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Expository Writing

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### Sometimes Support Falls Short

In Richard Rodriguez's essay "The Achievement of Desire" and Alice Walker's "In Search for Our Mothers' Gardens" both Authors use quotations to further their standpoint. The two Authors use different ways of persuasion but ultimately fail to fully represent their source. It is often helpful to use a quote to support one's point; however it is important to respect the form and intent of the original author.

Without reverence for the primary author, the essay loses meaning, for it is the original author where their expressed points are coming from. It is imperative for reader's everywhere to be cognizant of the level of deception that some writers use. If a reader does not recognize the misuse of a quotation from another source than it is possible that they have been fooled by the writer.

In "The Achievement of Desire", Rodriguez analyzes Hoggart's theory of a "scholarship boy". Instead of citing Hoggart's definition of a scholarship boy, Rodriguez supplements his own definition and uses Hoggart to support his altered statements. Rodriguez over examines the meaning of a scholarship boy.

He incorporates his own embarrassing life experiences to redefine Hoggart's term. Hoggart states:

‘He becomes an expert imbiber and doler-out; his competence will vary, but will rarely be accompanied by genuine enthusiasms. He rarely feels the reality of his knowledge, of other men's thoughts and imaginings, on his own pulses....He has something of the blinkered pony about him...’ (Rodriguez 666)

After this quotation in the essay, Rodriguez goes into detail over his personal battles with his family and the educational system. With these references, Rodriguez makes the scholarship boy seem almost as a disorder. His tangents on his family life have no clear representation of Hoggart's scholarship boy.

“My father and mother did not pass their time thinking about the cultural meanings of their experience. It was I who described their daily lives with airy ideas....If, because of my schooling, I had grown culturally separated from my parents, my education finally had given me ways of speaking and caring about that fact” (Rodriguez 670).

In using Hoggart as a reference it appears that Rodriguez's point differentiates from the original author not only in definition but in tone as well. Hoggart's scholarship boy seems to be more of a clear cut analysis that's dry but to the point. “He longs for the membership he lost....He wants to go back and yet thinks he has gone beyond his class”. Hoggart simply highlights what a

scholarship boy does and does not do; while Rodriguez adds a personal aspect that makes his tone more melodramatic.

When using another reference to support your opinion, the original author's quote should help structure your essay instead of contrast your work. Rodriguez's remarks on the scholarship boy seem to differentiate from Hoggart's definition and that creates a flaw in Rodriguez's work. Not only does it disrespect the primary author but also makes Rodriguez appear less credible.

Although they differ in style and tone, Walker too misrepresents her sources. In Alice Walker's essay, she uses Virginia Woolf and Phillis Wheatley as sources to further her point about important women in the arts. In use of Woolf's quote, Walker splices information in the middle of Woolf's statement to make her argument more clear.

'Yet genius of a sort must have existed among the working class. [Change this to "slaves" and the "wives and daughters of sharecroppers."] Now and again an Emily Bronte or a Robert Burns [change this to "a Zora Hurston or a Richard Wright"] blazes our and proves its presence' (Walker 744).

Notice in the quote how Walker imposes different names within the Woolf's words to justify her point more clearly. By imposing thoughts within another writer's work proves how unrelated her source was.

When quoting from Phillis Wheatley, Walker again alters the original writers work. Wheatley writes:

'The goddess comes, she moves divinely fair,

Olive and laurel binds her *golden* hair.

Wherever shines this native of the skies,

Unnumber'd charms and recent graces rise [My italics]' (Walker 743).

Within Wheatley's own work, Walker highlights the word *golden* to emphasize the one word and subsequently writes "My italics" when the quotation is finished. This use of italics on Wheatley's work is unfair because Wheatley did originally italicize the word "golden" so this creates a distortion in her own work.

The difference in Rodriguez and Walker's use of quotations is that Walker literally changes what the primary author wrote, where as Rodriguez is only expanding on what his source is stating. Walker's style seems less professional and unfair to the original writer. When a writer releases a piece of work to the public it is open to interpretation but exaggeration and distortion should not be accepted. If Woolf had intended for her work to be represented as Walker did than possibly Walker's essay could be justifiable. When using an alternate source there should always be a level of respect for the author's intentions but Walker did not exactly do that and basically used Woolf and Wheatley as support for her work only.

Rodriguez and Walker use different techniques to persuade their audience but ultimately both portray their source in the wrong light. Rodriguez, who takes his source and expands afterwards, seems to be a more admirable way of persuasion, where as Walker's style of inter-cutting her own thoughts

within her source is shameful. If Walker waited for the quote to commence to add her opinion, her view points would seem more commendable. By consciously persuading their audience, Rodriguez and Walker are using a technique Robert Coles calls “filtering”. Their reason for filtering their sources may be due to a lack of power in their argument. If they had a more influential view point then it is possible that they would not need to rely on their sources so heavily. In order to justify their statements more clearly they choose to filter their sources to persuade their readers. When an author distorts another author’s intention, their level of credibility becomes a question. When a literary work is published it is open for interpretation but only to the author’s acceptance. Using alternate sources in an essay is needed but as long as it connects to what the author originally intended.