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Discourse, genre and curriculum

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the central metaphors of curriculum as 'text' and 'discourse' that are adopted as the organizing metaphors for William Pinar's 2006 book *Understanding Curriculum: An Introduction to the Study of Historical and Contemporary Curriculum Discourses.* Using the works of Michel Foucault, the paper explores relationships between discourse and curriculum as procedures of exclusion. Moving on to genre as a literary form, the paper analyses the pedagogical form of the essay and the rise of the article as one of the most pervasive forms that underlie academic culture. In our postdigital age, however, both the article and journal have significantly changed. This paper shows that a historicizing of the curriculum, understood as an approach to curriculum studies, is a process of denaturalization of commonly accepted assumptions about the curriculum. Therefore, problematizing the concepts of 'discourse', 'genre', and 'text' enables us to understand the historical and constructed notion of the curriculum and to examine its contemporary postdigital forms.

Introduction

William Pinar's *Understanding Curriculum: An Introduction to the Study of Historical and Contemporary Curriculum Discourses* (2006, 5th edition) is the culmination of a life's work spent in the service of curriculum. It reflects a set of new understandings developed as part of what Pinar calls the 'reconceptualist movement' to describe a series of intellectual breakthroughs in curriculum theory that occurred with the emergence of the field of curriculum studies in the 1970s. Pinar decribes the origins and theoretical perspective of the reconceptualisation movement in curriculum theory as a radical departure from the reception of the curriculum as an official artifact or official discourse, based on the narrow taxonomic prescriptions of Ralph W. Tyler (1949) that picture the curriculum as a calculus for reading off a set of instrumental relationships between the school and the workplace. The early naïve view of Tylerian curriculum theory was seemingly based on the 1950s commonplace, commonsense, pragmatic and instrumental views about the transmission of cultural values and knowledge insofar as they informed a white homogenous and official outlook about the purposes of education. The aim of the reconceptualist movement, by contrast, was to use contemporary historical and philosophical theory to encourage

understandings of the wider meanings of curriculum and education that challenged the bureaucratization of schooling and instrumentalization of curriculum in order to initiate and open up the field of curriculum studies to new forms of theorizing.

Understanding Curriculum (Pinar, 2006) begins by historicizing both the notion of curriculum and the field of curriculum studies. By historicizing curriculum studies Pinar immediately introduces the notion that 'curriculum' is a discursive product of a particular era and the idea that curriculum is shaped by political and cultural forces that are dominant in that age. This move automatically questions the *naturalization* of the curriculum, that is, the curriculum understood as a natural artefact or as something that must take a particular logical and cultural form. The predominant metaphors adopted by *Understanding Curriculum* (Pinar, 2006) are those of 'text' and 'discourse', two meta-notions that themselves have undergone considerable theoretical development and methodological refinement over the past fifty years. This paper historicizes the centrality of these twin notions to show that they also can quickly become naturalized and institutionalized.

After introducing the notion of 'understanding curriculum' and tying it to the 'historical discourses' Pinar provides *staged* historical view of curriculum as 'historical text' according to four moments: Creation and Transformation, 1828-1927; Crisis, Transformation, Crisis, 1928-1969; The Reconceptualization of the Field, 1970-1979; and Contemporary Curriculum Discourses, 1980–1994 (Pinar, 2006, Ch1-Ch4). The substance of the remainder of the book is devoted to describing 'understanding curriculum' in terms of a series of 'texts': political text, racial text, gender text, phenomenological text, poststructuralist, deconstructed, postmodern text, autobiographical/biographical text, aesthetic text, theological text, institutionalized text, and international text. The rationale of this new expanded edition is to add to the perspectives but also to examine more closely the meta-concepts of text and discourse as they apply to curriculum.

Pinar argues that curriculum – or *currere*, a term that emphasizes an active construction – is an organic idea rather than an essence or form that never changes (Pinar, 2006). One corollary of this theoretical view is that the curriculum is a cultural and political construction that reflects knowledge/power relations and a set of official decisions of who to consult, whose and what knowledge and values count, as well as the choice of the means of conveying and interrogating the mandated curriculum. Another corollary is that teachers themselves must also discover the *currere* though an active process of engagement and through methods of experimentation and self-reflection. Curriculum theory therefore becomes the interdisciplinary educational experience that critically engages and actively constructs the processes, methods, aims, teaching, and general experience of the curriculum. By drawing on contemporary critical forms of praxis and philosophy, curriculum theory adopts an interdisciplinary approach to the study of curriculum as educational experience.

This paper seeks to refresh and extend the central metaphor of curriculum as 'text' and 'discourse' that are adopted as the organizing metaphors for *Understanding Curriculum*. 'Text' and 'discourse' are meta-concepts, or theoretical notions that have been developed and refined in the post-war years and function as forms of meta-analysis across the humanities and social sciences. We argue that these notions themselves require a critical and historical account, and we deconstruct the notion of 'discourse' and the concept of genre.

Discourse and curriculum

When we talk of 'contemporary curriculum discourses', what does this mean? Discourse is a term like curriculum: it has a history and a set of changing meanings and applications that have varied over time. The original word is from the Latin *discursus* that denotes written and spoken communication. As a general concept, it can be seen as a generalization of the notion of conversation that is now used to characterize the lexicon and language used in a given form or field of intellectual inquiry. In a sense contemporary curriculum discourse is similar to the concept of curriculum that has undergone relentless theorizing to become a central term and theory across the humanities and social sciences. The term discourse exemplifies the kind of critical work represented by curriculum theory as it recapitulates the movement of critical theory and methodology in the last fifty years. R. Keith Sawyer (2010) in 'A Discourse On Discourse: An Archeological History Of An Intellectual Concept' maintains that the term discourse has spread across the humanities and social sciences to become a dominant concept and approach. He asserts that there is a consensus that the current usage of the term 'discourse' originates with Foucault but he provides an archaeology of the term that problematizes its uses and attribution to Foucault after the standard usage of the concept dating back to the 1940s in the field of linguistics (especially sociolinguistics) where it was used to refer to a unit of language larger than a sentence. He writes:

> By the 1980s, British and American writers had begun to comment on the intellectual popularity of the term 'discourse', and its confusing, multiple and conflicting usages. In 1984, cultural studies scholars were commenting on 'the accusation of "discourse babble" that began to surface a few years ago when the term first erupted' (Henriques et al., 1984, p. 105). In 1990, anthropologists Abu-Lughod and Lutz wrote: '"Discourse" has become, in recent years, one of the most popular and least defined terms in the vocabulary of Anglo-American academics – As everyone readily admits, defining discourse precisely is impossible because of the wide variety of ways it is used' (Abu-Lughod and Lutz, 1990, p. 7) (Keith Sawyer, 2010, p. 434).

'The Order of Discourse' was the inaugural lecture given by Michel Foucault at the Collège de France on December 2nd 1970 and published in French as *L'Ordre du Discours* (Paris: Gallimard, 1970) (Foucault, 1981). Foucault sketches his approach to the study of discourse that at once includes the question of ideology, the history of institutions, and the regulation of speech. The traditional form of discourse analysis that linguistically studies discourse in a formal way under Foucault becomes an approach that links questions of power and desire. He begins with the following hypothesis:

> in every society the production of discourse is at once controlled, selected, organised and redistributed by a certain number of procedures whose role is to ward off its powers and dangers, to gain mastery over its chance events, to evade its ponderous, formidable materiality. (Foucault, 1981, p. 52)

We might paraphrase Foucault in relation to the curriculum to refer to its 'production' (and possibly its 'consumption', 'reception' and 'implementation') that is 'controlled, selected and organised and redistributed' (Foucault, 1981, p. 52) often to avoid embarrassing questions or issues. Fundamentally, we must ask by whom the curriculum is produced, for whom, and under what circumstances. Foucault goes on to elaborate what he calls the 'procedures of exclusion' (Foucault, 1981, p. 52). He remarks on the prohibition of

speech about certain topics, namely of sexuality and politics, that 'soon reveal its links with desire and with power' (Foucault, 1981, p. 52). He writes: 'discourse is not simply that which translates struggles or systems of domination, but is the thing for which and by which there is struggle, discourse is the power which is to be seized' (Foucault, 1981, p. 52). What is true of discourse in this sense is also true of curriculum. A curriculum is produced through difference, through 'procedures of exclusion' (Foucault, 1981, p. 52). In following paragraphs, we analyze Foucault's various procedures of exclusion as summarized by Garcia Landa (2014).

Procedures of exclusion

1. *Prohibition*. The subject matter of discourse may be forbidden; so may the speaker, or the occasion;
2. *Division of discourses, or rejection.* Such is the opposition between madness and reason;
3. *The opposition between truth and falsity*. The will to know is governed by a system of exclusions. (Garcia Landa, 2014)

Foucault discusses the procedures of exclusion inherent in the reason/madness binary: he maintains they are defined in an arbitrary manner by social convention that parades as science. Then he considers 'the opposition between true and false as a third system of exclusion' (Foucault, 1981, p. 54). As he suggests to make this move, one must not think 'on the level of a proposition, on the inside of a discourse' but instead 'on a different scale [by asking] what this will to truth has been and constantly is, across our discourses, this will to truth which has crossed so many centuries of our history' (Foucault, 1981, p. 54).

Foucault historicizes true and false in the same way that he historicizes reason and madness: both dualisms or binaries can be drawn up differently in different ages and they can vary from one society or era to another. More specifically, a given society's value system can directly affect what is and what is not considered true. Foucault notes that 'a day came [in the course of Western history] when truth was displaced from the ritualised, efficacious and just act of enunciations, towards the utterance itself, its meaning, its form, its object, its relation to its reference' (Foucault, 1981, p. 54). The will to truth, which Foucault calls 'that prodigious machinery designed to exclude' (Foucault, 1981, p. 56), is institutionally supported and reinforced (by libraries, laboratories, etc.). Furthermore, while the will to truth 'exerts a sort of pressure and something like a power of constraint … on other discourses' (Foucault, 1981, p. 55), it is also the procedure least noticed, for '"true" discourse, freed from desire and power by the necessity of its form, cannot recognise the will to truth which pervades it' (Foucault, 1981, p. 56).

Internal procedures

4. *Commentary.* That is, the division between canonical texts and their commentaries. Some texts are privileged (the canon, in religion, law, literature or science); others are commentaries of these major texts;
5. *The author* (as a principle for the grouping of discourses, a principle of unity and origin of their signification, as a focus of coherence) is another 'principle of rarefaction' in discourse;
6. *Disciplinarity*. Disciplines constitute an anonymous system … Disciplines define the kind of discourse on their object which will become a part of the discipline (not just any kind of discourse). (Garcia Landa, 2014)

Foucault writes: 'internal procedures (…) which function rather as principles of classification, of ordering, of distribution, as if this time another dimension of discourse had to be mastered: that of events and chance' (Foucault, 1981, p. 56). These internal procedures include commentary that he describes as 'a kind of gradation among discourses' (Foucault, 1981, p. 56). It also includes the author that is mentioned as 'a principle of grouping of discourses, conceived as the unity and origin of their meanings, as the focus of their coherence' (Foucault, 1981, p. 58). Finally, it includes the procedure of disciplines which are a principle of organization 'defined by a domain of objects, a set of methods, a corpus of propositions considered to be true', which 'is itself relative and mobile; which permits construction, but within narrow confines' (Foucault, 1981, p. 59).

Of the three internal procedures identified by Foucault, the procedure of disciplines is extremely important because:

> Within its own limits, each discipline recognises true and false propositions: but it pushes back a whole teratology of knowledge beyond its margins. (…) In short, a proposition must fulfil complex and heavy requirements to be able to belong to the grouping of a discipline: before it can be called true or false, it must be 'in the true,' as Canguilhem would say. (Foucault, 1981, p. 60).

Curriculum theory cements this conceptual link or relationship between curriculum and discourse through the disciplines. Since the late 1960s, both internationally and locally, we have witnessed the growth of subject areas outside the traditional liberal arts curriculum and disciplinary structure of the university curriculum: Black Studies (or Indigenous Studies), Feminist or Women's Studies, Critical Legal Studies, Film & Media Studies, Gay Studies, and Cultural Studies are some of the most popular. The principles underlying a global neoliberalism and managerialism were responsible for restructuring universities during the 1980s (Peters & Jandrić, 2018). Some thought that such developments imperiled the humanities, while others believed that the context of globalization and the development of new communications technologies offered new hope for both interdisciplinary work and the emergence of a critical approach.

In *After the Disciplines: The Emergence of Cultural Studies* Peters (1999) following Foucault inquires:

> What are the underlying historical, epistemological, and political reasons for the emergence of cultural studies? What do these developments imply for the traditional liberal arts curriculum and the traditional discipline-based university? To what extent does the emergence of cultural studies displace or dislocate traditional disciplines? What forms of resistance has cultural studies encountered, and why? To what extent does the emergence of cultural studies reflect a changing mission of the university and changing relations between the university and the wider society? What is the future of cultural studies? (Peters, 1999)

In a similar vein, in the first chapter of *The Archaeology of Knowledge* called 'The Unities of Discourse' Foucault (1969/2002) comments:

> We must also question those divisions or groupings with which we have become so familiar. Can one accept, as such, the distinction between the major types of discourse, or that between such forms or genres as science, literature, philosophy, religion, history, fiction, etc., and which tend to create certain great historical individualities? We are not even sure of ourselves when we use these distinctions in our own world of discourse, let alone when we are analysing groups of statements which, when first formulated, were distributed, divided, and

characterised in a quite different way: after all, 'literature' and 'politics' are recent categories, which can be applied to medieval culture, or even classical culture, only by a retrospective hypothesis, and by an interplay of formal analogies or semantic resemblances; but neither literature, nor politics, nor philosophy and the sciences articulated the field of discourse, in the seventeenth or eighteenth century, as they did in the nineteenth century. In any case, these divisions - whether our own, or those contemporary with the discourse under examination - are always themselves reflexive categories, principles of classification, normative rules, institutionalised types: they, in turn, are facts of discourse that deserve to be analysed beside others; of course, they also have complex relations with each other, but they are not intrinsic, autochthonous, and universally recognisable characteristics. (Foucault, 1969/2002, p. 24)

Methodologically following Nietzsche, Foucault reflects on 'the use of concepts of discontinuity, rupture, threshold, limit, series, and transformation present all historical analysis not only with questions of procedure, but with theoretical problems' (Foucault, 1969/2002, p. 23). Then he applies these concepts in turn to those mythical unities of discourse. First, the notion of 'tradition' which is given 'a special temporal status to a group of phenomena that are both successive and identical' (Foucault, 1969/2002, p. 23); then the notion of influence, 'which provides a support – of too magical a kind to be very amenable to analysis – for the facts of transmission and communication' (Foucault, 1969/2002, p. 24); then the notions of development and evolution which 'make it possible to group a succession of dispersed events, to link them to one and the same organising principle'; and then the notion of 'spirit' 'which enables us to establish between the simultaneous or successive phenomena of a given period a community of meanings, symbolic links, an interplay of resemblance and reflexion'. As he argues 'We must question those ready-made syntheses, those groupings that we normally accept before any examination, those links whose validity is recognised from the outset' (Foucault, 1969/2002, p. 24). Finally, 'the unities that must be suspended above all are those … of the book and the *œuvre*.' (Foucault, 1969/2002, p. 25) In the same way we might question the unities of the curriculum.

Conditions of access to discourse

7. The qualification of the *speaking subject* to enter the order of discourse.
8. *Societies of discourse*, which preserve discourses and make them circulate within a closed space;
9. *Doctrines*: Doctrine is a way of binding individuals to certain types of enunciation – 'Heresy and orthodoxy do not derive from a fanatical exaggeration of the doctrinal mechanisms, but rather belong fundamentally to them' (p. 64);
10. *Appropriation*: the social appropriation of discourse which takes place through educational systems. (Garcia Landa, 2014)

Under the heading we can consider on the one hand those who control the discourse of curriculum in terms of the formal curriculum prescription (e.g. the instructional content, materials, resources, and evaluation processes, the literacies and datagogies promoted, the aggregate of courses, the syllabus, the fundamental beliefs and principles underlying a curriculum), and, on the other hand, the discourses of curriculum theory. The analysis of the meta-concept of discourse allows us to be more structured in our study of curriculum and curriculum discourses.

There are in Foucault's works a number of 'philosophical themes' that require teasing out. For instance, questions concerning what he calls after Nietzsche 'the will to truth' and 'the will to knowledge', which raise explicitly issues of power/knowledge and the

way that power enters into the construction of the materiality of signs, discourse, genres and texts (Foucault, 1970, 1975). Clearly, we ought to add 'curricula' to this list. These issues also concern the founding subject, the author, the originating experience, and prevailing notions of 'origins' and 'essence' that pervade the analytic tradition. As Garcia Landa (2014) indicates, Foucault proposes two kinds of analyses for the future: the first, critical analysis, studies the principles of control of discourse; the second, genealogical analysis, 'studies the formation of domains of objects by means of discourse, the genesis of the [very] possibility of truth'.

Foucault's book *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (1970) has without doubt marked a turning point for the adoption of studies of discourse as material and historical genres and for the development of critical discourse analysis as a major form of historical analysis across the social science and humanities. However, of course, while Foucault encouraged a new understanding and approach to discourse, he was not the only theorist or thinker responsible for this change.

Genre as literary form

> The literary kind [genre] is an 'institution'—as Church, University, or State is an institution. It exists not as an animal exists or even as a building, chapel, library, or capital, but as an institution exists. One can work through, express oneself through, existing institutions, create new ones, or get on, so far as possible, without sharing in politics or rituals; one can also join, but then reshape institutions. (Wellek & Warren, 1949, p. 226)

Philosophically speaking, one of the great advances of the twentieth century is the realization that forms of thought are systematically related to forms of language; indeed, that forms of language shape or structure the expression of thought. This hypothesis, which has been refined over decades, has its source in the murky waters between philosophy, anthropology and linguistics. The Sapir–Whorf hypothesis (Kay & Kempton, 1984) in one form at least suggests that language determines thought and that linguistic categories limit and determine cognitive categories. Philosophy of language and various theories of meaning and theories of reference have investigated how language and meaning relate to the world. Some scholars suggest that language influences or determines thought (Dummett, 2006); others that thought structures language (Grice, 1989); and others, again, that thought and language are co-extensive (Davidson, 2001).

Philosophers like Tarski and Carnap remained skeptical about formalizing natural language and developing formal languages for analytic purposes while philosophers of ordinary language like Strawson and Ryle did not believe that the practical dimensions of meaning could be captured by logic or syntax. Wittgenstein was responsible for ushering in the notion that language is a diverse set of language games that pragmatically, in the stream of life, determine representation and denotation. He came to accept that one cannot isolate the representational dimension of language to understand its logical structure. In the Continental tradition language is related to 'logos' and language, and concepts are seen as part of a dynamic history of Being or becoming (Heidegger, 1962). In terms of one thread of this manifold tradition the distinction between sense and reference is abandoned for a semiotic conception of language as an autonomous and arbitrary system. This stream owes its roots to diverse strands beginning with the Russian formalist and especially Roman Jacobson who was responsible for coining the word 'structuralism' at

the Prague Linguistic Congress in 1939 and for introducing it to the anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss who began systematically to apply structuralist method to kinships systems and to inaugurate the great French 'moment' of structuralism.

For the purposes of this article we will maintain that forms of language we call 'genres' serve as the basis for the expression of thought. This need not be considered a one-way relationship. All we want to argue is that we can track the history of thought by examining its discursive forms and that for this purpose the fuzzy concept of the genre is a reasonable vehicle or taxonomic construction. This is not to argue that genres are 'real' or 'timeless' or 'transcultural' or 'universal'. For our purposes, all we wish to claim is that the genre is a literary form that comes into existence and undergoes change and development as media itself changes.

Genre theory from the Latin and French meaning 'kind' or 'class' is an ancient means for dividing literature into various kinds. It is a tool of classification that in the past has been responsible for broad divisions of literature into poetry, prose and drama. Various formal attempts have posited universal genres (Frye, 1957; Genette, 1992) and theorists focusing on contemporary media have identified the genres and sub-genres of film and television. Yet the classification is more of an abstract conception than an empirical taxonomy of that which exists (Feuer, 1992). Chandler (1997) makes the distinction between definitional and family resemblance approaches (after Swales, 1990) and other theorists have taken a pragmatic approach to genre in terms of the social nature of the production of texts under specific economic and technological conditions such as those that led to the development of television as a form of mass media.

The question that motivates us involves the academic adoption of the literary form of the essay especially in its pedagogical use as the main form of assessment and examination. This is of enormous significance because the form of writing is alleged to reflect the form of thought (i.e. there is a strong relationship between thought and language and the form of language development through genres provides a model for a kind of thinking in a way similar to the relationship between logic and grammar). Genre theory or genre studies originated with the Greeks who thought that the type of person determined the type of poetry they wrote: serious poets wrote hymns and eulogies representing the deeds of noble men, while writing satire focused on ordinary folk. The Greek tradition of literary criticism developed a literary taxonomy that distinguished various forms of epic poetry, tragedy, comedy and history, as well as philosophy as another form of poetry. We might refer to this as the classical curriculum that was interested in inherited tradition and preoccupied with what they regarded as essential human issues addressed in universalist terms.

The curriculum was based on the essential nature of genres. The Roman critics for instance distinguished between poetry and drama and the scholastic system that came into existence after the fall of the Roman Empire preserved a theory of genre based on essential forms. With the Enlightenment and after the introduction of the printing press the forms of writing exploded with the emergence of new forms like the pamphlet and the novel, forms that became the constituent parts of curricula and that permitted an official selection as 'great literature' and the successive historical formulation of the liberal arts curriculum. The taxonomy and the underlying assumptions concerning the order of genre has remained an integral part of the curriculum that can also be regarded

as a taxonomic mechanism designed to give stability and order to the selection of knowledge and values that define a culture and require transmission for its endurance.

Yet the principles underlying a theory (or law) of genre that accommodates the birth of new literary forms has been troubling to generations of critics and scholars since the late eighteenth century and genre theory has taken many turns. In 1980 Jacques Derrida and Avital Ronell published the essay 'The Law of Genre'. The concept of genre is a method for categorizing various types of writing, but the concept is based on a binary opposition such that a literary work may be defined or classified as belonging to one genre or another in that it coheres with the norms, conventions and interdictions that define a standard genre and maintain its purity and authority. The law of genre maintains the purity of the categories: 'genres are not to be mixed' (Derrida & Ronell, 1980, p. 55). Derrida and Ronell deconstruct this stable order of law and want to subvert it. They use the word 'text' to destabilize defined works under the law 'to upset their taxonomic certainties' and 'the presumed stability of their classical nomenclatures' (Derrida & Ronell, 1980, p. 63).

David Chandler (1997) notes the contestable nature of such a broad category, which equally could be said about the term 'curriculum':

> The classification and hierarchical taxonomy of genres is not a neutral and 'objective' procedure. There are no undisputed 'maps' of the system of genres within any medium (though literature may perhaps lay some claim to a loose consensus). Furthermore, there is often considerable theoretical disagreement about the definition of specific genres. (Chandler, 1997)

Starting with the problem of definition he quotes Robert Stam:

> A number of perennial doubts plague genre theory. Are genres really 'out there' in the world, or are they merely the constructions of analysts? Is there a finite taxonomy of genres or are they in principle infinite? Are genres timeless Platonic essences or ephemeral, time-bound entities? Are genres culture-bound or transcultural? … Should genre analysis be descriptive or proscriptive? (Stam, 2000, p. 14)

Chandler also notes that some Marxist critics see genre as an instrument for social control for the reproduction of ideology or culture. Utilizing the basic model in media theory that intuits a three-way relationship among the text, its producers and its interpreters, he suggests that a genre can be seen as a shared code between the producers and interpreters of texts and he goes on to cite Gunther Kress:

> Every genre positions those who participate in a text of that kind: as interviewer or interviewee, as listener or storyteller, as a reader or a writer, as a person interested in political matters, as someone to be instructed or as someone who instructs; each of these positionings implies different possibilities for response and for action. Each written text provides a 'reading position' for readers, a position constructed by the writer for the 'ideal reader' of the text. (Kress, 1988, p. 107).

In 'History and Genre' Ralph Cohen (1986) argued that the concept of genre is a flexible category in theory and practice that has changed and varied in terms of its use over time. He argues that genre is an open concept and not a determinate category with each genre being composed of texts that comprise a grouping open to change as new additions are made and where a new addition might change or stretch the genre to include something different. Cohen puts it this way:

> Genre has been defined in terms of meter, inner form, intronsic form, radical of presentation, single traits, family traits, institutions, conventions, contracts, and these have been considered as universal or as empirical historical groupings. (Cohen, 1986, pp. 203–204)

He refers to Foucault and Derrida to cast doubt on the dividing line between literature and philosophy. If the practitioners of these genres find it difficult to make hard and fast distinction then clearly we cannot be dogmatic about these groupings and must learn to accept fluid categories where there are overlaps, complexities and contradictions.

More and more new hybrid genres have come into being that lie at the intersection between classical or traditional genres or that deliberate experiment with the genre's conventions. This kind of experimental ethos has increased with digital environments and new Internet platforms that redefine texts and forms of textuality, emphasizing new inter-textualities and also the radical confluence and interdependency of music, sound, text and image. Digital environments have changed practices of 'reading' and 'writing', 'listening' and 'speaking', 'viewing' and 'watching'. The new radical concordance of different media therefore redefines practices of literacy. 'Texts' that comprise genres now taken a myriad of different hybrid forms (Peters & Jandrić, 2018, Ch 17), which consist of various mixes of the digital and the non-digital – in our recent works, therefore, we call them post-digital (Jandrić, Knox, et al., 2018; Jandrić, Ryberg, et al., 2018; McLaren, 2018; Peters & Besley, 2018). The question of genre is important for curriculum theory because it, along with the concept of 'text', makes up the constituent analysis of curriculum. Let's take the example of a kind of pedagogical genre called the essay.

The pedagogical genre of the essay

> For the point at issue for us now is not what these essays can offer as 'studies in literary history,' but whether there is something in them that makes them a new literary form of its own, and whether the principle that makes them such is the same in each one. What is this unity—if unity there is? … The question before us is a more important, more general one. It is the question whether such a unity is possible. (Lukàcs, 1974, p. 1)

The essay is a genre developed by Montaigne in his *Essays* (Montaigne, 1580/1993), and then by Hazlitt, Congrieve and Nash in England, as a form that expressed a personal reflection. For Montaigne the essay is both personal and private, even a self-defining expression or presentation of self, based on the artifice of confession or truth, as is revealed in his Preface:

> This, reader, is an honest book. It warns you at the outset that my sole purpose in writing it has been a private and domestic one. I have bad no thought of serving you or of my own fame; such a plan would be beyond my powers. I have intended it solely for the pleasure of my relatives and friends so that, when they have lost me - which they soon must - they may recover some features of my character and disposition, and thus keep the memory they have of me more completely and vividly alive.

> Had it been my purpose to seek the world's favour, I should have put on finer clothes, and have presented myself in a studied attitude. But I want to appear in my simple, natural, and everyday dress, without strain or artifice; for it is myself that I portray. My imperfections may be read to the life, and my natural form will be here in so far as respect for the public allows. Had my lot been cast among those peoples who are said still to live under the kindly liberty of nature's primal laws, I should, I assure you, most gladly have painted myself complete and in all my nakedness.

> So, reader, I am myself the substance of my book, and there is no reason why you should waste your leisure on so frivolous and unrewarding a subject. (Montaigne, 1580/1993)

From the outset the modern genre of the essay was philosophical in the sense of being a reflection that tells the reader something personal about the author.

The first is exemplified by Francis Bacon's *The Essayes or Counsels, Civill and Morall* (2000) that are directions that he gives to people. For instance, his first essay 'On Truth' echoes Montaigne but lays out what everyone needs to know about the subject. Addison and Steele in *The Spectator* (2018) added considerable variety to the form and they also wrote criticism. Samuel Johnson is probably the greatest moral essayist of the era. He does not write personal essays, but uses the persona of 'The Rambler' to make observations and engage in 'criticism':

> Criticism is a study by which men grow important and formidable at very small expense. The power of invention has been conferred by nature upon few, and the labour of learning those sciences which may, by mere labour, be obtained, is too great to be willingly endured; but every man can exert such judgement as he has upon the works of others; and he whom nature has made weak, and idleness keeps ignorant, may yet support his vanity by the name of a critic. (Johnson, 1759).

Charles Lamb and William Hazlitt, both writing in the beginning of the nineteenth century, are very interesting essayists (see Chadbourne, 1983). And of course we must acknowledge Locke's famous *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (Locke, 1689) that begins with an epistle to the reader and then systematically advances an empiricist reading of ideas, words and knowledge (and probability) that is based on a rejection of the Cartesian theory of innate ideas and principles.

In the modern and postmodern contexts the form of the essay has taken different directions. Nancy Fjällbrant (1997) in her paper 'Scholarly Communication - Historical Development and New Possibilities' argues:

> Today we are at the threshold of the greatest change in scholarly communication and knowledge transfer that the world has ever seen (even including Gutenberg and the printing press). Developments in computer technology - cheaper processors and memory devices - provide the means for the production and storage of ideas, thoughts, research and experiments in digital form. When this is combined with the possibility for rapid global transfer by means of high capacity networks we can begin to envision a virtual global *knowledge society*. It is, therefore, appropriate to examine the phenomenon of *scholarly communication* in order to see which factors will promote change and the forces that will be in opposition to this. (Fjällbrant, 1997)

She asks how did the *scholarly journal article* come to dominate the publishing landscape and, we might add, also modern pedagogy. It is a major question that demands a history of scholarly communication and a discussion of the origin of the scientific journal article. She explains, following Kaufer and Carley (1993), there are a number of important aspects in academic writing, including the ownership of an idea, the societal recognition for the author, the claiming priority for a discovery, and the establishing an accredited (sometimes professional) community of authors and readers. These features are only the barest of outlines that serve a role in the development of the academic journal scholarly system that dates from the establishment of learned societies in the late seventeenth century. The scholarly journal existed alongside a variety of other historical forms including the

scientific monograph, the newspaper, the letter as a form of personal communication, and also the scientific cipher or anagram system. In this environment consisting of scientific authors, publishers, students and other readers, booksellers, and others, the journal paper has become the accepted and preferred mode for scientific communication. Electronic publishing and the reality of networked publishing now has changed the practices of scholarly journals and academic publishing as well as the practice of writing itself that present new forms of standardization and the dominance of learning analytics and big data.

Olivia Y. Archibald (2009) is an author who has firmly grasped the historical relationship between representation, ideology and the form of the essay. By examining first-year writing programs in relation to the early history of the essay she reveals 'how and why a particularly limiting range of allowable subjectivities entered into the writing classroom through the essay's form' (Archibald, 2009). She explains in the abstract to her paper:

> Most college first-year writing courses privilege a thesis-driven form of the essay that is much closer to Bacon's (1592/1966) collection of essays, in contrast to those written by Montaigne (1575/1965), who is often referred to as the "Father of the Essay." Reasons for this practice include the writing curriculum's seeming alliance with classical rhetoric's definition of both essay and student writer. The concept of ideology as conceived by Althusser (1968/1971) proves useful for understanding the essay's implications in subjectivity formation. Although all essay forms are informed by ideology, the act of privileging thesis-driven forms in schooling practices can also privilege the practice of requiring students to take on subjectivities allowed only within those forms. Expanding the writing forms assigned within first-year writing programs can offer writers more open, contradictory possibilities for expressing authority, resistance, critical inquiry, creativity, and difference. (Archibald, 2009)

In a similar fashion, 'trying to make the point about homogenization and standardization of scientific thought', Michael Peters says that 'the article is a dirty little industrial machine' (in Jandrić, 2017, p. 52) – and such nature of academic writing inevitably interacts with the curriculum.

Conclusion

In this paper we are interested in the pedagogical form of the essay and the rise of the article as one of the most pervasive forms that underlie academic culture. After Montaigne, as Hélène Cixous (1991) explains, the essay genre split into two different forms: the *essay* as an informal, personal, intimate, conversational, and often humorous piece, and the *article* that became informative, factual, impersonal, systematic, expository, and evidential. It is the genre of the article we are interested in here because it has become the dominant academic form of scholarship both in the sciences and the humanities and has also quickly assumed almost a universal form as the basis for the assessment of students. Therefore, it is another historical form closely related to the curriculum. In the world of postdigital scholarship, however, both the article and journal that is its home are open to dramatic change in that same way that the nature of the book is subject to change. The digital revolution has affected the meaning of the book itself as it has affected the nature and form of the article and will affect the nature of scholarship and scholarly publishing (Jandrić, Ryberg, et al., 2018; Peters et al., 2016; Peters & Roberts, 2012).

Our study demonstrates that a historicizing of the curriculum as an approach to curriculum studies involves the historicizing of all genres associated with the concept of the curriculum. This historicizing is a process of denaturalization, or of making the familiar strange, of questioning the accepted commonplace and underlying assumptions that contribute and help to comprise the curriculum. By problematizing the concepts of 'discourse', 'genre' and 'text' we can begin to see the historical and constructed notion of the curriculum and we can also begin to examine the different forms it takes as we enter the postdigital era – the notion of the postdigital curriculum in particular needs close scrutiny.

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