Shelley Angelil-Carter: *Stolen Language? Plagiarism in Writing*. **Longmans. Pearson Education 2000. 147pp.**

Plagiarism, that 'scourge' of academia, has once again emerged as a topic of heated debate at universities across South Africa, in a somewhat new guise. In addition to old-fashioned 'borrowing' from written sources, today's student plagiarizers – at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels - have discovered the ease of 'cut-and-paste' approaches to the web. Once again, assessors find themselves responding by tracking down sources to confirm suspected dishonesty, debating appropriate punitive measures – but also asking *why* plagiarism is so frequent. South African universities are of course not alone in this situation, as a quick glance as the Web confirms.

Within this context, the appearance of Shelley Angelil-Carter's *Stolen Words*? is particularly timely, and a further confirmation of the valuable work in the field of academic literacy emerging from the Academic Development Programme at the University of Cape Town. In contrast to what is sometimes a knee-jerk legalistic approach, Angelil-Carter offers a very welcome alternative, arguing the case that 'plagiarism in the undergraduate years is not so much a matter of "deliberate theft" ... but is rather a complex problem of student learning, compounded by a lack of clarity about the concept of plagiarism itself, and a lack of clear policy and pedagogy surrounding the issue.' (2000: 2) This approach (which acknowledges the existence of intentionally fraudulent plagiarism, but excludes this from the discussion) is developed across 12 cogently argued chapters and supported by empirical investigation of student writers and staff responses. The deliberate interpellation of a dance metaphor throughout the text seeks to underline Angelil-Carter's distance to legalistic approaches.

Part 1 develops the line of argument within a framework of academic literacies, discourse theory and critical discourse analysis, before moving to the analysis of empirical data in Part 2. A first step is to denaturalize the term 'plagiarism'. In our post-modern age individual ownership of texts, words and ideas (as presupposed by the term plagiarism and long taken for granted) is increasingly being challenged; and Angelil-Carter confirms this by pointing to the relative youth of both the term plagiarism and the copyright system, and the widely varying ways in which plagiarism is understood. These uncertainties, however, by no means lead to the conclusion that our concerns about plagiarism are unnecessary, but rather point to the need to develop a

clear awareness of why the issue of plagiarism (and concerns about the related skill of referencing) must remain of seminal importance to the academy. Given that academic writing is premised on 'the analysis of and selection from sources, and subsequent integration and synthesis of knowledge and ideas into a coherent whole' (2000: 4), the skills of appropriate citation and adequate referencing are by no means simply 'mental loops' to be jumped through, but are indeed crucial to the mastery of academic writing. A meaningful discussion of plagiarism should therefore be located within approaches to academic literacy and to ways in which students can be supported in their attempts to master academic discourse. Students may view this mastery primarily in terms of passing exams: Angelil-Carter, however, hopes for one further outcome, the ability to challenge academic discourse, to 'force it to open up to previously marginalized discourses, allowing different discourses in' (2000: 12), and so to contribute to transforming higher education.

Against this framework Angelil-Carter presents her analysis of the processes whereby novice students seek to acquire academic discourse. Most incoming students find academic discourse initially alien, a 'foreign language' which is frequently in conflict with their own prior discourses. Early attempts to learn this new discourse are likely to involve 'trying it on' – attempts at simple appropriation which may involve perhaps 'the lexis of the new discourse, ... the structure of the academic essay, for example, or .... whole phrases or sentences in a mosaic which barely contains a sense of the student as author.' (2000: 37) The outcome may well be 'the unsuccessful, conflictual hybridization of prior school (or other) discourses and new academic ones' (2000: 38) – and quite possibly what may be labeled 'plagiarism'.

These difficulties are compounded for speakers of other languages who are still in the process of acquiring advanced competence in English. The fact that at all levels of language learning, chunks of language are learned and reproduced word for word (2000: 45) means that a student who is using English as an alternate language will be predisposed to reproduce chunks from source texts. The intertextuality inherent in academic discourse demands high level skills in reading, interpretation and rewording, such as paraphrase of complex texts. Students who have grown up with English frequently battle with these skills; all the more so students who have yet to acquire a wide range of sophisticated vocabulary.

The process of 'trying on' academic discourse, of drawing on words and sentences of others, is generally a stage of voicelessness: 'In a novice academic essay the voice of the author may not sound ...' (2000: 48). It is only when writers are able to produce authorial voice that they are coming to 'own' their writing; and this, involving 'the subtle control of the texts and authors, and the writer's stance towards them' (2000: 46-7), is an extremely complex achievement. Angelil-Carter argues that this only becomes possible when the writer has grasped the significance of referencing, the importance of signaling sources, position and stance, and in these ways is beginning to participate in the academic dialogue.

In Part II of the volume, this analysis is given empirical body: Angelil-Carter in turn explores the way in which a departmental handbook projects plagiarism, reports on studies of individual students and their academic writing, and contrasts this with the opinions of academic staff and their approaches to assessment and to plagiarism. While the handbook under consideration projects plagiarism as 'an undisputed, deceitful and immoral act' (2000: 60), staff opinions as to the purpose of and need for referencing diverge, and students appear uninformed, unconvinced

and generally confused as to how much background knowledge and outside reading may be brought into essays. Nevertheless, a year-long in-depth study of a mature student who overcomes considerable educational disadvantage in mastering academic literacy allows Angelil-Carter to conclude that 'a sustained focus on referencing ... can lead to a new understanding of the construction of knowledge, and can move the learner from a position of seeing knowledge as an indeterminate mass of information, to a position where he or she is able to locate authors within debates, and throw one perspective up against another in a critical manner' (2000: 92). Clearly, we should not simply abandon attempts to teach referencing, and the purpose of referencing, to undergraduate students; but we do need to reconsider current strategies.

In a final valuable section, Angelil-Carter draws together her analysis in 'a pedagogy for plagiarism and referencing' (2000: 113), arguing that 'the practice of referencing, and the deeper understanding of knowledge construction that it represents, should be given a serious place in the curriculum.' (2000: 114). This can be achieved, on the one hand, through the negotiation of shared meaning around the concept of plagiarism, and on the other, by including a focus on referencing in any academic literacy programme. The negotiation of shared meaning requires the development of a coherent institutional policy, one which 'acknowledge(s) the complexities of plagiarism, whilst at the same time (does) not condone it as a writing strategy' (2000: 117). At departmental level, clear definitions and policy guidelines for markers should be developed. To communicate institutional understandings more adequately to students, Angelil-Carter proposes extensive modeling of suitable citation practices in departmental handbooks. Such a model might include extracts from two or three sources, an acceptable paraphrased synthesis of these (possibly too a negative example), and clear explanations of the referencing modeled within this paraphrase.

Once shared meaning has been developed in this way, it will then be available to underpin academic literacy programmes, which must teach the genre of the academic essay explicitly. Given the importance of sources and intertextuality in academic writing, students will require practice in comprehension strategies, in paraphrase and summary techniques – perhaps by means of cognitive mapping. Here, too, Angelil-Carter proposes working with models (and repeatedly showing students how these can be used): 'Students need to see and discuss models of good essays, and how sources are used within them, as well as poor essays which demonstrate inappropriate referencing strategies or plagiarism' (2000: 126). Finally, students should be given practice in recognizing, and producing, authorial voice. Coming to recognize multiple voices in readings is an important step in beginning to use own authorial voice: where the voices of others stop, a student's own voice can begin to speak. And certainly, encouraging and permitting appropriate use of the pronoun "I" can allow such authorial voice to emerge. In concluding, Angelil-Carter returns to her conviction that such teaching will effect more than academic literacy: it is such an awareness of texts as authored, and of knowledge as constructed, which can support the critical stance towards knowledge that higher education seeks to inculcate.

To sum up, the work integrates a body of international and local theory and a carefully researched empirical investigation. It urges readers to rethink their understanding of plagiarism, and to consider deeper justifications for the weight currently placed on plagiarism and referencing within the context of the academic project. While avoiding simplistic solutions, it offers sound suggestions for a developmental approach which can aid students in moving beyond inadvertent plagiarism, by equipping them with an understanding of the role of sources in academic writing

and the skills to manipulate sources appropriately. The volume is strongly recommended both to teaching staff in higher education, and to those involved in developing institutional policy around plagiarism.

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