from society, but rather constitute individuals in their identities and capacities" (27).

Young forwards a conception of justice that moves from a model of distribution to one that focuses on democratic participation, deliberation, and decision making. One consequence is that in Young's model "the concept of justice coincides with the concept of the political" (34). Young's conception of justice is thus based on two values that provide for conditions that allow individuals to engage in activities that make for a just society: "(1) developing and exercising one's capacities and expressing one's experience . . . and (2) participating in determining one's actions and the conditions of one's action" (37). The two, Young acknowledges, do not grow out of human nature, nor are they universal truths.

They are instead assumptions based on the democratic notion that all persons are of equal moral worth. In other words, they are grounded in a conception of human nature necessary for democracy, not foundational grounds. Injustice, then, corresponds to two social conditions: "oppression, the institutional constraint on self-development, and domination, the institutional constraint on self-determination" (37). Freedom from oppression involves the removal of institutional limits on engaging in learning, satisfying skills, play, and communication. Freedom from domination means the opportunity to engage in action and the conditions that make for action. Most important, "thorough social and political democracy is the opposite of domination" (38).

This postmodern conception of justice leads to a definition of democracy based on the recognition of difference. The idea of impartiality is immediately abandoned. In other words, there are no disinterested observers who can arrive at objective decisions in matters of public policy. Instead, democracy requires "real participatory structures in which actual people, with their geographical, ethnic, gender, and occupational differences, assert their perspectives on social issues within institutions that encourage the representation of their distinct voices" (116). Traditional notions of civic discourse have constructed fictional political agents who leave behind their differences to assume a persona that is rational and universal in thought and language. In a postmodern world, no such subject exists.

Democracy, then, becomes radically participatory, as the heterogeneous voices that constitute any historical moment are allowed a hearing: "All persons should have the right and opportunity to participate in the deliberation and decision making of the institutions to which

their actions contribute or which directly affect their actions" (91). For Young, these democratic sites go beyond government institutions to include "production and service enterprises, universities, and voluntary organizations" (91). Decision making is here based on the traditional social contract theory of collective activity: "If all persons are of equal moral worth, and no one by nature has greater capacity for reason or moral sense, then people ought to decide collectively for themselves the goals and rules that will guide their action" (91). This participation ensures that the interests and needs of the heterogeneous groups competing for a hearing at any moment will be taken into account in arriving at decisions: "In the absence of a philosopher-king with access to transcendent normative verities, the only ground for a claim that a policy or decision is just is that it has been arrived at by a public which has truly promoted the free expression of all needs and points of view" (92-93). As for the protection of minority interests, Young invokes the primacy of certain constitutional rights: "democracy must indeed always be constitutional: the rules of the game must not change with each majority's whim, but rather must be laid down as constraints on deliberations and outcomes, and must be relatively immune to change" (93-94). These rights must cover economic, political, and civic domains. Finally, this conception of democracy is based on a politics of deliberatory discourse in which rhetoric is at the center of public life. As Young indicates in criticizing the exclusive emphasis on rational discourse in Habermas's theory of communicative action, deliberation must also include "the metaphorical, rhetorical, playful, embodied aspects of speech that are an important aspect of its communicative effect" (118).

The Democratic Classroom

The classroom in which writing and reading are seen from this perspective is preeminently participatory and democratic. It is, of course, disconcerting that a nation so justifiably proud of its democratic and activist legacy is currently so reluctant to extend the fruits of this legacy to its schools. For example, conspicuously lacking in the report of the 1989 governors' summit on education was any mention of citizenship preparation. A literacy that is without this commitment to active participation in decision making in the public sphere, however, cannot possibly serve the interests of egalitarian political arrangements. For democracy to function (as we are now reminded in eastern Europe),

citizens must actively engage in public debate, applying reading and writing practices in the service of articulating their positions and their critiques of the positions of others. To have citizens who are unable to write and read for the public forum thus defeats the central purpose of the notion of democracy we have just examined: to ensure that all interests are heard before a communal decision is made.

Placing Freire within a postmodern frame enables us to relate this silencing of citizens through literacy education to the formation of subjects as agents. Without language to name our experience, we inevitably become instruments of the language of others. As I am authorized through active literacy to name the world as I experience it—not as I am told by others I should be experiencing it—I become capable of taking action and assuming control of my environment. In more direct terms, literacy enables the individual to understand that the conditions of experience are made by human agents and thus can be remade by human agents. Furthermore, this making and remaking take place in communities, in social collections. The lessons of postmodern difference remind us, however, that the individual must never be sacrificed to any group-enforced norm. All voices must be heard and considered in taking action; the worth of the individual must never be compromised.

In teaching people to write and read, we are thus teaching them a way of experiencing the world. This realization requires that the writing classroom be dialogic. Only through articulating the disparate positions held by members of the class can different ways of understanding the world and acting in it be discovered. This is important whether students are studying text interpretation or production. As I have already indicated, all responses to texts are engaged in production and critique. Differences among students organize themselves around class, race, gender, age, and other divisions, and it is the responsibility of the teacher to make certain that these differences are enunciated and examined. At the same time, those of us who have experienced the dialogic classroom know how reluctant many students are to engage in public debate. Their years of enduring the banking model of education, the model of teacher as giver of knowledge and student as passive receiver, have taken their toll. Many would rather sit quietly and take the notes that they will later gladly reproduce for an exam. When pressed to active dialogue, they may deny the obvious social and political conflicts they enact and witness daily. For example, the majority of male students I have encountered at Purdue have in our first discussions assured me that race and gender inequalities no longer exist in the United States and simply do not merit further discussion. Thus, the works of Kate Chopin or Virginia Woolf, for example, are mere historical curiosities of no contemporary relevance. Any inequalities that do remain, they insist, are only apparent injustices, since they are the result of inherent and thus unavoidable features of human nature (women are weaker and more emotional than men, for example) or are the product of individual failure (the "glass ceiling" that is supposed to prevent women from rising in the corporate world is an illusion fabricated by women who have not worked hard enough).

It is at the moment of denial that the role of the teacher as problem poser is crucial, providing methods for questioning that locate the points of conflict and contradiction. These methods most often require a focus on the language students invoke in responding to their experience. The teacher attempts to supply students with heuristic strategies for decoding their characteristic ways of representing the world. Here we see why the literacy teacher, the expert in language, is at the center of education in a democratic society (and not just because English studies has historically been used in U.S. schools to reinforce hegemonic ideological positions). The questions the teacher poses are designed to reveal the contradictions and conflicts inscribed in the very language of the students' thoughts and utterances. The teacher's understanding of structuralist and poststructuralist assertions about the operations of language in forming consciousness here comes to the fore. At the minimum, this involves an examination of the various hierarchical binary oppositions on which the key terms in any discourse are based, the various connotative levels on which these terms function, and the larger narrative patterns of which the terms form a part. The movement is thus from the concrete and specific conditions of the student's experience to the larger economic, social, political, and cultural systems with which these conditions coalesce. A student's attitude toward women in the workplace, for example, is often a part of a larger conceptual formulation regarding reproductive responsibilities, the family, work in the community, and the realities of the economic conditions that govern our lives.

The relation between the teacher and students is crucial at this point. Although the classroom is to be democratic and participatory, this does not mean that the teacher surrenders all authority. As Freire points out, the authority of the teacher is never denied. On the other hand, it should never be exercised so that it destroys the student's

freedom to critique. The teacher must resist the obvious institutional constraints that in the typical college classroom make the teacher the center of knowledge and power and deny the student's active role in meaning formation. In a participatory classroom, the teacher shares the right to dialogue while never relinquishing the authority to set certain agendas for class activities. Certain matters are always debatable—for example, all positions on issues, whether the teacher's or students'—but certain others are not—the participatory and dialogic format, the search for contradictions, the analysis of codes. The teacher must display neither complete passivity nor complete dominance in discussion. From my experience in such classrooms, I know that the successful use of the problem posing and dialogic method usually leads to increasing participation by students. By the middle of the course, students are often themselves problematizing the assertions of their peers, the teacher becoming only one of many problem posers in the classroom.

I will not deny that my students have demonstrated resistance of various kinds, particularly in introductory composition classes. C. H. Knoblauch (1991, "Critical Teaching and Dominant Culture"), Cecilia Rodriguez Milanes (1991), and Dale Bauer (1990), among others, have reported similar experiences. What Ira Shor calls "desocializing students," that is, making them conscious of the concealed conflicts in their language, thought, and behavior, is never pursued without some discomfort. This resistance has as often taken the form of passivity as it has active and open opposition to locating dissonance in our coded responses to such areas of discussion as schooling, work, play, individuality, and their relation to class, race, and gender formations. Working together, my colleagues (primarily graduate students) and I have developed devices for dealing with this resistance. One of the most effective in the first-year composition course is to explain at the outset that the class will involve writing about the contradictions in our cultural codes. Since this will require that students participate in disagreement and conflict in open, free, and democratic dialogue, the students are asked to draw up a set of rules to govern members in their relations to each other. These rules are then published. The device has had the salutary effect of including students in the operation of the class from the start, thus averting passivity as well as inappropriate reactions. It also acts as a statement of rights to protect minority positions.

The success of the kind of classroom I am recommending depends on teachers knowing their students. The teacher must understand the unique economic, social, and cultural conditions of his or her students to arrive at the appropriate forms and contents that dialogue can assume. Extensive knowledge about the students' backgrounds enables sound planning about the topics, questions, and comments that are most likely to set a meaningful encounter in motion. Teachers must also be keenly aware of their own positions in the social relations of the classroom. The twenty-five-year-old African American female graduate student will have to develop strategies for interacting with students different from those needed by the fifty-year-old white female full professor. Indeed, if either attempts to emulate the other, failed classroom relations and an unsuccessful learning experience are almost certain to follow. The aim of the course remains the same in all situations: to enable students to become active, critical agents of their experience rather than passive victims of cultural codes. The "tactics," to use Freire's term, are always open to change. The final purpose of the course is to encourage citizens who are actively literate, that is, critical agents of change who are socially and politically engaged—in this way realizing some of the highest democratic ideals.

Reading and Writing for Critical Literacy

English studies refigured along the postmodern lines of social-epistemic rhetoric in the service of critical literacy would take the examination and teaching of reading and writing practices as its province. Rather than organizing its activities around the preservation and maintenance of a sacred canon of literary texts, it would focus on the production, distribution, exchange, and reception of textuality, in general and in specific cases, both in the past and present. English studies would thus explore the role of signifying practices in the ongoing life of societies—stated more specifically, in their relations to economic, social, political, and cultural arrangements. These signifying practices would be regarded in their concrete relations to subject formation, to the shaping of consciousness in lived experience. Here, once again, the subject is not the sovereign and free agent of traditional literary studies. Instead, the subject is the point of convergence of conflicted discourses—the product of discourse rather than the unencumbered initiator of it. English studies would thus examine the textual practices of reading and writing to explore their roles in consciousness forma-

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