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Styling writing and being styled in university literacy practices

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Abstract

Taking as its premise the ethical responsibility of the educator towards diversity, both in students and the materiality of their knowledge production practices, this paper examines four surfaces of emergence of academic writing governmentality. These are characterised as different 'styles' of knowledge production: Style 1 (canonic, Western rationalist governmentality); Style 2 (bureaucratic, product-control governmentality); Style 3 (transformative, academic literacy governmentality); and Style 4 (poststructural and deconstructive governmentality). Drawing on Foucault's genealogical approach (1991a), and a small 'archive' of literature and texts that regulate and/or problematise these four knowledge territories, I examine ways these complementary and competing disciplinary technologies orient us and our students differently in the 'constitution of ourselves as autonomous subjects' (Foucault 1991a,43), in both our educational and writing practices. The findings of the study are intended to make more explicit the hegemonic rhetorical landscapes, which call us all to order in our everyday practices. They are also used to argue that Style 4 affords small possibilities of keeping power in play within the university's 'matrix of calculabilities' (Ball & Olmedo 2012,103).

Key words: *autonomous subjects, Foucault, academic writing, governmentality, knowledge production*

Introduction

In his analysis and theorisation of governance Foucault allows us to understand it not as emanating from a 'single node located in a political hierarchy' (Hamilton *et al.*2015, 4) , but as a dispersed, practical everyday activity in institutional sites that is 'historicized and specified at the level of rationalities, programmes, techniques and subjectivities which underpin it and give it form and effect' (Walters 2012, 2). Thus governance ensures, as Rancière puts it, that 'the knowledge of society comes to be coextensive with the life of society' (2016, 32). As a related analytical approach, Foucault's flexible theory of governmentality is a practical toolbox for understanding and denaturalizing

'those forms of history that comprise our present' (Rose 1999, x) to which we are subject. The aim of this paper is to make salient the contingent nature of the practices, rationalities and techniques of four 'styles' of academic literacy governance, by which we produce ourselves and others as writing subjects and are controlled, in order to highlight some choices available in the networks of power within which we live our lives.

Our contemporary 'knowledge' and 'life' is epitomised by neoliberal governance logics of marketization, commercialisation and auditing, which ensure the grand narrative of the university and its subjects today is that 'the purpose of education is generic human skills, capacities and knowledges for a competitive labour market' (Luke 2015, 209). For Bowman (2014), these logics work oppressively to constitute teaching and learning under 'the three orientations of aims, objectives, [and] outcomes' (Bowman 2014, 9) in which disciplines need to explain themselves by answering questions such as: 'What is the point of this? What is the use of this? What are the profits or returns of it, and for whom?" (Bowman 2014, 10). As we engage with the simplistic binaries, neat categories and hierarchical structures in this present construction of what Dunne (2016, 15) calls the 'artifice' of higher education, and make ourselves into suitable subjects in the different contexts in which we are constituted, it can be all too easy to forget to interrupt the politics of doing pedagogical and writing work. Not doing so may mean we do not stop to question the present histories of writing practices we have learnt to accept as givens: to omit to see or explain writing 'as an epistemological concept that develops and mutates' (Hacking 2002, 10).

Of particular interest to me in relation to the different ideologies and practices which sustain the historically contingent, competing discourses framing knowledge and the agency of the (student) writing and learning subject, is the extent to which these acknowledge continuity and rupture as inherent to knowledge production. My intention is not to de-legitimate their respective positions, but to make more explicit the regulative styles and ideals of four such modes of writing governmentality, which we conjugate in our encounter with them in different contexts, so we may be more alert to what hangs in the balance when we either appropriate them or are appropriated by them. Hence, my ethical position aligns with that of Foucault, who refuses the 'blackmail

(Foucault 1991[1984], 42) of 'everything that might present itself in the form of a simple authoritarian alternative' (Foucault 1991[1984], 43) and instead questions every tradition locked to a singular version of knowledge and truth.

Styling the analysis

To structure this exploration, I conceptualise the four norms examined as governing logics of control, and/or writing 'styles ... that open up new territory as they go' (Hacking 2002, 184), each of which have different theoretical frameworks for understanding knowledge, objectivity and subjectivity, the agency of the subject, and the nature of writing. In keeping with governmentality approaches, there is no assumption of a 'particular ontology of social relations' (Walters 2012, 3) linked to these styles, but instead an ontology of the present (Foucault 1991a), and 'empiricism of the surface' (Walters 2012, 3). My interest is in the effect particular forms and formats of knowledge have on ways individuals fashion their identity and being in terms of a certain 'self'. The actual categories derive from my research into the topic for my doctoral thesis which examined the (im)possibility of the critical in pedagogy and student writing. I call these discursive fields, or 'styles' respectively:

Style 1 – canonic, Western rationalist governmentality;
Style 2 - bureaucratic, product-control governmentality;
Style 3 - transformative, academic literacy governmentality;
Style 4 - poststructuralist and deconstructive governmentality.

As guiding ideals and productive regularities and technologies in mainstream academia, it is arguably the first two which are more mainstream in organising writing practices and institutional intelligibility in the contemporary university, and also which are more tightly imbricated with singular versions of truth. However, this is not to suggest they take the form of oppressive strategies of power which 'crush subjectivity' (Rose 1999, viii). Rather, as with the latter two less visible and non-mainstream 'styles', they are disciplinary technologies of the self, whose various locations in academia both enable and constrain the subject in the daily business of becoming the self they aspire to be, and acting upon themselves in the present in order to become subjects (Rose 1996). In

this audit of the four governmentalities I necessarily engage with the productive forces of each, but align myself with the critical perspectives of Style 4.

The agency of the writing subject in such fields of governance is then 'an open question' (Foucault 1977, 299) to be considered neither as a universal, nor as an empirical object, but as a 'form of writing, of making, of thinking … which only applies each time it is evoked' (Manghani 2017, 166). The subject is 'the site of a multiplicity of practices or labours' (Rose 1996, 300), an emergent form rather than a substance that 'is not primarily or always identical to itself' (Foucault 1984a, 290), 'a permanent possibility of the resignifying process' (Butler 1995, 47). As such, the subject's embodiment, or performance, of knowledge ensures it always exceeds and disrupts its structural and social function. To structure this analysis of the productive force of four styles of governmentality 'I' conceptualise the subject as different agencies of discourse incited by a reflexive process of work on the self in response to interpellation (Althusser 1995, 308). I characterise these as follows:

Subject agency 1 – the centred, Cartesian subject
Subject agency 2 – the 'skilled' subject as compliant worker
Subject agency 3 – the transformed subject of empowerment
Subject agency 4 – the never-completely achieved subject of writing

Style 1 – The observing gaze of canonic Western, rationalist governmentality
Subject agency 1 – The centred, Cartesian subject
The territory of knowledge is now (still) panoptically organised according to the schemas of Western scientific discourse, and the English language, whose regularities channel cultural practices and academic rhetoric towards ideals of clarity, brevity and simplicity (Scollon & Scollon 2012, 139). The historical organisation of this scientific order of knowledge, of which the linchpin modernist assumptions are that science, philosophy and objectivity 'are synonymous' (Daston & Galison 2010, 4), is widely held to taken to have taken form in the seventeenth and eighteenth century. This in relation to events such as the industrial revolution, the shift from identifying the truth of beings in obedience to God's will, to doing so in conformity with the assumptions, institutions and praxis of scientific and capital production (Scollon & Scollon 2012; de

Certeau 2010, 199), and science's claims to be able to explain the universe in completely rational terms. In step with this ideological shift from the divine subject to the subject of reason came epistemological and ontological assumptions that the human being was an independent, rational, autonomous entity; 'a polity of mental faculties' (Daston & Galison 2010, 44); a subject of *telos* that could be taught to play their part in the march of history towards scientific and economic progress (Scollon & Scollon 2012, 116). Of particular relevance to the interest of this paper in the historical production of a certain model of knowledge and knowing subject, is that the 'advent of objectivity' (Daston & Galison 2010, 36) led to unease with the 'other' of subjectivity, and the need for it to be erased from representations of scientific knowledge.

Consistent with scientific systems, practices and laws, and their underpinning assumption of a wholly rational universe (Scollon & Scollon 2012, 115), was the requirement of a style of writing that sustains the idea of the autonomous subject of reason and 'bears no trace of the knower' (Daston & Galison 2010, 17). A style that echoes the rigour, reliability and precision of science and mathematic's framework of theorems and postulates whilst simultaneously inscribing 'reality' as knowable only through the objects of inquiry and objectivities of science. This is represented by Bishop Prat's 1667 guidance on the approach to language to be taken by the Royal Society, dedicated to promoting 'excellence' in science, which stipulated it should be 'analytic, original, move rapidly forward, have a unified thesis, avoid unnecessary digression, and, in essence, present only the most important information' (Scollon & Scollon 2012, 118). In this rhetorical disciplining of language and the self towards a certain style of coherence and function, where reason and judgement are exercised to curb 'the blandishments of the imagination' (Daston & Galison 2010, 224), and so as to further science's 'quest for truth-to-nature' (Daston & Galison 2010, 225), we can see a tacit injunction to bury and silence the dynamic multiplicities and fragmentations of historical praxis that organise knowledge (De Certeau 2010, 203).

Now hegemonic, and part of the set of utterances and statements that compose the 'archive' of society (Foucault 2002[1966]) which governs society's understanding of reality, the operations of this scientific discourse, or 'style' (Hacking 2002), determine ways the academy gives legitimacy to the types of subject positions offered in this

discourse and its localised enunciations, and what can be said in its discursive formation. Scollon and Scollon identify three archival strategies by which scientific representation perpetuates the unities and inevitabilities of its transcendental truth and relegates the messiness of scientific praxis to the margins: anti-rhetorical; positivist-empirical; and deductive (2012, 139). I now briefly examine the rationale of each.

Anti-rhetorical rhetoric is the dominant model in academic writing. It reinforces knowledge making as an impersonal, rational scientific process that produces concrete, authoritative 'facts'. It is rhetoric with the appearance of 'no rhetoric'. It is dispersed via university writing centres where neither metaphor, nor figurative language, is commonly acknowledged as a suitable feature of academic writing. However, as Swales (1990) study of the 'moves' of academic writing reveals, despite the '*impression* of [academic writing] being but a simple description of relatively simple raw material' (1990, 125) it is finely engineered to conform to rhetorical mechanisms of genre (Bazerman 1988). Such composition norms disguise the recursive, iterative nature of the multiple-drafting process which rhetorically demonstrates completion in a conclusion, and disregards the multiplicity of force relations and constellations of subjectivities immanent in such texts (Foucault 1998[1976]).

Strategies of positivist-empirical representational strategy that delegitimise the part subjectivity plays in knowledge-producing processes and results include: prioritising scientific thinking as the paramount model for thought; minimizing visibility of the contingent agency of human subjects in charting universal laws of logic and the physical universe; withdrawing the first person authority of the knowledge producer and exchanging it for passive forms of the verb; and the inherent assumption that language is a neutral, transparent medium for solving problems and conveying the 'truth' (Scollon & Scollon 2010, 141-142). Consistent with the need to legitimise one's 'discoursal self' (Ivanič 1998, 25) and to thrive in an existing system, all academics, be they students or tutors, are under pressure to enshrine the positivist rhetorical strategies of clarity and objectivity in their writing, to 'will their own passivity (…) within the field created by the distinction between objectivity and subjectivity' (Daston & Galison 2010, 246), and to distance or dissemble the embodied subject of academic rhetoric (Turner 2011, 72).

To maintain the idea that the text in academic discourse has 'primary authority' over the researching and researched subject (Scollon & Scollon 2010, 144), and rationality's interest in generalisable rules and laws, deductive rhetorical strategy acts as if 'human relationships are of little or no consequence' (Scollon & Scollon 2010, 144). Instead, it is the 'pure reason' of deductive logic and its duplicating rhetorical structure, whereby if the premise is true so is the conclusion, which bestows coherence to the research objects and experiments, soldered together in formalised, linear arguments. Hook (2007) approaches this totalising strategy of deductive reasoning through Foucault's theme of 'universal mediation' in scientific knowledge which works to discount the reality of discourse. As observed by Hook, Foucault's 'universal mediation', indicates the 'presumption of an omnipresent *logos* elevating particularities to the status of concepts and allowing immediate consciousness to unfurl (…) the whole rationality of the world' (Hook 2007, 115). To construct this restricted horizon around its practices, western science assumes 'an immanent reality as the principle of [its] behaviour' (Hook 2007, 115), thus determining 'discourse should occupy only the smallest possible space between thought and speech' (Foucault 1981 cited in Hook 2007, 115).

Premised on the scientific persona of a centred, rational subject, objectively observing the material world at a willed remove, the hallmark of legitimate writing in this system of governance is as a form of argumentation which presents evidence and reasons in a measured, balanced way, thus leading to a valid conclusion. Variations on this theme of critical writing can be found on numerous university study skills webpages. The ability to engage in such rhetorical practices plays a key part in authorising students as knowledge producers.

Style 2 – the observing gaze of bureaucratic, product-control governmentality
Subject Agency 2 – the 'skilled' subject as compliant worker

In this system of regularities, audit and quality assurance procedures work to produce uniformity, standardisation and conformity in teaching and learning practices and outputs, and so construct the university as a coherent whole instilled with singleness of purpose (Strathern 1997). By yoking knowledge to a political will of reductive simplification of knowledge production processes, the multiple possibilities and

complexities of interpretation, contradiction, and diversity of direction inherent to most social science and humanities disciplines are delegitimised and marginalised (Strathern 1997, 313; Ball 2012). Furthermore, imbricated with wider neoliberal systems of governance which make it hard to envisage life, or the university, or the self, outside a business framework of capital investment, productivity and profit, these regularities narrowly reconfigure the social purpose of the university and its subject. As Morrissey suggests, both students and educators alike undergo subjectivation to 'efficiency' in this 'performing institution' of the university (Morrissey 2015, 615), actively engaging in production of and resistance to expectations. As subjects of the university our capacity to act is harnessed by our indentured labour to the practices shifting it from serving the public good, to being a player in the global 'free market' of higher education. In this recasting of the university the value of knowledge is index-linked to capital gain, and the skill of individual students is a private good which must be paid for.

In this paradigm, which places the 'student as consumer' at the heart of the system (Willetts 2011), the university is symbolically naturalised as a service provider intended to 'upskill' the national workforce (Brecher 2010). Critiquing the skills agenda, Strathern (1997) points out that since policy dictates that the skills students acquire be aligned with corporate and state economic interests, they are meant to be 'transferable', 'multi-site' and match up to certain standard expectations. As a consequence, they are necessarily pre-defined, and so lay the ground for a homogenising and 'de-disciplining of university subjects' (Strathern 1997, 315). By privileging such problematics under the name of professionalism and employability, a clientele of willing candidates for the production line of higher education is generated.

From a discourse-analytical perspective, such procedures which reorganise the university in accordance with the needs of capital and industry, are enacted through 'genre chains' which link different genres together in 'systematic and predictable ways' (Fairclough 2006, 83) such that e.g. 'quality' is constituted as 'an institutionalized discursive entity' (Fairclough 2006, 84). In relation to the assessment of student writing in UK universities, such genre chain operations characteristically start with cyclical departmental periodic review and annual review documents which have very generic formats originating in a university's quality and standards guidelines. The interlinked

documents required for this typically: relate student learning to a university's teaching and learning strategy and graduate attribute skill sets under rubrics that include course learning outcomes and assessment strategies; encourage departments to self-evaluate successful and less successful instances of conforming to policy; aim to ensure the quality the of the student experience; and indicate examples of 'best practice' in relation to benchmarks and audit criteria. I complicate the neatness and seeming inevitability of such representations of higher education practices by examining one of the final links in the genre chain of student knowledge production: the micro panopticon of the mark-sheet, typically construed to mark the ubiquitous genre of the essay.

Undergraduate assessment marksheet grids contain and circulate the cultural and epistemological values of Western reasoning (Turner 2011, 67), and are designed to guide a certain management of the written word to ensure clarity of expression, objective reasoning and skills of synthesis and analysis are demonstrated. As an institutional visual and written representation of disciplinary knowledge, it implies it is inherently constituted by compartmentalized and objective parts with relatively impermeable boundaries and also evokes a certain universality of the writing subject and knowledge. As part of the system of classifying and measuring disciplinary techniques that implement audit culture, the task of these sheets is to produce 'bodies (…) both docile and capable' (Foucault 1991[1975], 294) whose activity and output aligns with institutional norms and broader mechanisms of social governance. To steer the subject towards the prioritised continuities of Western rationalist reasoning, these are explicitly mapped out in descriptors that specify the disciplinary knowledge and skills being tested and evaluated.

At the juncture of governance and subjectivity, the marksheet operates as a localised, mobile micro panopticon which functions in everyday practices to produce 'homogenous effects of power' (Foucault 1991[1975], 202). As such, in accordance with panoptic regulatory logics, it is spontaneously used by the educator in their role as observer of skills and progress to train, correct and classify behaviour, and also by the student to self-educate, self-correct and know the wrongs and rights of their behaviour in relation to production norms and outputs. The marksheet then is analogous to disciplinary software which programmes in the hardware of the writing subject the

rudimentary skills quintessential to academic intelligibility, and functions as a light-touch form of 'subtle coercion for a society to come' (Foucault 1991[1975], 209).

Pursuing this theme of the tactics of power further in *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault argues that these 'techniques for assuring the ordering of human multiplicities' (Foucault 1991[1975], 218) are relatively invisible and so inspire little resistance. To maintain its continuities, and frustrate the effects of counter-power and resistance, a discipline adjusts the multiplicities of mass phenomena to 'the apparatuses of production (…) it arrests or regulates movements; it clears up confusion' (Foucault 1991[1975], 219). Additionally, in opposition to the innate, adverse power of multiplicity, and the 'infinitesimal level of individual lives' (Foucault 1991[1975], 222), the physical and human science disciplines use:

> … procedures of partitioning and verticality that they introduce between the different elements at the same level, as solid separations as possible [so that] they define compact , hierarchical networks [of the] continuous, individualizing pyramid
> (Foucault 1991[1975], 220)

This particular structuring of hierarchy is found exercised in most undergraduate feedback sheets, in the form of a 'scaffolding' that offers students 'clear and concise' descriptors of the skills and knowledge they should aim to demonstrate to attain different levels of disciplinary performance according to authoritative criteria. By reinforcing standardized and uniform modalities of disciplinary knowledge, they calibrate thought, the eye, the hand and body with the 'style' (Walters 2002) of objectivity, and avert the gaze from knowledge's active genealogy of aporia and contradictions which are always already to unhitch the rhetoric of Western rationality from its moorings, and reveal its contingent constitution. Thus, the institution articulates the knowledge product and type of labour required, both of which the student worker complies with through rational self-regulation. In representing the activity of production as development of an aptitude, the very practice of disciplinary coercion, accompanied by increased management of the subject is concealed.

Other than unequivocally reaffirming the rhetorical norms of clarity, concision and logical structure which 'perpetuate European Enlightenment values' (Turner 2011, 78) of objective, rational, linear reasoning as the legitimate medium for knowledge production, a generic undergraduate feedback sheet used by my own institution prompts a number of critical questions. Why, for example, do undergraduate distinction level descriptors suggest it is good on the one hand under the rubric of 'knowledge and understanding' to demonstrate 'deep, extensive knowledge and understanding of ideas and theories' and to show 'considerable innovation in the selection of content/theory', whilst on the other, under the rubric of 'writing skills and presentation' the complexity of knowledge is to be articulated using an 'explicit and logical structure designed to maximise the development of ideas', 'clarity of expression', and 'fluent and effective writing'? There would appear to be an equally valid argument for complex, creative and original use of language to convey innovative use of theoretical stances and perspicacity in understanding. Likewise, whilst 'depth of critical analysis, perceptive judgement and independent thought' recalls the Cartesian subject of empirical knowledge, it does so by assuming that language is a neutral medium for conveying such astute discernment and individual thinking. Furthermore, in the marksheet's division of ideal knowledge production approaches into ostensibly clear units, there are certain concepts such as 'deep knowledge' whose meaning is far from clear or concise. The point is that such tensions and contradictions are not important. The point is they do not matter. The rationale for the argument that clarity and rationality are the best rhetorical norms for representing the natural and social worlds of Western knowledge is ideological, that has been made a commonsense norm over its long history. Hence, any manifestation of difference or the Other of scientific discourse is 'wrong', and/or used to support its claims to authoritative superiority. Therefore, those subject positions and textual constructions which do not speak to the rhetorical style and practices of modern rationalism, and implicitly critique them by not being fully beholden to official norms, and methodically marginalised and excluded by the marksheet's descriptors of what is required in academic writing and ordering of knowledge.

This is not to imply the ordering principles of academic writing delineated in a generic marksheet grid can or should be completely relinquished, they play a crucial role in the critical traditions of all academic and scientific inquiry. Equally, the marksheet genre

fulfils an effective role as a regulatory mechanism that coordinates the multiplicities of student writer subjectivities with pre-existing knowledge norms and practices that institute higher education. It performs this function too for the multiplicities of university educator interpretations of student knowledge production, and as such provides regulated spaces for educators to encounter and evaluate student learning and skills in ways apt to produce metric measures of achievement that meet with quality assurance and audit culture requirements. However, its lightly totalitarian technologies obscure and relegate to the margins of the fabric of knowledge its gaps, folds and multiplicities and thus provide a mythical account of the 'truth' of knowledge.

Style 3 – The observing gaze of transformative, academic literacy governmentality
Subject agency 3 –The transformed subject of empowerment

As a discursive field of governance , 'academic literacies' takes an explicitly counter-hegemonic stance towards researching and teaching writing in higher education, having as its main object of critique officially sanctioned, autonomous models of reading and writing which: (a) conceptualise 'literacy' as 'singular, universal, uniform and stable' (Blommaert & Horner 2017, 2); and (b), construct the knowledge and writing of students via a deficit discourse which operates to marginalise diversity and difference, sees learning purely in terms of acculturation to given conventions and expectations (Horner 2013). Indeed, as Lillis *et al.* (2015, 5) point out, this predominant approach tends mainly to call attention to 'what students *don't* or *can't do* in academic writing rather than what they can (or would like to)', which *inter alia* contradicts most universities commitment to access, equality, diversity and internationalisation at policy and mission statement level. To interrogate and put pressure on norms that construe academic writing, disciplinary knowledge and the writing subject according to a one-size fits all model, a range of approaches have been used.

Politically, 'Ac Lits' as it is called by Delcambre (2015), emerges from the diverse field of critical pedagogy theory and praxis, which sets out to challenge any status quo which institutes inequality and fosters disempowerment and illiteracy (Freire 1998), and to instead inaugurate democracy and equality (e.g. Freire 1972, 1998; Giroux 1992). Among the methods developed to bring about change is the use of dialogue between teachers and students as 'the necessary social force enabling transformation' (Nainby *et*

al. 2004, 35). The premise here is that in their interactions with teachers and each other as equals, students can learn to understand themselves 'as social historical, thinking, communicating, transformative, creative persons … capable of assuming themselves as "subject" because of this capacity to recognise themselves as "object"' (Freire 1998, 45-46). As a form of cultural positioning, critical pedagogy refuses to align blindly with government education policies' sidestepping of theory in their conceptualisation of pedagogy (Giroux 1992, 1), and acts and argues for education to be seen as a site of hegemonic political and cultural production. More concretely, the onus is placed on the critical educator to be alert to sites such as the layout of a classroom, architecture, disciplinary hierarchies, student-educator relations, and writing for the ways in which they reproduce class ideologies (Hardin 2002:40). Structuring this critical stance is the notion that struggle and 'a pluralistic conception of citizenship and community' (Giroux 1992, 245) mean 'literacy can offer new ways … of reclaiming power, voice and sense of worth' (Giroux 1992, 245). This is underpinned by assumptions of a 'natural and virtual *telos* of education' (Clemitshaw 2013, 269), and of a centred human subject represented as oppressed by the powers and vested interests of dominant social and corporate classes that may prohibit her, his or their emancipation. Widely prevalent then in these apprehensions of power as a binary battle between the oppressor and the oppressed are dialectical left-wing readings of society that presume the possibility of resisting and overturning 'sovereign regimes of truth' (Kincheloe 2004, 46).

In 2007, to account for academic literacies distinctiveness as a nascent field of inquiry that includes the ideals of transformation and empowerment, to unsettle the tendency for it to be construed solely in relation to academic reading and writing, and instead frame it as conceptual, methodological praxis within an ever-changing higher education context, Lillis and Scott argued that academic literacies 'constitutes a specific epistemology, that of *literacy as social practice*, and ideology, that of *transformation'* (2007, 7). This constitutional mapping of academic literacies as an object of knowledge and practice emerges in particular social and economic conditions in which the responsibilities of the AcLits educator are given certain types of salience. To depict these I turn to Percy's (2015) genealogical analysis of such educator responsibilities and the specific perspectives on parallel student subject agency conducted in Australia, in which she identifies four historical interpretations. These are:

> the *therapeutic intervention for the 'academic casualty'* in the 1950s-1960s, the *educational intervention for the 'social casualty*' in the 1970-1980s, the *curriculum intervention for the 'lifelong learner'* in the 1990s, and the *pedagogical/administrative intervention for the 'Graduate' in the 2000s*. (Percy 2015, 885)

Each of these modes of governance emerging from specific contexts renders intelligible different strategies for research and pedagogical action in relation to the 'non-traditional' student or university-produced Graduate.

Preceding, accompanying and following the paradigmatic assertions of Lillis and Scott (2007), a number of different investigative trajectories have been pursued to address questions not strictly nor solely aligned with those of literacy competence, but which instead locate and investigate this 'competence' and its users and producers in relation to disciplinary practices, power relations, contexts, identities, new literacy mediums, and genres of the site of the university. Typically these give value to difference, multiplicity and individual 'voice' as a constituent element of knowledge production and hence student writing, and operate to legitimate numerous alternative assessment genres to the ubiquitous 'essay' and honour diversity of approaches.

Research cleaving into the mainstream account of literacy in higher education since the late 90s, and authorising new practices, covers many areas. These include: thick interpretations of everyday social practices of knowledge production through observations of classroom practices leading to ethnographic accounts of what it feels like to perform scholarly activities for students with diverse cultural resources (Lea & Street 1998; Gee 2012); empirical investigation into the culturally blind and contested nature of academic writing teaching conventions, intended to foreground 'language as a central player in the work of higher education' and scrutinize the 'empirical reality of intercultural communication' in HE (Turner 2011, 1); corpora analyses of student writing in different disciplinary genres to identify genre families in student writing and ensure more relevant formal writing models for use in Ac Lits teaching (Nesi 2012); genre-switching experiments intended to problematize 'the dominance of the essay in

relation to disciplinary learning and teaching' (English 2012, 2), and to shift the goal of genre pedagogy from being remedial to constructive, and leading to skill at navigating the social semiotic affordances of genre as a knowledge resource; and exploring ways critical, qualitative research can allow students to be producers rather than consumers of knowledge (Henderson 2013). Since methodologically alert to the epistemic nature of writing in its construction of disciplinary knowledge, and its shifting form in different interpretive contexts, such research tends to avoid prescriptive, singular, boundaried accounts of writing 'style', though can be blind to its own normalising role in generating normative, regulating practices and procedures around 'transformation'.

Taxonomically interested in the different beliefs, ideologies and discourses which shape pedagogic practice and academic literacy research and education, in her 2004 paper Ros Ivanič uses a Critical Discourse Analysis approach to identify six distinct disourses. She categorises these as: a skills discourse; a creativity discourse; a process discourse; a genre discourse; a social practices discourse; and a socio-political discourse (Ivanič 2004). Employing a table, she provides a schematic representation of the six discourses, and their distinct beliefs about writing, learning to write, approaches to teaching of writing, and typical assessment criteria related to each (Ivanič 2004, 225). Her table also includes a column making explicit different processes implicated in the event of writing. Recognising the tensions and contradictions among the different socially produced approaches, she argues a 'comprehensive writing pedagogy might integrate teaching approaches from all six' (Ivanič 2004, 220). Whilst this work very usefully pluralises and problematizes singular notions of academic literacy and the teaching or writing subject, and hence provides a theorised model for research, it is premised on a model of 'human agents … continuously recombining and transforming discoursal resources as they deploy them for their own purpose' (Ivanič 2004, 224). By inferentially positing the agent as a subject that constitutes discourse from social semiotic resources rather than being constituted by subjectivation in discursive fields, the subject is announced as somehow exterior to the workings of power, from which position they are the causal foundation of meaning.

The suggestion writing and knowledge construction is managed by a purposive agent is not uncommon in this style of governmentality and means it can partially elude theory's

understanding of the immanence of practice, leaving academic literacies' writing open to the return of *telos*, causality and emancipatory possibility in its project of '*transformation*' (Lillis & Scott 2007, 7). Variations on this theme of separating out the empowered and transformed subject of academic literacies from the strategies of power can be found in various discursive traces in a recent book *Working with Academic Literacies: Case Studies towards Transformative Practice* (Lillis *et al*. 2015). Giminez and Thomas (2015, 30), for example, suggest that their pedagogical framework design provides students with 'opportunities for transformative practices through which they can gain control over their own personal and educational experiences', and Lillis (2015, 11) sees 'transformative 'design' in pedagogical and policy practices as a key way forward'. However, Mitchell (personal contribution to group introduction in Lillis *et al.* 2015:17) argues a 'transformative goal is never finalised [and] what counts as 'good' or 'better' is rightly the object of scrutiny', thus nipping teleological trajectories in the bud. Such unevenness in representation of the unstable ground of knowledge indicates the inherent complexity in maintaining understandings of knowledge and the subject as emergent and contingent within normative academic rhetoric.

Pushing towards establishing knowers and knowledge as always on the move, in an 'epistolatory conversation' which explores ways the path of flight of mobilities research in academic literacies intersects with similar in 'cross-language relations in academic writing', Blommaert and Horner (2017) propose 'a mobilities perspective for the conceptualization, teaching and study of academic literacies' (2017, 2). They present this as a paradigmatic shift to a model of 'change as the norm, which will itself require recognizing the change effected through seeming reiteration' (Blommaert & Horner 2017, 12) that comes closer to explaining 'the true nature and structure of the field of normativity in academic literacies' (Blommaert & Horner 2017, 15) which didactically signals non-conformity to norms as error. This model comes closer to undoing the assumption of an ontological relation between words and things and subjects, and by doing so questions the possibility of transforming the self or social processes in ongoing material practice.

Style 4 - poststructuralist and deconstructive governmentality
Subject agency 4 – the never-completely achieved subject of writing

In this discursive field defined by its refusal to blindly accept governance, there is no essentialist or humanist assumption of a 'bounded rationality' that can be mapped back onto a singular writer (Hertzberg 2015, 1211), nor a view that the significance of a form can be determined in advance (Spivak 1993, 1). Instead, there is an understanding of her/them/him as the temporal, emergent product and producer of a practical and agonistic engagement with the regulating conditions of Western rationalist materiality of Style 1, during the freeplay of writing (Foucault 1997; Derrida 1982; Hannam 2009), whereby the surplus of signification always disrupts the presence of intention in writing (Derrida 1986). It would be 'utopianism' (Laclau & Mouffe 1985, 143) to consider positive (re)ordering of the social were possible (Laclau & Mouffe 1985, 188), since there is no subject 'ontologically prior to power' (Ball & Olmeda 2012, 87), and we are all entangled in contingencies of the shifting, fragmented historical present in which we are both 'a constant *beginning* and … a constant *end*' (Ball & Olmeda 2012, 87). However, whilst rejecting old Left assumptions of the possibility of social change within the constant mutations and contingencies of the totalizing bodies of Western reason's 'endless interpretation and cross-referencing' (De Certeau 2010, 130), in this 'style' ways are conceptualised of fleetingly challenging the continuities of styles 1 and 2 of knowledge and subject governmentality.

Foucault rethinks the right to difference and variation as 'the virtue of critique', or more specifically 'the art of not being governed quite so much' (Foucault 1997, 45). From this position, the power strategies establishing a field of knowledge inescapably involve the subject's 'types of behaviour, decisions and choices' (Foucault 1997:64), so making sure there are always variable margins of certainty which disrupt the 'cold, machinic, calculative techniques' (Ball & Olmedo 2012, 91) of neoliberal, bureaucratic governance and reorganise the certainties of rationality. Seeing this from an alternative perspective, Derrida proposes the concept of différance to unsettle the teleological premises of knowledge production. By this he contends that stabilised, singular meaning is from the outset, 'broached and breached' by iterability, or the condition of writing, whereby each iteration, which perforce comprises some conformity to dominant codes, also adjusts or alters the same (Derrida 1986, 61), and is hence 'incommensurate with the adequate understanding of intended meaning' (Derrida 1986, 61). For Derrida, this ungrounded space between old and new conditions for the making or bringing into

being of knowledge is one of *poiesis* (Derrida 1988), that makes it possible to intervene in the highly determined contexts of university knowledge-making conventions using the incomplete power of the performative 'I can' (Derrida 2005, 5). Trifonas (2005, 211) interprets these complementary modes of thought in Derrida's inquiry as 'the instrumental (informative) and the "poietic" (creative), with their semiological effect being respectively 'representation' and 'undecidability'. Literacy practices and forms function somewhere inbetween the two.

Interrogating the question of equality's relation to pedagogy and its project of ostensibly guaranteeing progress to learners, Rancière (1991) targets the master-pupil dyad for the circle of power(lessness) it creates, which binds the student in a relation of inequality to 'the Old Master' and his methods (Rancière 1991, 15), and in which relative degrees of assumed ignorance of the student and assumed authority of the educator accompany the different levels of study and its structuring practices of 'progressiveness' (Rancière 2016, 26). To uncouple the intelligence of the student from the role of the teacher, Rancière proposes the book as a tool allowing students to learn on their own. Arguing that for master and student alike 'there is only one power, that of saying and speaking, of paying attention to what one sees and says [which] any man can do' (Rancière 1991, 26), there is thus no privileged perspective from which to know either the book, or the pedagogical steps required to lessen ignorance. Instead, the 'master' and student are fellow 'travellers weaving their path in the forest of things as signs' (Rancière 2016, 29). To give semantic force to this questioning of the inequality inherent to normative student-tutor relations, Rancière conceptualises both as 'ignoramuses' (Rancière 1991, 2016). As an additional catalyst for disrupting the ways in which 'bodies fit their functions and destinations' in knowledge's production, and more closely hinting at styles of writing inherent in knowledge production, Rancière proposes the 'poetic virtue' of 'improvisation' (1991, 64). This functions as a form of 'dissensus' (Rancière 2009, 48), that produces sense in place of commonsense by breaking open every situation from within to 'alter the field of the possible and the distribution of capacities and incapacities' (Rancière 2009, 48). Hence, rather than following the idea of learning 'such thing' or 'other thing' (Rancière 2014) that ensures a form of correspondence between the unfolding of time and knowledge, improvisation foregrounds learning

'something' (Rancière 2014), which produces a different temporal reality and concomitant loss of destination.

Rancière argues that such a re-reading of the pedagogic scene, with strategies for interrupting the 'social institution of intellectual inequality … present all over the surface of human relationships' (Rancière 2016, 29), requires 'unlearning', 'unexplaining' and 'undoing' (Rancière 2016) these old logics, and a deep will to resist the harmonization and uniformity of degree course as part of a global economic process (Rancière 2016, 33). It is stressed that the prefix 'un' is not to be understood negatively, or as an indictment of explicative practice, for example, but rather as a positive way of eliminating the obstacles normal forms of teaching and learning place in the way of 'the paths of communication between speaking beings' (Rancière 2016, 33). 'Unlearning' then is neither the antithesis to learning, nor 'simple semantic slippage' (Dunne 2016, 14), but an uncomfortable place from which to interrupt a learning whose hierarchies reflect the hierarchies of the social world we so easily take as a given in a culture premised on 'learnification' (Biesta 2013 cited in Dunne 2016, 14). As an idea to bolster denaturalisation of learning, Dunne (2016, 14) proposes we think of learning *in*comes rather than *out*comes, a Derridean inspired concept which he uses to refer to the unforeseen and to unexpected Others, originating in diverse unexpected catalysts and producing gaps in the generalised aims and outcomes of quality assurance discourse.

As a line of analysis for opening up normative codes of academic rhetoric, 'Style 4' supports the theorisation of the subject of academic literacies as an analytical notion for empirically discerning conformity with and bifurcations from the pre-coded fields of disciplinary writing. A subject engendered not in a formative, dialogic process between the cultural resources of the individual and academic meaning-making norms, but in a multiplicity of dynamic responses to (un)certainty by the subject, characterised by Nealon (2008, 98) as 'lively conceptual mutation' which always already eludes the singular, dogmatic or prescriptive.

Conclusion

The practices and truths of university literacy are deeply entangled with the archives of Western rationalism, with its intrinsic non-acceptance that knowledge is messy, unpredictable or unstable. Hence, it is conventionally argued that it is unhelpful or illusory to suggest normative forms of literacy, considered as efficient mechanisms for knowledge exchange, should be subject to change, all the more so by students. This inflexibility in institutional practice is challenged by the academic literacies paradigm which uses theory to respond to these norms, and provide arguments for supporting the ethical responsibility of the educator towards diversity and change. In these assertions, educators and students are construed as equals in their quest for rejection of oppressive dominant interests, with dialogue between both framed as possessing transformative potential. Whilst such work dislodges the focus on competence as a singular notion, and asserts the part all subjects can play in reinventing academic literacy, its premises and aims are complicated by its transformative agenda and neoliberal disciplinary technologies for regulating academic subjectivity which, as well as including audit of the self, also include freedom, responsibility and evaluation (Rose 1999). Accompanied by the hegemonic certitudes of benchmarking and measurement of achievement administratively embedded and policed, these constrain trajectories of diversity by centralised monitoring and disciplining of the system. Nevertheless, the contingencies of our present histories ensure that there is space within the authoritative intelligibilities of academic writing practices to make choices about how we conduct ourselves, and others. Thus, all subjects of university literacy, can give value and meaning to their own diversity in the texts they produce, with the intention of opening 'up new territory as they go' (Hacking 2002, 184), whilst knowing the ability to do so is an ever shifting possibility in different regimes of governance.

In the face of a university colonised by neoliberal logics, the political, moral and intellectual cost of not explaining the nature and structure of different governmentalities is high. Not delineating the specifics of the different norms at work leaves understanding of university literacy rather vague, unfocussed and ambiguous. It also encourages a rather confused and inconsistent account of academic subjectivity. For all higher education pedagogies, introducing awareness of a variety of 'styles' of governmentality of university writing, and the complex, dynamic interplay of different norms and processes at work, is surely a vital target of learning. An awareness of these

dynamics might also provide students with an incentive to see that rules are not simply to be blindly followed, but to be created when they are practised.

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