

Bakhtinian Perspectives on Language,  
Literacy, and Learning

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## Intertextualities

*Volosinov, Bakhtin, Literary Theory, and Literacy Studies*

Charles Bazerman

Intertextuality forms one of the crucial grounds for writing studies and writing practice. Texts do not appear in isolation, but in relation to other texts. We write in response to prior writing, and as writers we use the resources provided by prior writers. When we read we use knowledge and experience from texts we have read before to make sense of the new text, and as readers we notice the texts the writer invokes directly and indirectly. Our reading and writing are in dialogue with each other as we write in direct and indirect response to what we have read before, and we read in relation to the ideas we have articulated in our own writing.

Understanding how we use intertextuality as writers and readers can improve our practice as individuals and as collectives. Our writing can be more sure-footed as we notice the intertextual ground we stand on. We can become more deft and precise in invoking texts that we want the reader to see as relevant context and in excluding those intertexts that might distract the readers from the vision we want to present. As readers we can note more exactly those intertexts the writer is invoking, and how and for what purposes. Further, we can also decide as readers if we want to bring other texts to bear to the issue that the writer has not seen as relevant.

As useful a concept as intertextuality is, we have difficulty making precise analytic use of it for rhetoric, composition, and literacy studies. That is because the term has been introduced through literary studies and has been defined and elaborated in ways that focus on issues of most interest to literary studies, rather than those issues most of interest to rhetoric, composition, and literacy studies. The literary genealogy for the term intertextuality has been reconstructed to start with Mikhail Bakhtin. This Bakhtin is assumed to have written V. N. Volosinov's *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, and thus that work is read in the light of Bakhtin's ideological concerns with monologic and dialogic forms of consciousness of the literary author as expressed in the author's literary work. The term intertextuality then developed within literary studies where the issue focused on

the nature and status of the literary author. To gain a broader and more fundamental understanding of how texts rely on and relate to each other, we need to recover a definition and understanding of intertextuality that fits the needs of literacy practitioners, researchers, and educators, and then use that field-appropriate definition to refine practice, rather than to remain tied to definitions and understandings designed for the more limited domain of literary studies.<sup>1</sup>

I want to reframe literacy studies' concerns with intertextuality by two moves. First, I recover Volosinov from Bakhtin so as to point out his more fundamental and broader interests in the relations among utterances. Second, I remind us of the somewhat separate issues of intertextuality within writing studies – a story I tell from the perspective of my own developing interests. On the bases of these two moves, I then suggest how we might want to understand intertextuality.

The term intertextuality, or any Russian equivalent, appears nowhere in the works of either Bakhtin or Volosinov. The term was first coined by Julia Kristeva in a work of literary theory *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, published in English translation in 1980. Drawing on a combined Bakhtin/Volosinov, she suggests that any text is a mosaic of quotations. She uses the concept of the textual mosaic to argue against the radical originality of any text and to locate common cultural experience in the sharing of text rather than any shared intersubjective state, for we always take up individual subject positions. Orientation to common utterances, she argues, creates the ongoing culture and evokes common objects of desire. Intertextuality, for Kristeva, is a mechanism whereby we write ourselves into the social text, and thereby the social text writes us.

The origins of the concept in Bakhtin and Volosinov – and I would distinguish between the two – have different motives and forces than used by Kristeva. In *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* (first published in the Soviet Union in 1929; appearing in English translation in a limited edition in 1973 and more widely in 1986), Volosinov uses the relation among texts to argue against two idealized dichotomies Ferdinand de Saussure (1986; generally viewed as the founder of modern linguistics) makes in order to establish an autonomous linguistics. Saussure distinguishes between langue (an abstracted language system) and parole (particularized individual uses of that language). Then, Saussure designates langue and not parole as the proper object of linguistic study. Volosinov answers that language exists only in individual utterances located in particular moments and relations; one cannot properly understand language apart from its instances of use, embedded within many surrounding utterances. Saussure's second idealized distinction of diachrony (historical process) and synchrony (contemporary,

<sup>1</sup> Both Porter (1986) and Selzer (1993) also develop implications of intertextuality for composition and rhetoric, but they stay closer to literary critical understandings of intertextuality.

ahistorical form) is again to assert that language can and should be studied only in its idealized form in the present moment without respect to its history. Volosinov answers that every utterance draws on the history of language use, is responsive to prior utterances, and carries forward that history. In the interplay with past utterances, each new utterance takes on a stance to previous utterances. Volosinov, furthermore, begins a technical analysis of how texts position themselves to each other through linguistic systems of direct and indirect quotations.

Volosinov's work raises fundamental issues about the nature of all language and does not prejudge that any set of linguistically mediated relations is more valuable than any other. He points out that the relations exist and different linguistic forms and practices facilitate different sets of relations. As a linguist developing a philosophy of language,<sup>2</sup> he is primarily interested in the nature of language, which he sees as situated utterance. The relations among texts and other utterances are facilitated by certain linguistic mechanisms such as quotation. These mechanisms embed language in social interaction and social relations. Thus, Volosinov wants to explore the relations among texts technically in order to understand how language as utterance works in practice. Further, since he sees individual consciousness arising out of our particular experiences of language utterance, our consciousnesses are deeply dialogical (or as we would now say intertextual), just as our utterances are. Therefore, the mechanisms of textual relations are also part of the mechanisms of the formation of consciousness.

The dialogic formation of consciousness is a theme later pursued by Bakhtin (1981), in particular concerning the representation of novelists' consciousness within the form of the novel. However, because Volosinov's interests in consciousness concern the internal formation in socially situated nonliterary contexts,<sup>3</sup> they are much closer to issues raised by Lev Vygotsky's analysis of the internalization of the interpersonal words. In the words of Vygotsky's 1931 essay on the internalization of higher mental functions (in 1987):

An interpersonal process is transformed into an intrapersonal one. Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first between people (interpsychological), and then inside the child (intrapychological).

<sup>2</sup> Clark and Holquist (1984) report that, in 1927, Volosinov received a degree from the Philological faculty of Leningrad University and then enrolled as a graduate student in the Institute for the Comparative History of Literatures and Languages of the West and East. They report his dissertation topic seems to have been on reported speech, the main linguistic empirical matter in *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*.

<sup>3</sup> See also Volosinov's (1926) essay, "Discourse in Life and Discourse in Art" (translated in *Freudianism*, Volosinov, 1987), in which he argues that even literature must be seen as socially situated utterance.

Volosinov in his (1927) book *Freudianism*, (translated in 1987) already was concerned with the issue of inner speech. In this context, he cites Vygotsky's 1925 paper on consciousness as a core problem of psychology (in 1987). In this paper, Vygotsky begins his investigation into the way language mediates consciousness and transforms reflexes, thus making available for consciousness and thought a form of cultural transmission of the historical experience of humankind. That is, by learning the culturally and historically formed language spoken by those around us our consciousness is formed; furthermore, our neural reflexes and consequent behavior are transformed. In this way our consciousness and behavior are formed in relation to the utterances that surround us and to which we respond in interaction. In modern terms, Vygotsky was showing us how our thoughts and actions could themselves be understood as deeply intertextual, regardless of how private and personal they seemed, or how much they lacked overt reference to the utterances of others. Over the next several years, Vygotsky was to investigate the role of signs in mediating action, directing attention, and the development of the infant into a mature social being. He also studied the processes by which signs and utterances came to regulate behavior and become internalized into the mind. These ideas, however, were only sketchily gestured at in the 1925 paper. Although Volosinov's 1927 citation provides direct evidence of Volosinov's awareness of Vygotsky, it is also reasonable to assume that Vygotsky was aware of Volosinov – given Vygotsky's extensive reading, the limited world of Soviet science at the time, and the consonance of their interests in developing Marxist historical theories of the formation of language, the mind, and consciousness.

Vygotsky's ultimate formulation of an internal plane of consciousness resulting from the internalization of language experience would provide a more robust model of socially formed individual consciousness and agency than Volosinov's formulation of inner speech and consciousness. Vygotsky, as a psychologist with developmental interests, was looking at how the outside (the interpersonal) got inside (the intrapersonal) in order to shape individual thought and action. He thus elaborated mechanisms by which internalized thought operated within the functional system of the self. The internal plane of consciousness, formed when language experience integrates with nonlinguistic experience, incorporates one's earliest social and linguistic relations and reformulates one's prelinguistic and nonsocial experience and perception. If Vygotsky shows more fully how society gets into the self, Volosinov as a socially oriented linguist points outward into how the self gets into society. Volosinov's formulation of inner speech arising out of socially embedded utterance reaches further outward in planting individual consciousness within a dynamic and complex social field. He points to the linguistic mechanisms by which we become intertwined with others in social dialogue and by which we necessarily become reliant on others' words in talking with and interacting among people. Because his

work as a linguistic theorist and researcher did not extend much beyond his 1929 book (Volosinov, 1986), he never developed further his investigation of the sociolinguistic mechanisms of the embedding of the self in social relations and utterances. His work, nonetheless, has set important terms for contemporary sociolinguistics and anthropological linguistics. The strong complementarity between Vygotsky's inward mechanisms of the socially formed language-saturated consciousness and Volosinov's outward mechanisms of consciousness-forming sociolinguistic utterances provide a meeting point between psychology and social studies of language and interaction.

Bakhtin, rather than pursuing fundamental issues of the self formed in society, uses the relations of utterances to pursue narrower questions of literary value in the way that novels represent the utterances of the characters and narrators. In *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (Bakhtin, 1984a), a reworking of a 1929 book on Dostoevsky, and *The Dialogic Imagination* (Bakhtin, 1981), representing work in the 1930s and 1940s, he associates the form of the novel with a form of consciousness. He praises that form of novel that recognizes the variety of utterances incorporated and thus adopts a stance of multivocality, dialogism, or polyphony rather than authoritative univocality, monologism, or monophony, which obscures the complexity of human language, consciousness, and relation. Bakhtin's interest is in valuing appreciation of the existence of others, in the neo-Kantian tradition familiar to us in such moral thinkers as Martin Buber and Carl Rogers.<sup>4</sup> Bakhtin's moral stance starts with a morally accountable, autonomous self that must take responsibility for individual actions, as he articulates in his early works published in *Art and Answerability* (Bakhtin, 1990) and *Toward a Philosophy of the Act* (Bakhtin, 1993). Such an individual moral self implies a very different form of consciousness than that presented in the Volosinov and Vygotskian accounts of internalization of socially embedded speech. For Bakhtin, dialogism is a moral imperative rather than a fact of social development.

Bakhtin, in works such as *The Dialogic Imagination* (1981) and *Rabelais and His World* (1984b), is also interested in the stance or attitude or evaluation one utterance makes toward others, such as through double-voicing or carnivalesque. This often parodic or otherwise critical heteroglossia he considers typically in contexts critical of authority, power, and dominant classes. His treatment of double-voicing opens up the issue of the complex attitudes we have toward each other as we recognize and reevaluate the character of each other's voice. Such complexity of evaluative attitude can serve to exclude or demote appreciation of the other, and is a frequent method for keeping at a distance those who are different from us, as we might parody a foreign accent

<sup>4</sup> For an excellent discussion of Bakhtin's neo-Kantian origins, see Dentith's (1995) introduction to the collection *Bakhtinian Thought*.

or nondominant dialect or we might mockingly repeat words we dismiss as absurd. Bakhtin, however, attempts to maintain a democratic, neo-Kantian appreciation of the other by limiting the targets of what we would now call attitude. The examples of carnivalesque or linguistic mockery that he examines typically aim to deflate oppressively powerful ruling forces rather than to stigmatize the powerless.

Bakhtin provides conceptual tools for understanding how authors engage or repress complexity of perspectives and represent evaluation and attitude toward the perspectives of the characters they represent. He uses those tools to analyze in detail how the interplay of voices and perspectives is managed in different texts with particular ideological implications. In a number of works, he presents histories of different forms of consciousness associated with differing literary forms and the political struggles embodied in the replacement of one literary form by another. Later literary critics such as Kristeva, Barthes, and Riffaterre put aside analysis of the authorial handling of multiple voices and the historically shifting forms of fiction and literary consciousness. Rather they engaged broad, ahistorical questions of the status of the author, originality, and interpretation. As discussed earlier, Kristeva coined the term *intertextuality* to dissolve the autonomous integrity of both author and reader into the ocean of shared cultural experiences of common texts. Barthes (1977) took the implications of *intertextuality* a step beyond Kristeva's dissolution of authorship to a destabilization of the text itself because the text rests on the evocation of so many other texts. Riffaterre (1984) sought to establish a basis for textual meaning and interpretation within the linguistic ambience, or *intertexts*, within which it is read. Among the literary critics, only most recently has Genette returned to a concrete analysis of how *intertextuality* works within specific texts. In several publications he has mapped out orderly sets of possible relations among texts, what he calls *transtextuality*: *intertextuality* (explicit quotation or allusion), *paratextuality* (the relation to directly surrounding texts, such as prefaces, interviews, publicity, and reviews); *metatextuality* (a commentary relation); *hypertextuality* (the play of one text off of familiarity with another); and *architextuality* (the generic expectations in relation to other similar texts) (Genette, 1992, 1997a, 1997b). Yet even this elaboration is only for the purpose of explicating literary meaning and effect. *Transtextuality* is a method by which texts make their meaning in a world of surrounding texts.<sup>5</sup>

The stakes of rhetoric, composition, and literacy studies in the relations among texts, self, society, and social action, however, are much broader than the concerns that have defined and elaborated the term *intertextuality* within literary studies. Our concerns harken back to the groundwork laid

<sup>5</sup> See Allen (2000) for a good overview of the various literary perspectives on *intertextuality*.



by Volosinov and Vygotsky, long before the term intertextuality was used. I am acutely aware of this because my own interests in the relations of text grew out of practical issues in composition before I had engaged with the work of any of the authors discussed in this paper. I then elaborated my interests through intense reading of Vygotsky starting in the mid-1970s and continuing as works became available in English, and then at the end of the decade by an interested, but less intense reading of Volosinov's *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*. Only after my project based on the issues concerning the teaching of writing was fairly well formulated did the work of Bakhtin and Kristeva's term intertext start to wash across the American academic scene to provide the means by which teachers of writing and literacy researchers generally came to address issues of the relations among texts. I was pleased that the popularity of Bakhtin's and Kristeva's terms drew attention to how one used reading in the course of writing and how familiarity with texts developed one's consciousness and thought. I saw these terms providing useful tools for reorienting teaching of writing and literacy studies away from the isolated, individual writer toward the writer placed within a complex social, textual field.

However, I became increasingly uncomfortable with the focus and limitations those popular terms put on those issues of reading and writing. While I continued my own work following the issues as I saw them, I observed those terms were limiting the ability of the larger part of rhetoric, composition, and literacy studies to address the precise mechanisms by which writers were formed within a world of texts and the ways in which they deployed those texts to create social action. To reopen the question of how we can best examine the development of writers' consciousness, perception, and social relations within the world of texts which they engage with, I present how I see these issues by showing the path by which I came to see them as I do.

My work in academic writing, begun in the early 1970s before Bakhtin or intertextuality were known in the United States. I soon saw a critical aspect of literacy development within schools, disciplines, professions, and other structured fields of communication. Rather than being concerned with the status of the author and the modes of consciousness expressed in fiction – as the literary definition of intertextuality might have directed me – I was drawn to considering the kind of skills and tasks necessary for people to develop into competent literate participants within the textually dense worlds of modernity. Enhanced agency as readers comes with noting how texts create social dramas of reference and sit in relation to the resources of prior and ambient texts. Enhanced agency as writers grows with our ability to place our utterances in relation to other texts, draw on their resources, represent those texts from our perspective, and assemble new social dramas of textual

utterances within which we act through our words. How we use other texts frames social organization, relation, and action within the world of textual interchange.

The problem was first posed to me in the form of the standard but ill-defined assignment of the library research or term paper. In such assignments, students are expected to investigate and discuss some issue relevant to the course subject matter. Nobody at that time quite knew what this assignment entailed, and the only teaching materials available were little more than lists of references and resources along with footnote-style prescriptions. Teachers regularly complained, long before word processing and Internet research, of cut-and-paste jobs that strung together quotations, paraphrases, or verbatim plagiarism. Successful students, however, knew that there was a lot more to writing good research papers than locating some sources and following correct bibliographic form. There was a journey of learning, of problem formation and reformulation, of careful and thoughtful reading, of being able to interpret and restate what sources had to say, of evaluation and comment, of synthesis, of fresh argument. Such skills allowed a small group of students characterized as “academically talented” to climb up the slippery slopes of elite institutions and enjoy the pleasures of leisured academic life. As a writing teacher, I took as one of my fundamental problems to demystify what it took to climb this mountain.

I soon saw the problem of how to write the research paper as part of a bigger question of how to write well about nonliterary, knowledge-focused reading. My response to this question was a pedagogy that anatomized and practiced the various skills involved in writing about what you read – skills involving accurate portrayal of source materials as well as response, evaluation, commentary, analysis, synthesis, and incorporation into new ideas and projects. In addition, the pedagogy focused on students’ reflective ability to analyze the systematic flow of genred texts that formed the context and resource for each piece of academic writing.<sup>6</sup> At this time, influenced by my reading of Vygotsky, I also became aware that active engagement with texts and developing articulate responses and thoughts in relation to those texts were significant parts of the development of students’ educated and informed consciousnesses.

My interests in these issues developed just as the Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) movement was being born. My work on academic reading and writing suggested to me that the expressivist and writing-to-learn theories behind early WAC in England and the United States did not give us a precise enough picture of the literacy demands of disciplinary coursework or of the experiences by which students’ thought grew within academic contexts.

<sup>6</sup> This pedagogy took the shape of several textbooks, *The Informed Writer* (Bazerman, 1981, 1985, 1989, 1992, 1995), *The Informed Reader* (Bazerman, 1989), and *Invited: Writing for College, Writing for Your Self* (Bazerman, 1997).

As I surveyed the writing students were doing in university courses, it became clear that much academic writing was in response to particular texts, and that stances students were asked to adopt toward texts were organized along disciplinary lines. Texts provided a structure of role relationships that corresponded to disciplinary identities and that provided pathways for development of disciplinary forms of thought. Disciplinary differences seemed to be deeply rhetorical, psychological, sociological, and intertextual (as I was coming to understand the term as referring to the concrete relations among texts and utterances). The textual form appropriate to each kind of assignment emerged out of the argumentative relations authors took with each other's texts within the emerging social activity system of their fields. My comparative study of texts in literary studies, sociology, and biology considered the ways texts used the prior texts of the field, how they positioned themselves with respect to those prior texts, and how they anticipated being taken up as contributions to a literature (Bazerman, 1981). As my basic analytic heuristic, I expanded the traditional Aristotelean communication triangle of author-audience-subject matter by adding a fourth vertex – the literature – to create a communication pyramid. The text, in addition to establishing relations among author, audience, and subject creates relationships between the literature and those other three. The audience and author knowledge of the subject is built on prior texts; the audience knowledge and orientation is based on their reading; and the author's authority, resources, interests, and current stance grow out of an engagement with the literature. Thus intertextuality (as in Volosinov's relationship among utterances and Vygotsky's social language becoming the basis of consciousness and action) became built into my fundamental model of communication. I also began doing some historical work to see the features of scientific writing more distinctly through their emergence, and continuous repositioning against earlier texts. This was coincident with my settling on genre as a key concept, with genre being an historically emergent intertextual phenomenon.<sup>7</sup>

I have continually applied these ideas to my own writing, the writing of my students, and the writing I have examined in my research. As a result, I have come to appreciate how much reflective understanding of the intertextual landscape provides the writer with important strategic rhetorical tools. Developing a highly articulated picture of the ambient relevant texts can help the writer to define and even redefine the rhetorical situation, position the new text within larger organizations of textual utterances and activities, and bring deeper and richer resources to bear on the current task. Similarly, a highly developed view of the intertextual landscape helps a reader interpret, evaluate, and use a text more effectively. In short, intertextual awareness increases one's agency by planting literate activity in a richer context, increasing one's ability to move around within that context,

7 These studies are represented in *Shaping Written Knowledge* (Bazerman, 1988).

and helping one deploy parts of it for one's own purposes.<sup>8</sup> We carry out our written speech acts on an unfolding landscape of unfolding intertexts, emergent structures of texts that condition the situation for future actions. Each text we write is a speech act, and the success of that text is in the consequences of what follows after, how the text creates a landmark of something done that needs to be taken into account in future utterances.<sup>9</sup>

To help students and other writers develop a fuller picture of the intertextual grounds and resources for their writing we can call their attention to a number of dimensions of intertextuality.<sup>10</sup> First is how explicitly and fully one text refers to and incorporates material from other texts. Are substantial amounts of material incorporated and taken at face value or is the other text only alluded to, or are other texts only there as an unspoken, assumed background?

Second is the form the reference takes, from direct extensive quotation with cited reference, through paraphrase, to unreferenced terms that echo recognizable discourses. Third is how far the text reaches out into distant texts. At one extreme is use of bits of text that appear earlier in the same text, echoing and building on it, in what we might call intratextual reference. Reference can reach a bit farther, but stay within closely related texts around a single case or issue – what we might call intrafile intertextuality. Intertextuality can stay within a specialty, disciplinary or professional domain, or may reach into different fields, different times, and different places. Fourth is how the intertextual material is transformed in its re-representation, and how the new author's stance or evaluation or synthesis places the intertextual

<sup>8</sup> I took an interest in how intertextual fields became historically organized and how individuals were able to build these systems for their own purposes. Such questions led me to examine the writings of Joseph Priestley, who it turns out was central in developing modern explicit citation practices (Bazerman, 1991). I took up the consequences of modern citation practice for the way the publication game is played now by examining a modern virtuosic tour de force of citation, Gould and Lewontin's (1979) "Spandrels of San Marcos" (Bazerman, 1993). During this period, several other people were working on parallel studies. Swales (1990) examined how research article introductions position new contributions to the literature, and Myers (1991) looked at how reviews of literature advance research agendas. Berkenkotter, Huckin, and Ackerman (1991), as well as Prior (1998), documented the way graduate students learn to navigate the literatures and other discussion of their fields to establish professional identity. Devitt (1991) examined the way intertextuality structures the work of the accountancy profession, and McCarthy (1991) researched the way a central text has organized the discourses of psychiatry.

<sup>9</sup> These themes of agency through creating presence in intertextual landscapes directed my book on the *Languages of Edison's Light* (Bazerman, 1999). The book examines how Edison took up positions in the major discourses – patent law, finance, corporations, technology and science, politics, journalism, consumer culture – as part of making incandescent light and power a reality. He had to complete many speech acts and create many social facts in multiple discursive worlds to give his emergent technologies presence, meaning, and value.

<sup>10</sup> I spell out tools for analyzing intertextuality in greater detail in the forthcoming *What Texts Do and How They Do It*, which I coedited with Paul Prior.

material in a new context, thereby modifying its meaning (see Linell, 1998). Fifth is how the intertextual material is used rhetorically in the new argument. These first five dimensions all concern how the intertext is deployed in the new text.

Three other dimensions call attention to the texts that lie behind the new text and that the writer can draw on or otherwise use to define the situation of the current text. First is the sequence of texts that have led up to and formed the current rhetorical situation. What memos, directives, and reports have created the necessity for a governmental agency to issue a new policy? What course syllabi and assignment sheets, assigned course readings, books cited in class lectures, and prior papers have led up to the paper that is to be handed in tomorrow? Second is the genre of any text or text to be written that grows out of a history of prior texts that set exemplars and expectations. Showing students models of prior texts that accomplish the tasks they are facing and helping them see how they can build on and modify that history of genre models can help provide guidelines as well as space for originality relevant to the specifics of the current task. Third is the entire range of relevant documents that can be brought to bear or used as a resource for a current document. The more broadly and precisely students and other writers envision the intertextual world they can draw on, the more powerful a set of flexible options they will have on hand. By bringing in new intertextual resources and contexts that they can show to be relevant, they can even redefine the fundamental rhetorical situation in major ways. A seemingly narrow issue of political expediency, for example, can be transformed into an issue of philosophical principle and moral integrity. Or a historical narrative can be transformed into a test of social theory. Or a muddle of conflicting interests can be sharpened into a small list of legally permissible choices.

Volosinov recognized that, as linguistic creatures, humans are inevitably caught up in the social drama of unfolding webs of utterances, to which we add only our next turn. It is worth serious attention how we place that next turn, how we draw on the history of utterances before us, and how we draw ourselves close to or distance ourselves from those utterances. On such questions rests what we are able to do.<sup>11</sup> Volosinov's understanding of language as historically situated utterance opens up many issues of the way writing is situated within, deploys, and re-represents the flow of prior texts, but it is up to composition and rhetoric to articulate the complex skills and knowledge by which we manage to articulate our position and contribution

<sup>11</sup> A concern for agency within intertextual worlds now leaves me wondering about what it means to live in an information age, and what intellectual and rhetorical skills students will need to succeed in such a world (see Bazerman, 2001). Information technologies are now reshaping all educational, social, and economic institutions, but the ideology of information misleadingly represents information as disembodied for human purposes and meaning-shaping contexts. It is urgent that we begin to understand how people gain agency in complex informational environments.

to that intertextual space. If we are to understand how we are acted upon, how we can react, and how we can act freshly in this complex literate world of ours, where major institutions and spheres of activity are saturated by texts, we need to move toward a richer and more participatory understanding of intertextuality. To do so, we need to develop analytical concepts and methods that extend beyond Volosinov's beginnings and head in directions quite different than the ways intertextuality has been taken up by the literary critical world. Composition and rhetoric's intertextuality is ultimately about agency within the complex, historically evolved, and continually mutating landscape of texts. Intertextuality for composition and rhetoric is about creating authority, agency, and powerful text, and not about their dissolution within everything that has been written before. We, after all, are concerned with helping students write themselves and their interests into the teeming world of language.

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