

## Reading and writing culture and nation: Theorizing the teaching of discourse in Sweden and the United States

### 1. Introduction

While conducting fieldwork in Sweden on multiculturalism and its relationship to discourse education, I heard stories from teachers that led me to reflect in new ways on my own teaching experiences and 'the multicultural'. I recall one teacher of Swedish language-arts describing an incident in which his pedagogical practice, a practice that he believed was responsive towards diversity, produced a paradoxical result. He has worked towards establishing a highly student-centered environment where students take personal responsibility for their education, designing their own projects, choosing themes to write on and discuss, and working independently. The teacher explained that one of his students, a student who had only recently come to Sweden from another country, was used to a more teacher-centered pedagogy and found it difficult to work so independently. This student felt particularly disadvantaged when undergoing evaluations. This story reminded me of a Korean student I recently had in a writing class for middle-school students. I tend to encourage argument and debate, believing it a tool students can use to express and defend their varied viewpoints. I also invite my students to disagree with me. But when I asked my student why he remained so quiet during discussions, he confided that he was not accustomed to such open discussions. He also explained that in Korea disagreeing with a teacher was disrespectful.

These classroom particulars are often ignored in debates about multiculturalism and education, which explore instead more general theoretical implications. Similarly, American debates reflect most often on multiculturalism as it manifests itself within the United States' borders. This paper, and the larger project of which it is a part, travels outside those borders to focus on the teaching of discourse and its relationship to multiculturalism in a country other than my own. Using ethnographic methods, I explore late-secondary discourse education in Sweden, a country actively discussing its changing cultural demographics. I analyze professional discussions on educational objectives and curricula among policy-makers, researchers, and teachers, evaluating the influence that collective and individual understandings of *multiculturalism*, *national and cultural identity*, and *diversity* have on current policy, research, and practice. By analyzing these concepts in a different social and political context, I aim to complicate current American discussions.

Scholars of varied nationalities have often asked me what the United States could possibly learn from a 'small nation' like Sweden on the subject of diversity. In undertaking this project I do not wish to suggest that issues of multiculturalism may

be addressed outside their particular social and political contexts. Yet discussions about multiculturalism, about its relation to concepts like nationalism, benefit from both local and global studies. Such studies help us to avoid the chauvinism and universalism that we are currently working to dismantle as we consider the boundaries of individual social groups within countries. International exchanges that consider both similarities and differences in the historical and present conceptions of and responses to cultural diversity will help scholars to demystify what diversity means for their own countries, as well as for other countries.

In its full form this work consists of three intersecting microethnographies - an ethnography of policy, an ethnography of research, and an ethnography of practice. Through each of these sections I explore the dynamic relationships between policy-makers, researchers, and teachers as they formulate and facilitate curricula and objectives for teaching discourse in a culturally-diverse society. This paper is more limited in scope and will focus mainly on material gathered in interviews done with Swedish secondary-school teachers of language-arts. I will present three interviews, identifying and reflecting on a few significant cultural patterns and interpreting these patterns in relation to current Swedish and American research. Before I present my study, however, I will address some of the limitations of my methodology and provide some relevant background information.<sup>1</sup>

## 2. Methodology

One prominent scholar in the field of English studies (North, 1987:284) argues that the

aim of ethnographic inquiry is to enlarge 'the universe of human discourse', in Geertz' phrase ... Its power as a mode of inquiry, and hence the authority of the knowledge it produces, derives from its ability to keep one imaginative universe bumping into another.

It is here that I locate my own goals in pursuing this study. Its value lies not in the answers or generalizations it makes, so much as in the questions it raises. In other words, shifting my focus to a different context has led me to see my own context, my own biases, in a new light - to make what seems natural and familiar in American writing and literature instruction suddenly strange and, in this process of recognition, to see possibilities for approaching the subject in new ways.

Admittedly, there are a number of limitations to such an approach. In writing an ethnography, after all, one still seeks to produce a coherent narrative, with reasonable interpretations for patterns and events.

Investigators may succumb to pressure they feel from the larger research establishment to make this sort of interpretation be (or seem to be) something other than what it is - to make it seem controlled, more systematic, more 'scientific' in a positivist sense. (North, 1987:306)

In conducting my research I have tried to resist becoming overly systematic. I hope that my interpretations will 'generate hypotheses' and not truths. Furthermore, in constructing a narrative of my own encounters with the Swedish educational sector, this paper does not strive towards some global understanding of Swedish and American pedagogy. Rather, I hope to raise new questions, which could give rise to further ethnographic research and to other quantitative and qualitative studies in the United States and abroad.

It is also important to recognize certain limitations pertinent to this particular study. While many of the teachers I interviewed spoke excellent English, often better than I spoke Swedish, I chose to do my interviews in Swedish. This allowed me to interview teachers who did not speak much English. I wanted, too, to have a fuller sense of the particular language that teachers use in Sweden to discuss pedagogical issues. I recorded these interviews and, thus, could go back to sections that I did not understand and rehear them. I also had assistance from a native speaker. Yet in reading over my interviews I recognize places where I might have asked the interviewee to expound or to clarify, but because I was not sensitive to the nuances of what he or she said, I did not follow up. Perhaps it would have been useful to have had follow-up interviews, but time and money were limited.

Some might argue, too, that a more fruitful approach to studying educational practice would have been to watch teachers working in the classroom. While I did observe a number of classes and also worked directly with a few groups of students, I found it difficult to gain access to teachers' classrooms. One issue my longer study takes up, in fact, is a certain tension that seems to exist in Sweden, as well as the United States, between policy-makers, researchers, and teachers. Some teachers I spoke with expressed concerns about the tendencies of policy-makers and researchers to come in to the classroom and prescribe remedies for what they are 'doing wrong'.

In an attempt to set teachers at ease I usually introduced my research project by explaining that part of what I wanted to investigate was this tension between policy-makers, researchers, and teachers. As a teacher myself, I also insisted upon my view - that in understanding educational endeavors, the expertise of teachers is as important as the expertise of researchers and policy-makers. I encouraged the teachers I interviewed to talk about both the positives and the negatives of their classroom experiences, the successes as well as the failures. However, I do realize that teachers' perceptions of what occurs in their classrooms may not match reality. But this study focuses on how teachers *theorize* about their work, of the relationship, from their perspective, of current theory to their particular practice. And while what actually occurs in the classroom may differ from the teachers' perceptions, I would argue that these perceptions still reflect a body of knowledge important to understanding the ways in which today's educators work.

### 3. Background of the study

For the purposes of my longer study I interviewed twenty-three teachers at five higher secondary schools. Four of these schools were public, serving students under twenty, while the fifth was 'private', serving adults seeking secondary-school certification.<sup>2</sup>

Swedish students complete nine years of compulsory education. Ninety-five percent of those leaving the compulsory school then apply to Sweden's higher secondary schools. Most are accepted. Should an individual meet with difficulties getting into the school of his or her choice, or choose not to attend a higher secondary school right after finishing primary school, he or she has the option of returning to school later in life. Students who start studying after age 20 have the option of attending a folk high school or a publicly funded adult education program. The folk high schools have a long tradition in Sweden and often are funded and run by churches, county councils, trade organizations, or nonprofit foundations.<sup>3</sup>

As in the United States, most institutions for higher education require twelve years of primary and secondary study. However, in Sweden students choose to enter specific programs of study as soon as they begin higher secondary school. Sixteen specific national programs are offered at various schools throughout the country. Fourteen of these programs are vocationally oriented, while the other two are theoretical, designed to prepare students for university studies. It should be noted that students attending vocational programs also go on to higher education, often at professional schools and university colleges. A number of core subjects are required for students on all programs. These include Swedish, English, civics, religious studies, mathematics, natural science, physical education and health, and artistic activities.

Since my own teaching experience has been mainly with students just entering college or university, one might ask why I chose to focus on the Swedish higher secondary school and not the university/college. While this varies from college to college, many American students spend their first year of higher education completing general education requirements, taking core courses in math, literature, composition, psychology, biology, and history, for instance.<sup>4</sup> This is particularly true at the small public college where I teach. Students often begin working on a specialized degree only after satisfying some, if not all, of these requirements. But students attending higher education in Sweden begin working on a specialized degree as soon as they arrive at the university, the assumption being that they have completed their 'general education' at the higher secondary level. Thus, since I am essentially concerned with the cultural role of general education courses in discourse and its practices (i.e., reading and writing), I chose to focus on the Swedish higher secondary school. However, in doing so I do not wish to claim that debates about diversity and education do not also occur in connection with Swedish universities and colleges.

Sweden has recently implemented a new higher secondary school. Control over curriculum and finances has shifted from the central administration to districts. But the government has still formulated and issued an umbrella curriculum with stated goals and aims for the various programs of study, for the special courses within those programs, and for the core courses required on all programs. The grading system has also been revised. Furthermore, while certain programs of study were formally two years in length, all students are now required to attend for three years. Programs have been consolidated, and certain requirements standardized. The hope is that the new secondary school, particularly its vocational programs, will provide a wider and deeper knowledge than the former system. The changes should also increase students' chances to pursue higher education.

The new higher secondary school has given rise to a great deal of debate, debate which has been considered in a number of provocative studies. Although the limited scope of this paper prevents a lengthy consideration of this debate, one issue under consideration, and central to this study, is the manner in which the new policy deals with cultural diversity. Important to the curriculum is the recent 'internationalization of society'. But also significant is that

Sweden has become both a *multinational* and a *multicultural* society. But when our interest for people and for countries around the world increases, we naturally also ask questions about *our own national identity* and *our history* and the contributions we can make to *cultural diversity* in this world. Knowledge about *our own culture and history* is important in order to understand *other peoples and cultures*. (quotation from *90-talets gymnasieskola och vuxenutbildning*, 1991)<sup>5</sup>

Taken from a proposal on which the new policy is based, this passage acknowledges the cultural complexity of today's Swedish society and places a high value on the individual's ability to negotiate such complexity. Yet certain terms used in the passage are left open to interpretation (see italics). Which countries are important to the process of internationalization? What exactly does or should a multicultural society look like? What constitutes the knowledge needed to know our own and others' cultures? Who is 'we', who is 'other', and of which narratives does 'our history' consist? And finally, what specific role should instruction in discourse practices, like reading, writing, and speaking, play in conferring such knowledge to Swedish students?

It is these questions I addressed in my interviews with Swedish language-arts instructors. These interviews were semi-structured interviews. Although I had prepared questions, I left room for teachers to explore meaningful tangents. I began the interviews by gathering general information about the teachers' backgrounds, their goals, and their methods when teaching literature and writing. I then concluded by having the teachers read the selection cited above and share their reactions to it. I specifically asked teachers to consider how the ideas expressed in this quotation related to their own teaching theories and practices.

In the next section I present material from these interviews, paying particular attention to the teachers' responses to the above quotation. In the analysis section that follows, I relate these responses to their earlier reflections on their goals and practices when teaching.

## 4. Interviews

### 4.1. Maria<sup>6</sup>

Maria teaches at an old and academically prestigious school, which offers primarily theoretical programs and attracts mostly university-oriented students. According to another teacher I interviewed there, the school has a fairly diverse student body, with as much as one-fourth of the student population having immigrant background (though defining 'immigrant background', as this teacher and others pointed out, is an issue in itself. This teacher defined it as first and second generation immigrants). But the teacher also remarked that these students tend to come from a socio-economically more privileged background than students with immigrant background at other secondary schools.

Maria has taught at School A for over twenty years now, witnessing a number of important pedagogical changes. Her areas are history, Swedish, and religion, and although she has taught on vocational programs before, she mainly works with students in the theoretical programs. She is also active on a committee investigating new student-centered pedagogies. This work has been especially satisfying to her. She likes the recent trend in Sweden to promote cooperation between teachers, commenting on how in previous years teachers seemed too solitary.

In discussing her goals when teaching Swedish, Maria stressed for me the general and overlapping nature of all three of her subjects. When teaching literature, for instance, she tries to give students pictures of the various writers' historical contexts. Context, she pointed out, affects 'who a writer is'; thus making connections between history and literature may give the students a better sense of the realities experienced by the writer. When working with a historical epoch, a teacher can also give the students a sense of how assumptions relevant to that period relate to their own assumptions. Maria does this by asking students to imagine themselves living at that time. 'That makes it interesting for them'. Maria also uses literature in her religion class, recently teaching Herman Hesse's *Siddhartha*. 'This is a book that takes up life questions interesting or relevant to them'. Maria added that what students find most interesting is that in which they see themselves. 'Everyone has his or her own life history and this history may be very different from another person's history, so it is important to consider individual histories'.

Integration within each subject area is as important to Maria as making connections between subjects. For instance, Maria remarked that teachers of Swedish are responsible for different areas, i.e., literature and language, but that she strives to combine them. She often has her students write in response to a particular author

they are reading. She may have them write 'spontaneously' and not evaluate their language use. Later she may have them rewrite this piece, and then she can evaluate it for form, as well as content. But Maria complained about the lack of time available, given the breadth of the material one is expected to cover.

I asked Maria to talk more about her goals in teaching writing. One of her main aims is to help students express themselves well. In her classes she often asks her students to write what she calls a 'thought report', where students write down everything they know about a historical figure like Charles XII and reflect over what they have read about him or her, drawing parallels with today. But she also wants to prepare them for university level work. Since they will be expected to 'discuss and investigate', to 'argue and reason', she often combines literature with exercises that will help them develop these skills.

I followed up these comments by inquiring about conventions in academic writing and whether students are expected to master a particular 'language' or type of discourse in her class. Maria asked for clarification and I described some current discussions in the United States over the academic language students are expected to use and the actual languages they bring with them into the classroom. She responded that there did seem to be differences in the ways people write. At an academic level, students are expected to write at a 'higher level'. But, she added, 'there are different levels in society, reflected in writing styles'. This becomes especially apparent when students try to write at a certain level. Because they are not ready to do so, they 'fall through, using words they do not understand'.

Next I showed Maria the above quotation from current school policy. She responded:

Actually this is precisely what I have been saying. In order to understand others one must first understand oneself. That is to say, it is really important for one to be able to relate to what others think and I think I really try to teach that in my areas. And I believe, also, that Swedish and history, as well as religion, are excellent areas in which to study different perceptions. History is a particularly good place, as you can find a sort of anchor. For instance, today we recorded on the board answers to the question: 'what symbolizes or depicts nationalism'? We then considered areas like language, geography, tradition, religion, culture. There was [a student] who said, interestingly enough, that a common enemy [symbolizes nationalism]. However, [I pointed out that] there are different ways to establish a nation. If one has a common goal, so one can establish a nation. But there are other [so-called] areas of feeling (or emotions) that we do not recognize. If we look at the ethnic conflicts in the Balkans, for example, how one ... how this can occur, and in Ireland and England. We have talked about the conflicts between Catholics and Protestants. So that one can, thus, have such a discussion [about this] in the classroom, which I believe is important. It is not so important to know everything from history; rather, it is more important to understand each other. So this [statement], that Sweden is a truly multicultural society today. One

could point out that many of them who come as foreigners, if we use that word, that is to say immigrants - it is usually that word that gets used - they build their own segregated groups and they hold together, and so the Swedes are in some way in the middle and there is rather bad contact. One place where there is contact is at the school and that must be the case, for the child has to go to school. But you know we had a government that just left office, and they encouraged groups to start their own schools. For instance, in [a near-by city], some Muslims didn't want to go to the regular school. They wanted to start their own school, and I think this is dangerous. They isolate themselves, and Swedish children, they become ... they never learn to pay attention to ... they never learn to understand other cultures ...

Maria added, though, that her school is different. They do not have many 'problems'. For instance, she really appreciates having students with different faiths in her religion class, since they can share some of their traditions with the rest of the class. She also remarked on recent school efforts towards internationalization as positive movements, pointing out that the school has been reaching its hand out in different directions, establishing exchanges with schools in eastern Europe.

#### **4.2. Henrik**

Henrik has taught at School B, a folk high school funded by a local foundation, for eight years. Like Maria he teaches Swedish, history, and religion. Founded in the nineteenth century to provide adult agricultural workers with a civic and vocational education, School B has a rich history. Now adult students of all cultural and socio-economic backgrounds and ages attend. A high percentage of these students have immigrant background. Like School A, School B offers mainly theoretical programs. These programs differ somewhat in design from those offered at public secondary schools like School A, but they provide students with similar qualifications. Many of the adult students who now attend School B continue on to higher education, often pursuing careers in the sciences and the social services.

In discussing his goals as a Swedish teacher, Henrik pointed out that many of the students who attend School B have had negative school-going experiences and lack confidence in their abilities. His goals include teaching students to express themselves with confidence in different contexts. For instance, students should be able and willing to write to the public authorities with their concerns. They also should be able to forward an argument in an essay and to analyze, or critique, what they have read. As a way to stimulate students' critical thinking skills, Henrik often makes use of editorial articles, as well as advertisements, having the students discuss these articles aloud. During such discussions, he stresses the importance of listening to the various perspectives students share, but also the importance of critiquing each others' perspectives. He remarked that he does not force compromise, but encourages the

students to determine concretely what it is the article is actually saying, where it is they each agree, and where it is they disagree.

In order to encourage those quieter students to express themselves, Henrik also has students write about subjects under discussion. But he added that those who find it difficult to express themselves orally, find it even more difficult to express themselves in writing. 'Many students have good ideas, deep ideas, but they are unable to express them. Even if they are able to articulate them aloud, in writing they often skip important steps. They do not write logically, forgetting that there is a reader who will see their work, and that they must provide a well reasoned account'. I inquired whether students who have Swedish as a second language have particular problems with this. He answered that yes, such students have trouble, but that students who have Swedish as a first language also have this problem. These students, in his view, occupy what might be called a 'language gap, and are, thus, unable to understand what the local authorities and politicians say or write. As a result they are unable to influence these authorities. They find it difficult to present their own arguments even when using their own language, their own Swedish'. When one writes to the authorities 'one needs to use a relatively strict and correct Swedish'. Many students do not know how to 'organize such a letter, or how to address the authorities properly. Then there are simple things like problems in spelling or errors in syntax and usage, or such deficiencies'.

Henrik blames students' difficulties partly on the media, suggesting that many newspapers use a much simpler and less analytical style than they used to. Henrik also links this language gap to the prevalence of television and 'kiosk', or popular, literature and attributes students' difficulties reading 'classical' literature to this gap. He believes that it is important for Swedish teachers to continue to teach classical literature because it explores social issues and cultural traditions in a way that is much less simplistic or stereotyped than television and kiosk literature. He stresses that one can still talk critically about television and kiosk literature in the classroom, but he disagrees with teachers and researchers who argue that teachers should assign popular literature as a way to encourage reading.

Henrik himself teaches a great deal of classical literature, trying to help students work through the difficult language used. Most of this literature is taken from a western tradition, since it 'reflects our ways of thinking'. However, he tends to place more emphasis on modern literature, since it is more relevant to his students' lives and a bit easier for them to read. I ask him whether he teaches many of the Swedish proletarian writers from earlier in this century, and he discusses how he sees those writers as interesting for his students. When reading these authors he often focuses on the ways their writing has influenced the development of today's society.

I move on to the final part of the interview. Henrik responds to the quotation as follows:

I think it is good that both parts, both internationalization and that we must have knowledge about cultures living in Sweden, are emphasized. It has been my experience that earlier a polarization existed, so that there were those who

placed a strong importance on internationalization, forgetting their own culture. But on the other side there were those who put their hands up against internationalization, while only placing emphasis upon their own culture. We have a large number of immigrants in Sweden, and here at the school, and for them to be recognized as complete human beings, one must pay attention to their cultural identity, an identity that is perhaps not Swedish from the beginning. They may have an identity brought from their home country. But I also think it is clear that [immigrants] must take on the Swedish culture, just like those who are born in Sweden. So it is important that one has knowledge about other cultures at the same time that one knows about one's own cultural identity. I believe that it is important not to have a social soup of cultural identity, so that one plucks a bit from here, and a bit from there. It may be the case that a number of immigrants are rootless and have no solid ground on which to stand. They take a bit from Swedish culture, a bit from their home country, and a bit from American culture.

Henrik next discussed national identity.

National identity can be misinterpreted, however, so that one is nationalistic in a negative way. I do not think it is wrong to be nationalistic if one is humble about it. But [this recent attention to] Sweden's era of greatness, and those who go around boasting about Charles XII.<sup>7</sup> Ironically, they often have a false picture of Charles XII, these skinheads, and others who admire him. We can see our national identity more clearly if we read the history, looking at how it actually was in Sweden back then and at how the average individual lived. How was it that Charles XII actually went to war? Was it him who started it, and how many Swedes did he actually have in his army? Were there actually more Finns, or Germans, or Scots fighting? One also discovers that our national identity is influenced by Germany. We have been highly influenced by other countries, so our nationality isn't built on race. Our national identity arises out of something else, perhaps the fact that as a people we have fought together through the years to have it better.

I inquired whether he meant that they were united politically.

Yes, politically, but also if we think about culture, and I mean more than in the sense of music and literature, and such. I mean in terms of everyday work - farming culture or folk culture. These aspects of culture are not so easily exhibited, but have something to do with national identity as well as cultural diversity.

I mentioned arguments I have heard that even second and third generation children of 'immigrant families' have a hard time being accepted culturally as 'Swedes', and are often expected to reflect their original cultures.

I think that we in Sweden have not stressed that immigrants who come to Sweden should have the opportunity to develop a Swedish cultural identity. Many immigrants work hard at this. But here we come back to the fact that, possibly since the end of World War II, it has not been accepted to emphasize national identity. People might see [such assertions] as an attempt to claim that Sweden is better than other nations. Along with this, then, has been the tendency of mass cultural messages to stress an international culture. So there has been more emphasis, say, on the American or English culture.

#### 4.3. Linna

Linna teaches religion, history, and Swedish at School C, a metropolitan school that is only a few decades old. Although the school does not have such a long history, it has taken on a reputation of its own as a pleasant place to study and work, often attracting pedagogically innovative teachers. Offering most of the available national programs of study, the school has become increasingly popular among local youth and attracts culturally and socially diverse students. Linna has taught there for over ten years and has worked with both theoretical and vocational classes.

Linna said that her main goal when teaching Swedish is to stimulate students so that they can continue to learn outside the classroom. While she recognizes that students need certain grammatical building blocks to read and produce their own texts, she criticizes teachers who insist that students must learn some defined body of material.

I think it is possible that in many areas teachers spend so much time worrying about giving students certain knowledge, that the students have no opportunity to use that knowledge. In teaching them a mass of facts we end up not teaching them to think. It is this that teachers should do. If we give them tools, we should also show them how to use those tools.

But since there is so little time, teachers must make choices about what they teach. When Linna teaches literature, she wants her students to develop an interest in reading. She tries to pick works of literature, sometimes written specifically for adolescents, that will engage students' interests. She also reads aloud in class. This has worked with many of her classes, as she has read half of a book aloud and then had the students finish the book on their own at home. Additionally, Linna sees reading literature as a way to encourage students to put themselves in other positions, learning about experiences that they might never have.

When I asked Linna whether her students like to discuss things, she answered that they do, but that she believes it is important that discussions be conversations and not 'meaningless chat'. In her view teachers are often poorly trained when it comes to leading discussions. She does not just use discussions as a way to be democratic and let the students 'come along', as many teachers do. 'I think that a discussion needs

to lead somewhere, otherwise the students perceive that it is not an important moment'. She often uses values exercises and ethics games as a way for students to develop strategies useful to discussion (strategies for listening to and sharing perspectives). As a mediator in discussions, she will also play the devil's advocate, and not the 'mother or father'. If a student is alone in his or her perspective, she might take that student's side in an attempt to discourage the class from simply ganging up on the student or dismissing his or her views. She remarks that young people tend to be very categorical and that this is something she works on breaking down.

Linna integrates writing into her classes on a regular basis. Writing, she said, is as important as speaking and reading. But she approaches writing instruction not in the traditional way, 'by teaching grammar, that is'. Approaches have changed. Admittedly you have to be sure that they have certain grammatical foundations and continue to develop those foundations, but she encourages students to use writing as a means to express themselves. She also uses something called a reader's log with her students, asking them to respond to their various readings by picking out a quotation and writing about it. Her hope is that they will do more than say that they liked or disliked it, instead generating new questions, or exploring what it was that caught their attention, what they did not understand, or why they disagreed with the writer. Linna's response to the quotation was long and detailed.

One main goal [of this policy] is to increase tolerance. I think that the way to increase tolerance is to increase knowledge, about foreign religions, other cultures, other countries, other peoples. It is that with which we are concerned. It is also important to know about our own history, for there is a fair amount of ignorance in Sweden about this. I believe that this is part of the reason for this being written. Just consider the way in which hatred of foreigners and racism has been tied up with Charles XII. This grows out of ignorance of him and his period. For example, Sweden has never been so multicultural as it was during the Hanseatic league. There are a number of benefits that come from studying one's own history. I also think that the more one is anchored in one's own history, the more confident one is in his or her identity, and the less likely one is to judge others. [Internationalism] can not happen at the cost of one's own identity; rather, you must have parallel developments. Today it is so popular to talk about internationalization. We need to be 'European Union friendly'. We should be 'reaching out and learning new languages'. But we should not just learn languages so that we can make contact with other countries; it should be about deepening our understanding. One should not turn oneself outward in such a way that one forgets one's own history. There is no point in knowing a language if you have nothing to talk about. One should be able to stand for something.

I brought up the issue of history next, mentioning that it is also an issue of which history one studies.

Yes, absolutely. This is clear. One often says here, 'dig where you stand' as a way to simplify this issue. But I think you need both parts. You can't have just local history, for then it becomes provincial. One becomes trapped in another way, just as with internationalization. One needs to look with both eyes. One can't just look outwards and forget where one sits; nor can one build a wall between oneself and the rest of the world. This means that you take your own background with you even as you take in new things. I believe that we need to be proud over that which we have, and that which is our identity, otherwise we become culture-less, or without a history, or what you will. I believe that one needs to be proud of one's history, but to do so, one needs to have knowledge. This is a Swedish dilemma. It is as if we are a bit ashamed of our own inheritance.

I asked whether one should be critical at the same time that one is proud.

Oh, yes, absolutely. One needs to be able to see things with critical eyes. I usually say to my students, mistrust everything that teachers say, mistrust that which you read and that which you hear. By this I mean that one should avoid being naive. What shows up in a book could be a mistake. Or, one can ask from what perspective was this written. So, critical skills are always in demand. The way in which something is written depends a lot on what one has for eye glasses. A person is often, in other words, unaware of the forces that influence him or her. I usually say that teaching is about encouraging students to change eye glasses. I often talk about how when an editor encounters a typing error in a text, it is exactly what he is looking for. The same goes for a feminist, who looks for particular signals in a work, or a socialist. There are different sets of eye glasses. What we see depends on in which tower we stand. But Swedish schools have long been marked by an emphasis on total objectivity - a faith in a single truth.

## 5. Analysis

In the previous section I set out to present some of the rich details of my encounters with language-arts teachers in Sweden. Since the interviews delved only slightly into the teachers' day-to-day teaching agendas, the portraits I have drawn are general in nature. But they still reveal much about the ways these teachers think about language-arts education and issues like multiculturalism.

Scholars like G. Malmgren (see 1991, 1992:187, and 1992:188, and 1995), L.-G. Malmgren (1994 and 1995), and J. Thavenius (1981, 1991 and 1995) have done a great deal of relevant and detailed work on the historical and modern-day cultural role of Swedish language-arts education at the primary and secondary level. G. Malmgren (1991) suggests that over the past twenty years the subject area of Swedish has inspired intense debate. This 'identity crisis' becomes especially

apparent when one observes current fragmentation both within the area itself (between, for instance, instruction in literature and instruction in writing) and between the area and other subject areas. This identity crisis has by no means been resolved, as scholars, policy-makers, and teachers continue to argue over such issues as: how to integrate sub-areas, how to deal with the differing needs and interests of students in vocational programs versus those in theoretical programs, how to approach the subject of cultural heritage, how to maintain the area's integrity as a subject of study, and more recently, how to respond to cultural diversity in the classroom.

In a more recent study Malmgren & Malmgren (1995:47-50) point to three theoretical traditions that have tended to characterize Swedish language-arts education and its relationship to culture. These theoretical traditions resolve the above issues in different ways. The first defines '*Swedish as a skill dominated subject*',<sup>8</sup> where the education is based on a formalisation of the language-skill training ... This type of mother-tongue education is primarily a *language subject*. It should be of *practical use* in the pupils' everyday lives'. Such an approach advocates mastery of standard spoken and written Swedish, and de-emphasizes the situational aspect of communication. The second approach is content oriented, viewing '*Swedish as a cultural-educational subject dealing with the history of literature* ... The central concern is to hand over a cultural heritage [which is based on Swedish, or Western philosophical and literary traditions] that is considered indispensable ... the school is responsible for providing pupils with a shared cultural orientation and familiarising them with the most important Swedish authors'. The third and final approach is student centered and 'can be characterised as ... *historical, humanistic, and cultural-educational* ... open to other subjects at school, especially social studies'. Swedish is viewed as '*an experience-oriented subject* ... It deviates from the skill-dominated subject by attempting to functionalise language-skill training and incorporate it into a coherent process of seeking knowledge ... One important goal of the education is to try to bring up topics dealing with various aspects of human experience, current as well as historical. Another goal is to develop the pupils' social and historical understanding of central, humanistic problems'.

I might speculate, here, that unlike the first and the second tradition in Swedish language-arts instruction, the third provides the most room for diversity. Through the work of certain progressive movements like those forwarded by the Malmgrens, the mid-seventies in Sweden were marked by teaching that more readily reflected this third tradition; the eighties saw a return to the 'cultural-educational subject' view (Malmgren & Malmgren, 1995:29). The national curriculum written and issued for the nineties, while making gestures at the third tradition, encourages primarily the second, 'a top down model where a national heritage and subject specific knowledge shall be reproduced' (L.-G. Malmgren, 1994:46). These observations may be accurate. While the current curriculum stresses that students develop their abilities to interpret, reflect, and critique different types of texts, it places more emphasis on studying 'the Swedish language as it is spoken, read and written ... even if balanced with other objectives a back-to-classics, canon, national common heritage seems to

be the official answer to a social situation which is characterized by a multi-cultural development' (ib., 43).<sup>9</sup>

I have found this research useful in considering the material gathered from interviews. It is important to note that, as the Malmgrens suggest, teachers rarely work out of a single theoretical tradition. For example, some teachers may be methodologically open, using student-centered pedagogies (i.e., free discussions, group research projects), and yet more restrictive in the material they choose to teach. Similarly, some of the teachers with whom I spoke seemed to teach literature in a way that was more student centered, but writing in a way that was 'reproductive' or skill oriented (thus supporting G. Malmgren's point about internal fragmentation). But how, given the complex theoretical traditions out of which they work, do these teachers specifically approach cultural diversity? Is the issue of diversity affecting the theoretical stances that teachers take? Does L.-G. Malmgren's theory that Sweden's multicultural development seems to be marked by back-to-the-classics, national-common-heritage tendencies hold true in practice?

It is important to note that each of the teachers discussed works in a very different educational sector, with different sorts of students. Maria works with academically-oriented students, who hope to enter competitive universities. Henrik teaches adults, some of whom have come for personal development, others of whom go on to higher education, although more often at university colleges or technical institutes. Linna works with students seeking admission to competitive universities, as well as to university colleges and technical institutes, but she also works with students who will enter a profession or vocation right out of school. Certainly these differences inform the teachers' particular practices in significant ways.

Maria, Henrik, and Linna's responses suggest that all three *tend* to work more readily out of the Malmgrens' third theoretical tradition. All three organize their Swedish courses around 'central humanistic problems' and explorations of 'human experience'. They also claim to be 'student-centered' and exhibit a strong interest in the overlaps between the different subjects they teach. And in teaching Swedish, they strive to make connections between the various sub-areas. This last item seems especially true for Linna and Maria.

Yet, given observations of the current popularity of the second, cultural-heritage tradition, I find it interesting that Maria, Henrik, and Linna all praised the attention of current policy to Swedish cultural heritage. While they felt that Sweden's multicultural and international development was important, they considered studying Swedish culture to be equally important. All three suggest that *all* people, including Swedes, should feel pride in their history and culture. Henrik suggests that after World War II people felt pressure not to 'take pride' in Swedish cultural heritage, and that this pressure was destructive, leading to increased Americanization or to reactionary nationalism. Linna, likewise, wonders whether Swedes are somewhat 'ashamed of their inheritance' and sees this shame as unhealthy. Although Maria does not talk as explicitly about 'pride', her classroom attention to sharing 'life histories' reflects a belief in looking admirably at one's heritage. The three teachers also all draw a line between good and bad nationalism. In the exercise she does with her

students, Maria points out that a common goal can bind people together as much as a common enemy can. Henrik comments that it is 'okay to be nationalistic if one is humble about it'. Linna, too, thinks that it is important to be proud, but that in order to do so one needs accurate knowledge of one's culture and history.

All three teachers seem to work from the unstated premise that a concrete body of cultural knowledge about Sweden and about being Swedish exists and that teachers are responsible for conferring it. What this body of knowledge looks like, however, is never fully articulated. But what is clear is that being 'culture-less', or 'without a history', poses problems for all three teachers. For Maria, having and recognizing one's own culture is the key to understanding other cultures, and such understanding will help to prevent the type of cultural chaos occurring in places like the Balkans. Henrik similarly remarks that not standing fast in one's own cultural identity leaves both 'immigrants' and 'Swedes' rootless, weakened by the steam of living in a cultural soup. Finally, Linna worries that if people spend all their time learning about other cultures, they will have nothing to say about their own.

For Maria, Henrik, and Linna the boundaries of a cultural identity appear to be discernible, and multiculturalism involves learning and recognizing the boundaries around your own and others' cultures. In becoming more and more multicultural, Sweden should, paradoxically, give more attention and respect to the boundaries of Swedish culture or heritage.

However, Maria, Henrik, and Linna differ in the ways in which they approach these boundaries and introduce them to their students. Maria seems to be highly concerned with 'personal boundaries', with the emotional and creative aspects of belonging to a particular culture, whether that culture be Swedish or not. Her goals in teaching Swedish are to help students to understand and express their particular life histories. She chooses literature that deals with 'life questions' and encourages students to make connections between the experiences of others and their own experiences. Thus literature and writing are tools that students use to reach a fuller self-understanding and to convey that understanding.

Maria also feels that having other cultures in the classroom is beneficial, since it means that students are exposed to different ways of seeing things. For Maria, cultural diversity is a resource useful to understanding each other's personal boundaries. She is critical of Muslims for starting their own schools because she worries that Swedish students will not have a chance to share in other ways of looking at things, and, as a result, will not develop tolerance. These 'foreign' students' reactions to the literature read, and the themes they produce in their writing will thematically enrich the class's exploration of 'personal histories'. Yet, I would note, that the language in which these students' differences must inevitably be expressed will be 'standard, academic Swedish'. And the literature that will serve as the touchstone for discussions will most often reflect a Swedish, or a western, way of looking at things.

Henrik's aims as a Swedish teacher also include personal development. But his interest is in building his students' confidence, so that they can actively influence the society in which they live. Henrik places more emphasis upon debate than upon

creative sharing. When both writing and discussing, students are encouraged to challenge each others' 'personal boundaries' - to develop arguments exploring, defending, and revising their ways of looking at things. For Maria, studying literature in terms of historical context is a way to gain access to the *self*. For Henrik, studying literature in terms of historical context is a way to gain access to *society*. Henrik tries to teach literature that will touch on political and social issues, making connections between the society of today and the society out of which the work grew. For instance, by studying late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century literature, one learns that Swedish national identity has come about through a number of particular social phenomena.

Henrik seems to approach all his students with respect for their discreet cultural backgrounds, but with the firm belief that the goal of a Swedish teacher is to give all students a full picture of Swedish society and the cultures on which it is based, and to help them develop the tools to function in that society. Henrik worries about students with immigrant background being rootless, suggesting that they need to feel firm in either Swedish culture or their native culture, and that teachers need to encourage that commitment. But he also points out that the immigrant who stays committed to his or her native culture needs to adopt some Swedish cultural ways in order to function. He teaches western literary works, seeing them as important to showing students 'our way of looking at things'. He also focuses on teaching a 'standard Swedish', seeing it as a necessary tool for students trying to negotiate today's political and social world. But individual dialects, whether they reflect regional or national differences, are allowed little influence on this social and political world, interpreted instead as 'deficiencies' or 'gaps'.

Although they achieve their goals through student-centered pedagogies, Henrik and Maria strive to provide their students with a specific body of knowledge about Swedish language and culture, its history, and its uses. Thus it is possible to see them as working partly in accordance with a cultural heritage tradition. Linna, too, is interested in Swedish cultural boundaries. But I would argue that she gives more emphasis to the role of social and self critique when considering those boundaries. Early in her interview Linna points out that she is more interested in helping students explore the processes through which knowledge is gained than in conferring some particular body of cultural and language knowledge. The role of 'perspective' plays a key role in Linna's teaching. She is critical of the tendency of Swedish schools to stress objectivism, encouraging her students to look at the way in which history and culture have influenced their outlook. She also urges them to scrutinize the ways in which the authors they read are influenced by their particular views of culture. For Linna, knowing about one's history and taking pride in it means being willing to critique that history.

I might also argue that Linna differs from Maria and Henrik in her use of literature from outside a traditional canon, literature that she hopes will engage students' particular interests and backgrounds more specifically. She has chosen literature that reflects on issues current to the day and their age group, like homosexuality, and drugs. Thus she is less concerned than Henrik with providing her

students with some coherent picture of Sweden's literary history. She is like Maria in that she encourages students to write about their own particular experiences of the works they read. Yet what is most important to her is not the 'self' that is articulated through this process, but the process itself. Like Henrik and Maria, she focuses on 'standard Swedish grammar', but she never speaks of her students as occupying language gaps, or as using a lower level of language. For Linna, Swedish language use is influenced by perspective and grammar is secondary to communication.

Of all the Swedish teachers I interviewed, I felt that Linna most thoroughly reflected the Malmgrens' third theoretical tradition in teaching. While she saw cultural heritage as influential and deserving of study, that heritage should not simply be celebrated, or negotiated. It is open to interpretation and critique. Thus, for Linna, Heritage serves as a reference point and not as a solid mass of material out of which one is made. I would argue that her view of Swedish language and culture as dynamic, that is related to other languages and cultures, leaves more room for cultural, as well as class and gender differences.

Maria, Henrik, and Linna, like many of the other Swedish teachers I interviewed, stress the role that studying Swedish cultural heritage should play in 'becoming multicultural'. In doing so these teachers are perhaps trying to negotiate their own way out of the area's current identity crisis. After all, multiculturalism at the national and international level, and its accompanying multilingualism, call into question on some level the necessity of being educated in a single national language, or at least problematize the central role it has played in the curriculum. But at the same time, these teachers adopt different approaches to the multicultural. Maria's multiculturalism is about developing in her students a knowledge of and pride in the self's unique cultural and social heritage, whether that heritage be Swedish or Iranian. Henrik's multiculturalism is about gaining knowledge of society and the tools to negotiate that society. Looking at Swedish cultural heritage provides students with the necessary foundation for gaining power and functioning successfully in Swedish society. Finally, for Linna multiculturalism is about gaining knowledge about the self and society, but also understanding and critiquing the ways in which the self and society have come into being. It is through understanding the social and dynamic nature of cultural knowledge that students become influential members of a changing society and world.

## 6. Conclusions

My analysis of the teacher interviews shows some of the complex tensions with which language-arts teachers have been labouring as they struggle to balance their own varied biases about multiculturalism with the conflicting theories and prescriptions of research and policy. As I point out, the teachers I interviewed responded positively to the term multiculturalism. They also agreed that both Swedish cultural heritage and the cultural heritage of other groups living in Sweden are important. But they approached the idea of cultural heritage in different ways,

sometimes working from a romanticized view, where culture is a natural phenomenon, with well defined and transferable boundaries, and sometimes from a constructionist view, where culture is a social phenomenon with unclear and potentially conflict laden boundaries.

I wish now to make some brief comparisons with current discussions on multiculturalism and language-arts instruction in the United States, and to highlight for my readers some of the purposes to which I have put this ethnographic study in my own context. American debates over how to provide students with an education sensitive to cultural difference take a number of forms. Debates often occur across universities and secondary schools, as special committees are appointed to consider the role multiculturalism should play in the curricula. Public demands that education become more responsive to changing demography have led some schools to investigate and implement specific diversity requirements.<sup>10</sup> These requirements have been implemented in different ways, depending upon the institution. At some universities (The University of Texas at Austin, for example) students may choose a certain course from a longer list of courses across the curriculum, all dealing in some way with issues of diversity. Other schools (Stanford for instance) have designed specific required courses, often run by African-American studies or women's studies departments. Finally, some schools have attempted to integrate multiculturalism into required, general education courses such as Western civilization, sophomore literature, and English composition (see Disch, 1993).<sup>11</sup>

Calls for reform sound within individual departments as well. Debates have been particularly intense within English departments, where literature and composition courses are most often taught. For instance, in debating multiculturalism literature instructors have been arguing over what texts should be read in the classroom and over the methodology used in teaching those texts. Faculty and students have asked for additional course offerings in the literatures of minority groups and currently seek more culturally representative reading lists in American, British, and world literature survey courses (lists that would embrace differences in class, race, gender, and ethnicity, for instance). Canon debates have, in one scholar's words, 'generated a canon' of their own (see Bacon, 1993:501).

But while debates over the teaching of literature and multiculturalism remain heated, particularly at the late secondary and early postsecondary levels where administrations and the public scrutinize the classroom aggressively, discussions in English studies over the role of multiculturalism and *writing* instruction are perhaps even more intense.<sup>12</sup> In other words, while Swedish discussions about multiculturalism and discourse education have tended to focus on the general subject area known as Swedish language-arts, or Swedish mother-tongue education, recent American discussions have tended to center around the subject-area of freshman composition, a required general education course for most American, first-year university or college students. By way of example, proposals to make freshman composition at The University of Texas at Austin a course dealing with issues of discrimination met with volatile reactions from faculty, students, the administration, and the public. These reactions were heard not just in Texas, but across the nation,

suggesting that in the United States the freshman composition classroom may be at the center of even more dramatic struggles over issues of multiculturalism than the literature classroom has been.<sup>13</sup> For instance, scholars, teachers, administrators, and the public disagree over whether writing instruction for a diverse student population should focus on teaching skills, or encourage critical thinking; over whether it should encourage students' individual cultural and social development, or introduce them to the customs of academic discourse. And it is in these discussions over multiculturalism and writing instruction that I see the most interesting overlaps with the Swedish understandings I have analyzed above.

When making comparisons between the United States and Sweden, the teachers I interviewed occasionally suggested that the United States allowed for diversity more readily than Sweden and that it would take time to build a 'truly multicultural Sweden'. Other teachers pointed out that Sweden, with its deep national and cultural roots, can not be compared with the United States and should not be expected to 'Americanize'. These teachers were searching for their 'own way' to be multicultural in the classroom, at times maintaining their cultural integrity by romanticizing their Swedish roots as they grow alongside the cultural roots of 'others'. Americans surely engage in similar idealism.<sup>14</sup> One still hears teachers and theorists from all sides of the political spectrum in American composition classes praise the diversity of the United States and the 'special' position this multitude of voices affords it in relation to the rest of the world.

Yet, as I note in my introduction, *exceptionalism*, whether it is Swedish or American, liberal or conservative, is not particularly instructive when assessing the complexities of cultural difference within modern classrooms. This article, and the longer work from which it stems, rests firmly on the belief that in examining the boundaries society draws between cultural groups, researchers must also examine the boundaries drawn between nations. International comparisons can only enrich our understandings of the complexities of cultural diversity both in and outside classrooms. While I agree that Sweden and the United States have different histories, policy-makers, researchers, and teachers of discourse in both countries share similar struggles. As in Sweden, American researchers and teachers often idealize, or objectify, culture, approaching it as a natural phenomenon and, thus, limiting the possibilities, both in and out of the classroom, for the formation of new cultural identities. But equally important is that researchers and teachers in both countries are also wrestling with these tendencies, considering their implications and discussing how through theory and practice they might be counteracted.

Studying Swedish pedagogues' understandings of multiculturalism casts light on similar tendencies in current American theory in the field of composition instruction. Maria, as well as several other teachers I interviewed, resembles American composition researchers and teachers who represent cultural diversity in the classroom as a valuable 'resource'.<sup>15</sup> In Sweden, such an approach means calling on students with minority background to share their unique cultural heritage with their majority peers.<sup>16</sup> Teachers working from such an approach seem to work with progressive experience-oriented pedagogies like those advocated by the Malmgrens,

building their curriculum around their students' lived experience. But they also tend to essentialize about their students' cultural backgrounds. Those with minority background, even if that background extends back two or three generations, are expected to reflect their native heritage in particular ways. The same expectations may be placed on those considered 'ethnic Swedes'. In either case, cultural characteristics - social codes, behaviours, and beliefs - become quantifiable, objective information.

Swedish folklorist A. Runfors (1994) describes the recent classroom emphasis on the differences between Swedish culture and immigrant culture as a movement away from an ideology of sameness towards an ideology of difference. One should note, however, that as the culture of the immigrant is constructed, so too is the culture of the Swedish; mainstream culture uses foreign culture to reinforce its identity. Such an ideology, more importantly, resembles an ideology of sameness in that it views cultural background (in the sense of ethnic background) as always essential to identity development. It imposes a universalism, assuming that all cultures and individuals view 'native, ethnic heritage' as equally important (or unimportant) to the formation of social and personal identities.

Runfors' argument resembles certain American composition researchers' criticisms of *subjective* theories in the teaching of writing and literature, theories that have influenced the work of prominent composition specialists like Elbow (1981) and Murray (1985).<sup>17</sup> Particularly popular in the seventies and eighties, *subjective* theories have given rise to *expressivist* approaches, stressing the importance of personal vision and voice. In stressing the personal, these approaches seem to make more room for cultural difference. Classes using this approach have often been compared to therapy groups or encounter groups in that they foster a supportive environment where students can explore and develop greater faith in their own racial, cultural, and gender identities. Through reading and writing, students are encouraged to gain control over their lives by gaining control over words (see Berlin, 1987:154).<sup>18</sup> But scholars worry that fostering an environment where personal impressions and understandings are constantly validated prevents students and teachers from responding to or challenging that individual who expresses, for instance, racist or sexist views (see Jarratt, 1991). Such approaches have been described as perpetuating 'ideologies of the self' (see Faigley, 1992). They fail to reveal to the student the extent to which the individual truths about culture and identity he or she discovers are informed by particular social and historical positioning and relations of power.

Such approaches to teaching also lead to essentialized perspectives on race and culture. For example, white teachers might expect their African-American students to speak as representatives of 'the African-American community'. But asking them to do so denies the complex differences *within* African-American communities. And even if a student feels it is possible to speak as a representative, he or she may feel uncomfortable sharing that heritage with white peers who may be intolerant (see Holman, 1992:5).

Henrik's belief that offering students the finest in western and Swedish literature and language counteracts their 'language', and cultural, deficiencies and helps them

succeed socially also brings to mind certain arguments made in the United States. Informed, by *objective* theories on the teaching of writing and literature, current-traditionalists like Hirsch (1987) argue that social and political empowerment is delivered through transference of the clusters of illusions and references (mostly to European culture and history) on which the United States was presumably founded. Hirsch sees a 'mastery' of standard English and of certain traditional writing styles as the key to understanding and maintaining traditional principles of democracy. For some composition researchers influenced by objectivist theories (see Flower & Hayes, 1981), helping students master 'standard language' and certain written forms also involves cultivating in them certain scientifically-defined and generalized cognitive structures necessary for reading and composing.

Herzberg (1991), one critic of objectivists like Hirsch, calls attention to the ways in which limiting the curriculum to Western works and standard language practice silences culturally different voices, thus working against rather than towards democracy. Herzberg argues that while approaches like Hirsch's offer students a 'vast and rich culture', they also reproduce a culture that tends to devalue non-western, non-white, non-male, and working-class cultures. Normative approaches like those of Flower & Hayes (1981) have also been critiqued for not acknowledging the role of ideology in the classroom, nor the influence of material positioning on the production and reception of discourse (that is, the effect of social circumstance on the cognitive structures supposedly guiding these processes).<sup>19</sup>

Yet Henrik's use of argument in the classroom, his belief that students should challenge each others' boundaries, also reminds me of other more progressive American scholars and teachers influenced by what Berlin refers to as *transactional* theories. These scholars, working from premises similar to those from which progressive theorists like the Malmgrens work, advocate 'social-epistemic', or social, approaches to the teaching of writing (as well as literature), arguing that language, and culture, be represented to students as a social and historical phenomenon, produced through and mediating complex interactions.<sup>20</sup> Proponents of expressivism and current-traditionalism, like Elbow (1981) and Hirsch (1987) respectively, often critique advocates of social-epistemic approaches for foregrounding the influence of ideology on acts of communication and accuse them of needlessly politicizing the classroom.

Among the more concrete pedagogical manifestations of social-epistemic approaches are conflict-models like those forwarded by composition specialist S.C. Jarratt (1991).<sup>21</sup> Jarratt's conflict-model emphasizes the importance of dissensus to processes of reception and production and the role of argument, both written and oral, in negotiating that dissensus. Jarratt sees this model as making more space for diverse perspectives within the classroom than current-traditionalism or expressivism.

Jarratt (ib., 111) proposes that writing instructors use *argument* as opposed to personal narrative as a means to negotiate diversity. Jarratt argues that what writing teachers need right now is 'theory and practice more adequately attuned than expressivism is to the social complexities of our classrooms'. The theory and practice that Jarratt articulates calls for conflict - for acknowledging and engaging in debate

over the power relations (as informed by race, class, gender, and ethnicity) that influence what we read and what we write. Jarratt (1991:119) paraphrases Weiler, author of the ethnography *Teaching for Change: Gender, Class, and Power*: 'Recognizing the inevitability of conflict is ... the starting point for creating a consciousness in students and teachers through which the inequalities generating those conflicts can be acknowledged and transformed'. *Argument* becomes a means for students and teachers to respond respectfully to diversity. Thus Jarratt's approach enables the language-arts classroom to be what Herzberg (1991:98) calls a site for 'ideological action'; a place where 'the strictures of the curriculum may be followed', but 'where they may also be resisted or ignored as the contradictions of the curriculum are played out'.

Another prominent composition researcher advocating a conflict-model of a different variety, Bartholomae (1985), argues that the beginning student of composition enters a relationship with the academy inevitably charged with conflict as he leaves his own community and language behind and appropriates a new discourse. Since within the academic community power is linked with particular discourses, instructors can not shirk from their responsibility to provide students with the keys to these discourses. Bartholomae (1995:63) articulates his position as follows:

I want to argue that academic writing is the real work of the academy. I also want to argue for academic writing as a key term in the study of writing and the practice of instruction. In fact, I want to argue that if you are teaching courses in the university, courses where students write under your supervision, they can't not do it and you can't not stand for it (academic writing, that is) and, therefore, it is better that it be done out in the open, where questions can be asked and responsibilities assumed, than to be done in hiding or under another name.

Bartholomae is especially critical of expressivists like Elbow (1981) who, from his perspective, shirk this responsibility in favour of a de-centered classroom where learning is linked with personal development. For Bartholomae, teaching writing should be about providing students with what they need to participate and advance in public institutional life.

As I have suggested, Henrik, a teacher of Swedish, also reflected at times a 'conflict-model' approach to teaching. But Henrik is an interesting case, resembling at times Hirsch (1987) and at times Bartholomae (1985 and 1995), two very strange bedfellows. But the merging of two seemingly different conceptions of discourse education in the rhetoric of Henrik has been revealing, suggesting that Bartholomae and Hirsch have more in common than one might expect. American scholars like Joseph Harris (1989:16) have identified certain problematics of conflict-model approaches, particularly as they are articulated by Bartholomae. Harris finds Bartholomae's metaphor of students having to cross from one discourse community to another useful, since it offers teachers a way of talking about why many students

'fail to think and write as we would like them to without having to suggest that they are somehow slow or inept because they do not'. But he also points out that in Bartholomae's theory 'the learning of a new discourse seems to rest, at least in part, on a kind of mystical leap of mind' from one discourse to another.<sup>22</sup> Discourse, although socially and historically constructed, is represented as a bounded body of knowledge and material to which a student must be initiated. Bartholomae stresses the student's need for academic discourse and the responsibility of the teacher to smooth the process of assimilation, an authority that should be recognized and made use of, even if it results in symbolic violence (losses in terms of culture and dialect). In a sense, then, Bartholomae, like Hirsch, stresses delivering a certain, though socially determined, essential cultural or institutional heritage as it is embodied in academic discourse.<sup>23</sup> What Bartholomae's theory shares with current traditionalists like Hirsch is a view of education relying on transference and that makes little room for the blending of languages, and for the blending of cultures - for what might be termed, the *trans-cultural*.

Certain other American scholars exploring social-epistemic approaches to the teaching of literature and writing have expressed dissatisfaction with the tendency of conflict-models to banish from the classroom personal experience. In describing her experiences in a teacher training program advocating a conflict-model approach, Welch (1993:390) expresses frustration with the underlying assumption that 'we write and learn only and always in a conflict-ridden and even combative environment, one in which our languages and beliefs are constantly challenged by a powerful group of insiders we must struggle to join and try to change'. She wonders if there are alternatives that would allow a teacher to combine expressivist and conflict-model approaches more imaginatively.

Scholars also critique the view that students must leave their individual dialects at home and assume a common, standardized academic discourse. Delpit (1988:296) admits that gaining social power requires learning the codes of power and developing an awareness of traditional approaches to discourse. But in her view teachers of reading and writing should also call students' attention to the 'arbitrariness of those codes and [of] the power relations they represent', and make room for students' own language experience.

Harris (1989:17) articulates an alternative to Bartholomae's views by suggesting that students be encouraged 'towards a kind of polyphony - an awareness of and pleasure in the various competing discourses that make up their own'. Languages, like communities, do not exist alongside each other discretely. They overlap, flowing into and ricocheting off of one another constantly. In providing for both flow and conflict, Harris seeks space for consensus, as well as dissensus, of opinion. At times he may resemble certain expressivists in his attention to individual development, but I would argue that what Harris tries to do is allow for the *trans-cultural*. He seeks to recognize the dynamic relationships between the personal and the political, teacher authority and student authority, the often irrational and emotional aspects of our personal languages and cultures, and the supposedly rational, practical aspects of academic discourse and institutional cultures. Classrooms are boundary lands, not

isolated communities, where both meaningful marriages, as well as painful separations, may occur.

I see scholars like Welch (1993), Delpit (1988), and Harris (1989) challenging certain theoretical polarizations between expressivist and conflict-oriented approaches, between approaches built around the individual, or the personal, and those built around the social. While I would argue that they still advocate the social, they strive to make room for personal experience and specific cultural heritage, encouraging students to see critically the dynamic relationship between their own histories and society's histories - between their own languages and standard academic discourses. In their theory it becomes no longer a question of whether to assign personal narratives or argumentative essays, but rather of how to integrate the two.

Examining the theory of progressive Swedish pedagogues has allowed me to look from new angles at this debate between American educators over the role of expressivist and conflict-model approaches in negotiating diversity. In Swedish theory and practice I see the potential to combine these approaches in responsible and innovative ways.

I observed conflict-model approaches like those of Bartholomae (1985) and Jarratt (1991) infrequently among the Swedish language-arts researchers and teachers I encountered. While in the theories of researchers like the Malmgrens (1986 and 1995) and Thavenius (1995) I did see some experimentation with conflict-models,<sup>24</sup> I believe their theories, as well as those of a number of researchers working in and outside of the Lund group, resemble more readily the social-epistemic theories of Harris (1989) and Delpit (1988) than those of Bartholomae (1985 and 1995) and Jarratt (1991). Like Harris and Delpit, these Swedish researchers resist drawing firm lines between the social and the individual, the personal and the political, the expressive and the analytical.

How such resistance to polarization translates into the American and Swedish classroom remains a critical issue, and one that I will only begin to explore here. American composition scholar Faigley (1992:223) offers one possible application, describing how students in composition classes, by writing microethnographies, may steer clear of the 'ideologies of self', while still attending meaningfully to their personal experiences.

Asking students to write microethnographies requires them to perform many of the activities required by traditional writing assignments. They must observe and record carefully. They must analyze their data, making decisions about what is important and unimportant. They must classify their data into categories. And if they are successful, they must be able to draw generalizations from their data. But even more valuable is the opportunity for students to explore their own locations within their culture.

Such an assignment prepares students for future institutional responsibilities, but makes these responsibilities relevant to their daily lives, drawing on personal experiences and interests.

Turning to the responses of the teachers of Swedish I see additional examples of how pedagogues may, at least in theory, resist hasty polarizations. In studying Linna's conceptions about teaching, I saw not just the theories of progressives like the Malmgrens, but also those of Harris and Delpit potentially in action. Linna seeks to encourage her students to engage in social conflict, but also to attend to her students' personal experiences and interests. She has them read and write works based on personal impressions, but they do so with a critical eye, looking at the contexts out of which those impressions arose. Linna also recognizes the importance of balancing student power with teacher power, pointing out that being democratic does not mean merely handing over the controls to her students. She resists polarizations, recognizing the dynamic relationships not just between Swedish culture and 'other' cultures, but between student dialects and teacher dialects. Cultures, and the discourses through which they are conveyed, are material realities with which we live, but they always intersect, and they are always open to change.

As my above comparisons hopefully reveal, attitudes towards managing the 'multicultural' in the classroom are much more complicated than categories and theories in either Sweden or the United States often allow them to appear. While recognizing the ways in which teachers' theories place them in particular categories, it is equally interesting to see how it is they do not fit. In drawing this paper to a close, I find myself aspiring towards the following: that in theorizing the *multicultural*, researchers and teachers of the language-arts continue to explore the possibilities that cross-cultural, and cross-national scholarship open up; and that they study in more concrete terms the varied and particular ways in which theories of the *multicultural* translate into actual classroom practice. For it is when varied national and international theories and practices bump up against each other, that new theories and practices come into being.

## Notes

1. I would like to thank The Swedish Institute for funding my research and the Departments of Education and Comparative Literature at Lunds University for assisting me with my project.
2. Although privately funded, the folk high schools do not require students to pay tuition.
3. The source of this information is The Swedish Institute.
4. Students may be exempt from such courses by scoring high enough on specific college entrance examinations.
5. My translation and italics.
6. All names have been changed.
7. The last king of Sweden's colonialist era, known for his military endeavors and ruling from 1697 until his death in 1718. He has recently come to be a symbol for ultra-nationalist organizations, who view him as a representative of Swedish cultural and national unity.
8. Their italics.
9. This prescription is quoted from the current national curriculum (Skolverket, 1994).

10. Thompson & Tyagi (1993) link current academic efforts at multicultural reform in the United States to increasing public pressure from a variety of groups including 'family farmers, unemployed working- and middle-class people, black and Latino urban youth, people with AIDS and their care givers, Japanese-Americans, and others' (xiv).
11. See Berman's (1992) and Arthur's (1995) recent collections of essays on multiculturalism and college campuses.
12. Rhetoric and composition has emerged as a discipline of its own, although its theorists most often belong to English Departments (see North, 1987).
13. See Carton & Friedman (1996) and Linda Brodkey (1996) for more detailed discussions of debates over composition instruction at The University of Texas at Austin.
14. For examples of such idealism (although well-meaning), see Takaki's (1993) and Agüero's (1993) work. See also North's remarks (1987:375) that debates over literacy are a 'peculiarly American phenomenon'.
15. I refer here to the works of composition scholars like Elbow (1981 and 1990), Murray (1985), and Flynn (1988), among others, all of whom view individual cultural experience as the ground from which writing should grow.
16. Some Swedish representatives of this approach include Bjerstedt (1994) and Konstantinides (1994). See also Daun (1984).
17. Berlin (1987) describes three epistemologies commonly underlying writing instruction in the United States: objective theories, subjective theories, and transactional theories. Objective theories are positivistic, locating truth within the material world. Students reach truth through empirical, 'verifiable' experience of that world. Berlin lists philosophers Whatley, Blair, and Campbell, representatives of Scottish Common Sense Realism, as potential sources for these theories in the teaching of writing. Subjective theories see truth as within the individual, reached only through 'internal apprehension'. Sources of subjective theories include Plato, the German idealists, and more recently, proponents of depth psychology. Transactional theories see truth as arising from complex interactions between subject, object, audience, and language. Recent representatives include K. Burke and M. Foucault. For Berlin, objective theories correspond with current-traditional approaches, subjective theories with expressivist approaches, and transactional theories with social-epistemic approaches.
18. Faigley (1986) points out that expressivism tends to forward a neo-romantic view of the composing process, where integrity, spontaneity, and originality are highly valued.
19. See Berlin (1987) and Faigley (1986) for more developed critiques of cognitive approaches like those of Flower and Hayes.
20. Faigley (1986) points out that the 'social view' of teaching is not as easy to 'codify' as the expressivist or current-traditional view because it has roots in a number of disciplinary traditions and has spokespersons representing a variety of positions. Marxism, poststructuralism, and sociology have all influenced the development of social approaches to the teaching of composition. Proponents of the social view include K. Burke, R. Ohmann, and A. Berthoff, among others.
21. G. Graff has developed a conflict-model to be used in the teaching of literature.
22. However, Harris points out that Bartholomae's actual pedagogy differs from the theories he articulates in 'Inventing the University', allowing more overlap between the discourses students bring with them into the classroom and academic language. I would add that Bartholomae's work is more complicated than this representation suggests, and that earlier articles like 'The Study of Error' speak to his respect for his students' working methods and backgrounds.

23. Bizzell performs an interesting self-critique (1992:256-276), analyzing the intersections between her own theories and those of Hirsch. Bizzell argues that scholars should resist 'totalizing schemes for national unity', and avoid promoting 'oppressive academic discourse'; but she also suggests that we cannot be completely without some academic discourse.
24. L.-G. Malmgren pointed out to me that earlier works produced by members of a Lund research group (see Malmgren, 1986), do explore the use of conflict-models in the teaching of literature. In his most recent work Thavenius (1995), too, highlights Graff's work on teaching the conflicts as an example of a pedagogy that better accommodates diversity.

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