and understood in the academy.

One aspect of re-framing the "why" of pedagogy involves defining the term. The definition of pedagogy offered by feminist scholar Jennifer Gore marks an important

distinction between understanding pedagogy as *instruction* and understanding it as a *process* of knowledge production (68). The difference between these two definitions impacts how we view students in the classroom; pedagogy as instruction connotes a passive student while pedagogy as process implies that the students are active participants in their learning. As Gore explains, "Indeed if pedagogy is conceived as the process of knowledge production, a meaning consistent with much critical and feminist work that tends to deny constructions of pedagogy as 'instruction,' than we can argue that empowerment must be pedagogical--a process of knowledge production" (68). For those educators who wish to do more than instruct, for those who wish to involve students in their own learning, defining pedagogy in the framework of process is an essential starting point.

Reframing pedagogy as more complex than instruction also entails consideration of the politics of pedagogy. Henry Giroux has done much work in developing an argument that describes how teaching is not a neutral, value-free practice. Giroux addresses throughout his work how pedagogy, in addition to being devalued, is depoliticized. Teachers frequently consider pedagogy to be just a series of methods they use in the classroom, or even more detrimental, it is seen solely as a means of training students or as a means of transmitting knowledge to them. These explicit or implicit understandings are problematic because they ignore pedagogy's political, social, and moral implications. They also disregard the fact that pedagogy is "a moral and social practice through which knowledge, values, and social relations are deployed within unequal relations of power in order to produce particular notions of citizenship, subject positions, and forms of national identity" (Giroux, *Impure Acts* 92). Hence, to view pedagogy as *only* practice or *just* methods ignores its ideological base and function as a social practice. Instructors who willingly contribute to scholarly debates surrounding the material they teach without also asking critical questions about how that material is taught risk both complicity with social

practices that may be oppressive and losing the opportunity to make their teaching itself, in addition to the subject matter they teach, a tool for encouraging students to develop agency in their process of knowledge production and in the development of social relations.

Composition scholars, in spite of their delegation as the "service" arm of the English department, have begun and continue to develop conversations about the relationship between practice and content in their classrooms. The willingness of the practitioners of this specialization to interrogate both theory and practice while teaching writing offers an important model to those who are engaged in teaching literature. For example, in a recent article by Kevin Porter in *CCC* entitled "A Pedagogy of Charity: Donald Davidson and the Student-Negotiated Composition Classroom," Porter not only articulates a theoretical basis for his work (using Donald Davidson's interpretive principle of charity) but he also includes a discussion describing the interaction of his pedagogical theory with his students and his classroom practices. By doing so, he makes clear the implications of his pedagogy for both himself and his students.

While pedagogical work like Porter's in composition studies is far from exhausted, the written conversations in Literary Studies tend to be dominated by textual engagements and have not as a whole exerted the attention to pedagogy that we see in composition studies. Certainly the works of well-known and respected scholars such as Gerald Graff and Robert Scholes have made significant contributions in addressing issues related to teaching literature. However, their contributions (specifically Scholes's *Textual Power* and Graff's *Professing Literature*) fall short of asking questions that move beyond the texts we teach to the dynamics of the place in which we teach them. For instance, Susan Horton, in responding to a paper given by Scholes (later to become part of *Textual Power*), comments that in addition to making students more aware of the semiotics of the texts, we also need "a recognition that the *classroom* is also a text, produced by teacher and student

in collaboration. There is a semiotics of *that* text, too, and it is time we studied it" (53-54). Graff's development of "teaching the conflicts" also largely remains above questions of daily practice in the classroom and "works more effectively as a theoretical answer to a set of questions forced on us by 'theory' than it does, so far at least, as a pedagogy enacted daily in classrooms and reflected on in writing by teachers and critics" (Levine 11). Both scholars then, while clearly making efforts to address some aspect of pedagogy, fail to consider pedagogy at the classroom level.

To be certain, the institutional valuing of theory over practice may make focusing on more specific pedagogical theories less attractive to scholars, especially those just building their careers. English instructors may find themselves rewarded more by what they do with literature and critical theory through research than by how they teach it. However, as pressure increases on the educational system for producing "competent" students and as the debates surrounding the value of the humanities and traditional canons rage, those who teach English have an opportune moment for beginning to articulate how and why we teach literature in the classroom. Articulating these practices can become a means for resisting frequent calls for standardization as well as resisting the construction of an educational system that measures students primarily through competencies and deficiencies.

Furthermore, many teachers in secondary schools, colleges, and universities observe at a variety of levels the enormous influence of popular culture on their students; in fact, it functions as a pedagogical force shaping desire, identity, and values (Giroux, *Impure Acts*, 29). If engaged intellectuals wish to offer resistance or an alternative pedagogical force to popular culture (not to imply that all popular culture is inherently dangerous to students' minds), then we must begin to do the work of theorizing our pedagogical "forces." hooks calls for exactly this type of intellectual work, writing, "It is crucial that critical thinkers who want to change our teaching practices talk to one

another, collaborate in a discussion that crosses boundaries and creates a space for intervention" (129). In the spirit of hooks' challenge, this project engages in developing a pedagogical force for the English discipline by focusing on the dynamics of teaching literature in a classroom space that involves teachers, students, discourses, myths, emotions, curriculum, theories, and texts.

Difference Between Critical Theory and Pedagogical Theory

While a large body of published materials on critical theory and teaching literature exists, we less frequently read articles in print focused on pedagogical theory in the literature classroom. The distinction between conversations and practices that engage with critical theory and those that seek to articulate a pedagogical theory is important to note in order to support my claim that teachers of literature need to focus on pedagogical theory as well as critical theory. Arguably, most teachers do bring particular critical stances (i.e. Marxist, feminist, new historicist) to the teaching of literature and use these theoretical approaches to ask certain questions of the text. Indeed, for some instructors, particularly those engaging with feminist theory, their critical approach does influence their classroom practice. However, relying on critical theory alone, or even primarily, can be problematic because it fails to interrogate the practices of the classroom.

First, critical theory does not subject to scrutiny the role of the instructor in the classroom or the way that knowledge is produced in the classroom. In aiming to move beyond critical theory, Horton asks this question: "Why do we talk about what texts we should teach, ignoring the one text we must *all* teach: our own action in the classroom?" (55). I find this neglect especially troublesome in a case where an instructor might use post-structuralist or post-modern theories in order to open up an interpretation of a text and to call into question the Western ways of knowing while at the same time failing to

interrogate his or her practices which may be complicit to the ways of knowing and knowledge that he or she aims to question.

Second, excluding pedagogical theory leaves no space for dealing with students' resistance to or acceptance of the theoretical questions critical theory asks of texts. Certainly, it is possible to use a particular theoretical framework in a classroom for reading a text and yet completely disregard students' reactions to that theory; indeed, I fear this is a picture of too many "typical" literature classrooms. In the case where the teacher is attentive to students' reactions, he or she may be either frustrated by students who "don't get it" or ecstatic with those who use theory for new and insightful readings. However, between these two extremes a whole range of student responses exists. By theorizing pedagogy, instructors participate in a discourse that serves to examine student reactions, regardless of where the students are positioned. Ultimately, focusing on pedagogy generates more possibilities for making critical theory accessible for students because teachers begin to imagine ways that they might meet students "where they are" with their questions and various positionings relating to critical theory.

Pedagogical work of this type begins when teachers reconsider their practices and theories in light of context-specific classroom interactions. Consider a situation where students may intellectually assimilate a theory or idea, while on the level of lived experience the theory makes no difference in how they engage with their world. By asking what this gap reveals about the students, the teacher, the theory, and their worlds, pedagogical theory attempts to maneuver in the space between intellect and lived action. What makes these questions so interesting and in need of scholarly attention is that this space is filled with ambiguities, complexities of time and situation, and all the diversity of identity that one classroom contains. Yet, for many teachers, dealing with the complexities of texts and critical theory often seems enough for one semester, and "[t]he reality of engagement with students makes the already difficult questions about the nature

of literature and literary study even more difficult than they seem at the level of high theory, in graduate seminars, at international conferences" (Levine 14). However, if literature teachers envision critical theory functioning in a world outside of the text, the increasingly complex and difficult questions that pedagogy brings to the surface should be addressed.

From Freire to Critical Pedagogies and Beyond

As one of the most influential educators whose thoughts on pedagogy have had significant ramifications in bringing issues of pedagogy to the forefront, Paulo Freire developed his theories of education in resistance to what he termed the "banking concept of education." Critical literacy, he argued, does not take place when students are expected to merely consume and "bank" the knowledge passed on to them from texts or teachers. Rather, students who produce knowledge together in social contexts based on their own experiences will engage in a process of *concientização*, meaning "learning to perceive social, political, and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality" (Freire 35). This is a more empowering educational process.

Pedagogy of the Oppressed is distinctive for its discussion of the specific educational methods Freire developed as the means for fostering *concientização*, including problem-posing and generative themes. This praxis, in combination with his moral and social philosophy, originated in the historical contexts of his teaching situations, namely working with Brazilian peasants. Because his work examined the intersections of students, teachers, texts, historical situations, teaching methods, and educational structures, it provides an example of the kind of pedagogical work I am advocating for the English discipline.

Many have explored the implications of Freire's ideas since he first wrote *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, and, in particular, the school of critical pedagogy traces some

of its origins to Freiran thought. Critical pedagogy defines itself as "an attempt to alter experience in the interest of expanding the possibilities for human agency and social justice" (Giroux, Disturbing, 20). Yet, as the school of critical pedagogy influenced by Freire's thinking has continued its development, particularly in the academy, its connection to specific teaching and learning contexts has arguably weakened, primarily because the language constructing its discourse has functioned increasingly at the level of theory. This impulse concerns me as the conversations within critical pedagogy are one of the limited spaces where pedagogy is seriously engaged as an academic topic. As these conversations disengage from practice, we are brought back full circle to a theory/practice binary that limits growth for both teachers and students.

The primary conversations in critical pedagogy have been developed by Peter McLaren, Henry Giroux, Roger Simon, and Stanley Aronowitz among others. Through their attention to the politics, ideologies, and praxis involved in teaching, they have begun to challenge many of the discourses shaping education currently and emphasize the importance of developing pedagogies of empowerment. McLaren, for example, describes critical pedagogies as looking to transform "the relationship among classroom, teaching, the production of knowledge, the institutional structures of the school, and the social and material relations of the wider community, society, and nation-state" (10). And Giroux writes that "critical pedagogy self-consciously operates from a perspective in which teaching and learning are committed to expanding rather than restricting the opportunities for students and others to be social, political, and economic agents" (Disturbing 18).

As the statements by both McLaren and Giroux reveal, those involved in developing these pedagogies typically look at the broad context of the system of education, and their ideas are only occasionally brought into direct relation with specific subject fields or practices. While those working to develop critical pedagogies have made tremendous progress in bringing the political, social, cultural, and moral implications of

pedagogical practices to the attention of the academy and the public, the lack of specific engagement with classroom and disciplinary practices limits the function of critical pedagogies to yet another theoretical debate in the academy. For instance, Giroux's texts tend to make broad calls for what pedagogy "ought" to be without offering suggestions as to how a teacher might actually construct a critical pedagogy in his or her classroom.[1] Consider, for example, an abbreviated list of "musts" for a postmodern pedagogy given by Giroux in "Slacking Off: Border Youth and Postmodern Education":

○ must address the shifting attitudes, representations, and desires of this new generation of youth being produced within the current historical, economic and cultural conjuncture (74)

○ must be more sensitive to how teachers and students negotiate both texts and identities, but it must do so through a political project that articulates its own authority within a critical understanding of how the self recognizes others as subjects rather than as objects of history (75)

○ [needs] a more specific understanding of how affect and ideology mutually construct the knowledge, resistance, and sense of identity that students negotiate as they work through dominant and rupturing narratives attempting in different ways to secure particular forms of authority (75)

After discussing each of these "musts" (in addition to others) in slightly more depth, the article ends. An instructor is left with a long list of ideals for his or her classroom practice, but with little evidence of how these ideals might be enacted. Therefore, even in the school of thought that articulates the importance of acknowledging the implications of practice, one rarely finds a contextual discussion of actual classroom practice. This phenomenon actually opposes the original aims of critical educators because it limits the changes that can be made in the material circumstances of the classroom or in broader cultural life. As a result, the discourse's appeals to moral action collapse upon themselves.

Elizabeth Ellsworth confronted the limitations of critical pedagogical discourses when she began developing a class called "Media and Anti-Racist Policies" in which she

initially intended to address many of the central concerns of critical pedagogies--justice, racism, marginalization of the other, and development of critical consciousness, to name a few. She found that the language of critical pedagogies was "more appropriate (yet hardly more helpful) for philosophical debates about the highly problematic concepts of freedom, justice, democracy, and 'universal' values than for thinking through and planning classroom practices to support the political agenda of C&I [Curriculum and Instruction] 607" (92). In *Feminisms and Critical Pedagogy*, Ellsworth and others present important additional critiques to critical pedagogy that developed as its theory interacted with the practices of their classrooms. Summarizing their critiques is useful as it provides further context for my departure from critical pedagogies, a school of thought I initially intended to use as a basis for this project. Their work opens a space for this project as they articulate the limitations of critical pedagogies.

Ellsworth's primary criticism centers on the argument that the principles underlying critical pedagogies "are repressive myths that perpetuate the relations of domination" (91). In her words we find that critical pedagogies' stated goals defined earlier by Giroux as "expanding possibilities for human agency and social justice" are in fact reversed and become instead repressive, dominating, and limiting. This reversal is a result of the broad, rationalistic, and abstract nature of critical pedagogies.

Ellsworth notes that the levels of abstraction present in the theories can result in classroom discussions that ignore historical contexts and political positions (92). Certainly, addressing both agency and justice require contextualization according to time, place, and situation. She also contends that critical pedagogies fail to address important issues of classroom practice (95). That is, critical pedagogies often proclaim themselves as empowering without actually examining how classroom practices either support of challenge that assumption. Additionally, the absence of critical educators analyzing the power structures that shape their own positions in the classrooms and their relationships

with students essentially results in giving students (and instructors) the illusion of equality in the classroom (98). Finally, Ellsworth argues that critical pedagogies rely upon rationalistic assumptions and discourses that have the potential to oppress the very Other they seek to liberate (97).

Along similar lines, Jennifer Gore wants to problematize the construction of empowerment by both critical and feminist discourses looking for "their dangers, their normalizing tendencies, for how they might serve as instruments of domination despite the intentions of their creators" (54). These "normalizing tendencies" occur primarily through the construction of the term "empowerment" and its unreflective use for describing the process of empowering students. Gore contends that both the broad and decontextualized use of empowerment is problematic as well as the way in which the term sets up the teacher and/or academic as the owner of power and agent of empowerment (61). Gore, like Ellsworth, struggles with the conversion of the "macro" theoretical discourse into the "micro" of daily practice in the classroom (59).

A Pedagogy of Stewardship

Both Ellsworth's and Gore's analyses of their experiences with the discourse of critical pedagogies, along with my own increasing discomfort with the exceedingly political and theoretical aspects of the discourse, prompted me to reconsider using the critical pedagogical discourse in my own work. Instead, I began to search for a way in which I might construct a discourse that disrupts the theoretical, rationalistic, and highly political language of critical pedagogies while encapsulating the emphases of what I will argue might construct a useful pedagogy for a literature classroom. To this end, I offer a pedagogy of stewardship.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*) defines stewardship narrowly, the primary definition being "the office of steward" ("Stewardship," def.1). "Steward" itself has

several definitions; the original sense of the word included "an official who controls the domestic affairs of a household, supervising the service of his master's table, directing the domestics, and regulating household expenditure" ("Steward," def. 1a). Today, the literal definition of stewardship is less associated with the term than a metaphorical definition stemming from Biblical usage. The term's broad definition in this sense connotes the Christian's responsibility to care for God's creation and its resources in ways that are pleasing to Him. This idea has been applied to primarily stewardship of financial resources and stewardship of creation. The later application founds the theoretical basis of a large Christian environmental movement. More recently, the term has been appropriated in business discourses, environmental ethics, and even in world health policy. In this project, I appropriate it for an educational discourse because it opens up a language for discussing ethics, authority, responsibility, and care giving (among other ideas).

In reconsidering the literal definition of stewardship, how might conceptualizing the teacher in the role of a steward offer a useful alternative to the discourses of critical pedagogies? We can replace several words from the *OED* definition with educational words. Is it useful to think of the teacher as an "educator who controls the educative affairs of a classroom, supervising the service of the curriculum, directing the students, and regulating learning experiences"? Certainly, the terms employed by the *OED* in its definition of a steward-- "controls," "supervising," "directing," and "regulating"-- are loaded to some degree in the context of any educational philosophies that aim to resist banking approaches to learning. However, educators conscious of the various ongoing interactions in a classroom can probably admit that these terms do, in fact, present themselves in classroom dynamics, in both positive and negative instances. What is important to note in terms of this definition is that the steward does not control, supervise, direct, or regulate for his or her own gain; rather, the steward is ultimately responsible to the "landowner." The obvious question then becomes, if we are to consider teachers as

stewards, who functions in the role of landowner? I would argue that this role functions at multiple levels, that teachers are responsible to many landowners--their institutions, the communities in which they teach, the nation and democracy at large, their own ethical and moral convictions, and their abilities and education. In this context, stewardship shapes responsibility through its call to interrogate classroom practices to determine the ways in which they enable or restrain students from participating in expression and dialogue in any of the multiple-levels of community, classroom, institution, personal convictions, or nation. Thus, drawing on the metaphor of steward emphasizes the responsibility of a teacher to others while at the same time it acknowledging the teacher's own interests and authority in the classroom. Critical discourses, on the other hand, have a tendency to mask the unequal power relationships at play in any classroom through the language surrounding terms like "empowerment."

Second, authority is reframed through stewardship in the sense that it is not an assumed right of the teacher, but instead is granted to the teacher-steward by multiple bodies including institutions, communities, and curricula. Again, this understanding holds the teacher-steward responsible for the exercise of authority and power while also acknowledging that the teacher is also subject to the same larger authorities as the students. With this consideration in mind, the empowerment central to critical pedagogies becomes problematic because the teacher-steward does not have in his or her hands the "power" to empower students as the discourse so often suggests. Gore uses Foucault's articulation of power to argue that teachers do not necessarily empower students so much as they "help others to exercise power." Foucault's discussion of the ways in which power is exercised, not held, is worth quoting at length:

> Power must be analysed as something which circulates, or rather as
> something which only functions in the form of a chain. It is never localised
> here or there, never in anybody's hands, never appropriated as a commodity
> or piece of wealth. Power is employed and exercised through a net-like

> organisation. And not only do individuals circulate between its threads;
> they are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising
> this power. They are not only its inert or consenting target. They are
> always also the elements of its articulation. In other words, individuals are
> the vehicles of power, not its points of application. (*Power/Knowledge* 98)

Teacher-stewards, then, are not the dispensers of power, but "vehicles of power" in the same sense as their students are. However, as stewards they have the ability to assist students to also become "vehicles of power," not by empowering students but by helping students to develop the tools of empowerment that they already own.

Third, stewardship reconstructs traditional patriarchal structures in the classroom. Ideally, the idea of steward involves humility that comes from the conviction that one's own interests are not the highest interests at stake in any given situation. (I do not mean to suggest that a teacher can dissociate himself or herself completely from self-interest or that we should not also bring self-interest into the discussion of pedagogy.) In an article discussing stewardship and the environment, Jennifer Welchman describes stewardship as "a social role individuals adopt toward some other, a role sustained over time. To be a steward is to devote a substantial percentage of one's thoughts and efforts to maintaining or enhancing the condition of some thing(s) or person(s), not primarily for the steward's own sake" (415). Again, the construction of teacher as steward changes the ways in which we are able to talk about power and authority in the classroom, issues central to pedagogical theory. Peter Block, well-known for articulating stewardship as a management style in the business world, writes that "Stewardship is the choice for service. We serve best through partnership, rather than patriarchy" and that "It's [stewardship is] a willingness to act without needing to control those around us" (qtd. in Laabs 27). To see teachers as stewards, who are in the traditional sense also servants of a landowner, reverses the traditional patriarchal structure of the classroom because a teacher *chooses* to serve the students while patriarchal structures demand service *from* the students. At the

same time, naming the teacher as steward acknowledges that teacher and students are not, and possibly never can be, on completely equal footing in a classroom.

Fourth, the articulation of a stewardship principle in the context of environmental movements reveals two more spaces in which this term opens possibilities for pedagogy. The environmental movement highlights motivations for stewardship that are rooted in caring deeply about the earth's future and the conviction that its general future directly affects our personal future. Furthermore, environmental stewardship works to put forth concrete, practical actions that concerned citizens can utilize in their own efforts to be better stewards of resources. I argue that both the motivations and practical actions that are at stake in environmental stewardship also have a stake in a pedagogy of stewardship. This pedagogy recognizes the importance of caring, collective futures, and the interaction between practical actions and theoretical principles in learning for both teachers and students.

Finally, a pedagogy of stewardship frames the questions critical pedagogy asks in a significantly different manner. Gore argues that critical pedagogies too often assume "we *can* do for you" rather than asking "what *can* we do for you?" (61). In a pedagogy of stewardship, the teacher-steward asks the second question at a variety of levels--of students, of institutions, of communities, of democracy, and of the values such as justice and freedom that comprise their own ethical and moral subjectivities. Getting to the point of framing the "empowerment" question differently requires that we seek "ways to exercise power toward the fulfillment of our espoused aims, ways that include humility, skepticism, and self-criticism" (Gore 63). For Nicki Verploegen Vandergrift stewardship is motivated by "reverence rather than guilt" and its development is promoted through "a disposition of awe, renewal through contemplation, unitive sensitivity and humility" (Abstract). The values outlined by Gore and Vandergrift provide an alternative model to the rationalistic, theoretical, and self-assured proclamations currently constructed in the

discourses of critical pedagogy and also form the basis of the theoretical principles that I will outline briefly next (and in more detail in Chapter 2).

Pedagogical Principles

For the scope and purpose of this project, I articulate theoretical principles that might compose a pedagogy of stewardship specifically concerned with teaching literature. However, these principles alone are not sufficient for contributing meaningfully to a pedagogical discourse and for fulfilling the values of stewardship unless they are also intimately tied to the practice of teaching literature. To this end, I "apply" these principles to two case studies, the play *Macbeth* and the novel *Fools Crow*. The aim of this practice-oriented application will be to emphasize that the process of teaching and its interaction with theory is equally as important as the texts that make up a syllabus. In other words, conversations about pedagogical theory should also be inherently conversations about practice (the "action" discussed earlier in regards to environmental stewardship). In the negotiation between the theory and practice in the classroom we can begin to engage education most meaningfully for our students and ourselves. To be clear, the pedagogy and practice outlined here are not meant to become a prescription for all times and all places but rather an exploration of what pedagogy and practice framed by stewardship might offer a literature classroom.

By bringing theory into direct relationship with classroom practices and student experiences, this project begins to conceptualize a language about teaching that is both scholarly and tied to practice. While secondary education tends to place too much emphasis on practice and the methods of teaching, post-secondary education frequently prioritizes discussions of theory over those on practice. Therefore, I envision that this project could be useful for both those who teach advanced grades in secondary schools (i.e. 11th or 12th grade) and for those who teach in institutions of higher education.

My earlier discussion, following the lead of Gore and Ellsworth, illustrated how the discourse inherent to critical pedagogies limits their applicability to specific material and historical contexts. The attention to and awareness of discourse modeled by Gore and Ellsworth comprises the first pedagogical principle for a pedagogy of stewardship. Part of the process for becoming aware of subjectivities and agency involves examining discourse and discursive practices, from those that students encounter in their readings to those that construct their schooling. Language shapes subjectivities in subtle yet pervasive ways; exploring how it constrains experiences and ideologies offers possibility for the development of a deeper understanding of all the "texts" (including literature) that we encounter in our lives. In addition, in order for students to answer our question "what *can* we do for you?" they may need to first come to a fuller comprehension of the ways in which their identities are being constructed (often without their "consent") by the discourses that surround them in the media, schools, at home, and at work.

Second, one of the means through which we examine discourse, as well as another central tenet for this pedagogy, is engagement with theory in relation to practice for both teachers and students. Students' educational paths are usually filled with an abundance of activity but contain little in the way of theoretical frameworks used to ask critical questions of those educational activities. Teachers, on the other hand, often engage with theory and practice, but frequently they exist in separate spheres. Both teachers and students can benefit from a view of theory and practice that specifically concerns itself with how one affects the other. For students, theory initially provides tools for the development of critical thought. Later, or simultaneously, students begin to apply this critical thought to the practices of their everyday lives in and beyond the classroom. Furthermore, theory helps teachers and students to construct new understandings of knowledge they may already have and also to conceive and imagine new knowledges. In order to avoid including theory as just another type of canonical text, the pedagogical

reasoning for theory should be clearly linked with practice, just as practice should be clearly tied to theory. Through this dialectical relationship, theory and practice ideally complicate one another as the theoretician reconsiders his or her theory after engaging it with practice and the practitioner reconsiders his or her practice through engagement with theory. The goal here is for both teachers and students to begin seeing themselves as practitioner-theorists. Those who have the tools to begin articulating their own subjectivities, interests, and desires in the context of their individual situations can enact these articulations.

The final principle in this pedagogy aims to theorize both the role of and a place for emotions and subjective knowledge in the classroom. Theorizing pedagogy in the context of stewardship opens a space for this because stewardship concerns itself with the actions that result from caring deeply about a place, issue, or cause. Because of stewards' emotional investments, they work to preserve, strengthen, enrich, or enable particular locations, institutions, values, and so on. Stewardship, in either the religious, environmental, business, or pedagogical sense, flows from a reservoir of personal beliefs, convictions, values and emotions, none of which currently have much of a discursive space in the academy outside of feminist discourses. Therefore, arguing that emotion does have a place in scholarly theory and writing challenges the prioritizing of objective discourses over subjective discourses. bell hooks notes that the classroom is generally seen as a place for the public self and that we expect the private self, for both teachers and students, to remain outside of it. Bringing the private self to the classroom, however, builds a space in the classroom to more fully answer humanity's lived experiences. Ultimately, it is more stewardly to incorporate both intellect and emotion in our classrooms (not that they are separate entities entirely). To neglect to do so fails to engage one of most important resources that teacher-stewards are entrusted with: the student as a human being filled with loves, hates, frustrations, stories and ideas.

And yet, even the language we have at hand constrains to some degree our ability to theorize this space in the classroom. Words like "emotion" and "feeling" are vague and associated primarily with the individual. However, beginning to struggle with this language will, I believe, lead to other equally critical questions about "emotions" and teaching. If we can't incorporate words like "love" "erotics" or "friendship" into theory and/or academic discourse, what does this reveal about the ways in which we construct ourselves (and by default our students)? How can teachers talk about their love for students, texts, and teaching and what would be the implications of this for learning? How can acknowledging desire help students and teachers understand their subjectivities? How could it prove destructive for teachers or students? How will deconstructing the myth of objective knowledge and objective teaching open a space where students develop more agency in their learning and knowledge production? By foregrounding emotion in a pedagogical theory, I hope to engage with these questions and others.

Implications

Perhaps one of the reasons that teachers have been reluctant to bring their private selves to the classroom is their concern about what this would do to their Authority. While authoritarian models of teaching have no place in a pedagogy aiming to develop student agency and critical, self-reflective thought, this pedagogy does not intend to eliminate the idea that the teacher can function as an authority in the classroom (as the discussion of teacher as steward aimed to show). For example, a teacher's education and experience have contributed to expertise that is useful for students and that makes them authority within their subject matter. Furthermore, especially in the secondary classroom, the teacher needs to accept the role of the authority figure simply as a result of how the educational system is structured and in order to manage the everyday details of the classroom. For instance, grading, by its nature, places the teacher in a position of

authority. We often ignore how these more mundane details also construct our own identities and our students' identities in the classroom. Acknowledging material limitations of the classroom situation and then working through the tension that results when they are compared to more theoretical principles is a necessary part of engaging both theory and practice in scholarly discussion.

Just as a pedagogy of stewardship impacts the role of teacher, it also challenges canons, the status of texts, and the structure and system of education. The case studies as they develop in this project should begin to address the implications of the pedagogy for texts, teachers, curricula, and canons. However, while I was confronted with the need to make direct challenges to structures that limit student and teacher engagement in education and also to offer suggestions on a larger scale within the system of education, I was also confronted with the need to theorize a pedagogy that might be effective within the structure and realities of education as they exist now. In the end, I decided the latter direction would be a more meaningful project for myself (and I hope others); accordingly, I focused the pedagogical principles to a classroom level.

If critical pedagogies, a school of thought concerned with the moral and political implications of practices, as they actually interact with specific classroom contexts, have a tendency ultimately to limit the space where students (and teachers) encounter critical consciousness and empowerment, what are the chances that all discussions of pedagogy will have similar effects? Any pedagogy must be aware of and leave space for the ways in which interaction with practice complicates, questions, and possibly leads to the revision of theoretical stances. Indeed, perhaps it is most useful to consider any pedagogical theory as constantly shifting, a work in flux, as the particulars of students, institutional structures, and the instructor's subjectivities also shift and evade efforts of naming and codifying. The more I involve myself in pedagogy, the more it complicates itself as it deals with the intersections of student, teacher, classroom, curriculum, texts, and

institutions. Both broad theoretical statements and prescriptive methods erase these intersections. Perhaps the academy's disdain for discussing issues of pedagogy also stems in part from these complex intersections. Is it simply easier to ignore how exploring pedagogy ultimately forces us to ask questions about ourselves, the system in which we work, our relationships with students, and the students who fill our classrooms each day?

As someone who considers herself a teacher before an academic, I am more than fascinated by these questions and complications; they haunt me after almost every class that I teach. Barbara Christian once wrote, "But what I write and how I write is done in order to save my own life" (2265). I might paraphrase her statement as "But what I *teach* and how I *teach* is done in order to save my own life." It saves my life because teaching constantly asks me to be self-reflective while at the same time it confronts me with questions about who I am in relation to other people and who I am in relation to communities and the society at large. It asks questions about the texts I love, questions about the institutions in which I teach, and questions about my complicity and responsibility at all these levels. For these reasons, I use this project to begin exploring possible answers to these questions--questions in which I am deeply invested, and I believe others are as well.

CHAPTER 2

PEDAGOGICAL PRINCIPLES

Myth and (in) Education

"Myth does not deny things, on the contrary, its function is to talk about them; simply, it purifies them, it makes them innocent, it gives them a natural and eternal justification, it gives them a clarity which is not that of an explanation but that of a statement of fact. [. . .] In passing from history to nature, myth acts economically: it abolishes the complexity of human acts, it gives them the simplicity of essences, it does away with all dialectics..."

*   --Roland Barthes, "Myth Today" (117)*

Education, perhaps more than any social institution, is influenced by a number of myths: "Knowledge is rational and objective." "Emotion distorts objectivity and rationality and thus does not have a place in the classroom." "Schools are politically neutral social institutions." "Multi-culturalism threatens the quality of education." "Textbooks and curriculum present objective and value-free knowledge." "Education itself is the great equalizer, blind to race, sex, class, etc."

Educators, perhaps more than any professionals, have the power to "de-mythicize"[2] what they do by challenging the "naturalized" methods, discourses, and practices that make up education by re-establishing complexity and dialectics in their work. Many educators are engaged in this work at present. For example, John Smyth and Geoffrey Shacklock look at how teaching has been shaped by economic discourses arguing for an examination of schooling that reads its "ideological and economic agenda" (28). Henry Giroux has written extensively on politicizing teaching and pedagogy, while feminist scholars question the natural and eternal justification of masculine and Western ways of knowing, thinking, and writing in education. These writers and others construct

lenses through which we can re-examine educational practices and discourses at large. They show us how seemingly benign and taken-for-granted discourses and practices can mask ideological and political agendas. Pedagogical theory can also be used as a tool for examining the myths that exist in our classrooms because theorizing pedagogy reveals the complexity and complications that exist beneath the surface of everyday classroom life. By confronting the contextual specifics of a classroom, the relationship between theory and practice, and the interplay of discourse and practice, we begin the process of de-mythicizing education for ourselves, for our students, and for the communities in which we work.

In the following sections I explore three principles for a pedagogy of stewardship: I examine the possibilities for the classroom of bringing attention to discourse, of developing a dialectical relationship between theory and practice, and of reconsidering the place of emotions in education. These contribute to the task of examining myths at play in the classroom because they interrogate three locations in the English discipline where exposing the complexity of pedagogical acts reveals how various myths limit educational possibilities for our students. Thus, the process of de-mythicizing creates choices for teachers and students where we can become more aware of the consequences of our actions. To be clear, these principles are not meant to be exhaustive, but rather they are three that I consider to be foundational for developing teaching practices and theories in the literature classroom that include the values of stewardship.

Discourse and Discursive Practices

"The true mirror of our discourse is the course of our lives."
--Montaigne, "Of the Education of Children"

Educators, particularly those who speak of empowering their students and/or those, like myself, who wish to develop pedagogical practices that provide students with an education that encourages them to act, take responsibility in their learning, and participate fully in their communities, can look to Michel Foucault's theories on discourse and power for insight. His theories suggest that one cannot address the practices and power relations in a classroom without also examining the discourse and discursive practices that characterize it. Foucault articulates how the discourses of a community and the practices of that community are intimately related: "Discursive practices are not purely and simply ways of producing discourse. They are embedded in technical processes, in institutions, in patterns for general behavior, in forms for transmission and diffusion, and in pedagogical forms which, at once, impose and maintain them" (*Language* 200). Discourse, in this sense, while inclusive of language, also concerns broader practices in a wide range of social institutions. Furthermore, Foucault's writings describe the ways that "relations of power cannot themselves be established, consolidated nor implemented without the production, accumulation, circulation and functioning of a discourse" (*Power* 93). His work then points to the ways in which practice, discourse, and power implicate one another and intertwine together.

An awareness of how discourse functions to shape our practices and our subjectivity is a central part of having power to make choices that build up and restore full humanity and diversity in our communities rather than destroying them. Furthermore, stewards recognize their position as one that does not hold *ultimate* power, while also

recognizing that they do have *some* power to act in the interest of a larger goal. For example, in the Christian environmental movement, stewardship implies having power and responsibility to make choices that affect the environment and communities positively, while also recognizing that no one person or group has the power to control the ecological fate of the planet. Understanding these parameters leads neither to a distorted view of power, a false optimism in the power of the individual, nor a pessimistic belief that there is no action anyone can take to make a difference. Teachers who can develop this type of critical consciousness in their own practices and theoretical positions will then also help to develop it in their students. In this way, teachers and students both may begin making stewardly choices involving discourse, practices, and power.

Indeed, if educators remain unconscious with regards to the power relations contained in the dominant discourses that construct education, their discipline, and even their own values and language, they risk becoming accomplices in the reproduction of existing societal class, race, and gender discrimination (O'Loughlin 337). Suzanne Clark writes that "Ideology works not as the private agendas of individuals but as a kind of unconscious within the very forms of communication, and to ignore the unconsciousness of that operation is to leave us at its mercy" (105). Thus, the unreflective practitioner of a discourse risks unconsciously taking on a specific world view, regardless of whether he or she ethically or morally agrees with it. However, examining discourse develops explicit consciousness about practices, institutions, and society, thereby allowing us to resist divisive processes and destructive ideologies. This process of de-naturalizing practice, language, and social institutions develops what Freire termed *concientização*, or critical consciousness--being aware of one's subjectivity while also understanding that subjectivity does not necessarily involve being subject to societal structures, powers, institutions, and discourses that helped to shape it. In other words, it is important to recognize that subjects are also agents. When students and teachers develop critical consciousness, in

part through discursive examination, they are better able to meet the goals like action and participation because of the emphasis on understanding that being a subject also implies being an agent in our own contexts.

In order to meet these goals, identifying hegemonic discourses, in some cases, presents no problem, nor does naming the ways in which they can oppress. For example, one does not have to look hard for evidence supporting the work of Smyth and Shacklock (mentioned previously). They examine the economic discourses shaping education and their potential harms (i.e. the discourse surrounding standards and testing and the discourse surrounding university administration). However, an example of a less apparent, and perhaps equally problematic, discourse that shapes educational practice stems from Piagetian developmental psychology. While this discourse acknowledges the role an individual plays in constructing his or her knowledge, it fails to take into account the social nature of that knowledge construction. In general, it views students in terms of innate, individualized, and cognitive terms that tend to ignore social and economic factors.[3] Both of these examples, the former, well-known and debated, and the latter, relatively insidious, compose only a small sample of the numerous discourses that affect educational practices. Importantly, they also illustrate that as we begin to understand how discourse functions at both visible and subtle levels, we glimpse the complexity of the language and practices with which we engage. We see that the choices we make are never entirely free of the competing ideologies inherent in discourse. Therefore, when I suggest using stewardship as a framework for pedagogy, I want to be careful about contributing to a myth that constructs pedagogical choices along a continuum of binary oppositions-- good/evil, black/white, empowering/disempowering, oppressive/liberating--because the choices are rarely that clear cut. However, I do contend that the paradigm of stewardship can serve as a tool for examining and evaluating the complexities of discourse and

discursive practices so that we and our students might make choices that build just relationships.

In order to perform these decisions with the integrity that stewardship demands, we must be as aware as possible of the implications of these choices. What is at stake in discourse is a variety of ideologies that are engaged in a struggle to give meaning to social institutions as well as to "offer the individual a range of modes of subjectivity" (Weedon 179, 181). In considering the two examples named above, we see how both discourses, the one relying on economic values as well as the one rooted in developmental psychology, seek to represent education and position an individual in specific ways. Through making concerted efforts to bring the subtle struggles for position that occur in discourse out into the open, we are freer to make choices that reflect our values and ethical stances.

The literature classroom in particular provides a useful arena for exploring discourse as contested terrain. Novels, non-fiction, short stories, journals, and all the texts we study can be excellent examples of the ways in which discourse contributes to the construction of subjectivity, politics, social institutions, and so forth. In addition, it may be easier to first identify, for example, how a character is being defined and shaped by the discourse that surrounds him or her before bringing the same lens to our own identities and specific historical and cultural contexts. Once educators and students begin to conceptualize discourse as a site of contested terrain, why examining discourse in the classroom and making a discursive choice is so important becomes more clear--that is, we are choosing a subjectivity, a political interest, a representation of an institution, and so on.

Determining the range of meanings and ideologies at play in any text or in our own world is difficult, as I pointed out earlier, because hegemonic, authoritative discourses present themselves as if they were unitary and monologic; in other words, they construct a

myth that seeks to disguise the plurality of meanings as well as the availability of choice in any given utterance. Refuting this myth is important for teachers and students because, once again, doing so opens the possibilities of becoming stewards of language through the decisions we make. In order to deconstruct this particular myth, I will rely on the work of M.M. Bakhtin concerning the discourse of the novel as he theorizes heterglossia and dialogism.

Bakhtin writes that "a unitary language is not something given but is always in essence posited--and at every moment of its linguistic life opposed to the realities of heteroglossia" (270). The realities of heteroglossia include the condition of language where at any time or place a set of conditions "will insure that a word uttered in that place and at that time will have a meaning different than it would have under any other conditions" (Bakhtin 428). While authoritative discourses of school, church, and politics present themselves as unitary and monologic (often convincingly), according to Bakhtin, because of heteroglossia, this monologism is a purely theoretical construct. The unitary language seeks to enact ideological unification and centralization but then confronts the realities of dialogized heterglossia and splinters. Therefore, because social and historical contexts create "a multitude of concrete worlds, a multitude of bounded verbal-ideological and social belief systems," language is never unitary (288).

If heteroglossia and dialogism[4] characterize discourse, then as users of discourse become aware of the multiple ideologies and belief systems at play in language, they face the prospect of having to choose. As Bakhtin words this condition, "Consciousness finds itself inevitably facing the necessity *having to choose a language*. With each literary-verbal performance, consciousness must actively orient itself amidst heteroglossia, it must move and occupy a position for itself within it, it chooses, in other words, a 'language'" (295). For instance, one might consider a teacher occupying a conscious position by choosing to resist the highly individualized and scientific discourse of developmental

psychology in favor of social-constructionist language in describing his or her students and classroom learning environment.[5] Ultimately, in these choices we and our students become "vehicles of power," and we share an opportunity to use language in stewardly ways that enrich and restore that which we care about--our communities, our peers, our students, our subject matter, or our relationships.

Jon Klancher's considerations of Bakhtin's rhetoric in the classroom add additional insights into why discourse should be a central concern in a pedagogical theory. Specifically, in choosing a language, students and teachers alike come to realize that the choices we make concerning discourse inherently involve "self," but "self" as situated within the context of social languages. According to Klancher:

> He or she can only adopt a language that others already share, making a choice that is at once stylistic and ideological. To be 'social' is not to don a range of masks or impersonate a repertoire of roles, but to declare oneself situated among the existing languages of heteroglossia. This choice means becoming aware of the ideological commitments signified by the various styles that circulate among us. It also means giving up the illusion [. . .] that the reader/writer's 'self' can be defined or held apart from the conflict of social languages that constitute our individually expressed words" (91).

In short, for Bakhtin, having to choose a language refutes the myth of individual autonomy; the speaker realizes that his or her participation in social contexts, in communities, is part of language use. In selecting from the plurality of discourses (not necessarily the same discourse all the time), the individual joins a community of users of that discourse.

In my experiences, one of the more deeply held myths that high school students and first year college students profess involves their "true" selves. Many students write and talk about their "true" selves in terms of fixed, natural, inherent identities without taking into consideration the ways their "true" selves may have been shaped by class, family, race, gender, sexuality, education, friends, and so forth. As Klancher's interpretation of Bakhtin reveals, even choosing a social language illustrates the