teacher in these performances, Newkirk asks “What kind of ‘self’ do we invite students to become?” and “What kinds of ‘selves’ do we subtly dismiss?” (6). He indicates his own struggle with such questions: “Previously, I often felt constrained to dislike elements in student writing that I thoroughly approved of in their lives—their optimism, energy, capacity for enjoyment, idealism. Translated into writing, these qualities often appeared clichéd, trite, naïve; they were everything I had been conditioned to dislike” (107). In many ways, Newkirk’s decision to attempt to view his own responses to student writing as “conditioned” reveal a frankness and a kind of trust necessary for both the composition classroom and composition studies to function as sites of critical negotiation. Regarding a student’s paper on her work at an animal shelter and her evolving sense of agency with regard to the animals’ welfare, Newkirk recalls that he might have in a less reflective mood considered the work trite but that with the effort to “listen more carefully,” he discovered that he was “finally paying attention.” Must we invite students to perform versions of self in writing in order that we might truly hear and honor their writing? Surely not. But perhaps in reading Newkirk’s careful reflective and reconstructive work, we may rethink with diminished cynicism the value of personal writing for the ways in which it accompanies the teaching of rhetorical knowledge and skills, particularly as that teaching involves the concept of ethos—the self-conscious awareness of one’s values, beliefs, and biases that is essential to academic (and other) writing. As well, it can’t hurt to confront our own beliefs and values with regard to the ways in which we construct, deconstruct, and reconstruct students within our classrooms and our scholarly conversations.

Orem, Utah


Reviewed by Marshall Myers, Eastern Kentucky University

For centuries now, scholars have struggled with the problem of how to interpret texts. From as early as the ancient Greeks and Romans who anticipated looking for meaning both through the style of a document and in its content, scholars have labored to find the most satisfactory way of determining the inherent “meaning” of a piece of writing. Whether they looked at an artifact as a product of its times, or whether they saw a text to

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be generally free of outside influences, whole schools of thought have argued that writing should be interpreted a particular way based on the suppositions of a specific hermeneutic and theoretical construct.

Concentration on one particular methodology to the exclusion of others, however, has meant that often the full richness of a textual interpretation has sometimes been sacrificed at the altar of a limiting methodology, leaving the text's "meaning" confined to a particular stance to the exclusion of other more fruitful interpretations. Scholars are labeled "deconstructionists," "new historicists" or "structuralists" so that we can neatly classify both them and their methodology and see interpretation as a one dimensional activity: one text, one interpretation. But the result of using just a single approach is that such procedures oftentimes miss obvious opportunities to interpret texts more fully. Indeed, even the concept of "author" itself has been challenged, leaving readers and scholars afloat in a sea of confusion, frightfully wondering just where to turn for guidance and understanding.

Rarely, however, do hermeneuts use a variety of approaches to understand an artifact, seemingly because such a multi-faceted approach would add only more heat but hardly any more light to the questions of interpretation. Understandably, there is some merit in being consistent, for consistency, at times, can be conceived to be a virtue that not only adds weight to the argument, but also adds stature to the ethos of the critics themselves. Yet many texts go begging for interpretations that only one school cannot provide. Add to the mix, too, that literary texts are those most often analyzed, and most composition theorists are left cold. What, they may ask, does new historicism, for example, have to do with the first-year composition series? After all, our students are not producing literary texts; they are learning how to write, all too often, I'm afraid, the still living and breathing five-hundred word essay.

Of course, the probability is that most of our students will not produce literary texts. Does that then mean that the various approaches to interpreting texts provide no help to the composition teacher? After graduation, most of what our first-year writing students will write beyond their college writing experiences will be what may be called "everyday texts": letters, memos, proposals, reports, advertisements, and the myriad documents produced in a variety of settings and situations. At the same time, these same college graduates will also meet multiple texts to respond to, whether it be mortgage contracts, insurance policies, technical reports, and any other important written documents. In spite of the stern warnings of Quintilian, texts are often produced by less than "good men" who use the resources available to writers to produce documents of what Stephen B.
Katz calls “expediency” (55-75). As his article makes so clear, writing, for example, was used to effectively carry on the day-to-day gruesome business of the Holocaust without even a flicker of moral conscience. Consumers of texts, then, must be aware of the full moral implications of a document if they are asked to take moral action on a variety of issues they may confront in everyday texts.

Thus, thorough examinations of everyday texts, if analyzed by a comprehensive union of different approaches to textual interpretation, can provide writers with valuable information about how readers should interpret and how they should write documents that are both ethical and effective. To speak to this need, Glenn Stillar’s *Analyzing Everyday Texts*, in his words, “outlines an integrated and comprehensive framework for the close critical analysis of everyday written texts, puts the theory into practice by providing extended analysis of three different types of texts, and reflects on this analytical practice in terms of its theoretical implications” (7). It is “a daunting task” that “necessitates touching on major trends in the complete intellectual history of the 20th century” (9). Stillar must thus be the master of three approaches to textual analysis and make those approaches complement one another. To do that, he chooses to examine a series of everyday texts using a hybrid discourse analysis model, a dramaticistic approach, following Kenneth Burke, and, finally, an approach employing the theories of social action by Pierre Bourdieu. Much of the book explains in some detail which aspects of the three theories he uses for his analysis.

First, Stillar approaches discourse analysis by “bring[ing] together theoretical concepts from systemic-functional linguistics, communication linguistics, and social semiotics” (2), and he sees that “[t]he object of the analysis for a social and functional discourse analysis is language activity—actual texts in real contexts” (20). Language, that is, is not free of a particular context, and language is “not simply a series of concepts and names” (40). In Stillar’s words, “[i]t has an attitudinal and interactive component. The resources of the interpersonal function respond to motivated and interested acts between people in social circumstances” (40).

This attention to the social environment of text melds well with the current interest in the role of the social context in the production of written texts and blends in neatly with the use he makes of the ideas of Bourdieu. Many of his cues for discourse analysis come from M.A.K. Halliday, so Stillar does discuss more familiar subjects like theme, cohesion, field, tenor, mode, and register, all pointed in the direction of “providing a vocabulary with which to identify and analyze the social, and functional characteristics of texts in context” (56). In general, his reasoning is sound and his explanations clear, although much is expected of the reader.
Secondly, for the rhetorical interpretation of everyday texts, Stillar uses Burke’s concepts of “identification” and “consubstantialization,” for Stillar sees, like Burke, that language as presented in these texts is “symbolic action that both complements and extends the social and functional discourse analysis” (59). According to Burke, language is a way of coercing cooperation between the writer and the speaker. That means that a text uses so many different means and foci that the act of successful communication is best seen dramatically wherein act, agent, scene, agency and purpose operate upon and interact with each other. Or, as Stillar says, “we begin to get a picture of how [the text] constructs a representation of ‘reality’; more important, the representation is attitudinal and motivated because every representation is the situated social practice of real social agents” (64). These social agents, then, “construct reality with reference to their practices and the terminologies that are a part of them” (64). In the second half of this chapter, Stillar details the various restraints on a symbolic act, including terms like logology, grammar, and rhetoric as Burke defines them. While uneven in places, this particular section of Stillar’s work will be the most familiar theoretical framework to trained rhetoricians and compositionists, thereby offering the most practical value in the classroom. Joe Comprone’s classic essay on applying the pentad in the teaching of writing is just one example of how Burke’s ideas have been used successfully to teach writing (336-340). Philip M. Keith’s essay “Burke for the Composition Class” also deserves mentioning (348-351).

Thirdly, using the thinking mainly of Pierre Bourdieu and Anthony Giddens, in Stillar’s words, he “seeks to investigate social theory to provide a means for systematically and explicitly exploring the social meanings of language acts in terms that complement and extend the discoursal and rhetorical theories” (90). Stillar sees social theory as an ally which views language as a force “through which we represent the world for ourselves and others, orient ourselves and others to that world and our representation, and organize and articulate both representation and orientation” (92). Key to understanding this social theory is grasping the concept of “habitus,” or the “cultural dispositions that social agents bring to bear in social practice” (95). Different social situations, that is, demand certain language responses characteristic of that particular culture. We might expect, for example, that upon receiving a gift, we, in our culture, will say “Thank you.” Obviously, texts represent more complicated responses, but the thinking is generally the same: the culture demands its members produce a customary response. While the length of this specific chapter is dwarfed by the lengths of the preceding sections, the chapter still renders a fairly perspicacious explanation of the concepts necessary to understand how and why Stillar interweaves all three approaches.
Following the three sections devoted to the explanation of his methodology is a long and detailed series of analyses of everyday texts. The first text he carefully examines is a Harper's magazine advertisement for a Saturn automobile. The spokesperson for the ad is an handicapped, female, African-American physicist, who, in the words of the ad copy, "you'd expect . . . would make a very calculated study" of the car before purchasing it, but who, upon seeing the Saturn at an auto show, makes an "emotional, if unlikely response from a keen, analytical mind" (110). Of course, the implications of the advertisement are duplicitous and insulting both to the readers and to the portions of society that the spokesperson represents. But to his credit, Stillar's analysis thoroughly and carefully dissects the often hidden assumptions the ad plays upon and brings to light the "corrosive" import of the advertisement; indeed, it is a real service to readers who would miss many of the most blatant examples of deceitful advertising if Stillar had not used the integration of his three methodologies to ferret out these various potentially destructive implications.

Equally interesting is his second extended analysis of a gathering of booklets from a Canadian Royal Bank promising free financial advice to its customers. While not nearly as misleading and harmful in its implications as the Saturn ad, Stillar makes thorough use of resources of discourse and dramatistic analysis, along with a kind of social analysis, to explore the ultimate meaning of providing a "free gift" to bank customers, detailing, then, the role played by language in the construction of a so-called "expert" system. Typically, for example, gifts imply an expectation of reciprocity, which sponsors, from the rhetorical point of view, a kind of guilt on the recipient's part, so the receivers feel an obligation to reciprocate. But that is not the whole story. Interestingly, this gift of expert advice "absolves Royal Bank of any culpability for reader's potential transgressions against the perfection of the advice" by noting that the advice is correct only "in principle"; besides since the advice is free, the bank does not shoulder any responsibility since the advice comes from the bank's "generosity" (151). In the end, the import of the bank's advice is, of course, much more subtle and fraught with a kind of linguistic trickery than the reader at first imagines.

The last text that Stillar analyzes is a progress report on a six year-old who attends an university speech and hearing clinic. Like the bank's series of booklets, what comes into focus in Stillar's analysis is the question of how expert advice is given to the consumers, in this case, to the parents of the boy. Stillar finds reason upon which to argue that the parents are as much consumers as those who read the Saturn ad or look to the Royal Bank's free booklets for financial advice.

The speech and hearing clinic's report, then, is making an obvious "rhetorical, social, and discursive" act worthy of careful interpretation
(152). One of the ways by which the speech pathologists assure the parents that their advice is sound is through the use of technical vocabulary. Expressions like dysfluent speech, secondary behaviors, blocking, and word and syllable repetitions pepper the report and supposedly give the parents assurance that the “experts” really do know what they are talking about. In addition, the report explains the child’s speech problems by setting up an appropriate “terministic screen” to show that there is a “problem” and that it is identifiable within the confines of the vocabulary of speech pathology, giving the consumers (in this case, the parents) the notion that the pathologists do have authority to study and treat the child’s speech abnormalities. Stillar, however, sees problems in the rhetoric of the report, things he labels “antinomies,” or ultimately various contradictions that are “indexed by the text’s own representation of the subject of the report, the clinicians and the clinic, and the nature of linguistic communication” (156-57). Particularly interesting is Stillar’s understanding of linguistic forms like extra-position which supposedly create an objective style, but which turn out to be, in this document, at least, ways to present often contradictory messages. Stillar concludes that the recommendation “is based on ‘evidence’ so vitiated by contradiction—at least in the way it is communicated—that anyone having to make a decision based on this report is faced with a difficult decision” (170). Here, more so than any other place, Stillar is able to show that “however mundane the texts are, the stakes are high for everyone involved” (177). Stillar’s case is a convincing one, for his analyses bring to light many aspects of the text that would remain hidden without this careful and lucid examination.

The remainder of the book attempts to extend and summarize the argument for using all three approaches. He says, for example, that

[d]iscourse analysis interprets instances of text in relation to systems of meaning making resources. Rhetorical analysis focuses on the role and nature of symbolic systems in enabling and constraining our means of identification and consubstantiation. Social theory recognizes the symbolic as both a constituent of social orders and a major means through which social orders are produced and reproduced. (179)

In Stillar’s mind, each of the different approaches goes at the business of interpretation a different way, a way not accounted for by using just one particular approach: “Different emphasis is given to certain elements of text and text practices” (186).

We may wonder, then, how is all this analysis useful to the composition teacher? Stillar answers that question by arguing that in order for an integrated theory to be useful to both the producer and the consumer of texts, it must be “diverse” enough to apply to a variety of texts; it must be
"systematic" enough to be useful consistently; and it must be "applicable" enough to "produce insights about texts that go beyond a mere labeling of the text" (190). He believes his approach fulfills all those requirements since he asserts that "the points of entry are increased when we approach text from three perspectives" (191). And finally, he concludes that when we use these three approaches "we create new ways to be involved with text—as readers, writers, teachers, students, and critics" (193).

Stillar’s points are well-taken. While I am not convinced that Stillar’s tri-part analysis is the only way to interpret text and to teach students to write, he does help us realize that everyday texts, texts that are so much a part of our lives, need more attention in the writing classroom. Our students will surely be both producers and consumers of such texts. In the meantime, Stillar’s methodology is a systematic way to continue that seemingly age-old search for how to interpret a text, how to reveal its ethical implications, and how to create an effective one within those parameters.

Richmond, Kentucky

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