Legends of the Center: System, Self, and Linguistic Consciousness

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Abstract

Commentators on language standardization, including Bourdieu and Bakhtin, provide various perspectives on what this chapter calls *modern linguistic consciousness*: speakers' awareness of their own speech in relation to others' and in relation to the operation of centralizing *system*. In this chapter, these formulations are used to analyze interview data collected from readers and writers at a South Asian university—and, in turn, these data elaborate the picture of modern linguistic consciousness. Readers and writers can pick out *self* amidst the words of others, and in the presence of centralizing mandates; they can position themselves in working spaces adjacent to *system*, and, while recognizing speech norms, imagine themselves as not occupying those norms. Linguistic consciousness can be detected in the expression of *rules*—but rules themselves turn out to be complex spaces hosting diverse possibilities. Moreover, modern systems, in managing the speech of populations, may not always operate exclusively in the service of the centre.

Modernity has struggled to locate system in diversity, and then self in system. Reasoning about language has hosted many episodes of the struggle, as the normative face of speech confronts the private one—the rise, decline, and residual of structuralist explanations of language being the commanding example.

In the aftermath of structuralism's ascendancy, the search for a modern conception of language goes on in many domains, for questions persist about the nature of the speaker's participation in the system. New-rhetorical genre theory has de-centered attention by disregarding universal measures of communicative effectiveness and focusing instead on local contexts for expression, and the regularities in situation, form, and content (or "symbolized experience" (Burke, quoted in C. Miller, 1984, p. 160) which develop over accumulating instances. These regularities are visible in textual outcomes, but, more important for this discussion, they are apprehended in language-users' *intersubjective consciousness*: speakers' and listeners' not only recognize typical situations but also recognize one another's mutual awareness. If we look for *self* in this model of individuals' participation in a system, we find it in speakers' identification with the roles and motives available in the speech situation, and performance of these roles and experience of these motives. If we want to add *agency* to conceptions of self, we find it in the contingencies of situation: typifiable but also historical, contexts change—at least partly in response to individual instances of participation. This view of self and agency comes at some cost to ideals of originality and self-expression, but also with some profit to ideals of the sociality of language.

In the genre-theoretical model, consciousness is a play of intersubjectivity—and it is also structured for tacitness. Intersubjective recognitions go on at levels not entirely available for explicit expression. Tacitness explains discrepancies between what language-users do and what they say about what they do, and explains the inadequacy of rule-giving and direct instruction in speakers' learning of a genre new to them. In this chapter, I look again at what people say they are doing, but with a different or complementary interpretation of what has been taken to be discrepant: the excess, the seemingly overgeneralized surplus as language-users give an account of themselves and of others.[1] In this chapter, I try the proposal that some of what speakers and writers, listeners and readers say about language is also an expression of a broader domain of linguistic consciousness, and, further, that it is an indication of modernity itself: a sign of center and system, and self in relation to those. While later sections of this chapter silently consult new-rhetorical genre theory, I mainly intend to resume linguistic explanations of speaker and system, for these continue, and they go beyond the structuralist analysis of competence which formerly attached speakers to their language. Thereby, they uncover areas of sociality and planes of regularity which genre theory, given its focus on the contingencies of local contexts, has had to take for granted: standard language and its extensions.

In this chapter, I first look into a relatively recent round of discussion which inquires into language through critical analyses of centralizing systems which regulate its use. The prominent commentators I will briefly cite – James Milroy and Lesley Milroy, Tony Crowley, Pierre Bourdieu, Deborah Cameron – are not always in sight from disciplinary perspectives in rhetoric and writing, for they all keep in mind processes of *language standardization*, usually a province of sociolinguistics and historical linguistics. But each gestures far beyond the usual topics of standardization mechanisms and their realization in lexicon, morphology, and syntax.[2] The standard is advanced not only by dictionaries and grammars but by the provisions of modernity: institutions, roles, disciplines, techniques, policies, publicity. From the perspective of these accounts, the "standard" is only one expression of centralizing forces and motivations. Equally, each analyzes standard as established not by decree but in the intersection of system and self in *linguistic consciousness*, which speaks to what Bakhtin calls "verbal-ideological consciousness" (1981, p. 342). Each discovers aspects of language-users' awareness or behavior in the presence of centralizing systems and amid populations administered by those systems. Moreover, tracing links to Bakhtin's reasoning, we are reminded that Bakhtin had in mind more than heteroglossia and dialogism[3] when he explained the sociality of language. By putting Bakhtin in the company of current theorists of the standard, we are reminded that Bakhtin's observations of genre, often cited by new-rhetorical genre theorists, took place in a context of reasoning about the broader formations of modernity. Each of these writers addresses the forces Bakhtin describes as *centripetal* (roughly, centralizing and homogenizing) and *centrifugal* (roughly, decentralizing and diversifying), and they also offer hints of certain irrepressible conditions which we can find specified in Bakhtin's account. These conditions restore self to settings that might seem most likely to elide it. We can also discover these conditions, with some complications, in the comments of those cited in the second part of this chapter: readers and writers in the English department of a South Asian university.

Standard and Center

James Milroy and Lesley Milroy's landmark *Authority in Language: Investigating Language Prescription and Standardisation* (1985/1991)[4] examines the historical centralizing forces accompanying the production of Standard English. Most forcefully, they note first that standardization, in the presence of variety, ordains one form, and second that the prescription is not equal to the task, for variety persists. So standardization is not to be viewed as accomplishing actual uniformity in speech, but as inducing widespread consciousness of the standard, and of companion variety. Consciousness of the standard produces auxiliary discourses and publicity, among them the "complaint tradition," which inspires both officials and citizens to lament over variety and interpret it as decline and deterioration. The complaint tradition is one index of linguistic consciousness: in the current round of discussion, it is an early indication of positions and attitudes *vis-à-vis* system and self, the speech of others and one's own speech.

While Milroy and Milroy defend speech variety from centralizing insult, however, they leave writing to fend for itself. Standardization, they say, is a requisite for modern systems, assuring clarity of communication across time and space. At the same time, Milroy and Milroy's critique of prescriptivism points to reform: They recommend changes to conceptions of variety in spoken English, urging such change in educational policy especially. To this extent, liberal-reformist aims can be themselves normalizing, and centralizing—corrections to the system.

Tony Crowley's genealogy of the standard (*Standard English and the Politics of Language,* 1989) exposes centralizing forces as personages and postures, defensive against the barbarians at the gate, and the "mob" within. Crowley's story of the standard, and its contribution to nation as comfort to official anxiety over class conflict, suggests the illegitimacy of centralizing aims and expands the social-ranking capacity which the Milroys identify in linguistic consciousness. Self-interested and domineering, centralizing ambitions inculpate class privilege, and commandeer both official and public consciousness—both administrative and commonsense evaluations of variety in expression. Moreover, the official discourse on language which Crowley quotes calls not only for grammatical policing but also for inculcation of common, "national" values, these introduced on the vector of the standard.

By invoking *symbolic domination*, Pierre Bourdieu's analysis (1991) is most aggressive in its measure of the penetration of centralizing forces into linguistic consciousness. Aware of variety and schooled to anticipate correction, speakers and writers learn how to rate their own speech and writing, and are thereby recruited to the service of their own domination, intimidated by the Milroys' complainers. Bourdieu dismisses the claim that standardization is necessary for writing in modern societies, suggesting that the claim is itself an exponent of centralization. The terms of symbolic domination describe a linguistic consciousness steeped in the schemes of the center: Indentured by *habitus* to their styles of speech, language users absorb the means of interpreting distinction in the "unified linguistic marketplace," that unification itself a dimension of modernity, and manifested in both administrative systems and class differentials. In the meantime, the forms of speech are beginning to fill with content: While the Milroys, Crowley, and Bourdieu all analyze conformity to and deviation from the standard as activating class

awareness, in Crowley's version national and literary materials slip in the door opened by the standard; in Bourdieu's famous measure of habitus, speech embodies practical preferences and daily dispositions.

Like the Milroys, Crowley, and Bourdieu, Deborah Cameron (*Verbal Hygiene,* 1995) rates those aspects of linguistic consciousness that absorb authority as tending to accrue to conservative interests.[5] But, at the same time, the aspects of linguistic consciousness which, by Cameron's audit, absorb authority are mobile, and not in themselves illegitimate, despite the prejudice, injustice, faulty reasoning and quackery which they can serve. She identifies the impulse to evaluate language as indigenous to linguistic competence. While some forms of evaluation, or some occasions for it, are prone to contribute to centralization, prescription in itself is not necessarily hegemonic, and some forms of "verbal hygiene" which Cameron investigates, such as plain language movements and campaigns for non-sexist language, can stand up for dissenting attitudes and oppositional interests. In Cameron's analysis we begin to see signs of life: speakers emerging from their subjugation, organizing outposts of value.

Verbal-ideological Consciousness

If we steer Bakhtin alongside these commentaries, we arrive at intersections and contiguities. Milroy and Milroy's claim that standardization is the production of consciousness of the standard, rather than actual uniformity of speech, finds a forerunner in Bakhtin's observation that the standard – the "unitary language," the "literary language" – is surrounded by its Other: "alongside the centripetal forces, the centrifugal forces carry on their uninterrupted work" (p. 272). And by naming the standard the "literary language," Bakhtin specifies implications of Crowley's analysis—the historical complicity of literary studies and canonical appreciations in producing the center and the notion of common cultural resources. And like Bourdieu, Bakhtin denies the efficiency rationale for standardization – "the myth of perfect understanding."

Able to enter into productive exchange with current commentaries on language-centralizing systems, Bakhtin's analysis nevertheless advances into otherwise unexplored areas, at first challenging but finally indemnifying to intuitions of the self. The advances go forward on two related fronts. First, Bakhtin finds that unitary conceptions of language (housed not only in systems but also in consciousness) are also sites for conceptions of the "originality" of the individual "voice", the unique style ripe with individual intention. How can the centralizing formation host the individual one? Its hospitality flows from the theory of the language itself as a universal and accessible system—a common "treasure" available for the use of the individual and unchanged by that use. Recognizably modern and cognate with structuralist conceptions of language, this one sees the individual entering and exiting the system without disturbing it.

Second, Bakhtin denies (as the other commentators do) the naturalness of the standard. The idea of the system is produced by centralizing forces – institutions, organized privilege, state. Its companion idea, then, the pure originality of the individual voice, is also denied by Bakhtin, and replaced by less systematic conceptions of self. While other commentators also doubt the standard and the center as the legitimate source of words, Bakhtin goes farther by identifying the

actual sources: Words come to the speaker not from a central repository ("it is not … out of a dictionary that the speaker gets his words!" p. 294) but from other speakers:

> the transmission and assessment of the speech of others, the discourse of another, is one of the most widespread and fundamental topics of human speech. In all areas of life and ideological activity, our speech is filled to overflowing with other people's words, which are transmitted with highly variable degrees of accuracy and impartiality. (p. 337)

Transferring from other speakers, words can be introduced by reporting devices—or they may settle into the current utterance without syntactic markings:

> not all transmitted words belonging to someone else lend themselves, when fixed in writing, to enclosure in quotation marks…; of all words uttered in everyday life, no less than half belong to someone else. (p. 339)

The contract for the individual voice (guarantor of the belief in unique expression) is cancelled in this bazaar of used words, marked by the wear-and-tear of their previous uses, and their services to other speakers' purposes. But the self re-emerges from the process by which "[o]ne's own discourse is gradually and slowly wrought out of others' words that have been acknowledged and assimilated, and the boundaries between the two are at first scarcely perceptible" (p. 345). Even in "exact transmission" of the others' words, there is "change", calibrations of "distance" (p. 342) and refractions of "authority" (p. 343). In the appropriation of others' language, speakers come into their own, absorbing the word, working on it by using it. The word engages the attention and inclination of the speaker, whose consciousness entertains and prepares for it (the "'theme' [of another's word] may sound in the text long before the appearance of the actual word" [p. 346]), employing "many means of transmission" of the "internally persuasive word":

> these methods account for other peculiarities as well, which also express the essence of the internally persuasive word, such as that word's semantic openness to us, its unfinishedness and the inexhaustibility of our further dialogic interaction with it. We have not yet learned from it all it might tell us; we can take it into new contexts, attach it to new material, put it in a new situation in order to wrest new answers from it, new insights into its meaning, and even wrest from it new words of its *own* (since another's discourse, if productive, gives birth to a new word from us in response). (p. 346-347)

The word of another is both set in and set off from the speech that becomes one's own, and this space around the word of another sets it moving, an active instrument and accomplishment:

> Such variants on the theme of another's discourse are widespread in all areas of creative ideological activity, and even in the narrowly scientific disciplines. Of such a sort is any gifted, creative exposition defining alien world views: such an exposition is always a free stylistic variation on another's discourse; it expounds another's thought in the style of that thought even while applying it to new material, to another way of posing the problem; it conducts experiments and gets solutions in the language of another's discourse. (p. 347)

This high-traffic area is the stage for the person's "ideological becoming," not only a way of speaking but a "basis for behavior" (p. 341), and an emergent self. This is not the self proposed by a "Ptolemaic" conception of language (that is, one which imagines the absolute eminence and authority of a center): not the self which materializes as an autonomous voice by virtue of unprecedented ("original") use of the centrally managed resource, its intentions fully declared in the unique utterance and uncontaminated by the intentions of others. Rather, it is the self proposed by a "Galilean" conception of language, materializing not in the unprecedented but in the "typical." To apprehend this self, and to round out this philosophy, it is

> necessary to come to terms with discourse as a reified, 'typical' but at the same time intentional phenomenon; … we must learn how to develop a sensitivity towards the brute materiality, the typicality, that is the essential attribute not only of actions, gestures and separate words and expressions, but the basic ingredient as well in points of view, in how the world is seen and felt, ways that are organically part and parcel with the language that expresses them. (p. 367)

In Bakhtin's account, self –while not necessarily exempt from the mistakes and dominations pointed out by other accounts of standardization —emerges amid them. The Bakhtinian account acknowledges centripetal forces as part of the life of language (but not on terms like those which expect language standardization for purposes of efficient communication):

> A unitary language is not something given [*dan*] but is always in essence posited [*zadan*]—at every moment of its linguistic life it is opposed to the realities of heteroglossia. But at the same time it makes its *real presence* felt as a force for overcoming this heteroglossia…. (p. 270, emphasis added)

The norms of "a common unitary language" (a "real, although still relative unity—the unity of the reigning conversational [everyday] and literary language, 'correct' language" [p. 270]) do not "constitute an abstract imperative," but a force against heteroglossia. And these are the norms not of the linguistic "*minimum*" of comprehension (which would be the "imperative" of standardization for "efficient communication") but of a "*maximum* of mutual understanding in all spheres of ideological life," agents of "forces working toward concrete verbal and ideological unification and centralization, which develops in vital connections with the processes of socio-political and cultural centralization" (p. 271). This step in the analysis carries linguistic consciousness into verbal-ideological consciousness, and finishes the job of filling form with content. Crossing this threshold, we take linguistic consciousness (ideas about one's speech in relation to others' speech) into the realm of ideas about one's self as rendered or positioned in negotiation with the words of others, these negotiations involving contacts, citations, world-views, intentions. It is these resources that centripetal forces attempt to manage. In fact, their busyness with dictionaries, style-guides and copy-editing may be only a distracter.

Gathering Bakhtin's observations, we might re-invest in inquiry into the center and system, hoping eventually for dividends for the self. We invest in system and center not as necessary for communication, and or even as confirmed (the unitary language is only posited, an eminence of

consciousness) but as a "real presence" nevertheless, and an inconclusive condition of "ideological becoming," this process registered in linguistic consciousness.

How do we find out about linguistic consciousness? What measures are available? In tracking consciousness of the standard, the Milroys, Crowley, and Cameron all quote the declarations of commissioners, educators, politicians—executors of centripetal intentions. The Milroys and Cameron quote less prominent figures too, ordinary folks who are inspired to make their complaints in public settings. The Milroys add sociolinguistic evidence of speech variety and consciousness of the standard. Cameron adds anecdotal[6] evidence of linguistic consciousness from those who know about copy-editing practices and those who remember their schooldays. For his part, Bourdieu looks at the platforms on which the "legitimate language" is publicized by dignitaries, and the institutional structures which support these platforms: From these observations he interpolates the symbolically dominated consciousness. Like Bourdieu, Bakhtin doesn't quote, but in the spiraling deliberations characteristic of his commentaries, circles over the site of linguistic/verbal-ideological consciousness. In this study, I go to ground level, investigating places for which Bakhtin provides an aerial view. I present remarks from conversations conducted in a place that, like many others in modernity, stages language in the "real presence" of system.

At this site, consciousness of the standard develops within a broader consciousness of centralization itself. This aspect of linguistic consciousness attends to one's own participation in language-administering systems in relation to others' participation: *Many people do this but I don't*, or *we all do this because of the system.* In the meantime, expression of rules—which we might look to as agents of central enforcement—can seem instead to assign authority off-center. These aspects of linguistic consciousness sketch the coordinates of self, as do other dimensions of awareness: On many occasions, writing is represented as active negotiation with words arriving from both ratified and unratified sources—a register of *ideological becoming*. On other occasions, these seemingly centrifugal processes can be represented more systematically: teachers can see them as developmental. Similarly, "originality" can be drawn into the orbit of either "Galilean" or "Ptolemaic" conceptions of language. While ideas of originality can be summoned to endorse ideological becoming, it is in the vicinity of the most commanding feature of the landscape of the center—the national examination[7]—that they are most likely to stake a claim for the self. As Bakhtin predicts, the center, to strike a bargain with self, puts "originality" on the table—but we will see that the profits fluctuate. And even when the center presides, its modern sovereignty can be painted in folk terms, and in some old stories of class differentials.

Method: Eliciting Representations of Linguistic Consciousness

The conversations reported here took place in an institution with which I had no previous connections except for correspondence with the host department outlining the project and asking permission to carry it out: The project was described to the administration of the English Department of the University of Mumbai/Bombay as developing from new-rhetorical theory and

intended to discover aspects of language-users' awareness of their activities as readers and writers in academic settings. At the University of Mumbai, I conducted 40 hours of interviews on student writing with 22 students (graduate and undergraduate) and faculty, with the help of two research assistants, one an M.A. (English) and M. Phil. candidate at another Mumbai university, the other an anthropology B.A. from Canada. The Canadian researcher and I lived on campus, and stayed also some nights at the homes of faculty, and at the distant home of our fellow researcher; we dined and picnicked with students and faculty. I visited one college in the area, but mainly subjects came, from tributary colleges as well as from the English Department, to our interview room amid classes and offices at the university.

Participants were people whom our Mumbai colleague found interested in talking to us, and willing to select papers from their own portfolios (as writers or readers) as in some way "representative." Telling invitees that we were interested in their ideas about writing in academic settings, we left "representative" to be defined by participants. We asked students to read aloud essays they had written and professors to read aloud essays they had marked, commenting as they went along, reporting what came to mind as they read.[8] If interviewees lapsed into more reading than reporting, we posed routine prompts; for example,

> Do most people do that?

> Where did you learn to do that?

> Would people not in the class understand that?

Other questions arose from participants' remarks.

Sounding "The Theme of Another's Discourse"

In the interviews, there were many reports corroborating Bakhtin's survey of the traffic in words, and many indications that writers are aware of the processes by which words are handed on. They calculate the space around cited words—taking some to heart, holding some at arm's length; they point to self in the techniques by which they absorb the words of others.

Throughout the interviews, writers acknowledge their words' histories. An M.A. student can track a long chain of citation, as residue from generations of discourse appear here in a present-generation postcolonial discourse on literature, entering "new contexts, [attaching] to new material, put … in a new situation in order to wrest new answers from it" (Bakhtin, p. 347):

> **M:** There is **a biography of Ngugi's which talks about** how when he was Leeds he was greatly influenced by Marxist ideology and **he read a lot of Marx and Engels**…. **the reference that I was doing on Ngugi, it mentioned** this thing about change in society, you know, one thing impacting the other in a kind of continuum … that was **originally Engels' idea** … So when I was doing my reference work, I think there were **about two books** that were, you know, **reiterating** the fact that ... Ngugi's influences especially Engels' influence is very predominately this text[9]

And words can also be traced across current planes of intersecting activity—not only reading but also class discussion:

> **M:** "[Karanja] felt like a failure and joining forces with the whites gave him some sense of identity and power." I mean I've … discussed postcolonial theory, certain aspects of the white man and the native's relationship, how it's informed by power, how the white, native wants to identify with the white man because it's identification with power ... [mentions Franz Fanon] I think this comes, **this idea comes in from there** /…/ I have a copy of the text / … / These are **things that we discussed in class**, and the theory we discuss Fanon, we discuss Edward Said *Orientalism* and you know we are doing theory basically so these aspects have been talked about in class.

In the interview, the writer at the M.A. level recovers several planes of disciplinary discourse in which she has participated. In the paper itself, however, reporting expressions associate her words only with her reading, and not with, for example, class discussion.

Among writers at the B.A. level, reporting expressions were much rarer (as Bakhtin notes, syntax by no means exhausts the means by which others' words are absorbed into one's own utterance). But these writers nevertheless also traced their words to others, although they were less likely than M.A. students to trace a chain of citation or to identify the authors of the statements from which they derived their words: [A:]"I've referred to **three books**"; [F:]"I've referred to **two books**, they are both on the problems of Indian society and one is on the philosophy of education." Contributing books can be located in different information-organizing systems. (We will see later that writers are thoughtful in drawing on these different arrangements of information, calculating their positions relative to the center.) Some are "in the syllabus"; others are in libraries, reading rooms, and homes: [C:] "I have read up on [Plato's] ideas in **the encyclopedia that I have at home**"; [E:] "Frankly speaking this is not my own title — there was **a book in our college**."

The books are more or less accessible, both in terms of location and in terms of their proximity to the writer's sense of her own position as a thinker:

> **E:** What happened **I had the book but it was a reference book, I couldn't take it home**. When I'm not clear about a concept I don't feel I can talk about it. / ... / Mostly in my papers I write my own, I study only the points [provided by teachers as "notes"], then write my own. But here — **I didn't have time** for this thing. And **I was not clear with the topic**, what I had to do.

This writer seems very aware of "borderline" conditions, the line that language draws "between oneself and the other" (Bakhtin, p. 293). At the border, one admits others' words, populating them with one's "own intentions, … accent" (p. 293). But "not all words for just anyone submit equally easily to this appropriation ….; many words stubbornly resist….; they cannot be assimilated into [the speaker's] context and fall out of it" (p. 294). For this writer, the words of the "reference book" seem to have stubbornly resisted appropriation.

Some wordings are traced not from books but from teachers' "notes" and lectures, as well as presentations by fellow students, or consultations with classmates, or "points" distributed by teachers. Writers are also aware of wordings coming from the public domain. Mention of some legislation comes from general reading: [B:] "I read it elsewhere, in **the newspapers** probably." In other cases the means of distribution have vanished by the time the statement appears in the writer's hand:

> **B:** "In India the seeds of communalism were sowed by the British before 1947. They introduced the policy of divide and rule so they could rule over India comfortably for a very long time." /Are there **a lot of people who think that? /** I think so, I think so.

Tracing ideas and their transformation, writers represent their own work as active productions (and would probably agree with Bakhtin in calling such activities "a difficult and complicated process" [p. 294]): [F:] "I have added … I made it concise"; [A:]"the examples I have coined on my own." The writing self can be located in its performance arranging, compiling, and coming into its own:

> **A:** some things are taken from the book, but **I have arranged them in a different way**, like I didn't get everything from one source. Different sources have been combined. I added some, I deleted some.... Annie Besant was not available in any of the books, only one book I got and one source notes and I really compiled. So it is extended, only four pages of notes was given to me **I have added** … It's **my own points**, only the substance is taken and it is made into a sentence.

The student who, using her home encyclopedia, wrote about Plato selected high-value items which, in their "new contexts, new applications" (Bakhtin, p. 346), accrued to her:

> **C:** Certain important words, those have been used, but generally **it's an original essay** … I would say I have tried to **understand it in my own way** and put it in a summary.

Materials transferring from other speakers can share a spot with home ideas which coincide with them: [F:] "Sometimes it is **something already there in your mind**." Or other ideas, arriving to acclamation, are seized and pronounced: [F:] "This is something that **I totally agree on, and I have read it and put it here.**" Or the current speaker, finding an idea of hers already in circulation, maintains her stake in it:

> **M:** This is **what I made out of the text** when I read it and this has been said by a lot of people, a lot of people think that this is the theme of the text and I have not, I mean I've just **stuck to my idea and what I thought about it**

Sometimes when an idea is brought home it gets special attention which still picks it out as an import: [H:] "It was **really interesting** the material I had collected."

Reports of the processes by which words are handed on represent busy combinations, borrowings, additions, coincidences, collections—the "critical interanimantion" of languages (Bakhtin, p. 296), the "new contexts and applications," the "experiments" which Bakhtin detects in "ideological becoming."

System and "originality"

At the same time as they represent consciousness of the processes by which others' words are appropriated, incorporated, shared or collected, and as they calculate the space around others' words and thereby locate themselves, these writers are also aware of the system which administers their reading and writing. In this phase of reasoning, "originality" appears in the context of reception, a scene often characterized as inhospitable to that "originality."

> **E:** Our mind is conditioned that whatever we write **from the book**, we are going to get marks. **Your originality** is going to be subdued everywhere.

Whereas, in their accounts of their writing practices, students seem confident in their negotiations with the words of others, in the scene of reception the "critical interanimation" of languages subsides to "the book," which is "everywhere." In this consolidation and expansion of its powers, "the book" may draw it status from the category Bakhtin calls "authoritative discourse:" Unlike "internally persuasive discourse," with its "*open*" semantic structure affording "every newer *ways to mean*" (p. 346, emphasis in the original), authoritative discourse is inert, its semantics finite, its very authority placing it beyond the "zone of contact," in an area where "the context around it dies, words dry up" (p. 344). Nevertheless the same student still estimates "everywhere" as an extent that's hard to fathom:

> **E:** Some essays I write I feel I have written very well, and I've included **my own ideas**, and I find that it is appreciated. / *The ones that are appreciated — where does the difference come? /* I don't know, maybe where the thing goes wrong. Very few teachers would take into consideration when we put in **our own ideas**.

While the syllabus pulls consciousness into its centripetal current, this current does not sweep all before it. Outcomes are not entirely foreseeable, and individuals' participations in the system are not uniform. For example, in the presence of this centralizing energy, the "personal" can be a writer's name for readings not on the syllabus, and students can feel that they take risks when they refer to "personal" reading they have done. But they go ahead and take these risks. One student [Q] who herself uses "three of four books" to compose her essay contrasts her practice with that of other students who "always restrict themselves to what is in the syllabus." The syllabus centralizes reading, but it also inspires measurements of individuals' variable participation in the system.

This kind of reasoning may be typical of any school-writing situation, where writers see themselves relative to one another, possibly recognizing a norm, but rarely seeing themselves as occupying it. The particular shape of reasoning here, among these readers and writers, may be

specific to the intersection of policies, practices, and institutions which support a presiding genre which everybody mentioned to us: *the examination*, a national genre.

The modern system of examination is staffed by persons individually anonymous but known by reputation. Students tell us

> **F:** They may **want the textbook material** to be written on the exams as it is, they don't want to be exposed to **any kind of creative or literary writing**, their vocabulary may not be that good.

Even when the exam is down the road, it can influence other writing activities, as writers anticipate eventual reception by examiners, as this next student reports—yet at the same time, this student, like the one who reported her awareness of others' safe practices, also sees variety when she looks at language behavior in the vicinity of the center. She sees her own practices— and others':

> **M:** [on choosing to write about a book which was not discussed in class] most of the people actually stick to the text because it's easier to do and you have a time, you have deadline ... in fact I think it's the easy option plus **it's also preparation for the exams so you don't really have to wrack your brains when it's exam time,** so /*Because the exams will be on those texts?* / Oh these texts, yes, definitely. That's why most people prefer to do — whatever you do in a paper, **the exams, that's going to judge you for a long time in life**, because you have a mark sheet that says you are first class or you [aren't].

In a complex cycle of reasoning, demonstrating a highly mobile linguistic consciousness, an education student describes a norm—

> A: All the students they tend to read what is put in the text and reproduce, so there's not much scope.

—which she seems not to occupy, or does not occupy wholeheartedly, for she can imagine a teacher's perspective, and from this perspective, copying is undesirable:

> **A:** When I'm teaching, suppose I'm an English teacher and I am going to teach an essay surely I'm not going to give them a free essay on [?] from which they can easily copy and give me the points.

Yet she can also imagine examiners' frames of mind, and presents that picture as an inducement to her own practice, possibly bringing her closer to the norm:

> **A:** If I were to write the same thing from the examination point of view, I cannot utilize so much of freedom. In the first place because the time constraint is there and secondly because what they check on the examination is **something which is there in the syllabus and nothing beyond that**.... sometimes these examiners who correct our paper, **they don't do a lot of extra reading, so they have typical answers in their mind**.... I included [discussion of Yeats' cyclical philosophy of time, as discussed with professor]

> on my answer sheet but I think it was completely ignored, probably they had not understood what I was trying to say.

From exam results or rumors of them, the student derives an image of examiners that acknowledges their authority (constraining her "freedom") but limits their prestige. In their efforts to regulate reading and writing, the imagined examiners end up dumbfounded by anything atypical, and reward the copied answers of which examinees themselves have a low opinion.

Reckoning reception, writers picture the center. Remote and anonymous, the center is nevertheless figured as attitudes and even as reading habits—a dispreference for "creative or literary writing," and limited experience of ideas. The examiners are folk figures, formidable for both their authority and their limitations, and the system that assigns and circulates readings dominates some sectors of writers' consciousness. But at the same time its reputation is in the hands, and minds, of the writers who regard it. These writers take a variety of positions in relation to it and plot a variety of working spaces adjacent to it. While centripetal forces organize reading and writing, centrifugal ones go on, as Bakhtin says, "uninterrupted"—although, if not interrupted, at least conditioned by the eminence of the examination.

Reading "The Theme of Another's Discourse"

As Bakhtin tells it, the story of ideological becoming unfolds in the speaker's consciousness. Yet those words adopted and entertained are uttered and accented, and in their utterance, heard. So, the compilations which students see themselves actively composing are also read by teachers. Teachers' representations of these episodes of utterance in many ways mirror the writers' own, and they also refract them.

For example, teachers hear the contributing voices that the writers themselves identify in interviews. Teachers can trace a word two generations back: [D:] **"this is all taken from a book**. 'Goodman decided ...' **somebody else said this** in his or her book ... this is **also from a book**." Detecting the population of words by others' intentions, they can hear multiple voices: [N:] "It almost seems as if these are **taken from the generalities of two different articles**."

While students report themselves actively collecting, poaching, and incorporating, teachers observe from slightly different positions, from which they can see indications of system:

> **N: hardly anyone can be said to write on their own**…. They just don't give them sufficient writing practice right through their educational careers. So they're just afraid to write on their own…. one of the reasons why people are reluctant to rephrase is because they are **afraid the moment they rephrase, their articles in the first place will go haywire and many other things**. So they're **anxious to just take over things from books** /… / because they're not sure of their own writing ability ... they feel that they will not be able to write so elegantly, will not make much of an impact.

No students who spoke to us about their writing considered either this systemic deficit in writing practice, or their own anxiety over the standard.

Teachers also attempt to manage the process by which students participate in the system, but these attempts are not entirely successful. A teacher in an M.A. course in linguistics explains the difference between the paper we looked at and those that she did not select for our meeting:

> **J:** it was a totally unseen poem and I specifically asked them not to refer to any reference books.... there were other papers which had a better theme than this girl has been able to provide but I haven't brought them here because **they were obviously from various books**. So in spite of the fact that I asked them not to I could make out from the way they had done the stylistic analysis later that the theme had been picked up from reference books.

Like students, teachers also recognize the materials for statements coming from many planes of activity. They see, for example, cooperation among friends ([J:] "A friend's helped her ... to do this"). In students' writing, teachers also recognize the classroom and their own performance in it:

> **J:** "It reinforces sense with sound and is used too as a device of phonological foregrounding of the prominent sounds in the text"... / ... / I think she's just, she's putting, **she's quoting me ... from other poems**..."...an example of structural parallelism, which is made use of by the poet for emphasis and memorability" /... / [these are terms] that were **used in class / ... / noted down in their diaries** and /*everything [every stylistic feature] is for "emphasis"* / for "emphasis."

> **K:** She said [the words in rhyme] are the thematic words of the poem. I agree that they are. /*...saying that the rhyming words are the thematic words, is that from class, or — ?* / Yeah. **Some other poem that we have done and said that** ... " The alliteration adds to the music of the poem." **All of them have said this**. / *They've all said this?* / Most of them have said this. / *Where would they have got—?* / **From me obviously**. / *In class* / **In class.**

According to teachers' reports, some wordings transfer easily from the teacher's classroom voice to students' writing.[10] But others do not. Even when a ratified view is offered for students' appropriation, the offer can be declined. No matter how insistent the teacher that a certain view be tried on, writers can refuse to join this chain of citation.

> **N:** I should I also say that sometimes it's disheartening to find that however much one puts forward **different viewpoints in the classroom**, ultimately what is **there in the book they are reading** is the one that they would adopt as their viewpoint. Now I have been speaking as much as I can against objective testing and I've been pointing out, and I do this every year and every year everybody speaks in favor of objective testing.

Some views may be more internally persuasive than others. Or, possibly, the syllabus-sanctioned "authoritative discourse" of "the book" eclipses other voices.

While they notice the up-take or the dead-letter of their own words, teachers also detect voices from beyond the classroom. A wording which might have had its origins in popular political discussion, and which appears re-accented here, is acknowledged as the student's "own":

> **G:** "To build a mighty nation — mighty in thought, mighty in action, mighty in culture, and mighty in peaceful service to humanity." This amuses me, this "mighty" word…. It's **the student's own language**, and I feel there's no need to be mighty, to be good, to be a small good nation is enough. */Where would she have picked up "mighty" as a word? /* **It's used currently**.

And, just as students measured their accomplishments in reading and compiling, teachers measure value-added, and increments in students' own understanding:

> **N:** She has **managed to put this together** and it's **very coherent**, you know…. I don't think she's doing a bad job … at least **she's got the material**, she's trying to put it together.

> **D:** It's clear that this concept has become **clear to her.**

Teachers also participate in making the legend of the exam, in terms like those by which students estimate the reception of their work, although teachers seem more likely to scan the horizon of the examination's reach:

> **N:** [students fear rephrasing] But then, they're also right that **examiners are not used to looking for evidence of thought**. So they would be marked lower for doing that and they would be marked higher for doing this, so therefore they are quite justified in carrying on in the same way*/But which examiner are we referring to? Not the examiner reading this paper? /* Yeah, but then they have **one style of writing**. And this is ingrained you know, **deeply ingrained** … **not much store is laid by originality, certainly.**

Yet, as this professor continues – "But people do want to have decently written language as well" – she also acknowledges a stake in another campaign, too: The macro-acquisition of a standard Indian English, a goal mentioned to us by several faculty members.

The general desire for "decently written language" brings a complication attending English as a medium of instruction: Copying is a tactic to avoid penalty for non-standard usages in a tongue that is, for most students, not the language of the home, or the street ([N:] "they are afraid the moment they rephrase, their articles … will go haywire and many other things. So they're anxious to just take over things from books "). Centralizing systems like this one privilege consciousness of the standard; Crowley and Bakhtin both suggest that the standard is also a vector for shared thinking, and common values. Yet, somewhere in this process, the transmission of values on the vehicle of the standard can stall, caught on the cusp of thoughtful iteration and submissive copying: Teachers don't see examiners looking for "evidence of thought." While, at some levels, the writer's participation in the system can be an occasion of "ideological becoming," it can also be a moment that dictates "authoritative discourse": "context … dies, words dry up" (Bakhtin, p. 344). The "originality" which the ideology of centralized language

promises is not delivered, and, in fact, "originality" remains a goad to the system, a rallying point for challenge to it, although students and teachers may come to the rally from different positions.

When teachers witness the dictatorial effects of the examination, *change* becomes a topic. Teachers talk about adjustments to the system, recognizing that the examination produces not only writers' linguistic consciousness but also examiners':

> **N:** they're just afraid to write on their own ... and they're perfectly justified as we said earlier. So **we have to train examiners** if we want to change, if we want to make students think and write, thinking you know, applying their minds, taking the material and putting it together.... in order to do this we'll have to train examiners. And it's going to take quite a bit of training because examiners have gone through this whole system themselves.

System-level changes may not be possible independent of consciousness-level changes, but, at the same time, changes in consciousness depend on changes in system. Reasoning about these reciprocals is carried on in the spirit of modernity: System regards itself, and thereby designs and re-designs itself. This condition both contains the opportunities for change, keeping them within the system's reach, and also incurs tactical responses of one system to its neighbor: Teachers also talk about "lenient" internal ratings to counteract the examination's morbid effects.

The Developmental Curve and the Chronotope of the Center

The examination system encourages ideas of central rating, of reading and writing regulated not by decree but by a consciousness of central reception, this consciousness executed in a variety of tactics, attitudes, and positions. Many remarks were offered on the effects of examinations, including : [N:] "They're perfectly justified as we said earlier... [examiners] are looking for standard answers and the guide books do provide these standard answers." Others commented on the effects of teachers' practices generally: [G:] "They are afraid of making very emphatic statements, like 'none.' / *Why ... ?/* Because when they say 'none,' we say 'some'"; [K:] "Of course they do this [take a stand too early in a discussion] because they are always being asked, 'Do you agree?'" But alongside or in the shadow of the historically imposing system of examination, interpretations of student writing activate consciousness of other schemes.

One of these is developmental: Writers proceed along a route, passing stages of accomplishment. Students themselves occasionally report some of these stages: [H:] "This kind of format was new to me, it daunted me"; [M:] "It's not something that you learn in a day or two, it's a process and you keep learning all the time." Teachers notice them much more often:

> D: She's on her way to becoming a better academic writer

> **G:** So with age, more reading, experience, **that type of writing** [which uses modality and limiting expressions to moderate 'emphatic' statements] **will come.**

K: I think she hasn't got the entire theme but **she is beginning to get there**

L: This is **the right time for them to pick up some discipline** in the field of research, and how it could be helped with series of textual details, critical analysis, cross references ... **it is a long process**, it needs a lot of reading and discipline.

N: I think with more training of this type she will learn to organize

These observations and interpretations may systematize the processes of "ideological becoming," stages which Bakhtin calculates too: For example, he figures that "initially" the consciousness awakened to the surrounding world of alien discourse "cannot … separate itself " from that discourse: "the process of distinguishing between one's own and another's discourse, between one's own and another's thought, is activated rather late in development" (345).

While these observations explain features of student writing by referring to an ideal train of progress, others explain features of student writing in terms of the writer's degree of participation in other systems—social, historical, political, and even geographic. Here a professor takes time to remark that certain desirable features of a literary-critical genre are inaccessible from the position this student occupies:

J: So the laws were designed to give greater freedom to the people of Britain but it didn't work that way according to Blake. So that is what she has completely missed out. But I think it would have been a historical allusion, this is a very clear historical allusion to the charter of rights and the girl obviously didn't know this because **I don't think she has read much of the history of Britain** and what Blake is alluding to. **So I have not taken this** [the missed allusion] **into consideration in my marking.**

Just as this student's position is discovered as being relatively distant from some canonical readings, other remarks also locate students relative to the center and positioned by systems intersecting with syllabus and examination. Readers can locate writers beyond the immediate institutional situation—calibrating the schools and colleges where students have received their prior education, and estimating students' positions in the urban order. A professor compares the work of two students in terms of this proximity to the center:

N: [the first student comes from] **a regional language background**. I mean she studied not in English before ... in school and so she has this complex about her English not being good enough ... that's a constant fear that she has. She tries to overcome that by working very very hard. **She also lives very far away and spends a lot of time traveling** ... [turning to a second, and highly regarded, essay] In order to use a computer **you'd have to be fairly well off** ... **[computers] are not available to [students on campus].** So this girl [author of the second essay] has in fact had it done elsewhere. **She's probably had access to her father's office** and had it done there or something or the other. **I think there must be a class difference in these two students as well.** This girl [the one who comes from a regional language background] is working desperately hard ... and ... for **what she has managed to achieve**, I think one should give her **a lot of**

> **value**. **It's fantastic** that she's managed so much ... [the other student,
> with access to a computer] lives in [?] which is sort of central, I mean
> halfway between here and [?] **Not far way**.

Fusing with the literal and figurative geography of the center, *time* occurs to both teachers and students. In a city as populous as Mumbai, where students can spend four hours a day traveling between home and school, and class assignments are produced between the pressing schedules of family life and commuting, time is a force to be reckoned. As they approach the center, students cross differential zones in the use of English; once they reach the examination itself, time restrictions are intensified when writers work in a language that has not been uniformly the medium of instruction. In the chronotope of centralization, writers and readers imagine time not only as progress along a developmental curve but also as an arrangement of relative routes towards the center. When teachers tell this story, they expose the grid of class hierarchies which lie across the geography of the city and its regions.

Types and Rules

In the neighborhood of the center we might expect to meet ideas of uniform expression, in keeping with consciousness of the standard (a teacher quoted earlier does notice "one style of writing" as an examination effect). But centralization induces awareness of many categories, a proliferation of images of types. Here are some (but not all) of the types students and teachers mentioned to us:

> **A: life sketch**, **seminar paper**, **essay; research paper**; **B:** [you get a
> topic, you write a] **report**; **C: compilation** is from *one* book *vs.* **summary**;
> **D: research work**; **F:** [making something concise] could be called
> **summary**; **G: talking** [identified by reader when writer refers to "*our*
> children"]; **H: paper** *vs.* **arguing with an examiner**; **H:** writing which is not
> intended to **convince** reader but to give **information**; **L:** something without
> details is a **summary**; **compilation** *vs.* **research document**; **M: exams,
> written papers, comprehensive papers**

Taken from institutional designations or put together from vernacular materials, the types recognized here don't obviously involve complex social roles, so they may not be on the same plane of typicality which Bakhtin recommends for acknowledgement. At the same time, they are also not codified, bureaucratic, or taxonomic: As working terms, they may be fleshed out in consciousness by ideas of roles and situations.

Consciousness of types materializes in expression of rules. Rules are often used in a discriminating way by participants, to distinguish between one type and another —

> **A:** [quotation] is important, like **when you're talking about a leader**,
> surely the dialogues have to be given

> **C:** If it is about a particular philosopher or thinker's relationship to education
> we generally do **write a bit about his life**.

— and some frequently expressed ideas are used to distinguish between exams and other genres —

> **G:** I feel going to the next subtopic like this closes the continuity of thought. It is **almost like essay writing for examinations, not essay writing for essays**.

But there is also a lot of overlap: You couldn't say that each type or genre exclusively owns its own rules. For example, there is a widespread conviction among both teachers and students that one must not go "astray" from the topic, no matter the genre. And other rules are not specifically tied to particular genres. Some principles expressed by writers implicate readers' general dispositions and capacities, rather than a specific type of writing:

> **C:** When you divide it into subtopics you make it **easier to understand.**

> **E:** if you directly start with something abstract **they may not find it interesting** because if you read any article even in our newspapers the catchy thing is a title and a starting thing […] Wherever I've underlined, these are punch lines. I feel when we speak after some time **it becomes monotonous for some people to hear**. To grasp attention there should always be some punch line.

While some rules present themselves as self-evident, or derivable from an idea of human nature, others are described by writers as developing from long experience of schooling:

> **F:** whenever we are writing you are **not supposed to write directly on the answer**, we are supposed to give some background. / *Who tells you this?* / It becomes a habit now, nobody tells me. It's become a habit from five years of studying arts, it becomes a habit. Whenever I write **I start with the background**.

> **H:** This is exactly **what is expected** ... I begin with a definition of alliteration every time I do a stylistic analysis.

> Teachers also express rules, some of which they vouch for:

> **L:** A survey [of the literature] ... should be just a page. Not more than a page. Perfectly sized, just a paragraph.

Other rules teachers recognize but regard with detachment:

> **G:** Expected styling is to **begin with various definitions** and then come down to what you think of them. But somehow students get stuck with those definitions and never come down to the definition they think is best. */... /...* **It doesn't matter** how they begin according to me.

Both writers and readers expressed many rules, and we might think rules would be the location in consciousness of centripetal forces, or that rules in students' minds are transfers from teachers

or from general edicts. But in fact consciousness of rules is heterodox and relative: People have a range of ideas about the origins of rules, and they take a range of positions in relation to the rules. For example, we find some rules, like the definition one above, about which teachers are indifferent, and some which teachers recognize as widespread in students' practice and consciousness, but which they themselves do not endorse:

> **J:** I think what she's trying to do is highlight the unusual collocations that she has found out. I think she's falling back on **the same old story that teachers don't read the whole thing so if you have them underlined it strikes out** and they would pay more attention to it.

> **O:** She … is trying to give importance to the subject by tracing the Classical roots of the subject. *…* **a lot of people in the Indian context wish to go back and provide some history** and I think reference to, to whatever Classical writers there are, **reference to previous periods is always considered a worthwhile thing to do. I don't necessarily think that it has made a great impression**.

Teachers and students are also split on the use of subdivisions and headings: Teachers are skeptical about them, but students believe they are called for. Writers learn some rules, and apply them with confidence — but readers aren't necessarily in agreement with the rule or the application. Rules can disseminate and flourish in some sectors and not others, and the rules belonging to sectors which are not apparently dominant can still prevail.

Including ideas of where rules come from, linguistic consciousness represents authority as widely distributed, rather than centralized. Some rules are noticed as originating within the writer herself: asked *Is that how most students would do that, put it that way? "A"* answers

> No. / *Where did you learn that? /* It all comes **from within**. […] It's not taught, but I suppose **all of us have some kind of ability** to [use examples from the Indian context]

While schooling can be observed as a direct source of rules ("The title should be a very catchy one, and the first paragraph should be interesting *... / Where did you learn to do it that way? /* This is the way we had in school, that is what **our English teachers** made us do"), it is not always so direct, or such an efficient transmission of a standard.

In one writing episode, students are provided with a "checklist" ("based on the checklist provided in Leech and Short's book *Style in Fiction*") and with repeated instructions:

> **J: I have told them** that always after finishing their stylistic analysis they must come back to the theme and revise their theme accordingly.

But students mainly do not do this. Explicit instructions do not guarantee an outcome:

> **J: I have asked them to give me the definitions** to see whether they've understood it or not. There are **very few who have done it** … **Again**, reflect which theme of the poem and how.

Indeed, instructions do not guarantee an outcome even when they are repeated, as this student report verifies:

> **H:** In fact this is what she mentioned in class, every time you analyze something, tie it back to the theme. This is **something she has mentioned time and again.** But I guess **not everyone** is doing it.

And other teachers also find that between direct teaching and actual doing there's room for a variety of outcomes:

> **K: I think somewhere along the line they have misunderstood what I have said**, what I had said was that after you finished the context I would like you to make general comments about what you felt about the poem, something you had missed out in the theme, you can go back to the theme and add your impressions after the stylistic analysis.

> **L:** We provide them with **a model, how the thing is to be approached,** but it's clear that she hasn't been able to get to all those **nuances**.

A genre-theoretical perspective on rules could predict these last-mentioned episodes of shortfall between direct instruction and actual practice: Rules can be ineffective half-measures for conveying the tacit know-how which genre users share. But this perspective would overlook surpluses too substantial to ignore. There is, for example, a substantial regularity in students' failure to observe the rule; there are substantial regularities in the observance and expression of rules which have not been officially issued or institutionally authorized. Similarly, a common-sense perspective on rules could predict reports of rules absorbed by writers from centralized schooling but could not account for self-regulation surplus to officially sanctioned rules. Conversations in Mumbai suggest that the expression of rules—of not only their content but also their origin, distribution, and observance—can represent aspects of linguistic consciousness which find authority locally as well as centrally, with rules springing up in many sectors.

Conclusion

Both Bakhtin and Bourdieu imagine a moment before modernity when linguistic consciousness would have been different. [11] Before centralization, language was a normative condition, but not yet a normalizing one. Modernity introduces a particular kind of linguistic consciousness, which in turn cooperates in the design and routine maintenance of modern systems. While consciousness of the standard is not the only indication of modern linguistic consciousness, it is the most prominent one. So prominent is it that it can fill our window—with the common-sense view of the standard as the universal instrument of self-expression, or with the critical view of the speaking self impressed into silence, as Crowley pictures non-standard speakers in the presence of the standard, or hesitant and intimidated by symbolic domination, as Bourdieu pictures them. But there is a wider view than these of the speaker's participation in the system.

Expanding the view, we might see in the scene of modern linguistic consciousness a capacity for recognizing systems themselves as open to correction: a capacity for monitoring the institutions

of language centralization, and their systemic effects. So Milroy and Milroy recommend changes in educational policy and testing to accommodate speech variety and thereby improve the integrity of the system and its ability to survey all instances. Under some circumstances such recommendations may be executed, but whether they are or not, they still comprise an element of modern linguistic consciousness (and complainers themselves frequently impugn educational systems, their complaints sometimes heeded and sometimes ignored). In Mumbai, readers and writers regard the examination system and evaluate it even as it evaluates them. As de Certeau (1984) says generally of institutional conditions, the examination is a fact rather than a law, so students imagine that it might be otherwise: Examiners might be better read, might be well-versed rather than narrow-minded, might be sharper in their evaluation of worth and "creativity" — but they're not. In a different vein but similar spirit, teachers manipulate their own participation in the system: Tactically, they calibrate internal ratings; strategically they theorize adjustments to the system. Imagining change, in the spirit of modernity, speakers establish outposts of value: not yet, or possibly never to be, drawn into the center, but circulating a petition for consensus nevertheless.

In the conversations reported here, these outposts are heard from in the proposals for change— and also in the expression of rules. While rules might seem the most likely opportunity for centralizing motives to unify consciousness, rules seem instead to incur themselves and position speakers to produce diverse conditions: Images of types are inherited from the center or arise locally; a rule is found deep within, or picked from the surface, or taken from the teacher; one does as one is told—or not, discovering a respectable option. The self is found in the observance of a rule, or in degrees of observance, or in shrugging off a rule. A rule is followed with conviction, or with detachment. A rule is declared—and ignored. Rather than a place for consolidation or for simple conformity or resistance, rules are a complex space in consciousness from which the speaking self witnesses variation in the presence of regulation. Most important, when estimating compliance, and customary ways of getting on, speakers tend not to represent themselves as occupying the norm—but neither do they (with one exception in the interview data) represent themselves as renegade. In modern systems, the speaking subject hears others, and hears itself among administered populations. Possibly, these conditions of modernity provoke a particular kind of linguistic consciousness and a particular sense of self, neither wholly conforming nor radically resisting.

Other measures of linguistic centralization have also gauged the self in its variation. Milroy and Milroy deliberate on "non-standard" linguistic identities in terms of solidarity and stigma: Even in their consciousness of the standard, people can apparently refuse its social advantages and choose instead affinity with groups stigmatized by non-standard speech (a refusal which has baffled generations of well-meaning teachers in systems of mass education). Crowley's and Bourdieu's measures of centralization estimate selves and consciousness as less choosy and more regulated—or betrayed once more by their choice: In speakers who have acquired rather than inherited the standard, it will always display marks of its acquisition. In Bourdieu's linguistic domains, the "legitimate language" is the arena where self is equivalent to *habitus*, and consciousness is the experience of correction (for non-privileged speakers) or confidence (for

speakers whose privilege destines them for long years of schooling). The scene projected by conversations in Mumbai, however, suggest a terrain more like the one which Cameron surveys, where in the vicinity of the standard she finds pockets of rule-givers and fringe enforcers, schemes of intervention and projects for change. In its mobility among speakers, linguistic authority delegates many agents of regulation, amateur as well as official, and unlike the complainers in the Milroy tradition or the grammarians in Bourdieu's, they don't necessarily have close ideological ties with the center.

Moreover, the "center" is itself multiple, or distributed. Even where the center seems most systematic, most assured of control over reading and writing, as in for example the relationship between the syllabus and its examination, it is vulnerable to agitation or interruption. In the slender space between these sites (measured as very slender indeed by the many reports of examiners' preoccupations with syllabus materials), libraries insert themselves: college and university libraries, home libraries, teachers' collections, departmental reading rooms — each used, accumulated, organized, and on-loan according to different principles of information, and liable to accidents. (So, on a particular afternoon, Annie Besant, required in the syllabus, can't be found in the library.) Writers explain their negotiations with published statements as demanding in production and uncertain in reception: Books themselves can be centered as the seat of authority—"the book" of the syllabus—or they can veer off, becoming "personal" (or, as in the case of Yeats' philosophy, possibly canonical in another system). Even at the heart of this public system, looking for books can be a private venture, a wilderness expedition with uncertain destination, an investment with uncertain returns.

Modern consciousness can also rescue the self from aggregates by tracing the developmental curve: Teachers can follow the progress of the speaking subject towards an ideal, although writers themselves seem to have a less calculating sense of this progress. So we might wonder about these perceptions, and the effect of their expression, which may be within or beyond earshot of writers themselves. To see oneself approach an ideal may be an impossible aspect of modern linguistic consciousness, and one may learn to rely on watchful, semi-official overseers to estimate one's progress.

While teachers recognize writers' approaches to an ideal, they also recognize a self emerging amid the words of others ("this 'mighty' word…. It's the student's own language…. It's used currently"). But especially it is writers themselves who can pick out the boundaries between others' words and words that have become their own. They are aware of activities at the border, where a word's credentials are called for, or it is asked to account for the company it keeps.

> [people] transmit, recall, weigh and pass judgment on other people's words, opinions, assertions, information, people are upset by others' words, or agree with them, contest them, refer to them and so forth. (Bakhtin, p. 338)

The actions of taking an interest, agreeing, compiling, condensing or elaborating—even knowingly taking the dictates of "authoritative discourse"—all these actions pick out self in its "ideological becoming." Even though writers may not identify this becoming, their remarks

suggest that these processes go on at some level of awareness in linguistic consciousness. Speakers are not unwittingly filled up with words.

Bakhtin's analysis invites us to concentrate on the opposition between centripetal and centrifugal forces: Centralizing and decentralizing motives engage in a never-ending pull and push, a tug-of-war which results not in homeostasis but in the monitored instability of language. The pull of the center can never overcome the push away from it, but neither will the center cease in its efforts. Yet it also seems that, even as the center is multiple, it can also detach itself from hegemonic interests and re-form in circles of organized linguistic consciousness. These appear—and disappear—in moments of perceived regularity, when rules and their distribution are noticed. They also appear in larger formations. Particularly at the B.A. and B.Ed. level, writing and reading address goals beyond the examination — without necessarily defying it, and possibly even cooperating in the creation of the common values which Crowley describes as "national." Teachers report as currently and urgently demanding attention from students each of these discourses: environmental concern; the status of women in Indian society; the sectarian crises of communalism and the problems of civil unity. Students develop wordings for these issues; they adopt, adapt, and elaborate attitudes. And at the M.A. level particularly, students configured and re-configured postcolonial theory, performing readings of colonial history and Indian contexts. In these cases, ideological becoming owes a lot to the mechanisms of the center, even if these are not operational in the narrow mandate of the examination. Some features of modern systems may, as Bakhtin says, aim for a "*maximum* of mutual understanding in all spheres of ideological life," as exponents of "forces working toward concrete verbal and ideological unification and centralization, which develops in vital connections with the processes of socio-political and cultural centralization" (p. 271). But other features of modern systems may operate on planes other than those controlled by the center.

And, even while the center is tireless in its efforts to convince itself of its own control over language, as Susan Miller (1991, p. 58) describes the schemes which administer composition in U.S. universities, it cannot control its own reputation. Participants in the system rework the center and personify its anonymity. Students share the work of making the legend of the examination, taking as well responsibility for knowing the techniques and rumors which address the legend. Holding their own against the magisterial eminence of the exam, they devise tactics and develop tricks. Students also consult the category "originality," one which Bakhtin analyzes as deriving from unitary conceptions of language, the domain of the standard and centralized examination: It is the promise of the center, and the artifact of the standard. Yet, students' consciousness of "originality"—which they may owe to the ideologies of centralization— nevertheless makes them skeptical of the promise. Possibly, the skepticism rationalizes outcomes, and the belief in "originality" secures a modern sense of self compatible with this centralized system.

"Originality" contributes to the legend of the examination which students compose, and also appears in teachers' accounts of the center. Teachers tell an additional story too, figuring the chronotope of the center. In this story, students venture towards the examination, from near and far, and pressed for time. The schedules of their journeys unfold the districts of the city and the

regions beyond, plotting grids of class hierarchy. In late modernity, this story is the sub-official narrative of centralization, an old story rumored beneath liberal systems and public mandate.[12] Possibly, in organizing and re-organizing people, modernity re-formats linguistic consciousness of class difference, as the centripetal current of standardization and systems of mass education both mystify and disclose hierarchy.

And lingering in the current episodes of examination are the annals of the examination system itself, instituted in the mid 19th century, centrally important to the political economy of the colonial regime, and surviving that regime to manage mass education in the late 20th century.[13] That history is itself infused with the record of English studies in India and the U.K.: As Gauri Viswanathan (1989) has explained, formal, examinable knowledge of English literature appeared in India in the 1830s, long before it did so in Great Britain.[14] Like any history worth telling, this one is not sealed but active in late-modern linguistic consciousness, and mentioned tangentially in interviews by both readers and writers. It is in mind as "J" evaluates a student reading which misses Blake's allusion. It is also again on the table when the professor provides a checklist from Leech and Short's *Style in Fiction*, which has come to the classroom via her graduate education abroad, and the western graduate education of those who determine the syllabus, their advanced studies supported by the British Council. James Clifford's (1997) thoughts on "travels and contacts [as] crucial sites for an unfinished modernity" (2) suggest, first, that students' "dwelling" (*vs.* traveling) may be what Clifford calls a "particular worldliness"—a position traversed by their well-traveled teacher; and, second, that the historical dimension of colonial inheritances is overtaken or at least fused with geographical dimension of late twentieth-century academic qualification: the chronotope of the British Council.

* * *

In principle, a modern system performs unperturbed by changing content: Modern organizations, for example, are supposed to operate oblivious to the coming and going of particular individuals. So our experience of modernity can convince us that form is separable from content—yet this experience of separation may also arouse a compensatory sensitivity to specific content that has been overlooked: The oblivious operation of a bureaucracy, for example, can be decried for letting some particular person "fall through the cracks."

Accordingly, in matters of language, our modern attention is attracted by the transcendent form of the standard operating undisturbed by actual instances of speech. Myths of formality gather around the standard: the myth of perfect understanding, fetishized as "clarity" and "communication"; the myth of a centralized language as a value-free channel for the expression of the individual self and original "voice." When some voices go unheard or fail to sound, associated myths compensate for the discrepancy: the myth of "mechanical correctness," which inspires counter-fables of classrooms liberated from obsessions with form; the liberal myth of valuing all speech equally in the presence of the standard—for the differences are only formal. So Milroy and Milroy, early in the current commentary on the standard, rescue self and identity

by relativizing speech forms—a move which Bourdieu notices elsewhere and condemns as "naïve," for ignoring the telling particularities of distinction and its contents.

And Bakhtin also tells us that it is a radical error to separate form and content:

> Form and content in discourse are one, once we understand that verbal discourse is a social phenomenon—social throughout its entire range and in each and every one of its factors, from the sound image to the furthest reaches of abstract meaning. (p. 259)

His account of ideological becoming makes no distinction between form and content, nor does his category "verbal-ideological consciousness." Conceptually in opposition to formalist theories, typicality is "the basic ingredient … in points of view, in how the word is seen and felt, ways that are organically part and parcel with the language that expresses them" (p. 367).

Typicality fuses verbal materials with seeing, feeling, acting, and being. It is also the site of individual intentions, taking "discourse as a reified, 'typical' but at the same time intentional phenomenon" (p. 367). Paradoxical as this may seem, it is a conception nevertheless available to the writers and readers quoted in this study, who recognise the processes of ideological becoming amid the words of others. And they can distinguish this from the imposition of "authoritative discourse."

But they are also citizens of modernity, which respects form and system. So modern linguistic consciousness entertains multiple indications of self: in the "originality" which system promises—and in the ideological becoming amid the unorganized traffic of others' words. Modern linguistic consciousness induces awareness of speech norms and of one's own speech in relation to others—and also a sense of one's own speech not occupying those norms. Modern linguistic consciousness establishes confidence in systems; even makes it unthinkable that language could survive without dictionaries, copy-editors, style guides, or examinations in English. But it also imagines changes to system, and re-tells the center according to local legend. And it encourages the intuition that self is available to be discovered and redeemed in language.

Acknowledgements

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Notes

[1] Giltrow & Valiquette (1994) explain the surplus as sign of tacitness; Giltrow (2002a) revisits that explanation to propose the category "meta-genre" to name the "atmospheres of wordings and activities, demonstrated precedents or sequestered expectations" surrounding genres (195); and to recognize "commentary on writing as functionally motivated rather than simply mistaken or immediately illuminating, … a site where language users give an account of themselves, and try to come to a situated understanding of their activities, their positions *vis-à-vis* one another, the risks incurred and the indemnities afforded as they compose" (203).

[2] Language standardization is a long-established topic in sociolinguistics and historical linguistics, the latter producing materials for the oft-repeated story of 18th-century prescriptivisms. While both sociolinguistics and historical linguistics have taken a turn towards more critical and social-constructionist analyzes (see, for example, chapters in Cheshire and Stein, eds., *Taming the Vernacular* (1997), and Arnovick (1999) on 18th-century prescription for *shall* and *will.* Acknowledging prescriptive projects as proscribing "common use" (and thereby having a social dimension), Arnovick's re-analysis of 18th-century rationalizations for prescription finds "elaborate" models of pragmatic symmetries, both patient with and appreciative of careful distinction, suggesting that the means of rationalizing the standard are sensitive to the sociohistorical moment. The commentators I will cite in this chapter, however, write in adjacent but different fields, and take a more a more focused look at *consciousness*—public and otherwise—of language, encouraging perspectives which look beyond developments in orthographic, lexical, morphological, and syntactic uniformity to the frames of mind which induce, resist, or cooperate in centralization of language.

[3] *Dialogism*, in Bakhtin's analysis, is a condition beyond *dialogue*, where separate speaking subjects engage in exchange: Dialogism is the infiltration of the single utterance by "alien" words. The speaking subject hosts visits from the words of others; inside the single utterance, these visiting words come up against, condition, or elaborate the speaker's "own" words. The surrounding *heteroglossia*—the multiple speech styles at work in a language, and available to speakers—is the circumstance that makes dialogism possible.

[4] Although 'landmark,' and polemical as if swimming against the tide, Milroy and Milroy were not the first (nor do they claim to be) to challenge naturalizing versions of the standard. See for example, Geoffrey Thornton 1986 *Language, Ignorance and Education*, and others whom they themselves cite.

[5] Also like the Milroys and Crowley, Cameron records how linguistic expertise can be alienated from the center, and from common sense, in late-modern times. This alienation is a fascinating feature of the history of linguistic consciousness, one which might be investigated by means of Anthony Giddens' (1990, p. 79-92) analysis of *trust* and expertise in modernity.

[6] Cameron doesn't report her method of collecting data, and organizes their presentation episodically. So I have called them "anecdotal."

[7] As they originated under colonial rule in the 19th century, centralized examinations of students in university-level studies have been interpreted—with much supporting evidence—as a strategy for recruiting qualified Indians to the civil service. Since independence, the examination system has continued. It is broadly administered by national commissions, and regionally managed by bodies that set syllabi for examination, these syllabi governing instruction in the many participating institutions. At both the undergraduate and graduate levels, students in India focus much of their attention on writing for the actual event of the examination, or on preparatory exercises. As we will see from data collected, however, there are also many other occasions for writing in coursework during the year, carried on in the shadow—or light—of the examination.

[8] These techniques are exemplified also in Giltrow & Valiquette, 1994; Giltrow, 2000; and Giltrow, 2002.

[9] In transcriptions of interviews, **bold** font indicates emphasis added in the analysis; ellipsis points with slashes—/…/—indicate omissions which across one or more turns in the conversation, e.g. (and typically)., the interviewer posed a question and the interviewee replied; ellipsis points without slashes indicate an omission of material within the turn (usually the repetitions or false starts typical of speech); *italics* indicate the speech of the interviewer.

[10] While students readily reported their incorporation of the words of others from books, they seemed less likely than teachers to report explicitly the transfer of teachers' words to their own discourse. This process possibly occupies another area of linguistic consciousness, maybe one that would come to light later in life, when people remember their schooldays.

[11] Bakhtin imagines the experience of "an illiterate peasant," assured in the "inviolability of his own language," living at the same time "in several language systems": prayer, song, family, address to local authority (p. 295). "But these language systems were not dialogically coordinated in the linguistic consciousness of the peasant; he passed from one to the other without thinking, automatically…" (p. 296). Not until the peasant recognizes that these languages can mutually regard one another, that they are neither "inviolable" nor "predetermined," not until he recognizes "the necessity of choosing one's orientation among them," does the "critical interanimation of languages" begin in the speaker's consciousness. Noting the process of standardization as having a beginning, and a course of development, Bourdieu distinguishes between the linguistic unification of the *pays d'oïl* and that of the *pays d'oc*—but both follow an earlier period, when "So long as a language is only expected to ensure a minimum of mutual understanding in the (very rare) encounters between people from neighboring villages or different regions, there is no question of making one usage the norm for another (despite the fact that the differences perceived may well serve as pretexts for declaring one superior to the other)" (p. 46).

[12] In *The Politics of Indian English* (1998), Krishnaswamy and Burde describe, in the teaching of English, a far greater range of differentials than our interviewees suggest: "Those who can afford, get imported whisky and the best English education; at the next level, people go in for 'Indian-Made-Foreign-Liquor' (IMFL) and better English education; at the lower levels, most people will have to be satisfied with the government-approved locally brewed

liquor sold in 'toddy shops' and government-run English medium schools; and still lower are those who consume the illicit arrack, the least expensive but the deadliest, while their children learn how to say 'Daddy and Mummy' in some 'teaching shops' which pretend to be 'English medium schools'" (p. 72).

[13] Sumit Sarkar (1998) analyzes the historical role of centralized examinations in the distribution of resources and prestige in colonial India, finding — then <u>and</u> now — a hierarchization produced by this centralization. While examination provided for the recruitment and credentializing of the middle class for the civil service, it also cooperated with impoverishment of that class. Nowadays, English-medium instruction produces a new, and complex version of hierarchization.

[14] Like Sarkar, Viswanathan also describes the hierarchizing effect of centrally examinable English (literature and language) education in India in the nineteenth century. Imperial administrators and reformers figured on literary education to strike a bargain between secular and European-religious educationists at the same time as it addressed the Indian "mentality" invented by managers and reformers: they intended that it would displace Asian-religious/intellectual affinities, and then "filter" down to unify and modernize the colonial population. In addition it would provide candidates for colonial office. But centrally examinable English studies had other effects in India in the nineteenth century: a sharpening of class divisions as resources for English-language education were allotted to élites; and, as Sarkar also observes, a confusion and translation of social distinctions acquired by those who engaged in literary study.