

**SOCIAL PERSPECTIVES ON AUDIENCE:
A DIALOGIC APPROACH FOR THE UNDERGRADUATE
WRITING CURRICULUM**

BY

SANDY P. BAARDMAN

A Thesis
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of

MASTER OF EDUCATION

Department of Curriculum: Humanities and Social Sciences
Faculty of Education
University of Manitoba
Winnipeg, Manitoba

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ISBN 0-315-76925-4

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ABSTRACT

This study examined the concept of writer-audience relationships from the perspective of social-epistemic rhetoric. Using LeFevre's (1987) social continuum as an initial structure for arranging conceptualizations of writer-audience relationships, a unitary theory of writer-audience relationships was proposed based on a Bakhtinian notion of rhetorical dialogism. A dialogic approach to written discourse--a "conversation model" of writing which is based on a synthesis of LeFevre's Platonic, internal-dialogic, collaborative, and collective perspectives--was then proposed as an appropriate model for student discourse. Finally, general curricular theories (traditionalist, conceptual-empiricist, reconceptualist and social constructivist) were reviewed in terms of their ability to sustain or suppress the dialogic potential of student discourse. It was concluded that a social constructivist approach to curriculum, represented primarily through the work of C. A. Bowers, is congruent with the dialogic approach to undergraduate writing described in this thesis.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank all of those who have helped and supported me through the process of writing this thesis. Especially now, it is difficult for me to see this work as anything other than a moment in an ongoing collaboration, a conversation, among many in the university itself and in the field. Clearly, the development of these ideas has not been the result of the work of one individual, but of all of those whom I've talked with, argued with, written with, and read with for the last two years. Fellow students, conference participants, colleagues, and friends have all significantly affected the shape and substance of this work. Nevertheless, there are some with whom this collaboration has been particularly intense and rewarding. First and foremost, I would like to thank my advisor, Stan Straw, for his constant encouragement, support, and mentorship. Without his guidance, his confidence, and his collaboration, my professional life would be greatly diminished. I would also like to thank Deborah Schnitzer and Sheldon Rosenstock for their work on my committee, their thoughtful responses, questions, and feedback, and most of all, for their supportive approach to the process. For my wife Beth, I can only say that nothing would be possible without her. Her understanding, endless patience, and her genuine interest in the work itself have sustained me throughout. And finally, I would like to thank my brother John who, over the years, has provided me with a rare model of exceptional intellectual rigor and principled academic inquiry.

INTERTEXTS

As teachers of writing, we have virtually ignored an integral part of the composing process: the audience. We have not taught our students how to analyze audience and why content and style must be formed by just such an analysis (Pfister & Petrick, 1980, p. 213).

* * * * *

[M]ost texts designed for use in beginning composition classes do pay some attention to the writer's awareness of his reader. . . . I have become increasingly disturbed not only about the superficiality of the advice itself, but about the philosophy which seems to lie beneath it (Long, 1980, p. 221).

* * * * *

[J]ust who do we mean by "the reader"? Most composition handbook discussions of audience tend to focus on the student's need to decide who his intended readers are, to assess the needs and expectations of those readers, and to gauge the effects of his words on them. ... I have found, however, that it is often necessary to distinguish several other reader categories. ... actual readers ... implied readers. ... intended readers addressed readers. ... revised readers ... composite readers ... projected readers (Roth, 1983, p. 3).

* * * * *

How can we best define the audience of a written discourse? What does it mean to address an audience? To what degree should teachers stress audience in their assignments and discussions? ... Teachers of writing may find recent efforts to answer these questions more confusing than illuminating (Ede & Lunsford, 1984, p. 155).

* * * * *

A decade or more ago, there may have been ... a unified view, and composition teachers may have once been in substantial agreement about what it meant to "teach audience." However, it is becoming clear that the term "audience" has multiple meanings in contemporary work on composition: the term no longer means the same thing to all theorists who talk about the process of writing for readers, and various pedagogical techniques--all purportedly aimed at teaching students about

audience--are based on quite different theoretical perspectives (Kroll, 1984, p. 172).

* * * * *

Our students often find our talk about audience awareness just so much abstract nonsense, and most of the composition texts we provide them with, even despite the best efforts of many of these texts' authors, don't go far enough beyond a command to Know Your Audience (Willey, 1986, p. 4).

* * * * *

The centrality of audience in the rhetorical tradition and the detail with which current writing texts provide advice on analyzing audience might suggest that the answers to such questions are well established. But they clearly are not. Side by side with the growing awareness in recent discussions that audience is a rich and complex concept exists a growing dissatisfaction with traditional audience analysis (Park, 1986, p. 478).

* * * * *

In the last few years perhaps the most complex task in describing the writing process is the attempt to characterize the writer-reader relationship (Foster, 1986, p. 3).

* * * * *

The role of the reader in how the meaning of a text is formed has been a nearly obsessive concern of recent critical thought. Books and articles abound taking one stand or the other on the question of where meaning lies: in the text, in the reader, in the intentions of the author, in the intertext, in the practices of interpretive communities, and so on. For the most part, such talk tends to be seen as a kind of elegant diversion--the stuff of graduate seminars and doctoral theses--somewhat removed from the more practical tasks of teaching our students to read intelligently and write with conviction (Harris, 1987, p. 158).

* * * * *

No matter how different various definitions of audience may be, contemporary scholars seem to agree on one point: that no matter who/what the audience is (from real people to a fictional construct)

writers adjust their discourses to their audiences. In other words, writers do things to bring their readers into their texts, to establish a community that includes themselves and their readers (Wildeman, 1988, p. 3).

* * * * *

As a teacher of professional writing and as a writing consultant, I am constantly frustrated at how little I know about audience analysis. Our textbooks and journal articles offer some help, but generally not much, at least not enough to prepare my future professionals for what they will face on the job; and certainly not enough to be useful to the working, on-the-job professional (Bocchi, 1988, p. 2).

* * * * *

Writing implies a reader. The act seems straightforward and unremarkable: the writer writes, the reader reads. However, the idea of an "audience"--and the writer's relationship to that entity--has been an important and difficult concept since Plato, at least. The problem is fundamental: where and what is the "audience," and how does one come to "know" it (Pare, 1991, p. 45).

* * * * *

CHAPTER ONE
STARTING POINTS

As Fulkerson (1990) notes, "[a] concern for audience was not standard in composition scholarship or textbooks a decade ago" (p. 416), but it has since become one of the most significant, and most difficult, concepts in writing theory and pedagogy. Fuelled by recent efforts to more fully conceptualize the social dimensions of writing, the concept of audience has become an increasingly complex problem, in terms of our conceptions about what audience is, in terms of our conceptions about how audience influences the act of writing (or even writers themselves), and in terms of our conceptions about how one should teach the concept in the context of the composition classroom (if at all).

Studies in rhetoric over the past few decades have seen the development of a multiplicity of responses to questions in all of these areas leading to fundamental disagreements over what constitutes an audience as well as how audience should be conceived in relation to all of the elements of the rhetorical situation. Questions concerning writer-audience relationships are complicated further given the unique quality of writing as a discursive form which appears to separate writers from their audiences both spatially and temporally. Also, the constant play back and forth in writing studies between rhetorical concerns and pedagogical concerns has muddied these waters even further when writing theorists have turned their attention to questions of how writer-audience relationships are played out in educational settings.

In this thesis, I would like to join this conversation, which has been going on in earnest now for over a decade, by addressing the problem of audience from these three perspectives: first, by examining conceptualizations of the writer-audience relationship in the discursive arena; second, by examining the problem of using text as a medium for rhetorical exchange which significantly affects the kinds of discursive interaction which occurs between writer and audience; and third, by examining writer-audience relationships as they are realised in student discourse within the context of an undergraduate setting.

Berlin's Theories of Rhetoric

One reasonable place to begin an examination of writer-audience relationships is to view it broadly from the perspective of the different rhetorical theories which have informed efforts in writing instruction. In his book, *Rhetoric and Reality*, James Berlin (1987) traces the development of writing instruction in America since the turn of the century by grouping different approaches according to one of three dominant rhetorical theories: *objectivist* theories, *subjectivist* theories, and *transactional* theories.

Objectivist Rhetorics

Objectivist rhetorics are associated with a positivist tradition, in which truth is to be found in the material world of objects and experience. Under these rhetorics, writers are seen to be able to discern and record truth objectively through careful observation. Berlin writes: "The responsibility of the observer ... is to engage in an innocent reaction to sense impression, examining it without allowing any distortion to occur. Once the truth is determined through observation, the next task is to find the

language to describe one's discoveries" (p. 8). Language is seen as a potentially distorting symbolic code that is used to transcribe the truth--at best, it can serve as a transparent window on material reality. In all aspects, objectivist rhetorics require writers and readers alike to divorce themselves from any subjective distortions of the reality which is being examined and communicated, and this is done by attempting to adopt a position of objective neutrality. Thus, social influence is seen as a potential hindrance or an obstacle to the accurate recording of reality. Berlin notes that "the audience is ... outside of the meaning-making act. It is ... assumed to be as objective as the writer, so that the language presented can stimulate in the reader the experience that the writer originally had" (p. 8). In other words, an audience or reader can receive the truth objectively if the writer has written effectively and clearly. Good writing can be achieved through meticulous observation coupled with accuracy and precision in language, and audience is a secondary consideration.

Subjectivist Rhetorics

According to subjectivist rhetorical theories, Berlin's (1987) second category, truth is located, not in the material world, but in the supersensory realm of ideas. These rhetorics, grounded in philosophical idealism, see truth as a product of solitary vision, achieved through introspection. While the truths discovered in this manner do resist expression, especially since ordinary language refers to the everyday, material world, ideal truths can be intimated through the use of original metaphor. Even through the use of this specialized language, however, the supersensory can only be suggested and not positively communicated. Subjectivist rhetorics then, in all facets,

are radically individualistic. Berlin notes that, "truth can be passed on from one individual to another only in a limited sense. ... The suggestions of the permanently valid that are offered by the gifted speaker or writer must be confirmed in and through the individual's [the auditor's] personal experience. Thus, an interlocutor can suggest truths already discovered by her auditor or she can suggest truths not yet discovered. In the case of the latter, the truths can be accepted as authentic only if and when they are confirmed through the auditor's personal experience, through her own private confirmation in an act of intuition" (p. 12). The only role that an auditor/reader might play in subjectivist rhetorical systems is that of one who can point out falsehoods and cue the writer to cliched or inauthentic writing. The writer must then return to introspection in a further search for authenticity.

Transactional Rhetorics

The third category of rhetorical theory posited by Berlin (1987) informs a series of rhetorics which he calls transactional. In this case, truth is seen as "arising out of the elements of the rhetorical situation: an interaction of subject and object or of subject and audience or even of all the elements--subject, audience, and language--operating simultaneously" (p. 15). Berlin identifies three predominant forms of transactional rhetorics: *classical*, *cognitivist* and *epistemic*, whose differences are found in the ways that they define the elements of the rhetorical situation, and the assumptions that are made regarding the ways that they do, or do not, interact in the construction or apprehension of reality. What unites them into one category of rhetorical theory is a rejection of a unitary foundation for truth (found either in the

objective world or the individual subject) which defines the other two categories of rhetorical theory that Berlin describes.

Classical rhetoric. Classical rhetoric, derived predominantly from the writings of Aristotle, make a distinction between those truths which can be arrived at through science and logic, and those truths which can only be derived through debate amongst members of a given community. Berlin writes: "Science and logic are outside the rhetorical realm since both are concerned with the indisputable. The truths of rhetoric, on the other hand, are by their very nature uncertain, open to debate, contingent, probable" (p. 15). From a classical perspective, rhetoric is an intensely social activity which is necessary for a community to arrive at, and maintain, agreement on matters of public concern. As Berlin notes, "[t]ruth is ... located in a social construct involving the interaction of interlocutor and audience (or discourse community). ... The crucial feature of these transactional activities is that new knowledge, new truths, emerge from the interaction" (pp. 15-16). Rhetoric, then, is seen in classical terms as a collaboration between rhetor and audience undertaken through discursive exchange. Through this collaboration, certain truths, particular kinds of knowledge, can be arrived at whose ultimate purpose is to establish community consensus with regard to issues concerning the public good.

Cognitivist rhetoric. A second type of transactional rhetoric is based upon the work of cognitive psychologists who assert that "the mind is composed of a set of structures that develop in chronological sequence" (Berlin, 1987, p. 159). This development of cognitive structures occurs through significant transactions between

individuals and their material and social environment. Learning to write, from this perspective, is seen as the development of naturally-occurring cognitive structures, tied to the writer's language-using capabilities, which must be exposed to the appropriate environmental cues at appropriate points during that development. As Berlin (1987) notes, "it is necessary for the individual to have the right experiences at the right moment in order for this development to take place. Without these experiences, or with the wrong sequence of experiences, cognitive structures do not properly mature" (p. 159). From the point of view of cognitive psychology, learning about, or understanding, audience in the rhetorical situation is something which develops as the cognitive structures of the writer develop. The notion of cognitive egocentricity, for instance, refers to the developing writer's inability to account for the rhetorical needs of an other in a communicative context. In other words, the cognitive structures which might allow a writer to take into account the needs of an other, if as yet undeveloped, prevent the writer from effectively interacting with an audience through discourse.

Epistemic rhetoric. Currently, the predominant form of transactional rhetoric is epistemic rhetoric. Berlin (1987) defines epistemic rhetoric as being distinguished by the ways in which the elements interact not only to communicate knowledge, but to generate it as well. He writes:

The distinguishing characteristic of the epistemic view ... [is that] rhetoric exists not merely so that truth may be communicated: rhetoric exists so that truth may be discovered. The epistemic position implies

that knowledge is not discovered by reason alone, that cognitive and affective processes are not separate, that intersubjectivity is a condition of all knowledge, and that the contact of minds affects knowledge (p. 165).

This epistemic account of knowledge creation implies that knowledge is not, or cannot, be a construct apprehended by individuals working in isolation. Instead, knowledge is seen to be communally held, contingent upon the ways that members of communities socially justify their beliefs (Bruffee, 1984). Knowledge is not generated, maintained, and adapted simply by individuals set in particular relationships with the world, but also by individuals set in particular relationships with other people--relationships which occur in particular social contexts.

Furthermore, unlike the epistemological assumptions of expressivist or objectivist rhetorics, which see knowledge and truth as universal, immutable constructs existing outside of any relationship to human perception, the epistemic view sees knowledge and truth as purely human constructs. In this view, there is no referent, either in the objective world or in the subjective world, which can serve as a foundation for truth and knowledge. In discussing how knowledge construction occurs, Bruffee (1984) notes: "If there is no absolute referent, then knowledge must be a thing people make and remake. Knowledge must be a social artifact. But to call knowledge a social artifact ... is not to say that knowledge is merely relative Knowledge is maintained and established by communities of knowledgeable peers. It is together what we agree it is, for the time being" (p. 646). In other words,

knowledge is not simply "out there" waiting to be discovered or perceived. It cannot, therefore, be seen as universal, able to be apprehended by all people regardless of their context or of the situations in which they find themselves. Instead, knowledge is localized within the particular communities which generate it.

The importance of this account of knowledge creation for writing instruction lies in the fact that language and discourse occupy a central place in the process of creating, maintaining, adapting, and extending knowledge. The process of socially constructing knowledge is held within the framework of linguistic and symbolic exchange, thus making *all* knowledge creation a rhetorical enterprise. Berlin (1987) writes: "[R]hetoric is epistemic because knowledge itself is a rhetorical construct. ... Meaning emerges ... from individuals engaging in rhetorical discourse in discourse communities--groups organized around the discussion of particular matters in particular ways" (pp. 165-166). The interactions of individuals in the construction of knowledge are discursive interactions--they are instances of symbolic, linguistic exchange. Language and discourse, therefore, become the medium and the process with which knowledge is held and generated within knowledge communities.

The system of knowledge construction implied here, however, is not easily captured or described. The discursive interactions of people operating within discourse communities are affected by such things as the individual experiences of the people involved, by the varieties of communities and discourses that they bring to bear in any situation, by the constraints of their status within those communities, and by their control over the linguistic and discursive conventions of those communities. In other

words, people operate within a variety of communities and engage in a variety of discourses simultaneously. Therefore, there can be no "pure" instance of language, and no "pure" example of discourse, unaffected by other systems. Berlin (1987) writes: "Language ... embodies and generates knowledge, and there is no knowledge without language. For epistemic rhetoric, language is not, however, a single, monolithic entity. Within each society there is a host of languages, each serving as the center of a particular discourse community. Each community ... is built around a language peculiar to itself so that membership in the group is determined by the ability to use the language according to the prescribed method" (p. 167). Even so, whether the use of language (leading to particular ways of knowing) is prescribed or not, the central dynamic of knowledge construction is not simply maintenance of communally-held knowledge, but also the expansion, adaption, and extension of knowledge within given communities. This occurs, to a greater or lesser extent, not only according to the ways that members of communities adhere to the linguistic and discursive norms and conventions of particular communities, but also according to the ways that members incorporate the language and discourse conventions of other communities to which they belong.

The epistemic view of rhetoric, then, is one which sees knowledge construction as being the result of the interactions of members of discourse communities; it sees knowledge itself as a rhetorical construct. Further, the primary characteristic of these interactions is linguistic and symbolic exchange, configured in ways that are particular to the rhetorical conventions of given communities. Thus, to learn the language and

rhetorical conventions of particular communities is to gain access to their particular ways of knowing. Finally, discourse communities are marked by continual change. This change can occur not only by adhering to the conventionally-held mechanisms and processes through which knowledge is ordinarily extended, expanded, or transformed in communities, but also by challenging those conventionally-held mechanisms and processes.

Obviously, this account of knowledge construction, which purports that conceptions of reality are socially and rhetorically constructed through language acts, has major implications for how one conceptualizes audience within the rhetorical situation. Unlike objectivist and expressivist approaches to rhetoric which assert that audience is located outside of the meaning-making act, epistemic rhetoric asserts that the construction of knowledge is not only affected by, but depends upon, the social relationships which are implicit in all language acts, including those which involve writing. This clearly moves audience to the forefront of how we conceptualize the interrelationships between the elements of the rhetorical situation.

Rhetorical Theories and Audience

The theories of rhetoric described by Berlin (1987) do suggest that one can make some broad distinctions about the role of audience within the rhetorical situation by locating conceptualizations of audience within objectivist, subjectivist, or transactional traditions. Objectivist rhetorical theories hold that audience is outside the meaning-making process because a writer's main activity involves the transcription of empirically-derived truths. Subjectivist rhetorics similarly hold audience to be outside

of the meaning-making act but for a somewhat different reason. From a subjectivist position, truths are only accessible through individual experience and knowledge is arrived at through individual introspection and recollection rather than social interaction. From a transactional point of view, however, particularly the classical and epistemic variations, knowledge and truth are virtually dependent on the interaction of rhetor and audience. Meaning-making is a collaborative, social activity involving all parties who share in a particular discourse occurring in a particular context.

It should be noted that the categories established by Berlin (1987) in his historical study of the development of rhetorical theory do begin to break down when he addresses developments over the last fifteen years or so. He notes:

[T]he taxonomy I have used in discussing rhetoric and writing up to 1975 does not prove as descriptive after this date. The most important reason for this has been the tendency of certain rhetorics within the subjective and transactional categories to move in the direction of the epistemic, regarding rhetoric as principally discovering and even creating knowledge, frequently within socially-defined discourse communities (p. 183).

In many ways, this goes a long way in accounting for the resurgence in interest in audience as an important consideration in discursive activity. There does appear to be a general consensus emerging as to the significance of audience in the rhetorical situation. As Wildeman (1988) notes: "No matter how different various definitions of audience may be, contemporary scholars seem to agree on one point: that no matter

who/what the audience is (from real people to a fictional construct) writers adjust their discourses to their audiences" (p. 3).

Despite this consensus, however, there is little agreement beyond this recognition of the importance of audience, even from the point of view of fairly well-articulated socially-based accounts of rhetorical activity. Like detectives at a crime scene, scholars in composition and rhetoric have been able to determine the presence of audience--we have been able to agree that audience is somehow *implicated* in the activity of meaning making--but there is still little agreement on the actual role that audience plays in that activity. Because of this, I will not attempt to argue, in this thesis, that audience is an important presence in the process of constructing knowledge--I will assume that it is.

One of the main issues addressed in this thesis, however, has to do with *how* knowledge is produced through the interactions of interlocutors within particular communal contexts, an issue which requires a more detailed understanding of how audience influences and contributes to this construction of knowledge through discourse. Chapter Two of this thesis will begin to address questions about how audience should be conceived from the perspective of epistemic rhetoric. In attempting to understand the variety of ways that audience has already been conceptualized, I have adopted Karen LeFevre's (1987) social continuum for the purpose of arranging the variety of conceptualizations of audience which have been developed over the past few decades and which are currently being taught or practised in composition classrooms.

LeFevre (1987) proposed this continuum to describe the varying discursive relationships which arise between the individual inventor and the social spheres in which he or she operates, and she posits four places on the continuum where these dynamic relationships might be arrested for analysis: At one extreme end of this continuum lies the *Platonic* perspective, in which the inventor works in isolation. From this perspective, the meaning that is developed in rhetoric is primarily, or even exclusively, the result of the writer's intention, unfettered and uninfluenced by social constraints. The second perspective described by LeFevre is the *internal dialogic* perspective, in which the inventor invents by means of an internal dialogue or dialectic with one or more constructed, internalized others. This view suggests that the individual's psyche is split into a multiplicity of selves which can be drawn on to engage in a collaborative exchange in order to produce meaning. The third perspective on LeFevre's continuum is the *collaborative*, in which the inventor works in collaboration with real and specified others who serve to support the act of invention. Finally, LeFevre describes inventive processes which are derived from the *collective* perspective, in which the inventor works in relation to supra-individual collectives. These collectives, represented by such things as institutions, communities, or cultural bodies, serve both a generative and constraining function in the meaning-making process.

A review of these social perspectives on rhetorical invention will reveal that each of these conceptualizations is associated with conceptualizations of the writer-audience relationship. In light of this, I will argue that, seen in relation to this

continuum, conceptualizations of audience can be situated in a more complete context from which we might be better able to discern their emphases, their strengths, their limitations, and most importantly, the ways in which they might operate relationally within the rhetorical situation. In other words, rather than treating these various conceptualizations of audience as competing, one might better understand how audience is involved in the construction of knowledge by seeing these various conceptualizations as representing different points of emphasis within a much broader, more unitary rhetorical framework.

In Chapter Three, I will propose just such a unitary framework, arguing that the writer-audience relationship is best conceptualized from the point of view of Dialogism, a rhetorical framework drawn primarily from the work of such theorists as Mikhail Bakhtin, Michael Holquist, and Gregory Clark. A dialogic approach to discourse suggests that meaning is developed as a result of a collaborative interaction of utterances and responses which take place within a complex social milieu. The forces which govern this exchange are related to the need for rhetor and audience to operate collaboratively, in effect, intersubjectively, in order to orient unique perspectives towards a shared situation in the development of meaning. In doing so, through a process which involves both internal and external dialogue, individual intention and communal constraints both become operative in the development of meaning through discourse. What this suggests is that, when viewed relationally, many of the salient aspects of the four perspectives described by LeFevre (1987) are

represented but reconceptualized from the point of view of dialogism, a point of view which is consistent with the premises which underlie social-epistemic rhetoric.

One of the salient characteristics of dialogism is that it takes its overriding metaphors from the site of actual speech as it occurs between interlocutors who share a particular situation at a particular time. Rhetoricians who draw on a dialogic perspective on discourse often transfer their conclusions to written discourse without exploring the implications of this shift from speech to writing. It should be noted that this is a characteristic of much of the discussion in the field of rhetoric--that it often treats discourse as though rhetorical principles can be shifted from oral to written forms of discourse without any need for adjustment. Some compositional theorists, such as Walter Ong (1975), make much of the distinction, suggesting that the adoption of text as a medium for discursive exchange significantly affects any possibilities that writers and their audiences can truly engage in an interactive discursive exchange. Other theorists, such as Charles Bazerman (1980) counter by proposing a view of writing as conversation, an approach which highlights the possibilities of discursive interaction even when texts remove writers and audiences from one another both spatially and temporally. In Chapter Four, I will discuss the problem of transferring a dialogic approach to discourse to discursive forums in which interlocutors use text as their medium for discursive exchange and I will argue for a conversation model of writing which acknowledges the special circumstances brought on by the use of text.

Finally, it is important to note that the meaning-making potential of written discourse is significantly affected by the social situations in which writers are

embedded. In other words, the act of composing a text is not, by itself, sufficient to insure that writing will become a meaningful activity. Instead, the dialogic potential of writing is entirely dependent on whether or not texts are used in an exchange of assertions and responses which will allow writers and audiences to engage collaboratively in the development of meaning. The social situations in which writers and their audiences are embedded can either support or repress this activity. So, because this study is ultimately concerned with issues related to undergraduate writing, in Chapter Five I will undertake an examination of the ways that students are situated in the academy.

In order to understand the students' place within the academy, it is important to understand that the social configurations in which they are embedded are strongly influenced by general curricular structures or models. So, while rhetorical theory can provide certain assumptions about the discursive relationships that students should adopt, general curricular models can either resonate strongly with those assumptions or serve to undermine them. It appears necessary, therefore, to examine the connections between general curricular models and approaches to writing instruction, especially given that both are fundamentally concerned with the ways that students engage in the construction of knowledge, and both make fundamental assumptions about the ways that social relationships influence that process.

In this line of inquiry, I will briefly review a variety of curricular paradigms: traditionalist, conceptual-empiricist, reconceptualist, and social-constructivist. In each case I will examine how this particular curricular paradigm either supports or

undermines a dialogic approach to student discourse. My goal is to use these categories in order to identify a general curricular model that will resonate strongly with the kind of writing pedagogy which places an interactive and dialogic approach to the writer-audience relationship at the centre of student discourse. An examination such as this, of course, also gives one the benefit of identifying curricular systems which can be characterized as inconsistent with such an approach to writing instruction.

CHAPTER TWO

SOCIAL CONCEPTUALIZATIONS OF AUDIENCE

A few decades ago, there was relatively little debate as to how one should approach audience in writing. As late as 1953, the conventional wisdom was, as Donald Bryant noted, that "modern enlightenment has produced no new method of analyzing an audience which can replace Aristotle's" (In Ede, 1984, p. 141). Today, though, with the development of social conceptualizations of writing, one is confronted with arguments which range from Richard Fulkerson's (1990) contention that the concept of audience dominates the current field of writing to Anthony Pare's (1992) assertion that the concept of audience, as it has been traditionally conceived, is no longer worth talking about. The disparity between Fulkerson and Pare here is diminished only slightly when one acknowledges that they are using the term "audience" quite differently in each case. The concept of audience within the rhetorical situation is more a matter of contention now than it has ever been, and this highlights a need--one that this chapter will attempt to address--for a structure which can help to organize emerging and apparently competing conceptualizations of audience in writing theory and pedagogy.

For this purpose I have adopted Karen Lefevre's (1987) social continuum, which "extends from a view of invention as an act of an atomistic individual, through intrapersonal and interpersonal perspectives, to invention as influenced by the supra-individual entity of a social collective" (p. 48). This theoretical framework attempts to

capture the variety of ways that inventors¹ position themselves (and define themselves, ultimately) in relation to others who might influence the inventive act. I have ordered conceptualizations of audience along this same continuum in order to see how this theoretical framework might guide one in understanding the relationship between these various conceptualizations.

The Platonic Perspective

Background

LeFevre's continuum is one which attempts to capture the variety of social contexts in which people operate and engage in invention or meaning-making activity. At one extreme of this continuum lies the perspective which disavows any acknowledgement of the social and which, instead, emphasizes rhetorical invention as radically individual. It is a perspective which sees the author as atomistic--a person isolated from social influence, one whose purpose in writing is to discover meaning which has its origins within the self. In explaining this, LeFevre recalls Plato's story of the soul which, before coming to earth, visits a realm of ideal forms, an "ideal pattern-world of a true, transcendental Reality But before leaving, all souls drink of the waters of Lethe, which make them forget the truth they have seen" (p. 11).

¹I should mention at this point that LeFevre's use of the term "invention" is very broadly presented in her work, defined primarily as "the process of generating what one comes to know and what constitutes the substance of discourse" (p. 5). Because this thesis is primarily devoted to audience as it influences the use of writing for epistemic, or knowledge-constructing, purposes, my use of the terms "writer" and "inventor" will generally be such that they can be seen as synonymous, except where otherwise noted. In other words, writing is generally treated here as writing which is used for inventive purposes.

Given this history of the soul, expression in life is seen as an act of recollecting what is innate.

This is the enduring image behind what Berlin (1987) calls "subjectivist rhetorics" (p. 11), in which truth is seen as that which transcends the mutable world and which can be recovered or discovered by the individual through introspection. Significantly, truth resists expression because its claim to authenticity lies only in the experience of the individual and hence cannot be communicated or given over to an audience by conventional communicative means. Moreover, not only can truth not be communicated, but it cannot be taught in any conventional sense either. At best, a teacher can only create a suitable atmosphere in which the student may engage in his or her own unique process of discovering what is real and true about the self and the world. Any attempts to accommodate the needs or views of an audience by a writer is seen as a hindrance or an impediment to achieving authenticity.

Authenticity, therefore, is the enduring hallmark of expressivist rhetorics. Writing should be an effort at introspection and self-expression, and good writing is that which can express "private versions of experience" in original metaphors-- "metaphors," writes Berlin, "which show by their freshness and uniqueness that they are not simply the imitative reports of the visions of others" (p. 13).

The Platonic Perspective and Audience

It may appear that, given the extreme isolationism of this approach, there would be no place within it for any elaborated conceptions of audience except perhaps as a peripheral consideration or a marginal by-product of the rhetor's position in a

social world. Certainly this is true if one looks at the history of subjectivist rhetorics as they evolved, first through the 1920's, 30's and 40's, and then through the 1960's and early 70's. Berlin's (1987) description of the development of subjectivist rhetorics, which encompassed a range of emphases from a "Brahminical romanticism" to a "postwar, Freudian-inspired" expressionism (p. 73), confirms a number of influential and widespread movements which did advocate the total separation of invention from a concern with audience. For instance, an extreme form of expressionistic rhetoric was realised in a pedagogical approach in the 1960's called "English as a happening" saw students writing about their experiences after being given a set of tasks to perform. Berlin (1987) writes: "These included such tasks as repeatedly counting to five silently and saying aloud 'If I had the wings of an angel' each time five was reached; or hiding one's head in one's hands while standing in the corner of a room; or gently tapping one's forehead against a desk repeatedly; and so on" (p. 151). Despite the rarity of such extremism today, in a contemporary text such as Richard Graves' (1990) sourcebook, *Rhetoric and Composition*, one still finds reprinted essays such as Pumphrey's (1973) "Teaching English Composition as a Creative Art," whose pedagogy can be traced through Berlin (1987) directly back to the aesthetic expressionism popular early in this century.

These extreme kinds of Platonic expressivism find their way only rarely into contemporary writing and rhetorical pedagogy. Yet expressivism remains a strong force in modern composition classrooms which, through an emphasis on personal experience as the source for student writing, continue to value the expression of

private truths couched in original metaphors. This emphasis on originality has provided a space in which audience can function within the rhetorical process, and Berlin (1987) cites the participation in peer response groups as a means by which audience can become a factor in expressivist writing pedagogy. Essentially, using a peer group as an audience, writers can discover what is inauthentic in their writing. Berlin (1987) notes that, in fulfilling the function of audience, members of a peer group, "serve as friendly critics, pointing out when the writer has been inauthentic (bureaucratic voice, cliched language, and the like), trying in this way to lead the writer to authenticity in voice and vision. However, they are never to serve as an audience whom the writer attempts to please or accommodate" (p. 14).

The importance of this specific audience-role is usually emphasized in contemporary writing pedagogy whenever it comes to training or describing peer response groups. For instance, in defining the role of the peer response group, Huff and Kline (1987) explicitly note that the author is "responsible for accepting or rejecting the opinions of the group members. She is not required to follow the advice of the group" (p. 154).

Much of the discussion regarding student ownership of the meaning-making process is tied up with this idea. For instance, Berkenkotter (1984) conducted a qualitative study which examined student writers' reactions to peer response, and she found student authority to be the central issue at play in defining the extent and nature of audience accommodation by student writers. Berkenkotter defined three types of

reactions to peer responses in the students she studied, and she described three paradigmatic students to illustrate these reactions.

First, she described the "resisting revisor," who was characterized as aggressive, proprietary, and confrontational. One such student, for instance, refused to acknowledge the criticisms of his audience and aggressively defended his text. Berkenkotter notes that, had he listened to the criticisms of the group, he "might have realized that his readers' suggestions to include examples and draw them from personal experience would have helped him buttress his central point" (p. 315).

Second, Berkenkotter described the "inner-directed revisor." One student of this type "chose to make decisions independent of his readers' expectations. And although the readers might have helped him, they did not possess his clear sense of the subject. Pat demonstrates that some writers revise out of a sense of internal necessity" (p. 316).

Third, Berkenkotter described students who experience a "crisis of authority"-- those students who experience a loss of authority over their texts due to an overzealous attention to suggestions from audience. One such student "took her readers' judgement seriously, even when she questioned it" (p. 317).

Note that, under an expressivist paradigm, the audience for the first student acted appropriately in pointing out inauthenticity and describing the need for recourse to personal experience, and this student is described as acting inappropriately in ignoring them. The second student has such a strong internal sense of the subject that audience response is seen as superfluous. And the third student experienced a

situation in which the audience response does not match her inner, private sense of the truth, and she is described as acting inappropriately in accommodating their views.

All of these assertions of the appropriate relationship between a writer and audience are concomitant with the Platonic, expressivist paradigm described by Berlin and LeFevre.

The Internal Dialogic Perspective

Background

In many ways, the internal dialogic perspective can be seen as a corollary of expressivist rhetorics: it depends on similar epistemological and rhetorical foundations, and it views the individual as the principle agent of invention. Moreover, the internal dialogic perspective expands the notion of the atomistic individual and views the creation of meaning as the product of a dialogue carried out between the writer and one or more constructed, internalized "others." The basis for this view grew largely out of the work of Freud, who posited the notion that the psyche is split into the interrelated forces operating within the individual, each of which asserts sometimes competing interests. LeFevre (1987) notes: "Employing Freud's model as an analogue for one view of rhetorical invention allows us to pay special attention to the inner dynamics occurring when a writer invents. ... [A] model that allows for debate, dissension, and consideration of alternative views does seem appropriate when one is concerned with invention" (p. 55). LeFevre's model of internal dialogue, however, does not require that the forces or voices operating in the inventive process be oppositional in nature. She draws heavily on a variety of conceptualizations of

internal exchange, from Freud's ego and superego, to the ancient Greek's notion of *daimonion* (an inner monitor or partner in thought), to Albert Rothenberg's notion of "janusian thinking" (a process in which two or more antitheses co-exist and operate simultaneously). LeFevre writes: "The main feature of this model is that it conceives of ideas as generated through a dialogue--sometimes a dialectic: call it an ideologue--going on within an individual. This process is represented in an internalized social construct that both is and is not a part of the self. While this inner actor or other self may derive from social influences and actual others whom one has known, once it has been internalized it may evolve further on its own" (pp. 55-56).

The Internal Dialogic Perspective and Audience

Perhaps the most direct example of this approach to audience is Donald Murray's (1982) article, "Teaching the other self: The writer's first reader." Murray proposes a metaphor for writing as, "a conversation between two workmen muttering to each other on a workbench. The self speaks, the other self listens and responds. The self proposes, the other self considers. The self makes, the other self evaluates. The two selves collaborate: a problem is spotted, discussed, defined, solutions are proposed, rejected, suggested, attempted, tested, discarded, accepted" (p. 140). Note that in this case, the other self proposed by Murray is one which has a function, but not necessarily a persona. The other self tracks the writing as it happens, provides distance, provides an ongoing context for the writer, provides technical and process advice, and generally criticizes and praises (Murray, 1982). This other self is a construct which, he believes, can and should be brought out in the composition class

and in the student-teacher conference through a series of questions designed to cue the student to the fact that this other self does indeed exist and is a resource to be drawn upon in the process of writing.

Robert Roth is another theorist who has written extensively about audience. In his (1987a) article, "Addressing unknown readers: The expanded other meets the self", Roth notes that writers often take over the functions ordinarily associated with audience without necessarily taking over the persona of any real anticipated readers: "When we reread a draft of an essay, we sometimes imagine how it might read to a friend or a colleague, a sympathetic or critical reader. At other times, though, we just read it to ourselves trying to gauge the overall impression it makes on us. We try to read it as though we're coming upon it fresh, but we are not necessarily role-playing any particular external reader. In fact, there is an essential interdependence between reading as the other and reading as oneself, one mode inevitably slipping unnoticed into the other" (p. 5). In this kind of composing process, Roth argues, the adoption of an "outside eye" is not one which tests to see what effect the piece will have on others, but an analysis of whether or not the text is evolving in a way congruent with the writer's purpose in meaning-making. Even when audience representations do become more than functional "monitors," Roth considers it wrong to overly emphasize their relationship to real anticipated readers. In a study of three college writers (Roth, 1987b), one student consistently refused to identify any outside audience at all, claiming that he was writing primarily to himself. The other two students, however, both demonstrated evolving, flexible, multiple audience-creations which were revised

throughout the developing text. In fact, Roth maintains in this study and elsewhere (1983, 1987a) that audience representations which evolve through the composing process often come to resemble the writers themselves, exemplifying something of an "ideal reader who [is] clearly a self-projection" (1987a, p. 5). This relationship between the internalized reader and the self, Roth argues, is one which is essential for the development of a writer's ability to address a general audience.

Traditionally, writers who address a general audience follow a conventional audience-adaptation scheme. Roth (1987a) refers to one textbook which recommends that "writers must repeatedly measure the looks, the sounds, the flow, the sense, the structure of their evolving draft against the tastes and expectations of their intended readers" (p. 6). Roth believes that this process of accommodation requires writers to divorce themselves from their own histories and interests. The alternative, the extreme Platonic stance outlined earlier, requires divorcing oneself from the social world. The middle ground which Roth advocates is one which sees the internal dialogic stance as a necessary part of a process of expanding one's own interests in order to adopt the interests of a general audience. If students are to learn to address wider and wider audiences, they will do so in part, writes Roth (1987), "through 'multiple identifications and differentiations.' That is, they identify with potential readers in various ways by differentiating their potential audiences (and themselves) into a multiplicity of audiences (and selves). And they do so, not by 'decentering,' by leaving the self behind, but through a gradually expanding identification with others as both the self and others become redefined in a process in which the writer discovers

the common ground he or she may share with previously unknown readers" (p. 8). In this process Roth hopes to account for both the private and public aspects of self and their relationships in the composing process. Particularly, his construct of the "expanded other" is one which provides a basis, a common ground, for negotiating private meanings into shared experience.

Peter Elbow (1981), also writing from an internal dialogic perspective, speaks of "the audience in your head" as being a more dominant force in writing than even real anticipated readers. "In the dark of the brain," he writes, "a real audience is easily trampled by a persistent past audience" (p. 187). Elbow makes a stronger connection than either Roth or Murray regarding the character of internal audiences and the ways that they may affect writing. He proposes that writing is influenced either negatively or positively, according to whether or not one writes to: (1) a dangerous audience, which may prohibit writing altogether, cause anxiety which muddles the writing, or cause the adoption of a protective stance which "drains your language of power"; or (2) a safe audience, which unblocks the flow of feelings and words, but which may also lead you to "feel things inside that you'd rather not feel" (pp. 187-188). He also proposes a stance that writers may adopt of writing without any sense of audience, or with a sense of "nonaudience," which can liberate new voices, sounds, and tones, but which can also deaden one's purpose for writing. For Elbow, the writer's job is to learn to control these states of audience awareness and use them to aid the writing process, either by allowing them to serve as a focus for invention, a yardstick for measuring psychic distance, or even a way of exploring

relationships. Central to Elbow's approach, though, is the idea that writers can either switch on or switch off audience, and can manipulate audience in a variety of ways, each of which will yield a different kind of writing, a different approach to the subject matter. This seems to be the power of conceiving of audience as an inner dialogue generally--that of being able to control and determine the terms of invention. The writer is seen as an arbiter with a bias towards his or her own purposes.

The Collaborative Perspective

Background

From this perspective, rhetorical invention is seen as the result of interaction between people. The principle theorist LeFevre (1987) draws on to illustrate this perspective is George Herbert Mead. LeFevre writes: "According to Mead, meaning is not privately constructed in an individual's consciousness, but is instead generated by the interaction of these three moves: (1) a gesture (in our case, a symbolic verbal gesture by an individual); (2) an attribution or interpretation of what the goal or outcome of the gesture is; and (3) a response or adjustive reaction by another individual" (p. 62). This description of the creation of new meanings disavows the notion of the atomistic individual as the wellspring of meanings; meanings are, instead, brought into existence through a process involving symbolic gestures and response.

Two immediate implications of this approach become apparent: first, that invention is seen not as a spontaneous instant or a moment of creation, but as an act occurring over time between rhetor and audience; and second, that "we come to think

of invention as an act initiated by a person but not fully brought to fruition until it is evidenced in situations where others receive and acknowledge and eventually evaluate it" (LeFevre, pp. 64-65). Where this collaborative process of invention is manifested in texts, then, an audience's reading of a text, at whatever stage or in whatever situation, becomes part of a larger process of meaning-making. And this process only sometimes comes to definite closure, at other times building on previous meanings or previous texts and leading to new inventive processes.

One other aspect of the collaborative perspective is important to highlight: LeFevre's concept of *resonance*, a term adapted from Harold Lasswell. LeFevre explains: "Resonance comes about when an individual act--a 'vibration'--is intensified and prolonged by sympathetic vibrations. Resonance ... occurs indirectly when people provide a supportive social and intellectual environment that nurtures thought and enables ideas to be received, thus completing the inventive act" (p. 65). This concept of resonance sits in stark contrast to traditional conceptions which see the writer in an adversarial relationship to the reader. The concept of resonance suggests that, even when an audience needs to be moved or persuaded, audiences can, and do, provide contexts which support the generation of new ideas and alternative viewpoints.

These two principles, first that invention is essentially a collaborative act occurring over time through interaction, and second, that this interaction can sometimes be a positive, resonant, productive dynamic in invention, are central to the collaborative perspective offered by LeFevre.

The Collaborative Perspective and Audience

LeFevre notes that, in adopting a collaborative perspective, one "takes the invention process out of the mind of the individual and into the interaction of real people" (p. 62). Somewhere, in *any* discussion of audience, it seems commonsensical to acknowledge that real people do read texts, and that this act can have a significant effect on the way those texts are composed. Aside from the purely Platonic conceptualization which ignores audience completely, other notions of audience, the internal dialogic and the social collective, exist primarily as abstractions or constructs which are developed and defined in the mind of the reader. The collaborative perspective creates a space for real readers to impact on writing.

Traditionally, the impact of audience on writing was manifested in a form of audience analysis proposed by Aristotle. Aristotle suggested that audience analysis should include such variables as emotional states, moral states, age, and economic status--the assumption being that knowledge of these factors would lead to knowledge of the audience's beliefs, attitudes, needs, and experiences, which could then be accommodated for persuasive ends. In a review of research on audience, Lisa Ede (1984) noted that the influence of Aristotelian methods of audience analysis has been most felt through empirical studies undertaken by people involved in speech communication, who emphasize demographic variables such as sex, race, income, and religion, seen through the lens of social psychology.

Ede (1984) noted that these studies could be seen as, "attempts to refine, rather than to reject, [Aristotle's] basic strategy. Thus where Aristotle relied upon general

beliefs about types of people, modern researchers in speech communication often attempt to discover information about the audience directly, through controlled experimentation. In both cases the assumption is the same: that the best way to learn about audience is through observation" (pp. 141-142). This kind of methodology carries with it several other assumptions: that observation is an appropriate methodology for coming to know audience; that the demographic knowledge acquired through observation can be matched with stereotypic or commonsense knowledge of those traits and used to good effect in composing texts; that the more knowledge of audience, the better; and that all purposes in composition can be served by this singular type of audience awareness.

Certainly the major reviews of conceptualizations of audience (e.g., Fulkerson, 1990; Ede, 1984; Kroll, 1984) have acknowledged and analyzed the pervasive influence of this approach to audience analysis in composition theory and pedagogy. The approach is aptly illustrated by the forceful assertions of Huff and Kline (1987): "Texts exist for audiences, and an audience is not an abstraction. The audience is the set of anticipated readers or the known reader. The readers have expectations, desires for certain knowledge, and emotional, social, and intellectual backgrounds. They have likes and dislikes; they will tolerate certain forms and levels of language but not others. The writer cannot rhetorically define her topic without considering this audience in detail" (p. 73). Typically, Huff and Kline then suggest a checklist of questions that writers should ask about their audience, a checklist which begins with: "What do I know about my audience; who are they, what do they wear, do they care

about this topic, how can I reach them?" and so on (p. 73). Not all checklists are as vague as this, but they all assume that writing needs to be accommodated to the needs and desires of an audience of real readers, and that those needs and desires should be reflected in the final product.

There are a variety of criticisms that can be levelled at this approach. One of these is furnished by those in the subjectivist schools who would argue that writing which is formulated to account for the needs of others is not, therefore, suited to account for the needs of the writer; through the process of audience accommodation, there is potential for the writer to lose his or her sense of agency, purpose, and in extreme versions, even his or her sense of self, sacrificed to the rhetorical needs of audience.

On another level, however, Russell Long (1980) criticizes the audience analysis approach because of the stereotypic nature of the knowledge that is brought to bear in the analysis. He writes: "We would not tolerate this sort of noxious stereotyping in any other context; in fact, most teachers of composition fight diligently against the superficial overgeneralization and the simplistic stereotype. Yet here we not only quit the fight, we shift our allegiance to the other side of the issue" (p. 223). To be fair, some audience analysis proponents try to account for this difficulty by admonishing that only valid inferences be drawn from observation, or by creating audience analysis schemes that attempt to account for the complexity and intricacy of audience as a material construct. But by keeping to the fundamental assumptions outlined above, Long believes that these composition theorists fail to account for the space between

writer and audience--a space which prevents the kind of knowing necessary for the legitimation of the kind of inference that they advocate. As an alternative to audience analysis, Long advocates the adoption of Ong's (1975) understanding of audience as a fictionalized construct created by the writer.

A detailed look at Ong's (1975) conceptualization of audience is warranted here, largely because of its role in establishing the problematic nature of the position of real readers in composition theory and audience analysis. In his article, "The writer's audience is always a fiction", Ong bases his argument on the notion that writers cannot craft their texts unproblematically according to an assumption that particular types of readers will respond in predictable ways to textual cues. Because of this, he suggests, "the writer must construct in his imagination, clearly or vaguely, an audience cast in some sort of role... . [Further], the audience must correspondingly fictionalize itself. A reader has to play the role in which the author has cast him, which seldom coincides with the role in the rest of actual life" (p. 12).

At the heart of Ong's contention is a fundamental difference in the way he conceives of an audience of actual auditors gathered to hear a rhetor, and readers who are reading a text. In other words, writers cannot know their audience in the same way that speakers can know their audience. He notes that, "the spoken word is part of present actuality and has its meaning established by the total situation in which it comes into being. Context for the spoken word is simply present, centered in the person speaking and the one or ones to whom he addresses himself and to whom he is related existentially in terms of circumambient actuality. But the meaning caught in

writing comes provided with no such circumambient actuality, at least normally" (p. 10). According to Ong, by adopting text as their medium of symbolic exchange, writers preclude themselves from any interactive forum. And for Ong, this interactive forum is a necessary condition if the rhetor is to "know" his or her audience. Both the writer and the writer's audience are fragmented from any collective in important ways. Of the writer, Ong writes: "I am writing a book which will be read by thousands, or, I modestly hope, by tens of thousands. So, please, get out of the room. I want to be alone. Writing normally calls for some kind of withdrawal" (p. 10). Of the reader, Ong writes: "The orator has before him an audience which is a true audience, a collectivity. ... Readers do not form a collectivity, acting here and now on one another and on the speaker as members of an audience do" (p. 11). Ong sees both writing and reading as essentially solitary acts in which writers and readers engage with text individually and privately.

Significantly, the terms under which a "true" audience operates for Ong are almost identical to the terms under which invention occurs collaboratively in LeFevre's system. The only difference--the one which blinds Ong to the possibilities of readers and writers interacting--is his conception of the interlocutors acting "here and now" upon one another. By conceptualizing invention as an event occurring over time, LeFevre provides a space for readers to become a true audience even under Ong's terms. LeFevre writes: "Put in terms of tagmemics, one field's particle is another particle's field. In investigating the invention process of individuals who are necessarily social beings as well, it is misleading to focus exclusively on the 'particle'

of the spatially separate inventor and the spatially separate text. Invention is more comprehensively viewed if it is conceived as an ongoing process--a *longue duree*--occurring in individuals and groups, which is occasionally manifested in an event such as a speech or a written text" (p. 42). Under these terms, there is ample opportunity for readers to act upon one another and upon the writer as members of Ong's "true audience" (p. 11) do. And under these terms, writers can come to know their audience in a way that can become productive in the crafting of a text.

From a collaborative perspective, it is not so much a matter of whether or not writers can know their audience, as much as it is a matter of *what* they can know about their audience (conventional discursive behaviour rather than predictable individual response), the nature of that knowledge (contingent rather than objective), the terms under which they create that knowledge (through interaction rather than observation), and the inferences and implications that are drawn from that knowledge. Ong (1975) believes that the adoption of text as a medium for symbolic exchange forces both the writer and the reader to "retire into [their] own microcosm" (p. 11). For LeFevre (1987), the adoption of text as a medium for symbolic exchange requires only a realignment of the conventions of that exchange--from speech conventions involving gesture and response, to textual conventions involving gesture and response.

The Collective Perspective

Background

The collective perspective is one which takes into account the influence of larger social units on the act of invention. LeFevre writes: "The collective view is

based on the assumption that invention is neither a purely individual nor an interpersonal act or process; rather, it is encouraged or constrained by social collectives whose views are transmitted through such things as institutions, societal prohibitions, and cultural expectations" (p. 50). In large part, though, LeFevre's interest in social collectives represents an attempt to account for not only the influence of social collectives on invention, but the possibility for understanding, using and interacting with social collectives productively during invention as well.

The principle theorist LeFevre draws on to illustrate the workings of the social collectives is Emile Durkheim. She paraphrases him as follows: "When individuals live together, orienting their behaviour to one another and harmonizing their actions, they give rise to society, a collective unit that is greater than the sum of its individual parts. Society emerges from the interactions of individuals and in turn influences them to act in certain ways" (pp. 80-81). Importantly, collectives act as a single, unified entity whose conventions and terms of being constrain individual invention either through hegemony or through the deliberate valuing of certain kinds of invention and the disparagement of others. At the same time, the conventions and terms under which some kinds of invention are arrived at can be particularly generative *because* of their constraining effect.

The more extreme versions of this perspective posit a view of invention as being almost entirely generated by social collectives working through individuals who act as functionaries of the collective will. Of these extreme views, LeFevre writes: "the socioculture itself is what thinks through individuals or by means of individuals.

It is as if an idea floats somewhere in the collective waiting for a propitious time and place and person in which it may manifest itself. In contrast to the internal dialogic invention, in which an individual incorporates social influences but can modify them through an internal dialectic, the collective view sees ideas as virtually imposed on individuals from without" (p. 81). Her illustrations of this process are compelling, but may leave us with a metaphor that is more useful for explaining in retrospect the ways in which meanings are created than for helping us create them. On the other hand, LeFevre also gives us a wide variety of illustrations that perhaps mitigate the overwhelming influence of the collective. She concludes by noting: "In any sphere of invention, individuals and groups must find ways to think with, and through, and contrary to the collective body of ideas and ways of thinking which both enable and restrict people" (p. 92). It appears, at times, as though the collective perspective would rob the writer or rhetor of all intentionality and agency, but here LeFevre provides an imperative, an admonition, which militates against that position and which can serve to motivate invention even while acknowledging the power of the social collective.

The Collective Perspective and Audience

Much of the discussion surrounding the idea of social collectives and writing over the past several years has manifested itself in the notion of discourse community. Primarily, the metaphor of discourse community has been developed through the adoption of social constructivist thought which suggests that knowledge is localized within the particular communities which generate it. Therefore, students who are

learning to write in the academy need to understand and become proficient at using the conventional language of academic discourse communities both in order to gain access to their specialized forms of knowledge and to contribute to the creation, maintenance, and transformation of knowledge within those communities. Proper use of the linguistic and discursive conventions of a given community by students will substantiate their membership, and will help to ensure the credibility of their academic endeavours. This is because discourse communities provide the situational context in which knowledge construction occurs.

Mark LeTourneau (1988) has written an important review of the relationship between audience and situational context. He identifies three significant historical stages in that relationship: the union of audience and situational context, the separation of audience from situational context, and finally the identification of audience and non-situational context. LeTourneau's account is, again, one which centres on the perceived disjuncture between oral discourse and written discourse. The first stage he describes is one which treats audience and situational context as being unified; that is, for classical and eighteenth century rhetoricians, who were mainly interested in oral discourse, the audience was used to classify discourse--it determined both the "end" and the "species" of a speech (LeTourneau, 1988, p. 2). This approach to classifying discourse, however, was not seen as being able to account for the exigencies of written texts, where speaker and audience become separated in space and time. As a result of the ascendancy of written discourse, then, notions of audience were transformed from "men in particular" (knowable by situational context) to "men

in general" (divorced from situational context), a relationship which constitutes the second stage in the process. Given these two stages, LeTourneau speculates that we are now re-identifying audience with what he calls "non-situational context", a process which "has come about through metaphorically extending both concepts to accommodate the exigencies of reading and writing" (p. 8). He draws on Park to explain that "contexts that are created within a piece adumbrate [or shadow] its implied audience; to be aware of the discursive canons of a discipline is equivalent to addressing the audience in that discipline. In this sense, audience and context become identical" (pp. 8-9).

One fascinating study that addresses this issue directly is Arthur Walzer's (1985) "Articles from the 'California Divorce Project': A case study of the concept of audience." In it, Walzer examines three articles written by Judith Wallerstein and Joan Kelly, each of which reports the results of the same five year study investigating the children of divorce. The articles were written for three different journals: *Psychology Today*, the *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, and the *American Journal of Psychiatry*, all deemed by Walzer to be academic in nature. Walzer's analysis revealed that traditional methods of audience analysis were woefully inadequate in accounting for the differences in the articles. He outlines a composite heuristic for audience analysis which appraises "the prospective readers' backgrounds (e.g. age, income), attitudes (e.g. sympathetic, hostile), needs (e.g. for instruction, recommendation), and knowledge (e.g. broad and cursory, narrow and technical)" (p. 155) and concludes that only the heuristic category which deals with the knowledge of

the audience might be relevant to the differences in the articles. Even so, traditionally, schemes of audience analysis tend to stress *how much* the audience knows rather than the *kind* of knowledge the audience might expect given the context of the piece.

Walzer writes: "The problem with the current model for analyzing audiences results in part from the conception of audience on which it is founded, a conception that too literally equates an audience with the real readers external to the text. The demographic survey virtually required by the current model failed to distinguish the important characteristics of the different audiences in the articles by Wallerstein and Kelly in part because many of the same people read the *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* and the *American Journal of Psychiatry*; in other words, the audience changes even if the readers do not, a distinction the present model does not make" (p. 155). One reasonable way to account for this disassociation of readers and audience is to conceptualize audience, as LeTourneau suggests, in a way that relates audience and non-situational context. That is, if one is to ask students to write academic papers, then it seems reasonable and productive to account for the discursive contexts in which those papers are purportedly being written within or for. And this accounting amounts to nothing less than a heuristic for audience analysis which centres on contextual matters rather than real readers. Walzer, in fact, suggests that students need to analyze the discourse of academic communities as they are revealed in specialized journals "in terms of such generalized *topoi* as the roles played by scholars working in a discipline, the rationales or exigencies conventionally stated to justify writing in it, and the structures in which information is arranged" (p. 156).

Certainly, this kind of study, directed at elucidating the conventional discursive habits, norms, and dynamics of academic discourse communities, can be seen as helpful and empowering to any writer, especially when one acknowledges that membership in, and access to the knowledge of, discourse communities is contingent upon one's internalization of these discourse conventions. Because of this, the approach has gained momentum and support over the last few years. The invoking of "community" as a construct to illuminate metaphoric notions of collectivity, however, is not without its problems.

Joseph Harris (1988), in his article, "Community: A keyword in the teaching of writing", has called into question the consequences of using the term. He quotes Raymond Williams, who characterizes "community" primarily as a "warmly persuasive word... : What is most important, perhaps, is that unlike all other terms of social organization (*state, nation, society*, etc.) it seems never to be used unfavourably, and never to be given any positive opposing or distinguishing term" (In Harris, 1988, p. 2). While this property of the term carries with it some extraordinary rhetorical power for those who use it, presenting composition theorists with a metaphor for their own work which is attractive and encouraging, it has at the same time allowed those who use the term a way to sidestep a whole set of related discussions dealing with the politics, ideology, hegemony, oppression, and conflict within groups and larger collective units.

Harris suggests that this is, perhaps, due to the history of the way the term came to be used in writing circles, as a strange hybrid between *interpretive community*

(a philosophic-literary term referring to "a kind of loose dispersed network of individuals who share certain habits of mind") and *speech community* (a sociolinguistic term referring to "an actual group of speakers living in a particular place and time"). To add to the confusion of these two terms is the phrase *discourse community*, which Harris sees as embodying both the tangible and specific qualities of speech communities--out there, somewhere, there really are "groupings of writers and readers that we can help 'initiate' our students into"--and interpretive communities--"writers and readers who are dispersed in time and space, and who rarely, if ever, meet one another in person" (pp. 5-6). The vagueness of these terms belies the slippery way in which they are used to invoke authority as the source of conventional behaviour, habits, knowledge, etc. Harris writes: "Abstracted as they are from almost all other kinds of social and material relations, only an affinity of beliefs and purposes, consensus, is left to hold such communities together. ... So while members of an 'academic discourse community' may not meet each other very often, they are presumed to think much like one another. ... In the place of physical nearness we are given like-mindedness" (pp. 6-7). This largely consensual conceptualization of the way communities form and operate is related to the inherent warmth in the way that the term is used as outlined earlier. Ultimately it may be naive and overly simplistic to approach the reality of the influence of social collectives with such open arms. LeFevre and others point out that collectives are prohibitional as well as promotional. They exclude as well as include. They can be places of conflict and oppression as well as consensus and like-mindedness.

The most telling of the criticisms levelled at the metaphor of *discourse community* in the composition class has to do with how discourse communities, to which students do not belong, are used as a source of authority for student writing. Marilyn Cooper (1989a) notes: "The problem I see with many discussions of the notion of discourse communities is that they are underlaid by an ideology Richard Rorty calls foundational epistemology, an ideology whose primary assumption is that truth is not a judgement made in an immediate social situation but is rather grounded in external standards" (p. 202). She continues, "Discourse communities, like Standard English and cultural literacy, can function as a set of external standards that are used to control and constrain the immediate discourse, legitimating the discourse of those who are members ... and silencing those who are not" (p. 211). In many ways, the notion of discourse community looks eerily like the notion of general audience that students have been subjected to for so long. In other words, there is "out there," somewhere, a paradigmatic group of "reasonable, rational men" (the use of "men" is intentional here), and the writer's discourse must conform to the conventions of this "universal" general audience. Despite the fact that, under the metaphor of discourse community, one is now faced with a multiplicity of general audiences, the dynamic remains the same. Discourse communities have standards of correctness; discourse communities have conventions for ascertaining truth; discourse communities represent authoritative ways of knowing. Clearly, adopting this approach to student writing can certainly lead to a further imposition of a kind of authoritarian rhetorical pedagogy

that composition theorists were trying to avoid by developing the notion of discourse community in the first place.

Audience analysis that deals with the norms and conventions of communities should lead to the kind of understanding which will allow writers to negotiate competing discursive impulses both around or between discourse communities and within them as well. Writers need to be able to locate social collectives, locate themselves in relation to them, and be able to attach some kind of significance to where they are situated in this relationship. In other words, a writer operating comfortably within the centre of a collective will view that collective differently than someone operating on the periphery or even outside of it.

In acknowledging this, Park (1986) has proposed that three conditions must be met for an audience to exist: "1) an established social institution or social relationship... . 2) an evolved and understood function that discourse performs within and for that social relationship. ... 3) ... there must be a physical setting [or] means of publication" (p. 482). Park has suggested that one needs to "know" an audience on this level--in terms of its identity as part of a social collective. To this end, he proposed a series of questions as follows:

I. What is the identity of the audience?

- A. What is the institution or social relationship of writer(s) and audience that the discourse serves (or creates)?
- B. How does the discourse function in that relationship?

- C. What is the physical setting or means of distribution that brings the discourse to the audience and what are the conventions and formats associated with it?
- II. How does the audience view the subject matter and how may it view the intentions of the discourse?
- A. What is known or can be projected about specific attitudes and knowledge in an audience that affect what the discourse will have to do in order to accomplish its purpose?
 - B. To what extent are the audience's attitudes toward subject and purpose affected by or describable by reference to its collective identity as audience?

After outlining these categories of questions, Park notes: "Although this outline has the appearance of a heuristic, I propose it more as a general framework for thinking about what writers may actually do when they attend to audience" (p. 484). Park's apprehension at suggesting a heuristic is well-founded. Writers who engage in serious analysis of the social collective nature of their audiences must not only ask "what" but also "why" and "to what end," mainly because knowledge of the discursive conventions of collectives does not lead organically to an ability to use that knowledge productively or effectively in engaging in that discourse. Moreover, Park's apprehension may be based in a more complex problem. In short, it may be that the kind of analysis he advocates here is subject to the same criticisms as those which are

levelled at the demographic or observational analysis undertaken by those more traditional proponents of audience analysis. An analysis of some collectives, undertaken by a disinterested observer outside of the collective, even at the complex level suggested by Park, may only result in simplistic, naive, or stereotypic knowledge. In other words, the kind of "knowing" that is required for a productive accounting of social collectives might only be gotten through interacting with or within them.

A Synthesis of Conceptualizations of Audience

In proposing a continuum, LeFevre recognizes that the categories developed along it may overlap, that writers and theorists who are identified along it may think in ways that encompass more than a single perspective, and that writers may roam the entire continuum according to the variety of rhetorical situations they encounter. What remains is the question of how they might operate in relation to one another, how they might come together to resonate as a useful and rich conception of the role of audience within the rhetorical universe. While the Platonic perspective leaves the writer with an impoverished and skeletal conception of audience, it captures forcefully the notion of the writer's intention and the writer's unique perspective on the situations that he or she encounters. The rest of the positions on the continuum carry with them viable and sometimes powerful notions of audience. Clearly writers do engage in internal dialogue with constructed others; undoubtedly real readers of texts not only affect writing but can have a deeply positive effect on the composition; and unquestionably, social collectives are both constraining and generative, sometimes

acting as "other" in a writer's understanding of audience, at other times providing the richest context in which audience may be conceptualized.

Certainly, no single conceptualization of audience along the social continuum is adequate to account for the role of audience in all rhetorical situations or even the variety of roles audience might play within a single rhetorical situation. A refusal to acknowledge anything but internal audience constructs can limit one's conception of writing to the crafting and constructing of texts and can prevent one from acknowledging the social context of that invention. An overemphasis on real readers may cause writers to lose authority over a text and may cause too much stress to be placed on the communicative or persuasive aspects of discourse. And a preoccupation with the conventional and normative aspects of social collectives may perpetuate the marginalization of certain ideas or discourses, or even disallow them altogether.

Clearly a synthesis is needed, and I believe that this can be found by reconciling the notion of audience with a Bakhtinian notion of dialogue. Underlying this notion is the idea that the impetus for language use comes from our need for others to share in our experience--to validate it and give it meaning, not necessarily through assent, but through the common language which makes meaning and significance possible. This social dynamic of language use is captured in what Bakhtin calls *utterance*, a communicative process which involves two levels of dialogue: one internal, one external. Clark (1990), summarizes the process as follows: "Before the utterance of one person can confront another in the external, or interpersonal, dialogue ..., the person who will utter it must construct it in an internal,

or intrapersonal, dialogue where it emerges both in response to the memory of relevant, related utterances that have preceded it and in anticipation of others that will follow it. From that internal collaboration of utterances remembered and imagined emerges a construction of words that have particular meaning given the combined experiences of the person who expresses them and the person to whom they are addressed. That is why, Bakhtin argues, no utterance is the product of one person alone" (p. 11). Here, the process remains incomplete until the one who is addressed understands the utterance by engaging in a subsequent internal, intrapersonal dialogue, a deliberate activity which requires placing the utterance in the "concrete historical situation" of the exchange. This allows both participants to locate the exchange so that common "representational and ideological particulars" can impact on the meaning that develops in communication.

This process of utterance and understanding undertaken dialogically is comparable to LeFevre's description of invention as an act occurring between participants in a discursive exchange--an act occurring through symbolic gestures and responding interpretive gestures. It is also a collaborative act that accounts for the need for an internal dialogic construction and interpretation of the linguistic elements of the exchange. What Bakhtin's notion of dialogue emphasizes, though, is the necessity for locating the larger social context of the exchange as being immanent within the dialogic or interactive system itself. It is dialogue, or linguistic exchange occurring in real rhetorical circumstances, which invokes the collective influence of discourse communities, and not the other way around. In other words, the influence of

social collectives on rhetorical exchange is necessarily informed by the shared socio-rhetorical assumptions, either tacit or conscious, of the participants in a dialogic exchange.

What is important to recognize here is that the wide variety of conceptualizations of audience--broadly grouped into internal dialogic conceptualizations, collaborative conceptualizations, and collective conceptualizations--do not necessarily compete with one another within the rhetorical situation. Engaging in internal dialogue does not preclude the possibility for real readers to impact on texts, and neither of these precludes the possibility of writers taking into account how social collectives influence their writing. This broad conceptualization of audience, one which encompasses all of these relational elements, though, does suggest that the richest conceptualization of audience for writers is one which attempts to unify these elements into one system. By doing so one might be able to more fully explore relationships between the elements of that system and examine the ways that it might impact on the writing situation.

CHAPTER THREE

A DIALOGIC APPROACH TO DISCOURSE

One of the great values in using a continuum such as LeFevre's (1987) to describe how varying social relationships affect, direct, or influence rhetorical invention, is that a continuum suggests an interconnectedness among the points which are identified for analysis across the continuum's range. Rather than proposing a set of discrete categories, the continuum highlights four distinct but interrelated perspectives across a single analytic construct (social relations implicit in invention), and the divisions, as LeFevre (1987) suggests, serve to illustrate "differing degrees of emphasis in theories or teaching practices" (p. 51). For the purposes of this thesis, it has helped to identify how those divisions along the continuum have manifested themselves in conceptions of audience. Moreover, as I hope the following discussion will show, among the many gradations along the continuum that LeFevre might have chosen to highlight, the four points that she describes prove to be remarkably reasonable, especially since, when put in the context of dialogism, together they can aid one in mapping out some of the conceptual dynamics within the literature on dialogic approaches to discursive practices.

At the same time, LeFevre's social continuum was created for the specific purpose of opposing social conceptualizations against more individualistic conceptualizations of invention. Because of this, the continuum is more useful as a tool for the analysis of how theorists have conceived of the social nature of invention

rather than as a description of discursive practices. Indeed, much of the tension in LeFevre's work revolves around this dual desire: on the one hand, to create a framework in which a variety of social conceptualizations can be placed alongside one another for analysis, and on the other, to critique those perspectives from the point of view of a social theory of discourse. Nevertheless, LeFevre is aware of this limitation, especially in her discussion of the Platonic and collective views of invention. She writes: "Both extremes on this continuum--the Platonic and collective views--are to some extent oversimplifications of the invention process, much as any implied dichotomy between individual and social perspectives is ultimately a fiction. An individual cannot be totally divorced from social collectives any more than a social collective can be totally separated from individuals" (p. 51).

One can sense in LeFevre's work a pressure, which remains relatively unexplored, to move toward the centre of the continuum in order to adequately understand the invention process and the relational dynamics at play within that process. This pressure to move toward the intrapersonal and interpersonal dynamics of invention ultimately represents a move towards dialogism as an overriding metaphor for inventive processes. Despite LeFevre's reluctance to conflate her analysis of theoretical perspectives with a descriptive theory of discourse, a descriptive theory of discourse is necessary if one is to fully realise the implications of LeFevre's analysis. A dialogic approach to discourse as a descriptive theory, however, is not intended to discount the legitimacy of the more extreme views as much as it is intended to more fully describe the relationships between all four points on the continuum,

enclosed within a unitary system of rhetorical interaction. To see the more extreme ends of the continuum through the lens of dialogism might help reveal each of the varying perspectives that LeFevre has identified as being important elements of a more complex audience construct.

In this chapter, then, I will examine the concept of dialogism, setting out the context in which it has emerged, and outlining the basic conceptual framework. After reviewing the basic principles of this approach, I will re-visit LeFevre's social continuum in order to explore the implications of dialogism for how one might conceptualize the relationships between intrapersonal, interpersonal, Platonic, and collective views.

Dialogism in Context

In order to fully understand dialogism it is necessary to first re-examine the socially constructed nature of knowledge and the diverging forces at play in our conceptualization of how this process works. The position of epistemic rhetoric, as Berlin (1987) describes it, is that rhetoric exists not to communicate or represent extralinguistic realities, but instead, rhetoric exists to construct reality or knowledge through discursive exchange. In other words, knowledge is constructed socially by interlocutors engaged in rhetorical activity.

One's understanding of how this process occurs, however, can be clouded by a continued tendency, even from the point of view of a social constructivist position, to reify knowledge and view it as a product--the *result* of a constructive process. In viewing knowledge this way, it is possible to see it as being held, almost in material

terms, within a community in much the same way that a container can hold any material object or substance. Furthermore, communities and the knowledge that they "hold" become mutually defining, especially because one is identified so much with the other, and eventually they are seen to be mutually generative. Note, for instance, Bruffee's (1986) characterization of social constructivism:

A social constructionist position ... assumes that entities we normally call reality, knowledge, thought, facts, texts, selves, and so on are constructs generated by communities of like-minded peers. Social construction understands reality knowledge, thought, facts, texts, and so on as community-generated, community-maintained linguistic entities--or, more broadly speaking, symbolic entities--that define or "constitute" the communities that generate them (p. 774).

In fact, it is not clear at all that knowledge is generated *by* communities. What is clear is that knowledge is generated *within* communities and that some relationship between community and knowledge construction exists.

This tendency of Bruffee not to look beyond the communal context in which knowledge construction occurs represents, I think, an urge on the part of many theorists and practitioners to maintain a foundational approach to knowledge which sees it as having a stable life beyond the immediate social situations in which it is generated. This foundationalist understanding of knowledge is a function of the consensual nature of community life in general--a consensus which is necessary for communities to maintain coherence. Clark (1990) writes: "The process of making

knowledge begins when people recognize that they need each other, that they must cooperate. In order to cooperate, they begin to define common interpretations of experience that they can treat as their collective reality, a reality constituted in terms of their shared needs, values and purposes that are the *foundation* upon which they can sustain the cooperation that maintains their community" (p. 7, emphasis added).

Consequently, it is difficult to resist the urge to see this collective reality or shared interpretation of experience as something like a body of knowledge which exists outside of human interaction. As Wells (forthcoming, 1993) writes: "In practice there is a great deal of commonality in the knowledge that is constructed by members of particular cultural communities. It is this that enables us to talk about 'common' knowledge and to act as if it had an independent, impersonal existence." The same can be said, of course, of the performative aspects of knowledge construction, or the commonly-held conventions by which members of communities engage in constructive activity. In social constructivist thought, shared interpretations of experience are accompanied by shared assumptions about legitimate or sanctioned ways of interpreting experience.

In both cases, what emerges is a picture of communities as groups of people who collectively share a set of assumptions about reality and about ways of interpreting reality, and significantly, from within or from without, those assumptions are able to be apprehended through analysis or observation. In other words, conventional ways of knowing and coming to know in a communal context become not only customary, but standardized into formal systems which can then be used to

identify and distinguish between diverse groups. Furthermore, knowledge of these formal structures, either tacit or conscious, is seen to be necessary if one is to engage in meaningful communicative activity within a given community, a notion which implies that communities are characterized by recognizable boundaries which adumbrate the formal discursive systems governing a community at any given time.

These assertions are illustrative of a desire to concentrate one's energies on the normative dynamics of rhetorical interchange. One result of this is that the interactive processes which occur within the context of a discourse community go largely unexamined. While many social constructivist thinkers pay lip service to material context of language use, from the perspective which foregrounds discourse communities as the site of knowledge construction, actual use of language in discursive exchange is often downplayed.

According to Richard Rorty (1979), the impetus for this comes from the need for language theorists and philosophers to construct an epistemological account of knowledge construction within communities (an approach which he ultimately rejects in favour of hermeneutics). This epistemological approach, "proceeds on the assumption that all contributions to a given discourse are commensurable. ... By 'commensurable' I mean to be able to be brought under a set of rules which will tell us how rational agreement can be reached on what would settle the issue on every point where statements would seem to conflict" (p. 316). In Rorty's account, commensurability is the "stuff" of epistemology. In other words, epistemology depends on an understanding of what is commonly held and thus what is

generalizable. Commensurability is also that which allows epistemologists to make the distinction between what Rorty calls *normal discourse* and *abnormal discourse*.

Normal discourse can be rendered commensurable because,

everybody agrees on how to evaluate everything everybody else says.

More generally, normal discourse is that which is conducted within an agreed-upon set of conventions about what counts as a relevant contribution, what counts as answering a question, what counts as having a good argument for that answer or a good criticism of it.

Abnormal discourse is what happens when someone joins in the discourse who is ignorant of these conventions or who sets them aside.

... The product of abnormal discourse can be anything from nonsense to intellectual revolution, and there is no discipline which describes it, any more than there is a discipline which is devoted to the study of the unpredictable, or of "creativity" (p. 320).

Significantly, the only way that one could make a distinction between normal and abnormal discourse in actual practice is to set any given speech act in relief against an epistemological understanding of what makes any discourse commensurable within a given context. The study of actual language use, then, is rendered secondary to the primary act of apprehending the normative dynamics of a discourse community.

Normal discourse can only be recognized as such in relation to an account of the normative aspects of a community's discourse; and abnormal discourse, because of its unpredictable and chaotic nature, can only be understood in terms of what it is not,

which is also a judgement made in relation to the normative aspects of a community's discourse. So, despite the fact that actual language use is understood as contributing to the construction of knowledge within communities, one's understanding of it can only begin from a perspective which recognizes its normalized, structured, and systemic features. Once recognized, all normal discourse is subordinated to the terms of commensurability, and all abnormal discourse enters a black hole of language use we are content to call aberrant.

If one detects resonances here with the structuralism of Ferdinand de Saussure, this is no accident. One of the enduring influences of structuralism is the distinction made by Saussure between two perspectives on language. The first perspective is that which views it synchronically, as a determinate system of structures frozen in time which govern the particular instances of language use at any given moment. The second is that which views language diachronically, a perspective which perceives, but cannot understand, the muddled and chaotic dynamics of its historical development. Language can only be studied, or analyzed, from a perspective which perceives it as synchronic, ordered, systemic, or structured. As Michael Holquist (1990) puts it, in order to "retreat into the conceptual safety" (p. 46) of a synchronic view of language, Saussure proposed the now-famous distinction between *langue* and *parole*, which is made possible by opposing collectively- or socially-held linguistic structures against an individual's use of everyday speech. Holquist (1990) explains:

Saussure characterizes speech (*parole*), as having a particularity so unsystematic and endless that it becomes virtually unstudyable. ...

Speech for him is language as it is present *only* in a single speaker.

Language is the other pole of the duality, the realm of the social: it is also, but not solely, in the individual. Saussure reserves the term language (*langue*) to refer to the general rules that exist for all present speakers of a particular language. These lend themselves to systematization (p. 45, emphasis in original).

The adoption of a synchronic perspective by Saussure allowed him to discount *parole* as something which was unalterably subject, again secondary, to the primacy of the structures of language. As Eagleton (1983) notes, "Saussure believed that linguistics would get into a hopeless mess if it concerned itself with actual speech He was not interested in investigating what people actually said; he was concerned with the objective structure of signs which made speech possible in the first place" (p. 97). It is important to note here that it is *langue* which makes *parole* possible. Actual speech is seen to be ancillary to the rules which govern it. As Eagleton (1983) points out, the primacy of synchronicity over diachronicity, of *langue* over *parole*, of language over speech, is seen by Saussure to be a matter of logical necessity. "How could we create meaning," writes Eagleton, "unless the rules which govern it were already there? However far back we push, however much we hunt for the origin of meaning, we will always find a structure already in place. This structure could not have been the *result* of speech, for how were we ever able to speak coherently in the first place without it?" (p. 113, emphasis in original).

Of course, all of these assertions which argue for the primacy of the structures which govern the creation of meaning, the construction of knowledge, or the use of language, are made against a background of assertions which argued just the opposite. These are arguments born out of approaches variously described as "personalist" by Clark and Holquist (1984), "expressivist" by Berlin (1987), or "Platonic" by LeFevre (1987). All of these views are united by the assumption that the ownership of meaning belongs to the individual subject or self. As Clark and Holquist (1984) put it, meaning comes about "as the lonely product of an intention willed by a sovereign ego" (p. 12). Language, even if it is structured or configured in certain ways, is appropriated by individuals for their own purposes which are not subject to constraint. Significantly, from this perspective, language lives in individual speech acts, instances of actual use, where individuals express and create meanings or knowledge which is unique to them alone.

Principles of Dialogism

As Clark (1990) notes, Mikhail Bakhtin has been the most influential proponent of dialogism, and the real import of his work has only recently been recognized. Writing as Voloshinov (1973)², Bakhtin proposed a dialogic perspective on language which attempts to negotiate between two extreme and diverging trends: "individualistic subjectivism" and "abstract objectivism" (p. 48). The former holds that language is an

²The authorship of this work attributed to Voloshinov is seriously questioned by many Bakhtin scholars. Hereafter, in keeping with current practice, *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language* will be referred to as Bakhtin's work, although it will appear in the reference list as being authored by Voloshinov in order to remain consistent with the decision by Seminar Press to publish it under that name.

activity, or an "unceasing process of creation realized in individual speech acts" (p. 48). This view either denies the existence of pre-existing norms altogether, or it views those norms as subservient to the purposes or intentions of the individual speaker. An account of language as a stable system is one which privileges an entirely fictionalized notion of what language is and how language is used. The structuralist myth of language is one which can only see the "*inert crust, the hardened lava of language creativity*" (p. 48). To extend the metaphor, in the heat of actual use, the apparent unity of the surface of language is always torn apart by the processes which continually produce and transfigure that surface. The fiction of the objective, unsituated, ahistorical, synchronic view of language is that it abstractly arrests the volcanic activity of language use in order to take a snapshot, and then pronounces the resulting picture as enduring, or even worse, universal.

Abstract objectivism, the second trend identified by Bakhtin (1973), is the polar opposite of individualistic subjectivism. From this perspective, individual intentions are always subject to, or subservient to, "*normatively identical linguistic forms which the individual consciousness finds ready-made and which is incontestable for that consciousness. ... Individual acts of speaking are, from the viewpoint of language, merely fortuitous refractions and variations or plain and simple distortions of normatively identical forms*" (p. 57, emphasis in original). Abstract objectivism does admit to speaking subjects, but their activity is necessarily senseless, irrational, and unimbued with the systemic qualities of language itself until they are seen in relation to linguistic structures.

Bakhtin's dialogism represents an attempt to mediate between these two views of language. In his view, the articulation of these accounts in terms of binary oppositions obscures other possible accounts of how language works. In other words, upon recognizing the inadequacy of the individualistic-subjectivist perspective on language, the move to abstract objectivism was seen by Bakhtin to be reactionary and, in many senses, arbitrary. As an alternative, he proposed a view of language as something which accounted for both. In other words, he saw each of the views expressed by the diverging trends in language theory as parodies of the diverging dynamics of language itself. As Clark and Holquist (1984) write: "Instead of the Neo-Platonic gap between *langue's* dream of order and *parole's* necessary deviance, Bakhtin proposes a continuum between system and performance, the complementarity of both" (p. 14). The conflict between proponents of individualistic subjectivism and abstract objectivism was merely indicative of a struggle which encouraged Bakhtin, ultimately, to define language as a continual clash of forces, both centripetal and centrifugal. Language can live precisely because, "alongside the centripetal forces, the centrifugal forces of language carry on their uninterrupted work; alongside ... centralization and unification, the uninterrupted processes of decentralization and disunification go forward" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 272). The binary conceptual frame which informs most other theories of language and language use inexorably draws one to either end of this polarity, but Bakhtin's account is one which attempts to avoid this movement by describing language as something which cannot be owned by an individual, nor abstracted (and thus similarly owned) by a system, but as something

which is shared by those who use it, belonging to no one, and yet belonging to everyone: language is something which exists on the borders between people.

The middle ground that Bakhtin hopes to inhabit is one which conceives of language in dialogic, communicative terms rather than either linguistic or essentialist terms. In adopting this perspective, Bakhtin claimed that the fundamental unit for investigation in the study of language should be the utterance, or language as it occurs in actual communicative circumstances. Because of this assertion, Bakhtin's notion of utterance is often confused with Saussure's notion of *parole*, but properly conceived, utterance embodies important differences. The similarity lies in the fact that, as Holquist (1990) notes, "utterance is active, *performed* [But] utterance is not the completely free act of choice that Saussure posited. The Bakhtinian utterance is dialogic precisely in the degree to which *every aspect* of it is a give-and-take between the local need of a speaker to communicate a specific meaning, and the global requirements of language as a generalizing system" (p. 60, emphasis in original).

Choice in dialogue needs to be seen in relation to the fact that utterances are constrained on a number of levels. In the first place, an utterance never originates with the speaker who articulates it. Utterances always take place in response to, or in answer to whatever utterances have preceded it. Holquist describes this condition as the speaker's "addressivity," or "the situation of not only being preceded by a language system that is 'always already there,' but preceded as well by all of existence, making it necessary to answer for the particular place I occupy" (p. 60). In this sense, it remains impossible either to commence the flow of meaning, or to resist it. All

utterances are necessarily historical, situated in an ongoing dialogue, and to live is necessarily to respond and to engender further utterances.

So utterances are conditioned and shaped according to the utterances which preceded them, and they are also cast in relation to anticipated responses. All of this implies a boundary which Bakhtin characterized as the structure of the utterance--the change of speaking subjects (1986). All single utterances are exhausted in their articulation--their beginning is preceded by the utterances of another and their end is followed by the responsive utterances of another or another's active understanding. Significantly, the rules which govern this change of speaking subjects or the structure of an utterance are not "wired into the brain" as Holquist (1990, p. 61) puts it, but are derived in all their multiplicity through the social norms implicit in the communal situation.

This change of speaking subjects also implies another social axiom having to do with utterances--that an utterance is never owned by, and never the product of, one person alone. Addressivity is only one aspect of an utterance and is always equally balanced by the addressee. In a particularly apt illustration, Bakhtin (1973) notes:

Orientation toward the addressee has an extremely high significance. In point of fact, *word is a two-sided act*. It is determined equally by *whose* word it is and for *whom* it is meant. As word, it is precisely *the product of the reciprocal relationship between speaker and listener, addresser and addressee*. ... A word is a bridge thrown between myself and another. If one end of the bridge depends on me, then the other

depends on my addressee. A word is territory shared by both addresser and addressee, by the speaker and his interlocutor (p. 86, emphasis in original).

This is what is meant when Bakhtin claims that language is a border phenomenon. In order for it to mean, it must cross the gulf between people, and in doing so, it must be shared in a special sense. Each individual can only apprehend this bridge from the perspective of his or her end of it. Because of this, it is subject to the conditions of an individual's unique position in the world. At the same time, an utterance is always a cooperative endeavour, and this cooperation is based on an assumption of a shared set of values and practices derived from the community which both interlocutors call their own.

Furthermore, utterances derive their meaning from the immediate social situation in which they occur. Bakhtin calls this the *extraverbal context* of an utterance. Eagleton (1983) provides a fitting example:

What if I asked you to close the door having just spent twenty minutes roping you to your chair? What if the door was closed already, or there was no door there at all? Then, surely, you would be quite justified to ask me: 'What do you mean?' It isn't that you don't understand the meaning of my *words*; it is that you don't understand the *meaning* of my words. It will not help if I hand you a dictionary (pp. 113-114, emphasis in original).

As Eagleton points out, the meaning of this utterance is not tied solely to the phonetic, morphological, or semantic elements of the words themselves. The relation here is much more complex than that. In the first place, the meaning of this utterance is clearly connected to the intention of the speaker. This intention, however, is not the product of an unfettered ego which can whimsically say anything it wants in order to inhere meaning in the use of language. Intention is relentlessly tied to the immediate social situation in which it is enacted. "When we understand the 'intentions' of a piece of language," writes Eagleton (1983), "we interpret it as being in some sense *oriented* ... and none of this can be grasped apart from the practical conditions in which language operates" (p. 114, emphasis in original). The meaning that we anticipate will emerge from the utterance described in Eagleton's example is as yet unfinished. It depends on intention coming into resolution with the immediate social situation. And even if the meaning of the utterance is clear to the first speaker, it will not be clear to anyone else until that resolution is achieved through a dialogic exchange which ensures that the person for whom the words are meant is able to resolve the situation.

When meaning is successfully achieved, it clearly functions in relation to the extraverbal context described by Bakhtin. He writes: "This *extraverbal context* of the utterance is comprised of three factors: (1) the *common spatial purview* of the interlocutors (the unity of the visible ...), (2) the *interlocutors' common knowledge and understanding of the situation*, and (3) their *common evaluation* of the situation" (quoted in Holquist, 1990, p. 63, emphasis in original). Obviously, the meaning

inherent in an utterance is in part a product of the immediate situation and it is necessarily social, cooperative, and collaborative. The bridge of language which makes meaning possible cannot be built by a single individual, nor can the collaborative bridge-building take place without some common understanding of the conditions which create the need for the bridge in the first place and the conditions which would allow it to be built.

While the need for an extraverbal context makes it quite clear that the verbal context of language is not sufficient to inhere meaning in an utterance, it is just as true that the concrete fact of a situation is insufficient to provide all that is needed for an utterance to obtain meaning. The complexity of a language act is found in the fact that utterances always partake of the intentions of the participants oriented towards a shared system of signs as well as a concrete situation. All of these necessarily come together in utterance in order to achieve meaningful expression. Bakhtin (1986) writes:

When selecting words we proceed from the planned whole of our utterance, and this whole that we have planned and created is always expressive. The utterance is what radiates its expression (rather, our expression) to the word we have selected, which is to say, invests the word with the expression of the whole. And we select the word because of its meaning, which is not in itself expressive but which can accommodate or not accommodate our expressive goals in combination with other words, that is, in combination with the whole of our

utterance. The neutral meaning of the word applied to a particular actual reality under particular real conditions of speech communication creates a spark of expression. ... Only the contact between the language meaning and the concrete reality that takes place in the utterance can create the spark of expression. It exists neither in the system of language nor in the objective reality surrounding us (pp. 86-87).

In Bakhtin's terms, we "borrow" words from a system of signs in order to enliven them for our own purposes in the utterance. Abstracted as they are from the site of the speech act, words embodied in a language system lack the expressive and purposive qualities of the utterance. At the same time, words cannot be withdrawn from a system and held or owned indefinitely in a condition of expression (meaning) because this condition is inherent in utterances which are temporal, spatial, and subject to continual change. This is why Bakhtin (1973) can claim that "*the immediate social situation and the broader social milieu wholly determine--and determine from within, so to speak--the structure of an utterance*" (p. 86, emphasis in original).

Bakhtin's notion of utterance goes a long way in helping us to understand the nature of rhetorical exchange and its relation to not only the needs or purposes of localized expression but also the constraints of the broader social systems which operate within the exchange itself. An account of how these interact in the utterance, however, is not one which sees the two opposing forces in a state of equilibrium. As physicists will tell us, the centripetal and centrifugal forces which keep the planets in a seeming state of perfect orbital symmetry are an illusion of perspective, and the same

can be said of the way these forces operate in language. The apparent symmetry of centripetal and centrifugal forces operating within the utterance are characterized by Bakhtin as a volatile clash rather than a stable system of harmoniously interacting forces. Bakhtin refers to this dynamic of language as *heteroglossia* and this complex term is concisely explained by Holquist (1981):

[Heteroglossia is] the base condition governing the operation of meaning in any utterance. It is that which insures the primacy of context over text. At any given time, in any given place, there will be a set of conditions ... that will ensure that a word uttered in that place and in that time will have a meaning different than it would have under any other conditions; all utterances are heteroglot in that they are functions of a matrix of forces practically impossible to recoup, and therefore impossible to resolve. Heteroglossia is as close a conceptualization as is possible of that locus where centripetal and centrifugal forces collide (p. 428).

For Bakhtin, in this collision, the centrifugal forces of language, those which ensure its heterogeneity, are clearly dominant and the necessary product of dialogue as it occurs in actual, lived language. Heteroglossia, then, is the dynamic process by which language is continuously stratified in to a flux of genres and social practices. Heteroglossia is that which describes the effects of the dispersion of meaning in language and it is that aspect of dialogue itself which ensures plurality both within and between utterances. Its opposing term, that which describes the converse of

heteroglossia is *canonization*, of which Holquist (1981) writes: "[It is] the tendency in every form to harden its generic skeleton and elevate the existing norms to a model that resists change. ... Canonization is that process that blurs heteroglossia" (p. 425). Significantly, canonization can only occur at the expense of dialogue; it has power only when dialogue is actively suppressed.

Self/Other Relations in Dialogism

It is interesting to consider that LeFevre's (1987) social continuum, though far-ranging and comprehensive, makes no mention whatsoever of Bakhtin and his work. The irony, of course, is that Bakhtin's dialogism captures, I think, in almost mirror-fashion, the dynamics that LeFevre articulates along her continuum. Though dialogism has been presented here largely in terms of its perspective on language and the centrality of the utterance, the dynamics of self/other relations which are implicit in its principles will make the connection between Bakhtin's approach and LeFevre's approach more apparent.

Platonic/Collective Perspectives

The connections between LeFevre's description of the Platonic perspective and Bakhtin's description of individualistic subjectivism are hard to miss. In both cases, the self is viewed as an autonomous individual who, in real terms, has no need for others to aid in the process of inventing, creating, discovering, or expressing meaning. The self is enclosed, immutable across situations, and entirely self-sufficient. Selves are not transformed in any way by entering into relation. The essential independence of individuals is ensured by the nature of one's task in life which is to discover or

uncover an essence or truth which is idealized and apprehendable only through individual introspection and experience. This is the source of the idea that selves own their own meaning; it is unique to each individual. Meaning is seen as the product of an individual's sovereign will which is directed at uncovering and expressing that which is original and authentic. And all of the elements of Platonic notions of invention which make meaning resistant to communication are the same as those which make the process by which meaning is created from an individualistic subjectivist perspective resistant to systematization.

Similarities also exist between LeFevre's account of the collective perspective on invention and Bakhtin's account of abstract objectivism. Both of these accounts emphasize the normative dynamics of supra-individual entities which stand over and influence the inventive efforts of individuals who operate within them. Selves, from this perspective, have no uniqueness at all; or, as Eagleton (1983) puts it, from the "Olympian height" of a supra-individual perspective, "all minds looked pretty much alike" (p. 109). In other words, individuals who, from the opposite pole, had no need for entering into relation, from this pole could exist and be defined *only* in relation to groups of others who were held together by systems of sign/symbol relations or conventional discursive habits. It doesn't much matter whether the collective is conceived as a discourse community or as a group of people who share something like a national language. Both share the qualities of normality, structure, and system to which the individual must be subjected or subordinated.

The polarity of these two trends in LeFevre's continuum tends to emphasize the distinctions between Platonic and collective views, or individualistic subjectivist and abstract objectivist views. But from a dialogic perspective, this polarity which emphasizes their distinctiveness also obscures some similarities in the ways that each of them views the inventive process and self/other relations. Holquist's (1990) comments are worth considering: "Each of these tendencies [abstract objectivism and individualistic subjectivism] is characterized in terms of self/other relations: in the first, the ground of meaning is so dominant that its otherness obliterates all possibility of subjectivity, whereas in the second, it is precisely the individual 'I' of the self, who controls meaning. The first ... sees language as happening outside the person, while the second ... treats language as completely inside the person" (p. 42). If one stands aside for a moment from the question of where meaning lies, it is possible to see that neither of these perspectives seriously questions what meaning is or how it functions in its creation. In both cases, one can perceive an outward push of meaning from either entity under consideration--the individual subject or the supra-individual collective. In both cases, meaning functions entirely in terms of autonomy, ownership, and imposition.

With this in mind, Karen LeFevre's (1987) comments come into sharp relief when she questions the deeply-held western bias which favours individual autonomy and ownership of meaning:

What is it we are trying to say about a writer's invention process when we say that at times it is most appropriate to take a collective

perspective? Are we, in effect, to tell a writer that he invents by letting the collective think through him? That is perhaps no less extreme, however, than current views suggesting that a writer invents by releasing a mysterious, hidden entity--authentic self, innate structures, true voice, private meaning--that he projects onto an outer world. Which is the greater fiction: the solitary individual existing apart from social collectives or the abstract collective existing over and above individuals?" (p. 83).

The answer, of course, is neither. And the implicit charge in LeFevre's comments is that there is no great conceptual leap in moving from one perspective to the next because each of the opposing positions share important characteristics: the individual and the collective each share a kind of selfhood. As Eagleton (1983) notes in his comments regarding the move to a structuralist perspective, "the new subject was really the *system itself*, which seemed equipped with all the attributes (autonomy, self-correction, unity and so on) of the traditional individual" (p. 113, emphasis in original). In the shift from essence to abstraction, what is obscured is a transfer of these attributes of selfhood, intact and *en masse*, from person to system, from individual to collective. On this level at least, the move was not one of reconceptualization, but merely of relocation.

Collaborative/Internal Dialogic Perspectives

Meaning seen from the perspective of dialogism is not something which can be owned at all by a single individual or a supra-individual collective. Instead, the

creation of meaning is a collaborative endeavour. In order for something to mean, it must be created collaboratively by interlocutors engaged in dialogue within a shared social context through an exchange of utterances. An utterance is never individually owned or generated: it always responds to previous utterances and is always cast in relation to anticipated responses. This is clearly comparable to the collaborative perspective described by LeFevre (1987) whose model for collaborative invention comes from George Herbert Mead. Mead postulated that meaning can only come about as the result of three interrelated moves: a gesture, an interpretation of that gesture oriented towards an assumption of what that gesture was intended to accomplish, and a responsive gesture by another.

The collaborative nature of the meanings which emerge from dialogue are often masked by the change of speaking subjects that Bakhtin noted was one of the characteristics which define the boundaries of the utterance. In other words, while there is a speaking subject, this implies a listening or silent other who waits to respond. This stance can easily be mistaken for one of passivity, but Bakhtin's concept of dialogue militates against this notion. Bakhtin (1986) notes: "When the listener perceives and understands the meaning ... of speech, he simultaneously takes an active, responsive attitude toward it. ... And the listener adopts this responsive attitude for the entire duration of the process of listening and understanding, from the very beginning--sometimes literally from the speaker's first word. ... Any understanding is imbued with response and necessarily elicits it in one form or another: the listener becomes the speaker" (p. 68). Active understanding, in Bakhtin's

world, is necessarily dialogic and internal--internal dialogue. What is clear is that the response implied by active understanding is not one which can be likened to the passive reception of a speaker's intended meaning, internalised in a unified and self-contained form. Just as the speaker's utterance is not something which "disturbs the eternal silence of the universe" (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 69), so also the understanding of an other in a dialogic exchange is not something which is perceived outside of any relation to other utterances. "Any utterance," writes Bakhtin (1986), "is a link in a very complexly organized chain of other utterances" (p. 69). And an exchange of utterances involves *both* internal and external dialogue.

Significantly, if the meaning inherent in this type of dialogic exchange cannot be owned by an individual speaker and then passed on to a passive listener, then it has none of the qualities which would allow it to be imposed from within or from without. Instead, the origins of the meanings which emerge from dialogue are unconditionally shared by all of the forces which converge and diverge within a dialogic exchange, a confluence which shatters any illusions of absolute autonomy or absolute determinism which inform either the Platonic or Collective versions of discursive activity.

Still, this image of speaker/listener, where the speaker is assigned the role of "utterer" and the listener is assigned the role of "understander," is seductively fragmented, or abstracted, from the swirl of dialogue that all exchanges are subject to. Mead's image of three consecutive gestures, and Bakhtin's "change of speaking subjects" should not allow one to forget that all utterances are simultaneously responsive and active, and all understanding is simultaneously active and responsive.

In dialogism, all addressers and addressees are subject to the condition of addressivity, regardless of their position at any given moment in the complex of utterances which produce meaning. What all of this means, of course, is that in Bakhtin's work one necessarily finds a radical reconceptualization of the complex ontological status of self and other when seen through the lens of dialogism.

The whole notion of a "speaking subject" produces reverberations of ontological privilege and centredness; however, dialogism retains the concept in order to explore its complexity and to defuse its privileged status. In order to understand the special significance given to conceptualizations of self and other in dialogism, one must first begin by recognizing that perception is a spatial and temporal concept. Holquist (1990).notes: "Dialogism ... takes for granted that nothing can be perceived except against the perspective of something else: dialogism's master assumption is that there is no figure without a ground" (pp. 21-22). The dynamics of perception, however, are different for seeing than they are for being seen. Holquist (1990) describes one aspect of the differential relation between self and other in terms of what he calls "the surplus of seeing" (p. 35). If we regard two people who are looking at one another, it will be quite obvious that there are objects within their purview which are perceptible to both, and there are things which are unique to each perspective. Holquist writes:

Let us envisage you and me confronting each other. There are certain things we both perceive, such as the table between us. But there are other things in the same encounter we do not both perceive. The

simplest way to state the difference between us is to say that you see things about me (such as, at the most elementary level, my forehead) and the world (such as the wall behind my back) which are out of my sight. The fact that I cannot see such things does not mean that they don't exist; we are so arranged that I simply cannot see them. But it is equally the case that I see things that you cannot see In addition to the things we see jointly, there are aspects of our situation each of us can see only on our own, i.e. only from the unique place each of us occupies in the situation (p. 36).

The nature of relative positions is that each of person, though they share the same situation, cannot share the same perspective. Each person occupies a certain centre. But this is accompanied by a realisation that neither can see all that there is. Put in another way, the spatial and temporal categories which organise perception are different in terms of the "I" and the "other" even though they share the same situation.

The differential relationship of self and other is further complicated by the kinds of perception that are engendered by this surplus of seeing in that the condition of centredness itself confers a different perceptive status on the perceiver than it does on the perceived. The space in which self and other find themselves is both shared and unique, as are the temporal categories which organize their perception. Holquist (1990) writes:

For the perceivers, their own time is forever open and unfinished; their own space is always the center of perception, the point around which things arrange themselves as a horizon whose meaning is determined by wherever they have their place in it. By contrast, the time in which we model others is considered closed and finished. Moreover, the space in which others are seen is never a significance-charged surrounding, but a neutral environment, i.e. the homogenizing context of the rest of the world. From the perspective of a self, the other is simply *in* the world, along with everyone and everything else (p. 22).

These temporal and spatial categories which organise perception insure that my position in the world is one which is continually un-completed. From my position alone, I never have the privilege of a consummated vision. The limits on my perception, because of the position that I occupy, necessitate an abridged and fractional experience of the world. The other, however, is always seen as whole, completed, a contextualized figure against a spatially and temporally stable ground. What is so significant about this mode of conceptualizing experience and perception is the relation that it bears to the constant clashing of forces that defines dialogism generally. Self and other are *always* in a dialogic relationship with one another in that they share the same space. And their relationship is dialogized precisely because of the energizing and meaningful encounter between the openness and un-completion of the self and the closed, stable nature of other. Here, as always in Bakhtin's vision of

dialogism, we find centrifugal and centripetal forces coming together to form meaning.

One last, crucial point needs to be made, however. The self as it is seen from the perspective of dialogism is in no way concomitant with any popular notion of "person" or "individual." The openness and partiality of the self is what prevents it from living on its own as a construct one might call a person. This is because of the necessity, in a dialogic universe, for individuals to be able to fulfill the functions of both self and other. As Holquist (1990) writes:

The unfinished nature of the self is not mere subjective license: like any border, it is also a limit. The very immediacy which defines my being as a self is the same condition that insures I cannot *perceive* my self: one way to grasp how far removed the self is from any privilege is to be aware that *like anything else*, its perception requires temporal categories that are less fluid and spatial categories that are more comprehensive than are provided by the manner in which my "I" is fated to live the event of being. ... I must have some way of forming myself into a subject having something like the particularity of the other. My "I" must have contours that are specific enough to provide a meaningful addressee: for if existence is shared, it will manifest itself as the condition of being addressed (pp. 26-27, emphasis in original).

Addressivity is the condition of being addressed as well as addressing, of being perceived as well as perceiving, and ultimately, of being an other as well as being a

self. In actual discursive exchanges, this is what allows one interlocutor, in Bakhtin's (1986) words, to take into account "the apperceptive background of the addressee's perception of my speech" (p. 95). It is what allows one person to imagine the surplus of another's seeing, and ultimately what allows the self to be perceived in the process.

From this perspective, then, selfhood cannot be conceptualized as anything near what one might call an "entity." In Bakhtin's dialogism, the governing characteristics of selfhood are reconceptualized from entity and stasis (both elements of subject and object oppositions) to interrelation and event. Selfhood is a shared element of dialogue which helps interlocutors to coordinate their respective perceptions in the process of generating utterances. In order to understand the self as an event, it is helpful to think about it in terms of how the pronoun "I" is used in language. Holquist (1990) comments: "Its task is to indicate the person uttering the present instance of the discourse containing 'I,' a person who is always changing and different. 'I' must not refer to anything in particular if it is able to mean everybody in general. In Jakobson's suggestive phrase, 'I' is a 'shifter' because it moves the center of discourse from one speaking subject to another When a particular person utters that word, he or she fills 'I' with meaning by providing the central point needed to calibrate all further time/space discriminations" (p. 23). Self and other, then, *merge* in the person, but *emerge* in the event of dialogue, remaining separate only in the event of discursive exchange. This is the root of how we can conceptualize selves as having their reality only in the context of the social situations in which they are embedded at any given time.

Dialogism and Audience

While it takes its overriding metaphors from the site of individuals engaged in conversation with one another, Bakhtin's dialogism provides a theoretical framework that encompasses all of discourse, including discourse which uses written text for its medium of symbolic exchange. For this reason, the reconceptualization of self and other which is necessitated when one adopts a dialogic perspective on all discourse can be seen as concomitant to a reconceptualization of writer and audience when one adopts a dialogic perspective specifically on written discourse. In these terms, "self and other" and "writer and audience" can be treated as synonymous. From the preceding discussion, then, it is possible to see how audience, conceived as an entity, as an "other" in the traditional view of subject-object oppositions, is subject to the same criticisms as those which have been levelled at notions of selfhood. In other words, audience can no more be thought of in terms concomitant with "person" or "individual" than the self. In any event of discourse, audience fills the necessary condition of addressivity, providing the speaking subject with an addressee. In Holquist's (1990) terms, if the speaking subject fills the centre of the discursive act, then audience is a necessary coordinate of that centre. Rather than being seen as a person, from a dialogic perspective it is better seen as a position filled by a person in the event of discourse--a position which can never be left empty.

In this sense, self and other, writer and audience, are symbiotically related, unified by the need for one another to provide the means of orienting meaning and intention to a particular situation that is shared by both. And, of course, the

coordinating function of writer and audience, from a dialogic perspective, helps both to channel and skew the centripetal and centrifugal forces at play in all discourse.

What one finds in dialogism, then, is more than simply a reconceptualization of writer and audience, but a reconceptualization which demands a particular approach to writing generally, and ultimately to writing instruction.

CHAPTER FOUR

DIALOGISM AND WRITING AS CONVERSATION

Bakhtin's dialogism represents an important corrective to expressivist, objectivist, and even some transactional theories of rhetoric, especially in its ability to more fully conceptualize the relationships between intention and structural or conventional constraints when they meet at the site of actual discursive exchange between interlocutors. Significantly, dialogism provides the conceptual categories which can allow a move beyond simply asserting that knowledge is constructed (or that knowledge is *socially* constructed) towards an understanding of how that process occurs--how through dialogic interactions, meaning is developed or constructed for the purpose of supporting communication as it addresses both personal and communal needs. This development of meaning can best be understood in terms of the heteroglossic nature of language activity--a quality which ensures that meaningful language use is that which is reconciled with the fluidity and changing nature of the localized situations in which speech acts occur.

While it might be said, as a general principle, that knowledge construction occurs within the heteroglossic circumstances of actual language use, it does not immediately follow that all language activity contributes equally to the construction of knowledge. As Hirschkop (1989) notes, a heteroglossic account of language use, "is a concept balanced somewhere between evaluation and empirical description. As the former, it is the ideal of a society in which language is constantly productive, throwing

out new forms and styles, developing and re-accentuating and differentiating itself" (p. 18). As the latter, however, it is a concept which refers to the development of meaning and construction of knowledge as a potential characteristic, one which is frequently realised, but also one which can be suppressed, depending on the situations in which language activity occurs.

One fundamental observation that can be made about the student language activity as it occurs in the academy is that most of the significant discourse required of students is *written* discourse. And while many discussions of the rhetorical situation simply take it for granted that what is said will be transferable from oral situations to written ones, I believe that it is worth arguing this case given that many of the objections to rhetorical accounts of students' language activity grow out of assumptions regarding the use of text as a medium for discursive exchange.

Dialogism and The Problem of Text

It should be noted at the outset that, for many, writing does not immediately lend itself to being thought of in dialogic terms. Unlike oral speech, in which the conversational context is apparent to anyone observing or participating in it, the use of written text as a medium for symbolic exchange carries with it a sense of permanency, a sense of objectivity that is hardly comparable to the fluidity of oral dialogue or conversation which is couched in response to previous utterances and which requires the response of another to bring it to completion. As Clark (1990) notes: "A text presents what is an incomplete version of the truth, but it presents it as an entity that, because it is palpable and permanent, seems complete and thus authoritative" (p. 24).

In very real terms, the crafting of a written text is an exercise in *making*; at least in this sense it is the turning of language into something that is part of the material world, into a *thing* to be interpreted, something which appears to have its existence apart from the person or persons who created it.

The activity of writing itself is also something which works against or undermines conceptions of writing as a dialogic endeavour. As Ong (1975) noted, writing and reading are commonly conceptualized as activities which are undertaken privately and individually by people who are necessarily divorced from any interactive forum. The crafting of a text is seen to be an activity which requires the writer to retire into his or her own microcosm (p. 11). This view is supported by cognitivist approaches to writing which have dominated the field of composition for the last three decades.

Cognitivist approaches to composition limit their attention to the internal processes presumably at play within individual writers, treating the social context in which writing occurs as being either outside the purview of composition studies altogether, or at least in a dichotomous relationship with the individual writer who is seen as self-enclosed. In a description of cognitivist conceptualizations of writing, Cooper (1989b) writes:

The ideal writer the cognitive process model projects ... works alone, within the privacy of his own mind. He uses free writing exercises and heuristics to find out what he knows about a subject and to find something he wants to say to others; he uses his analytic skills to

discover a purpose, to imagine an audience, to decide on strategies, to organize content; and he simulates how his text will be read by reading it over himself, making the final revisions necessary to ensure its success when he abandons it to the world of which he is not a part" (p. 4).

In some respects, this is a reasonable characterization of cognitive process models of writing. Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) define writing as "the composing of texts meant to be read by people not present" (p. 4). Flower and Hayes (1981) too, suggest that the best way to understand the writing process (not parts, or elements, of the writing process) is to see it as "a distinctive set of thinking processes which writers orchestrate or organize during the act of composing" (p. 366). The parameters set by cognitive compositional theorists are necessarily psychological and individual, given their relatively narrow interest in thinking processes.

These assumptions about written discourse may seem reasonable when one admits to that peculiar quality of writing--that it allows discourse to occur between people who are separated in space and time. From this perspective, writing can be seen as the production of a knowledge claim which, once "abandoned" to the world as Cooper (1989b) puts it, can travel outside of any context which might have influenced its production. In this sense, it must live on its own, especially if the writer can never be assured that she or he will be privy to the response that it might incur in others if it incurs any at all.

When this perspective on writing and textuality persists, it necessitates an approach to written discourse which, in rhetorical terms, is described by Clark (1990) as "eristic" (p. 19); that is, discourse which is released into the world as an unassailable assertion of truth. Clark notes: "Discourse that is eristic in its purpose treats knowledge as something we possess and language as the vehicle used to transport what we know to others An eristic rhetoric trains us in the art of authoritative statement" (p. 21). The point here is that reification of knowledge and individualist notions of discourse are often seen as necessary corollaries to discursive practices which are specifically textual--we adopt an eristic approach to written discourse because text demands it. Given that writers apparently preclude themselves from any interactive forum, given that they cannot count on the responses of others who are removed both spatially and temporally, writers must inhere within the text virtually everything which might authorize its contents beyond the immediate situation.

For those who see writing as text-production alone, and who fail to account for how texts are used or responded to once they are released or abandoned to the world, the rhetorical function of written discourse has no choice but to become eristic. Written discourse must be directed towards what Clark (1990) describes as the "numbing manipulation" of an audience (p. 20) because it is *written* discourse, and it cannot benefit from the kind of immediacy or collaborative interaction that is inherent in oral exchanges. The irony here is that, because written discourse is seen as being unable to account for real collaborative exchange, those who make this assumption

adopt an eristic rhetorical purpose which is devoted to preventing any exchange from taking place.

For Clark (1990), the alternative to eristic rhetoric is dialectical rhetoric. He notes:

[Those assumptions] underlying a dialectical rhetoric demand that any rhetor function as but one voice in a pluralistic process of collaborative exchange through which a community of equals discover and validate what they can collectively consider true. ... A dialectical rhetoric guides us in the process of coming to agreement. It continually reminds us that, in John Gage's terms, knowledge is an "activity" in which we participate with others through discourse, and not a "commodity" that discourse carries from one person to another (p. 21).

In order for written discourse to fulfill a dialectical, and in this sense epistemic, purpose, one must expand one's conception of writing beyond notions of text-production and composition to include a fuller understanding of how texts function within the discursive activities of interlocutors. In other words, one has to begin to take account of the way texts are used and not just the way texts are produced by individuals. One needs to better understand the exigencies which call for their production and the ways that texts address those exigencies.

As LeFevre (1987) pointed out, it is difficult, if not impossible, to understand the discursive function of writing if we continue to view it as a single act of composing. In her discussion of invention, LeFevre consistently refuses to draw any

distinction between written and oral modes of symbolic exchange and she offers three correctives which are necessary if one is to understand how writing functions as part of a "dialectical" process (p. 35). First, she argues that we need to see writing as an "act" in a sense which restores the original meaning of the word. Drawing on Hannah Arendt, LeFevre notes that *action*, in contrast to the current definition which generally refers to a single gesture by an individual, in the original Greek and Latin referred both to an initiating event and the completion of that event as inherent parts of the same process or "act" (p. 38). Furthermore, when an action "involves symbolic activities such as speaking or writing," it often requires "a series of social transactions and texts" in order to be brought to completion (p. 38). To see writing as an inventive act requiring more than one participant, one who initiates and one who completes the act, requires that invention be seen as a process involving both a rhetor and an audience, a writer and a reader. Thus the second corrective offered by LeFevre is that the act of writing should be seen as a collaborative endeavour which can involve an exchange between an inventor and one or more internalized others, a discursive exchange between rhetor and audience through a textual medium, or an exchange between interlocutors through a series of textual transactions. The third corrective is one which follows from the first two. If the inventive and dialectical aspect of writing is to be realised through a consideration of "the necessary bridge between inventor and audience" or a consideration of a series of textual transactions rather than "a single episode of composing" (p. 40), then it is necessary to see written discourse as

something which extends over a period of time whose beginning or end is not determined at all by the beginning or end of a particular text.

In this sense, then, textual exchange can be used by interlocutors for the purpose of collaboratively constructing new knowledge which can sustain their cooperative and communicative endeavours. In other words, writers can adopt a rhetorical purpose which is dialectical if their writing is allowed to enter a situation where response is possible, where assertions are negotiated through a series of textual transactions, where writing is seen in its social context and used for purposes which are essentially communicative rather than performative. From this perspective, the spatial and temporal separation of writer and reader is not absolute and unbridgeable, but relativized according to the discursive configurations of interlocutors who happen to be using text as their medium for symbolic exchange.

There is a danger, however, in attempting to emphasize the social context of writing in order to appreciate how it functions dialectically in the creation of new knowledge. The spatial and temporal separation of writer and audience, while relative in terms of the social context in which discourse occurs, is still a reality of textual exchange. When writing is seen only, as Pare (1991) puts it, as "a moment in an ongoing discussion" (p. 51), one might very well read this as cause to downplay the fact that that particular moment of discourse is textual. We need to remember that, as Linda Flower (1989) wryly notes, social context "does not produce a text through immaculate conception" (p. 289).

Indeed, especially when one considers writing done in academic settings, the composition of texts generally takes place without the spontaneity and constant adjustive elements of verbal exchange. The spatial and temporal separation of readers and writers does not prohibit response, but it does arrest, or at least delay, the process considerably. While this allows time for writers and readers to consider their assertions and responses much more thoroughly--in other words, to compose them--it also prevents the immediacy of oral discourse which can ameliorate for interlocutors the uncertainty of response. Because of this, as Clark (1990) suggests, written discourse must become enthymemic:

An enthymeme functions in a rhetorical exchange ... as a proposition to be collaboratively tested. It does so by affirming the knowledge that rhetor and audience currently share and by asserting on that basis a potential extension or application of that knowledge. If the audience accepts that assertion, they are persuaded; if they do not, the rhetor must modify that proposition in terms of their response. ...

Enthymemes embody the collaborative interaction of rhetor and audience itself, an interaction that is provisionally simulated when the enthymeme is initially composed but is then made actual when that enthymeme is presented to the audience ... (p. 28).

Seeing writing as enthymemic is important because it helps establish the relationship between the composition of texts, or the study of that activity, and the rhetorical and discursive function of texts. What it suggests is that, even when seen from a

rhetorical perspective, writing is a form of discourse unique from oral forms in its need to compose provisional assertions. And during that composition, consideration may be given to the ways that audiences or readers might affirm or reject assumptions of shared knowledge. In other words, there is a place in the composition of texts for the kinds of heuristic techniques which have long been associated with audience analysis as an element of composing.

In turn, compositional theorists need to admit that no amount of audience analysis is sufficient to actualize the enthymeme in any meaningful sense. Texts must be written and used in the context of real discursive exchange where written propositions can be collaboratively tested and where writing can function as part of an ongoing conversation. As Clark (1990) writes:

A text, removing both writer and reader as it does from any immediate interaction, is necessarily enthymemic: it must attribute to its readers their acceptance of the assumptions and agreements it presents even though those assumptions and agreements are provisional and subject to their judgement. Recognizing that our texts inhabit this uncertain ground between assertion and acceptance requires us both to write them and to read them in ways that will keep them suspended in the ongoing process of collaborative judgement that is described by dialectic (p. 30).

The collaborative nature of writing that is enthymemic comes from its need to assume a shared base, a common ground between writer and reader, a shared situation which must be established before knowledge claims can be advanced or accepted and it is

critical that such assumptions be confirmed or denied through interaction. Given this, it becomes clear that a compositional approach to writing must be balanced by an approach which emphasizes discourse and rhetorical interchange if writing is to contribute meaningfully to knowledge construction.

Writing as Conversation

Much of the important work that has been done recently in writing theory which attempts to acknowledge the need for writing to assume a rhetorical and discursive function has involved using the metaphor of conversation to describe written discourse. Burke's (1973) parlour metaphor is the most widely-known:

Imagine that you enter a parlour. You come late. When you arrive, others have long preceded you, and they are engaged in a heated discussion, a discussion too heated for them to pause and tell you exactly what it is about. In fact, the discussion had already begun long before any of them got there, so that no one present is qualified to retrace for you all the steps that had gone before. You listen for a while until you decide that you have caught the tenor of the argument; then you put in your oar. Someone answers; you answer him; another comes to your defense; another aligns himself against you

However, the discussion is interminable. The hour grows late, you must depart. And you do depart, with the discussion still in progress (pp. 110-111).

For many, comparing writing and face to face conversation is a particularly powerful way of conceptualizing the situation that writers find themselves in. Writers, particularly in academic settings, necessarily join conversations which are already in progress, conversations which are better seen as encountered than begun. Moreover, the terms of the conversation are already set. The language and the conventions by which its participants organise the discussion are already in place, and the topic of the conversation is already established (though they may change and evolve with the coming and going of different people). While these aspects of the conversation are given in the situation, the discussion that Burke asks us to envision is set in a parlour which is home to a group with a plurality of voices and perspectives.

Each of the participants shares the same situation, shares an interest in engaging with each other in dialogue over the particular topic under discussion, but each brings to the conversation a unique biographical history, background, and set of interests. It is possible to interpret the conversation metaphor in a way that will foreground the terms under which the conversation takes place, the language and conventions used by the participants, the common purposes and assumptions which help sustain the dialogue. But there is another dynamic that is equally as important-- all of the participants enter the conversation from somewhere else, from somewhere outside the parlour where different conversations are taking place. The participants bring that history with them, and it can influence and move the discussion in significant, and in many cases unpredictable, ways.

This tension highlights a shared weakness in both individualist and collectivist interpretations of discourse. An individualistic approach which foregrounds only the unique perspective of one participant's intention and position fails to account for the need for a shared basis for communication, a shared set of purposes and conventional means of achieving the collective ends of interlocutors. Meanwhile, a collectivist approach sees only those aspects of discourse which serve to sustain its communal nature. If overemphasized, it fails to account for the fluidity and constantly negotiated nature of the discursive forms which organise its activities--a fluidity which is the result of the impact of individual intention and the uniqueness of perspective that each interlocutor brings to the discussion.

The conversation metaphor is powerful precisely because it focuses on the intersection of these two dynamics in any communicative act. Certainly conversations are governed by normative constraints which channel the conversation towards the common purposes of the participants. This is why, as Burke points out, one has to listen for a while in order to catch the tenor of the argument before one can put in one's oar; individual intentions must be aligned or oriented with the terms of the discussion. The nature of this special kind of negotiation of intention, however, is often treated as though it were a logarithm, a rule-governed structure of behaviours which, once violated, arrests the activity completely. As Rorty (1979) suggests, however, "coming to understand" the terms of a conversation "is more like getting acquainted [W]e play back and forth between guesses about how to characterize particular statements or other events, and guesses about the point of the whole

situation, until gradually we feel at ease with what was hitherto strange" (p. 319). Furthermore, participants in a conversation often go to great lengths to make assertions which are unconventional or out of step with the ongoing discussion fit the current situation (Wardhaugh, 1985). Thus, from the point of view of both the individual and the group with whom the individual is conversing, conversations are flexible and negotiative by nature. It is because of these dynamics that Rorty (1979) suggests that a conversation is wholly unlike a "structure built upon foundations" (p. 319) and should not be conceptualized as such. Conversation simultaneously militates against both unfettered freedom and the fixity of rules. This, of course, is precisely the dynamic which has been articulated by Bakhtin with regard to the forces which govern dialogue. With this in mind, a number of statements about the conversation model of writing can be made as it relates to the dialogic approach to discourse described in Chapter Three of this thesis.

First, texts which are seen from the perspective of dialogue are bound by the same kind of structure which defines the utterance--the change of speaking subjects. As Pare (1991) notes, "the text is the writer's 'turn' in the conversation" (p. 51). A writer can neither craft a text whose substance is born out of silence, nor can a writer terminate a conversation by saying all there is to say. In Bazerman's (1980) words, a text can "advance the total sum of the discourse" (p. 658), but it cannot be used as a measure of where a particular conversation begins or ends.

Second, in the context of dialogism, texts function in a complex chain of utterances. Texts are written in response to other texts or utterances and they are

written in anticipation of further responses. In this sense, texts are products of an interaction between all parties within the discourse--past, present, and potential participants--so that each text reflects and embodies a plurality of voices and relationships. Pare (1991) writes: "The relationship implied by texts is not simply one way, from the writer to the reader, but between the writer and other writers, between readers and other writers, and between readers and other readers" (p. 50). For this reason, audience is not a singular entity but becomes a complex construct which embodies the function of an "other" in relation to the writing subject.

Third, writing which is dialogic is set in relation to an ongoing discourse between writer and audience. Both writer and audience are necessary to orient the intention of the writer to a particular situation that is shared by each. And both writer and audience require a shared set of assumptions about the language and conventions which will help channel their exchange. In this sense, texts do not become meaningful only as a result of a person's individual will or intention, but through a collaborative act which is socially constrained and socially generated.

Fourth, like all utterances, the meaning of a text is often influenced by the extraverbal context shared by writers and readers. While it is axiomatic that good writing is that which contextualizes its subject well, this is often difficult to achieve, especially for novice writers and writers who are divorced from the social situations that their texts inhabit, largely because this aspect of writing is related to a writer's apprehension of the extraverbal context of the discursive arena. Simply put, writers cannot inhere within the text *all* that is necessary for communication to be successful,

so they must attempt to balance their assertions against a background of assumptions which are shared between the writer and his or her audience. Writers can be penalized for assuming too much or too little, and the balance is achieved by recognizing what is common within the purview of both writer and reader, that is, by being sensitive to the extraverbal context of the exchange.

Finally, texts become utterances only when they are used in meaningful, communicative circumstances. From a compositional perspective, writing is enthymemic in that it must propose assertions which attribute to an audience the acceptance of the variety of assumptions on which those assertions are based. But when enthymemes are not actualized in a collaborative exchange of assertions and responses, texts become what Russ Hunt (forthcoming, 1992) calls "textoids". He writes: "Texts which resist being made into utterances--whether because of the situation, the users, or the string of signifiers themselves--are textoids. Circumstances in which no one is using the text as an utterance, as a vehicle for what Bakhtin calls dialogue, create textoids."

Clearly, when texts are used for the purpose of engaging in discursive exchange with others, when texts are used dialectically to construct knowledge with others in a process of collaborative interchange, they can serve to sustain dialogue in precisely the same terms as those described by Bakhtin. Within the context of a conversational model of writing, texts *can* function as utterances do in Bakhtin's dialogism. This is why Bakhtin (1986) claimed so emphatically that "everything we

have said ... also pertains to written and read speech, with the appropriate adjustments and additions" (p. 69).

CHAPTER FIVE

DIALOGISM AND CURRICULUM

Recognizing the ontological status of writing as a social or dialogic event can obscure the fact that not all writing functions dialogically. In other words, some would see conversation as something which is an inherent aspect of all writing just waiting to be discovered by writers. Gere (1987), for instance, notes that writers often "perceive their work as being removed from human interactions" (p. 68). She then goes on to quote John Trimble: "The big breakthrough for the novice writer ... will occur at the moment he begins to comprehend the social implications of what he's doing. Far from writing in a vacuum, he is conversing, in a very real sense, with another human being ... even though that person ... may be hours or days or even years from him in time" (p. 68). Trimble's mistake is in assuming that any act of writing or composition comes complete with intrinsically dialogic purposes and consequences and the novice writer needs only to "comprehend" that. Clearly this isn't the case. While those who advocate a full-blown social ideology might conceive the self as a social artifact, meaning as socially negotiated and constructed, writing as socially motivated, invention in its broadest sense as socially embedded, and all acts of language as being essentially dialogic--none of these social axioms necessitates that all texts which are created will become "utterance" as conceived by Bakhtin. As noted earlier, the composition of a text does nothing to insure that the text will be used as a way of engaging in a dialectical exchange for the purpose of collaboratively

constructing knowledge or developing shared meanings. Treating writing as conversation is best conceptualized as a deliberate stance that one takes or as a deliberate methodology that one adopts.

While all language use is ontologically social or, in a Bakhtinian sense, dialogic, some situations can have the effect of suppressing the dialogic use of written discourse. In his discussion of the creation of textoids, Hunt (forthcoming, 1992) notes that, "if we are looking for examples of language transactions which are of that peculiar, sterile, meaningless kind, the best possible place to find them is in school and university. I would contend, in fact, that the written language events which occur in educational contexts are virtually all like that." While there are many teachers and educators working today who attempt to allow students' written discourse to be socially consequential, they are working against a securely entrenched educational culture which, for a variety of reasons, prevents students from actualizing any real relational and dialogic potential in their writing. To fully understand the reasons for this would require an analysis of educational culture which is beyond the scope of this thesis, but a brief look at some of the more prominent aspects of the educational milieu are warranted to shed some light on the problem and on how one might go about addressing it. In this chapter, then, I will briefly review conceptions of literacy and conceptions of curriculum in order to understand how these conceptions either support or undermine a dialogic, conversational approach to students' written discourse.

Conceptions of Literacy

Straw (1990a), in a historical review of conceptualizations of literacy, has divided that history into five identifiable periods. The first three of these--the *transmission period*, the *translation period*, and the *interaction period*--were essentially supported by a notion of literacy as a "communication contract" which Straw and Sadowy (1990) define as "a dynamic of moving knowledge from author to reader" (p. 23).

The Transmission Period

In the transmission period, "the overriding metaphor is literacy as a *conduit*. It is a conceptualization of literacy in which information, knowledge, or meaning are shunted from the author to the reader via the vehicle of text" (Straw, 1990a, p. 167). The locus of meaning in the transmission model of literacy is entirely with the author and the reader is seen as altogether passive. Furthermore, the knowledge or intended meaning of the author can be transmitted whole through the text to a reader or audience. Successful reading, then, is that which allows the reader to "reproduce the author's intent" (p. 168). The way that the transmission model plays out in education is through the "shunting" of information from teacher to student.

The Translation Period

The second period identified by Straw is the *translation period* identified by a shift of the locus of meaning from the author to the text itself. As Straw (1990a) notes, "the author disappeared from the communication contract, with the text taking over the role previously held by the author. There was a realization that the reader

must bring some kind of skill to the act of translating text into meaning. The word 'skill' became an important concept that ruled conceptualizations of both reading and teaching for the next half century" (p. 169). The assumption here was that the meaning was encoded in the text and the successful reader should be able to decode or translate the text in order to reproduce that meaning. In all, the emphasis was still on getting the message that was lying there waiting to be received, and literacy education was devoted to imparting the skills necessary for its retrieval.

The Interaction Period

The third period, the *interaction period*, attempted to reintroduce a balance among the author, the text, and the reader. Straw (1990a) writes: "Most interactive theorists would suggest that the closer the match between reader knowledge and authorial information as realized in the text, the better comprehension is likely to be; the worse the match between reader knowledge and the textual realisation of authorial information, the poorer comprehension is likely to be" (p. 170). The interactive model introduced the idea that the reader's background knowledge impacts on the transmission of meaning from author to audience, and it attempted to strike a balance among the three elements of the communication contract. The communication contract, however, is still the ruling metaphor here for both the acts of writing and reading. There is a determinate meaning (represented as information or knowledge) which is to be conveyed through text, a meaning which can be correctly apprehended.

The importance of this brief review of conceptualizations of literacy for this discussion is that, in spite of the current theoretical trend away from

conceptualizations based on the communication contract to conceptualizations based on what Straw (1990b) calls the "actualization contract" (p. 17) derived from more social conceptions of literacy, this move is not at all reflected in educational contexts where popular conceptualizations of literacy find their main staging ground. Straw's (1990a) conclusion is worth quoting at length:

Our policy-makers and those who decide funding for literacy hold essentially conservative views about literacy The government and the public at large conceptualize literacy as either transmission or translation. They still perceive the single purpose of language, written language particularly, as communication--the shunting of information and knowledge from one source to another. They see the communication contract being fulfilled by the forms of language themselves Furthermore, they assume that the locus of meaning in any literacy act is either with the author (authorial intent) or within the text (textual intent). ... They perceive the nature of meaning such that literacy is determinate, measurable, and decontextualized (pp. 176-177).

It is worthwhile noting that these widespread assumptions about literacy inform most of the educational practices that occur in both schools and universities. It is also worthwhile noting that these assumptions about literacy have the effect of undermining or prohibiting the dialogic potential in students' written discourse.

Far from allowing students to use written discourse collaboratively to develop shared meanings or knowledge through discursive exchange, the transmission and

translation models of literacy support an approach to written discourse which is both individualist and, in Berlin's (1987) characterization, objectivist. The almost-universally-held notion in liberal arts faculties that students' writing should be used to evaluate their knowledge of course content suggests that writing can be used to shunt information or knowledge from student to teacher; the writer transmits information through a textual medium to a passive receptor who is seen as having a totally benign influence on the discursive act.

Furthermore, a translation model of literacy supports the teaching of writing from a purely compositional perspective. Writing is seen as a set of skills which can be taught to students whose knowledge is seen as an extralinguistic entity which can be transcribed into language. Composition pedagogy, then, ranges over a wide variety of methodologies which are designed to increase students' skills in the crafting of texts. These range from the old skill-and-drill grammatical approaches to writing instruction, to the informational approach popular in the 1970's which, according to Barry Kroll (1984), saw the writer's goal as getting information "into the reader's head. ... [T]he writer's job is to facilitate the intake of information, designing a text so that its readers will encounter few obstacles to their understanding and will thus comprehend the text with a minimal amount of effort" (pp. 176-177). Even a process pedagogy, which has become the new orthodoxy in composition instruction, can easily be adopted by those who hold a transmission or translation view, especially when writing is seen as a set of recursive processes which are undertaken in the formulation

of a text. In this sense, prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing are easily reduced to a set of skills that one learns in order to generate written language.

There is not much that is new here, but this is precisely the point. The transmission and translation views of literacy, supported by the traditional communication contract, are tremendously resilient within the educational milieu despite the attempts of theorists and practitioners to overturn them with more socially-based approaches. The acceptance of these views, however, has the effect of suppressing the dialogic potential of students' written discursive practices in both schools and universities. In other words, these conceptions of literacy are realised in particular textual practices which effectively rob students' writing of any socially meaningful context.

Conceptions of the Curriculum

Most of what has been said here about the conceptions of literacy which dominate the educational establishment is further reflected in the curricular theories which inform most educational practice in schools and universities. Giroux, Penna, and Pinar (1981) characterize the dominant curricular theories as falling into three broad categories: traditionalist, conceptual-empiricist, and reconceptualist.

Traditionalist Approaches to Curriculum

While the traditionalist's approach to curriculum is extremely varied, the theoretical framework which binds most traditionalist approaches to curriculum can most easily be characterized in terms of the "banking metaphor" suggested by Paulo Freire (1970) in his influential book, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*:

Education ... becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are the depositories and the teacher is the depositor. Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiques and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat. This is the "banking" concept of education, in which the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing, and storing the deposits. ... In the banking concept of education, knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing. Projecting an absolute ignorance onto others, a characteristic of the ideology of oppression, negates education and knowledge as processes of inquiry (p. 58).

The similarities between the banking metaphor of education and the transmission model of literacy proposed by Straw (1990a) are difficult to miss. In both cases, knowledge is objectified and seen as a commodity which is passed from educators to those being educated. What is significant about Freire's conceptualization is his identification of this process as being inherently oppressive. Students, as passive receptors of knowledge, are subject to whatever representation of the world that educators choose to submit to them, and this is invariably a representation of the world which favours the educators themselves. Student discourse is seen as legitimate only when it reflects back to the educators the knowledge that is considered by them to be true and incontestable and for this reason, in Freire's (1970) words, "[b]anking education resists dialogue" (p. 71).

Conceptual-empiricist Approaches to Curriculum

Another influential approach to curriculum theory has been termed by Pinar (1981) a "conceptual empiricist" approach (p. 90), an approach which views curriculum as the study of educational practices from the point of view of the social sciences. Pinar writes:

Curriculum and other education subfields have become increasingly vulnerable to criticism regarding scholarly standards by colleagues in so-called cognate fields. The influence of colleagues in the social sciences is particularly evident, paralleling the political ascendancy of these disciplines in the university generally. In fact, research in education has in many instances become indistinguishable from social science research (p. 91).

Curricularists who work from within the paradigm of the social sciences propose that educational practices should be based on hypotheses about student growth and development which can be tested or empirically verified. This assertion is founded on what Giroux (1981a) calls a "technocratic rationality" (p. 100), and he summarizes the assumptions inherent in this perspective as follows: "(a) theory in the curriculum field should operate in the interest of lawlike propositions which are empirically testable; (b) the natural sciences provide the "proper" model of explanation for the concepts and techniques of curriculum theory, design, and evaluation; (c) knowledge should be objective and capable of being investigated and described in a neutral fashion; and (d)

statements of value are to be separated from 'facts' and 'modes of inquiry' that can and ought to be objective" (p. 100).

The main influence of this approach to curriculum on student discourse has been through the development of cognitive models of the composing process which are used as a basis for composition pedagogy. In general, cognitive psychology has led educators to concentrate on the abilities, concepts, and reactions of the learner in the educational context, rather than focusing on the material to be transmitted to the learner. Cognitive psychology invites the educator to look inside the mind of the learner, understand the processes and capabilities that are there, and respond to those, rather than to preconceived ideas about what should be learned or what products are generated by the learner.

Cognitivist approaches to writing and writing instruction, therefore, focus on the individual mind of the student, searching for empirically verifiable statements about mental processes involved in writing which are generalizable. The results of this search amount to cognitive models of the composing process such as the Cognitive Process Model developed by Flower and Hayes (1981) or the Knowledge-telling and Knowledge-transforming models developed by Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987). These types of models, and the pedagogical approaches which arise from them, had widespread influence in the composition field and subsequently on student discourse. In many ways, however, they can also be seen as antithetical to a conversation model of writing based on principles of dialogism.

Unlike the intersubjectivity proposed by dialogism, in cognitive approaches to writing, the individual writer and the social context in which the writer operates are seen as dichotomous (Flower, 1987), a view which is necessary if researchers are to isolate the cognitive domain for study. As Flower (1987) notes: "Researchers in cognition tend to concentrate on the response of the individual rather than on the situational cues, for obvious reasons: one can observe a writer's actions with some clarity; however, the cues which stimulated a given action may often need to be inferred or may even remain a mystery" (p. 287). A dialogic account of discourse, however, presumes that it is precisely these "situational cues" which will or will not allow writing to fulfill any sort of meaningful function. From this perspective, cognitive theorists choose to ignore the very heart of why one writes, and ultimately, what one writes, apparently because these aspects of the writing situation are incompatible with the "technocratic" rationale for educational research and practice described by Giroux (1981a, p. 100). They are, however, not empirically obvious, nor are they easily brought under experimental control.

While a dialogic approach foregrounds the reasons for writing and the use of writing as it functions in a collaborative process of developing meaning through discourse, cognitive theorists display a curious lack of interest in the nature of the goals or purposes of the writer and the impact which this might have on the ability of the student's discourse to function as a meaningful activity. Certainly, the goals of a writer, or the writer's purpose, as they impact on planning are a significant part of the writing process, but in cognitive process models, it seems that any old goals will do

and they need not be set by the writer. In Berlin's (1988) words, from a cognitivist perspective, the goals of the writer are "self-evident and unquestioned" (p. 483). The significance of this becomes more apparent when one realises that in cognitive process models the reasons for writing represent a set of "givens" in what Flower and Hayes (1981) call the "task environment" (p. 370). Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) take it even further; in both of their composing models the act of writing begins with a "mental representation of [an] assignment" (pp. 8 and 12). This set of circumstances encourages the adoption of the "problem-solving" metaphor for writing. Students sit passively waiting for a problem to be presented to them, and once presented, they go about solving it on two fronts simultaneously: they tackle both the "content problem" dealing with the topic, and the "rhetorical problem" dealing with the generation of text which can reflect the writer's handling of the topic (Bereiter and Scardamalia, 1987, p. 12). Rather than seeing writing in dialogic terms, as a response to previous utterances, and as couched in anticipation of further responsive utterances, the use of the problem-solving metaphor suggests that the act of writing begins with a problem and ends with its solution, thereby effectively cutting it off from any dialogic context.

Any hope of seeing writing as operating within a complex chain of utterances, within the context of an ongoing conversation, is lost here. Instead, in a school setting, the teacher is responsible for assigning the task for the writer, and this is supported by the researcher in an experimental setting (where these models are generated) whose absolute control over the writing situation is essential to establish the scientific validity of the models themselves. It would be difficult to find a better

example of writing which is used for purposes which are entirely divorced from any communicative or meaningful context. It might be said, to use Hunt's (forthcoming, 1992) term, that cognitive researchers and curricularists have devoted much of their energy to studying the ways that students create textoids, a practice which serves no valid educational or rhetorical purpose.

Finally, the relationship between cognitivist approaches to writing curricula and Straw's (1992a) translation model of literacy should be noted. As Berlin (1988) writes:

[From a cognitivist perspective], language is regarded as a system of rational signs that is compatible with the mind and the external world, enabling the "translating" or "transforming" of the non-verbal intellectual operations into the verbal. There is thus a beneficent correspondence between the structures of the mind, the structures of the world, the structures of the minds of the audience, and the structures of language (p. 483).

Clearly, then, the cognitivist approach to writing fundamentally supports the communication contract as described by Straw (1990a) which sees knowledge being shunted back and forth between writers and readers; cognitivist models are merely devoted to making this type of communication efficient.

It is perhaps because of this that composition courses are consistently viewed as service courses for the rest of the academy. If, through a transmission model of literacy, or a banking model of education, students are to demonstrate their knowledge

through text for evaluation purposes, then composition courses serve the rest of the academy by teaching students to do this effectively. This points up the essential affinity between transmission and translation models of literacy, and traditionalist and conceptual-empiricist models of curriculum.

Reconceptualist Approaches to Curriculum

The reconceptualist approach to curriculum theory can be understood in terms of its opposition to the technocratic rationality which guides both traditional and conceptual-empiricist approaches to curriculum theory and their adoption of objectivist assumptions about language and discourse. The claim central to reconceptualist theory is that objectivity is, in reality, a construction based on normative criteria established in community. Moreover, these normative criteria exist as a set of reflections of the institutionalized power relations in which they are embedded. As such, they are simultaneously constituent of and constitutive of the historical, cultural, and ideological conjunctures in which they occur. They also represent what is seen by critical theorists as a set of ideologically frozen social structures which, as Giroux (1981a) says, "usually parade under the guise of universalistic laws" (p. 107), wielded by the ruling society to maintain social structures of domination and oppression.

In the face of this, the goal of critical pedagogy is to recognize and help students to recognize the relationship between knowledge and power. Once recognized, a more emancipatory rationality can emerge, one which marries critical consciousness and social action (Giroux, 1983). This critical consciousness facilitates students' confronting, gaining control over, and acting against their own and others'

oppression through a pedagogy of empowerment, individual freedom, and social transformation.

In reconceptualist terms, the connection between knowledge and power is inherent in the way society is structured. Giroux (1981a), suggests that "questions concerning the production, distribution, and evaluation of knowledge are directly linked to questions of control and domination in the larger society" (p. 104). Because of this, reconceptualists call for, "forms of curriculum that *push beyond appreciating that knowledge is social construction*" (p. 104-105, emphasis added). In other words, while a social constructivist epistemology, as a theoretical construct, can account for the power relations in a community as they are embedded in its discursive and ideological conventions, critical theorists move immediately to an indictment of those power relations, seeing the socially constructed nature of authority as inherently oppressive.

The reconceptualist feels obliged to require that students "relate social meanings to wider societal parameters in order to be able to judge their claims to the truth" (Giroux, 1981a, p. 105). Students are required to critique the power relations within a specific community and uncover inherently oppressive structures, identifying whose interests are being served and whose interests are being marginalized. These procedures are necessary because of the axiological position of the critical theorist, who values above all, "a critical democracy, individual freedom, social justice, and social change--a re-vitalized public sphere characterized by citizens capable of confronting public issues critically through ongoing forms of public debate and social

action. Students would be empowered by social identities that affirmed their race, class, and gender positions, and provided the basis for moral deliberation and social action" (Ellsworth, 1989, p. 300). The critical theorist would declare these to be primary values which are non-negotiable. To undermine these values is to perpetuate oppressive social structures and knowledge structures.

What allows these moves to be undertaken within a critical pedagogy is an assertion of what Giroux (1983) calls an "emancipatory rationality," which "augments its interest in self-reflection with social action designed to create the ideological and material conditions in which nonalienating and nonexploitative relationships exist" (p. 191). The rationale for this consolidation of critical consciousness and social transformation is provided by Freire (1970), who does not see social action as *following* from critical consciousness, but instead as a necessary correlate of it. For Freire, language (in connection with critical consciousness) and freedom (in connection with social transformation) are equally implicated in human reason and rationality: "Human existence cannot be silent, nor can it be nourished by false words, but only by true words, with which men transform the world. To exist humanly, is to name the world, to change it" (p. 76). False words, for Freire, are those which are given by others, or those which are passively accepted. True words are those uttered by individuals involved in active reflection. Thus, discursively, individual agency and intentionality are central to liberation, while a lack of individual agency and intentionality are central to domination and oppression.

In terms of individual agency and intentionality, however, the reconceptualist position concerning the constructed nature of knowledge becomes severely problematic. In 1980, Paul Klohr identified nine salient points which were generally accepted by reconceptualist theorists in curriculum studies. The second of these nine claims deals with the general understanding of the constructed nature of knowledge: "The individual becomes the chief agent in the construction of knowledge; that is, he/she is a culture creator as well as a culture bearer" (p. 3). The significance of this notion of constructed knowledge being the result of individual agency rather than social agency cannot be underrated, I think, given that Klohr saw this to be the general understanding of the field. Four years later, this was reiterated by Schubert, Willis and Short (1984).

In order to identify themselves in opposition to a positivist, technocratic ideology, reconceptualists do adopt a constructivist epistemology. Their treatment of this notion, however, allows them to place the authority for knowledge entirely in the hands of the knower, with the heart of emancipation lying in the oppressed becoming the agents of authority in determining their own individual reality through the act of naming their world, by uttering "true words" as Freire (1970) conceptualized it. Berlin (1988) describes this position as "psychological-epistemic rhetoric":

Psychological-epistemic rhetoric grants that rhetoric arrives at knowledge, but this meaning-generating activity is always located in a transcendent self, a subject who directs the discovery and arrives

through it finally only at a better understanding of the self and its operation (p. 489).

Reconceptualists ultimately make epistemological assumptions which are dependent on a notion of the transcendent self described by Berlin. Freire's (1970) pedagogy is based upon a radical separation of the self from its cultural context in order to position the two--the individual and the cultural context--in a dialectical relationship with one another: "As they separate themselves from the world, which they objectify, as they separate themselves from their own activity, as they locate the seat of their decisions in themselves and in their relations with the world and others, men overcome the situations which limit them" (p. 89). This separation is essential because Freire sees the self as capable of living an existence in a position of autonomy from the social context which surrounds it. Giroux (1981b) shares this notion of seeing the self in a similar dialectical relationship. He writes: "the dialectic incorporates an historic sensibility in the interest of liberating human beings not only from those traditions that legitimate oppressive institutional arrangements, but also from their own individual history" (p. 118).

Bowers (1984) makes the point that, "Neo-Marxist educators share essentially the same conventional neoromantic view of the individual's capacity for self-direction in the educational process, and thus are subject to the same criticism that is being directed at the neoromantic and technological humanists" (p. 27). In other words, while purporting to account for the historicity of the individual, the emancipatory process rests on the individual operating from a position that is a-historical, a-

contextual, and a-social. This is essentially the heart of Ellsworth's (1989) objection to reconceptualist pedagogies such as Giroux's and Freire's which entail, at a crucial moment in the emancipatory process, a cultural critique whose methodology, she claims, is traditional and rationalist.

It is no wonder, then, that one of the hallmarks of a reconceptualist approach to curriculum is an approach to students' written discourse which emphasizes "authentic voice." Teachers who are aware of the fact that students are situated within the class according to a variety of social, cultural, and historical influences, are also aware that these students' socio-historical positions within the school need to be explicated and negotiated. The starting point for this process lies in the students' own experience and knowledge, formerly subjugated and silenced. Ellsworth (1989) comments: "By speaking in their 'authentic voices' students are seen to make themselves visible and define themselves as authors of their own world. Such self-definition presumably gives students an identity and political position from which to act as agents of social change" (p. 309). In the case of student writing, then, teachers who work within a critical pedagogy have to make spaces for student voices and they have to trust in the legitimacy of these voices. To create spaces and contexts for student voice is to allow students a way out of silence into empowerment and transformation both of the world and, extemporaneously, of their own positions within it.

It appears that the reconceptualist position, especially as it deals with students' written discourse, falls prey to the same forces that bedevil all those who deal with the relationship between individualism and collectivism (in this case, a cultural

interpretation of collectivism) by dichotomizing them or by perceiving them in polar opposition to one another. Despite the reconceptualists' ability to critique objectivist, technocratic, and positivist approaches to curriculum, identifying the oppressive nature of these approaches, the answer that they propose is based on an assertion of a free, autonomous, self-determining individual. So, while the basis for their approach, on the surface, appears far removed from the Platonic idealism identified by LeFevre (1987), the approach to students' written discourse which is implied in the reconceptualist position is typically expressivist. Madeline Grumet's (1981) article on the relationship between autobiography and reconceptualization celebrates the connection between them. Bizzell (1986), too, notes how approaches to composition which emphasized autobiography, expressivism, and personal style gained widespread acceptance in part because of their liberatory appeal. She writes: "By fostering students' own styles instead of forcing conformity to an oppressive institutional standard, writing teachers could feel they were making their own contribution to the reform of oppressive academic and political institutions" (p. 53).

The ultimate irony in the adoption of expressivist models of discourse within a liberatory pedagogy is that, when the cry for emancipation is picked up by mainstream society, as Bizzell (1986) notes, it is generally found that an expressivist writing "comes much more easily to white middle- and upper-class students than to others, thus, preserving ... the very social discrimination it sought to combat" (p. 55). Perhaps this should not be as surprising as it first appears, given the fundamental assumptions

of freedom, individualism, rationalism, and personal autonomy which undergird an expressivist approach, even when it is couched in radical, reconceptualist terms.

The problem of the reconceptualists boils down to the need for the individual to divorce himself or herself from the determination of dominant structures. In describing this notion as it relates to emancipation, Giroux (1983) quotes Sharp & Green (1975): "The correct perspective should enable one to ask the question, 'Under what historical conditions can men break through the structure of determination?'" (p. 190). The answer, at least from the perspective of dialogism in a Bakhtinian sense, is that there are no conditions which will allow us to escape determination because we are socially determined as a condition of being; a dialogic perspective assumes that the transcendent self is a fiction. As Berlin (1988) writes in his discussion of social-epistemic rhetoric:

The self is always the creation of a particular historical and cultural moment. That is not to say that individuals never act as individuals. It is to assert, however, that they never act with complete freedom. As Marx indicated, we make our own histories, but we do not make them just as we wish. ... [T]he perceiving subject, the discourse communities of which the subject is a part, and the material world itself are all the constructions of an historical discourse, of the ideological formulations inscribed in the language-mediated practical activity of a particular time and place. We are lodged within a hermeneutic circle, although not one that is impervious to change (p. 489).

A dialogic approach to discourse must be one which admits that all discourse, to a large extent, is socially determined. Given this, one cannot condemn socially determinate structures simply on the basis of one's recognition of them as such. If we are to withhold the leap to indictment that reconceptualists require as a condition of critical consciousness, then we need to do so by making distinctions between oppression and determination, between tyranny and social definition--and these are distinctions disallowed by reconceptualists such as Giroux.

A Social Constructionist Approach to Curriculum

Education has to start from acculturation. ... [W]e cannot be educated without finding out a lot about the descriptions of the world offered by our culture. ... Later perhaps, we may put less value on "being in touch with reality" but we can afford that only after having passed through the stages of implicit, and then explicit and self-conscious, conformity to the norms and discourses going on around us. ... [This] caution amounts to saying that abnormal and "existential" discourse is always parasitic upon normal discourse (Rorty, 1979, p. 365).

What this statement suggests is that it is impossible to use language without *some* form of socio-cultural context, and education, if it is to ultimately lead to critical awareness, must also work from the same assumption. One curricular theory which recognizes this is proposed by C. A. Bowers (1984) who argues that we must begin to conceptualize curriculum from within a "sociology of knowledge framework" (p. 79) which he finds powerfully articulated in the work of Shutz, Berger, and Luckmann.

Bowers' (1984) claim is that curriculum requires "a theoretical framework that focuses on the interaction of the cultural belief system, the role of language and communication, and human consciousness" (p. 3). Significantly, Bowers claims that by "keeping in focus the connection between culture, communication and consciousness, it should be possible to develop a theory of education that recognizes the tension between the existential freedom (and responsibility) of the individual and the claims of tradition and society" (p. 3). This is a notable break from theoretical approaches to curriculum which dichotomize these forces and it promises a theoretical structure which can account for the very tension which Bakhtin revealed as central to dialogism.

Five Propositions

Bowers (1984) describes his theoretical framework by suggesting five propositions which would undergird a vision of curriculum based on social constructivist assumptions and I will briefly discuss each in turn.

"Proposition I. *Social reality is shared, sustained and continuously negotiated through communication*" (p. 35). By communication, Bowers is not referring here to the "communication contract" identified by Straw (1990a) where information and knowledge is shunted back and forth between people. Instead, Bowers refers explicitly to communication as "conversation" where individuals share "definitions of social situations" while "negotiating different understandings" (p. 35). In much the same terms, Bakhtin described dialogue as being the activity of two interlocutors who necessarily orient their unique spatial and temporal perceptions towards a shared

situation. Bowers points out that communication, in the sense of conversation, is important for two reasons: first, for sharing and sustaining knowledge and conventions about taken-for-granted beliefs about reality, and second, for initiating new members into the cultural communities which share that knowledge and those conventions.

With regard to the latter, he notes: "[T]hrough the process of communication, social reality is being continuously renewed in the consciousness of new members, while at the same time undergoing a process of gradual revision as each participant negotiates minor changes (and occasionally major ones) that reflect differences in perspective and existential stance" (p. 35). Through communication and conversation, participants in a culture are able both to gain access to shared interpretations of how other participants experience reality and to negotiate those interpretations in light of their own experience.

"Proposition II. *Through socialization the individual's intersubjective self is built up in a biographically unique way, and it serves as the set of interpretational rules for making sense of everyday life*" (p. 36). The notion of intersubjectivity is critical to a social constructivist argument for the social origin of a person's knowledge and cultural frame of reference. Bowers notes: "The intersubjective is, in effect, the socially derived set of assumptions, definitions, typifications and recipe knowledge that serves as the individual's frame of reference that underlies perception, cognition and behavior" (p. 36). The intersubjective self is a construct which totally denies the notion of an autonomous self which derives meaning through self reflection. Bowers notes that the intersubjective self is that which "accounts for how the

experience of others becomes part of one's own life world. It also is essential to explaining how one individual can understand the experience of another person" (p. 36). Again, it should be noted that Bakhtin's dialogism rests on a similar notion of intersubjectivity which allows interlocutors to share cultural frames of reference, sign systems, and discursive behaviours and forms which are conventional.

"Proposition III. *Much of the social world of everyday life is learned and experienced by the individual as the natural, even inevitable order of reality. This natural attitude toward the everyday world is experienced as taken-for-granted*" (p. 39). The point that Bowers raises here refers to the ways that social realities are passed on as a natural order which limits the individual's frame of reference, thereby making it difficult, if not impossible, for the individual to imagine realities outside the realm of socialization; and this ultimately constrains the possibilities for freedom in the individual's ability to make choices. Bowers describes the situation where choice *is* possible as a "liminal space" in a person's consciousness, where "'liminality' designates those moments in cultural transition where the individual is 'betwixt and between' established patterns of thought and behavior" (p. 6). With this in mind, Bowers notes that, "[e]xistential choice is not grounded in the individual's accumulated recipe knowledge, but in those areas of liminality not already stabilized and deproblematized by the natural attitude" (p. 40). Like Bakhtin, Bowers notes that choice is not made possible by a free act of will, but neither is choice made futile through the process of socialization. Both Bowers and Bakhtin recognize the complexity of the cultural systems in which people operate, forcing them to adopt a

variety of cultural codes and generic conventions which are specific to the various situations that they find themselves in, and thus creating the liminal spaces which makes choices both possible and necessary.

"Proposition IV. *The individual's self-concept is constituted through interaction with significant others: the individual not only acquires the socially shared knowledge but also an understanding of who she/he is in relation to it*" (p. 40).

Primarily, Bowers' concern here is with explaining how primary socialization functions in relation to identity formation, that is, how identity is shaped through the responses of significant others which provide cues to appropriate behaviour and linguistic activity. Although much of Bowers concern is devoted to the concept of the primary socialization of children, he notes: "This reflexive act of seeing oneself through the responses of significant others overcomes the uncertainty and vulnerability that one experiences in new social situations" (p. 41). This concept is similar to Bakhtin's notion of how the self finds definition in relation to others, and how both are needed to orient the self to a particular situation. Bowers' claim also supports the need for interaction and significant responses for students' written discourse *especially* when students are writing as apprentices within a given discourse community. Clearly a student's identity within that community depends on it.

At the same time, especially when one's interest is in adults writing in the academy, it should be noted that not all identity formation is the result of primary socialization. Bowers notes:

The normal individual's self-concept reflects the range of social interaction. As the individual has a wider range of social experiences ... the definition of who one is in terms of these social activities becomes established in consciousness as the individual's self-concept.

Individuals, as they grow in self confidence and the ability to make their own commitments to values and ideas, may begin to exercise increasing control over the selection of the significant other and in the process gain considerable control over how they define themselves (p. 41).

Thus, how one negotiates one's identity becomes a much more intricate process as the complexity of one's social experience grows. It becomes even more complex, and yet harder to control, in situations where interaction with significant others is undertaken through written discourse. So while the dynamic remains relatively the same, the importance of significant response becomes even more crucial.

"Proposition V. *Human consciousness is characterized by intentionality; it is the intentionality of consciousness that insures that socialization is not deterministic*" (p. 42). When Bowers talks about intentionality, he is not referring to the unrestrained will of an autonomous individual. Intentionality is reconceived within a sociology of knowledge framework to denote a fundamental characteristic of human consciousness; intentionality is linked to the fact that, as Bowers notes, "human consciousness should be understood as a verb," as a process of making choices based on "the objects of movements in one's immediate surroundings" (p. 42). In Bakhtinian terms, we exist

in a state of addressivity and because of this, we are constantly in a position of answerability. These states, masked as static conditions, exist in a tension that demands that we live in a continual and complex process of utterance and response--a continual process of dialogue.

Thus, intentionality is oriented in all respects towards the social world and constrained by it as well. Bowers (1984) comments:

The symbolic codes that serve as grammars for how to think and act within different social settings both free the intentional possibilities of consciousness within the culturally sanctioned zones of experience and deny it access to others not recognized by the culture. Thus the existence of intentionality should not be interpreted as an either-or possibility, but as an element of consciousness that can, in varying degrees, be determined ... and shaped by the sense of taken-for-grantedness and typifications of everyday life. The unique social biography of people, their perspective in social and physical space, and their awareness of different interpretive schemas insure that the intentionality of consciousness is not controlled entirely by determinism (pp. 43-44).

As the complexity of our symbolic code grows, as we move across social situations from one typification to another, and especially as we internalize those codes through the cumulative building of a unique biographical history, the possibility of choice within limits quickly turns into the necessity of choice among conflicting options. A

sociology of knowledge approach, which recognizes the contingency of our social world embraces this tension between the limits of one's language code and the unceasing possibilities of it. This paradoxical configuration provides an answer to foundationalists (dressed either for objectivism or idealism) who, in Rorty's (1979) words, simply hope that "the burden of choice will pass away" (p. 376).

A Sociology of Knowledge Approach to Curriculum

A sociology of knowledge approach to curriculum, based on these five propositions, is one which recognizes the desire of educators to introduce students to a variety of cultural configurations and codes which support particular purposes, while at the same time allowing students to "examine the taken for granted beliefs and practices" of those who adopt those cultural codes and configurations. Bowers recognizes, as does Bakhtin, that a simplistic approach to socialization, one which is popularly accepted as a general understanding of the term, serves merely "as part of an ideology that can be invoked to justify interventions intended to adapt people's behavior to prevailing bureaucratic and social norms" (p. 33). This is why, I think, social constructivist assumptions are so easily picked up, in a brutalized form, by foundationalists who use them as justifications for imposing upon people the social and cultural configurations which serve their own interests.

Bowers (1984) suggests that an appropriate balance is necessary if students are to appreciate the socio-cultural context of their learning. He suggests that three guiding principles be adopted when one addresses curricular issues. First, educators must focus on the students' "phenomenological culture" (p. 86). Bowers writes: "By

taking the students' phenomenological world seriously the teacher is saying, in effect, that the student's culture deserves serious attention. This is a fundamentally different message than is communicated when the teacher ignores the student's culture and proceeds to dispense the new culture that is supposed to confer respectability and success" (p. 87). By concentrating on the student's phenomenological world, one can become sensitive not only to the discursive conventions and linguistic codes of the culture being discussed, but how those *interact* with the complex cultural configurations of the student's world. Much of the emphasis in dialogism is fuelled by this same impulse--to look at *actual* language use rather than at just the structural or conventional aspects of language used in community.

The second principle advocates that educators "use ... [an] historical perspective to deobjectify knowledge" (p. 89). The deobjectification of knowledge is fundamental to students' ability to question their own taken-for-granted beliefs and to acquire the conceptual categories necessary for them to question the statements of "fact" continually being presented to them in an educational context. Significantly, the historical perspective that Bowers advocates is devoted to uncovering the "human authorship" of the knowledge that is being presented to students, especially when that knowledge is presented through written text. This is precisely the way that Bakhtin suggests that we treat the acts of writing and reading--as activities which are embedded in an ongoing dialogue between people.

The third principle follows naturally from the first two. Bowers suggests that educators incorporate "a cross-cultural perspective" on the material being presented to

students. He writes: "Incorporating a cross-cultural perspective into the curriculum unit helps to overcome the difficulty of recognizing the conceptual categories and assumptions that underlie the students' taken-for-granted beliefs. The phenomenological description enables students to externalize and obtain distance from the culture they would otherwise experience as taken-for-granted" (p. 93). Thus, a cross-cultural perspective helps students to recognize their own cultural framework, helps to deobjectify the knowledge being presented, and helps to expand their cultural and symbolic code to include possibilities as yet unrecognized. Significantly, none of these results is hostile to a dialogic approach to student discourse and, in fact, all of them actually support the need for students to engage in discourse for the purpose of developing shared meanings through dialectical exchange.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter has not been to suggest that any educational system, in either a public school or a university context, operates solely out of one of the paradigms discussed here. Any educational milieu operates within a complex culture of its own where a variety of paradigms operate and interact with one another in various pockets of the school or university system. Still, even most casual observers would recognize the dominance of curricular systems which are traditionalist and conceptual-empiricist. The important point that I hope to make here is that both rhetorical models and curricular models are based on assumptions regarding the nature of knowledge, conceptualizations of self-other relations, and the role of language and communication. Given this, while there is not a one-to-one relationship between

curriculum and student discourse, it is possible, as I hope I have shown, that certain curricular assumptions encourage or favour particular approaches to student discourse, and this has a significant bearing on the dialogic approach to discourse advocated in this thesis.

Most important, a dialogic approach to discourse is one which requires a particular communicative context which can allow students to engage in significant, purposeful discursive exchange for the purpose of collaboratively-developing meaning through interaction. Students must be allowed to engage one another in conversations both oral and written. The sociology of knowledge approach to curriculum, as envisioned by Bowers, not only supports a dialogic approach to student discourse as described by Bakhtin, but virtually *demand*s it. I hope to have demonstrated the fundamental affinity between Bowers' approach to curriculum as it relates to questions of language, knowledge, and self-other relations, and the assumptions which are inherent in dialogism as a rhetorical model. Most significantly, both theoretical approaches attempt to understand the interaction of conventional or cultural structures and the communicative needs of individuals as they are realised in student discourse and learning.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This study began with the observation that, for composition theorists, questions concerning the relationship between writers and their audiences has been severely problematic, leading to a fragmentary and often confusing view of what constitutes an audience and how to teach student writers about the concept. The need for some attempt to resolve this issue is heightened by the articulation of what Berlin (1988) calls social-epistemic rhetoric which assumes that the social relationships which operate within the rhetorical situation significantly contribute to the ways that knowledge is constructed within communities. When one accepts the social-epistemic claim that meaning is developed in community through a process of social interaction, through discursive exchange, then a better understanding of the forces which govern that interaction become critical to one's understanding of knowledge construction, especially if knowledge construction is seen as a fundamental goal of education.

I began an investigation of the problem with a review of Karen LeFevre's (1987) social continuum which highlights four perspectives on rhetorical invention: (1) the Platonic perspective; (2) the internal dialogic perspective; (3) the collaborative perspective; and (4) the collective perspective. This review demonstrated how each of these perspectives embodied a particular notion of self-other relations in rhetorical invention and how each of these perspectives had been translated into conceptualizations of writer-audience relations as well. I argued that each of the four

perspectives foregrounds an important aspect of invention. The Platonic emphasizes the writer's intention; the internal dialogic emphasizes the need for writers to invent through a process of exchange and introduces the notion of the writer as drawing on at least a dualistic, and often pluralistic, conception of the writing self; the collaborative expands this notion to emphasize the power of real readers and writers who engage in a collaborative exchange of texts in order to develop meaning; and the collective perspective emphasizes the writer's position within discourse communities which constrain the nature and substance of rhetorical invention. I also argued that when these aspects of invention are isolated or seen as competing, the result is an incomplete and unbalanced view of how social relations are implicated in the development of meaning.

Given this, I argued further that, rather than seeing them as competing, one might be better off to look for the ways that these different conceptualizations operate in relation to one another in the process of invention, and I suggested that the theory of dialogism proposed by Bakhtin could provide the conceptual depth necessary for discerning those relationships. Bakhtin's theory asserts that meaning is developed as a result of a collaborative interaction of utterances and responses which take place within a complex social milieu. The forces which govern this exchange are related to the need for self and other to operate collaboratively, in effect, intersubjectively, in order to orient unique perspectives towards a shared situation in the development of meaning. In doing so, through a process which involves both internal and external dialogue, individual intention and communal constraints both become operative in the

development of meaning through discourse. What this suggests is that, when viewed relationally, many of the salient aspects of the four perspectives described by LeFevre are represented but reconceptualized from the point of view of dialogism, a point of view which is consistent with the premises which underlie social-epistemic rhetoric.

Further, the conversation metaphor of writing is based on the same premises which underlie a dialogic approach to discourse. While the predominant approach to composition is one which concentrates on text production, the conversation metaphor suggests that if writing is to become meaningful, composition teachers must begin to augment their interest in the crafting of texts with an understanding of how texts function in a dialectical process of discursive exchange. In other words, texts must not only be composed, but also be used by writers and readers in an exchange of utterances and responses which involves real social consequence.

Finally, if student writing is to be used discursively in a way that allows it to fulfill its dialogic potential, it must take place within an appropriate educational setting. Therefore, I undertook to review four major curricular models in order to discern their relationship to students' written discourse. The major premise in this examination was that, because both rhetorical theories and curricular theories make assumptions about the nature of knowledge, the nature of self and other, and how discourse is implicated in these conceptualizations, it should be possible to come to some worthwhile conclusions regarding how well a given approach to student discourse--in this case a dialogic approach to discourse based on social-epistemic rhetorical theory--"fits" in relation to a given curricular approach.

In this analysis, I concluded that the predominant curricular models used in schools and universities are traditionalist and conceptual-empiricist, both of which support an approach to student discourse based on what Straw (1990a) calls the "communication contract". In these terms, knowledge is objectified and seen as a commodity which can be communicated by being passed, whole and unaltered, through the medium of text from teacher to student and from student to teacher. Composition instruction is seen as necessary, then, in order to insure that students' written discourse can be accurately reflective of their knowledge. Given this, composition courses are seen as service courses to the rest of the university.

Two principle reactions to these curricular theories are found in the reconceptualist approach to curriculum and the sociology of knowledge approach to curriculum. Both of these find the objectivist assumptions underlying traditionalist and conceptual-empiricist curriculum models to be oppressive and politically-charged while claiming to be value-neutral. The reconceptualist position supports a rhetorical model which Berlin (1988) calls "psychological-epistemic," and it is dependent on a notion of an autonomous self which can overcome oppressive social structures and exist in a state of complete freedom and autonomy. From this perspective, the individual becomes the chief agent in the construction of knowledge. The discursive model implicated in this position is typically expressivist and rests on the notion of student writers utilizing their "authentic voices" to overcome the definitions which are imposed upon them by others.

The sociology of knowledge approach, however, represented in the work of C. A. Bowers, does not accept that individuals can ever operate outside of some socio-cultural context which both frees and limits them. The epistemological assumptions which inform this curricular theory come from a social constructivist account of knowledge. The resulting curricular model is based on a need to account for the tension between the freedom of the individual and the constraining effects of the communal context in which the individual is embedded. This is the only curricular model of those reviewed here whose assumptions regarding the intersubjective nature of the self and the social-epistemic nature of discourse is consistent with the dialogic approach to discourse described by Bakhtin. Because of this, I believe that a sociology of knowledge approach to curriculum would provide an educational context in which a dialogic approach to student discourse could thrive.

Implications for Undergraduate Writing

One of the most obvious and direct implications that arises when one adopts a dialogic approach to undergraduate writing is that it suggests a readjustment of our understanding of student writing towards a more phenomenological account of what students are doing. Because of our enduring conceptualization of writing as being a form of discourse which removes writers and readers from any interactive forum, we have become used to describing the social realm of writing in very abstract terms--we ask students to imagine fictional audiences or we create abstractions like "general audience." When we realise the inadequacy of these notions, we substitute them for discourse community--a metaphor which does imply something slightly more concrete

than a general audience, but as Harris (1988) points out, even our own use of the term often relates more to a bundle of social practices and conventions than a to community made up of real people. Even when our notion of discourse community is associated with real colleagues whom we might meet at the occasional conference, our students are privy to no such interaction. For them, discourse community is every bit an abstraction. It is not that the notion of discourse community does not have power. Certainly, in a metaphoric sense, it does help students to de-objectify knowledge. It also helps them to see it in terms of the conventional matrices which organise the varieties of disciplinary discourses that they are expected to master. But when we invoke discourse community at the *expense* of attending to the students' phenomenological world, it becomes, I think, a dangerous notion.

One example of this danger can be found in Giltrow and Valiquette's (1991) report on research they conducted regarding audience in the disciplines. Giltrow and Valiquette (1991) conducted think aloud protocols with markers from two different disciplines, psychology and criminology, and focused primarily on two issues: "(1) the phenomenon of shared knowledge in these discourse communities; [and] (2) the role that the idea of the 'outside' reader--the reader who is not a member of the disciplinary community--plays in rationalizing the judgements of student work" (p. 5). What they found is that students can err, in the mind of a marker, either by providing detailed information regarding concepts which are viewed to be shared knowledge within the discourse community (a detailed account of the use of "standard deviation" was judged negatively in a psychology paper, for instance), or they can err by *not*

providing a detailed explanation regarding concepts which represented shared knowledge, but which a hypothetical reader located outside the discourse community would not understand (a passing reference in a student's paper to the results of a Muller-Lyer Vertical Illusion Test was faulted for a lack of explanation despite the fact that the test is shared knowledge within the discourse community). The researchers do note that neither of these concepts--standard deviation or the Muller-Lyer Test--is more likely to be known by the hypothetical outside reader, and the reasons for the invocation of the outsider is not readily explainable through simple assumptions about shared knowledge within a discourse community.

An analysis of this problem *only* from the perspective of discourse community causes the researchers to speculate about the possibility that some discipline-specific knowledge carries a unique status with regard to its relation to people outside the discipline:

Not all facts are suited for life in the outside world. So some propositions remain in-house, where they get worked on and refined, or absorbed into the taken-for-granted setting of the discipline. Nobody really expects outsiders to grasp these statements, and they are not offered to outsiders. But other propositions are available for public exhibition: visitors to the lab are addressed with the discipline's "mythology" (p. 10).

As plausible as this may be (and I think there may be some truth to the analysis), what it represents is just *another* layer--in this case an incredibly subtle and complex

layer--of conventional discursive behaviour to be learned by the student. Not only are students to be sensitive to what is common knowledge within a community, but they have to sense particular aspects of that knowledge which must be presented in a particular way to an outsider who may be "visiting the lab." But how does a student know when that visitor is present? It is the marker who invokes this confused outsider to rationalize the fact that some presentations of shared knowledge in student discourse simply do not wash. As Doug Brent (1992a) notes in his response to this research: "No wonder students often feel that they are walking through a minefield when they write" (p. 1).

Seen only from the perspective of the discourse community, students are expected to demonstrate that they know how to write as insiders. As part of that demonstration, they are also expected to know how to write as insiders presenting inside information to outsiders. But from a phenomenological perspective, a perspective which allows one to observe what Brent (1992a) calls the "real" rhetorical situation, one observes first and foremost, "*students writing to teachers*" (p. 1). Based on this distinction between the hypothetical and the real rhetorical situation, Brent (1992a) offers an alternative account of the psychology paper which was judged negatively regarding its treatment of standard deviation and the Muller-Lyer Board. He suggests that "the marker shifts the hypothetical rhetorical situation and conjures up the outside reader" in order to obscure the fact that the student, a disciplinary novice, needs to demonstrate an "internalization of the discipline by assuming shared knowledge" learned in introductory courses, such as standard deviation, but also needs

to demonstrate that he or she is in control of "new" knowledge such as that having to do with the Muller-Lyer Board (p. 2). He suggests that the outside reader is conjured only with regard to those concepts that students are currently being tested on. Brent (1992a) concludes:

If in fact the student-teacher rhetorical situation is at work here, it seems to me that life would be much simpler if we were all more honest and shared this system with our students. We are all so embarrassed by the "artificial" rhetorical situation of student writing to teacher that we keep trying to call it something else. But if the writer *is* a student and the teacher *is* a teacher, then that rhetorical situation is not artificial. Like it or not, it is really there, and the marker's real goal is not to increase his knowledge but to see how much the student knows. To disguise the situation as a seemingly random fluctuation between insider and outsider writing is merely to bury the land mines a little deeper (p. 2).

A phenomenological account of the rhetorical situation is one which admits to the "actual" situation of the real writers and real readers of texts rather than hypothetical abstractions. It should be noted that this approach does nothing to deny the existence or power of discourse communities; but it may suggest that the real outsiders in this rhetorical situation are the students themselves.

A dialogic approach to student discourse acknowledges that the real readers and writers of student texts cannot be ignored or imagined away. The status of the

writer and the status of the reader in relation to one another has a real effect on the meaning which may develop in any discursive exchange. We need not interpret the situation of students writing to teachers negatively, however. We may simply admit, as does Cayton (1991), that the student is in a unique position of apprenticeship whereby she or he is allowed access to the professional conversation of a discourse community through the sponsorship of an already-experienced participant.

Even so, it may be wrong to always judge students' writing as though they were participants in our own professional conversations because this ignores the fact that they are engaged in discourse that is, after all, particular to apprenticeship. This does not mean that their discourse is unrelated to ours--certainly there is overlap--but such an admission would, in fact free students to engage in discourse which is more amenable to their own purposes and to their own social realities. In other words, we might better envision students as participants in their own discourse communities. If discourse communities are defined, in part, by their conventional discursive practices, then Giltrow and Valiquette's (1991) study clearly demonstrates a set of discursive conventions which are quite particular to student writing. For example, as Brent (1992a) notes, explanations are required of students which would be "slightly tedious in a truly disciplinary piece of writing" (p. 2).

How fair is it, really, to judge students' writing on the basis of our own professional conversations when we never really envision their discourse as seriously engaging with our own? I am not offering a solution to this thorny problem here. The complexity of the problem is located in the fact that students *are* novices within

the disciplines, and their discourse *is* related to our own. But if we continue to judge student discourse only in relation to our own discourse, without ever letting the two interact, then we are still asking our students to use writing as performance.

In order to stop treating students as thinkers-in-training and begin treating them as just thinkers, we need to concentrate on the possibilities of their using writing to engage one another in a process of collaborative exchange for the purpose of developing shared meanings. As Pare (1991) notes, "[w]e needn't invent or simulate writer-reader relationships; our classrooms are full of, and surrounded by, writers and readers" (p. 58). If we are to allow students' written discourse to contribute to knowledge construction, then an awareness of the phenomenological world of student discourse is the place to begin this process. As the principles of dialogism suggest, real writing needs real audiences, and student writers have real audiences readily at hand. Teachers, however, need to learn to take advantage of this fact. The concept of discourse community is powerful, but we are just beginning to understand the possibilities of this metaphor.

Implications for Composition and Rhetoric

Clearly one of the most profound implications of a dialogic approach to undergraduate writing has to do with its apparent attack on the undergraduate composition course as it is currently envisaged within the university. Based on traditionalist and conceptual-empiricist models of curriculum which are supported by transmission and translation models of literacy, the composition course is most commonly viewed as a service course to the rest of the university--a place where

students attain competency in writing so that they may carry out their "real" university work effectively. Gage (1986) notes that composition courses are seen as places where students gain proficiency in writing skills so that "when competency in writing is attained, students are assumed to be able to perform in situations where writing is called for" (p. 13). Composition theorists and rhetoricians alike have long lamented this competency view of writing which is severely reductive, which divorces writing from any purposive context, and which refuses to acknowledge any connection between language use and knowledge construction.

The response on the part of many social theorists is to decry the composition class altogether because they see it as being necessarily divorced from any disciplinary discourse. In this view, a disciplinary discourse is the only context in which student writing can be related directly to the reasons that students attend the university. One answer is that students may find meaningful, purposive contexts by writing about themselves, but this is discounted by social theorists largely because of its resonances with expressivism. From some social perspectives, the *only* place to learn to write disciplinary discourse is within the disciplines themselves, for how can a single composition course serve so many varieties of discourse?

It would appear, at first glance, that a dialogic approach to discourse supports this notion. Hunt (forthcoming, 1992) advocates a dialogic approach to student discourse and has developed it into a pedagogy in which he engages his students in a "collaborative investigation" of a particular topic under study. Significantly, collaborative investigation always takes place within a disciplinary context and Hunt

(forthcoming, 1992) likens it to the whole language approach to literacy which is used in elementary schools. The assumptions behind whole language can be summed up by Britton (1985):

[L]et me offer you this as a hypothesis about learning: In taking part in rule-governed behavior, individuals may internalize implicit rules by modes that are indistinguishable from the modes in which those rules were socially generated in the first place--and the modes by which they continue, by social consensus, to be adjusted or amended (p. 74).

In other words, the rules and conventions of language use in a particular context, or "mode" as Britton puts it, are best learned by using language within that context.

In rhetorical terms, the argument takes a slightly different but related twist. Brent (1992b) suggests that dialogism can best be thought of as a "species" of rhetoric "with a highly truncated focus on the offices of arrangement and style and a greatly expanded emphasis on the office of invention" (p. 77). It may be said that the composition course as it has been traditionally conceived, confers most of its energy on arrangement and style with almost no focus whatsoever on the office of invention. If composition courses have severed themselves from discussions of invention, in my mind, an appropriate approach would not be to respond by concentrating solely on invention, but to restore a balance between these offices.

What some social theorists appear to be saying, however, is that when an appropriate social context is created which will encourage invention (that is, encourage participants to engage in meaningful collaborative exchange for the purpose of

developing shared meanings), then arrangement and style will take care of themselves through the natural negotiative process of language use. Through dialogue itself, it seems, discourse conventions regarding form, arrangement, style, etc., will be learned naturally because they are necessary to invention. In effect, this appears to be something like a socially-based natural process mode of learning, driven largely by social understandings of the ways that language is learned and used outside of any educative context.

One criticism which can be levelled at this notion is that it appears to assume that all students engaged in discourse, when given a truly dialogic context, will always begin from an equal footing in terms of their ability to construct a string of signifiers, and their ability to manipulate discursive conventions, which can support their communicative efforts. It also appears to assume that any direct teaching of discourse conventions, as they are realised in discussions of form, arrangement, and style, are necessarily destructive forces in terms of meaning; these elements of composition cannot be taught, but must emerge in a person's consciousness through dialogic negotiation.

I believe that one ought to be suspicious of both of these notions. In the first place, dialogism suggests *precisely* that a relative equality is necessary for real dialogue to occur, and that refers both to a shared or equal knowledge of discursive and linguistic conventions as well as relatively equal social status. When this equality is absent, the natural tendency of participants in dialogue to forgive or look beyond violations of conversational norms in a search for meaning is undermined and

sanctions are placed against those who committed those violations (Wardhaugh, 1985, p. 14). In the face of the vast inequalities which exist in teacher-to-student relationships, both in terms of a mastery of linguistic/discursive conventions as well as in terms of social status, student-to-student relationships do look pretty much equal. But this, of course, is not the case at all, and a natural process mode, particularly when it focuses on discursive exchanges between students, does little to address this, despite the fact that an awareness of the real relationships between conversational participants is a principle tenet of dialogism.

In the second place, an assumption that direct instruction is antithetical to meaning-making doesn't admit to the fact that direct instruction can serve an *ameliorative* function, especially when it is used in the context of such inequalities just described. In metaphoric terms, direct instruction can serve a positive function as a kind of "guide to the parlour", especially when students are unfamiliar with conventions regarding form, style, and arrangement, which govern the conversation. Certainly we must note that, when compositional elements are divorced entirely from meaningful, purposive contexts, direct instruction can devolve into a search for formal correctness. But it seems to make sense that, when a student lacks a sense of the compositional norms which govern the conversation, and the teacher does have knowledge of those norms, the teacher is doing the student a *disservice* by not sharing that knowledge.

It is not within the scope of this thesis to fully conceptualize the place of composition studies in the university. It may be true that the best place for

composition pedagogy is within the disciplines themselves. It may also be possible to reconceptualize an undergraduate composition course in such a way that it works in harmony with the variety of disciplinary discourses students encounter. The point that I really want to make, however, is that while learning to compose texts is not sufficient for students to make those texts meaningful, it does not necessarily follow that learning to compose is a bad thing. It is only problematic when it is divorced from any dialogic context.

Conclusion

A dialogic approach to student discourse suggests that students need to become active participants in their own learning. It is to suggest that students can construct knowledge socially through a dialogic exchange of assertions and responses which is simultaneously influenced by their own unique perspectives and by the constraints of the communities in which they are embedded. To say that writers need real audiences, real purposive contexts for their discourse, is not necessarily saying anything new. The power of dialogism is found in its ability to provide a basis for understanding *why* this is true. When we understand that, we can begin to understand why it is *necessary* for students to be able to contribute, to affect their situations in a genuine way. The communities that we find ourselves in need to be changed by our presence and in turn we ourselves are changed by those situations. This is the enduring richness of real dialogue, that in it we find possibilities both for ourselves and for the world, and we are able to enact those possibilities, affect change, and extend ourselves even further.

As educators, we especially need to remember for ourselves and for our students that mere talking is not dialogue. As Martin Buber (1980) notes:

The genuineness of ... dialogue is called into question as soon as even a small number of those present are felt by themselves and by others as not being expected to take any active part. Such a state of affairs can lead to very serious problems.

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