

Session 5, 2/21/07

- Deborah Brandt's "Strong Text": Small group discussion
 - How does Brandt's theory of literacy contrast with those she critiques (Goody, Ong, Tannen, Olsen)?
 - Goody was very interested in the impact of writing on large social structures, but not vice versa
 - Ong is very focused on the technology of literacy
 - Separation between text and context
 - Tannen seems to buy into the strong text theories least. Involvement focus: she changes the terms. She doesn't go far enough, but she seems to be on the right track according to Brandt.
 - Olsen looks at the transition from the oral home culture to the textual school culture. This involves taking context into account, but he still contrasts the oral and the textual too sharply.
 - What exactly is wrong with the "strong text" theory that Brandt explicates? In other words, what is wrong with "equating literacy with textuality," as she argues?
 - Is the difference between process and product the same as the difference between literacy and textuality
 - Literacy is the process, textuality is the product. Literacy has more to do with the writer and the reader, and the old representations ignored the people in favor of the textuality.
 - Part of the difference between literacy and textuality has to do with causality: which came first? It makes more sense to focus on the process rather than the history. We shouldn't privilege texts as the highest form of knowledge. It's much more interesting to look at the processes of coming to understand something via literacy. When you privilege literacy over orality, you make the written word higher order thinking.
 - According to Brandt, what is the value of examining processes of literacy? What does that get us?
 - It seems like this is a rephrasing of the last question: If you don't equate literacy and textuality, what are the benefits?
 - Does it make sense today to separate text from context? They seem so interrelated. The idea of separating them too sharply recalls the claims of the New Critics in literary theory, where the text is elevated as a totally separate object.
 - Privilege act over text
 - Social engagement and meaning
 - The text is only one of many representations that were previously possible. You can only discover this by considering the process.

- It seems like Brandt considers process is more important than product, but really both aspects should be considered. Put together, there is more value than with either process or product by themselves.
 - We've skipped over hundreds and hundreds of years of literacy research between Plato and Ong.
 - By talking about the literacy rather than reading vs. writing, we're trying to navigate the created separations between those two different kinds of cognition, knowledge, and representation
- Deborah Brandt's "Strong Text": Whole class discussion
 - How does Brandt's theory of literacy contrast with those she critiques (Goody, Ong, Tannen, Olsen)?
 - It's important to look at the process of creating a text
 - Look at the process of the reception of a text
 - Less emphasis on distinguishing between orality and literacy, instead look at them as working together.
 - What exactly is wrong with the "strong text" theory that Brandt explicates? In other words, what is wrong with "equating literacy with textuality," as she argues?
 - It deemphasizes the importance of context
 - Or, it glosses over the "flow" that goes on between text and context. Text and context flow together, which isn't to say one or the other is barren (pg. 30, Brandt). Language and context constitute each other.
 - According to Brandt, what is the value of examining processes of literacy? What does that get us?
- Video clips:
 - YouTube clip: "Killing in the name of blindfolded"
 - <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Zhph0RUveM>
 - Somebody plays Guitar Hero with a blindfold on, on expert mode, and gets every note right
 - Why would he do that?
 - "Cyberland": <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xhd2lnCTWQM>