

# ALTDIS

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Alternative Discourses and the Academy

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## Preface

In 1974, the Conference on College Composition and Communication passed a resolution entitled "The Students' Right to Their Own Language." Many of us in the profession at that time, I think, viewed the passage of this resolution as a victory for a politically left-liberal, social-justice-oriented agenda in composition studies, but, as subsequent experience has shown, we were never quite clear on what the principles expressed here would mean in practice. The resolution's title implies that students should be able to use whatever language they prefer for their school writing, but, to the best of my knowledge, vanishingly few curricula were ever created to make this degree of choice possible.

Rather, it was taken more or less for granted that students would have to write in English. Moreover, it was generally assumed that they would have to do their formal school writing in the customary Standard-Edited-English dialect of traditional academic discourse. The force of the resolution, then, was to assert that even if these requirements could not be changed, it was still important to recognize that so-called nonstandard dialects of English possessed the full range of meaning-making capabilities present in the more academically acceptable dialect. The Black English Vernacular was the variant dialect most discussed in the resolution, but the general principles applied to any such forms: so-called nonstandard dialects should not be stigmatized in teacher commentary, should not be regarded as retarding anyone's cognitive development, and should even be welcomed in the classroom for use in discussion and in informal writing assignments, such as class journals. Acceptance of so-called nonstandard dialects in these ways would facilitate achievement of the goal to which most writing teachers—including myself—remained committed in those days, namely, mastery of traditional academic discourse by all students. "The Students' Right to Their Own Language," whatever revolutionary sentiments may have animated its framers, turned out to espouse methods to make assimilation to the dominant culture easier, at least in theory, for students from politically marginalized social groups.

Of course, the issues of linguistic diversity that "The Students' Right to Their Own Language" attempted to address have not gone away in the twenty-five years since the resolution's passage. If anything, they have become more complicated and vexed as the school population continues to diversify at a great rate and as no easy method has been found to initiate all comers into traditional academic discourse. Debate has continued over the fundamental assumption that all students need to learn traditional academic discourse. For

example, African American educator Lisa Delpit has argued eloquently against denying instruction in Standard-Edited-English and other features of traditional academic discourse to students from social groups who have been denied access to social justice and full participation in the American democracy. Delpit views the traditional discourse as a “language of power” that must be mastered for access to be realized. But, she also urges, it must be taught in a way that respects and makes full use of the linguistic resources students bring to school—in other words, her position is very close to that which “The Students’ Right to Their Own Language” has effected. Xin Liu Gale has explored the arguments justifying the teacher’s authority to intervene in students’ language-using practices in these ways.

In contrast, scholar of Black English Vernacular Geneva Smitherman has promoted BEV as a dialect fully capable of being used for all sorts of academic work, as she has demonstrated by employing it in some of her own published scholarship. Researchers into Latina/o language use Victor Villanueva, Jaime Mejia, and Michelle Hall Kells have likewise questioned whether it is absolutely necessary to eradicate a sort of written “Spanish accent” in the English expository prose of their students. ESL scholar Vivian Zamel has made a similar argument concerning the English writing of international students whose first language is not English.

Indeed, the bibliography of work in basic writing pedagogy ever since Mina Shaughnessy’s ground-breaking 1977 study, *Errors and Expectations*, reflects our continued grappling with issues of linguistic diversity. As presented by Shaughnessy and followed by most composition teachers since then, “basic writing” has functioned as a research category to help them cope with the task of initiating all students into traditional academic discourse, to find new pedagogical methods to reach this goal. Writing-across-the-curriculum programs, too, have generally had as one major goal to improve instruction in traditional academic discourse for all students, as it became increasingly clear that mastery could not be achieved in one or two or three semesters of required “first-year” composition. Bruce Herzberg and I once defended this goal for writing across the curriculum against Lil Brannon’s and Cy Knoblauch’s attacks on it as mere “grammar across the curriculum.” Yet our field has not been able to bring all students to mastery of traditional academic discourse in any systematic way to this very day. My own views on whether it is possible or desirable to achieve this goal have shifted under this pressure.

Meanwhile, it seems that the world has moved on. True, many academics, in writing programs and elsewhere, still require students to produce traditional academic discourse and penalize them if they do not. Many writing teachers still agonize over how, or whether, to equip their students to meet this requirement. But meanwhile, many academics and students have been developing new discourse forms that accomplish intellectual work while combining traditional academic discourse traits with traits from other discourse communities. The essays in this book investigate this phenomenon: the emer-

gence of “hybrid,” “mixed,” “alternative,” or “constructed” forms of academic discourse, which many teachers believe that they are increasingly seeing, not only in student writing, but in published professional discourse. The emergence of these kinds of nontraditional academic discourse may soon make the debate over “students’ right to their own language” moot. Students, and their professors, are going ahead and developing new ways of writing in the academy that make use of “their own” languages as well as the still-valuable resources of traditional academic discourse.

Some of the essays collected here attempt to describe this phenomenon in more detail, at the same time debating about exactly what it should be called. The label *alternative* is helpful because it gets at what is perhaps the key feature of the discourses we are discussing, namely that they do not follow all the conventions of traditional academic discourse and may therefore provoke disapproval in some academic readers. *Alternative* invokes a sort of counter-cultural image that bespeaks the political resistance to hegemonic discourse that these new forms express—thus we see that the old left-liberal, social-justice-oriented agenda that motivated “The Students’ Right to Their Own Language” resolution may be reemerging in a new guise. The term *mixed* helps to convey exactly what makes these discourses “alternative,” namely that they exhibit stylistic, cultural, and cognitive elements from different discourse communities. *Hybrid*, although criticized by some contributors here for its biologically essentializing implications, is helpful for a similar reason, suggesting that in the new forms of discourse, traditional academic traits blend with traits from discourses not traditionally accepted in the academy to produce new forms with their own organic integrity. The term *constructed* adds emphasis on the pedagogical methods whereby the nature of the mix in the new forms of discourse is negotiated among teachers and students.

Beyond problems of defining the phenomenon, however, research must address the questions of whether alternative forms of academic discourse actually exist—are writing teachers’ perceptions accurate about their emergence?—and if they do, to what extent are they spreading within the academy? Some of the essays included here address these questions, analyzing examples of alternative forms, tracking their emergence empirically across disciplines, or exploring the resources that exist across cultures for legitimating the intellectual work of alternative forms. It is important to note here that scholarly interest in these new discourse forms does not arise only from the hope that the old pedagogical dilemma of basic writing—how are we to teach them all traditional academic discourse?—can at last be set aside, and with it the attendant social justice concerns (is it right to force all students to assimilate to the hegemonic culture? And so on). No doubt this is one motive, as I have suggested in linking the new interest in alternative forms with the political motives of the “Students’ Right” resolution, but avoiding this dilemma is by no means the only motive. More important, I think, is the growing awareness that these new discourse forms are developing because they enable kinds of rigor-

ous academic work that simply cannot be done within the traditional discourse. If this is so, then writing teachers need to know about the new forms so that they can help their students deal with the full range of discursive practices they will need to succeed in college and beyond.

Some of the essays in this volume embody evidence that alternative forms are emerging—they employ them. Moreover, these essays provide readers with good test cases for my claim, noted previously and explored further in the opening essay of this collection, that alternative forms enable kinds of intellectual work that cannot be accomplished in traditional academic discourse. At the same time, these essays provide a useful index of some of the many directions in which alternative forms can develop. So-called nonstandard dialects will appear in some of these essays, but it becomes increasingly clear that the phenomenon on which the contributors focus here moves far beyond the issue of whether or not a nonstandard dialect can be employed. The alternatives are far more diverse than that, including different dialects, essay forms, cultural allusions, authorial personae, and more.

If alternative forms are indeed emerging, however, investigation must turn to questions of the implications of this emergence for students of writing. Do students still need to learn traditional academic discourse too? Do teachers now need to learn alternative discourses? Are some alternative discourses more acceptable or useful than others? In what, exactly, does the status “alternative” consist—stylistic features, affect or ethos, political orientation of the writer—or what? Some essays in this collection address these questions. It will be clear that the essays collected here do not urge a unitary view of emerging discourses or present a program for curriculum reform. Rather, we are trying to encourage more writing teachers to acknowledge and explore alternative academic discourses. We are trying to put some provocative questions on the table for discussion, questions that have crucial implications for access to higher education in this country as the college population increasingly diversifies in the twenty-first century. We hope that you will be moved to join the conversation.

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# The Intellectual Work of “Mixed” Forms of Academic Discourses

Patricia Bizzell

To identify alternative forms of academic discourse, we need to have some sense of what a “standard” or non-alternative academic discourse, sometimes called traditional academic discourse, might be. A primary way to define academic discourse is to see it as the language of a community—hence the phrase, academic discourse community. I think it is possible to speak of the academic community’s language-using practices as conventionalized, that is, there are certain customary ways of doing things. The way one employs these language-using conventions (with familiarity, grace, or tentative bravado, for example) establishes one’s place within the community: people of higher status use language (within the shared conventions) differently than do people of lower status. Following these language-using conventions shapes participants’ way of looking at the world—their worldview—including notions of what’s real, normal, natural, good, and true. The people in the group use the shared language to work together on some shared project in the world—something they are trying to do together.

Because academic discourse is the language of a human community, it can never be absolutely fixed in form. It changes over time, and at any given time multiple versions of it are in use. In this sense, “alternative” forms of academic discourse have always been knocking around the academy. Nevertheless, because academic discourse is the language of a community, at any given time its most standard or widely accepted features reflect the cultural preferences of the most powerful people in the community. Until relatively recently, these people in the academic community have usually been male, European American, and middle or upper class. Hence it is possible to say that traditional academic discourses generally share certain features.

For one thing, such discourses employ a grapholect, the most formal and ultra-correct form of the participants' native language, treating as "errors" usages that would be unproblematic in casual conversation. Also, traditional academic genres shape whole pieces of writing, such as the lab report, the reflective journal, the critical essay, the research paper, and so on. Finally, the ones in power in the traditional academic community create discourses that embody a typical worldview. This worldview speaks through an academic persona who is objective, trying to prevent any emotions or prejudices from influencing the ideas in the writing. The persona is skeptical, responding with doubt and questions to any claim that something is true or good or beautiful. Not surprisingly, the persona is argumentative, favoring debate, believing that if we are going to find out whether something is true or good or beautiful, the only way we will do that is by arguing for opposing views of it, to see who wins. In this view, only debate can produce knowledge. Knowledge is not immediately available to experience, nor is it revealed from transcendent sources. Additionally, the persona is extremely precise, exacting, rigorous—if debate is going to generate knowledge, all participants must use language carefully, demonstrate their knowledge of earlier scholarly work, argue logically and fairly, use sound evidence, and so on.

The academic community is changing, however, and becoming more diverse—more people of color, more women, more people from the lower social classes, more people whose native language is not English or not the so-called Standard English (not all of these groups are mutually exclusive). Gaining access to higher education for these diverse groups has certainly not been easy, of course, and as they brought with them diverse discourses from their various home communities, gaining acceptance for these discourses, too, is an ongoing struggle. Yet, slowly but surely, previously nonacademic discourses are blending with traditional academic discourses to form the new "mixed" forms. These new discourses are still academic, in that they are doing the intellectual work of the academy—rigorous, reflective scholarship. We find these discourses appearing in articles in top-rank academic journals and in books from prestigious academic presses. But they have combined elements of traditional academic discourse with elements of other ways of using language, admitting personal experience as evidence, for example, or employing cultural allusions or language variants that do not match the cultural capital of the dominant white male group. After all, in how many communities is it considered appropriate to critically question everything one's interlocutor says, picking apart the other person's statements and even her or his grammar and word choice, while keeping one's own emotions and investments in the topic carefully hidden?

I want to emphasize that I see these mixed forms not simply as more comfortable or more congenial—they would not be gaining currency if comfort was all they provided, because the powerful people in the academic community are still, to a large extent, middle- and upper-class white men who would

have no stake in allowing discourse forms that were alien to them. Rather, I think these new, alternative or mixed discourse forms are gaining ground because they allow their practitioners to do intellectual work in ways they could not if confined to traditional academic discourse. That is why these discourses can be found in so many academic disciplines today. These new discourses enable scholarship to take account of new variables, to explore new methods, and to communicate findings in new venues, including broader reading publics than the academic. I attempted to sketch the contrasts between old and new academic discourses in "Hybrid Academic Discourses: What, Why, How" (Bizzell 1999).

These new forms of academic discourse probably should not be termed *hybrid*, however, a correction I attempted to explain in "Basic Writing and the Issue of Correctness" (Bizzell 2000). For one thing, this concept relies on a reified notion of academic discourse that obscures institutional dynamics of power. Earlier in this chapter I provided a brief taxonomy of the traits of traditional academic discourse in order to conceptualize the hybridization of discourse from two distinct "parents." As I also noted, however, I would not want to suggest that traditional academic discourse was a fixed and unchanging entity until very recently. This is certainly not the case, and one does not need to go back very far to discover that fact.

Moreover, research by Michelle Hall Kells among English-Spanish bilinguals shows why it is dangerous to imply that academic discourse has not changed much over time. Such a presentation tends to give academic discourse an air of superiority that all too readily plays into linguistic minority students' tendency to see the academy's formal language as "more logical" or "purer" than their home dialects—"dialect misconceptions" that lead to "linguistic shame," as Kells describes it, which impedes learning and school success (1999, 137). It might be more accurate to say that what has remained constant is the privileged social position of whatever currently counts as academic discourse.

Furthermore, the term *hybrid* is at once too abstract and too concrete. It is borrowed from postcolonial theory, and the problems with its abstraction are well analyzed in Deepika Bahri's work on applications of postcolonial theory to composition studies. I was attracted to the term *hybrid* because it upsets the dichotomy established in my earlier work between academic discourse and students' home discourses, and thus implies that discursive and cultural boundaries are more blurred and, perhaps because of that blurring, more easily crossed than had been thought in so-called current-traditional, error-hunting writing instruction. But Bahri points out:

If the concept of hybridity is useful in undoing binaries and approaching the complexities of transnationalism, as many would find in composition studies, I would warn that it also tends to avoid the question of location because it suggests a zone of nowhere-ness, and a people afloat in a weightless ether of ahistoricity. . . . The scores of underclass immigrants in Anglo-America

and illegal border-crossers not only cannot “make themselves comfortable” with the same ease that other postcolonials have but also know that a border-crossing can be dangerous and potentially fatal. The deeply racial and class segregated nature of our cities, moreover, should also alert us to the intransigent borders within, rather than invoking the more glamorous cultural borders that metropolitan postcolonial celebrities [such as Homi Bhabha and Salman Rushdie] invoke. (1998, 39)

It would be a mistake to imply that the “mixing” in alternative academic discourses can go on easily, naturally, or without political opposition from the powers that be.

At the same time as the concept of hybrid gets in trouble for being too abstract, however, it can also be critiqued for being too concrete. Hybrid, after all, is a biological metaphor, as in such statements as, the mule is a hybrid of the donkey and the horse. Using a biological metaphor for discourse risks essentializing people’s language use. Thus, for example, while Black English Vernacular is deeply significant to many people of African descent, deeply rooted in their sense of their individual and collective identities, its linguistic features are not genetically determined, and people of African descent may well be able to use and to enjoy using other dialects of English. There is a larger problem here, as well, and that is the nature of the variant forms that are coming into academic discourse. The biological metaphor of hybridity implies that what mixes in the new forms, as I noted earlier, are two distinct “parents,” that is, distinct, well-defined, and culturally independent linguistic and discursive practices. It is not at all clear that this is the case, however.

In short, we must not ignore the profound cultural mixing that has already occurred in the United States. Even students who are the first members of their families or their communities to attend college come with already mixed linguistic and discursive resources, as Scott Lyons explains in discussing the narratives of American Indian students:

To my mixedblood mind, the stories of Indian students are clearly *heteroglossic*—produced against, within, and in tandem with the grand narratives of contemporary American life and culture . . . There is a European in every Indian and an Indian in every “white”—each relationship positioned differently—and the two are not together by choice. It is this kind of *contact heteroglossia* that has been repressed by educators and theorists for centuries, and that Indian students not only know, but also use daily—we can all learn from them in this respect. (1998, 88–89, emphasis in original)

Lyons argues forcefully for the need for Indian students to use Indian discursive resources in their college writing, but at the same time, he shows how very difficult it would be to tease out the Indian strands in academic writing that nevertheless may be clearly recognized as “non-traditional,” variant, or new.

Moreover, Lyons points in passing to another important aspect of mixing that many of us have experienced in our classrooms today, and that is the “contact heteroglossia,” to use his term, that can be seen in the writing of European American students. Basic writing teachers know that it is a mistake to expect something like traditional academic discourse from all the students who appear racially white or who self-identify as white. Experimentation with new discourse forms certainly cannot be attributed to any essentialized linguistic heritage in the case of these students. Yes, increased access has happened, and a wide range of published scholarship employs new forms of academic discourse, as I have noted, but it is misleading to imply that new forms have emerged simply to make new students and scholars feel more comfortable. The new forms are being used by everyone, not only by students and scholars from underrepresented social groups, and the reason is not far to seek: as noted previously, they make possible new forms of intellectual work.

The best evidence I can present for the compelling nature of this new intellectual work is to find examples of powerful white male scholars who are employing alternative discourses, possibly at some risk to themselves, because they cannot do what they want to do in their scholarship any other way. Especially persuasive might be examples drawn from elsewhere than English studies, a field that has been experimenting with alternative discourses for some time, particularly in the work of feminist theorists and scholars in composition and rhetoric. Accordingly, I offer an example from *The Journal of American History*, the official scholarly publication of the Organization of American Historians.

A long meditation by Joel Williamson, a very senior and eminent scholar, leads off the March 1997 issue. Williamson attempts to explore how his own personal background has affected his scholarship, and thus to make a point about historiography in general. Williamson is interested in trying to understand why he, a southerner “born and bred” (1228) as he describes himself, took so long to realize that lynching and other racially motivated forms of violence were important factors in black-white relations in the South. His meditation is triggered by the Clarence Thomas confirmation hearings, in which Thomas clinched his own defense by accusing his critics of perpetrating a “high-tech lynching.” Thomas’ use of this metaphor spurs Williamson to examine how knowledge of lynching and understanding of its cultural significance are variably distributed according to race. Williamson argues not only that white people are ignorant on the subject of racial violence, but that they are willfully so—that there is a deliberate forgetting or erasure going on, and that it has affected even the practice of research in American history, even the research done by scholars such as himself, whose focus has been race relations. Williamson has published an important book on lynching and racial violence, and yet, in this essay, he indicts himself for the unconscionably slow growth of his own awareness of the importance of this topic and for the blind spots that



he knows exist in his vision even today. He concludes by noting that a major blind spot has to do with the sexual politics of lynching, and he calls for a new vision of southern history that deals more frankly with gender as well as with race.

Scholars in composition and rhetoric may find nothing surprising in Williamson's meditations other than that 1997 seems rather late for the discipline of history to be examining the personal roots of its scholarly agendas, compared to what has gone on in our field, in the work of Helen Fox, Keith Gilyard, Mike Rose, and Victor Villanueva, to name a few examples. But David Thelen, editor of the journal when Williamson's essay appeared, finds Williamson's experiment so challenging that he takes the very unusual course of printing Williamson's essay as he submitted it, along with six referees' reports as they submitted them—nothing edited for publication. Evidently Thelen is so anxious about publishing the Williamson piece that he must invite the journal readers to scrutinize the evidence on which he made the decision to print. Ongoing anxiety is evinced, too, in Thelen's decision to commission a seventh response to Williamson's piece from a woman who is a scholar of women's history, once he noticed that Williamson's six referees, all male, were none of them scholars of women's history. She is the only one of the reviewers who knew she was writing for publication.

What interests me about this now rather notorious fracas is that the reviewers, all but one, clearly address themselves to the issue of whether the historiographical insights provided by Williamson's essay are worth struggling with his alternative discourse form. Five end up voting in the affirmative, though there is ample evidence that the form disturbs them. A principal concern seems to be the nonlinear structure of the essay, familiar to writing teachers from what we call the personal essay, but not the traditional structure of academic argument. Williamson's reviewers react to this structure by finding it hard to connect the themes he broaches. Steven M. Stowe notes "two strands" of thought in the essay that "do not always adhere": "the author plays with one and then the other, then both, but shifting and spinning them in ways that/are not always clear" (1264–65). David Levering Lewis finds "three themes" in the essay that "are insufficiently explored, and their putative interconnectedness is either strained or fallacious" (1261). David W. Blight condemns "a cacophony of themes and subthemes, plots and subplots" in Williamson's essay—he counts no less than eight (1255).

The reviewers also notice the personal style of Williamson's essay, his use of autobiographical examples and his willingness to reveal his emotions. Lewis, the most negative of the seven reviewers, is repulsed by this style; he says, "the tone of the piece borders on self-promotion written in mighty florid prose" and he finds some passages "embarrassing" (1261). The majority of the reviewers, however, seem to react more like Edward L. Ayers, who, although "embarrassed to admit how much I like this essay," feels that it is "revealing

without being self-indulgent," and he is "pulled along by this essay's momentum, by its revelations and emotional power" (1254). Stowe characterizes the essay as "a kind of heart of darkness journey" that "seeks out something horrible at the center of things" (1264; a perhaps unintentionally ironic reference, given the well-known controversy in literary studies over the racism of Conrad's story—does Stowe enact with this reference another sort of the willful blindness Williamson condemns?). Stowe asserts that "the most powerful parts of this paper are when the author speaks most personally about his struggle to understand" (1266). George M. Frederickson states the dilemma for the male readers most clearly:

It is a highly personal, partially autobiographical statement that lacks the objective tone and scholarly apparatus of the normal *JAH* article. It is, *however*, intelligent, incisive, and full of interest for anyone concerned with southern history. . . . Should the *JAH* publish this kind of piece? It would be a new departure, I think . . . but my view is that essays of this kind, if they possess the authority and quality found here, deserve/a place in the *Journal*. . . . The personalized, confessional mode does not seem to me objectionable when used in historiographic essays that involve the author's own work. In fact, a good argument could be made that such disclosure is not only appropriate but highly desirable. (1257–58, emphasis added)

It is interesting that Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, the woman invited to compose a seventh response to Williamson's piece, does not seem to be bothered in the slightest by the mode of discourse the male reviewers found so complicated, although she takes exception to Williamson's preference for military metaphors. Perhaps as a feminist historian, she has encountered alternative discourse forms often enough—unlike the male reviewers—to be comfortable with them.

In spite of some reviewers' struggles with Williamson's alternative discourse, most found much to value in the intellectual work he accomplishes, as Frederickson hints when he notes that "such disclosure is not only appropriate but highly desirable" (1258). Here is how some of the other reviewers articulate what they find of value in Williamson's piece:

Hall praises the analysis Williamson provides, however unconventionally, of what she calls the "symbiosis between cultural amnesia and historiographical neglect" and its impact on southern history (1268).

Blight calls Williamson a "wise provocateur" who "has much to say about the cycles of historiographical discovery and decline"; Blight finds "stimulating" Williamson's call at the end of the piece for "a fuller embrace of gender—a new men's and a new women's history of the South" (1256; is there a pun intended here?).

Stowe provides perhaps the most detail about what Williamson contributes.

He notes that Williamson illuminates the ways that "the historiography of southern race relations in the past thirty to forty years divides into three overlapping vistas," dealing with slavery, segregation, and lynching, and that Williamson helpfully points out "how dim and limited the last one is" and asks "Why do we not know how to write about lynching?" (1265) Stowe believes that Williamson's valuable answer to this question is that historians need to do more self-searching work of the kind Williamson does in this essay. In other words, Stowe sees the essay as exemplifying a new kind of history writing that addresses the critical problems to which it calls attention, or as Stowe puts it, "the author suggests that historians look, not just in a different direction, but to a different dimension of experience for the next step in the history of the races" (1266).

It would seem, then, that for five of Williamson's seven readers, the alternative mode of discourse enables valuable, even uniquely valuable, intellectual work.

Two of the original six referees, however, recommended against publication, and most vehemently. But their objections do not seem to focus primarily on the use of an alternative discourse. Before I discuss them, however, I want to mention that Williamson's essay, and all seven responses, were accompanied by photos of the authors. No other articles in this issue of the *Journal of American History* are accompanied by photos of the authors, so evidently it is not this journal's usual practice. Are these photos included to let us know that the two negative reviewers, David Levering Lewis and Robin D. G. Kelley, are African American, without having to tell us? Racial identity is not always evident from photographs, but I wonder.

Although Lewis, as noted previously, makes clear that he does not like Williamson's alternative discourse, he condemns Williamson's entire body of work in southern history. Lewis's review is by far the longest of the seven and ranges over many issues only tangential to the Williamson essay he is reviewing. Not knowing the field of American history, I can only guess that in this review, a long-standing scholarly rivalry reemerges. Certainly Williamson's discursive experiment did nothing to win over an old adversary. I have to wonder, though, whether, since Lewis is African American, his rancor was motivated at least in part by some of the objections Kelley raises.

Kelley does not seem to be bothered by Williamson's alternative mode of discourse, either. At any rate, he does not say anything about it. His chief objection is that Williamson talks about his own problems of what Hall calls "cultural amnesia and historiographical neglect" as if they beset American historians universally. Kelley does not say in so many words that black historians have no problem with amnesia where lynching is concerned, but he devotes much of his review to citing works on racial violence that Williamson has neglected to mention, at least some of them, I know, by African American historians. Kelley argues forcefully that Williamson's portrait of a forgetful

profession can only hold through the use of a prejudicially defined "we" that neglects, most ironically, the work of historians who clearly have not suffered from Williamson's own debilities.

Yet, I don't think Kelley's strictures destroy my point about Williamson's essay doing valuable intellectual work. Rather, Kelley prompts me to ask, valuable intellectual work for whom? In this case, it seems that Williamson's willingness to dig deep within himself and reveal the emotional underpinnings of his work is most valuable for other white male historians. Their reviews answer the emotion in his piece, bespeaking their embarrassment, explicitly in Ayers, and at the same time, expressing gratitude for Williamson's intensity, most notably in Stowe. Perhaps the white male readers are assisted in identifying with Williamson because, as Hall notes, he tends to couch his emotional disclosures in military metaphors—scholars rush to combat, hold the high ground, look over the battlefield, etc. Perhaps Kelley and Lewis, on the other hand, are left cold by this essay, and Hall tempers her enthusiasm, because historians of color and white women historians do not need so much assistance in exploring the emotional roots of their scholarly agendas.

I want to make clear that I do not mean to devalue Williamson's contribution by suggesting that his alternative intellectual work is not equally valuable for everyone. On the contrary, Kelley helps me make the point that a diversity of intellectual approaches is exactly what we need. That is why, as I have argued, alternative forms of academic discourse are emerging. The academy collectively has finally grasped the point of the old fable about the blind men and the elephant. One gets a hold of the elephant's ear and says, "The elephant, I find, is very like a fan!" Another gets a hold of the elephant's trunk and says, "No, the elephant is very like a snake!" A third grabs the leg and says, "No! Very like a tree!" And so on. If we want to see the whole beast, we should be welcoming, not resisting, the advent of diverse forms of academic discourse, and encouraging our students to bring all their discursive resources to bear on the intellectual challenges of the academic disciplines.

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