



Intertextuality and the Discourse Community

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Intertextuality and the Discourse Community

At the conclusion of Eco's *The Name of the Rose*, the monk Adso of Melk returns to the burned abbey, where he finds in the ruins scraps of parchment, the only remnants from one of the great libraries in all Christendom. He spends a day collecting the charred fragments, hoping to discover some meaning in the scattered pieces of books. He assembles his own "lesser library . . . of fragments, quotations, unfinished sentences, amputated stumps of books" (500). To Adso, these random shards are "an immense acrostic that says and repeats nothing" (501). Yet they are significant to him as an attempt to order experience.

We might well derive our own order from this scene. We might see Adso as representing the writer, and his desperate activity at the burned abbey as a model for the writing process. The writer in this image is a collector of fragments, an archaeologist creating an order, building a framework, from remnants of the past. Insofar as the collected fragments help Adso recall other, lost texts, his experience affirms a principle he learned from his master, William of Baskerville: "Not infrequently books speak of books" (286). Not infrequently, and perhaps ever and always, texts refer to other texts and in fact rely on them for their meaning. All texts are interdependent: We understand a text only insofar as we understand its precursors.

This is the principle we know as intertextuality, the principle that all writing and speech—indeed, all signs—arise from a single network: what Vygotsky called "the web of meaning"; what poststructuralists label Text or Writing (Barthes, *écriture*); and what a more distant age perhaps knew as *logos*. Examining texts "intertextually" means looking for "traces," the bits and pieces of Text which writers or speakers borrow and sew together to create new discourse.¹ The most mundane manifestation of intertextuality is explicit citation, but intertextuality animates all discourse and goes beyond mere citation. For the intertextual critics, Intertext is Text—a great seamless textual fabric. And, as they like to intone solemnly, no text escapes intertext.

Intertextuality provides rhetoric with an important perspective, one currently neglected, I believe. The prevailing composition pedagogies by and large cultivate the romantic image of writer as free, uninhibited spirit, as independent, creative genius. By identifying and stressing the intertextual nature of discourse, however, we shift our attention away from the writer as individual and

focus more on the sources and social contexts from which the writer's discourse arises. According to this view, authorial intention is less significant than social context; the writer is simply a part of a discourse tradition, a member of a team, and a participant in a community of discourse that creates its own collective meaning. Thus the intertext *constrains* writing.

My aim here is to demonstrate the significance of this theory to rhetoric, by explaining intertextuality, its connection to the notion of "discourse community," and its pedagogical implications for composition.

The Presence of Intertext

Intertextuality has been associated with both structuralism and poststructuralism, with theorists like Roland Barthes, Julia Kristeva, Jacques Derrida, Hayden White, Harold Bloom, Michel Foucault, and Michael Riffaterre. (Of course, the theory is most often applied in literary analysis.) The central assumption of these critics has been described by Vincent Leitch: "The text is not an autonomous or unified object, but a set of relations with other texts. Its system of language, its grammar, its lexicon, drag along numerous bits and pieces—traces—of history so that the text resembles a Cultural Salvation Army Outlet with unaccountable collections of incompatible ideas, beliefs, and sources" (59). It is these "unaccountable collections" that intertextual critics focus on, not the text as autonomous entity. In fact, these critics have redefined the notion of "text": Text *is* intertext, or simply Text. The traditional notion of the text as the single work of a given author, and even the very notions of author and reader, are regarded as simply convenient fictions for domesticating discourse. The old borders that we used to rope off discourse, proclaim these critics, are no longer useful.

We can distinguish between two types of intertextuality: iterability and presupposition. Iterability refers to the "repeatability" of certain textual fragments, to citation in its broadest sense to include not only explicit allusions, references, and quotations within a discourse, but also unannounced sources and influences, clichés, phrases in the air, and traditions. That is to say, every discourse is composed of "traces," pieces of other texts that help constitute its meaning. (I will discuss this aspect of intertextuality in my analysis of the Declaration of Independence.) Presupposition refers to assumptions a text makes about its referent, its readers, and its context—to portions of the text which are read, but which are not explicitly "there." For example, as Jonathan Culler discusses, the phrase "John married Fred's sister" is an assertion that logically presupposes that John exists, that Fred exists, and that Fred has a sister. "Open the door" contains a practical presupposition, assuming the presence of a decoder who is capable of being addressed and who is better able to open the door

than the encoder. "Once upon a time" is a trace rich in rhetorical presupposition, signaling to even the youngest reader the opening of a fictional narrative. Texts not only refer to but in fact *contain* other texts.²

An examination of three sample texts will illustrate the various facets of intertextuality. The first, the Declaration of Independence, is popularly viewed as the work of Thomas Jefferson. Yet if we examine the text closely in its rhetorical milieu, we see that Jefferson was author only in the very loosest of senses. A number of historians and at least two composition researchers (Kinneavy, *Theory* 393-49; Maimon, *Readings* 6-32) have analyzed the Declaration, with interesting results. Their work suggests that Jefferson was by no means an original framer or a creative genius, as some like to suppose. Jefferson was a skilled writer, to be sure, but chiefly because he was an effective borrower of traces.

To produce his original draft of the Declaration, Jefferson seems to have borrowed, either consciously or unconsciously, from his culture's Text. Much has been made of Jefferson's reliance on Locke's social contract theory (Becker). Locke's theory influenced colonial political philosophy, emerging in various pamphlets and newspaper articles of the times, and served as the foundation for the opening section of the Declaration. The Declaration contains many traces that can be found in other, earlier documents. There are traces from a First Continental Congress resolution, a Massachusetts Council declaration, George Mason's "Declaration of Rights for Virginia," a political pamphlet of James Otis, and a variety of other sources, including a colonial play. The overall form of the Declaration (theoretical argument followed by list of grievances) strongly resembles, ironically, the English Bill of Rights of 1689, in which Parliament lists the abuses of James II and declares new powers for itself. Several of the abuses in the Declaration seem to have been taken, more or less verbatim, from a *Pennsylvania Evening Post* article. And the most memorable phrases in the Declaration seem to be least Jefferson's: "That all men are created equal" is a sentiment from Euripides which Jefferson copied in his literary commonplace book as a boy; "Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness" was a cliché of the times, appearing in numerous political documents (Dumbauld).

Though Jefferson's draft of the Declaration can hardly be considered his in any exclusive sense of authorship, the document underwent still more expropriation at the hands of Congress, who made eighty-six changes (Kinneavy, *Theory* 438). They cut the draft from 211 lines to 147. They did considerable editing to temper what they saw as Jefferson's emotional style: For example, Jefferson's phrase "sacred & undeniable" was changed to the more restrained "self-evident." Congress excised controversial passages, such as Jefferson's condemnation of slavery. Thus, we should find it instructive to note, Jefferson's few attempts at original expression were those least acceptable to Congress.

If Jefferson submitted the Declaration for a college writing class as his own writing, he might well be charged with plagiarism.³ The idea of Jefferson as author is but convenient shorthand. Actually, the Declaration arose out of a cultural and rhetorical milieu, was composed of traces—and was, in effect, team written. Jefferson deserves credit for bringing disparate traces together, for helping to mold and articulate the milieu, for creating the all-important draft. Jefferson's skill as a writer was his ability to borrow traces effectively and to find appropriate contexts for them. As Michael Halliday says, "[C]reativeness does not consist in producing new sentences. The newness of a sentence is a quite unimportant—and unascertainable—property and 'creativity' in language lies in the speaker's ability to create new meanings: to realize the potentiality of language for the indefinite extension of its resources to new contexts of situation. . . . Our most 'creative' acts may be precisely among those that are realized through highly repetitive forms of behaviour" (*Explorations* 42). The creative writer is the creative borrower, in other words.

Intertextuality can be seen working similarly in contemporary forums. Recall this scene from a recent Pepsi commercial: A young boy in jeans jacket, accompanied by dog, stands in some desolate plains crossroads next to a gas station, next to which is a soft drink machine. An alien spacecraft, resembling the one in Spielberg's *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, appears overhead. To the boy's joyful amazement, the spaceship hovers over the vending machine and begins sucking Pepsi cans into the ship. It takes *only* Pepsi's, then eventually takes the entire machine. The ad closes with a graphic: "Pepsi. The Choice of a New Generation."

Clearly, the commercial presupposes familiarity with Spielberg's movie or, at least, with his pacific vision of alien spacecraft. We see several American clichés, well-worn signs from the Depression era: the desolate plains, the general store, the pop machine, the country boy with dog. These distinctively American traces are juxtaposed against images from science fiction and the sixties catchphrase "new generation" in the coda. In this array of signs, we have tradition and counter-tradition harmonized. Pepsi squeezes itself in the middle, and thus becomes the great American conciliator. The ad's use of irony may serve to distract viewers momentarily from noticing how Pepsi achieves its purpose by assigning itself an exalted role through use of the intertext.

We find an interesting example of practical presupposition in John Kifner's *New York Times* headline article reporting on the Kent State incident of 1970:

Four students at Kent State University, two of them women, were shot to death this afternoon by a volley of National Guard gunfire. At least 8 other students were wounded.

The burst of gunfire came about 20 minutes after the guardsmen broke up a noon rally on the Commons, a grassy campus gathering spot, by lobbing tear gas at a crowd of about 1,000 young people.

From one perspective, the phrase “two of them women” is a simple statement of fact; however, it presupposes a certain attitude—that the event, horrible enough as it was, is more significant because two of the persons killed were women. It might be going too far to say that the phrase presupposes a sexist attitude (“women aren’t supposed to be killed in battles”), but can we imagine the phrase “two of them men” in this context? Though equally factual, this wording would have been considered odd in 1970 (and probably today as well) because it presupposes a cultural mindset alien from the one dominant at the time. “Two of them women” is shocking (and hence it was reported) because it upsets the sense of order of the readers, in this case the American public.

Additionally (and more than a little ironically), the text contains a number of traces which have the effect of blunting the shock of the event. Notice that the students were not shot by National Guardsmen, but were shot “by a volley of . . . gunfire”; the tear gas was “lobbed”; and the event occurred at a “grassy campus gathering spot.” “Volley” and “lobbed” are military terms, but with connections to sport as well; “grassy campus gathering spot” suggests a picnic; “burst” can recall the glorious sight of bombs “bursting” in “The Star-Spangled Banner.” This pastiche of signs casts the text into a certain context, making it distinctively American. We might say that the turbulent milieu of the sixties provided a distinctive array of signs from which John Kifner borrowed to produce his article.

Each of the three texts examined contains phrases or images familiar to its audience or presupposes certain audience attitudes. Thus the intertext exerts its influence partly in the form of audience expectation. We might then say that the audience of each of these texts is as responsible for its production as the writer. That, in essence, readers, not writers, create discourse.

The Power of Discourse Community

And, indeed, this is what some poststructuralist critics suggest, those who prefer a broader conception of intertext or who look beyond the intertext to the social framework regulating textual production: to what Michel Foucault calls “the discursive formation,” what Stanley Fish calls “the interpretive community,” and what Patricia Bizzell calls “the discourse community.”

A “discourse community” is a group of individuals bound by a common interest who communicate through approved channels and whose discourse is

regulated. An individual may belong to several professional, public, or personal discourse communities. Examples would include the community of engineers whose research area is fluid mechanics; alumni of the University of Michigan; Magnavox employees; the members of the Porter family; and members of the Indiana Teachers of Writing. The approved channels we can call "forums." Each forum has a distinct history and rules governing appropriateness to which members are obliged to adhere. These rules may be more or less apparent, more or less institutionalized, more or less specific to each community. Examples of forums include professional publications like *Rhetoric Review*, *English Journal*, and *Creative Computing*; public media like *Newsweek* and *Runner's World*; professional conferences (the annual meeting of fluid power engineers, the 4C's); company board meetings; family dinner tables; and the monthly meeting of the Indiana chapter of the Izaak Walton League.

A discourse community shares assumptions about what objects are appropriate for examination and discussion, what operating functions are performed on those objects, what constitutes "evidence" and "validity," and what formal conventions are followed. A discourse community may have a well-established *ethos*; or it may have competing factions and indefinite boundaries. It may be in a "pre-paradigm" state (Kuhn), that is, having an ill-defined regulating system and no clear leadership. Some discourse communities are firmly established, such as the scientific community, the medical profession, and the justice system, to cite a few from Foucault's list. In these discourse communities, as Leitch says, "a speaker must be 'qualified' to talk; he has to belong to a community of scholarship; and he is required to possess a prescribed body of knowledge (doctrine). . . . [This system] operates to constrain discourse; it establishes limits and regularities. . . . who may speak, what may be spoken, and how it is to be said; in addition [rules] prescribe what is true and false, what is reasonable and what foolish, and what is meant and what not. Finally, they work to deny the material existence of discourse itself" (145).

A text is "acceptable" within a forum only insofar as it reflects the community episteme (to use Foucault's term). On a simple level, this means that for a manuscript to be accepted for publication in the *Journal of Applied Psychology*, it must follow certain formatting conventions: It must have the expected social science sections (i.e., review of literature, methods, results, discussion), and it must use the journal's version of APA documentation. However, these are only superficial features of the forum. On a more essential level, the manuscript must reveal certain characteristics, have an *ethos* (in the broadest possible sense) conforming to the standards of the discourse community: It must demonstrate (or at least claim) that it contributes knowledge to the field, it must dem-

onstrate familiarity with the work of previous researchers in the field, it must use a scientific method in analyzing its results (showing acceptance of the truth-value of statistical demonstration), it must meet standards for test design and analysis of results, it must adhere to standards determining degree of accuracy. The expectations, conventions, and attitudes of this discourse community—the readers, writers, and publishers of *Journal of Applied Psychology*—will influence aspiring psychology researchers, shaping not only how they write but also their character within that discourse community.

The poststructuralist view challenges the classical assumption that writing is a simple linear, one-way movement: The writer creates a text which produces some change in an audience. A poststructuralist rhetoric examines how audience (in the form of community expectations and standards) influences textual production and, in so doing, guides the development of the writer.

This view is of course open to criticism for its apparent determinism, for devaluing the contribution of individual writers and making them appear merely tools of the discourse community (charges which Foucault answers in “Discourse on Language”). If these regulating systems are so constraining, how can an individual merge? What happens to the idea of the lone inspired writer and the sacred autonomous text?

Both notions take a pretty hard knock. Genuine originality is difficult within the confines of a well-regulated system. Genius is possible, but it may be constrained. Foucault cites the example of Gregor Mendel, whose work in the nineteenth century was excluded from the prevailing community of biologists because he “spoke of objects, employed methods and placed himself within a theoretical perspective totally alien to the biology of his time. . . . Mendel spoke the truth, but he was not *dans le vrai* (within the true)” (224). Frank Lentricchia cites a similar example from the literary community: Robert Frost “achieved magazine publication only five times between 1895 and 1912, a period during which he wrote a number of poems later acclaimed . . . [because] in order to write within the dominant sense of the poetic in the United States in the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth, one had to employ a diction, syntax, and prosody heavily favoring Shelley and Tennyson. One also had to assume a certain stance, a certain world-weary idealism which took care not to refer too concretely to the world of which one was weary” (197, 199).

Both examples point to the exclusionary power of discourse communities and raise serious questions about the freedom of the writer: chiefly, does the writer have any? Is any writer doomed to plagiarism? Can any text be said to be new? Are creativity and genius actually possible? Was Jefferson a creative genius or a blatant plagiarist?

Certainly we want to avoid both extremes. Even if the writer is locked into a cultural matrix and is constrained by the intertext of the discourse community, the writer has freedom within the immediate rhetorical context.⁴ Furthermore, successful writing helps to redefine the matrix—and in that way becomes creative. (Jefferson's Declaration contributed to defining the notion of America for its discourse community.) Every new text has the potential to alter the Text in some way; in fact, every text admitted into a discourse community changes the constitution of the community—and discourse communities can revise their discursive practices, as the Mendel and Frost examples suggest.

Writing is an attempt to exercise the will, to identify the self within the constraints of some discourse community. We are constrained insofar as we must inevitably borrow the traces, codes, and signs which we inherit and which our discourse community imposes. We are free insofar as we do what we can to encounter and learn new codes, to intertwine codes in new ways, and to expand our semiotic potential—with our goal being to effect change and establish our identities within the discourse communities we choose to enter.

The Pedagogy of Intertextuality

Intertextuality is not new. It may remind some of Eliot's notion of tradition, though the parameters are certainly broader. It is an important concept, though. It counters what I see as one prevailing composition pedagogy, one favoring a romantic image of the writer, offering as role models the creative essayists, the Sunday Supplement freelancers, the Joan Didions, E. B. Whites, Calvin Trillins, and Russell Bakers. This dashing image appeals to our need for intellectual heroes; but underlying it may be an anti-rhetorical view: that writers are born, not made; that writing is individual, isolated, and internal; not social but eccentric.

This view is firmly set in the intertext of our discipline. Our anthologies glorify the individual essayists, whose work is valued for its timelessness and creativity. Freshman rhetorics announce as the writer's proper goals personal insight, originality, and personal voice, or tell students that motivations for writing come from "within." Generally, this pedagogy assumes that such a thing as the writer actually exists—an autonomous writer exercising a free, creative will through the writing act—and that the writing process proceeds linearly from writer to text to reader. This partial picture of the process can all too readily become *the* picture, and our students can all too readily learn to overlook vital facets of discourse production.

When we romanticize composition by overemphasizing the autonomy of the writer, important questions are overlooked, the same questions an intertextual

view of writing would provoke: To what extent is the writer's product itself a part of a larger community writing process? How does the discourse community influence writers and readers within it? These are essential questions, but are perhaps outside the prevailing episteme of composition pedagogy, which presupposes the autonomous status of the writer as independent *cogito*. Talking about writing in terms of "social forces influencing the writer" raises the specter of determinism, and so is anathema.

David Bartholomae summarizes this issue very nicely: "The struggle of the student writer is not the struggle to bring out that which is within; it is the struggle to carry out those ritual activities that grant our entrance into a closed society" (300). When we teach writing only as the act of "bringing out what is within," we risk undermining our own efforts. Intertextuality reminds us that "carrying out ritual activities" is also part of the writing process. Barthes reminds us that "the 'I' which approaches the text is already itself a plurality of other texts, of codes which are infinite" (10).

Intertextuality suggests that our goal should be to help students learn to write for the discourse communities they choose to join. Students need help developing out of what Joseph Williams calls their "pre-socialized cognitive states." According to Williams, pre-socialized writers are not sufficiently immersed in their discourse community to produce competent discourse: They do not know what can be presupposed, are not conscious of the distinctive intertextuality of the community, may be only superficially acquainted with explicit conventions. (Williams cites the example of the freshman whose paper for the English teacher begins "Shakespeare is a famous Elizabethan dramatist.") Our immediate goal is to produce "socialized writers," who are full-fledged members of their discourse community, producing competent, useful discourse within that community. Our long-range goal might be "post-socialized writers," those who have achieved such a degree of confidence, authority, power, or achievement in the discourse community so as to become part of the regulating body. They are able to vary conventions and question assumptions—i.e., effect change in communities—without fear of exclusion.

Intertextuality has the potential to affect all facets of our composition pedagogy. Certainly it supports writing across the curriculum as a mechanism for introducing students to the regulating systems of discourse communities. It raises questions about heuristics: Do different discourse communities apply different heuristics? It asserts the value of critical reading in the composition classroom. It requires that we rethink our ideas about plagiarism: Certainly *imitatio* is an important stage in the linguistic development of the writer.

The most significant application might be in the area of audience analysis. Current pedagogies assume that when writers analyze audiences they should

focus on the expected flesh-and-blood readers. Intertextuality suggests that the proper focus of audience analysis is not the audience as receivers per se, but the intertext of the discourse community. Instead of collecting demographic data about age, educational level, and social status, the writer might instead ask questions about the intertext: What are the conventional presuppositions of this community? In what forums do they assemble? What are the methodological assumptions? What is considered “evidence,” “valid argument,” and “proof”? A sample heuristic for such an analysis—what I term “forum analysis”—is included as an appendix.

A critical reading of the discourse of a community may be the best way to understand it. (We see a version of this message in the advice to examine a journal before submitting articles for publication.) Traditionally, anthologies have provided students with reading material. However, the typical anthologies have two serious problems: (1) limited range—generally they overemphasize literary or expressive discourse; (2) unclear context—they frequently remove readings from their original contexts, thus disguising their intertextual nature. Several recently published readers have attempted to provide a broader selection of readings in various forums, and actually discuss intertextuality. Maimon’s *Readings in the Arts and Sciences*, Kinneavy’s *Writing in the Liberal Arts Tradition*, and Bazerman’s *The Informed Writer* are especially noteworthy.

Writing assignments should be explicitly intertextual. If we regard each written product as a stage in a larger process—the dialectic process within a discourse community—then the individual writer’s work is part of a web, part of a community search for truth and meaning. Writing assignments might take the form of dialogue with other writers: Writing letters in response to articles is one kind of dialectic (e.g., letters responding to *Atlantic Monthly* or *Science* articles). Research assignments might be more community oriented rather than topic oriented; students might be asked to become involved in communities of researchers (e.g., the sociologists examining changing religious attitudes in American college students). The assignments in Maimon’s *Writing in the Arts and Sciences* are excellent in this regard.

Intertextual theory suggests that the key criteria for evaluating writing should be “acceptability” within some discourse community. “Acceptability” includes, but goes well beyond, adherence to formal conventions. It includes choosing the “right” topic, applying the appropriate critical methodology, adhering to standards for evidence and validity, and in general adopting the community’s discourse values—and of course borrowing the appropriate traces. Success is measured by the writer’s ability to know what can be presupposed and to borrow that community’s traces effectively to create a text that contributes to the maintenance or, possibly, the definition of the community.

The writer is constrained by the community, and by its intertextual preferences and prejudices, but the effective writer works to assert the will against those community constraints to effect change.

The Pepsi commercial and the Kent State news article show effective uses of the intertext. In the Kent State piece, John Kifner mixes picnic imagery (“grassy campus gathering spot,” “young people”) with violent imagery (“burst of gunfire”) to dramatize the event. The Pepsi ad writers combine two unlikely sets of traces, linking folksy depression-era American imagery with sci-fi imagery “stolen” from Spielberg. For this creative intertwining of traces, both discourses can probably be measured successful in their respective forums.

Coda

Clearly much of what intertextuality supports is already institutionalized (e.g., writing-across-the-curriculum programs). And yet, in freshman comp texts and anthologies especially, there is this tendency to see writing as individual, as isolated, as heroic. Even after demonstrating quite convincingly that the Declaration was written by a team freely borrowing from a cultural intertext, Elaine Maimon insists, against all the evidence she herself has collected, that “Despite the additions, deletions, and changes in wording that it went through, the Declaration is still Jefferson’s writing” (*Readings* 26). Her saying this presupposes that the reader has just concluded the opposite.

When we give our students romantic role models like E. B. White, Joan Didion, and Lewis Thomas, we create unrealistic expectations. This type of writer has often achieved post-socialized status within some discourse community (Thomas in the scientific community, for instance). Can we realistically expect our students to achieve this state without first becoming socialized, without learning first what it means to write within a social context? Their role models ought not be only romantic heroes but also community writers like Jefferson, the anonymous writers of the Pepsi commercial—the Adsos of the world, not just the Aristotles. They need to see writers whose products are more evidently part of a larger process and whose work more clearly produces meaning in social contexts.

Notes

¹The dangers of defining intertextuality too simplistically are discussed by Owen Miller in “Intertextual Identity,” *Identity of the Literary Text*, ed. Mario J. Valdés and Owen Miller (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1985), 19-40. Miller points out that intertextuality “addresses itself to a plurality of concepts” (19).

²For fuller discussion see Jonathan Culler, *The Pursuit of Signs* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1981), 100-16. Michael Halliday elaborates on the theory of presupposition somewhat, too, differentiating between exophoric and endophoric presupposition. The meaning of any text at least partly relies on exophoric references, i.e., external presuppositions. Endophoric references in the form of cohesive devices and connections within a text also affect meaning, but cohesion in a text depends ultimately on the audience making exophoric connections to prior texts, connections that may not be cued by explicit cohesive devices. See M. A. K. Halliday and Ruqaiya Hasan, *Cohesion in English* (London: Longman, 1976).

³Miller cautions us about intertextuality and *post hoc ergo propter hoc* reasoning. All we can safely note is that phrases in the Declaration also appear in other, earlier documents. Whether or not the borrowing was intentional on Jefferson's part or whether the prior documents "caused" the Declaration (in any sense of the word) is not ascertainable.

⁴Robert Scholes puts it this way: "If you play chess, you can only do certain things with the pieces, otherwise you are not playing chess. But those constraints do not in themselves tell you what moves to make." See *Textual Power* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1985), 153.

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APPENDIX

Forum Analysis

Background

- Identify the forum by name and organizational affiliation.
- Is there an expressed editorial policy, philosophy, or expression of belief? What purpose does the forum serve? Why does it exist?
- What is the disciplinary orientation?
- How large is the forum? Who are its members? Its leaders? Its readership?
- In what manner does the forum assemble (e.g., newsletter, journal, conference, weekly meeting)? How frequently?
- What is the origin of the forum? Why did it come into existence? What is its history? Its political background? Its traditions?
- What reputation does the forum have among its own members? How is it regarded by others?

Discourse Conventions

Who Speaks/Writes?

- Who is granted status as speaker/writer? Who decides who speaks/writes in the forum? By what criteria are speakers/writers selected?
- What kind of people speak/write in this forum? Credentials? Disciplinary orientation? Academic or professional background?
- Who are the important figures in this forum? Whose work or experience is most frequently cited?
- What are the important sources cited in the forum? What are the key works, events, experiences that it is assumed members of the forum know?

To Whom Do They Speak/Write?

- Who is addressed in the forum? What are the characteristics of the assumed audience?
- What are the audience's needs assumed to be? To what use(s) is the audience expected to put the information?
- What is the audience's background assumed to be? Level of proficiency, experience, and knowledge of subject matter? Credentials?
- What are the beliefs, attitudes, values, prejudices of the addressed audience?

What Do They Speak/Write About?

- What topics or issues does the forum consider? What are allowable subjects? What topics are valued?
- What methodology or methodologies are accepted? Which theoretical approach is preferred: deduction (theoretical argumentation) or induction (evidence)?
- What constitutes "validity," "evidence," and "proof" in the forum (e.g., personal experience/observation, testing and measurement, theoretical or statistical analysis)?

How Do They Say/Write It?

Form

- What types of discourse does the forum admit (e.g., articles, reviews, speeches, poems)? How long are the discourses?
- What are the dominant modes of organization?

—What formatting conventions are present: headings, tables and graphs, illustrations, abstracts?

Style

- What documentation form(s) is used?
- Syntactic characteristics?
- Technical or specialized jargon? Abbreviations?
- Tone? What stance do writers/speakers take relative to audience?
- Manuscript mechanics?

Other Considerations?



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