

the author's public persona. But we react personally to books, and reviewers are no exception. I admit that I was moved by Mary-Margaret Jones's "Prelude" and Ann Beer's "On Being Lucky." I enjoyed the contributions of Monique Bégin, Frieda Paltiel, and Sally Gibbs, among others, all of whom consciously highlighted aspects of their professional life while also dealing with their feelings and fears. I love Juliana Nfah-Abbenyi's fine ironical story about her encounters with sexism and racism at McGill. These forms of discrimination, together with alcoholism and violence, and their impact on each author's life, form an important part of many essays and I admired the authors' courage in dealing with such painful subjects. Yet, other stories seemed so geared towards the public that they left me dissatisfied. Why did the authors suppress even a hint of their private life? Did Violet Archer, Canada's foremost female composer, ever experience discrimination or despair, friendship and love? Autobiographies are not simply factual documents, so why, in the mid-1990s, do many women still silence their private self?

While *Our Own Agendas* is no "autogynography" – a genre recommended by Domna Stanton in which authors explore their innermost, gendered feelings – the book nevertheless provides the reader with many examples of thoughtful feminist life writing. I recommend this anthology – moving, entertaining, and always informative – to anyone interested in women's lives. It is both educational and a very good read.

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DAVID CORSON (EDITOR). *Discourse and Power in Educational Organizations*. Toronto: OISE Press (1995). 368 pp. \$29.50. ISBN: 0-7744-0426-4.

In the last two decades the dominant positivist orientation of the social sciences has increasingly come under sustained attack from a range of competing theoretical perspectives. While this assault was initially led by Marxists, feminists, and, more broadly, critical theorists from the 1970s, scholars in the 1980s and 1990s have used poststructuralism and postmodernism to construct a theoretical critique of positivism. With the exception of mainstream economics, this critique now permeates and informs the intellectual practices of the leading social sciences, including anthropology, history, political science, sociology, and psychology.

Within education the impact of this critique has been extremely uneven. Where some fields of study have been profoundly influenced by

non-positivist approaches (notably the sociology of education and curriculum studies), others have remained entrapped within the yoke of a fading positivist hegemony. This is particularly the case of educational administration which has displayed a remarkable degree of insulation and inertia in its adherence to conventional theoretical paradigms and methodologies. It is against this background of insularity and an overwhelming dependence upon structuralist accounts of school management and organization that David Corson's edited collection, *Discourse and Power in Educational Organizations*, has been written.

The distinctive contribution of this volume to the study of educational administration lies in its conception of how and through what means power is exercised within educational institutions. Unlike conventional approaches which focus upon power as a function of formal authority, hierarchy, and office, Corson and his collaborators are concerned with power as a primarily discursive phenomenon that operates through language. As Corson puts it: "Language is the vehicle for identifying, manipulating, and changing power relations between people" (p. 3). This approach is reflected in the contributions by other authors to this collection, particularly in their shared advocacy of detailed ethnographic analyses of gender and educational leadership (Shakeshaft & Perry); teacher-supervisor instructional conferences (Blase & Blase; and Waite); and the commodification of "experience-near classroom examples" (Wortham). In this way, we are presented with an analysis of the operation and effects of power as it is expressed through and organizes the everyday cultural transactions that constitute school management and administration. That is, power is understood as an essentially *relational* phenomenon that is primarily concerned with the formation of individual subjectivity.

Discourse and Power in Educational Organizations is a timely and important contribution to a growing, if still marginal, body of literature that is only now beginning to challenge the received orthodoxies that have constituted educational administration. In Britain a similar approach has been charted by Stephen Ball and his colleagues in their attempt to develop a "policy sociology", while in Australia Peter Watkins, Jane Kenway, and other members of Deakin University's faculty of education have produced critiques of educational administration using insights drawn from theoretical advances associated with postmodernism and political economy. However, while the "discursive turn" that *Discourse and Power in Educational Organizations* brings to the study of educational administration is to be welcomed, its highly abstract and theoretically

dense style must limit its accessibility to a wide readership which it would otherwise deserve. Despite this reservation, I am sure that it will provide an invaluable aide to researchers and practitioners concerned with developing alternative analytical frameworks for exploring contemporary forms of educational governance.

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JAMES F. SLEVIN & ART YOUNG (EDITORS). *Critical Theory and the Teaching of Literature: Politics curriculum pedagogy.* Urbana, IL: National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), 1995. 369 pp., \$22.95. ISBN 0-8141-0963-2.

Slevin and Young's selection of essays represents what they consider "a vital exchange of views" on the issues raised at the NCTE-sponsored Summer Institutes for Teachers of Literature in 1991 and 1992. The articles selected include contributions by keynote speakers at the two conferences (Barbara Christian, Peter Elbow, Gerald Graff, Mary Louise Pratt, and Robert Scholes), additional essays which the editors describe as having been "incubated" during the conferences, and further collaborative and conversational explorations of the original ideas. The text as a whole investigates the crucial questions that several decades of literary theory and criticism have implicitly raised for academic teaching; as the contributing authors imagine – and report on – alternatives to the discipline's long history of believing "coverage" to be an appropriate pedagogical model, "the canon" an agreed-on certainty, "the professor" the exclusive agent of learning, and the classroom as a place where education is "delivered", the struggle with issues of personal and institutional politics, and with theoretical and practical implications for curriculum and pedagogy.

The text is divided into the three sections listed in the subtitle: *Politics curriculum pedagogy*, and each section includes a range of articles in a variety of styles and forms. Overall, the contributions are of very high quality, and though every exceptional essay cannot be mentioned by name, certain ones such as Mary Louise Pratt's "Daring to Dream: Re-Visioning Culture and Citizenship" and Eric Cheyfitz's "Redistribution and the Transformation of American Studies", are noteworthy for the historically-grounded and intellectually-challenging "bookends" they provide the *Politics* section of the text. Similarly, Gerald Graff's "Organizing the Conflicts in the Curriculum", an extension of his influential 1992 challenge to "teach the conflicts", and Wendy Bishop's "Attitudes and Expectations: How Theory in the Graduate Student (Teacher)