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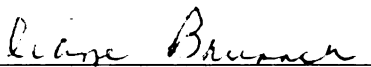
GENRE THEORY, NARRATIVE THEORY, AND  
ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT MULTIGENRE WRITING

presented by

MICHELLE TREMMEL

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**GENRE THEORY, NARRATIVE THEORY,  
AND ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT MULTIGENRE WRITING**

**By**

**Michelle Tremmel**

**A DISSERTATION**

**Submitted to  
Michigan State University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of**

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

**Department of English**

**2003**



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## ABSTRACT

### GENRE THEORY, NARRATIVE THEORY, AND ASSUMPTIONS ABOUT MULTIGENRE WRITING

By

Michelle Tremmel

The starting point for this project is a writing assignment—the multigenre paper—that purports to offer an “alternative” to a “traditional” research paper. As a classroom activity, the assignment has been characterized as a radical departure from and rebellion against the conventions and “objective” tone of “the” research paper, with much written about how to teach the assignment. This study steps away from pedagogy to examine the multigenre paper and, more broadly, the concept of “multigenre” through recent genre theories; M.M. Bakhtin’s theories of language and literature; and other theories of narrative and intertextuality, particularly those of Julia Kristeva and Roland Barthes. It also analyzes student writing (both so-called “traditional” school forms and multigenre papers) through the lens of these theories. Specifically, the study explores the following questions: 1) How do multigenre papers “work,” in theoretical terms? 2) How is the concept of multigenre both constraining and generative? 3) How are multigenre papers different from other ostensibly more “traditional” school forms? and 4) How can learning about multigenerality operating in wider contexts enrich the multigenre paper assignment? Findings of the study suggest that self-consciously multigeneric compositions simulate the qualities of genre systems that some genre theorists have discussed. They enact the dialogism of language theorized by Bakhtin and exhibit qualities he attributed to the polyphonic novel. And they are narrative in three senses: 1) they create a plot in ways described by narratologists; 2) they encourage narrative thinking; and 3) as a postmodern narrative, they challenge grand narratives that delineate

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acceptable academic writing. In addition, they graphically illustrate the concept of intertextuality. Similarly but perhaps most importantly, the student-writing part of the study shows that intertextuality, multivocality, and multigenerality are not exclusive to multigenre writing (nor will they automatically result because a teacher assigns a multigenre paper). Instead, this study suggests that if we listen, we may hear many, varied voices in texts often characterized as monologic and monogeneric (and sometimes set against the so-called multigenre paper). Finally, and perhaps most emphatically, it shows that such dichotomizing of “traditional” and “alternative” may be unproductive in helping students learn the complexities of writing.

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**to my husband Bob  
and daughters Courtney and Laurel**

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

No text is univocal, and this dissertation is no exception. Consequently, I would like to recognize those people who have added their voices to the chorus of my text. First, thank you to the 81 eleventh- and twelfth-grade students who agreed to take part in my study and allowed me to listen to the voices in their writing.

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## CHAPTER 1: THE PROBLEM OF MULTIGENRE PAPERS

The starting point for this project is a writing assignment—the multigenre paper—that offers an “alternative” way to a “traditional” research or term paper for students to engage in and report on some kind of research. In fact, most names for the assignment include the word research because its process often involves students using secondary, and sometimes primary, sources. For most teachers who use it as a classroom activity, the multigenre research paper assignment represents a fairly radical departure from and rebellion against the conventional formatting and objective tone of “the” research paper, a staple of American college and high school writing classes for as long as anyone teaching today can remember. However, the rather firm line drawn between this so-called “alternative” and other “traditional” academic writing seems questionable if we examine the assignment’s use in more depth, explore broader conceptions of multigenicity, and look at “the” multigenre paper in the context of the theories of genre, narrative, and intertextuality.

In this opening chapter, I first will provide a short history of the research paper in American schools and colleges, including objections to it and alternatives. In this history I intend to do two things: 1) contextualize the multigenre paper assignment as “alternative” to other “standard” academic discourses (e.g. expository school essays and research papers) and 2) to suggest that setting multigenre papers (or any other “alternative” that one might propose) against “traditional” school writings in a rigid dichotomy is simplistic and problematic from a postmodern perspective. Next, I will discuss how students’ and teachers’ reactions to the assignment may be perpetuating a kind of dualistic thinking about multigenre writing. Then I will outline my view of this duality and the parameters of my study. Finally, I will close the chapter by defining multigenre compositions and applying genre theories developed over the last twenty years in composition studies to multigenre writing, finishing with an introduction of the specific topics of the remaining

chapters of the dissertation. In all this work, I hope to complicate and unsettle the construct of “the multigenre paper” as a way to reclaim any disruptive potential it may have.

### “The” Research Paper, Objections, and Alternatives

Research writing in American schools and colleges did not start out as the ritualistic, formulaic exercise that almost from the beginning has drawn criticism. Rather, in the mid to late nineteenth century, it had lofty goals for meaningful research as part of the movement to modernize our universities, a reform that superimposed the German model of graduate education on an American system earlier borrowed from the British. This new, “modern” university valued the making of knowledge, some “original contribution” to one’s discipline in the form of written dissertations and theses rather than the oral “display” of learned knowledge created by others, a common practice under the old system (Russell 79-80).

However, since such a research ideal did not fit all the large and diverse population of undergraduates flooding the new university very well, research writing moved fairly quickly away from its egalitarian, creative roots, and by “the 1910s the research paper began to harden into its familiar form” (Russell 87). By 1920, in freshman composition courses, it served as a tool to wean students away from “personal” writing in order to acclimate and train them in academic discourse practices. In this way, research writing became “the research paper,” what Robert Connors has called “practice in the game of intellectual property rights” (Composition-Rhetoric 322). The assignment, primarily a vehicle for teachers to test students’ abilities to “amas[s] brute facts for regurgitation,” forced a novice writer into the role of knowledge “medium” rather than knowledge “originator” (321-22). In this way, it fulfilled a goal of “Modern composition-rhetoric”: to teach students “to explore the library or the words of the world, not timeless wisdom or his [sic] own experience” (322). As it became “apprentice work,” not creating “knowledge as much as reporting the known” (Davis and Shadle 423), the research

paper's formal "conventions" developed in attempts to teach students "the entire process of 'ethical' research"; however, such conventions soon overshadowed the creative potential of the research (Connors, Composition-Rhetoric 321). Thus, "the research or term paper atrophied as a genre of student writing and gained a reputation as a hollow formal exercise" (Russell 88). Instead of creativity, teachers latched on to the "grateful mass of practical formal material for which they could hold students responsible--the minutiae of formats, footnotes, bibliographies, citation forms, and so on" (Connors, Composition- Rhetoric 322).

As one might expect, given the questioning nature of the academy, it did not take long after the establishment of the research paper assignment, at both the college and high school levels by the 1930s (Russell 89), for some to raise objections to its "contrived and templated way of writing" (Davis and Shadle 425). In fact, as early as 1936, compositionists criticized "the" research paper for its failure to "stimulat[e . . .] independent thinking" (Bader 667) or to achieve an "impress of the students' minds upon their material (668); its lack of "real value"; and its contribution to careless, often "dishonest writing" (Stevenson 1030). Even earlier than that, a study published in 1931 reported that 66 percent of students surveyed at Kansas State Teachers College said the activity gave few benefits (Brown and Baldwin 311).

Some objections to "the" research paper have stemmed from a belief that in learning its "minutiae," students sacrifice (knowingly or unknowingly) any attempt at thinking imaginatively and originally. According to this argument, once they learn "the form," students "are content to do what they know how to do: present the knowledge made by others, write within set conventions, and produce what they have been conditioned to believe teachers want" (Davis and Shadle 425). Other arguments for doing away with research paper instruction in freshman composition courses have cited its invitation to plagiarism—a concern that first emerged in 1884 (Connors, Composition-Rhetoric 321)—the way it crowds out other important curricular material, and its

participation in the objectionable view of first-year writing as a “service course” for the university (Ford and Perry 826).

Still others have railed against research papers in first-year composition and upper division high school English courses because they are numbingly uninteresting and basically meaningless to both students and teachers. This argument claims that research papers become, in too many instances, a reductive, highly mechanical and linear process, a “classic scissors-and-paste” (Kraus 1), “clip and stitch” activity that results in “at best, a pale caricature of what it is supposed to be and, at worst, a kind of exquisite torture for student and teacher alike (Dellinger 31). It “turns a good writer into a bad one” and vibrant and compelling prose into an “empty, lifeless, and ritualistic performance” (Ballenger 3).

As Ken Macrorie wrote in an op-ed piece for the New York Times on September 3, 1979, “all the lists of reference books and instructions on how to make note cards and bibliographies that textbooks have presented [since the 1930s] do not result in well-documented, useful undergraduate research papers” (iii). Instead, he says, they are “bad jokes,” papers that do not establish anything” in the spirit of real research but are written sloppily, “unsystematically, [and] impatiently” because the assignment has destroyed the most important element of research”: “natural curiosity” (161, 55). To remedy this “farce” of “re-search,” Macrorie offered during the 1970s “I Search [. . .] the truth of any inquiry” and the assignment based on that idea, which teachers today still use in classrooms across the country. The I-Search paper promised a way to re-infuse “motivation” and the “itch of curiosity” and to balance objectivity and subjectivity in research writing (162). This promise ten years later or so became key justification for the multigenre paper assignment. However, all these objections to “the” research paper and proposed alternatives, some offered well before Macrorie’s I-search paper, have also created the construct of “the” research paper as a monolithic, unchanging form that can be criticized (often in blanket ways) and rejected in favor of some other “alternative”

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assignment. The problem with such reification of the “traditional” is that it has pitted it against the “alternative” in an artificial way inconsistent with what we know from postmodern discourse theories about the complexities of writing. It has created a too-rigid line between those school writings deemed “traditional” and those considered innovative that does neither justice. Thus we have today, on one side, a wholehearted belief in “the” research paper and, on the other, a resistance movement that portrays the assignment as a “bad guy” of academic writing. Given its long-standing existence, this conflict is difficult to disrupt and continues into the present.

Indeed, the conflict spans seventy years, with teachers like Macrorie calling for more authentic research practices for students and expressing skepticism about the value of this writing assignment staple. Such skepticism participates in a “legacy of complaint [. . .] probably unmatched by any other single writing assignment” (Ballenger 4), and carried on by others since Macrorie, perpetuating dualistic thinking about “academic” vs. “alternative” discourses. For example, in a 1982 College English article, Robert A. Schwegler and Linda K. Shamoan reiterate some of the same objections to undergraduate research papers we have already heard. In addition, they report that teachers in their department at the University of Rhode Island no longer “do the research paper” because the results are “so often disappointing and because they believe that freshmen and sophomores may not be sophisticated enough to do the kind of thinking necessary for a worthwhile research paper.” In all, they claim that the process seems beyond students’ intellectual reach and that the task of trying to meld source material with their own ideas to argue a position is just too “complex and overwhelming” (817). In an even more radical piece, Tom Nash suggests that since teachers most care about the documentation conventions of the traditional research paper, we should just teach those, having students write “fake” research papers with totally fabricated information. To him, doing so seems a much better idea than our current practice because “[r]arely, for unsophisticated writers, do both research and composing successes converge in the same paper” (68). Though



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perhaps intriguing, Nash's "alternative" in its removal of any meaningful substance emphasizes the hollowness and unreality of "the" research paper construct and even more the emptiness of the duality of "traditional" versus "alternative" in which it participates.

In a famous attack on the "research paper," Richard Larson's use of quotation marks around the construct also shows this practice of setting up a single, unchanging form of research writing (even though, given its wide use, it undoubtedly exists in many variations) in order to argue against it. He contends that the "research paper" is not a viable "concept" because it "has no formal identity, [. . .] no substantive identity and no procedural identity" and because as traditionally taught, it misrepresents "the activities of both research and writing" (812, 814). Particularly, Larson takes issue with the way the "generic 'research paper'" sets itself up as "separate": separate from other kinds of writing and separate from life. He objects to the way it communicates to students that research is a kind of exercise, an activity that only involves "looking up books in the library and taking down information from these books" and never involves their own experiences or touches their lives (813).

We should not be in the business, Larson believes, of teaching a kind of writing that functions solely as a "messenger service." We should not be saying to a student "that for this one assignment, this one project, he or she has to go somewhere (usually the library), get out some materials, make some notes, and present them to the customer neatly wrapped in footnotes and bibliography tied together according to someone's notion of a style sheet." Instead, Larson argues we can better serve the university and its students and "advance [their] humanistic and liberal education" by encouraging them to pay close attention to their own experiences and ideas and to find ways to support and develop them with information they gather not just in books but "wherever it can be found" (816). Though these goals for student research seem laudable, Larson's article exemplifies the problem of creating a construct that not only misrepresents the varied nature of practice but that, he admits, does not exist (has no form, substance, or

procedure, according to his claims) except as a “straw man” established in the argument in order to knock it down.

What this summary of objections to “the research paper” means to show is that almost from its beginning as an institutional practice, we find a “recurring debate among composition teachers over whether the research paper should be taught at all [. . .]” (Russell 91). This debate that continues into the present—with eighty-two percent of first-year composition programs still requiring research-paper instruction (Sutton)—discusses “the” research paper as though it is a single, basically unchanging entity. In addition, it has established a problematically good/bad, either/or dichotomy (solidified over more than fifty years) between it and something else offered as a different and usually superior “alternative.” One early example of this dichotomizing is Harold R. Nissley’s 1944 suggestion to abandon “the” research paper in favor of “illustrated term projects” in the form of photographs mounted on slides so that students not experienced or knowledgeable in standard practices of scholarship could handle research reporting (19). And fairly consistently, those objecting to “the” research paper have offered such ideas, particularly since the late 1960s as technology has rapidly developed and postmodern challenges to authoritarian, positivistic conceptions of writing have become the norm (cf. Cook and McElhiney; Culbertson; B. Miller; O’Connor). In addition, this trend of trying to find ways to make undergraduate and secondary students’ academic work (including research) personally meaningful, real, and useful has continued, with such groups as expressivists and feminists questioning what counts as academic writing and what validity such assignments as “the” research paper have.

Indeed, the past seventy years have seen a rather long conversation about this assignment that exhibits a tension between the dichotomy of personal versus academic writing, of writing as expression of self versus that of initiation into discourse communities, and of “writer/academic, present/absent, central/peripheral” (Welsh 104). In this spirit of rebellion such ideas have waxed and waned according to various social and

educational shifts. From conservative “standards” and traditional pedagogies to “alternatives” to “the” research paper—like Macrorie’s I-Search, Winston Weather’s “alternate style” pedagogy, Lillian Bridwell-Bowles and others’ call for “experimental” and “transformative” writing in the academy—new ideas about academic writing have emerged. The so-called multigenre paper, the research paper “alternative” that interests me at present and on which this dissertation focuses, fits into this context. But it also brings up a problem this dissertation means to address. Since the common characteristic of all these “alternatives” is that they set themselves up in opposition to “the” research paper, they establish an artificial dichotomy of “traditional”/“academic” vs. “alternative,” with notions such as negative, stultifying, inflexible, and constraining often associated with the former, and positive, freeing, creative, and generative associated with the latter. If we consider various school writing assignments, this rigid dichotomy, however, does not seem to hold and may even threaten the disruptive potential of so-called alternatives like “the” multigenre paper assignment by creating another construct and reifying the concept of multigenerality.

#### Intentions of and Reactions to Multigenre Papers

The multigenre paper assignment as defined by Tom Romano, established as a new form of writing, and used in various grade-school through graduate-school settings, has students 1) choose some kind of topic, 2) research that topic (with the term research interpreted broadly), and 3) report their research in a composition that comprises a collection of shorter pieces in different recognizable genres (e.g. poems, letters, editorials, memos, short fiction, essays) to tell the “story” of its chosen subject. It tries to approach research reporting in a way different from what most teachers would describe as a sustained expository discussion of the investigation—though, drawing on M.M. Bakhtin’s theories of the dialogism of all language, I will later explore how the problem of calling expository, or any other kind of writing monologically sustained continues the division between genres that Bakhtin saw as falsely dichotomous. Even though the

multigenre paper assignment invites students to write in a wide range of genres from the oral and written discourses beyond school, in the workplace, in the community, at home, in people's leisure activities, and so on, it does not question the way in which genres act as a set of directions or divide work problematically. Rather, "the" multigenre paper simply constructs another form that amasses its own set of directions, problems, boundaries, and the like as it continues to be used. Though meant to provide a framework for bringing together outside research with what students have within themselves from their out-of-school lives and experiences and what they care about, it may not disrupt or blur divisions between genres since it is itself a generic construct.

In addition, the multigenre paper assignment purports to challenge students to handle research material more critically, rhetorically, and imaginatively than at least some manifestations of "the" research paper allow. In encouraging quirky, unconventional, open-ended, creative thinking, researching, and writing, the idea of a multigenre paper intends to disrupt the concept of "correct" school essay or research paper format. However, whether it does or not is under consideration here since, if we believe Bakhtin, all texts are inherently multivocalic and teachers are always teaching multigeneric texts whether they assign personal narrative, "the" traditional research paper, or a five-paragraph theme. In other words, unless writers are pushed to do otherwise, I propose (and my examples of student writing in Chapters 4 and 5 show) that they already bring in "other" voices that assist in the creation of their texts. According to Bakhtin, because language itself is dialogical—a two-sided act—texts are always already dialogical. And since our utterances—and their conventionalized, relatively stable counterparts speech genres—construct themselves from words that contain the residues of many other uses guided by our new "speech plan," all texts may exhibit multigenicity.

Nonetheless, without realizing this inherent multivocality and multigenicity of all writing and attracted by what they see as the assignment's differences from other school forms and its creative potential, teachers over the last ten years and in a wide variety of

secondary and college undergraduate and graduate English courses, as well as other settings (e.g. middle-school classrooms, ninth-grade social studies, American government, Spanish literature, and other college-level general education courses) have adopted the multigenre paper assignment into their classrooms for a variety of reasons. They believe that it allows students to put “personal stamps” on their research (Romano, Writing 130) and gives them deeper “insights into opposing views” and better “control” over source material than more conventional research papers do (Moneysmith and Johnson). They say it encourages interdisciplinarity and serves as a “model for [. . .] holistic learning,” causing readers and writers to become partners in inquiry (Davis and Shadle 432). Moreover, they claim it acts as a vehicle for students to meld “practical skills and creative thinking” (Moulton 539) and pushes them to “synthesize the information about their subject instead of just becoming familiar with it” (Ballard 45). And it “empowers” students to “assume ownership of their learning [and] display pride” (C. Allen 1). Such enthusiasm is infectious; however, in arguing for adoption of this assignment into classrooms, it also participates in perpetuating the idea that the “traditional” fails to accomplish these goals and reifies “the” multigenre paper as a “thing” that does.

Students’ highly positive reactions to the multigenre paper assignment perpetuate this good/bad duality, as well. Conversations that I have had with students themselves and with their teachers about such reactions show that students view multigenre papers as a novel break from and a contrast to standard school forms of writing that bore or intimidate them, and oftentimes the effort of writing multigenre papers does not even seem like “work” because it allows them to put a substantial amount of their own individuality into what they create. In experimenting with different modes for presenting what they learn, they report an immersion of themselves into their subject (an exploration from the inside out) in the way the assignment draws them into complex interactions with their subjects. They also like the opportunity to experiment with different genres, playing around with writerly voice and purpose and audience, with different approaches

to handling material and organization, and with different formal conventions. In addition, many students find the process a kind of challenging puzzle that keeps them interested, results in papers they say are important to them, and causes some to work on them even after graduation (Davis and Shadle 437). As one student put it, "I have written many research papers and remained unchanged by the information I gathered, but writing the multigenre paper created an intensity and passion about my subject that made all that I learned a part of me--how I feel, how I think, how I know what I know" (Cunningham 54). Again, though we may appreciate such unequivocal enthusiasm for the assignment, we may also recognize rigid dichotomizing lurking behind the praise.

#### Adding to the Multigenre Experience: Problems and Possibilities

Such perceptions of "the" multigenre research paper as novel and "alternative" are predicated on the notion that the writing that results from this assignment is different from the forms against which it has been set, that they are "bad," or at least stale and rigid, (because they contain the weaknesses discussed earlier in the chapter in connection with "the" research paper) and that "the" multigenre paper assignment is "good," or at least better in allowing choice and freedom (because it manages to escape these problems). That dualistic assumption, at least from what I can tell in talking to teachers and reading the books and articles written about how they use the assignment in their classrooms, has been to this point unexamined. Thus, as part of my study, I will probe that assumption in light of actual student writing and various theories of discourse, genre, and narrative that complicate such dichotomizing of form. A dualizing that pits "academic" discourse against its "alternatives," artificially drawing a line between the two and portraying academic genres as monolithic and unchanging, it seems to me, is too simplistic and does not represent the intricate complexities of these discourses particularly well.

What Sidney Dobrin, one of a number of scholars writing recently about "hybrid," "mixed," or "alternative" discourses as "reactions to academic discourse" (45) says in "A Problem with Writing (about) 'Alternative' Discourse" may be instructive. Arguing from

the viewpoint of “paralogic rhetoric,” he claims that since all “communicators” use their past communication experiences to form “passing theories” to help them function in some “current communicative/discursive scenario” (a scenario unique to the moment) no discourse is static. In reality, “all discourses (be they academic discourses, public discourses, personal discourses) are never stagnant long enough to codify, study, identify characteristics, label in ways that allow us to identify parent discourses or mixed variants” (52). Instead, though some think and talk about academic discourses like “the” research paper as rigid and formulaic in order to contrast multigenre papers to it, if we accept Dobrin’s argument—as well as Bakhtin’s arguments about the inherent dialogism of language and Julia Kristeva’s theories about the geno- and phenotext (to be discussed in greater detail in Chapters 2 and 3)—we may realize that such thinking is an analytical convenience if not a curricular one and that such a duality does not hold. As Dobrin points out, “discourses such as academic discourse are not mono-discursive entities; they exist as amalgams, anomalies, hybrids in a continual state of flux, (re)invention, (re)inscription” (52).

Consequently, despite the enthusiastic testimonials from elementary, secondary and post-secondary teachers and their students across the country from New Hampshire to Oregon, New York to Texas, Florida to Minnesota, as well as some tangible differences between multigenre papers these students are writing and other more conventional papers, the either-or line drawn between this writing and more “traditional” school forms seems questionable. By examining student papers, both those labeled “multigenre” and those not, we may be able to study the extent to which these school writings coincide and differ and how much in a school setting a multigenre paper actually does manage to escape the rigid, “templated” forms to which it objects. Though others have implied a “good-guy/bad-guy relationship” between some school forms like “the” expository essay<sup>1</sup> and “the” research paper, I propose that we may better understand the writing assignments we give students if we avoid setting up such binaries.



Therein, however, lies another problem. Even if we accept, for a moment, the idea of a broad family of “alternative” discourses cropping up in the academy, which at least in some ways look different, behave differently, and accomplish different work than “academic” discourse with its “most standard or widely accepted features reflect[ing] the cultural preferences of the most powerful people in the community (Bizzell 1)—though as we have seen from Dobrin, this may be troublesome—we still face a problem in discussing an alternative to academic discourse like multigenre writing in a piece of academic discourse like a dissertation. Indeed, to try to talk about multigenre writing as a revolt against academic writing seems somehow strange and jarring, like an inescapable paradox that we must acknowledge but cannot ultimately avoid, especially in the context of academic writing (i.e. a dissertation). Moreover, this paradox readily makes Bakhtin’s and Kristeva’s point about the “lie of the lexicon” or the failure of language to critique without constituting that which it critiques. In addition, language itself, which often privileges logical argument and painstaking analysis (both of which force us to take apart complex problems for examination and understanding), creates further challenges for me in adding another layer of mind-boggling tension between a topic like multigenre writing that bristles at such an approach and the analytical approach itself. Though exploring multigenre papers as “alternative” to “traditional” research papers is far less troublesome than Dobrin’s attempt to discuss Hélène Cixous’s proposal that women need to create their own discourse, an écriture féminine, to “break with phallogentric discourses and produce a feminine writing unlike any male-centered writing, a kind of writing that disrupts the historical notion of what writing is” (48), my trying to discuss multigenre writing in the context of academic discourse seems an analogous problem. As Dobrin says, “feminine writing cannot be identified by, theorized by, codified by, and ultimately possessed by academic discourse, a phallogentric discourse” (49). In the same way, using conventional academic writing (i.e. a dissertation) to tease out the workings of a so-called alternative discourse (like multigenre writing) that tries to disrupt convention poses a

dilemma. The discussion of such a dilemma also points out Dobrin's and my inability to talk about one thing (écriture féminine or multigenre writing) without contrasting it to something else (academic discourse). Invoking the binary of academic/ nonacademic here, however, is a matter of convention. In doing so I do not mean to reconstitute the binary but to recognize the problem while also trying to critique such formulaic thinking. I intend to suggest that such polarization is useless, although Bakhtin himself could not escape such binarisms as monologic/dialogic even while he tried to challenge them.

Another challenge in taking on the topic of multigenre writing is that the concept or idea, the theory or ideal of multigenicity may differ from its manifestation. Specifically, multigenre writing that results from a school assignment in a classroom, because of the constraints that any graded assignment puts on a piece of student writing, as well as other factors I will discuss in more detail in Chapters 4, 5 and 6, may actually perpetuate the kinds of supposedly monogeneric qualities it means to disrupt. In other words, talking about multigeneric language seems at least in part different from talking about the multigenre-paper-as-school-assignment, and, as such, necessitates a distinction between the two (though I in no way mean this distinction to be hard and fast). Therefore, I am using two sets of terms: "multigenre writing," "multigenre," or "multigenicity" to represent the concept and "multigenre paper," "multigeneric work," or "multigenre composition" to denote classroom and other manifestations of the concept. But I do this only to attempt to argue against, not to validate, an already polarized way of seeing writing and language that has participated in setting up the construct of "multigenre paper" against other ostensibly nonmultigeneric kinds of writing.

In my project, I intend to step aside from the how-to-focused literature on multigenre papers to explore if and how multigenre writing participates in the ideas theorists working in the areas of genre, narrative, and intertextuality have discovered over the past twenty or more years. Though conceived of as a revolutionary way to shake up academic writing, in particular exposition (Romano Passion 3), the so-called multigenre

paper assignment's ability to do so is still debatable and presents an interesting problem for a dissertation for two reasons. First, as a relatively new kind of school writing, its study, though problematic, is relevant to my interest in both teaching and composition. Second, because it has been set against other, more "traditional" school writing, studying it allows us to question the validity of viewing those more conventional writings as rigid and monolithic, thus exploring the "alternative-ness" and revolutionary potential of multigenre papers.

In this study, I am calling into question the "multigenre paper" because its curricularization forces it into the same constraints that all genres face. Also, by considering "multigeneric" not just in terms of classroom writings but as the multivoiced, dialogic language that it already is, the inside/outside dichotomies of classroom and wider society may begin to blur, and we may reach a wider understanding of writing as particular uses of language. In other words, if we conceive of language in its broadest terms, the particular needs and language uses of classroom writing may seem less troublesome. Also, a breaking down of barriers between writing inside and outside of school may cultivate the kind of thinking that will eventually help teachers to do away with dichotomies that serve no purpose (i.e. such oppositional constructs as academic/personal writing or exposition/narration, etc.). Within the "universe of discourse" (Moffett), such distinctions serve only to contain, to exert control, to erect a system of valuation. In this way, school work is already unremittingly related to the uses of language in the wider society, a microcosm of society with its "will to truth" and its "order of discourse" (Foucault 1156, 1161).

As a participant in this "will" and "order," the routines of school are firmly established. Consequently, making teachers and students aware of anything that may be going on in writing will not necessarily translate directly into a change in practice. Anyway, that is not my goal. However, from my experience as a teacher for the last twenty-five years, I believe thinking and reflecting in and of themselves to be worthwhile;

and a study that shifts attention away from the “how-to” of multigenre papers, where writing about the topic has concentrated to this point, to an exploration of how and why they might illustrate theories of genre, narrative, and intertextuality may help us to think more complexly about school writing and to continue to remove barriers between it and writing in the world beyond. Further, it may suggest new ways we can approach the assignment to help students see what writing, reading, and research can mean to them as fundamental parts of their lived lives. We cannot escape the fact that a multigenre paper, regardless of how innovative, is itself a situated genre. Still, I see value in examining “multigenre paper,” looking at what is behind the assignment that attempts to complicate school-assigned research and connect it to research done for wider purposes. Such an exploration may serve as a chisel to create one of those “windows” Maxine Greene suggests we need in and around schools to admit “fresh air” into their often stale and dusty halls (134). But for that to happen, we must do more than simply jump on the multigenre bandwagon (continuing to set it up in opposition to exposition and “traditional” research that some assume do not allow for creativity and personal involvement), tout its rewards for engaging individual writers, and tell other teachers how to do it. We need to theorize and critique it instead.

To do this, I intend to explore both multigenre papers and papers resulting from other school assignments, as well as multigenre writing as a broader discursive process. In taking both an inside and an outside (of school) approach, I hope to offer something to enhance students’ experiences with the so-called multigenre paper. Moreover, though rhetoric per se is not a large part of my argument, of necessity, it is rhetorical purpose, context, and audience that more accurately reflects changes from one assignment to another or from school writing to writing within the wider society. And such changes occur regardless of whether or not we force writing into particular directive constructs called genres. This study, then, takes two paths. First, I will turn to theory for insights into the workings of writing that blur traditionally conceived genre boundaries,

specifically examining recent theories of genre; Bakhtin's theories of language, literature, and narrative; and other theories of narrative and intertextuality, particularly those of Kristeva and Roland Barthes. I will also pose what I take to be a fundamental flaw in Bakhtin's argument: that is, on the one hand, he refers to narrative (itself a genre) and on the other, he theorizes that genres represent false distinctions. Second, I will analyze student writing (both what most would consider "traditional" school forms and multigenre papers) through the lens of these theories.

The data for the student writing part of my study consists of a set of papers collected from eleventh and twelfth graders from a medium-size, suburban high school in Iowa (1,190 students in grades 9-12 with a 6.8 percent minority population, according to figures in the district's annual report for 2001-02, the year in which I did my study). As part of a four-year English requirement for graduation, these students completed five papers in an elective English course, Experiences in Writing, during the 2001-02 academic year. According to the school's course offering guide, Experiences in Writing

is appropriate for students with a range of writing abilities. It has a heavy emphasis on the process of writing and for making independent determinations about writing. Students will engage in personal, analytical, and research-based writing. A balance between the writing process and the final product will be expected. This course is intended to be a precursor to advanced composition or for post-secondary education preparation.

To fulfill the goals of this semester-long course, students compose a personal essay, an extended metaphor paper, an extended definition paper, a "traditional" research paper, and a multigenre paper.

For teachers interested both in expanding their thinking about "the" multigenre paper and in connecting their students' experiences with other so-called "real-world" discourse practices, the research I report in this dissertation may serve, in part, as an example of "practical" theorizing, or "the practice of theory," to use Ruth Ray's

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terminology. In addition, it may help teachers see ways to interrogate innovative teaching practices toward which they are drawn. Doing so may encourage them not only to discover ways to engage and sustain students' interest inside the classroom with such assignments as the so-called multigenre paper, but also to learn more about the concept of "multigenerity" and to realize that "the" multigenre paper is not a newly invented entity and that multiple genres are always already around us. Though by their very nature teachers' jobs demand concrete action, and too many of the educational spaces where we meet students work against innovative practices and "real-world" connections, I believe this study may contribute to disrupting institutional norms and show how the complicated webs of discourse in our increasingly more complex and technological society are applicable to the multigenre-paper-as-school-assignment. Then perhaps we can maximize this and other writing assignments in order to transport students and their writing beyond one classroom, one school, and one education to life-long practices. Again, I do not intend to erect dualities in attempting to clarify my point here, but I am aware that the contrastive use of language needed for my analysis implicates me in the very problems I rail against.

#### Rhetoric, Current Genre Theories, and Multigenre Writing

To introduce my argument that genre theory and theories of narrative, especially those related to intertextuality, have much to offer our understanding of the multigenre-paper-as-school-assignment, I want first to establish some definitions and articulate some qualities of genre and multigenre to help us understand what may be going on at the heart of the so-called multigenre paper. To begin, Bakhtin (as well as those who have used his ideas on speech genres to theorize genre as sociorhetorical action) views genre as a concept that goes beyond literary type and represents, instead, "a horizon of expectations" that operates on different kinds of texts. In trying to redefine genre, however, and to argue that "the novel" is a kind of writing that "cannot be framed by pre-existing categories" (Dialogic 428), Bakhtin at times undermines his arguments—which

seek to destroy genre distinctions—by the very act of naming and labeling. It must be recognized that Bakhtin himself did not call his examination of texts and language “narrative theory” or “genre theory” (other critics and theorists have attached those labels to Bakhtin’s work). Nonetheless, in trying to talk about “the” novel as something different from other texts and uses of language, for example, he sets that construct against other texts (as I will discuss in more detail in Chapter 2).

From my review of the literature on the so-called “multigenre paper,” no one has examined such theories in conjunction with this assignment. Therefore, my goal is to show how they can be applied in order to illustrate the multigeneric in all writing, but not to set up multigenre writing as another formalized practice. Unfortunately, from talking with those who assign multigenre papers and from reading books and articles educators have written about their experiences, curricularization of “the” multigenre paper has already occurred. From my research it appears, at least in some of its manifestations, that we now have a “new” school form or genre, “the” multigenre research paper. That is not what I am after. In fact, I hope to show how the reification that has already occurred does a disservice to the concept of multigenerality and stifles its creative, disruptive intent. To begin, current theories of genre offer some ways to think about how we may approach a compilation of genres as sociorhetorical action rather than simply a collection of forms, what multigenre papers seem to be in some school manifestations.

Equating genre and form, of course, is nothing new. Before the last twenty years or so, genre in writing was primarily associated with literary forms. And because of Romantic ideas of “the writer” as an inspired individual—with the most admirable ones, the literary geniuses, breaking out of established forms and defying conventions—genre had status as a constraining “thing.” This thing, a receptacle for artistic ideas, was, at best, neutral but useful in the realm of literary analysis, and, at worst, primarily negative, acting as a stranglehold on writers’ imaginations and creativity. However, inspired by twentieth-century “developments in linguistics, rhetoric, psychology, and sociology,”



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those in composition studies have recently been reconsidering the view of genre promulgated by literary studies for two centuries (Bazerman, "Systems" 20), resituating this "new genre" in rhetoric and demonstrating that it is far more than set textual forms, mere templates into which writers pour already conceived material.<sup>2</sup> As Anis Bawarshi and others propose, genres are not "containers" but "familiar communicative tools" with a "sociorhetorical function" that "shape" and "help us recognize our communicative goals, including why [they] exist, what and whose purposes they serve and how best to achieve them" ("Genre Function" 339).

Theories that have led to this social-action definition of genre have relevance to a study of the so-called multigenre paper since decisions about individual genres are the building blocks of a larger multigenre composition. In fact, in creating such a composition, writers have to negotiate even more complex rhetorical goals than when constructing texts based on a single genre. They need to fit various genres together to make up the overall composition, considering both the individual pieces themselves and the larger whole as "communicative tools" and actions (something "An Essay We're Learning to Read: Responding to Alt. Style" by Michael Spooner illustrates).

The influence of anti-foundational theories like those of Bakhtin—here I use this term guardedly, recognizing in it another instance of critics' and theorists' problematic penchant for composing binarisms—have helped to radically change the texture of genre and speak to the concept of multigenre. However, we need to be careful about setting multigenre against non-multigenre. What Bakhtin tells us about the dialogical within all language and the existence of at least some measure of multivocality—what we may call multigenre, though Bakhtin does not use that term—in all writing suggests the folly in naming any particular piece of writing a "multigenre composition." "Multigenre paper" or multigenre composition" is a social construct, just as Dobrin points out "discourse, too, is a construction, a label attributed for the sake of convenience, to provide a vocabulary through which we (think we) can discuss and study discourse" (46).

Though I am attempting, at least in part, to deconstruct the notion that a particular kind of writing, “the” multigenre paper, is multigeneric while other kinds are not, I also want to illuminate the workings of some pieces that for convenience sake we may call multigenre compositions because they seem to be on the high end of the dialogical, multivocalic continuum, to put it in Bakhtinian terms (or to consider it in terms of a “spectrum” like that set forth in James Moffett’s Teaching the Universe of Discourse). Even Bakhtin isolates one text from another in arguing, for example, that Menippean satire from about the third century B.C.E. with its “wide use of inserted genres,” its “mixing of prose and poetic speech,” and its “multi-styled and multi-toned nature” is more dialogic than “the fundamentally monologic (homophonic) European novel” of the nineteenth century (Problems 8, 118). Such a move is an analytical necessity even though doing so undermines his claims that all discourse is inescapably dialogic. The point is that though we cannot ignore such labels as “multigenre paper,” we need to think about how reducing multigenicity to a “thing,” a new school form, misses the point of an idea intended as a rupture. Contrary to its intent, multigenre writing in at least some school settings has become formalized, but perhaps recent genre theories may help us reclaim some of its alternative qualities because they “probe further” than traditional literary conceptions of genre:

[W]ithout abandoning earlier conceptions of genres as “types” or “kinds” of discourse, characterized by similarities in content and form, recent analyses focus on tying these linguistic and substantive similarities to regularities in human spheres of activity. In other words the new term “genre” has been able to connect a recognition of regularities in discourse types with a broader social and cultural understanding of language in use. (Freedman and Medway, “Locating”1)

Such a recognition is a start, but in order to rescue multigenre writing in school from its status as “thing,” just another school form, we need to focus more on that second part of the definition of the “new genre” (i.e. “broader social and cultural understanding of

language in use”) and try at least in some measure to abandon or at least rethink our focus on “types” and kinds. Doing so seems more in line with the recent thinking about genre that recognizes its “protean energy,” according to Wendy Bishop and Hans Ostrom (xi), its fluid shape-shifting of sorts, substantially different from earlier, more rigid definitions of genre as “immovable, insoluble conventions” (Mirtz 191). This sociorhetorical genre as interpreted by North American theorists (who differ from genre theorists of the Australian School in their objecting to this latter group’s insistence on the necessity for “explicit” teaching) can be contextualized by a brief history that Aviva Freedman and Peter Medway construct. Though admittedly not definitive (“Locating” 8), this history identifies a number of “twentieth-century perspectives on human knowing and language use” that Freedman and Medway believe have been key to re-conceptualizing genre (3) and that may help us shift from the sometimes-too-pointed emphasis on the teaching of forms in connection with multigenre papers to their sociorhetorical potential.

To begin, Freedman and Medway cite Susan Langer’s, Ernst Cassirer’s, and Kenneth Burke’s work to establish that humans above all else are symbol makers and that every aspect of human life is shaped by this fundamental activity. They especially highlight Burke’s contention that such symbol-making occurs in all aspects of persuasion, and they acknowledge the contribution of Thomas Kuhn’s “status as a scientist and philosopher of science” in lending “authority” to Burke’s ideas and gaining acceptance for the notion that “truth” is arrived at “rhetorically and communally” (Freedman and Medway, “Locating” 3). Begun in the 1930s, Burke’s work reflected a renewed interest in and reinterpretation of classical rhetoric, and a reintegration of it and literature following more than 50 years during which literature and rhetoric/writing had been systematically split.

After centuries as an important foundation in education, rhetoric—and its counterpart, composition—lost its status when English studies fought for recognition as a “formal discipline” in the new research university (Applebee 11) and settled on literature

as its “scientific” body of study (Berlin 22). Rhetoric of the late nineteenth century became divorced from its “historical context” and any “sense that [it was] intellectually challenging and socially important” (Halloran 175). At the same time, literature gained status “as the true equipment of America’s educated” (S. Miller 31), being “privileged” at the expense of rhetoric, which was relegated to the lower “tier” in the English department hierarchy (Connors, “Writing” 51). What Burke and others sought to do was to disrupt this hierarchy and to question the dualism of literature/rhetoric.

As Bizzell and Herzberg note, Burke “brought rhetoric and literature into intimate contact” with each other by arguing in Counter-Statement (first published in 1931) that literature’s use of language to “affect the reader” makes it a “branch of rhetoric,” or in Burke’s terms, “symbolic action” (900). Because it always tries to make some “impression” on a reader, Burke said, “effective literature could be nothing else but rhetoric [. . .]” (Counter-Statement 210). Even more broadly, “Burke’s rhetoric, bound up in communities, communal ideas, social relations, religion, magic, and psychological effects, in verbal and nonverbal communication, seems to encompass almost everything” (Bizzell and Herzberg 991). Burke believed rhetoric’s business was to study all the “symbolic means” humans have for creating and dividing communities (900)—which he believed included literary and nonliterary discourses (though this binary now is recognized as artificial)—because “motivation” drives them all (913). Since multigenre thinking and writing also rejects the splitting of the literary from the nonliterary, nonfiction from fiction, and so on, Burke’s reunification of literature and rhetoric seems applicable.

Additionally, not only did Burke’s ideas about motive serve to broaden the scope of rhetoric and reunite it with literature. They also began a way of thinking about language and rhetoric that anticipates a sociorhetorical view of genre and a way for us to think about multigenre compositions as sociorhetorical actions. Of the five elements of Burke’s pentad of motives (i.e. act, agent, agency, scene, purpose), his discussion of two

of these (i.e. act and agency) seems significant in the later refiguring of genre. In Burke's "dramatism," language is not separate from doing. It is an act (Language 63), not a thing. By its definition as "what was done" (Grammar xv), an act is a noun. However, by its very connection with movement and action, act also is implicitly a verb that Burke says "can overlap agency" (15), or how someone accomplishes an act (xv). What this characterization of language as act and its close connection to "means" suggest is that language forms are not simply receptacles for thought. They, too, have a "doing" dimension. Burke makes this connection between form and action in quoting Thomas Aquinas in a discussion of Aristotle's four causes. Aquinas claims that "a form is an act" (227), and Burke sees Aristotle's "formal cause" as "equivalent" to his concept of act (228). He also makes the case in The Philosophy of Literary Form that all "poetry" (which for Burke encompasses "any work of critical or imaginative cast") is a "strategic" answer "to questions posed by the situation in which they arose." Such answers "size up the situations, name their structure and outstanding ingredients, and name them in a way that contains an attitude towards them" (1), responding appropriately (Coe 198). Clearly, Burke's connection of literary works, language, and form to social context and action may be seen as a precursor to "new" genre theorists later complicating the notion of genre by linking it with the social.

Such ideas of Burke's participate in an early part of a movement Freedman and Medway call a general "rhetorical turn" in academic disciplines that by the 1970s infused composition studies ("Locating" 4). This movement became important in changing our thinking about genre as set form to thinking of it as purpose-in-form or form-in-action. Besides Burke's influence, this movement owes a debt to such thinkers as I.A. Richards and Chaim Perelman. Their part in defining a "new rhetoric" in the mid-twentieth century anticipates genre theorists of the 1980s doing the same for genre. As a philosopher of language, Richards created "the foundation of a new rhetoric" by tying it to his notions of "meaning [as] a matter of interpretation, not the inherent significance of words" and

“context” as “the effects of discourse on the audience” (Bizzell and Herzberg 900, 966). The notion that “remembered contexts” create meanings of words for a particular “interpreter” (909) suggests the reflecting and shaping influence of the social and cultural on language forms that later interests theorists in connection with genre.

Further, Perelman’s ideas about knowledge-building as a rhetorical act adds another dimension to language as social action that later helped redefine genre. To Perelman, “the social aspect of language” is its “essential element” (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1071), and language users create knowledge “within communities that share assumptions and beliefs” (Bizzell and Herzberg 901). He proposes rejecting any search “for a necessary and self-evident first truth,” instead envisioning a rhetorical world “in which people and human societies are in interaction and are solely responsible for their cultures, their institutions, and their future—a vision in which people try hard to elaborate reasonable systems, imperfect but perfectible” (Realm 160). In this vision, argument is the basis of knowledge, and “all discourse is rhetorical [. . .]” (915). Perelman’s view that language is a “tool for action” in “a social context” and not simply “an instrument for communication” (New Rhetoric 1099, 1103) eventually finds its way into later theories of genre that characterize it as social action. Further, it may add an important sociorhetorical dimension to our thinking about the multigenre paper assignment.

Along with Perelman, Richards, and Burke, Stephen Toulmin gets credit from Freedman and Medway for creating a “new rhetoric” that eventually influenced theorists to view genre as socially situated. Toulmin’s work in argumentation rejected the prevailing idea at the time that “rational” is a universal concept to be applied and judged equally “across all disciplines and forums.” As an alternative, he posited the notion of “the reasonable,” the “appropriate” or the “convincing” as determined by a particular “historical, disciplinary, and/or social context” (“Locating” 5). In terms of genre, this notion suggests that if individual communities “differ in their modes of reasoning” (6),

then the genres that reflect that reasoning and that shape and are shaped by these communities need to be defined and understood in their particular contexts.

In composition studies these ideas from the “new rhetoric” manifested themselves in a borrowing of such concepts as “invention,” “audience,” “occasion,” and “kairos” from classical rhetoric. Compositionists used these ideas in creating “a systematic basis for a process pedagogy,” a pedagogy that, unlike current-traditional rhetoric, cared about helping “students with the decisions and strategies necessary in the course of writing, rather than simply commenting [. . .] on faults in the written product, with appeal to a few very general maxims.” Both the specific re-coupling of rhetoric with composition in the context of process and composition studies’ recognition of “the rhetorical dimensions of knowledge-making and the primacy of the rhetorical impulse in human communication (and all linguistic and semiotic process)” have helped those concerned with genre see it as a socio-cultural act (Freedman and Medway 4).

In addition to the rhetorical influences Freedman and Medway cite, they attribute the rethinking of genre to another movement, “social constructionism,” which came into the field of composition studies in the 1980s primarily through the anti-foundational philosophy of Richard Rorty. Rorty rejected as unverifiable the idea of “universal” principles as the basis for trying to reach the meanings of life. Instead, he recognized “communal constructions of meaning and pragmatic evaluations of the good and the true.” Underscoring such ideas of Rorty’s about meaning being socially constructed, Freedman and Medway cite Clifford Geertz’s contention that more than “knowledge” is communally shaped (“Locating” 5), that “cognition, emotion, motivation, perception, imagination, memory [. . .] whatever [are] themselves, and directly, social affairs” (Geertz 153). In the context of social constructionism, then, genre as merely a constraining form begins to recede and becomes “far more dynamically [. . .] part of social process” (Freedman and Medway, “Locating” 5).

Along with rhetoric and social constructionism, Freedman and Medway point to



the influence on the “new genre” of “speech act theory” with its founding principle that “words do more than make statements about the nature of the world.” Such a theory disrupts a “container” view of language, words as receptacles of thought, and instead argues that “language—and especially utterances—are ways of acting in the world” that we can only understand by examining context and participants’ “social roles and relative power” (“Locating” 6). Philosopher John Austin first put forth this idea. In his How to Do Things with Words (1962), he argues that philosophy’s “age-old assumption [. . .] that to say something [. . .] is always and simply to state something” is flawed. Instead, he demonstrates that “to say something is to do something (12) and poses the idea that statements are a performance rather than an inert medium for communicating some “fact” (52). Just as Bakhtin argues that the utterance, rather than the word or sentence, constitutes the proper linguistic analytical unit (an idea I explicate more fully in Chapter 2), speech act theorists building on Austin’s work have emphasized “the production or issuance of the symbol or word or sentence in the performance of the speech act” as the “unit of linguistic communication” rather than the “symbol, word or sentence” itself (Searle, Speech Acts 16). This is the fundamental basis of speech act theory. However, Bazerman points out that a too rigid “formalization of speech acts” (“Systems” 86)—as illustrated by John Searle’s five categories of use (Expression and Meaning viii)—cannot capture richly enough the “multiple secondary intentions and uses” of genres (Bazerman, “Systems” 86). Still, principles drawn from speech act theory like “language—and especially utterances—are ways of acting in the world” and “researchers must take the context into account and understand it in the way it is understood by participants” have helped shape new theories of genre (Freedman and Medway, “Locating” 6).

What Freedman and Medway’s brief history of important intellectual trends of the twentieth century—i.e. “the ‘rhetorical turn’ in disciplinary studies; social constructionism; rhetorical versions of rationality in the field of argumentation; and speech act theory (“Locating” 3)—makes obvious is why “genre-study is no longer about

the forms of the story, poem, and novel, preexisting categories of politically assigned textual quality” but instead emphasizes “the social and political conditions of textual production” (Bishop and Ostrom 248). The broader intellectual context to which, Freedman and Medway freely admit, could be added other “developments in the economic, social, and political sphere [. . .] beyond the academy” (“Locating” 8), provides a starting point for us to understand why more recent views of genre as process and action, though not eliminating form, subsume it and for us to discover how we may use such theories to complicate our thinking about the multigenre paper construct. Significant in early attempts to define genre based on such a social view is Carolyn Miller’s 1984 seminal article “Genre as Social Action.”

By carefully tracing “the connection between genre and recurrent situation,” Miller shows how genre may be considered conventionally “typified rhetorical action” and to argue “that a theoretically sound definition of genre must be centred [sic] not on the substance or the form of discourse but on the action it is used to accomplish.” In addition, Miller concludes that since we are concerned with how discourse works in the world, with what it means and accomplishes in various rhetorical settings, defining genre as “open [. . .] and organized situated actions (that is pragmatic, rather than syntactic or semantic)” is more useful to us in composition studies than viewing it as a closed taxonomy (“Genre” 27, 24). In contrast to thinking of genre as synonymous with form and focusing on such “rules” of form as, for example, that a sonnet must contain 14 lines in iambic pentameter following a specific rhyme scheme (with, in the Shakespearean version, a closing rhymed couplet), Miller says we should instead think of genre as “meaningful action” and seek to discover how different genres variously enact “rules of symbolic action.” While genres are recognizable as recurrent patterns of discourse, they are more importantly, in Miller’s view, the place where “private intentions and social exigence” come together (37), with the individual shaping and being shaped by the public.

Important for showing how genres exist and operate within this public arena,

within “instrumental” discourse communities, John Swales—the only other person besides Bakhtin allotted a whole section in Freedman and Medway’s genre history survey—is individually notable, according to them, because of the contribution his ideas have made in the post-literary studies’ redefinition of genre (“Locating” 7). In drawing “lessons” about genre from folk-lore studies, literary studies, linguistics, and rhetoric, Swales’ work is useful, as is the work of other theorists I have mentioned so far, for insisting that genres are primarily “communicative” and “social” while not abandoning concerns for “generic structure (and its rationale)” (45). In addition, for the purposes of considering so-called multigenre papers, I find Swales’ description of genre “environment” and genre “networks” especially relevant to a working out of how single pieces of text within a multigenre composition interact with each other and contribute to the whole, a whole that functions as a kind of social context for individual utterances, a purpose-driven environmental construct. Swales says that as a “class of communicative events” (45), a genre comprises both “the discourse itself and its participants” and “the role of that discourse and the environment of its production and reception, including its historical and cultural associations” (46). To extend this idea metaphorically, I would propose that a multigenre composition virtually represents in textual form at least two of the key qualities Swales says constitute a discourse community: it establishes a “broadly agreed to set of common goals (24) and creates “mechanisms of intercommunication among its members” (25). In this way a multigenre composition fits Swales’ “principal criterial feature that turns a collection of communicative events into a genre” because its intentionality brings together individual utterances for “some shared set of communicative purposes” (46).

### Defining Multigenerity

Drawing on such fundamental principles inherent in the “new” conception of genre, I view genre, especially in connection with the concept of multigenre, as form shaped by individual and social purposes, and purpose shaped by form. Genre is not just

a result of an action, but an action itself and a call to other actions, a call that may be seen in all writing, but especially those texts, like “the” multigenre paper, that deliberately set out to integrate genres.<sup>3</sup> For my definition, I want to first examine and critique the definition Romano gives his students when they embark on the process of research and writing that eventually leads to a multigenre paper in a school setting. Romano tells his students this:

A multigenre paper arises from research, experience, and imagination. It is not an uninterrupted, expository monolog nor a seamless narrative nor a collection of poems. A multigenre paper is composed of many genres and subgenres, each piece self-contained, making a point of its own, yet connected by theme or topic and sometimes by language, images, and content. In addition to many genres, a multigenre paper may also contain many voices, not just the author’s. (Blending x)

As a basic definition of multigenre-paper-as-classroom-genre, Romano’s definition works for students because it is relatively simple and open-ended; however, it also uses language in a way that may be troublesome in its dichotomizing.

One problem is that Romano’s definition relies on contrast, establishing what a multigenre paper is by saying what it is not (i.e. “an uninterrupted, expository monolog nor a seamless narrative nor a collection of poems”). This contrast, however, is problematic since it establishes a duality between exposition as “uninterrupted” and “monologic” (and narrative as “seamless”) and a multigenre paper as presumably not these things. This duality does not hold, though, if we consider Bakhtin’s analysis of Dostoevsky’s novels—as I will discuss in more detail in Chapter 2—which suggests that narrative is anything but “seamless” and that exposition, though perhaps (and I say perhaps in a highly qualified way) more uni-voiced than what Bakhtin calls “novelistic” prose, still exhibits some degree of dialogism. He has shown that, though exposition often falls into the trap of what he calls a “general literariness” that tries to “order” the “spoken

and written heteroglossia that swirls in from all sides,” even it uses more than just the author’s voice (Dialogic 382).

Thus, I would propose talking about such issues in terms of a continuum of the dialogical, rather than setting up a dichotomy between monologic and dialogic, multigeneric and monogeneric. I would also propose, however, that more often than not there is a distinction between what most people would describe as, for example, the five-paragraph expository theme still taught in schools and an intentionally multigeneric piece—including its school version, the multigenre paper. In it, a writer consciously decides to construct a text by weaving together discursial chunks that readers will recognize as genres they have seen in isolation, and, as Romano’s definition suggests, doing so allows a greater degree of autonomy of intention for the “voices” that comprise it. I would, though, not call the individual genres within such a multigenre composition that make use of these voices “self-contained,” as Romano does, because doing so seems not to recognize the intertextuality that obtains among them. Each piece does usually have recognizable boundaries and discernible margins between those boundaries more definite than is noticeable in what some might call a “unified” piece, like an academic argument. However, even such a seemingly “unified” piece of writing may itself exhibit various degrees of dialogism that call into question the notion of unity itself and suggest it too has multigeneric properties. I would also point out that the part of Romano’s definition that says “a multigenre paper may also contain many voices, not just the author’s” implies that a writer’s voice in a non-deliberately multigeneric piece is one (unified), something the data from my study of student writing suggests does not always hold true.

While recognizing, then, the inherent dialogism of language and the multivocality/multigeneric quality of all written genres, I see at the same time purposefully multigeneric compositions as somewhat different in their attempts to deliberately, consciously integrate smaller genres. With this in mind, I would offer the following to define such a

**composition:**

- 1. A multigenre composition comprises textual pieces recognizable as performing the social and rhetorical functions associated by particular communities with the conventions of specific genres, and these individual texts are usually conceived of and activated as somewhat autonomous entities, relatively separate pieces of discourse which enact the communicative goals of one or more speakers.**
- 2. These pieces are situated in proximity to each other, definitely distinct but semantically connected—in ways that go beyond mere physical design, packaging, or layout—with boundaries between pieces more or less rigid or blurred.**
- 3. Individual genres interact with each other as though in “conversation,” representing social and historical voices and demonstrating high levels of intertextuality. Ideas between the somewhat separate utterances, distinguishable by their explicit change in speaking subject, play off each other; and, in addition, a single genre may contain multiple voices in dialogue.**
- 4. A theme or topic and/or transitional material within and between the pieces helps to create a loose “unity” (or integration) of purpose, a kind of collaborative, communicative goal with all the separate genres working together toward a certain overall common effect related to that purpose.**

**With this working definition of the construct “multigenre composition,” I hope to clarify what features I see as integral to a specific piece that deliberately sets out to make use of multiple genres and to do so loosely enough so as not to suggest a formula.**

**What I am offering in my definition is a description that I hope provides some useful vocabulary and broad characteristics, not to tie down and rigidify the concept of “multigenre” but to aid in my later analysis (since such a definition does not appear to exist in the literature on recent theories of the “new genre”). No genre theorists I have studied use the term “multigeneric” to designate a combination of genres into a larger piece of discourse nor have they laid out criteria for multigenres. Interestingly, however, the**

word itself does appear in the literature of genre theory. One theorist, Swales, uses it to describe an overarching, generalized category of genres, which he says constitutes a “clas[s] of communication” above genre that identifies “means of communication” but fails to achieve “genre status” because it lacks an “indication of purpose.” In Swales’ discourse scheme, “letter,” for example, is a communication category or “multigeneric generalization,” “business letter” a subset of that category, and “begging letter” a genre (61). This idea of multigenre has little to do with the way others use the term in connection with the multigenre-paper-as school-assignment or the way I am defining it in this study. Nonetheless, some of what genre theorists have written seems useful both to describe multigenre papers in school and manifestations of multigenicity in other settings and to provide some insights into how they function.<sup>4</sup>

For one, we can draw on two related concepts that may help us, at least metaphorically, get at the essence of deliberate multigenre compositions: Amy Devitt’s genre “sets” and Charles Bazerman’s “genre systems.” The idea of a “set” stems from Devitt’s analysis of the discourse practices of tax accountants. What she posits is a way of looking at genres not as isolated texts but as a group, as related discourse types that “expert” members of the accounting profession produce. These genres “constitut[e] and defin[e] the accountant’s work” and also create “a complex network of interaction” among the texts themselves. Devitt’s argument is that “[n]o text is single, as texts refer to one another, draw from one another, create the purpose for one another” (“Intertextuality” 336). In her research she demonstrates how the thirteen different genres written by tax accountants to each other, their clients, and governmental agencies “form a set which reflects the professional activities and social relations of tax accountants” (339). The “established genres” in the set each “respond” to a variety of rhetorical situations established by the “repeated structured activities and relationships” enacted in the discourse community of tax accountants (340), and the meanings of the community rely heavily on the interaction among the various texts in the genre set (343). In addition,

though Devitt—in order to develop her ideas on intertextuality—focuses on the “set” of texts produced by the “experts” in a tax department, she further suggests that this genre set is only one part of a larger departmental “genre system,” which includes tax return forms and “oral genres” (340).

Bazerman builds on Devitt’s brief mention of such a “genre system,” broadening it to include not only those genres produced by one type of person in “a multiple person interaction” (e.g. the tax accountant) and his or her “participations” but also those that embody the participation of others (“Systems” 98). In his conception of “system,” Bazerman considers “the full set of genres that instantiate the participation of all parties” in the tax “event” (e.g. genres produced not only by the tax accountant him/herself but also by the accountant’s client and the government). The genre “system,” then, represents the full range of “social relations” and creates a complete picture of the process (99). In “a system of a complex societal machine,” the individual genres function as “levers” that those operating in the system “must recognize, use and construct close to type (but with focused variation) in order to create consequential action.” Far from being rigid and automatic (as one might assume from Bazerman’s use of a machine analogy) a genre system does not drive its participants—or, in Bazerman’s words, “turn [them] into cogs” —because their participation and the extent to which they use a system’s genres in creating “consequential meanings” involves choice; and the freedom to participate is essential to making the system work (79). The emphasis, in Bazerman’s view, is on “find[ing] system in speech acts” rather than “reducing them to a system” (emphasis added). In this, there is room for individual creativity, diversity, and change: “evolution, novelty, and the multiplicity of human life” (99).

#### Genre Relations in Multigenre Compositions

What I believe Bazerman’s “system” and Devitt’s “set” offer to a conception of “multigenre” and to studying the construct of a “multigenre composition” is their analytical focus not so much on individual genres but on generic combinations and



relationships. Even though their analyses are of genres created by flesh and blood people in “real-life” sociorhetorical settings—much different from a single-authored multigenre composition (See Note 4 for further discussion of this)—still, what their theories (as well as those of Bawarshi and Anne Freedman, which I discuss next) may offer is an orientation for studying multigenre compositions holistically to discover the interesting ways their textual pieces interact with each other, for studying, in other words, their “intertext.” Thinking about “generic intertextuality” (Devitt, “Intertextuality” 342), and viewing multigenres as “intertextual occurrences” (Bazerman, “Systems” 99) may help counteract a tendency toward the formulaic that seems evident in some school manifestations of multigenre writing. We may enrich our experiences with multigenres if we become conscious of what goes on at the borders of individual genres in a multigenre paper and in the spaces where they butt up against other genres. To see beyond form, which is where attention to writing multigenre papers in school seems mostly to have been placed so far, we need to concentrate on meanings residing in the margins as much as or more than those residing in the separate pieces constructed according to certain genre specifications. Taking from current genre theory its emphasis on genre as action and reaction (rather than as thing) and such holistic envisioning represented by Devitt’s and Bazerman’s theories, we may steer away from tendencies to formalize multigenre compositions so that they return to the very rules and rigid structures that they mean to escape. Instead, we may more productively view them as “architectonic” wholes that draw together “concrete moments” (Bakhtin, Toward 67), even though that wholeness is limited by the partial sightedness of its writer. Because a multigenre composition has the potential to create a virtual social structure for such intertextuality to play itself out—an idea I will develop further in Chapter 3—it provides us with a fruitful place to study such actions instantiated in form. The ideas of “set” and “system” as applied to multigenre compositions help stretch our conceptualization of the construct.

To continue to theorize the nature of “multigenre” through the lens of genre

theory, we have at our disposal another term applied to genre contexts and hearkening to nature and natural environments: “ecosystem.” Bawarshi’s application of ecology to the idea of “system” moves it further away from a mechanical connotation and emphasizes instead its “living” quality. Describing genres as “codified-for-now rhetorical ecosystems,” Bawarshi disputes a view of them as “classification systems” or “innocent communicative tools” (“Genre and Identity” 34). His term “ecosystem” serves my purposes for exploring multigenre compositions because it suggests that inhering to “genre” is the idea of a complex utterance, a “community” that operates as a kind of organic “unit” and provides, through its overall intention, an “environment” for smaller genres that interact with each other in the way that members of an “ecosystem” do. An ecosystem (defined by Webster’s dictionary as “a complex of a community and its environment functioning as an ecological unit in nature”) seems particularly applicable to multigenre compositions in that it implies dynamism, relational patterns, and life (though, by virtue of having one author who plays all the parts of the organisms, a simulated life). Like the organisms in an ecosystem, individual genres in a multigeneric work have their own identities and individual roles to perform; however, in order for them to thrive in the organic system of a multigenre composition, they must live in some kind of symbiosis and balance with each other or the whole “ecosystem” suffers: the larger work cannot sustain itself.

In trying to understand this balance and symbiosis, we may turn to Anne Freadman’s article “Anyone for Tennis?” What is at first striking in her argument, and what has elicited the most attention in the field of genre theory, is Freadman’s notion of “uptake” (a concept from speech act theory), which claims that utterances interact with each other and that each “determines” some “appropriate” response (46) in a continuous discursal “volley” (to borrow Freadman’s tennis analogy). This idea of “uptake” certainly helps explain an important component of an effective multigenre composition. Without “uptake” the piece will not work; it will not hold together as a complex speech

genre, in Bakhtin's terms. The difference between success and failure is like the difference between a portfolio (which unites components in some common purpose and arranges and presents them to achieve that purpose) and a file folder (which relates components by some broad idea but places them randomly and without an attempt to create a kind of team effort). Uptake captures metaphorically the dialogic interaction integral to deliberately created multigenre compositions.

Also useful in understanding multigeneric works is Freadman's extension of the notion of language and speech acts as "games" (cf. Wittgenstein) to suggest that genre "might be a generalization over speech-acts." Here she makes a distinction between speech act as a "game" with focus on "constitutive" and "regulative" rules (45) and genre in its broadest sense as "the playing of a game" with focus on "the relation between strategy and tactics" (46, emphasis added). This game play she calls "a ceremony," a kind of game complex, that is, "games that situate other games [. . .] the rules for the setting of a game, for constituting participants as players in that game, for placing and timing it in relation with other places and times" (46-47). Freadman's idea of a "ceremony" suggests a contextualizing genre, or base genre, that sets the scene and provides the space for smaller utterances.

This interpretation of "ceremony" and my claim that a multigenre composition can be considered virtually "ceremonial" seem consistent with something else Freadman suggests about ceremonies. She contends that "each of the moments, phases, stages or 'places' in a ceremonial is a genre, and that speech-acts might have the function of the opening or closing ceremony, the marking of the passage from one phase to another, as well as of tactics 'within' any genre." Freadman's conception of "ceremony" and her assertion that "genre [as] a game [. . .] consist[s] minimally of two texts, in some sort of dialogical relation" is close to my earlier description of a multigenre composition. Though Freadman seems to be thinking of texts in smaller groupings in their social settings populated by "real" people (e.g. "essay question, essay, feedback," all situated in some

academic course)—rather than a composed one like a multigenre paper—her idea that genre moves are contextualized and tactical seems applicable to multigenre compositions in that their overarching plans create a simulated social setting that each genre inhabits. And each genre in inhabiting the multigeneric work must be conscious of single or multiple “partners” in this setting; it “play[s] its partner” and “must represent [that] partner—previous, current, future, fictional, or ideal” (48)—as part of the “rules” of the multigenre ceremony.

Also, although the particular conventions or “rules for play” of individual genres are important and help us recognize the nature and purpose of specific texts, what is more important, according to Freadman, is that the “rules for playing” govern everything in a ceremony and that a genre’s “place” in a system “determines the reading of linguistic or other formal features” (60). These claims seem to support my contention that although the texts in a multigenre composition are somewhat autonomous (individually recognizable and operational) and significant in and of themselves, more importantly their shared purpose and interactions with each other help shape the conventions of the individual generic pieces. In other words, the “‘place’ of [each] text in some sense precedes the features that we take to be characteristic of it” (56) and establishes what “manners” it must use. The generic rules of individual genres, then, must follow the rules of “etiquette” set down by the multigenre composition in which it “plays” in order “to ‘make things work’” as a whole (58). Overall, Freadman’s “notion that our texts arise within ceremonials, and that their form is determined by their ceremonial place and function” (60), seems a useful metaphor for thinking of a multigeneric work holistically and for noticing the relationship between the whole and the texts it situates.

#### Where We Should Go Next with Multigenre Writing

From this discussion of what we may infer about the idea of “multigenre” from current genre theory, we have some basis for thinking more complexly about the so-called multigenre paper. However, since focusing exclusively on isolating and analyzing this

construct would only serve to reinforce already-established binaries that set up some texts as multigeneric and others as not—a dualism I mean to challenge, especially by examining student writings—the genre theories I have discussed in this chapter are inadequate by themselves to critique the curricularization of multigenre papers. Therefore, I turn to other theories of discourse and language in order to further complicate the ideas of Chapter 1 and, because my primary interest is the classroom practice of students writing multigenre papers, to offer ways that my theoretical findings and analysis may enrich such practice.

To begin, I offer in Chapter 2 a detailed discussion of how the specific theories of language, discourse, and genre in the work of Bakhtin—mentioned briefly in this introduction—provide a sound theoretical basis for both the idea of the multigenicity of all writing and insights into self-consciously multigeneric works. In Chapter 3 I explain how other theories of narrative and intertextuality can illuminate the workings of multigenre compositions, focusing in the latter part of that chapter on the work of Kristeva and Barthes. Following these theoretical explanations, in Chapters 4 and 5 I examine for illustrative purposes a number of student writings, including multigenre papers, through the lens of genre and narrative theories. And, finally, in Chapter 6 I draw some conclusions from my theorizing and analysis, offer areas for further study, and suggest some ways we might apply the findings of my study to the multigenre-paper-as-school-assignment. In this part, I discuss how theorizing and connecting the assignment to broader conceptions of multigenicity may help us avoid perpetuating dualistic thinking about it that can turn it into another rigidified school genre, instead of fostering the assignment's disruptive qualities.

Through all this work, I hope to answer the main questions of my study: “How do multigenre papers ‘work,’ in theoretical terms?” “How is the concept of multigenre both constraining and generative?” “Are multigenre papers different from other ostensibly more ‘traditional’ school forms?” and “How can thinking about multigenicity

operating in wider contexts enrich the multigenre-paper-as-school-assignment?" In doing so, I further hope to make clear that "the" multigenre paper is not a brand new kind of writing invented in school and that the binary of multigeneric/monogeneric does not hold. I mean to show that what is most important about multigenre writing is not form and procedure, where those people writing about multigenre papers have, for the most part, focused their attentions so far, but rhetorical decision-making that can allow students to examine rhetorical relationships and social actions through genre and to explore the multigenerality and intertextuality of all texts. Shifting focus from how to "teach" multigenre papers (e.g. what the products should look like when finished and how we should evaluate them) to a probing of the inherent principle behind multigenre papers (i.e. the concept of "multigenerality") may allow us and our students to see ways we can use this assignment to recognize the artificiality of the barriers often erected between different types of school writing and between school writing and writing for wider purposes, to create bridges instead of dualities, connections instead of oppositions.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>When I use the term expository essay in connection with school writing, I am using it in a way typical to teachers' and students' usage. Such usage follows the current-traditional-modes configuration of texts that essentially equates the word "essay" with the five-paragraph "theme" (as in expository essay, persuasive essay, cause-effect essay, and so on). However, I recognize that essay writing done in many other settings outside of schools is anything but monolithic or rigidly formulaic and, instead, is one of the richest genres of writing. In fact, one pedagogical argument I would make is that we would serve students much better if we taught essay writing in the spirit of Montaigne, Virginia Woolf, and E.B. White rather than in the tradition of the daily theme which warps students' ideas about what a fine essay is and should do. As writer Ian Frazier says, "Everybody has to forget the school essay before they can write [. . .] . Nobody wants to read that, not even teachers" (qtd. in Scott 496).

<sup>2</sup>One thing to note here, however, is that over the last twenty years in which genre theorists in rhetoric have worked on different ways to rethink genre and de-emphasize it as form, literary theorists have also taken another look at genre. According to a 2000 College English article by Amy Devitt, "literary studies, like rhetorical studies, is renewing its interest in genre by reconceiving the nature of genre. Literary scholars from comparative literature, cultural studies, historical studies, and other current schools of literary theory have been revisiting genre and restating its centrality to literary study" (698). In fact, Devitt's argument in this article is that "rhetorical genre scholars and literary genre scholars [should] attend to one another's work" (697) and look for ways to integrate theories from both disciplines.

<sup>3</sup>While acknowledging again that I agree with Bakhtin, who says that all language and discourse are dialogic and multivocalic and with Dobrin, who says that all discourses may be considered "mixed" (46), I still see some types of writing as more self-

consciously multigeneric than others, more purposely combinatory. It is this construct of a “multigenre composition” that I want to stop for a moment to define more specifically for later analytical purposes. Primarily, I do this not to dichotomize but to try to pin down the shifting, ethereal concept of multigenerality in order to talk about those pieces of writing inside and outside of school that overtly and deliberately combine different genres. At the same time, however, I do not mean to suggest that a multigenre paper is unique because it is multigeneric and other school writing is not, as others writing about multigenre papers have implied by setting it against “traditional” forms.

In some ways, all discourse is just discourse; and any kind of labeling, categorizing, juxtaposing—though the analytical in us can hardly resist the impulse—cannot do justice to the (one might say, most interesting) aspects of slippery concepts like discourse and knowledge by separating them out from other things. As Malea Powell says, “the only difference between a history, a theory, a poem, an essay, is the one that we have ourselves imposed. We have cut the wholeness of knowledge into little bits, scattered them to the four winds and now begin to reorganize them into categories invented to enable empire by bringing order to chaos and civilization to the savage” (15). My defining here certainly participates in this artificial cutting up and shuffling process; however, since defining is also a convention of academic discourse that aids readers in following an argument, I offer a definition of multigenre composition that seems to apply to those pieces of writing that set out to bring together a number of smaller genres into a larger whole.

<sup>4</sup> In thinking here about Swales’ “environment” and “networks” in connection with genre, Devitt’s idea of genre “sets,” and Bazerman’s ideas of genre “systems”—and later about Bawarshi’s “ecologies” and Freedman’s “ceremonies”—I recognize that such concepts are rooted in a use of language and genres that include multiple flesh and blood speakers who are different from each other. Their interactions in these life situations require communicative “turns” taken by the various actors involved in the social context



from which utterances emerge in various, appropriate genres.

Obviously, a multigenre work, because a single speaker/writer composes it, is rather different from “real life” genre “environments,” “networks,” “sets,” “systems,” “ecologies,” and “ceremonies (that operate, for example, in an insurance office, in connection with a funeral, or in a household). Nonetheless, because the writer of a multigenre composition takes on a multitude of personas and speaks in their voices, s/he can simulate the turn taking of “real-life” contexts and, thus, a multigenre composition can create a virtual genre “environment,” “set,” and so on.

For example, one college freshman writing student of mine, in order to create a multigenre composition that explored the issue of religious pluralism in contemporary American society, envisioned an unusual extended family whose members adhered to various spiritual beliefs (e.g. evangelical Christianity, Catholicism, and other branches of Christianity; new-age scientism; atheism; Judaism; Hinduism; Islam; Buddhism; Bahai; agnosticism). In all, sixteen family members spanning four generations comprise the “cast of characters” in this multigenre composition, a kind of multigenre play in which twenty-one major genres (sometimes with smaller ones embedded within larger ones) serve as the plot events (See more on this idea in Chapter 3). Each genre (e.g. church youth survey, sermon, poem, personal letter, flier, face-to-face conversation, scholarly essay, joke, theological argument, song, T-shirt saying, magazine article, cartoon, school essay, dream) puts forth one or more religious viewpoints in one or more character voices. Most importantly, though, each shows an awareness of what other genres are “saying” and answers these other genres, creating a lively discussion of the issue that approximates “real-life” turn-taking and communicative genre interaction.

As with Freadman’s tennis metaphor, I believe Swales’, Devitt’s, Bazerman’s, Bawarshi’s, and her ideas about the interrelation of genre—though they cannot be applied literally to multigenre compositions like my student’s—may serve as useful metaphors to complicate our thinking about such compositions as more than a collection of container-

like forms. Because they stem from the sociorhetorical, these theories may give us ways to emphasize that view of genre as we help students construct multigenre compositions rather than to perpetuate the notion of genre as receptacle of thought, merely stringing generic pieces together into a whole composition instead of exploring their potential to play off each other, to take turns speaking in the multigenre environment.

## CHAPTER 2: MULTIGENRE WRITING AND BAKHTIN

As the discussion in Chapter 1 of the social and rhetorical redefinition of genre shows, the influences that complicated earlier notions of genre as categorical form (common under Romanticism) and that shaped theories applying genre to a wide range of texts and discursive situations have been many and varied. In this chapter, I want to discuss in more detail one briefly noted influence from that earlier discussion: M. M. Bakhtin. In the literature on genre as linguistic, rhetorical, social, and cultural activity, those defining and articulating this “new genre” repeatedly cite a small body of Bakhtin’s theory. Typically, they draw on two works, “The Problem of Speech Genres” (in Speech Genres and Other Late Essays) and a collection of essays entitled The Dialogic Imagination, as theoretical justification for using the concept “genre” to link “regularities in discourse types with a broader social and cultural understanding of language in use” (Freedman and Medway, “Locating” 1). However, these genre theorists have made little use of Bakhtin’s writings, these or others, for insights into the multigenicity of texts.

My interest in exploring the construct of “the” multigenre paper—and in critiquing that construct in light of the multigenicity of all texts—gives me an opportunity to revisit Bakhtin’s writings in search of relevant ideas. Although Bakhtin does not use the word multigenre, in many ways his ideas can show teachers how they might think more complexly about multigenre compositions as speech acts, emphasizing the give and take of language in such compositions rather than their generic pieces and form. Again, I want to note, as I explained in Chapter 1, that I conceive of multigenicity as widely applicable to all texts to a greater or lesser extent. However, not everyone does, and to this point multigenre compositions written in school have in some instances been placed in a duality with more “traditional” writings like expository essays and “the” research paper. Such dichotomizing has created a new kind of school genre known as “the” multigenre paper. My intent is both to complicate the notion that we can set up one kind

of text as multigeneric against others that are ostensibly monogeneric and, at the same time, to explain, theoretically, the workings of a text that announces itself intentionally as a “multigenre composition.” Since no one else, from what I can tell, has done this, I hope to argue (in part by drawing on Bakhtin) for approaching the writing of multigenre papers in school in ways that resist slipping back into the “old” emphasis of genre as form that genre theorists have been fighting for the last twenty years. Looking at how others have used Bakhtin’s ideas in connection with “new genre” theory is a start for extending ideas about genre to multigenre.

### Bakhtin and Current Genre Theory

As I briefly mentioned in Chapter 1, one can clearly see Bakhtin’s influence on recent theories of genre in the introduction to Genre and the New Rhetoric (1994), a collection of essays on current genre theories, research into public and professional genres, and applications in education. In it, Aviva Freedman and Peter Medway give prominence to Bakhtin’s work as one of six “central concepts and theoretic approaches” that comprise the “[d]iscursive context” for “current North American thinking about genre” (“Locating” 3). Key concepts of Bakhtin they note are his definition of the “utterance” and his insistence on its being the proper unit for analyzing discourse, his identification of utterances as “primary” and “secondary” “speech genres,” and his concepts of “dialogism” and “addressivity” (6-7).

Five other writers (of twelve) in the Freedman and Medway collection also rely on Bakhtin’s works to support their reconceptualizing of genre as social action. For example, in a follow-up article to “Genre as Social Action,” Carolyn Miller uses Bakhtin to help her show how “centrifugal and centripetal forces” collide in a rhetorical community and to argue that genre is one of society’s important “structures of power” (“Rhetorical” 74, 71). In another piece that addresses genre power, Catherine F. Schryer draws on Bakhtin’s ideas of genre as “ideological action” to support a study of how research (“lab”) and practice (“clinic”) genres in such fields as medicine and engineering

“compete” with each other and are “sites of both stability and instability” (107-8).

To argue that genre and “Background Knowledge are inextricably linked,” Janet Giltrow starts with Bakhtin’s contention that an addressee’s “aperceptive background” helps to determine a speaker’s genre choice. She then uses this idea to claim “that genre is a portrait of ‘the scope of [the reader’s] specialized knowledge’” and thus Background Knowledge is integral to its workings (155). Next, in an essay exploring the relationship between teaching and learning new genres, Freedman calls on Bakhtin to help her argue against the explicit teaching of genre conventions in school (what some members of the “Sydney School” of genre theory would have us do) since genres understood as social action, she says, cannot be isolated from their “recurring socio-cultural contexts” (“Do” 194).

Finally, Russell A. Hunt credits Bakhtin with helping him understand that all language (including “school” language) is dialogic and that we must offer students as many opportunities as possible to use conversation (both oral and written). Specifically, he suggests that teachers use such activities as “inkshedding” not only to help students learn the genres necessary for success in school but also to enhance their ability to “internalize the habits of discourse that allow them to participate in communities in which they want to participate” as life-long language users (215-17). Though diverse in their usage of Bakhtin (and perhaps debatable in this usage), these six chapters show that theorists, researchers, and educators have relied heavily on Bakhtin’s ideas about genre as sociorhetorical action, and they suggest that he may also serve as a valuable resource in moving from talking about genre to examining multigenre.

Further evidence of this reliance on Bakhtin (and justification for applying his ideas to multigenre compositions) comes in another, more recent collection of essays on genre, Genre and Writing: Issues, Arguments, Alternatives (1997), in which half its authors cite Bakhtin. First, Wendy Bishop calls on him to assert that the field of composition needs to make room for “alternate styles” of writing to enhance thinking

(“Preaching” 12), and Charles Bazerman credits Bakhtin with contributing to genre theorists’ questioning of “formal and textual definitions of genre” in order to rehabilitate genre as “communicative action” (“Life” 21). Then Irvin Peckham equates Bakhtin’s concepts of the centripetal and centrifugal in language with the Chinese duality of yin and yang in order to explore how genre exists as a site for struggle between the powerful “patriarchal and class-based values” that hold sway in many cultures and societies and the less privileged “dark feminine side of the master trope” (43).

In arguing that genre encompasses a “complementary relationship between constraint and choice” akin to the tension between “standardization and “variation within language,” Amy Devitt cites Bakhtin as integral to the current redefinition of genre “as an active social and rhetorical construct” (“Genre” 45). In addition, Debra Journet turns to Bakhtin to define genres as “socially constructed codes of behavior” (56), and William Lyne uses Bakhtin’s idea of carnival to argue for courses on genre theory that are “anti-foundational” and “make privileged students uncomfortable, [. . .] leading them to question genres that have always worked well for them” (80).

Further, Lynn Z. Bloom mentions Bakhtin’s work as one of several “diverse schools” of literary criticism that can be used to support the teaching of autobiographical literature “across the educational spectrum” (152); and Brad Peters draws on Bakhtin’s contention that only through autobiographical writing does one “becom[e] a supraperson, or his own witness and judge” (202-5) to support an argument that writing autobiography should be approached “as a form of exploratory discourse” because it helps one gain “accountability.” Also, Freedman emphasizes the importance to her research of Bakhtin’s view of text as dialogical, intertextual, and flexibly interactive as she articulates the theoretical underpinnings of a study she did of writing in social science and financial analysis courses (“Situating” 180).

In a tenth essay in the collection, Ruth M. Mirtz demonstrates how student writing is a “metagenre,” a kind of “tertiary genre” that extends Bakhtin’s categorization

of genres into primary and secondary (194). And, finally, in an “alternative” essay deliberately constructed as a multigenre composition—like the ones that concern this dissertation— “Postings on a Genre of Email,” Myka (Michael Spooner and Kathleen Yancey) identify Bakhtin’s thinking as useful to our understanding of the “tenor” of email as a multivocal genre (230). Clearly, though some of these genre writers’ applications of Bakhtin’s theories are more useful than others in understanding multigenre compositions-- and though some of these writers isolate types of writing from each other and set these against other types, participating in the kind of dichotomizing my study intends to question—I bring them up here not to apply them but as evidence that in the realm of “new” genre theory Bakhtin’s linguistic and literary theories have been seminal.

For final evidence of his prominence and to justify extending Bakhtin’s already influential ideas to an exploration of broad conceptions of multigenerality and the workings of intentionally multigeneric compositions (like multigenre papers written in school), I now turn to respected journals in the field of English studies. A brief survey reveals that from 1993-2001, four of these journals published seven articles that draw on Bakhtin’s ideas to lend support to theoretical and pedagogical arguments on genre. For example, four such articles appeared in Research in the Teaching of English, including the often cited and highly debated “Show and Tell? The Role of Explicit Teaching in the Learning of New Genres.” Here, as a way to contextualize a study of the question “What role, if any, can or should the explicit teaching of genre features play in learning to write new genres?” Freedman emphasizes (as I already noted she does elsewhere) Bakhtin’s influence on a rethinking of genres that recognizes their primacy as textual actions that respond “to recurring sociocultural contexts” and the “recurring textual regularities of these genres “as secondary to, and a consequence of” those actions (224-25).

Also, in introducing and establishing the theoretical background for a study of the genre choices of first-grade writers, Marilyn Chapman cites Bakhtin’s work as central to the questioning of “traditional” notions of genre. Deborah Hicks goes even further in

suggesting that teachers should draw on Bakhtin's early philosophical writings, in which he writes about "ways in which any human act (i.e., any conscious act) entails a simultaneous configuration of cognitive thinking, sensual (i.e., bodily) feeling, and emotion." Doing so, Hicks claims, will help us see "that students can only develop rich modes of response to discourses inasmuch as they engage with them as morally responsive agents" (471). In a third article, George Kamberelis gives Bakhtin the first word in his study of kindergarten, first-grade, and second-grade students' "working knowledge of narrative, scientific, and poetic genres," and he credits Speech Genres and Other Late Essays (1986) as "largely inspir[ing]" the whole movement that questioned "traditional notions of genres as classes of texts" and redefined them as socio-rhetorical acts (405), a relevant reminder if we want to avoid setting up "the" multigenre paper as just another new "class" of school text.

Significant to current thinking about genre as "a rhetorical and essentially semiotic social construct" rather than "a formal classification system" (573), Devitt, in "Generalizing about Genre: New Conceptions of an Old Concept" in College Composition and Communication, also draws on Bakhtin. In defining and arguing for a "new" conception of genre, she leans heavily throughout the article on Bakhtin's contentions about the inseparable nature of form and content, the constitutiveness of genre, the permeation of an individual's words by the words of others, the limits on freedom of utterances, and the interrelationship between primary and secondary speech genres. These are ideas on which we too can rely in moving the writing of multigenre papers in school from a tendency toward the formulaic to opportunities it provides for studying the rhetoricality and intertextuality of genre.

In an article in College English (briefly mentioned in Chapter 1), Anis Bawarshi calls attention to Bakhtin's influential ideas on "genre and its relation to space and time" ("Genre Function 346) to help him argue "that genres constitute all communicative action" and to pose "genre function" as an alternative to Michel Foucault's "author-



function.” He also points out that unlike other literary theorists, Bakhtin “takes perhaps the most significant step toward a view of genre as social semiotic” (348).

Finally, in an unusual application of genre theory to teacher research, Patricia Stock cites Bakhtin in an article in English Education, arguing that reflective practice is not monolithic but entails many “forms and forums” (i.e. genres)—like the anecdote and the workshop—that deserve respect as methods of building knowledge about the teaching of English. In this argument she uses the theories of Bakhtin, among others, to support her conclusions that such genres are essential to reflective practitioners, that “language learning and use and participation in discourse communities” are interrelated (102), and that the genres of teacher research deserve “systematic study” instead of being derided by our field as not “legitimate” (111). Again, though Stock seems to set genres against genres (a practice I find unproductive in trying to question the duality of multigenre/monogenre), what I most want to show by mentioning her 2001 article here is Bakhtin’s currency and importance in work with genre in order to explain how using Bakhtin in connection with multigenre writing may help complicate what genre theory has done with his ideas so far.

Stock’s piece and the other articles I have reviewed from respected books and journals by some of the most prominent people in the fields of genre and composition studies and of English education show that Bakhtin’s ideas are ubiquitous and fundamental to supporting the definitions of and arguments for a living, active view of genre as “not just forms” but “forms of life, ways of being [. . .] frames for social action” (Bazerman, “Life” 19). And the work these theorists have done suggests that using Bakhtin to theorize multigenre writing is a sensible next step, given his already widely recognized influence in the field of genre studies. For my purposes, Bakhtin’s work, in addition to being key to a reconceptualization of genre, can further be used to understand the nature and power of multigenre (both the concept and the construct, as I articulated in Chapter 1). What others have done to connect Bakhtin to “genre as social action” (C.

Miller) may serve as a starting point for an application of his theories to multigenerality, an idea only suggested in genre theory but not named or articulated. Indeed, what Bakhtin says about the nature of the utterance; speech genres; and, what he calls, the “polyphonic” novel all suggest a look beyond single genre types to the idea of a larger whole that comprises relatively autonomous individual genres “speaking” to each other dialogically about a common theme—that is, what I am calling a “multigenre composition” for analytical convenience, as I explained in Chapter 1. At the same time, I do not intend to suggest that only such pieces of writing that announce themselves as multigeneric, like the so-called multigenre paper, have exclusive ownership of multigenerality.

Before going any further to discuss Bakhtin’s ideas in connection both with the “multigenre composition” construct and the broader concept of multigenerality, I want to note that Bakhtin does not use the term “multigenre.” His concepts of multivocality and polyphony tied to his definition of speech genres, however, seem close enough to apply to multigenre writing—though I think it a mistake to conflate “multivocal” with “multigeneric.” In addition, I want to make clear that because of the relationship I see obtaining between the ideas of multivocal and multigeneric, I understand all writing to have elements of multigenerality and to exist on a dialogical continuum, as discussed in Chapter 1. I also realize the dichotomizing problem inherent in trying to deal with the label “multigenre composition” or “multigenre paper” given to the school assignment. Since it establishes an opposition between compositions and papers that ostensibly are multigeneric and those that are not, it jars with Bakhtin’s theory of the all-pervasive dialogism of language. Even Bakhtin, however, does not escape such binaries. He creates a similar problem for himself, and a similar disconnect between theory and analysis, when he names a piece of text a “polyphonic novel” (as a way to accentuate its multivocality and dialogism) and, thus, sets it against other “non-polyphonic” novels. Taken as a whole, his theory argues that all discourse is dialogic and that such dialogism in its pervasiveness defies categorizing as a product, a type, a kind, or a form. However, by

calling Dostoevsky's novels polyphonic, the characteristics of which I will discuss later in this chapter, Bakhtin himself is categorizing. While he means to rupture such a categorizing of texts and to articulate the qualities of language that defy categorization, he cannot totally escape the paradox of having to use language to do this. As I said in Chapter 1, language, because it breaks concepts up, puts significant constraints on anyone discussing alternative views and principles about language because attempting to "capture" such ideas in language dilutes or even destroys their alternative, disruptive qualities. Yet language, at least in a dissertation, is all we have to try to articulate such ideas.

In addition, whereas Bakhtin makes his own label (i.e. "the" polyphonic novel), I am working with a label created by others (i.e. "the" multigenre paper) that establishes a duality of multigenre/monogenre, thus compounding my task of questioning and complicating such a duality. And the language that has allowed teachers to write books and articles about the "alternative" multigenre paper assignment has, ironically, actually helped standardize it as another kind of school genre, making formulaic, at least in some manifestations, that which is meant to challenge formulas. Even while they try to offer something un-labeled, undefined, or unbounded, something unlike other school genres, such discussions of multigenre writing participate in the modern and positivistic habits of labeling, defining, and providing boundaries in order to grab hold of often complex and ethereal concepts. However, Bakhtin's ideas about dialogism call into question the kind of language and dualistic thinking that has set "the" multigenre paper against other supposedly monologic kinds of writing. Even though Bakhtin himself is stuck with language and falls into the dualizing traps of language by setting what he considers highly dialogical texts, like "the" polyphonic novel, against others, like exposition, that he deems less so, still there is enough in Bakhtin that may help to complicate current thinking about multigenre compositions in a school setting, to recognize the multigeneric nature of other school texts, and to point to multigenicity in wider contexts.

For one set of theories that can help us consider multigenerality and multigenre compositions more complexly, I propose returning to Speech Genres and Other Late Essays and The Dialogic Imagination to apply to multigenre writing those of Bakhtin's ideas that genre theorists have used for other purposes and to expose a number of other ideas they do not use but that also may illuminate the workings of multigenre compositions. In addition, by examining a work not typically cited by genre theorists, Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics, I intend to show what Bakhtin's ideas about "heteroglossia" and "novelistic prose" can contribute to our understanding of the concept of multigenerality and the construct of a multigenre composition. When Bakhtin speaks about heteroglossia and novelistic prose, he seems to conceive of them as broad concepts, applicable to other types of discourse and not genre dependent. In fact, though he develops these ideas in "Discourse and the Novel" (in The Dialogic Imagination) and Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics through the vehicle of the novel—and in the case of the latter work, through the vehicle of one author's novels—what seems most useful is his portrayal of textual heteroglossia and "novelization" as attitudes toward, ways of thinking about, how written language can mirror the dialogism of everyday language and how it can inform other genres (Problems 270)—like multigenre compositions—that mean to question the lines still often drawn between fiction/nonfiction, literary/nonliterary, poetry/prose. It is focusing on this notion of attitude that may help break apart the dualistic thinking that has attached itself to "the" multigenre paper.

Clearly, Bakhtin's ideas blur such dualities. In addition, postmodernists, through work in such areas as autobiography, essay writing, and creative nonfiction, understand that these rigid distinctions do not hold. However, Bakhtin's and other postmodernists' theories that mean to disrupt the boxing in of curricular forms have had little impact on the naming and separating that goes on in educational institutions and academic departments. A look at any "schedule of courses" from a high school, college, or university anywhere in the country illustrates the situation. Typically, we find a course

like Creative Writing listed--as though somehow there are types of writing that are "creative," and within the purview of the course, and others that are not--separately from fiction writing and from poetry writing. Michigan State University's schedule of English department courses from Fall 1997 even lists a course called "Writing as Exploration," as though not all writing involves exploring.

Obviously, institutional tradition and communicative expediency continue to maintain artificial distinctions between writing that perpetuate a dichotomizing of multigenre and monogenre papers that I find unproductive and hope others will see as questionable, as well. In this, Bakhtin's work, though not perfectly consistent and free from dualities, can help us see how multigenre compositions potentially allow experimentation that opens up the complexity of language, encourage ideological clashes, and refrain from privileging "official" voice while suppressing conflicting "other" voices. Though "old genres," like those school forms nearly anyone who has spent time as a student would recognize, also exhibit dialogism and ideological clashes (as I will discuss further in Chapters 4 and 5), multigenre writing in its intentional legitimization of multiple points of view may have the power to "novelize" these so that they "better perceive their own possibilities and boundaries [and] overcome their own naiveté" (Problems 271). Such ideological clashing allowed to remain unresolved, according to Bakhtin, connects art (writing) to the heteroglossia of life. It tries to avoid falling into the trap of "general literariness," which Bakhtin dislikes for its "attempts to introduce order into this heteroglossia, to make a single, particular style canonical [. . .]" (Dialogic 382). Though we cannot totally escape naming and form (as much as I intend to try to rupture these notions), I would argue that multigenre compositions may be one of the best ways to see a resistance to the canonical and the concept of multigenicity in action.

#### Dialogism of the Word and Multigenre Writing

Fundamental to any discussion about the multivocalic properties of larger pieces of discourse like a multigenre composition is the concept of "dialogism," a complex idea

that informs all of Bakhtin's theorizing. To review, this dialogical theory of language says that words embody all past and present uses, interpretations, and meanings, creating a constant internal and external "interaction" among them and potentially "conditioning" all other meanings (Dialogic 426). Bakhtin rejects the commonplace idea of words as neutral building blocks of language that speakers and writers choose out of a kind of data bank to translate already formed thoughts into communicative speech. In contrast, he continually argues that words are anything but neutral and those we use belong not to us but to everyone. We are "not, after all, the first speaker, the one who disturbs the eternal silence of the universe" (Speech Genres 69). Instead, when we begin to speak or write, we take the words of others shot through with "alien" meanings and used for their purposes and give them "expression" through our own "speech plan" (88). The words we claim as ours, then, have meaning residues from all others who have used them in the recent or distant past, in far or near places, as well as those of our own time and place (and, I suppose, the hints of how others will use them after us).

Bakhtin's concept of dialogism is pertinent to a study of multigenre papers because one of their fundamental properties is that they do not pretend to be "original," in a sense, but consciously borrow from life situations and the words and genres circulating in those situations. Multigenre writing recognizes and legitimates the echoes of many different voices, using these for the deliberate purpose of exploring a particular issue, theme, or topic. In addition, though such writing may involve the writer making specific points about his or her topic, more importantly, it retains other speakers' use of its words, even when they conflict. Multigenre compositions do not conclude anything definitively but invite their conversation to continue. They are not static or twisted only to reflect a writer's singular intention. Instead, multigenre writing exhibits the sharing of language that goes on unconsciously and unintentionally all around and within us by its inclusion of others' words penetrated with various meanings, tones, nuances, intentions, misrepresentations, and so on.

As shared and social, the penetration into words of a multiplicity of uses in language causes them to be dialogic, to be always engaged in an internal dialogue, to always mean more than what they mean in a narrow rhetorical situation because they bring to that specific context all the echoes of culture, society, and individual feelings that adhere to them. Therefore, anything we say or write, according to Bakhtin, in some way articulates what others have said or written, be that consonant, conflicting, or combative with our meanings. And just as our words don't begin with us, they don't end with us, either. Our words' meanings are not exhausted in a particular speech situation but form another link in the continuous evolution of the word through time and space, coupling with the words of others and participating in the birth of new meanings in the language systems available to us.

Most prominent in multigenre writing (though I want again to point out that it is not absent in other writing) is this dialogism of language. We can see in it the give and take among various voices, the references the writing makes to time and space outside itself, the ideas of others given somewhat free rein and equal standing with those of the writer. And throughout all this, a multigenre paper gives birth to new meanings and ideas as a participant in what Bakhtin calls the "dialogic imperative" that compels every utterance always to address or "tur[n] to someone" (Dialogic 426; Speech Genres 99). A multigenre composition shows how voices of a moment are conscious of the impact they may have on, or response they may receive from, some audience, urging or constraining them as they formulate what they want to say, molding them "in continuous and constant interaction with others' individual utterances" (Speech Genres 89). Built on the foundation of the dialogical word, a multigenre composition's utterances are fluid and organic and resonate with the overall dialogism of language

The evolving dialogic word—what Bakhtin calls "language in its concrete living totality" (Problems 181)—is the first link in the chain of linguistic dialogism that becomes more complex as we begin to put single words together to create larger pieces of

discourse. Multigenre writing also exhibits this complexity in the ways it uses what Bakhtin posits as “the real unit of speech communication: the utterance” (Speech Genres 71). Though “the word,” as part of the universal conversation, always responds to the words of others (those we hear, read, think) and is, therefore, important, and though examining words and other units (like the phrase, clause, or sentence) may be appropriate for some linguistic analyses, Bakhtin’s method of explaining the workings of oral and written discourse practices focuses on the utterance, a unit useful to us in analyzing multigenre compositions, as well.

Before discussing the utterance, I want to reiterate what I said earlier about such naming being problematic when trying to discuss concepts like multigenerality that defy such naming. We, including Bakhtin, label and categorize language in order to talk about and analyze it, but we also need to be aware of the tension that such labeling creates when we try to talk about concepts that challenge categorization. Although Bakhtin chooses “utterance” as a way to articulate the workings of language more realistically, he believes, than other linguists can by focusing on “word” or “sentence,” still, in contesting one grammar, Bakhtin sets up another. In academic writing, however, analytical frameworks are expected, as much as Bakhtin or I might want to eliminate them. Perhaps awareness of the dilemma is a start, and perhaps some ways of labeling are better than others. At least, Bakhtin seems to think so in settling on the utterance as the most legitimate unit of linguistic analysis.

With that said, we cannot dissect language accurately into such forms as the word or sentence, according to Bakhtin, because they are just that, forms. They do not constitute the unit of communication itself, are not the way people express ideas to each other, or even work out ideas for themselves. We don’t “exchange” words or sentences, Bakhtin says, but only utterances (Speech Genres 75). These utterances range widely “in terms of their length, their content, and their compositional structure” from the briefest, most primitive grunt in an oral, face-to-face meeting to a 1,000-page Senate subcommittee



report, for example. In all, however, they share the “quite clear-cut boundaries” of “a change in speaking subjects” (71), rather than the usual syntactic markers (e.g. the period). Each utterance has something to say—an intention (a “plan or speech will”)—that guides its length, breadth, and complexity (77), and each, if “finalized,” expects a response (in thought, word, or deed) (76). All of these properties of the utterance are evident in a multigenre composition, whose interactions between genres illustrate this back-and-forth interchange among speakers. These utterances are fluid and organic and resonate in different ways that participate in the overall dialogism of language and form the basis, then, of a dialogical view of genre and of multigenre writing.

### Genre, Multigenre, and the Polyphonic Novel

Bakhtin’s departure from a formalistic view of linguistics to a more historical and social conceptualization of “word” and “utterance” defines genre, not as form and structure (the way it was primarily conceived of in literary theory) but as a linguistic, social act, characterizing “genre” more as a verb than a noun. As previously noted, Bakhtin’s ideas about genre as act have been the starting point for genre theorists of the last twenty years crafting a redefinition of genre; and his ideas about dialogism of the word and the utterance become even more relevant to a study of multigenre writing. Bakhtin defines genres as “typical” utterances that are “definite and relatively stable.” Through repetitive use, these “primary” and “secondary” utterances, or “speech genres” become recognizable and available to speakers for individual expression in certain social situations (Speech Genres 78, 62). Without them, “speech communication would be almost impossible,” since each new opportunity for discourse would necessitate a speaker creating from scratch a frame in which to appropriately express an idea, thus essentially overloading the communication process (79).

Besides being essential for communication, the distinction Bakhtin makes between “primary” genres—those of everyday life formed “in unmediated speech communion”—and “secondary” ones—those usually written, more complex, and derived from primary

genres—is particularly interesting in a study of multigenre compositions since these exhibit many of the characteristics Bakhtin ascribes to one type of secondary genre: the novel. Multigenre compositions incorporate, that is, “absorb and digest” for artistic purposes, primary genres that maintain to some extent their autonomy. However, the new composition’s content “plane” now shapes their “form and significance” into a larger secondary genre similar to what Bakhtin describes as the dialogic novel (Speech Genres 62). In this, what he says about “novelistic” discourse in general, and the “polyphonic” novel in particular, paves the way for multigenre writing. Bakhtin’s ideas can help us understand not only the workings of overtly multigeneric compositions but also the ways the broader idea of multigenicity instantiates fully the concept of dialogism and participates in a kind of “polyphonic artistic thinking” that Bakhtin says “renounce[s . . .] monologic habits” (272). Such artistic thinking is evident in multigenre writing just as he claims it is in the novels of Dostoevsky.

Dostoevsky’s artistic vision, according to Bakhtin, stems from recognizing that we cannot reduce the “multiple ambiguity of every phenomenon” to a sequence or hierarchy but must, instead, visualize its “contradictions and bifurcations” in a chronotopic way, “spread out in one plane [. . .] as an eternal harmony of unmerged voices or as their unceasing and irreconcilable quarrel” (Problems 30). Bakhtin claims that Dostoevsky puts this artistic vision into action by creating a complex utterance in which the voices of others invited into the text retain their own independent intentions but are also infused with the intentions of the author. Consequently, the various parts of his novels engage in “microdialogues” with themselves, other parts, the author, and the reader (40), creating a double-voiced discourse (one embodying more than one orientation and intention) that although “finalized” also remains open when Dostoevsky relinquishes the “floor,” the speaker’s platform, as the novel ends. According to Bakhtin, Dostoevsky does not force the voices in his novels to merge with his own authorial one and does not totally objectify them so that they lose their original intentions. Instead, they continue to

speak for themselves without being reduced to a Hegelian dialectic (26) that results in a synthesis expressed solely in the voice of the author. This open-endedness, in theory, allows Dostoevsky's novels as utterance to join the ongoing universal conversation, adding their voices to the already complex living word.

In describing the possibilities for open-ended double-voicedness in novelistic prose, Bakhtin defines a novel subgenre the "polyphonic novel," which he calls "the unif[ying] of highly heterogeneous and incompatible material—with the plurality of consciousness-centers not reduced to a single ideological common denominator" (Problems 17). Multigenre compositions exhibit many characteristics of the polyphonic novel Bakhtin describes. In fact, if one did not know Bakhtin was defining this type of novel, we could mistake his definition for that of a multigenre composition. At the center of this polyphony, and of multigenre writing (both as construct and concept), is an egalitarian presentation of "fully valid voices within the limits of a single work" (34). In this presentation the author refrains from "fusing" represented consciousnesses with his or her own to make them only an authorial "mouthpiece" (51). The voices of these consciousnesses resist being "maimed" by the author's ideology (Booth xxi), refusing to be silenced by the author's pursuit of a unifying idea. Yet these "incorporated" voices do not completely take over the work, either, thus creating some kind of chaotic anarchy that cannot hold together as an artistic utterance.

What happens in a polyphonic novel or multigenre composition, instead, is that the author becomes less an absolute ruler whose word is law in the piece and more a mediator or orchestral conductor who, while not abdicating his or her authorial responsibility, executes that responsibility by maximizing the dialogue among voices. As Bakhtin puts it, "The author of a polyphonic novel is not required to renounce himself or his own consciousness, but he must to an extraordinary extent broaden, deepen, and rearrange this consciousness [. . .] in order to accommodate the autonomous consciousnesses of others" (Problems 68). He or she must be willing to share authority

with the different voices brought in to create polyphony and make “the other person’s discourse” stylistically integral to the text. In addition, the author must not render such utterances invalid by subjecting them “to the verbal and semantic dictatorship of a monologic, unified style and unified tone.” In contrast, as Bakhtin points out in discussing polyphonic novels, he or she must forge “vibrantly intense bonds between utterances, between independent and autonomous speech and semantic centers” (204). Achieving such bonding in ways that avoids rigid structuration and the formulaic is also the challenge of writing a multigenre paper and of recognizing the multigenerality in other kinds of writing.

Working with multigenre (at least in instances where it has not been reified into a standardized, set form) challenges writers to construct whole pieces that all at once explain, describe, narrate, argue, and so on. This may contrast with the writing in some English classrooms where students are subjected to the dictatorship of single genre production, where form is emphasized, and where such activities continue to be artificially broken into highly familiar current-traditional “modes.” Further, experimenting with polyphony and multigenerality can help writers understand the discourses that circulate in various genres and the way they interact with each other. Polyphonic novels and multigenre compositions, ideally, “contain no final, finalizing discourse that defines anything once and for ever” (Problems 251) but attempt to escape (though how well they do may be up for debate, at least in student writing) the kind of rigid artistic unity that muzzles dialogism. To help us understand how this polyphony works, we can examine the dialogical “devices” Bakhtin says allow the languages of life to be represented in the novel in general and Dostoevsky’s work in particular (Dialogic 358) and see how they apply to multigenre writing.

### Novelistic Techniques and Multigenre Compositions

Attempts at double-voicedness in and of themselves do not guarantee a highly dialogical text, and others’ words may remain relatively “quiet” and subservient to the

authorial one that dominates them and connects them to other parts of the text. However, Bakhtin suggests that novelistic techniques like “hybridization” can allow the speech of others to engage in an equal dialogue with the author’s voice. Such an environment contrasts sharply to what he calls rhetorical double-voicedness, a “shallow” and “formalistic verbal play” which “sickens” words and cuts them off from reality (Dialogic 353-54). Though, again, multivocality and double-voicedness are not exclusive to one kind of writing that we may label a “multigenre composition,” the kind of speech “degeneration” Bakhtin discusses may occur more often, for example, when students try to incorporate ideas from sources into the academic arguments they write in high school or first-year composition courses than it may in a multigenre paper. Rather than the fairly pointed dividing line Bakhtin draws between the double-voicedness of polyphony and that of rhetoric, however, a continuum seems more accurate to represent this difference. With that in mind, according to Bakhtin, Dostoevsky’s polyphonic novels do not engage in such rhetorical double-voicedness but instead retain “the dialogical essence of evolving language” (354) and mirror the heteroglossia of language in life, the linking and interrelating of dialogized multiple voices (263). However, at the same time we should keep in mind that as soon as we name a bounded construct like “a multigenre composition” we put in jeopardy such “evolving” dialogism by creating borders and erecting barriers that prevent shifting and fluidity. Potentially, though, the polyphonic texts Bakhtin describes may “organiz[e] heteroglossia” without completely stifling it through such techniques as character speech, first-person narration and skaz, stylization, and, the one most germane to an analysis of multigenre compositions, “incorporated genres” (320).

First, in terms of character speech, conventional monologue and dialogue in most novels allow characters to “speak” in their own voices as distinct from the narrator’s; however, Bakhtin says, the existence of such speech does not necessarily ensure “novelism” (as he defines it in connection with polyphony) if what happens to characters

as individuals and what they say are really “of no concern for the novel.” Characters’ discourse can only rise above “aimless verbal play” and participate in the heteroglossic stratification of language if it “strive[s] for a certain social significance, a social breadth” and if a character is “an ideologue [. . .] who must defend and try out his ideological positions” (Dialogic 333), positions that may clash with the author’s.

What Bakhtin says here about characters is applicable to other kinds of writing as well. Though not always the case, in typical school writing like an argumentative essay, for example, the voices brought into the argument, as quotes from experts or anecdotes, have no individual significance; they are “of no concern” to the essay. Rather, they are simply there to serve the intentions of the arguer, who manipulates them to give credence to a claim, to serve as a jumping off point for rebuttal, or to illustrate some idea. These outside voices may not be “respected as full subjects, shown as ‘consciousnesses that can never be fully defined or exhausted.’” Conversely, a polyphonic novel or a multigenre composition (though, again, I do not intend to pit one kind of writing against another even when Bakhtin’s ideas may lead there) seems to treat character speech less as artifacts, “objects fully known, once and for all, in their roles—and then discarded as expendable” (Booth xxiii). Instead, character voices in a dialogic novel or multigenre composition work to establish a context that encourages ideas to function as what Bakhtin calls “a live event, played out at the point of the dialogic meeting between two or several consciousnesses” (Problems 88). This speech is “represented and not merely expressed” by the author (51), and character voices function as more than objects bandied about as another extension or version of the author’s voice. As representational and participatory in a “dialogic communion between consciousnesses” (88), character voices in a dialogic novel or multigenre paper retain some of their own intentions and self-direction, functioning as more than just a “compositional convention” (198) or rhetorical tool used solely to help an author craft his or her point. Rather, the writer cultivates a willingness to resist any inclination to solve the inconsistencies, tensions, and conflicts that the clash of ideas in

character speech introduces (51).

Second, in addition to characters and their speech, polyphonic writing also makes use of the narrator's voice, which when "orient[ed] toward another's discourse" infuses dialogism into novels like Dostoevsky's, according to Bakhtin. This may be achieved through common first-person narration (Ich-Erzählung) or, when also emphasizing oral speech patterns, through the "analogous" skaz, a Russian term meaning "narrator's narration" (Problems 193). As double-voiced discourses, first-person narration and skaz contain both the created narrator's voice with its own intentions as a kind of character in the novel and the author's intention for this voice as a vehicle for communicating the work's overall ideas. In this way the author's "refracted" intentions penetrate the words of his narrator so that the narrator's words are the words not only of the "other" but also of the author.

In skaz the difference between the narrator's and author's voices is even greater than in first-person narration because the author makes a definite attempt to create a style uniquely the narrator's own and not simply an extension of the author's style (Problems 8). Yet the two interact with each other internally in the narrator's words, which the author evaluates and interprets to serve larger novelistic purposes (195). Huckleberry Finn is a striking example of this uniqueness. The "internal dialogization" of skaz happens when "a divergence in direction between the author's [and the narrator's] aspirations" occur (198) as narrator words interact with author intentions. The narrator in skaz is a kind of oral "storyteller," whose speech serves as an "intersection [. . .] of two voices and two accents," his or her own and the author's (192), that contributes to the multivocalic quality of Dostoevsky's novels that Bakhtin describes.

Such a creation of a persona so distinct from the author that it can interact with him or her in a kind of conversation may seem scarce in most school writing. Nevertheless, if we continue to think on a continuum, we may see that school writings do create personas that writers adopt. And these ideas of Bakhtin's, though they may be

more obvious in a multigenre paper, may also appear in what some people would describe as a standard school essay or research paper. If nothing else, the writerly voice may exist in tension with the directions of the assignment or teacher explanation, and these other voices may bubble up in the writing, as we will see in the student writing samples I examine in Chapters 4 and 5. However, if we also refrain from conflating multivocalic with multigeneric, we may see that in a multigenre paper, a constructed narrator persona may be so intentionally different from the author that the concept of skaz becomes prominent.

For example, in composing a multigenre paper on the issue of welfare, one of my college freshmen—a white, politically conservative, upper middle-class woman with strong negative feelings about welfare recipients—chose to allow the genres in her paper to evolve and interact with each other through the persona of a case worker writing the report of one fictional welfare recipient and developed through the paper’s genre “events” (an idea I will discuss further in Chapter 3). These genres, all connected to a single mother with two children, include multiple voices from government, various uninvolved members of the general public, her daughter, a school counselor, a social worker, a drug customer of the mother, the medical examiner, a newspaper, and the mother herself. By the writer’s own admission, using a dispassionate case worker-narrator created a tension between the narrator’s objective attitude, conflicting voices allowed to swirl unresolved throughout the paper (unbracketed and unbounded by the author’s disdainful viewpoint), and that viewpoint itself—a tension we might describe as double-voiced and illustrating the concept of skaz.

Related to the double-voicedness of skaz is a third technique, “stylization,” which Bakhtin calls “[t]he clearest and most characteristic form of an internally dialogized mutual illumination of languages.” It differs from more common conceptions of “style” in that the “linguistic consciousnesses” of the author (the “stylizer”) and the words of another being stylized or “represented” do not merge. This occurs in a multigenre



composition when the writer allows the speakers of separate genres to have their say without being totally appropriated by the author voice as he or she enacts the composition by combining genres. In such stylization, a writer gives a new context to the “free image of another’s language” that changes its original “meaning and significance” (*Dialogic* 362). However, Bakhtin says, this is not mere “imitation” of another’s voice because the utterance’s original “direct and unconditional meaning” collides with the author’s meaning to accomplish his or her new discursive intentions. Though the utterance is no longer exclusively the other’s, it also does not belong solely to the author, becoming, instead, indirect and “conditional” and thus double-voiced (*Problems* 190). The words of the stylizer and the stylized, then, “penetrate one another, overlap one another at various dialogic angles” and represent, according to Bakhtin, the dialogism of the living word (266).

We can see all of these previous techniques (character dialogue, first-person narration and *skaz*, and stylization) in a multigenre composition since the writer deliberately creates various utterances all with their own speakers who retain enough individuality to allow them to interact in various ways with the author’s voice and intentions. However, the technique I see as most directly comparable between the dialogic novels Bakhtin describes and multigenre compositions is a fourth technique, “incorporated genres,” relatively separate individual genre pieces inserted into a larger work. This, Bakhtin believes, is one of the most positive and prominent aspects of a polyphonic novel, and I see it as the unique defining quality of a self-consciously multigeneric composition. As examples of genres borrowed from other contexts, Bakhtin identifies both those of an “artistic” nature like “inserted short stories, lyrical songs, poems, [and] dramatic scenes” and “extra-artistic” ones like “everyday, rhetorical, scholarly, religious genres” (*Dialogic* 320)—though from a postmodern perspective we may disagree with his categorizing here and also recognize the creation of binaries I mean to challenge. Nonetheless, incorporating such genres, Bakhtin says, is “one of the most

basic and fundamental” ways an author can admit and “organiz[e] heteroglossia in the novel.” This genre incorporation, in contrast to other polyphonic techniques, results in chunks of discourse not totally integrated or blended into the larger composition, with generic boundaries retained for the most part and the pieces usually set off visually from other parts of the text. Thus the separation in this case between the incorporated genres and other aspects of the novel is greater than between narrative material, character dialogue, and other stylized speech since the “genres usually preserve within the novel their own structural integrity and independence, as well as their own linguistic and stylistic peculiarities” (320). For example, the incorporation of a letter from one lover to another is more noticeable than a conversation between the two since as a recognizable genre outside the context of a novel, a letter stands out because of its generic conventions, its obvious beginning and ending boundaries, its use of the persona of lover-as-letter-writer, and so on.

Though inserted into the larger work, a smaller genre, like a love letter, retains both its status as a genre in its own right and the residue of its uses in other contexts. However, because the author’s new intentions now infuse it, it becomes double-voiced and also engages in new interactions with other voices in the piece, contributing to the multivocality of the complete novelistic utterance. In addition, some genres (e.g. “the confession, the diary, travel notes, biography, the personal letter”), Bakhtin argues, go even further than contributing their small voice (or group of voices) to the dialogic chorus but can “play an especially significant role in structuring novels” because “as well-worked forms,” they have the capacity to “assimilate various reality in words” (*Dialogic* 321). In this discussion of inserted genres and the novel, though, we can see where Bakhtin’s argument for unfettered dialogism breaks down when he dissects forms in this way. He claims such structuring genres keep the artistic material of the work firmly connected to reality and are essential to maintaining alive and functioning words that have potential to “expand and renew their meanings in new living contexts” (354). However, by focusing

here on form, an artificial construct, we may wonder how connected they may be to “living contexts.” Again, we can see the difficulty of trying to rupture anything when the language we have available to critique actually constitutes the form we are critiquing. The same kind of disconnect exists in trying to discuss the concepts of multivocality and multigenicity as an alternative to school forms. Thus, in trying to hold on for a moment to such fleeting concepts, better grasped through intuition than analysis, the construct of “multigenre composition” is convenient though imperfect as a vehicle to talk about how incorporated genres play an even more prominent structuring role than Bakhtin says they do in the novel. These genres themselves constitute the “story” (an idea I discuss in more detail in Chapter 3) and are not deposited into a narrative frame. Individual genres in a multigenre composition function more like links (since each is essential to forming a polyphonic chain that tells a story of a subject) than like blocks dropped into an already formed narrative container.

In a number of ways, then, we may consider a multigenre composition “a novelistic hybrid [. . .] an artistically organized system for bringing different languages in contact with one another” (Bakhtin, *Dialogic* 361), which illustrates “novelistic” thinking applicable beyond “the” novel. Multigenre compositions, like polyphonic novels, create themselves out of smaller chunks of utterances, relatively autonomous speech genres or generic parts “filled with dialogic overtones” (*Speech Genres* 92). These enter the multigenre “frame” and form a “chemical union (on the semantic and emotionally expressive level)” rather than a mere “mechanical bond” (*Dialogic* 340) and, in doing so, create a layering and building of dialogic echoes.

Unlike polyphonic novels, however, the pieces in a multigenre composition may stand on their own with little or no authorial connective material. In other words, if we remove inserted genres from a piece of writing more toward the monologic end of our dialogic/monologic continuum, the text as a whole—though inevitably altered—remains intact. On the other hand, if we remove inserted genres from a multigenre composition,

the whole disintegrates because the composition is its parts to a great extent. Each stands there speaking, and the larger work exists as a tapestry or mosaic with individual colors contributing to the overall design. It is a chorus with individual voices and vocal sections having their own distinct parts but blending in various ways to create a more or less harmonious song that, though complete, reverberates beyond the last note.

A multigenre composition acts out what Bakhtin calls “novelistic counterpoint” and illustrates the polyphonic “principles” he says Dostoevsky developed in a new way to combine discourse “elements” and “construc[t . . .] the whole” (Problems 43). The individual genres, each containing at least one utterance with its own speaker and “speech will” that marks it off from the next, comprise the larger utterance, the complete text guided by the writer’s overall intention. This overall “will” behind a multigenre composition as a whole, then, constitutes a “relatively stable” utterance, a complex secondary speech genre. And just as individual utterances “invest” the words they contain “with the expression of the whole” (Speech Genres 86), a multigenre composition as an utterance contextualizes all its parts and “invests” the smaller generic pieces that comprise it with its “speech imagination” (the overall envisionment the writer has for the multigeneric utterance), which then regulates genre choices (81).

A dialogism that manifests itself internally (within an utterance) and externally (between utterances), with words addressed to and eliciting a response from others, makes itself visible in a multigenre composition as a writer creates pieces built on other voices, either real or simulated, who have some interest in and concern with the theme of the composition. In deciding to create a deliberately multigeneric composition like multigenre papers in school, a writer thinks about the issue or topic, and perhaps researches it, and from this thinking she or he imagines the possibilities surrounding it, representing disparate voices in individual generic chunks, “transformed primary [and often secondary] genres” (Bakhtin, Speech Genres 98). These multiple perspectives expressed in various genres interact with each other in different ways (for example,

agreeing, disagreeing, or arguing with; augmenting or commenting on; musing about; etc.). And the thematically linked “equally weighted discourses” that meet each other in a multigenre composition “must inevitably orient themselves to one another [. . .] must come into inner contact [. . .] must enter into a semantic bond” (Problems 189). As one type of the many “secondary genres of complex cultural communication,” multigenre compositions “play out various forms of primary speech communication” (Speech Genres 98), with such communication occurring not only between the genres themselves and the writer but also between the genres and the reader. These compositions essentially act out in rather overt ways the dialogism that, Bakhtin claims, other types of more monologic writing, like exposition, often gloss over or “neate[n] up”—though when we examine student writing, for example, (as I do in Chapters 4 and 5), we may see exposition as less monologic than those who juxtapose it with the multivocalic or multigeneric may realize.

#### The Question of Silencing in Exposition

Bakhtin contrasts polyphonic novels that he says attempt to stay connected to language-in-life with expository prose, which he feels is too constraining in its need to leave no linguistic loose ends. Exposition, he says (though here again he is dichotomizing, and the stringent line he draws seems too simplistic), divorces language from life and moves too far away from discourse as “raw material,” feeling a need to refine it, “to neutralize or somehow structure [the] excess” in order for it not to be “an obstacle” to a particular unifying conceptualization. Unlike the dialogical “messiness” that Bakhtin encourages (and that multigenre writing seems intentionally to nurture), expository writing, according to Bakhtin, too single-mindedly tries to resolve the fits and starts of discourse and silences voices when they do not coincide with a writer’s intention. In exposition, excess material, Bakhtin says, is “ordered on the template of convention, smoothed out, straightened, polished, touched up” so that the result is “no more than an empty euphony [. . .] an empty ease of manner, a smooth finish, [. . .] an equally empty

rhetorical complexity.” Instead of supporting a connection between artistic and everyday language, expository writing, Bakhtin claims, tries to “complete” the conversation and in the process “canonize[s] the absolute rupture between language and material.” In this supposed tyranny of exposition, double-voiced discourse cannot flourish. By “making language respectable,” the conventions of expository prose, according to Bakhtin, cause “a reduction of semantic polysemy to empty single meanings” (*Dialogic* 380-81) and fail to take advantage of the “[d]ialogic relations [. . .] always present” in all writing types (*Speech Genres* 125). Although I might agree that at least some manifestations of expository writing are less double-voiced than writing that consciously encourages dialogism, I might qualify Bakhtin’s blanket contentions with a suggestion that exposition is less monolithically reductive than his language implies and that even potentially polyphonic discourses, like multigenre papers, may become rigidified and standardized so that they join the canon of forms they mean to challenge and escape.

Nonetheless, “neat” secondary genres may tend to cut off dialogism, intentionally or unintentionally, through the creation of a monologue or soliloquy, in which the writer holds the floor exclusively to enhance the authorial viewpoint, admitting no other voices, or if admitting them, doing so only grudgingly. For instance, typical guidelines for writing “traditional” argument (a genre further toward the monologic end of the continuum than Rogerian argument—though I do not intend to set these rigidly in opposition to each other) may push a writer to quote from sources for the sole purpose of supporting his or her claims and to bring in dissenting views, not sincerely to validate such views but only to criticize or negate them. Thus, even if writers try to fight against using a domineering voice, the long-entrenched conventions of argument often encourage an inegalitarianism that works against the dialogism Bakhtin describes. Although others’ words are present, the author does not give them equal status, and her or his words predominate instead of being just one among many legitimate ones. In contrast, multigenre writing encourages writers to cultivate “[in]direct speaking, an attitude toward one’s own language as one of

the possible languages (and not the only possible and unconditional language)” in a work (Speech Genres 115). This is the ideal; however, multigenre compositions, at least in some manifestations, may fall into the same traps that they try to escape, so in practice, just as in the case of expository and argumentative writing, results vary.

#### Inquiry and Conversation in Multigenre Writing

Still, multigenre writing has the potential to be a complex dialogue—or, perhaps more accurately, a “polylogue” (Kristeva, “Novel” 181; North, Refiguring 143). It is “inquiry and conversation” (Speech Genres 114), in which “another’s speech in another’s language [communicates] authorial intentions but in a refracted way” (Dialogic 324). Even though, as creator of the multigenre composition, the author still guides the whole, the intent of multigenre writing is for a voice working behind the scenes, not taking center stage, with, perhaps, a feeling of the author as nonexistent or absent since speech genres with their own speakers make up the whole. Though these are now shot through with a “new semantic intention” (Problems 189), they still represent other “linguistic consciousnesses” and have their own “‘authors’ [. . .] who speak in the given language, who structure utterances in that language and who therefore introduce into the potentialities of language itself their own actualizing language intention” (Dialogic 359-60). A multigenre composition that stays true to the spirit of multigenerality and multivocality borrows from the discourses all around it, imagining, inventing, recreating, or recording these other voices; recognizing that they already have their own intentions; and allowing them to retain these intentions (Problems 189), even as it adds its new intention in order to give a broad picture of the theme, issue, or topic addressed.

Like Dostoevsky’s “authorial activity,” multigenre writing ideally attempts to stretch “every contending point of view to its maximal force and depth [. . .] and expose and develop all the semantic possibilities embedded in a given point of view” (Problems 68-69). And unlike some varieties of exposition or argument, a multigenre composition (at least one that itself manages to resist efforts to harness its open-ended multivocality)

does not attempt to dispel the contradictions, conflicts, or dissonances that may exist among the voices that comprise it, but allows conversation, no matter how contentious, to exist among the pieces, the writer, the audience, and even beyond. The writer's primary task is to create for each individual voice a "framing context, like the sculptor's chisel, hew[ing] out the rough outlines of someone else's speech, and carv[ing] the image of language out of the raw empirical data of speech life" in order to provide "the situation and conditions necessary for it to sound" (Dialogic 358). Keeping the dialogical interaction among viewpoints and perspectives open and moving "vari-directionally" (Problems 198), the writer does not once and for all attempt to finalize the discussion, close it, "tidy up" the argument, or make his or her intentions crystal clear. In fact, different parts of the multigenre composition may stand on a continuum of "greater or lesser proximity to the author and to his ultimate instantiation," with perhaps some completely rebelling against author intentionality so that "the author does not express himself" as an authority over all the words and genres in the composition but instead dignifies their uniqueness and allows them to operate autonomously (Dialogic 299).

In my student's multigenre paper on welfare, discussed earlier, we see such a willingness to abdicate or at least share authority that seems different than the tropes typically used by arguers to bring in other voices in order to paint them as foolish, irrational, or flawed in order to enhance the writer's claims so that he or she can "win." My student initially had strong feelings against providing social assistance through welfare but still allowed many voices in the paper to disagree with her and each other without shouting them down. She offers multiple perspectives that she lets stand without arguing against them through fifteen different genres, including, for example, a list of what she calls "Various Definitions of Welfare" that echoes conflicting voices from society speaking their views on the issue (e.g. "a safety net for when wages aren't available," "a mockery of the efforts of working people," "a door to success for those in our society with poor education, limited opportunities, discrimination, and dependent



children”). She writes a letter to the editor from the perspective of the single mother whose case is being presented, objecting to the simplistic and dangerous “no work, no pay” policy behind welfare benefits, and she constructs a diary entry from the woman’s seven-year-old daughter kept out of school to watch her baby brother while the mother scours the area for a job. Such genres represent the pretty intense wrestling this student said she did in thinking about her chosen issue in ways she never had before and from perspectives she had never considered. Through her representation of these diverse and often clashing voices that speak out from pages of her paper, the issue of welfare is complicated, and no definitive, univocalic stance emerges. Though an absolute duality of a thesis-driven argument versus this paper certainly does not hold (if we accept Bakhtin’s dialogical view of language and recognize that all writing exists on a continuum of multivocality and multigenicity), there is something going on in this and other multigenre compositions worth investigating. Writing such compositions seems to provide a unique experience for writers to think explicitly about voices in a text and an opportunity for different readers to work out in various ways the relationships among the voices of the genres, the writer’s voice, and even their own voices, all of which contribute to a dialogically enriched exploration of a topic.

### Readers as Actors

This use of more or less independent genres that “talk” to each other in creating a multigenre composition attempts to weaken monologic tendencies and provides an opportunity for rethinking the role of reader, as Bakhtin says, a “new sense of the listener [reader] as a partner-interlocutor, new forms of finalization of the whole” that resonate and reverberate beyond the author’s last words in the composition (Speech Genres 66). In fact, the reader of a multigenre composition, like the “viewer” of Dostoevsky’s novels Bakhtin speaks about—if he or she is open to the challenge of navigating an “alternative” text—has an opportunity to be a “participant” since the “whole formed by the interaction of several consciousnesses, none of which entirely becomes an object for the

other [. . .] provides no support for the viewer.” Of course, readers might abandon the text without the expected conventional support of thesis or essay structure (though the enjoyment many people have puzzling through the intricacies of the World Wide Web suggests that they may be more tolerant than in the past of less explicitly organized texts). Because they cannot “objectify an entire event [the whole utterance] according to some ordinary monologic category (thematically, lyrically, or cognitively)” (Problems 18), they must wrestle with the material and make sense of the different, ambiguous, and even conflicting parts of it which defy a “crude and [. . .] primitive definitiveness” (272) if they choose to participate in the multigenre composition experience as a co-constructor of meanings.

As Bakhtin points out, even the most monologic piece of writing (a “finalized” utterance) always elicits some kind of response (even if that response is boredom and disengagement). However, when confronted with a less dialogic genre like a “traditional” argumentative essay or five-paragraph theme, a reader may find it easy to detach and not enter into the essay’s conversation in a fully participating way, perhaps because the genre is too familiar and/or the idea development too predictable. Of course, a well-written essay may be anything but predictable and dull and thus may engage a reader open to exploring it. Yet, the experience of reading a multigenre composition still seems different from reading other more “traditional” texts, though not in any absolute, dualistic sense. Since the voices in a multigenre composition ideally are not suppressed or quieted in any substantial way, they may entice the reader into the inquiry and conversation, if the whole provides enough guidance to negotiate its parts so as not to frustrate the reader unbearably. To fully appreciate the experience, a reader must take on a more participatory, though not entirely different, role than in reading other, less multivocalic and multigeneric texts. He or she must be an actor in the discussion carried on by the piece and cannot afford to sit back as a spectator. Thus, the transaction between reader and text, though not inherently different from that of other reading experiences, is more

complex. Unless one entirely rejects reading a multigenre composition (something possible with any kind of text for any number of reasons), a hands-off approach is often very difficult (if not impossible) in this reading situation because understanding the whole involves doing myriad interpretive activities.

First, one must create meaning by interacting with each individual genre, recognizing it for what it is by using appearance and other conventions as clues to its generic identity, discerning the identity of its speaker(s), and then grasping the intention(s) of the utterance/speech genre. But constructing meaning from each individual part of a multigenre composition barely scratches the surface of its potential meanings since the most important work goes on in the margins between the pieces and around the periphery of the whole composition at its “seam of boundaries” (Speech Genres 72). Consequently, a reader must also make meaning from a single genre’s relationship 1) to each, other individual genre in the whole, 2) to whatever connective or transitional material an author might use as a thread to hold the individual genres together, 3) to the motifs, themes, ideas etc. that emerge during the experience of reading the piece, 4) to any pattern of such ideas that she or he discovers, and 5) to the author’s overall intention. To do all this, readers must add their own voices, and the words of others they carry with them, to the reading; and these new utterances, spoken or not, become part of the free-flowing conversation initiated by a multigenre composition and taken up by a willing reader. As Louise Rosenblatt has taught us, this is how all reading works (though some teachers and readers still see meaning as something that resides in a text waiting for a reader to ferret it out), but multigenre compositions may demonstrate the co-construction of meaning that creates a “poem” better than, for example, a five-paragraph theme since it helps make concrete a transactional view of reading.

These reader, writer, text voices in the conversation of a multigeneric work are not totally free, however, since the genre choices which reflect them also are not free. Though Bakhtin says “generic forms in which we cast our speech” are less “compulsory” than

language forms like the word or sentence, “they [do] have a normative significance for the speaking individuum, and they are not created by him but are given to him” by society and culture (Speech Genres 80-81). This typicality of speech genres, despite their being “more changeable, flexible, and plastic than language forms” (81), “guides” and shapes the content of the utterance. And such typicality, along with the writer’s conceptualization of the whole piece as a multigenre, shapes his or her individual genre choices and the components (i.e. the words and sentences) of these genres chosen “from the standpoint of the whole” (similar to Freadman’s idea of “ceremony” I discuss in Chapter 1). In addition, each genre choice to some extent dictates the words, phrases, and sentences the writer uses, as well as the “compositional links” the author devises (Speech Genres 81); and each “has its own typical conception of the addressee” (95). This conventional aspect of genres, the aspect that makes them stable and recognizable, has both a constraining and generative function, helping a writer decide what is rhetorically and materially appropriate for a particular genre choice (a generic “action”) and what is not, though not in a deterministic way that releases the writer or the reader from their roles as co-constructors of meaning.

Nevertheless, this tension between conventions and forms and the concepts of dialogism, heteroglossia, polyphony, and multigenerality meant as ruptures to such conventions and forms—and to the positivistic slicing and modern naming and labeling that participates in them—also provides a cautionary tale for those who see multigenre writing as disruptive and challenging to long established school genres like research papers and five-paragraph themes: the only “free” use of language is spoken, as Derrida argues, because whenever we write we take “speech” and change it into form. In addition, the border-constructing inherent in the English language adds another layer of constriction. Further, institutions, like schools, that erect even more structures to protect themselves from unregulated change try to stifle or neutralize challenges to their power often by co-opting the innovation and turning it into another one of its discourses, an argument of

Sidney Dobrin's I mention in Chapter 1. This already seems to be happening with some classroom manifestations of multigenre writing.

Given these constraints on the "alternative," what Bakhtin has contributed to our thinking about language, literature, and genre seems especially important in helping us to understand the complexities of writing and to pause a moment and think about the fate of the multigenre paper assignment's potential to challenge established forms. In addition, his ideas provide a rich and fruitful way to think about and analyze the multigenre compositions we find inside and outside classrooms as complex, dialogical utterances in order to stimulate more critical thinking about the multigenre-paper-as-school-assignment. Doing so may illuminate ways to approach writing multigenre papers that work against reducing them to forms and rules but instead allow them to initiate lively discussions that acknowledge and respect disparate points of view and invite us to think about the interesting connections between oral and written speech, and between texts, and to experiment with the wide variety of genres available to us in exploring, formulating, challenging and expressing ideas in writing. Also, since Bakhtin's theories of narrative and dialogism as verbal echoes across textual sites (the ways texts speak to each other) anticipate, and in some cases provide the foundation for, the work of later theorists working with narrative and intertextuality, Bakhtin serves as a solid starting point for looking at those other theories of narrative and intertextuality, which I now go on to explore in Chapter 3.

## CHAPTER 3: NARRATIVE, INTERTEXTUALITY, AND MULTIGENRE WRITING

Just as M.M. Bakhtin's ideas about the polyvocality of narrative forms like Dostoevsky's novels can serve as a valuable lens through which to examine multigenre compositions and the concept of multigenicity, similarly we can look to other narrative theories for further insights. In this chapter I develop my claim from Chapter 1 that a multigenre composition tells a story. I do so by looking at its connection to narrative in three ways: how it conforms, at least in part, to what we typically think of as modern story structure; how it makes use of narrative thinking as teased out by Jerome Bruner and others; and how it exhibits postmodern tendencies to disrupt such "grand narratives" as narrative unity and "traditional" academic writing. From an examination of multigenre compositions through these three lenses, we may see their complicity in a both/and of modern/postmodern ideas about narrative and its structures. In this, multigenre writing faces the dilemma of both participating in modern story structure and attempting to disrupt such structure. And I face a similar dilemma, as Bakhtin did in naming the qualities of the polyphonic novel, when I try to discuss both the characteristics of multigenre writing as a construct while at the same time articulating how the concept ruptures textual categorizing. In its tendencies to break up ideas and to categorize, language (as I describe in Chapters 1 and 2) hampers any discussion of texts that means to disrupt categories because it may dilute or destroy the essence of such texts in attempts to capture their constituent parts. Still, though we should recognize and try to wrestle with these contradictions, even an imperfect effort to understand multigenre compositions as narrative may help us learn something about multigenre writing that will enrich our understanding and use of it with students.

### Multigenre Composition as Modern Story

To begin, an intentionally multigeneric work tells a story of a topic in a way that fits structuralist narratology's generally recognizable definition of narrative. This

modernist definition says that all narrative is “the recounting (as product and process, object and act, structure and structuration) of one or more real or fictitious events communicated by one, two, or several (more or less overt) narrators to one, two, or several (more or less overt) narratees” (Prince, Dictionary 58). Since multigenre compositions comprise smaller genres that serve as ordered “events,” they fulfill this basic definition of narrative in attempting to achieve wholeness in the modernist spirit of creating some measure of coherence, stability, and order (Faigley 8). In addition, the whole of a deliberately multigeneric piece also satisfies two long-established, fundamental requirements for “good” stories, or narrative products: that they have a “plot”—“a beginning, middle, and end” (Aristotle, “The Poetics” 50b21)—and that they “give pleasure because of the rhythm of their ordering” (Culler, Literary Theory 85).

Indeed, if we look closely at multigenre compositions through the narratological lens, we may see that they fulfill these plot and pleasure-through-structure demands and that they fit the characteristics of narrative as “object” by possessing four essential qualities of “narrativity” (i.e. an utterance’s ability to tell a “good” story). Gerald Prince articulates these qualities as “event description,” “wholeness,” narrative “orientation,” and an inductively arrived at conclusion. As a whole, a multigenre composition adheres to a kind of story structure with its smaller genres functioning as “events,” the happenings of the topic, which demonstrate Prince’s first constituent of narrativity (i.e. “event description”). In this, they deal with “states and actions (involving some kind of conflict)” in a “humanized,” concrete way (Narratology 148-49). The idea of “event description” plays out in a multigenre composition in that a writer’s goal is not an economical, skeletal report on its topic or an efficient summary of generalities, but a piece built on specifics that puts “meat” on the bones and a human face on the topic. For instance, a multigenre paper on the issue of anorexia and bulimia by one of my first-year writing students does more than report facts and statistics about the issue. Instead, it humanizes such facts by allowing glimpses into the workings of an anorexic’s mind

through a diary entry in which she discusses her vomiting and exercise regimen and in a look at the results of twelve years of such behavior in an obituary of anorexic musician Karen Carpenter.

Second, in addition to going beyond the skeleton of actions and states—fleshing out these events as experienced by real people—multigenre compositions also satisfy Prince’s second constituent (i.e. “wholeness”) to the extent that their individual genres form a kind of plot. This wholeness is not simply a matter of sequence (chronological or otherwise) but a requirement that the events hold together as a narrative, with all the genres working together in the multigenre plot to tell the story of the topic (Narratology 150). In the case of the eating disorder paper mentioned above, the story it tells is of a society that values thinness, the pressure it puts on people to achieve unrealistically thin bodies, and the conflicting actions and feelings involved. All eleven genres included in the paper help tell that story in some way and thus achieve “wholeness” through a third constituent: narrative “orientation.” Because the genre-events of a multigenre composition are oriented toward each other and the overall story, the piece moves “from one set of states or actions to another” (155) as it develops the various aspects and perspectives of its topic in discrete genres.

The anorexia/bulimia paper achieves this, framing the story as a special issue of People magazine that deals exclusively with the topic. It opens with a preface that establishes some of the writer’s general intentions and divides the magazine into two parts. The first focuses on anorexia nervosa and explores that condition through a definition and statistics on the disease, the diary entry mentioned previously, a double-voiced piece that juxtaposes an anorexic’s perception of her body and her friends’ view of her, the Karen Carpenter obituary, a letter to “Dear Abby” from a girl trying to break out of her anorexic cycle, Dear Abby’s reply, an advertisement touting the benefits of weight-loss pills, an eating attitudes self-test, and a male jeans advertisement. The second part focuses on bulimia and includes a short definition/summary of the disorder, its causes and



effects, the poem “Binge and Purge,” and an advertisement for Ultra Quick Trim shakes. A discussion of tips for detecting the signs of eating disorders in someone and how to help forms the bridge between the two parts, and the final event of the story is a poem entitled “Something on the Edge,” a lament in the voices of parents coping with the loss of a child to an eating disorder. As a reader goes from one of these genres to the next, the states and actions they describe help the story progress.

Finally, looking at a multigenre composition from a reader’s standpoint, its end ideally is not set forth explicitly at the beginning—the way it usually is in “traditional” argument or research papers—thus fulfilling Prince’s fourth constituent of narrativity. As in other stories, reading a multigenre composition necessitates “waiting for the end” (*Narratology* 157) and discovering inductively, through the experience of the multigenre whole, the “point” (159) of its genre-events. And this “point,” ideally, is open and inclusive, as seen in my student’s anorexia/bulimia paper. From the composition, a reader explores many aspects of the issue, but the writer does not set out in an introduction what her thesis is, what she is trying to prove, or what exact message she intends to communicate in the piece. Instead, multigenre writers let the genre-events of the story speak for themselves, allowing individual readers to articulate their own theses (which may be multiple even for a single reader) as they come to the end of the piece of this research narrative.

### Genres as Events

To understand more fully how the genres of multigenre papers function as plot events, we can explore how they satisfy the requirement that narratives report “events ordered by a specific slice of time occurring before the writing” (Hesse 199), how, in other words, a piece of writing that (according to most conceptions of it as an assignment) requires students to draw heavily on researched “facts” may function as narrative. As I discuss in Chapter 1, the curricularization of writing has created a rigid dichotomy that usually aligns research with other “fact-based” writing like the essay as “information-

based” (non-narrative) and sets it against “experience-based” (narrative) writing (Harris qtd. in Hesse 198). However, Douglas Hesse’s “conce[ption] of the essay as story” blurs these lines and may help us see how a multigenre paper attempts to achieve such blurring as well, recognizing that exposition and narration, what some teachers see as separate modes of writing, actually co-exist.

Narrative theorists working in cultural studies, for example, accept that all writing, indeed all culture, performs a story of some sort, but for those in other settings like many secondary English departments, narrative is still conceived in a narrow literary way that sets it against “factual.” In addition, factual writing is still often attached to “truth,” and thus privileged, and story to “falseness,” and thus characterized derogatorily as a fiction, “just a story.” Hesse’s ideas about the essay as narrative complicates these truth/untruth, fiction/nonfiction, factual/imaginative dichotomies in interesting ways that apply to multigenre compositions, which also try to break down such either/or thinking.

In Hesse’s view, the “propositions” (or “points”) of the essay are its “events”; and any “traditionally narrative elements” brought into the essay, rather than serving as proof, “giv[e] those points a place in the story, in time.” Hesse builds the case that the “truth” of essays is not “timeless, logical, and stable but [. . .] always situational, constructed in experience” (199), and that in constructing them, writers use both what he calls “experience time” and “essay time” (206). The first, experience time, is a “temporal dimension” created by the writer’s “encounters with a scene, a thought, or a text,” which “hav[e] the rhetorical effect of being prior” to the experience of writing the essay (199). This “Experience 1” constitutes “the propositions of existence” and is recognizable in the essay as “narrative in the conventional textbook sense: a story of something that happened.” In addition, Hesse posits a second kind of experience (“Experience 2”) that constitutes essay time, a time in which “the essayist writes about or with or against or because of the occasioning experience.” Essay time, then, is the “experience of writing about Experience 1” and itself progresses as a story with “certain ideas or events

caus[ing] others to come into existence” and “subsum[ing] Experience 1” (200). In this way, both those parts of the essay that report traditionally action-oriented narrative events from Experience 1 and those aspects that seem to “step out of [the] time” of the story or stories in order to provide “exposition,” commentary specific to the action, or a general “assertion” that extends the action (201), are all events—the past events of Experience 1 and the present events of Experience 2— “linked” and ordered in essay time (202).

Through an analysis of three essays that intermix Experience 1 and Experience 2 in different ways, Hesse demonstrates “the essayist’s characteristic stance” of “being in the middle,” of being “fixed in a present, making of a past a story that is but a future to readers as they read it” (206). His view of the essay rejects the idea that narrated past events are subordinate to present propositions and, thus, function as proof for these propositions, effectively creating a hierarchy of ideas and keeping events and propositions separate in time from each other (or from readers’ futures). Borrowing from Paul Ricoeur, he argues that all parts of an essay equally constitute its plot, that they are “emplotted” (208). Distinguishing it from mere “order” (1:73), Ricoeur opposes emplotment to the “imitation or representation of action” (mimesis) and instead defines it as “the organization of events” (muthos) (34), constructed “as the ‘what’ of the mimesis” (35) and “mediating” between two kinds of time (i.e. the time of some set of original events a writer shapes into a story and the time of the creation of the story itself (65):

the act of emplotment combines in variable proportions two temporal dimensions, one chronological and the other not. The former constitutes the episodic dimension of narrative. It characterizes the story insofar as it is made up of events. The second is the configurational dimension properly speaking, thanks to which the plot transforms the events into a story. (66)

This notion of emplotment helps us see narrative as thinking, or “judgment” (76), expands “the concepts of event and narrative” (Hesse 207), and allows us to define events

“as movement from a past to a future,” not just in a chronological sense but in a way that admits that writing an essay or a multigenre composition involves its own shaping of time; and, thus, its propositions (in the case of the essay) or its genres (in the case of a multigenre composition) serve as events that constitute its plot, though it may or may not be a modernistic plot of rising action, falling action, and denouement. Hesse applies this broadened view of narrative to essays.

The essay’s “narrative rhetoric” (Hesse 210), he says, consists of “two dimensions”: “configurative” and “extensive.” Through the configurative dimension, “[r]eaders perceive experience as having caused ideas or the narratives of other experiences and these, in turn, still others, until a sense of closure allows readers to grasp all as part of a larger whole.” And through the second, “[t]he essay pushes experience beyond the mere succession of fragmenting nows. As the writer transforms Experience 1 into Experience 2, he or she creates the possibility of Experience 3, readers making the essay part of their experience, invited and taught to do so by the figure of the essay narrator” (208). The writer and reader, then, construct knowledge together out of ideational and experiential events as these unfold in the plot of the essay and progress toward some “end” (in the Aristotelian sense). The essay’s emplotment—an “organization of events” (*muthos*) that reconciles Experience 1 and Experience 2 (Ricoeur 1: 34, 35)—integrates these events in some satisfying way that at once feels complete and persuasive and also invites openness and the creation of further individual and cultural narratives beyond the last word of the essay.

Such meshing in essay time of narrated experiences (which constitute Experience 1 and occur prior to the essay) and propositional ideas (which arise in Experience 2 as one writes about Experience 1) into a new plot is applicable to the way a multigenre composition brings together various individual genres. To do so successfully requires a writer to negotiate the various time frames operating within each genre-as-event and allow some measure of temporal and spatial autonomy while also building a plot that creates a

progression in “multigenre time.” Such time recognizes the temporal layering and interplay that Derrida speaks of in discussing “a time of writing,” noting Kant’s recognition of “simultaneity” as a legitimate temporal “mode,” just as much as “succession” and “permanence” (225). Like Derrida’s writing time and Hesse’s “essay time,” multigenre time—and its chronotopic partner, multigenre space—creates an environment in which “disparate events” (taken in the broadest sense) (Hesse 208)—any of the nearly limitless possibilities of speech genres a writer will choose to enact in multigenre emplotment—form a whole that moves from beginning to middle to end in fine modern story form but is not, finally, a completed, static object.

A writer creating an intentionally multigeneric work takes Experience 1, which may encompass a wide variety of material gleaned from her or his own life experiences, experiences narrated in wider societies and cultures with which she or he comes into contact through various means (media, reading, others’ oral tellings, etc.), researching experiences, and experiences of the mind processing that material. All these experiences become grist for Experience 2, the raw stories that he or she then transforms into a new story in multigenre time-space for a reader to experience first hand, not as a report to be digested, but as a story to be lived in the act of writing, reading and thinking. A multigenre composition, even more than an essay, demands that its reader walk around in its events as they remain open not to interpretation in the sense of figuring out what meaning it contains but to further activation of its “meaning potential” (cf. Halliday 28) and reformulation as Experience 3 by the reader. If we look at a multigenre composition from Hesse’s perspective and from the perspective of modern conceptions of narrative like those discussed here, we can see that it indeed can be considered the story of its topic that takes research beyond its usual report mode.

### Narrative Thinking and Multigenre Compositions

In addition to the ability of a multigenre composition to exhibit the structural requirements of narrative, and thus to be an interesting story in that regard, perhaps more

importantly, it allows a writer to exercise his or her brain's narrative muscles and, in so doing, fosters an open and deep delving into a topic.

In Writing with Passion, Tom Romano suggests this link between narrative thinking and multigenre compositions by using Jerome Bruner's argument in Actual Minds, Possible Worlds as justification for his claim that we need to recognize and cultivate "narrative" thinking in schools through such assignments as multigenre papers. Bruner (and Bruner through Peter Elbow) serves as one of Romano's primary impetuses for his call to break the "stranglehold" of exposition that "tyrannizes students and narrowly defines the nature of acceptable writing in school" (Writing 3). In his tirade against exposition, Romano sets up a dichotomy between exposition as "not-narrative" and other more "creative" writing as narrative; however, from what we've seen in Hesse's work and from other postmodern theories of writing, this binary--though still accepted for the most part in schools--does not really hold. Nonetheless, although we should recognize the inherent narrativity in many kinds of writing, including exposition—and the artificiality of setting narrative against non-narrative—there is something in the exploring and creation of individual genres to create overtly multigeneric compositions that causes a writer to activate narrative thinking and go beyond explaining. Multigenre compositions richly "render experience with such detail that readers don't merely understand their meaning. They live it" (8), through the multigenre story.

Bruner, like Romano, believes that this "mode" of thinking (which "subjunctivizes" reality) is as important as the "logico-scientific" kind (which calls for explaining and analyzing), common to most academic settings (Actual 26), because in narrative thinking "the world [is] less fixed, less banal, [and] more susceptible to recreation." It "makes strange, renders the obvious less so, the unknowable less so as well, matters of value more open to reason and intuition" (159). Bruner justifies narrative thinking 1) by making a link between individual and community in identifying a person's need to "make [knowledge] his own in a community of those who share his sense of

belonging to a culture” and 2) by emphasizing that “negotiating and sharing” in a “joint” creation of culture are important for being a fully participating member of society (127). To accomplish this, he says, we need the language of narrative, a language that in its openness “express[es] stance and [ . . . ] invite[s] counter-stance and in the process leave[s] place for reflection, or metacognition” (129), a place where most educators would agree real learning happens. It is only through the trying out of stances that comprehensibility of the world is possible, Bruner believes. Entertaining possibilities, in the way that Bruner describes and that multigenre writing encourages, helps us let go of “the idea that ‘the world’ is there once and for all and immutably,” making us better equipped “to deal with the myriad forms that reality can take—including the realities created by story, as well as those created by science” (105). In emphasizing the importance of narrative thinking, Bruner cites Richard Rorty, who, he says, believes we need to be at least as invested in the “question of how we come to endow experience with meaning” as we are in the question Rorty claims has, unfortunately, held the interest of “mainstream Anglo-American philosophy” for too long: “how to know truth” (Bruner, Actual 12). Multigenre writing with its trying on of perspectives and genres emphasizes that former question.

Bruner’s conception of narrative as something that “deals with the vicissitudes of intention,” and the application of it to multigenre writing, involves viewing it (and its sister term “story”) as process, as one of “two modes [the other being ‘logico-scientific’] of cognitive functioning [ . . . ] each providing distinctive ways of ordering experience, of constructing reality” (Actual 11). Though I might suggest that Bruner draws a too rigidly dualistic line between “paradigmatic” and narrative thinking, he does bring a more complexly active and social dimension to narrative than was possible under modern formalist literary theories. Such theories emphasized the aesthetics of literature, treating literary works as self-sufficient, autonomous wholes and rejecting a connection between them (and other art, as well) and the social, biographical, philosophical, cultural, and so

on. Bruner, on the other hand, connects narrative to the sociocultural by treating it as a cognitive mechanism for constructing knowledge, a way to help us understand more fully how we “create products of mind, how we come to experience them as real, and how we manage to build them into a corpus of culture as science, literature, history, whatever” (45).

Further, through his objection to the common practice of setting “[t]he body of scientifically verifiable objective knowledge [. . .] against the soft, suppositious, and subjective products of the humanities” (Bruner, Actual 44)—and at least some people’s “habit of drawing heavy conceptual boundaries between thought, action, and emotion as ‘regions’ of the mind”—Bruner provides a perfect rationale for Romano’s belief that schools, if they truly mean to teach higher order thinking skills, need teachers willing to blur the typical lines drawn between the paradigmatic and the narrative for students through such writing assignments as multigenre papers that can provide a space for them to flex their narrative as well as logico-scientific intellectual muscles. Here again, though, we should recognize that just as the monologic/dialogic dichotomy does not hold, neither does the narrative/not narrative. The curricularization of writing in educational settings, however, does not seem to recognize this in its commonly pitting exposition and “hard” research against storying. Nonetheless, in arguing for recognition of the part narrative plays in intellectual activity in schools, Bruner suggests that narrative cultivates not “objectivity” but “a detachment of commitment [. . .] a caring, a deep need to understand something” (On Knowing 5) and emphasizes “discovery” (87) in order to “develop in the child an interest in what he [sic] is learning, and with it an appropriate set of attitudes and values about intellectual activity” (The Process 72).

Building on Wolfgang Iser’s argument that literary works, especially prose fiction, constitute speech acts, Bruner shows that the power of narrative lies in its ability to demonstrate the possibilities of reality. Because a literary text does not adhere to a one-way communication model that sends a message in a “common code” from sender to



receiver, a reader can only “receive” the literary (narrative) message “by composing it” him- or herself through the text’s “two-sided” (“verbal and affective”) structure (Iser 21). This “indeterminacy of a text” allows not infinite, “arbitrary” readings but “a spectrum of actualizations” (24), the “possible worlds” Bruner says narrative evokes. Romano’s adoption of Bruner’s stance to legitimate writing multigenre papers in the academy helps us consider not abandoning the paradigmatic but blurring the lines between it and narrative in order to enrich students’ thinking. Doing so by creating multigenre compositions encourages them to “keep meaning open or performable” and to help them feel more comfortable with “trafficking in human possibilities rather than in settled certainties” (Actual 26), an important skill to develop in our often uncertain world. In all, Bruner’s work provides a powerful theory to help us question the common-sense business of schools and its writing assignments, which for the most part value the positivistic, expository, analytical, and argumentative, and to help us understand the often under-appreciated mode of narrative thinking and its connection to multigenre writing.

Multigenre writing involves thinking narratively to make sense out of and construct knowledge about the topic. It involves taking experience and melting it down, telling stories about it in order to make meaning. It also gives an opportunity for the writer to connect personal, individual experiences and stories with broader social and cultural ones. It forces her or him to take researched material, no matter how seemingly objective or factual the topic or issue may be, and consider it through the eyes of real or imagined people acting in time and space. In fact, we might say that multigenre writing exhibits its own unique chronotope, drawing on a world of real people doing real things in various “time-spaces” in an “as yet incomplete historical world” (Bakhtin, Dialogic 253). The multigenre chronotope makes use of individual genres that (like all things in life “from an abstract idea to a piece of rock on the bank of a stream”) are anchored in specific time and space (Bakhtin, Speech 42), “defined,” in other words, by their own chronotopes (Dialogic 85). Thus, the ideas and genres of a multigenre composition are not mere

“figures,” textual objects isolated from broader social, rhetorical, and cultural contexts, but actions that retain life and “show forth” (250). The story that emerges from such showing forth is a participatory one: “[T]he reality reflected in the text, the authors, creating the text, the performers of the text [. . .]and finally the listeners or readers who recreate and in so doing renew the text [. . .] participate equally in the creation of the represented world” (253) in a multigenre paper’s story of a topic.

Even structuralist theories of narratology, though they primarily seek to tell what a piece of literature “means” by dissecting “its structure and devices” (Culler, Foreword 8) acknowledges narrative as thinking. Indeed, though such theories often define narrative strictly and separate the narrative from the “not narrative” rather rigidly, they also recognize narrative as a knowledge-building activity. Prince’s definition of narrative, discussed earlier in this chapter, as not only “product,” “object,” and “structure” but also equally as “process,” “act,” and “structuration” suggests this recognition. The latter section of Prince’s lengthy entry on narrative speaks further to the idea of narrative as thinking:

By definition, narrative always recounts one or more events; but as etymology suggests (the term narrative is related to the Latin gnarus), it also represents a particular mode of knowledge. It does not simply mirror what happens; it explores and devises what can happen. It does not merely recount changes of state; it constitutes and interprets them as signifying parts of signifying wholes (situations, practices, persons, societies). (Dictionary 60)

Here Prince articulates the knowledge-constructing function of narrative, its status as an action and not simply as a thing to be dissected. Echoing Bruner’s idea that narrative thinking “subjunctivizes,” Prince’s characterization suggests narrative as an exploration not only of “what is or was” but “what if?” It helps a writer make sense of topics by creating an opportunity to play around with the “actual” and imagine the “possible,” not only for him or herself but for some audience as well. For a story needs not only a teller

but an audience; it is a “context-bound exchange between two parties” that “emphasizes the fact that narrative is not only product but also process, not only an object but an act” (Prince, Dictionary 59). Far from a narrowly formalist notion of story, this view—even though connected to “the (structuralist-inspired) theory” of narratology (65)—sees narrative theory as useful in describing “a segment of reality that is broader than that of narrative texts only” (Bal 12). For example, a course syllabus represents such a “broader segment of reality” to which we might apply narrative. It may be analyzed as a regulatory genre that tells the story of how a class will be run and mimics how other regulatory genres run segments of the wider society. And if we consider other school genres, including multigenre papers, through the lens of narrative we may discover what stories they tell, how they both perpetuate and rupture genre codes in school, and how they both reinforce and change students’ and teachers’ thinking about the workings of the wider world.

Indeed, though not exclusive to multigenre compositions, the kind of thinking and writing they encourage helps students explore possibilities and multiple perspectives from wider contexts. And viewed through the lens of narrative as thinking, they involve storying that goes beyond the modern rudiments of narrative and the modernist preoccupation with “literary” and “nonliterary” narrative forms (e.g. short story, personal narrative, memoir)—what postmodern theories have already questioned and shown to be artificial boundaries. In most manifestations of the assignment, a multigenre paper written in school serves as a more creative kind of research writing, an ostensible “alternative” to a “traditional” research paper. However, because it relies heavily on narrative thinking, we may also see it as story in the same way that Judith Summerfield, for example, has shown other genres commonly conceived of as expository or descriptive or scientific to be narrative. Agreeing with Bruner and Prince, Summerfield claims that stories “represent ways of knowing, ways of constructing our lives and our values.” She follows this claim with a discussion of what stories are, what they do, how they perform,

and what forms they take. While considering traditionally non-narrative forms and actions as narrative, she identifies the “lab report” as such an example in her catalogue of the various “shapes” stories can take (180). In this, she seems to echo Bakhtin’s and Julia Kristeva’s narrative theories, which show that even such conventionalized genres exhibit a multi-ness that strains structure. In addition, Summerfield’s unconventional labeling of lab report as “story” suggests that if we can call even this most fundamental and sacrosanct type of scientific writing a narrative—a retelling of the events of a scientific investigation and how it all turned out in the end—surely we may do the same for a multigenre composition. All we need do is consider narrative as thinking and turn our gaze just slightly from what tradition has rigidly taught about story and “not story” to see narrative processes at work. We need here to question the accepted separation of narrative and non-narrative genres and the strict distinction between fictional and nonfictional “textual conventions” (181). We need to re-examine “the binary of narrative and argument,” or of narrative and research writing, generally accepted in schools (192) and to recognize not only the modern elements of narrative but also the power narrative has as a kind of thinking.

If we do this, we can see that multigenre compositions may be one useful answer to Summerfield’s call for “new constructs altogether” (192), ones that build bridges between the paradigmatic and the narrative, that recognize that human action and stance cannot be divorced from objective “facts,” that a “rhetoric of the [. . .] certain” (191) is limited in helping us figure out what we know and how we know it. Indeed, we need a rhetoric of the uncertain, a rhetoric of narrative that, as Bruner argues, “is not just child’s play, but an instrument for making meaning that dominates much of life-in-culture from soliloquies at bedtime to the weighing of testimony in our legal system.” And now more than ever, in an increasingly complicated, global, technology-dominated society that puts us in touch with people and experiences that in a less connected era we could barely comprehend or even imagine, we need story to thrive emotionally and intellectually.

“Without [the narrative skills first learned in infancy and nurtured through interactions with others in our lives] we could never endure the conflicts and contradictions that social life generates. We would be unfit for the life of culture,” Bruner claims (Acts 97). If we allow a place in school for narrative thinking in such assignments as multigenre papers, we can help students further develop these necessary narrative thinking skills.

As a life skill, narrative is not only a telling but also a “reflecting” (Ricoeur 2: 61), and multigenre writing in demanding careful and thoughtful reflection about a topic from a wide variety of perspectives illustrates this constituent of narrative. Ideally, it is a reflection not meant to create a single-voiced perspective, not meant simply to contemplate and reinforce a single viewpoint, but to question that and to go beyond to self-critique and cultural critique. Since September 11, 2001, for example, we have seen this power of narrative to help us reflect, question, and critique in the wide variety of stories (first-hand witness accounts, governmental briefings, religious homilies, news reports, commentaries, photographs, anti-war demonstrations, propaganda leaflet campaigns, and so on) told about the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon and their aftermath. Such storying—not only in telling, describing, and contemplating but, more importantly, in reflecting self-critically, bending back on codes, rules, statuses, and the like—goes beyond the “narrative, descriptive, contemplative,” which William James suggested 100 years ago we need as much as “reasoning” (qtd. in Bruner, Actual 1). People tell stories to make meaning out of the unusual with the purpose of discovering “an intentional state that mitigates or at least makes comprehensible a deviation from a canonical cultural pattern” (Acts 49-50), not just from one perspective but from many, not just what makes sense for me or for you but for as many other me’s and you’s as we may conceive. As John Mayher says, “the role of narrative in learning and memory” is vital:

our holistic ways of knowing are best exemplified by and rooted in our personal stories. They create the space with which we explore our own place in the world.

They not only help us consolidate and frame our knowledge of the world, but our own stories and those we hear from others are particularly crucial in helping us understand human motives and actions. (99)

In multigenre compositions, writers activate narrative thinking to explore the multiplicities of knowledge by researching and writing about the topics they choose in order to figure out (discover, question, accept, reject, etc.) what to them are new and unusual findings in connection with what they already know, understand, and believe. They use these new findings, ideally, to exercise reflexivity, or critical reflection, that calls into question individual beliefs, cultural imperatives, societal norms, and so on. Multigenre writing encourages narrating as “not only an expository act but a rhetorical one” (Bruner, Acts 87), one that invites a reader to discover something about the material that the writer is working out in the piece and to continue the reflexive, discovery process beyond the end of the multigenre story’s last words.

#### Multigenre Writing as Postmodern Story

To think about multigenre writing as narrative is powerful because narrative in culture is powerful. It is so hard-wired in many of us nearly from conception—some pregnant mothers upon feeling their unborn children move in utero tell them stories about their family and the lives they will enter when they are born—that it seems “natural,” “God-given,” biologically inherent. However, as postmodern cultural critics like Frederic Jameson have pointed out, this seeming naturalness, though it begins early, is really “symptomatic of cultural practices.” Though narratologists in the tradition of modernism saw “narrative as inherently mimetic,” life’s “natural” mirror, postmodernists have questioned that assumption with thinkers like Jameson viewing narrative as “a master trope that, drawing power from the assumed naturalness of storytelling, indicates what is possible and good” in a way far from “unproblematically” imitating life (Hesse 207). As Jameson says in The Political Unconscious, narrative is an “ideological act in its own right, with the function of inventing imaginary or formal ‘solutions’ to unresolvable social

contradictions” (79). Unlike modernists who believed they could explain everything neatly through how-the-world-works “grand narratives,” postmodernism—which believes that there is no solution to life’s mysteries but only complexity, that everything is contradiction in the largest sense—sees narrative as a mechanism for exploring the fragmentation that comes from such contradiction and unresolvability. It rejects the positivist stance that ostensibly definite, proven, factual “truth” exists and instead claims that “truth” actually consorts with storying. Thus, the narratives of postmodernism have sought to tell other stories, stories that disrupt both the stability and unity modernists believed they could create in art and the logical positivism that modern academics saw as most appropriate for scholarly discourses—though some would argue that reification of postmodernism into another “ism” has negated its potential for rupture.

Nonetheless, when I claim that a multigenre composition’s greatest potential (though this potential, as we may see in actual student writing in Chapters 4 and 5, may already be stunted by curricularization) is its questioning of generic labeling and boundaries, I mean that the significance of its story is not primarily in its adherence to modern story elements—although, as the first part of the chapter shows, multigenre compositions do demonstrate a number of basic characteristics of structuralist conceptions of narrative. Instead, the importance of multigenre writing is as a postmodern story, a story that may be one of the more concrete examples of the fragmented, postmodern narrative. In addition, as school assignment, multigenre compositions are important because they seek to challenge and disrupt the grand narrative of academic writing whose “most standard and widely accepted features reflect the cultural preferences of the most powerful people in the community,” people Patricia Bizzell identifies as, for the most part and “[u]ntil relatively recently,” men of “European American, [. . .] middle or upper class” backgrounds (1).

As a break from conventional research writing, multigenre compositions participate in a larger movement in which “hybrid,” “mixed,” “alternative,” or

“constructed” academic writing seeks to rewrite the story of traditional academic discourse that says to be effective it must use academic Standard-Edited-English; must be written in “traditional academic genres [. . .] such as the lab report, the reflective journal, the critical essay, the research paper”; and must be “argumentative,” “extremely precise, exacting, rigorous,” and “objective” (in order to keep ideas from being tainted by “any emotions or prejudices”) (Bizzell 2). In its function as what we might call a postmodern narrative, a multigenre composition shows us that we may do the “intellectual work” of the academy in other ways, perhaps more effectively, than “traditional” academic discourses have allowed (3). Although, again, the lines between “alternative” and “traditional” are not hard and fast, still the forms of “alternative” discourses like multigenre papers show that we do not need to trade logico-scientific writing for structuralist conceptions of narrative that judge unity to be of paramount importance.

On the contrary, in its resistance to achieving single-minded unity, multigenre writing breaks from modernism. Whereas the modern narrative is a universalizing force in telling how the world works from one person’s perspective, multigenre writing as a so-called postmodern narrative questions this singular perspective through its incorporation of multiple viewpoints that disrupt the single voice. Unlike traditional first-person narration, which may not be reflexive or self-critical and often reflects the dominant discourse that a single individual has internalized, when a writer creates a multigeneric composition, he or she has the opportunity to make contact with all kinds of discourse, both dominant and resistant, and to entertain multiple perspectives, letting these well up and mingle with, challenge and break apart a single unified perspective. In resisting the notion of unity in modern narrative, or the primarily monologic, logical goal of exposition—though expository writing, as I have already discussed and as we may see illustrated in Chapters 4 and 5 in student writings, may not actually achieve such monologism—multigenre writing functions as a counter-narrative to the grand narrative of objectivism and positivism, the modern story that sets up logic and science, unity, and



neatness as supreme (as a hero).

In allowing other voices and multiple viewpoints to rupture the single voice of modern first-person narration, multigenre writing provides an environment for critical reflection, a way for a writer (and reader) to construct knowledge by resisting the impulse to settle on one perspective or one thesis. It ideally refrains from trying to make meaning of the world solely through that one perspective, which, as writers like Henry James in his ghost story The Turn of the Screw and Vera and Bill Cleaver in their young adult novel Where the Lilies Bloom, for example, have shown is by and large unreliable anyway. Though the value of dialogical play is not exclusive to it, multigenre writing attempts to break up single-logic thinking because it forces writers to speak, contemplate, and critique their own thoughts on paper, as well as the thoughts and actions of others, allowing more space than some other kinds of academic writing for any loose ends this may entail.

In order to make a multigenre paper work, a writer does not simply combine genres unreflectively, but must apply a critical eye in making genre decisions that involve an intersection between public, official discourses (secondary discourses—the discourses of school and society) and private speech (primary discourse—one's first or home language) (Gee 108-10). As performative and thus disruptive, the multigenre-paper narrative offers an alternative to single-voiced writing like the modern novel or a claim-driven academic argument and tolerates the messiness of a ruptured voice and ruptured form much more than most, though not all, "traditional" school writing does. And such tolerance makes possible a richness in the writing and reading experience because the multigenre chronotope provides a time-space environment that is non-linear, non-sequential, more like the narratives from other cultures (like Japanese and Spanish, for example) or oral storytelling that string brief scenes or sketches together in ways that confuse the conventional beginning-middle-end story construction.

From a reader's perspective, Romano's reaction to the multigeneric "biography,"

The Collected Works of Billy the Kid by Michael Ondaatje—which he says first gave him the idea for the multigenre paper assignment—illustrates this non-linear characteristic of multigenre writing:

The reader enters this different kind of book and drifts and puzzles and makes sense. Reading it is like listening to jazz: the reader feels something satisfying and meaningful, but may not be able to articulate what it is immediately. The multiple genres [e.g. “songs, thumbnail character sketches, an authentic comic book legend from The Five Cent Wide Awake Library, imaginative creations of moments that could have occurred, even photographs and drawings from the era”], the nonchronological order, the language rhythms, the condensed imagery—all these the reader adjusts to and begins to work with. Intellectual and emotional understanding mounts. (Writing 110-11)

In its narrative function, multigenre writing seems to say, “Involve yourself in this topic. Move around in it as you would on a leisurely stroll not purposely meant to take you from point A to point B. Don’t look for me to tell you what I mean. Don’t expect to find a unified thesis that tells ‘what’ and ‘how.’ I care not only for the ‘what is’ but also the ‘what if?’ I am more interested in exploring the ‘why,’ the human motivations, the myriad choices, the possible consequences than in developing a single point of view through ‘logical’ development.” Indeed, its story is about making meaning in other ways than those considered primarily single-voiced and unified (like “the” research paper or the five-paragraph expository theme)—though even these types of writing are not purely monologic and cannot be set up rigidly against a multigenre paper. To create a postmodern plot that defies the supremacy of the modern grand narrative of unity, linearity, and single-minded surety, multigenre writing uses an interplay of genres. And in doing so, it illustrates the persistent “narrative paradigms” that Jameson says shape the ways we make sense out of our world, showing narrative, as we have seen, to be more than form and structural conventions, but a cognitive, social, and cultural tool for

examining possibilities and questioning official realities.

For years, I have been hard-pressed to understand why many of the secondary and college students I have taught call, in a seemingly automatic way, almost any conceivable text (ranging from poems to essays, advertisements to editorials) “stories” even when a particular text does not contain what one might call “typical” story elements and seems nothing like a narration of any events. In the past, I have chalked up such imprecise naming to ignorance, thoughtlessness, or carelessness. But as I think about multigenre writing as narrative, it occurs to me that my students, exposed to many different kinds of linguistic, literary, social, and cultural texts from early in their lives, may actually have it right: that everything in some sense participates in storying. Just as Andrea Lunsford and John Ruskiewicz argue that “everything’s an argument,” I am coming to the conclusion that the narrative inhabits much more of life and its texts than our positivistic, dualistic, current-traditional tendencies to separate the literary from the nonliterary, the narrative from the argumentative from the expository from the descriptive have allowed some of us to see, even when these “modes” are all wrapped up together.

As a postmodern narrative, multigenre writing has a critical, disruptive potential that we should cultivate, though some manifestations of it may not. In the story it constructs of a topic, it can blur the lines between the supposedly different “modes” of writing; and as an intellectual activity, it crosses the “heavy conceptual boundaries between thought, action, and emotion as ‘regions’ of the mind,” reuniting “what should never have been put asunder” (Bruner, Actual 106). In addition, it illustrates how the “hard” facts of research exist in a symbiotic relationship with the stories that construct them, that shape them, and that result from them as others take them up, playing them against other texts. Further, as a larger discursive act, and representative of the trend to find alternatives to the status quo of academic discourse, multigenre writing questions the master narrative of modernism that elevates the positivistic over the impressionistic, exposition over story, and so on.

A multigenre text is a “writerly” text (Barthes, *S/Z* 4), the handiwork of a “scriptor” rather than an “Author” (Barthes, “Death” 147). It is one of many kinds of texts that “no longer aspire to mean or to ‘be,’ but literally to ‘work’” on and be worked by writers and readers (Benamou and Caramello 226). Multigenre writing, like other “scriptible” text, is not a commodity—what Roland Barthes calls a literary “work” (as opposed to a “text”)—but an organism that interacts internally and externally with a wide variety of other texts, which themselves function as rhetorical organisms that have, on the one hand, recognizable, somewhat stable forms and conventions but, on the other, the ability to change and adapt to specific uses. A multigenre composition establishes both an intra-generic relationship among its individual parts and an inter-generic one between the whole composition and genres set in other sociorhetorical contexts. In its drawing material and forms from wider social and cultural texts, a multigenre composition creates an intertextual relationship with these other texts while, at the same time, it establishes a textual environment in which individual genres speak and respond to each other, fitting Laurent Jenny’s definition of an intertext as a text binding together and “absorbing a multiplicity of [other] texts” (45). Although all texts participate in numerous intertextual relationships (and thus intertextuality is not the exclusive province of multigenre writing), a multigenre composition more strongly supports the values of dialogism and intertextuality than some other kinds of writing.

### Intertextuality and Multigenre Writing

Such ideas about intertext and intertextuality (which emerged from narrative and literary theories conceived during a larger movement in France in the 1960s and ’70s, which examined “literature’s radical relation to political and philosophical thought”) are important to my project because they help illuminate the workings of a multigenre composition. This French movement eventually led to poststructuralism (G. Allen 31), which generally “view[s] notions of a stable relationship between signifier and signified as the principal way in which dominant ideology maintains its power and represses

revolutionary, or at least unorthodox, thought” (32). Theories about intertextuality fit into this early poststructuralist challenge to the prevailing notions of literary “work” and “author” in showing how signifier-signified relations of words in text and texts themselves are not fixed, that signifiers melt into signifieds that then themselves become signifiers for other signifieds, and so on. “The theory of intertextuality insists that a text [. . .] cannot exist as a hermetic or self-sufficient whole, and so does not function as a closed system,” a finalized signified (Worton and Still 1). A literary work, then, is not “the product of an author’s original thoughts, and is no longer perceived as referential in function.” It is “a space in which a potentially vast number of relations coalesce,” rather than “the container of meaning” (G. Allen 12). In other words, any given text is a compilation of other texts, the echoes of multiple past voices that come together into a dialogue for a brief moment and whose conversation spurs further conversations that stretch beyond the text. The text welcomes into it prior texts and, as an open structure, serves as material for future texts, creating a continuous intertextual ebb and flow.

All sources point to Kristeva as the mother of intertextuality, the first person to name the phenomenon from which has grown a wide and diverse body of theoretical work in literary studies. Though Worton and Still credit Barthes with anticipating the idea of intertextuality in the term cryptographie (which he used to show how a text “may appear to be the spontaneous and transparent expression of a writer’s intentions, but must necessarily contain elements of other texts,” the “traces” of other voices), Kristeva coined the word intertextuality when she presented Bakhtin’s work in Barthes’s seminar in 1965 (19). As one of the first non-Russian scholars to introduce Bakhtin to the West, Kristeva carefully explains in “Word, Dialogue, and Novel” his now-familiar ideas of dialogism/monologism, carnival, double-voicedness, and the polyphonic novel (along with his categorization of other genres like the epic and Menippean satire). Here she cites Bakhtin as bringing to literary theory the “important fact” of individual words and texts as linguistic and textual “intersections” and the “insight” that “any text is constructed as a

mosaic of quotations,” absorbing and transforming other texts (66). She renames Bakhtin’s concept of dialogism (which she says couples “subjectivity” with “communication”) “intertextuality” (68), explaining that it occurs because the text is a “productivity” relating in a “redistributive (destructive-constructive)” way “to the language in which it is situated” (“Bounded” 36) that takes the words of others and infuses them with a new voice.

Intertextuality as first conceived by Kristeva as an extension of Bakhtin’s ideas was at least in part a struggle against and a reaction to the perceived tyranny of genre—what Derrida thirteen years later called “the law of genre”—and its “authoritarian imperatives” (Duff 56). It was a rejection of the rigidity of genre categories that David Duff claims may be considered “at one level, a poststructuralist restaging of a traditional Romantic resistance to genre” (57), begun when such writers as Friedrich Schlegel, who coined the adjective romantisch (Firchow 19), “denounced traditional genre distinctions—in effect, the whole Aristotelian and Alexandrian genre system— [ . . . ]” (Duff 56), “as primitive and childish as the old pre-Copernican ideas of astronomy” (Schlegel 237). As a participant in this rejection, Kristeva calls 1) for an intertextual approach to texts that studies them “within (the text of) society and history” and 2) for “a typology of texts” that can “replace the former, rhetorical division of genres” (“Bounded” 37). Her brand of semiotics, which she terms “semianalysis,” views “texts as always in a state of production rather than being products quickly to be consumed.” And as much as the text is constantly being produced, so are the human subjects that interact with it. “Author, reader or analyst join a process of continual production, are ‘in process/on trial’ (le sujet-en-procés) over the text” (G. Allen 34).

In her early writings on language and discourse, Kristeva defines this “text [ . . . ] as a trans-linguistic apparatus” that destroys and constructs simultaneously as it refers to and borrows from other texts. The text is thus a “permutation of texts” that provides a space where “several utterances, taken from other texts, intersect and neutralize one

another” and where the “intertextual function” of the “ideologeme” can work. Kristeva’s conception of text places it in what Jameson calls the “framework [. . .] of society” (75), which goes beyond thinking of a particular text as an individual utterance or “symbolic act” and recognizes it as more broadly including “the social order.” In this social context, the text makes contact with “the great collective and class discourses,” becoming an “ideologeme [. . .], the smallest intelligible unit of the essentially antagonistic collective discourses of social classes” (76). In essence, then, the text as ideologeme functions as a site of contestation in which social tensions and conflicting discourses may meet and play out those tensions. Thus, texts do not “present a unified meaning” but are a “combination and compilation of sections of social text” with all these caught up in “on-going cultural and social processes” (G. Allen 37). In Kristeva’s connecting the ideologeme to intertextuality, and in her emphasizing the way sociocultural utterances meet and cross (or even pierce) each other in the “arrangement” of the text (“Bounded” 36), we can see a suggestion of the workings of a multigenre composition. Participating in the kind of intertextuality Kristeva describes, a multigeneric work borrows from, rearranges, incorporates, mirrors, and refers to other historical and sociocultural texts outside itself and exhibits unresolved tensions among various social discourses. In this, it also makes clear Bakhtin’s labeling of secondary genres as “ideological” (Speech 62).

#### The Semiotic/Symbolic and Genotext/Phenotext

Two related sets of dualities, the “semiotic” versus the “symbolic” and the “genotext” versus the “phenotext,” are important in understanding Kristeva’s concept of intertextuality and in seeing how multigenre compositions are both integrated to some extent and “bursting at the seams” with individual generic voices bubbling up and escaping the boundaries used to draw them together. Shaped by Freudian psychology, Lacanian psychoanalysis, marxism, feminism, and Saussurean linguistics, Kristeva’s theories of language and text posit a world in constant tension between constraining—even repressive and oppressive—forms, structures, and institutions and the rebellious, joyfully playful

parts of our human nature that refuse to be held down, locked in by such institutions. Phenotext and the symbolic relate to the former impulse, and genotext and the semiotic to the latter. Associated with the pre-Oedipal identification and bonding of infant with mother, the semiotic is one “modality” in the process of signification” (Kristeva, Revolution 26), one half of the “signifying field” into which Kristeva believes a human subject is divided after acquiring language. She associates it with a time when a child is without speech (G. Allen 48-49) and has yet to “constitut[e] himself [sic] as signifying and/or social” (Kristeva, Revolution 67). The time of the semiotic is a “pre-thetic” time, a time in which a human is not yet a being-in-language; it is a time before he or she has become a linguistic subject who asserts him- or herself as an “I,” separate from other “I’s” (36). The semiotic comprises the “drives, erotic impulses, bodily rhythms and movements” that make up an infant’s “language” at a point when she or he identifies her- or himself seamlessly with others and prior to acquiring speech and to developing a distinct identity of “self” (G. Allen 49). Language acquisition, however, moves the child into the “thetic phase” when “human subjects enter the social world, governed, as it is, by monological notions of language” and the “social norms” that posit language as “capable of presenting a thesis, a singular, unitary meaning” that a subject can call his or her own (48).

It is here, in this thetic phase, that the symbolic asserts itself and signification arrives (Kristeva, Revolution 40), creating a split subject in which a “socially signifying language operating under the banners of reason, communication and the ideal of singularity and unity” (G. Allen 49) tries to control the semiotic. This assertion of the symbolic is tied to the role language plays in society’s growing dominance, through such structures as the family (and, later, the school), over a child’s behavior and his interactions with others, the way language teaches us society’s values and expectations and norms our thinking and action. As Kristeva says, “the symbolic--and therefore syntax and all linguistic categories--is a social effect of the relation to the other, established through the objective



constraints of biological (including sexual) differences and the concrete, historical family structures” (Revolution 29). An individual comes to recognize these as she or he gains language and becomes an “I” to the many “you’s” around him or her. Whereas our semiotic tendencies ally themselves with the mother’s body, manifesting themselves in free and fluid expression virtually unchecked by societal norms, our “symbolic disposition” participates in “paternal discourse” (“From One” 137-38) and is ruled by the exact, the “correct,” the scientific, and the positivistic. In multigenre writing we can see an intersection between the maternal and the paternal, between the semiotic and the symbolic.

For instance, in a chapter from Alt Dis entitled “An Essay We’re Learning to Read: Responding to Alt.Style” (mentioned briefly in Chapter 1), Michael Spooner follows the conventions of academic writing in setting forth an argument about how editors should give in-process response to writers attempting to use “alternative” styles. This “standard” approach corresponds to Kristeva’s notion of the symbolic and operates in the bulk of the piece, where Spooner sets up ideas in conventional typeface, paragraphs, and five sections broken up by Roman numerals. However, because this essay not only discusses how editors should work with alternate style pieces but also is itself written in an alternative style—what I would call a multigenre paper—the rule-breaking semiotic bubbles up in unconventional ways and unexpected places. For instance, at the beginning of each of the sections, Spooner places a left-justified joke balloon enclosing some variation of the “How many \_\_\_\_\_ does it take to change a light bulb?” joke (e.g. “How many copyeditors does it take to screw in a light bulb?”). Next to this, in a right-justified balloon, he puts a seemingly serious (though actually satirical) response that ostensibly some editor working with a manuscript for publication might make to help the writer clarify the passage (e.g. “Not sure whether you mean ‘change a light bulb’ or ‘have sex in a light bulb.’ Consider revising for clarity?”) (155). Such quirky interruptions poke fun at the publication process of academic writing and break

the rules of such writing. They exhibit the playfulness of the semiotic that does not take itself too seriously and creates a tension between it and the symbolic.

The symbolic “modality” of signification needs a vehicle of expression, and Kristeva calls this the “phenotext.” She defines it as “language that serves to communicate” and says we can describe it linguistically “in terms of ‘competence’ and ‘performance.’ [ . . . ] The phenotext is a structure (which can be generated, in generative grammar’s sense); it obeys the rules of communication and presupposes a subject of enunciation and an addressee.” As such, Kristeva compares it to the mathematical branch of algebra (Revolution 87), and we may also compare it to James Britton’s conception of the transactional function of writing (cf. 18n, 88). The “threads” that make up the “texture” of the phenotext “issue from societal, cultural, syntactical, and other grammatical constraints [and] insure communication” (Roudiez 5), following the rules of the symbolic that govern such communication.

In the Spooner article, the phenotext asserts itself in such passages as the following, in which the writer uses language and makes moves in developing his argument that are “standard” practice in academic writing:

More specifically research in composition has developed useful language through which to explore issues in response. I’m thinking here of well-known handles like “facilitative” versus “directive” (and shades in between: e.g., Straub), along with more general principles of response from the Rogerian to the postmodern; respecting the (student) writer’s ownership; deliberately “reflecting” the writer’s position/s in text-specific comments; losing “awk,” ww,” “frag,” and replacing them with fuller, more accessible comments. I won’t review the literature here; I’ll just assert the uncontroversial notion that feedback in writing instruction was more than a 1970s platitude. It was a serious move away from Correction and toward Response. (159)

For the most part, this kind of writing, though perhaps somewhat informal with its use of

first person, feels like a typical academic discussion and predominates in the article, allowing it to develop along patterns familiar to and comfortable for academic readers. In this, it exhibits expected structures associated by Kristeva with the phenotext and the symbolic.

On the other hand, the genotext gives a voice to the semiotic, which the symbolic does not totally efface or replace when a child acquires language. Since it has no language of its own, the semiotic uses the thetic language of the genotext to make its presence “heard and felt” (G. Allen 51). And though the semiotic is itself pre-linguistic and “the genotext is not linguistic (in the sense understood by structural or generative linguistics),” Kristeva calls the genotext the “underlying foundation” of language (Revolution 87) because it can “articulate structures that are ephemeral [. . .] and nonsignifying [. . .]” (86). Likening it to the mathematical branch of “topology,” which deals “with those properties of geometric configurations” that remain unchanged by acts like “stretching or twisting,” Kristeva calls the genotext a “process” that “moves through zones that have relative and transitory borders and constitutes a path that is not restricted to the two poles of univocal information between two full-fledged subjects” (Revolution 87). It exhibits the split nature of subjectivity and allows outbursts of unharnessed thoughts and undisciplined voices that the phenotext would stifle in the interest of a rigid unity. And it “articulates the drives and desires of a pre-linguistic subjectivity” (G. Allen 51) that do not follow “the ‘Symbolic Order’ (the social categories and divisions of language)” (213). In this, it is like the purely expressive function of language that Britton describes (cf. 85, 88-89). Whereas the phenotext strives for stability, clarity of expression, and unity, the genotext is rebellious, seeking to express unbridled impulses and feelings and to disrupt and subvert any fixed, authoritative intentions to which the phenotext may aspire.

In Spooner’s piece we can see this rebellious genotext operating in the joke balloons discussed earlier and in other features. One instance occurs in the opening of the chapter. First, Spooner reveals that, trying to be unconventional, he intended to begin the

piece with a personal anecdote about plans to demolish his office building as “an allegory for dealing with alt.style in academic writing.” He then reports that he abandoned the idea when he realized, from a listserv comment by Patricia Bizzell, that such a move is “common as dirt in conventional academic writing” (156). However, the description of the office building, though now removed from the text, seemingly refuses to be excised. It remains in a light-gray drawing placed behind the typed discussion of its removal as though ready to emerge at will. In a later spot, Spooner places a boxed advertisement for a copy editor that juts into the left side of a running discussion of teachers and editors as “responders” versus “gatekeepers.” This relates to the ideas of the passage, but at the same time the passage does not “harness” it, even though the gray-screened, fictional editor’s comment placed below it calls for it to be roped into the text. This comment says, “House style, again. We don’t usually allow violations of the margins like this. I’ll check. Just in case, wouldn’t it be possible to integrate this advertisement [sic] with the body of your text? Introduce it, set it up like a standard block quote? Wouldn’t this make more sense to the reader?” (158). But the genotext resists this request, and the ad remains an autonomous, interruptive genre. Clearly, in Spooner’s deliberately multigeneric paper, in his use of a number of different generic crots (to borrow Winston Weathers’ term) and multiple, conflicting voices, we can see Kristeva’s ideas about intertextuality operating. Throughout the piece he continually tries to treat the voices in the text, even those of the semiotic, in egalitarian ways while still striving for some measure of coherence and integration of disparate voices so that his argument is understandable. In this multigenre composition, we can see a concrete manifestation of the tensions between geno- and phenotext.

Sometimes such tensions are subtle, but no text is purely one or the other of these types. Instead, texts move along a pheno/genotext continuum, much like the one Bakhtin suggests for monologic/dialogic novels (or that I have proposed for monogenres/multigenres). Some texts whose goal is to create “clear and unequivocal meaning” (G.

Allen 213)—like the “rational, scientific or legalistic”—show little trace of the genotext, little contact with that “pre-speech infant fluidity of self” the genotext attempts to communicate (49, 51). But other texts—for example the novels of James Joyce, and, I would argue, multigenre compositions like Spooner’s—allow the genotext to find openings through which it may be heard. Leon Roudiez, Kristeva’s editor, suggests that we may detect the genotext most “often in the physical, material aspect of language (certain combinations of letters, certain sounds—regardless of the meaning of the words in which they occur)” (5-6) and that poetic language embodies “textual presence” (7). Graham Allen makes the same point when he ties poetic language to the semiotic in saying that it comes closest to being able to express the “fluidity of self [. . .] prior to language, logic and the fixing of identity and subject position” and serves to “distur[b] the monologic order of the symbolic field” (49). With its frequent inclusion of poetic expression and its experimental use of language, multigenre writing participates in this disturbance, as well.

In addition, in its mixing of voices and use of creative, expressive genres not usually associated with research or report writing, a multigenre composition also “disturbs” monological forces. It even can use poetic languages as a stage for the expression of exuberant joy, deep-seated pain and so on experienced by people but often covered over in other types of writing by attempts to communicate rationally, to follow the rules of “correct” usage, or to master accepted forms. Though it follows rules of its own making, a multigenre composition often breaks established norms for presenting ideas in academic writing. For example, in four spots in the main body of Spooner’s text he makes a point—e.g. “‘standard’ forms are moving toward more experiment and visuality than they have in the past”—but then offers a contradictory viewpoint in a quotation set in gray, all capital letters and running between the lines of text—e.g. “Prefer the standard to the offbeat. . . . Err on the side of conservatism, on the side of established usage” (Strunk and White 84)” (164). Such buried quotations are the “rule” in Spooner’s

piece for offering other views, but they certainly do not follow the usual rules. In their defiance of others' rules, they participate in Kristeva's idea of the text as a "practice of rejection" and "heterogeneous contradiction," which she says is "essential" and must not be lost, "no matter what binding texture or ideological signified it may appear in" (Revolution 187, 189-90). It "posits and displaces theses" rather than working to communicate a unified thesis to an addressee (208) and "opens the way for all linguistic, symbolic, and social structures to be put in process/on trial" (210), providing a space for dialogue rather than a platform for an author's monologue. Although a multigenre composition creates a "binding" of sorts, it does not insist on a strangling of voices brought into it by an all-powerful writer but, instead, allows the writer and reader to participate in the practice of the text, to be partners with textual voices in the processes of knowledge discovery (205-206).

While, philosophically speaking, "[t]here is no limit to what can be said in a text" like a multigenre composition, practically speaking, Kristeva points out, it is the "so-called composition" of the text that erects "guardrails" to provide "a 'boundary to the infinite'" and prevent the text from "becoming a free-flow 'escape' of the signifier" (Revolution 209). However, this compositional structure ideally is not as absolute or rigid as some other structures (like the five-paragraph theme still common in secondary schools). Multigenre compositions deliberately try to be different and more fluid than such "traditional" school writing; however, in practice, as the student samples I analyze in Chapters 4 and 5 show, the duality of multigenre paper/non-multigenre paper does not necessarily hold and intertextual play and multivocality are not exclusive to them. Regardless, because the goal of multigenres and other texts (as opposed to "works") is not to "transfer" the ideas of one "author [. . .] who has author-ity over the meaning of his work" to a passive addressee, but to allow a "writing subject" and reading subject (along with the text subject) to mutually investigate "the structure and function of language," texts ideally allow "all linguistic, symbolic, and social structures to be put on trial"

(Roudiez 7; Kristeva, Revolution 210).

By drawing from various social texts to create the investigation that a multigenre composition allows, there occurs the possibility that a writer may not only copy but also question these rhetorical genres. With its unfinalized tendencies toward inquiry rather than statement, such a text encourages the emergence of the genotext through fissures in the phenotext, and attempts to express the “semiotic [. . .] inherent in the symbolic” (Kristeva, Revolution 81). This lack of finalization fits Kristeva’s view of a human subject as split between the semiotic and the symbolic (constituting a “dynamic” text “composed of discourses”) and as always conflicted and “on trial” itself (Worton and Still 16). Writer and text as sites of contestation are part of Kristeva’s overall conception of writing and intertextuality, “which suggests, in line with marxist sociology, that meaning is not given nor produced by a transcendental ego” (Worton and Still 17) and that texts maintain “semiotic heterogeneity” and reveal a constant “tension between phenotext and genotext” (G. Allen 154). The tension of such texts, like Spooner’s multigenre essay, is an antagonistic struggle between signifiante, which Kristeva calls “the heterogeneous generating of the ‘desiring machine’” (Revolution 17) and communication.

It is this tension that Kristeva’s semianalysis investigates while itself “being subject to it.” In order to conduct such investigations she “constantly places scientific and logical discourses within artistic and fictional contexts, thus self-consciously blurring the distinction and staging the struggle between science, or the logical, and the language or force of imagination and desire” (G. Allen 35). And we too can investigate such blurring in multigenre compositions. In them we may see more evidence of various texts (from outside the society of school) making their way into the usually walled-off texts of education than may be the case in much academic writing (though other pieces of school writing may also show intertextual relationships and admit those other voices). In addition, since a multigenre composition ideally strives less for “clear and stable meanings” than other school writing and invites into it a wide variety of speech genres,

including the poetic and imaginative, we can see in its use of “bits and pieces of social text [. . .] the on-going ideological struggles and tensions” inherent in society’s various languages and discourses (36) and important in Kristeva’s notion of intertextuality.

#### Text, Writer, and Reader in Kristeva

Kristeva, like Bakhtin, uses the literary form of the novel to illustrate her ideas about the reader-writer-text dynamic of intertextuality, and these discussions may further help us understand the intertextuality of a multigenre composition. In a way similar to Bakhtin’s discussion of how Dostoevsky’s polyphonic novels contain voices that disrupt and contest the author’s voice, Kristeva uses Phillipe Sollers’s novel *H* to illustrate the idea of a text as a “polylogue” in which the “music” of the semiotic seeks to obliterate a “symbolic thesis” (“Novel” 181), and she shows how the novel as art form lends itself to the assertion of the genotext. In addition, through an analysis of Antoine de La Sale’s 1456 novel *Jehan de Saintré*, she demonstrates that “the already set notions of the oeuvre (message)” that the author-as-“owner” means to send do not completely push into oblivion the “play” and *jouissance* associated with the expressiveness of the semiotic unhampered by language (“Bounded 44). Kristeva believes that the novel, though it may show signs of definitiveness, is not an utterance that constitutes “a minimal sequence” or “set entity.” Instead, it is “an operation, a motion that links” the “arguments” of the plot (37), while at the same time its material shows glimpses of the writer’s playful generation of ideas and the vibrant, creative energy used in examining and sorting (making meaning from) the raw data from which the novel derives.

Here again we have the sense of genotext asserting and manifesting itself as “practice,” “process,” and “play” and rebelling against that side of the novel that aspires to be “product,” “effect,” and “value.” In this regard, the novel allows a writer’s subjective split between the semiotic and symbolic to emerge in his or her dual roles as “author” (the all-knowing asserter of theses) and “actor” (the tentative, exploratory player) (“Bounded” 44-45). We can see this same tension in a multigenre composition.



Ideally, it is both tentative and exploratory, neither a “set” product nor a finalized “effect,” an activity more than an act in its ability to bring in discourses that continue to resonate in their new context. At the same time, however, a multigeneric work as a “textual arrangement” (36) exists in an historical moment and does, as a result, have materiality; it cannot be just pure energy and “motion” but is an object—though one whose boundaries shift and re-form. The challenge of the novel as described by Kristeva and of a multigenre composition, then, is to strike a balance between stability and fluidity without leaning too far toward the stable so that it becomes a rigid form, or, even worse, formulaic.

Part of the way a multigenre composition tries to negotiate between the chaos of incomprehensibility inherent in the genotext and the danger of the rigidifying form possible in the phenotext is through strategies of integration that create tenuous filaments in the multigenre web. Like the stock transition and signal phrases used to connect the novelist’s voice with other voices brought into the narrative (what Kristeva calls “inferential agents”), integrative devices of a multigenre composition function like hyperlinks that connect various parts of a website. They have two “functions”: the “junctive” or “internuclear” and the “translative” or “intranuclear.” Kristeva explains, “As junctive, they tie together (totalize) two minimal utterances (narrative and citational) within the global, novelistic utterance. [. . .] As translative, they transfer an utterance from one textual space (vocal discourse) into another (the book), changing its ideologeme” (“Bounded” 45-46). Thus, common integrating devices of multigenre papers, for example the fragmented narrative—in which a story is broken apart and interrupted abruptly by other genres which remain unincorporated into the story line—or a repetend—“the unexpected repetition of a word, phrase, sentence, or passage” (Romano, *Passion* 80)—serve both to connect the discrete, semi-autonomous genres borrowed from the social texts outside it and to reinterpret them in the context of the new multigeneric context. They set side by side as equals the writer’s discourse and those discourses different from

the writer's. In this way, Kristeva theorizes, "the author refuses to be an objective 'witness'—possessor of a truth he [or she] symbolizes by the word—in order to inscribe [her- or] himself as reader or listener, structuring his [or her] text through and across a permutation of other utterances. He [or she] does not so much speak as decipher" (Kristeva, "Bounded" 46).

Being conscious of the intertextuality that obtains among all texts, the writer, if she or he can tolerate the loss of control and comfort of the hierarchical, abandons a stance as unified-subject-writing or author-ity to engage in a kind of shifting dance with him- or herself, the text, and the reader, in which each shares and trades the roles of reading and writing, speaking and listening. Kristeva explains this dance in terms of intertextuality in discussing Bakhtin's conception of the polyphonic novel:

The writer's interlocutor [. . .] is the writer himself, but as reader of another text.

The one who writes is the same as the one who reads. Since his interlocutor is a text, he himself is no more than a text rereading itself as it rewrites itself. The dialogical structure, therefore, appears only in the light of the text elaborating itself as ambivalent in relation to another text. ("Word" 86-87)

This ambivalence takes the place of authoritative intention and surety. As writers and readers, we assume conflicted and conflicting roles in relation to the text, which, though destabilizing, may bring pleasure in uncertainty of meanings and feelings of adventure. Multigenre compositions, because they require the ability to take on such shifting roles, challenge readers and writers to recognize the way such texts "redistribute" different types of discourses (poetic, business, conversational, journalistic, etc.) through "transposition" (Kristeva's later term for intertextuality). As a "field of transpositions" (i.e. the "'place' of enunciation and its denoted 'object'"), we must recognize all "signifying practice[s]," including a multigenre text, as "plural, shattered, capable of being tabulated," rather than "single, complete and identical to themselves" (Revolution 60). In this continuous intertextuality, well-exemplified in multigenre compositions but present

in all writing, sign systems intersect, separate, merge, and challenge each other in the kind of writing time Kristeva discusses in connection to La Sale's Jehan de Saintré.

Similar to Hesse's "essay time," what Kristeva calls "scriptural temporality" orders "narrative sequences" not according to conventional narrative or "discursive temporality" but according to "the very act of writing. The succession of 'events' (descriptive utterances or citations) obeys the motion of the hand working on the empty page--the very economy of inscription" ("Bounded" 54). Here we see the idea of writer as scribe, working in "scriptural" time and "deciphering" and recording the social texts around him or her, who also, through his or her unique handwriting, adds another voice to the intertextual conversation in the new novel or multigenre composition, inviting the reader to do the same. This invitation is part of a "practice" that is social and perhaps even "revolutionary" (Revolution 196). It redefines reading as "retracing the path of [a text's] production" (103) and connects "[w]ork as process" (104) and texts as pluralities to "signifiante" (i.e. a text's capacity "to signify what representative and communicative speech does not say") through the semiotic breaking through cracks in the symbolic (Roudiez 18), something a multigenre environment makes possible.

#### Text, Reader, and Writer in Barthes

For further development of these and related ideas, we can now turn to Roland Barthes whose definition of text as "plural" and his explanation of both writer and reader roles in interacting with an "ideal[ly plural] text" (S/Z 5) shed light on "work as process" and the intertextual nature of multigenre compositions. For Barthes, "the Text," as opposed to "the work" (as in the phrase "literary work") cannot be analyzed or interpreted as a finalized object but is continually in process. In his distinction between "Text" as "the force of writing" and "work" as "stable meaning" and "object" (G. Allen 66), we can recognize Kristeva's ideas of genotext and phenotext. We can also see a connection to current genre theory's conception of genre as social action in Barthes' view of text as an activity that "decants the work (the work permitting) from its consumption

and gathers it up as play, activity, production, practice” (“From Work” 162). According to Barthes, “etymologically, the text is a tissue, a woven fabric” that relies on “the stereographic plurality of its weave of signifiers (159). It exists loosely as a “web” or a “garment [. . .] woven from the threads of the ‘already written’ and the ‘already read’” (G. Allen 6), at any moment capable of bursting apart. In its always open and never finalized plurality, the text serves as a “space where no language has a hold over any other, where languages circulate” (Barthes, “From Work” 164) and interact with the languages of other texts. Like Louise Rosenblatt’s conception of the “poem,” in contrast to the “text” (cf. The Reader, The Text, and The Poem 12), Barthes’ Text appears and evolves in the interactional space among the words on the page, the human minds that read/write it, and the surrounding sociocultural environment in which it is read/written. It is the antithesis of a bounded literary work that can be “studied” in the spirit of New Criticism to pull out the meanings that the “Author” (in the sense of one who has ultimate authority) has put into it. Because of its multiple voices and multiple purposes, as well as its “in process” feel, a multigenre composition and its vibrating web of meanings illustrates this conception of Text that rejects sole authority resting in the Author.

In fact, according to Barthes, a Text has no “‘theological’ meaning”; we cannot detect in its words any “‘message’ from the Author-God” but only experience in its “multidimensional space” the “blend[ing] and clash[ing]” of many other unoriginal texts. In this way, “[t]he text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture” (“Death” 146) and is plural both “inside” and “outside.” Indeed, we cannot fix “inside” or “outside” because the text as a web of coexisting multiple voices (like the egalitarian voices of Bakhtin’s concept of the polyphonic novel) is not “a unified, isolated object” (G. Allen 67). It is, instead, a series of semantic “networks” that continually mean without cutting off any lines of thought or association. In Barthes’ words, it “is a galaxy of signifiers, not a structure of signifieds; it has no beginning [or end and] is

reversible,” and we can dive into the text at any point, not any of which is any more “correct” than another (S/Z 5).

We can apply this idea of Text as the weaving together or intersecting of various “off-stage voices,” or “codes” (S/Z 21), drawn from the many discourses of individuals, cultures, and societies, to the intertextually open and dialogic system of a multigenre composition. Ideally, such writing, like Barthes’ concept of Text, “combines structure and an infinity of meaning” (G. Allen 78), unlike “readerly texts” that reinforce the “doxa.” Though readerly texts “sugges[t], and indeed embod[y], the idea that stable meaning is possible, that a signified can be found for the text’s signifiers, that language can uncomplicatedly represent the world, that truth can finally be delivered by an author” (79), multigenre texts attempt to refrain from rigid stability and the establishment of finalized meanings and instead invite multiple readings and interpretations of “truth.” Genre “events” that comprise a multigenre composition function as lexia, nuggets of text that conjure many sociocultural texts and utterances for a reader to savor, as well as create spots for him or her to stop and ponder, an invitation to free-associate with other texts. These genres-as-lexia create “a minor explosion of meaning which provides the reader with a window not onto some ultimate structure or meaning [what structuralism strives for] but onto the realm of the intertextual.” In a multigenre composition, “[e]very lexia is a signifying point which leads us out into the infinity of the social text [. . .].” In this regard, Barthes’ analytical method of “cutting” apart a text to show how “it is woven from the threads of the social text,” and his “respect [for] the text’s non-linear, non-totalizable intertextuality” (G. Allen 83), give us a way to understand how multigenre compositions make contact with, and remain open to, relationships with other social, historical, and cultural texts.

But what is a writer’s role in creating such openness? Here, again, Barthes’ theory of text and intertext can be instructive in helping us understand how a writer creates fluid and blurred borders between a multigenre composition and texts “outside” it,

as well as how he or she achieves an open dialogue among the smaller genres that comprise it, thus working toward as free-flowing an intertextuality as possible. When Barthes characterizes his writing self as an “echo chamber” for “siren signifiers” and phrases that he likes and borrows from other writers “with a certain slippage,” he suggests that a writer, like a text, is a space within which intertextuality works. The creator of the texts Barthes imagines is not an “Author” but a “scriptor.” And just as he rejected writing as commodity, Barthes, in addition, rejects the “tyrannical” construct of the Author, which, he says, has had a stranglehold over writing since the Renaissance “with [the advent of] English empiricism, French rationalism and the personal faith of the Reformation,” all of which lauded “the prestige of the individual” to such an extent that Author grew eventually to an objectified celebrity status capable and worthy of consumption (“Death” 143)—an objectification seen in such questions as “Have you read much Hemingway?”

On the other hand, Barthes conceives a “scriptor” as a compiler of textual fragments (not original to her or him) that retain memories of their previous uses in new wholes that themselves are always in a state of potential dismantling. This conception seems reminiscent of Claude Lévi-Strauss’s “bricoleur” and suggests the process a writer uses to create a multigenre composition. Lévi-Strauss’s craftsperson stockpiles a “heterogeneous” collection of existing “wrought products” (like watches, small machines, broken-down automobiles), rather than “raw materials” (36), dismantling and co-opting these for new projects, which themselves may subsequently be taken apart for other uses. In the same way, a scriptor’s “only power is to mix writings, to counter the ones with the others, in such a way as never to rest on any one of them” (“Death” 146). Unlike the Author, a scriptor does not exist prior to the text and does not “impose a limit on [a] text” or give it a “final signified, to close the writing” (147). Instead, he or she grows out of the performance of the text. As Barthes puts it,

The Author, when believed in, is always conceived of as the past of his own book:

book and author stand automatically on a single line divided into a before and an after. The Author is thought to nourish the book, which is to say that he exists before it, thinks, suffers, lives for it, is in the same relation of antecedence to his work as a father to his child. In complete contrast, the modern scriptor is born simultaneously with the text, is in no way equipped with a being preceding or exceeding the writing, is not subject with the book as predicate; there is no other time than that of the enunciation and every text is eternally written here and now. (“Death” 145)

Barthes’ view suggests an equal co-existence between text and writer, with writer, in some sense, functioning as a facilitator of intertextual relationships rather than as a Creator imposing his or her absolute intention on a text that pretends to be “original.” Though there has been disagreement over whether Barthes truly calls for “The Death of the Author” (G. Allen 75)—and if he does, whether he should, especially considering the struggle female writers have had to be recognized as “alive” (cf. N. Miller)—what is important for multigenre writing in considering Barthes’ view of the writer is that it “disturbs the previously hierarchized, filial relationship between author and reader” (Allen 75). Furthermore, it signals an equal participation between writer and reader in making meaning from a text, redefining both roles in terms of “literature as work,” as process, and viewing a reader as “no longer a consumer, but a producer of the text” (Barthes S/Z 4).

For Barthes, reading as “a lexeographical act” is not to discover a buried treasure in the text but to “write [a] reading” and “to appreciate what plural constitutes it.” As the writing I is not prior to the text, the reading I, “already itself a plurality of other texts,” is not after it, “not an innocent subject, anterior to the text, one which will subsequently deal with the text as it would an object to dismantle or a site to occupy.” According to Barthes, reading is not a “parasitical act, the reactive complement of writing which we endow with all the glamour of creation and anteriority. It is a form of work [. . .]” (S/Z

10-11), in which the reader has equal status with writer and both exist synchronically with the text. And “reading does not consist in stopping the chain of [linguistic, intertextual] systems, in establishing a truth, a legality of the text [. . .]; it consists in coupling these systems, not according to its finite quality, but according to their plurality (which is a being not a discounting) [. . .]” (11). Rather than searching for the “correct” meanings a writer has deposited in the text for withdrawal, while trying to refrain from making “errors” in reading, Barthes’ reader (like Rosenblatt’s) produces meanings and creates “a text’s unity” from the “multiple writings” that comprise it and that offer her or him opportunities to create (“Death” 148).

Readers are “representatives of general intertextuality” (Culler, Pursuit 102) whose “practice” is “re-writing” the already-written of the text (G. Allen 70). They read, in a way, for “connotation,” the multiple meanings and plural voices of a text, rather than “denotation,” some ostensibly “first meaning” or stable truth (Barthes, S/Z 8-9). In terms of reading a multigenre composition, Barthes’ ideas are important because they recognize, just as Bakhtin’s did, that readers are crucial in producing a multigenre text, that they must assume a heavy responsibility in making meaning from and unifying it (at least for now), and that their abilities to produce a text are no less important—Barthes would say, even, that they are more important—than a writer’s. Though I would disagree with Barthes that “the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author” (“Death” 148), and I would argue, as Nancy Miller does, that we should not let the reader take the place of the writer as tyrant and allow Barthes’ announcement of the writer’s “death” to shut “off by delegitimizing other discussions of the writing (and reading) subject” (80), still, his questioning of the hegemony of the Author and his total disruption of the hierarchy of an all-mighty Author, a closed literary work, and a passively consuming reader resonate in interesting ways with similar ideas of Bakhtin’s discussed in Chapter 2. Moreover, it gives us another way to see how multigenre writing and reading value—not exclusively but more than some other kinds of writing—highly interactive,



fluid, and intertextual processes.

### Multigenre Writing, Genre Theory, and Intertextuality

In these conceptions of Text and the intertextual set forth by Barthes, Kristeva, and Bakhtin, we can recognize, also, the connections we may forge between theories of genre, narrative, and intertextuality. In deriving her ideas on intertextuality from the work Bakhtin did with polyphony, dialogism, and speech genres, Kristeva creates an opening for such a connection. In later renaming intertextuality “transposition of one (or several) sign system(s) into another” (*Revolution* 59-60)—in order to draw a distinction between her conception of intertextuality and what she saw as perversions of it—Duff suggests 1) that intertextuality as conceived by Kristeva may not be hostile to genre since a genre can be considered a “sign system” and 2) that we can interpret intertextuality as “embrac[ing] the process of genre-formation as described by Bakhtin, and incorporat[ing] too the ad hoc genre-mixing and discourse-mixing performed by a particular text” (63).

Also, since more widespread access to and more careful reading of Bakhtin’s writings have revealed a close connection between his “theory of the novel” and his “broader theory of genres,” at least some theorists of intertextuality (e.g. Jenny, and Gérard Genette), operating in the post-structuralist traditions, have been working to draw together “notions of intertextuality with those of genre” (Duff 68). In addition, recent genre theories, as discussed in Chapter 1, see genres as somewhat open yet stable actions that participate in sociorhetorical systems and interact closely with other genres within and outside a particular system. Such theories no longer embrace the Romantic attitude toward genre as rigid patterns and forms that do nothing except constrain a writer’s creativity, while also recognizing that genres, at the same time, do not completely lack structure. Therefore, drawing connections between theories of narrative, intertextuality, and genre and multigenre writing can be fruitful in helping us appreciate its complex richness. In fact, in explaining genre as a social act, a response to a sociorhetorical situation, Devitt makes such a connection: “once we recognize a recurring situation, a

situation that we or others have responded to in the past, our response to that situation can be guided by past responses. Genre, thus, depends heavily on the intertextuality of discourse” (“Generalizing” 576). The pieces of a multigenre composition in the way they call to and answer each other illustrate such dependence.

We may see this connection between intertextuality and genre by examining master’s student Jennifer Sorenson’s multigenre paper “Cosmetic Clips” (Romano, Blending 7-14). In all, twenty-two pieces, each separately titled and kept distinct by intervening white space, comprise Sorenson’s paper on the topic of department store cosmetic counters. These pieces simulate the rhetorical situations and forms of twelve different oral and written genres: department store public address announcement, job advertisement, scene description, oral conversation, sales tips from an employee training manual, short story, self-description, self-reflection, character sketch, poetic chant, friendly letter, and strategy explanation. They use first, second, and third person points of view and reflect both individual speaking voices that range from the seemingly anonymous and personless (Nymens Department Store, the cosmetic department, the department’s training manual, an elementary school, an omniscient observer) to the highly personal (various cosmetic department employees, their husbands and children, their customers) and, in two pieces, the collective voice (of the saleswomen). In the course of the paper, a number of themes (e.g. relationships, customer service, appearance, loss/death) surface, retreat, and resurface through these genres.

One theme that seems most prominent, however, is that of selling, which insistently undergirds and propels this multigenre composition as a whole without establishing a definite thesis. Of the twenty-two pieces, fourteen of them deal in some way with sales or selling, and the pivotal genre related to this theme, the sixteenth piece in the paper, is “Circles,” one of two poetic chants. In this piece the theme of selling—and the disturbing way, for a number of complex reasons, it defines and drives the job of cosmetic clerk—gets its most intense articulation. Though other genre-events prior to

“Circles” provide glimpses into the selling theme, this particular piece feels like the time-space where the voices articulating that theme meet most dramatically. Using the voice of one anonymous cosmetic saleswoman, it reads:

When I sell, sell, sell  
I make more, more, more  
And I’m happy, happy, happy  
Until next year when I have to sell  
More, more, more to beat the sales  
I did this year in order to keep  
My job, job, job

This short chant puts into context the many references to selling in other genres in the composition, giving these references a place from which to bounce off each other, to refer to each other intertextually. For instance, it helps a reader understand the coldly calculated last line of the paper’s third genre, “Beautiful Red Hair”: a conversation between one cosmetologist (who has given a makeover to a worn-out, distraught nurse with two pre-school-age children who had found her thirty-two-year-old husband dead at his computer the previous week) and her co-worker. After discussing the ages of the woman’s sons, the person listening to the story asks, “Did you sell her anything?” At this early point in the paper when the theme of selling first emerges, such a crass, insensitive question seems like a jarring non sequitur to the reader, but “Circles,” coming 14 genre-events later, allows him or her greater insight into this comment and the complex feelings and results of selling pressure in the cosmetic business, as do other references to the theme in the genre-events between “Beautiful Red Hair” and “Circles.”

These intertextual references appear, for example, as

- recommendations that “Suggestive selling is a must! [. . .] Multiple sales is the key to success!” in “Training Tip Number One,” the paper’s fourth genre
- a comparison of sales achievements in Genre Five (“May I Help You?”) that recounts a conversation between two clerks, Wendy and Sandra, and establishes a sales “bet” that the reader watches play out in the next piece,

### **“Wendy’s Waltz”**

- **“Wendy’s Waltz,” the story of one of the cosmetologists using sex (adding a new dimension to the “suggestive selling” idea of Genre Four) to sell a male customer \$272.69’s worth of Chanel products**
- **the announcement of “No job security unless you maintain sales goals” in Genre Nine, “Help Wanted Nymens’ Cosmetic Specialist”**

As these few instances of the selling theme in “Cosmetic Clips” demonstrate, clearly the genres in a multigenre paper allow multiple, disparate voices to speak without any attempt to reconcile them with each other or come to some finalized conclusion about them. Instead, if we pay careful attention, we can feel the “selling” thread weaving in and out of the composition’s genres and hear the intertextual echoes “circulating” among their various voices. We can also discern strong connections between the genres in the paper and the instances of selling that go on in many other aspects of our commodity-obsessed society and that manifest themselves in its various genres

In essence, a multigenre composition, taken as a whole, illustrates both a narrow intertextuality that operates among its genres and a broader intertextuality, a referring to the texts of culture, society, and history. It incorporates genres from other sociorhetorical contexts into it and appeals to its readers’ experiences with such genres. Indeed, to understand a multigenre composition, a reader must be able to recognize how various genres work, what they signify, how they respond to their rhetorical situations, and how they relate to other genres. This demands much effort on the part of not only the writer but also the reader of a multigenre composition.

Having explored such multigenre compositions through the lenses of Bakhtin’s language, genre, and literary theories, as well as other theories of genre, narrative, and intertextuality in the first three chapters of this dissertation, I now turn in the next two chapters to a study of high school students’ writings, both those labeled “multigenre” and those not. The intent of this part of my research is to examine to what extent, if any, my

theories about multigenre writing manifest themselves in a sample of student-generated classroom texts. To do this, Chapters 4 and 5 will describe my analysis of multivocality, multigenerality, and intertextuality in the papers of eleventh and twelfth-grade students in a one-semester, elective English course entitled Experiences in Writing.

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## CHAPTER 4: STUDENT WRITING (1): MULTIVOICES IN SO-CALLED MONOGENRES

Pondering classroom writing assignments, including the multigenre paper, through the lens of genre and narrative theories has given me the opportunity to theorize both the construct of a multigenre composition and the concepts of multivocality and multigenicity. Such work has also led me to theorize that despite the multigenre paper assignment's usually being set against "uninterrupted, expository monolog" (Romano, Blending x) or "the" research paper ("objective," impersonal, unified), we might see that this binarism does not necessarily obtain if we examine actual student texts, both those named "multigenre paper" and those labeled "expository essay" or "research paper" In this part of my study, I examine if and how the theories I have been considering relate to student writing in order to explore two of my primary research questions: "How is the concept of multigenre both constraining and generative?" and "Are multigenre papers different from other ostensibly more 'traditional' school forms?" Here, my overall aim is to describe what I see operating in a collection of student papers and to use them to illustrate the theories with which I have been working. Since, over the course of my teaching life, I have given many writing assignments, including the multigenre paper, to students, I want to challenge my own assumptions about the nature of such assignments and the validity of separating "the" multigenre paper as school construct from other school writing deemed more traditionally "unified" than multigenre papers. My hope is to "make the familiar strange" (for other teachers and myself) by looking at a set of writing "artifacts" from an outsider's viewpoint (LeCompte and Preissle 115).

### Nature of the Study

As part of this outsider stance, I want to make clear that my study is a textual,

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not a classroom, one. I was not the teacher who gave the assignments and then collected students' responses to them. I had no part in designing the assignments or presenting them. I did no classroom observation when the teacher introduced and facilitated the work on the assignments. I did not interview students at all during the course, and I talked to the teacher only sparingly and informally to clarify the assignment information she gave me in written form. I did not even collect the finished products when students had completed them. The only time I had classroom contact was early in each of the two semesters of data collection when I explained the general nature of my study, asked students to consider participating, answered questions, and distributed the permission forms (see Appendix A), which the teacher later collected. Thus, my research focuses exclusively on written artifacts with students' names removed from their papers by the teacher and coded so that I do not know author identities. Also, there were no teacher markings or grades on the copies of papers I received. As far as the teacher materials are concerned, I used these for background and contextual information.

Overall, my intent is illustrative and descriptive, and I make no claims for the generalizability of my findings nor for my observations having the status of proof. In addition, I recognize that the strands I see in the collected student work stem at least in part from the theory I have internalized and that another reader might see different strands, common characteristics, or contrastive qualities. Nonetheless, my goal in this and the following chapter is to present enough textual examples to illustrate the workings of the writing of four groups of students taking a semester-long writing course during one school year, 2001-02, in terms of the theories I see as applicable to multigenre writing. While recognizing the limitations of such a study, I believe my work has value in its capacity to let student writing blur the lines between assignments labeled "expository,"

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“research,” and “multigenre.” How much this body of classroom texts resonates beyond that context I will leave for readers to decide.

As explained in Chapter 1, the student writing comes from a course called Experiences in Writing offered by the English department of a suburban Iowa high school during the 2001-02 school year. This is a one-semester elective, open to eleventh- and twelfth-grade students and taught twice yearly. These students, if juniors, come to the course from English 10, a two-semester sequence of one speech course and one literature course. Dependent on the teacher, tenth grade English provides anywhere from no or very little writing to extensive response and analytical writing, according to the teacher with whom I worked for my study. Seniors who take Experiences in Writing may have had no writing course as juniors or they may have taken Advanced Composition in their eleventh-grade year, opting for Experiences in Writing as seniors because they want to take more English but do not want to move to Advanced Placement Literature and Composition, offered at the top of the English course hierarchy. Thus, the amount and kind of writing experiences both juniors and seniors have prior to Experiences in Writing are widely variable.

In 2001-02 two sections of the course were taught each semester, and the students taking part in my study came from these four sections. In all, eighty-one of ninety-four total students taking Experiences in Writing agreed to participate, allowing their teacher to pass on to me a copy of the papers they wrote for the five major writing assignments of the semester. At the outset, I specified that I would use the papers only for comparative and illustrative purposes and would not judge them in any way for quality. This writing comprises a data set of 405 papers, which subsequently formed the basis for a comparative/contrastive analysis, as set forth by LeCompte and Preissle (240-2), both within and between student sets of papers. In most cases, a process log, which students completed and turned in to the teacher at the evaluation stage of a particular assignment, accompanied each paper. In addition, students from second semester provided a one-page

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“caption” they did for one section of their semester portfolio. This piece reflects on the experience of writing in a variety of genres during the course and addresses such topics, according to the teacher-provided portfolio instruction sheet, as “How writing in different genres challenged you,” “How writing in different genres strengthened your skills,” “Any adversities you came across when writing in different genres,” “Which one has become your favorite and why,” and “Which one you can most improve on and how.” Though my analysis focused exclusively on the five major papers, I used these reflections and the process logs as windows into students’ thinking, which, at times, gave me insights into the workings of the papers themselves.

As further supplemental material, the teacher provided summaries of the writing assignments (outlining the purpose and her approach); information about the pre-drafting, drafting, responding, revising, and polishing activities accompanying each assignment; copies and/or description of some of the readings students did as they moved toward drafting each paper; and the evaluation rubrics she used to grade students’ processes and products. Following are descriptions of each paper (gleaned from these teacher materials) with a code letter designation I assigned it. I will present these descriptions in the order students did the assignments during first semester. During second semester, students wrote the virtue paper as their last assignment in order to give more time for the multigenre-paper unit. Because that unit took more time than it did during first semester, the virtue assignment was truncated, with students from the two second-semester sections doing only the first part (writing an extended definition) but not the second (designing, executing, and reporting on their own primary research of the virtue).

- *Mission Statement (MS)*—The teacher describes this paper as an expository essay on goal setting in which students first create a concise mission statement (following the description and examples of such a statement on pages 81-83 of Sean Covey’s book Seven Habits of Highly Effective Teens) and then expand this short statement into a thesis that they further develop into an essay. Based on what the teacher writes

about the assignment (“This is the first essay that we write, so one of the goals is just to have an introduction with thesis statement, a body, and a conclusion”) and the assessment criteria on the grading rubric, this paper appears to be what most teachers would recognize as a first-person, three-part expository essay.

- *Extended Metaphor* (EM)—This assignment, according to the teacher, “takes[s] the traditional personal narrative in a different direction” by asking students to do a close analysis of themselves (the parts of their personality) and compare both parts and whole to a tangible object (like an orange, a cell phone, a tree). As preparation, students discuss and free write about “six selves” that make up their personality (emotional, creative, social, physical, critical, passionate—cf. Betts and Kercher 166); they create and explain a symbolic representation of themselves that uses abstract shape, texture, and color; and they brainstorm objects (like a garden or a bike) that have many parts. Finally, they settle on an object to analyze/compare for the extended metaphor paper and apply an analogic formula as an analytical aid (e.g. “uphill climb : roller coaster AS ambition : me”).<sup>1</sup> According to this lesson’s directions, the required five analogy statements then serve as an outline for drafting the paper. In evaluating it, the teacher looks for a “concise yet strong thesis that guides the essay,” the thorough carrying out of the extended metaphor, and “consistent use of critical comparisons using the analogy formula.” From the directions for and the teacher’s summary of the assignment, as well as the rubric, we may infer that here, as in the mission statement, the goal is an expository essay with introduction, guiding thesis, body, and summative conclusion, this time in the form of what most teachers would recognize as a “traditional” extended metaphor paper.
- *Virtue Paper, Part One: Extended Definition* (ED)—For this paper, students choose one of ten virtues (self-discipline, compassion, responsibility, friendship, work, courage, perseverance, honesty, loyalty, or faith) identified by The Book of Virtues: A Treasury of Great Moral Stories. Then they set out to explain how they would

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define the virtue, drawing on such material as dictionary definitions, synonyms and antonyms, and quotations by others who have attempted to define the idea. They also examine writings that deal with the virtue: songs; poems; fairy tales/children's stories; Aesop's fables; myths and folk tales; short stories; Bible stories and psalms; other religious texts (e.g. the Tao Te-Ching); lists of rules (e.g. "George Washington's Rules of Civility"); oaths and creeds; letters; speeches and sermons; autobiographical and biographical pieces; magazine articles; excerpts of governmental documents, of Shakespearean plays and sonnets, and of philosophical writings (e.g. Plato's Dialogues); and stories from their own experience. As with the previous two papers, the rubric calls for a guiding thesis and three clearly delineated parts ("attention getting introduction that moves from general to specific," thoroughly developed body with "strong detail," and a "summative conclusion that leaves a strong and lasting impression with the reader while moving from specific to general.") All of these requirements suggest what we would usually recognize as a "traditional" five-paragraph theme without the restriction of only three body paragraphs.

- *Virtue Paper, Part Two: Primary Research (VR)*—done only with two first-semester sections of students—After writing their extended definitions, students then move on to do some of their own first-hand research by creating a "moral dilemma question" (modeled after those in the board game *Scruples*) and constructing a survey based on the main question and supporting demographic questions: age, gender, parent or guardian, and type of upbringing (strict, average, lenient). The teacher also instructs students to request a rationale for the yes-or-no answer the question elicits from each of a required 40 respondents. After administering their surveys, students graph their data and write a double-entry log to draw conclusions from their findings, using those conclusions to formulate a thesis. In writing up their research, students follow a prescribed formula, recognizable as typical of (or at least mimicking) quantitative study write-ups: introduction and rationale, design and methodology (including

limitations of the study), findings and analysis, and conclusion (intended to present the student's research thesis and to tie this Part Two of the virtue assignment to Part One: Extended Definition), and "beneficial appendices."

- *Research Paper (RE)*—Though the teacher calls this assignment a research paper in all materials given to students, we might more accurately describe it as a researched argument because, as the assignment "overview" tells students, the "objective of the paper is to choose the one person whom you believe to be the most influential person of the millennium and then to compose a research paper which aims to persuade your reader as to why that person is influential. *Your purpose is not to give a biographical report on this person.*" In its intent, then, the paper is not strictly speaking expository (if for just a minute we engage in the current-traditional mode separation that still goes on in schools) and, in that way, is slightly different from the first three major papers of the semester. However, except for students being required to construct a thesis that argues for their chosen individual's influence and to prove that thesis through the facts their paper includes, the assignment follows the process we traditionally associate with "the" research paper. Students learn about various aspects of doing library research (searching the Internet and using the Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature, Social Issues Resources Series (SIRS), the school's catalog, and its vertical file, etc.). They are required "to have a minimum of 50 notecards (each note card has an annotation and a piece of information you may use in your paper)" taken from five sources, four of them different from each other; and they must make "a working outline from which to compose the paper." Requirements for the final paper say it "must have a clear introduction with a clearly stated thesis statement; [. . .] must accurately annotate and include research information; [and] must contain a complete *works cited page* [. . .] which lists resources in alphabetical order." Teacher generated materials and pages from Writers Inc instruct students in all these areas. And for this paper, the assignment directions even specify length (3-47

pages), though the rubric does not list length as an evaluation criterion. The rest of the rubric suggests students need to follow the same three-part structure as the previous papers with “MLA format” added as the only new area of assessment.

- *Multi-Genre Writer's Collage* (MGP)—Coming on the heels of the research paper unit (and using the topic and source materials of that paper), this final assignment of the semester is a re-named version of the multigenre paper introduced by Romano. In it, the students’ goal, according to the assignment directions, “is to create a total picture of [a chosen] person. When your reader is finished they should *know* your subject.” To accomplish this goal, students must compose “a minimum of **six pieces of writing**, each being a distinctly different genre” and including “**no more than two pieces** that do not require writing.” (For first-semester students, the requirement was only four pieces. That changed when the teacher, dissatisfied with those papers’ incompleteness, increased the number of required genres for second semester.) The assignment directions also instruct students not to “repea[t] information from genre to genre” and to make genres “authentic,” to “look *real*.” Further they encourage students to experiment with voices, not “always to write from the point of view of the person you’ve researched. Write as if you’re the friend, spouse, enemy, confidant, invention, accomplishment, etc. of the person.” And in an unspecified way, the assignment sheet tells them to create “**cohesiveness** or a theme” for holding the pieces together and requires them to put endnotes as the last page of the paper.

Materials accompanying these directions are a sample notes page from Romano’s Writing with Passion (142-43) and a list of 162 genres (e.g. advice column, brochure, contract, dialogue, eulogy, flyer, graffiti, horoscope, invitation, journal, lyrics, medical records, news release, outline, poetry, quiz, resume, speech, table, wanted poster). This list serves as a starting point for student genre decisions (though the teacher does not restrict them to these choices). Students

also have at their disposal a three-ring binder full of example pieces (collected by students outside of school) that demonstrate the format, language, etc. of some of the listed genres. In addition, the teacher provides a planning sheet to help students think through their overall theme, possible genres, and ways to incorporate different information and points of view into the various genres. A second sheet (created for second semester) requires students to state their thesis (related to the influence of the person, as in their researched argument) at the top and then in columns to specify four characteristics of the six genres that will form their paper: "role," "audience," "format," and "topic." The teacher explains this additional planning sheet as her attempt to guide students to stick to their thesis and think through how the smaller genres that comprise their papers achieve the goal of unity. Unlike the rubrics for the other four papers, the multigenre paper rubric evaluates each of the six pieces (or four, in the case of first semester) as separate entities, based on informativeness, understandability, authenticity/creativity, organization, and style; the endnotes page, according to how well it documents sources and gives a rationale for the ways sources were used in each of the genres; and the paper's connecting theme by how well the "[t]heme (thesis) clearly ties the pieces together to add cohesion and direction to the collage" and how "appropriately packaged" the paper is.

Throughout the school year as students completed these assignments, I met periodically with the teacher to collect papers and supplementary materials. As I did this, I created packets of writings for each student participant to aid in my analysis. Organizing data in this way allowed me not only to compare and contrast from assignment to assignment but also to trace patterns and disruptions of patterns within the body of work from a single student. As I read and studied what students had written in response to the five assignments, I tried to allow characteristics and strands to emerge from the writing, rather than conceiving analytical categories beforehand and imposing

them on the data. By taking this inductive approach, I began to notice two main features of the writing. First, I discovered a lively multivocality (and sometimes multigenerality in instances where textual chunks took on conventions of recognizable genres in more formalistic terms) in papers written in response to what may be considered the four “traditional” assignments, the ones that at least “on paper” call for conventional thesis-driven “unity”; the three-part structure with those triangles (upside-down for the introduction and right-side-up for the conclusion) that everyone who has taken and/or taught writing in a school setting for any length of time can instantly envision (and that still is a staple of many secondary writing curricula); and a sustained explanation of a focus idea, a kind of straightforward monologue from one point of view. Second, in the papers written in response to the multigenre paper assignment, I discovered wide variance in the amount of multivocality and kind of voices invited into the text (characteristics that make at least some of the multigenre papers seem not particularly “alternative” when compared to the “traditional” essays).

If the tyranny of exposition M.M. Bakhtin describes actually exists, then in many cases it lost its iron grip in the expository and research essays I examined from these groups of students. Despite attempts of the assignments to impose order and neatness on ideas, students’ responses to them were anything but “smoothed out, straightened, polished, touched up”; they were not a total “reduction of semantic polysemy to empty single meanings” (*Dialogic* 380-81). In many instances, and in many ways that I will illustrate, the “traditional” papers teemed with voices, some expected given the conventions writers typically use to bring others into a text (through such devices as quotation, analogy, allusion, paraphrase, summary, and so on) but some not so expected if we give in to tendencies to view student writers as unified subjects. On the other hand, the possibilities multigenre writing offers for open-endedness, for disparate and conflicting voices to assert themselves and interact, for the executing of many different speech “plan[s] or speech will[s]” (Bakhtin, *Speech Genres* 77), for engaging in



“polyphonic artistic thinking” that rejects “monologic habits” (272) do not in many instances come to fruition in the papers of the students I studied.

I suspect that the reasons for a divergence of the actual from the theoretical (at least in this one, limited context) are complex, many, and varied. For some of these instances and to a limited degree I can and will speculate “why.” However, I want, again, to make clear that I mean to describe phenomena and illustrate theoretical ideas occurring (or not occurring in this small set of papers). I do not wish to engage in judgmental binarisms with regard to either the students’ or their teacher’s work. I do not mean to imply right or wrong, to ferret out “mistakes,” or to reduce these students’ efforts to the successful or unsuccessful, to “good,” “bad,” or middling writing. In analyzing their work, I have tried to avoid thinking about it in those sorts of terms, instead striving to discover what is (at least from this reader’s standpoint and interactions with the texts) rather than judging what should be. As I promised student participants, I have no interest in holding their writing up to the light of criticism (in its negative sense) or in evaluating it on some basis of “quality.” No matter what grades these papers received—and I would imagine they ran the usual gamut typical for any given school writing assignment—they all are highly valuable for my stated purposes.

To present the specifics of my analysis, I will first describe characteristics related to the theoretical issues of multivocality multigenerality, and intertextuality that I found in the four “traditional” assignments (mission statement, extended metaphor, extended definition/report of primary research, and research paper) and then consider the workings of the multigenre papers. I do this not to suggest that the duality of multigenre paper/non-multigenre paper is valid but for descriptive and comparative/contrastive purposes only. Examining carefully both sides of the line that has been drawn between the “traditional” (expository essay, research paper) and the “alternative” (multigenre paper) may provide a lucid way to blur that line and to show that the actual qualities of each (at least in this set of student papers) disrupts the notion that they can always be set against

each other. The intent, here, is to reveal multivocality and multigenerality and unexpected breaks with convention in the conventional and the ostensibly monovocalic and monogeneric, and to illustrate how the unconventional and “alternative” cannot always escape the conventional, the imposition of constraints and “traditional” structures inconsistent with its ideal potential and intention.

In the spirit of dignifying the students who have allowed me to listen to the voices in their writing, I will quote in the remainder of this chapter and the next passages from their papers as they stand, without modifying or editing, without subjecting them to my own standards of correctness. What writers say and the way they say it here represent their voices of the moment without alteration, the way they expressed their ideas when the deadline came for them to present their last revision of their papers for teacher evaluation. For each reference to a student text, I have placed a parenthetical notation that contains a student and assignment designator (e.g. “1A MS” for Student 1 of Section A’s mission statement).

### Conventionalized Multivocalism

#### Titles

To begin, in papers responding to the four what-would-generally-be-called-expository assignments, students, not unexpectedly, often use titles in ways that echo other voices from advertising, clichéd expressions, stories, fables, books, movies, television, and so on. Using this conventional technique of entitling papers by borrowing from other voices creates an intertextual relationship of variable richness, depending on the extent to which the experiences of a particular reader put him or her in touch with the voices to which titles allude. Thus, because of these suggested relationships to other texts, the titles of students’ papers already disrupt the supposed monologue of exposition before we even get to the paper’s first sentence.

A scanning of paper titles reveals car-related references, like “Keep on Truckin’” (5D EM), which readers may connect to the song of the same name or to a common

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bumper sticker, and “Built Ford Tough” (19C EM), the automobile manufacturer’s slogan. Some allow us to hear the court bailiff: “Telling the Truth and Nothing But the Truth” (10C ED/VR), or the movie director: “Lights, Camera, Action” (17A RE). Other titles conjure truisms that most readers will commonly have heard and/or seen (on key chains, decorative plaques, greeting cards, etc. where such oral sayings often find themselves inscribed)—or even had directed to them as an admonishment or guiding principle: “You Gotta Have Faith” (3D ED/VR); “Honesty is the Best Policy” or a variation “Is Honesty the Best Policy?” (3C ED/VR; 15C ED/VR; 11B ED/VR); “Future: Whatever You Make of It” (7A MS); “Friends Are Forever” (22A ED/VR); “If at First You Don’t Succeed, Try, Try Again” (6D ED/VR). Any one of these titles may suggest multiple layering of voices from a person’s life and even, in the case, for example, of the last one (for some movie viewers), the film voice of Susan (Natalie Wood) in Miracle on Thirty-Fourth Street, repeating the cliché in disbelieving despondency when she thinks she is not getting the new house she wanted for Christmas.

From still other titles, we may hear echoes of Robert Frost and the speaker of his poem wrestling with the decision of a less traveled path in “Courage: The Road Not Taken” (12B ED/VR), or the voice of the Cowardly Lion from The Wizard of Oz trying to reassure himself that he is not afraid in “The Courage of the Cowardly Lion.” In the title “Happy is the Life for Me,” Pinocchio’s and Jiminy Cricket’s animated voices perhaps sing out to us with carefree abandon “An Actor’s Life for Me” (5D MS), or in the titles “The Wonderful World of Friendship” and “The Wonderful World of Freud (5D ED/VR and RE),” the voiceless voice of Tinkerbell’s wand from television’s The Wonderful World of Disney. If we have watched the VH1 program Behind the Music, the title “Society focused on the virtue of compassion: The Lesson behind the Story, Compassion” (23A ED/VR) may conjure the countless voices brought into hundreds of shows exploring the songs people love to hear. And if we know Benjamin Disraeli’s work (or even if we do not, but recognize the slightly misquoted words we are reading as

“famous” and have access to Bartlett’s Familiar Quotations to check), the title “Youth is a blunder, Manhood a struggle, Old age regret” (12B MS) may resonate with us in different ways depending on our age and the amount of living we have done. We might even connect to the many voices of baseball and the voice from the Iowa cornfield from the movie Field of Dreams when we read “Go the Distance” (9D ED/VR). Indeed, through their use of titles these students show what Bakhtin means when he talks about the innate dialogism of the words we choose as our own and the fact that we are “not, after all, the first speaker, the one who disturbs the eternal silence of the universe” (Speech Genres 69). Even in these ostensibly monologic genres and even before we delve into the first sentence of the paper, already multiple voices are bouncing off the page through the highly conventionalized practice of entitling a piece of writing. Reading these titles through the lens of genre and narrative theories like those of Bakhtin and Julia Kristeva provide one way for us to become sensitive to seeing/hearing the many and varied voices students invite into their texts.

### Allusions

In addition to titles, students bring the voices of others into their writing through another conventional practice: the allusion. They use allusions to poems, short stories, myths, and so on in order, for instance, to explain something about themselves in the case of their mission statements or to help illustrate their chosen virtue in extended definitions. For example, one student in explaining his goal of trying to put others’ interests ahead of his own includes this detail: “Narcissus was a Greek god who was in love with him self. Some people say that I am a little like him, the world revolved around me. Some times this is true, but I am trying to fix this” (17C MS). Through this allusion, the writer conjures the voice of Narcissus, his actions, reactions of others to him, and so on for any reader who knows the myth. In addition, by phrasing his connection of the mythological character to himself as indirect speech reporting—“Some people say [. . .]”—he also gives voice to those who compare him to Narcissus. As MaryAnn Crawford’s study shows,

“the meaning of reported language can best be explained as a feature of overt intertextuality, an instantiation of other voices situated in the socio-historical space and time of other worlds” (3).

Further, a student writing about the virtue of compassion alludes to Charles Dickens’ “A Christmas Carol” and the character Scrooge, assuming readers know the story (“Everyone is familiar with the Christmas story with the characters of Scrooge and tiny Tim [. . .]”) and uses it as a negative example of compassion against which she juxtaposes the other parts of her extended definition. Though Scrooge is mentioned in all seven paragraphs of her paper, providing a kind of base for other ideas, the writer never details the story or describes the specifics of Scrooge’s actions (23A ED). Instead, she relies on her imagined readers’ familiarity with the tale to bring into their reading of the paper the voices of Scrooge, Jacob Marley, the various Cratchits, Scrooge’s nephew Fred, the three ghosts of Christmas, those who would celebrate Scrooge’s death, and so on and to apply to her explanation of the virtue what they hear in her brief allusions to the story.

In another short reference, this time to “Our Heroes” by Phoebe Cary (Bennett 461), one student summarizes the essence of a piece of poetry—“‘Our Heroes’ is a poem praising the boy who has the courage to stand up to the crowd and do what he knows is right.”—using the poem as an example of a point she makes about different forms of courage: “There are several ways to practice courage. Seeing what is right and doing it with confidence is the mark of moral courage” (14A ED). Though I was not familiar with this poem until I found and read it, once a reader knows it, the writer’s allusion to it as an example of courage may resonate and bring to the definition she is constructing the voices of the poem’s speaker; the character of the young boy, saying “No”; and those in the crowd admonishing him to be strong, cheering his resolve, and reassuring him of God’s support. Such allusions are an indirect way that students use the accepted tools of exposition and yet infuse a genre purported to be monologic (or at least leaning toward that end of the monologic continuum) with a chorus of voices.

### Quotation

By using a third highly conventionalized practice, direct quotation, these students' papers illustrate yet another way that writers, without going outside "the box," disrupt monologic tendencies that thesis-driven expository (or argument) assignments may try to impose. Such quotations have a "social function" (Crawford 284) and "provide a potential space for dialogic interaction (244). One common and expected piece of writing in which to find space given to quotation is "the" research paper. Its purpose requires that students consult other people, most often in print but also first-hand, in order to report thoroughly on the topic (or, in the case of the papers I studied, to amass a body of evidence to prove a person's influence or significance in the last millennium). Such requirements stem from notions of authority in which students, supposed non-experts, must rely on recognized experts to validate their ideas. Papers in the four sections of students I examined commonly use this technique. In a fairly typical example, one student who tries to prove the influence of Robert F. Kennedy discusses the U.S. public's reaction to him before and after his death. In doing so, she includes this quoted statement from one of her sources: "'A death in the prime of a great life is as cruel as it is tantalizing: Bobby was still hovering on a most certain threshold of public acceptance in his last days' (Lowe 154)" (20A RE). Here in order to help articulate how people viewed Kennedy, the writer brings in the "expert" voice of Jacque Lowe, someone by virtue of having written The Kennedy Legacy, from which this statement comes, speaks knowledgeably about the topic. In addition, though the writer does not give credit in the parenthetical notation, we also are hearing the voice of Wilfrid Sheed, identified as Lowe's co-author on the paper's list of works cited. Adding another layer of voices, Lowe and Sheed's statement further suggests the voices of a "public" still questioning their attitudes about Kennedy.

In another paper, about The Beatles, the writer includes Paul McCartney quoted in one of her sources and speaking about how the group affected other bands: "Paul

remembers a fellow band coming to see The Beatles play in their earlier years, ‘the Hollies came to see us once and come back two weeks later looking like us . . . this is what started to happen’ (The Beatles Anthology 68)” (8D RE). An interesting feature of this use of quotation is that it adds another vocal layer. Not only does it bring in the voice of McCartney but it also suggests, hovering in the background, the voice of the unnamed compiler of The Beatles Anthology, who may or may not have gotten McCartney’s words down accurately. In addition, this compiler may be working from one or more other sources so that the vocal layer potentially becomes even thicker. Though the student’s in-text citation does not exactly follow MLA style for indicating that a quotation has been acquired second-hand and though the paper includes no works-cited page to give more information about the source, those readers experienced in the conventions of research paper writing may recognize the presence of these voices. In such use of direct quotation in research writing, however, these voices feel merged with the writer’s voice to a great extent as they work together to justify the influence thesis. And yet they are, nonetheless, other voices entering the conversation, and, at least in the case of the Lowe and Sheed quotation (where there appears to be some equivocation on their part about Kennedy’s impact), they give a sense that these writers may mean something a bit different than the present research writer does in using their words, thus creating a double-voiced tension while still contributing to the research paper’s purpose.

On their own, students may not notice this kind of double-voicedness. However, if teachers recognize it, they may be able to use such instances as an opening to discuss how bringing direct quotations from others (especially those deemed to be experts or authorities) into research-based school writing involves a negotiation between those voices and the writer. It may be an opportunity to talk about issues of power in writing (how quotations can take over a student’s writing and marginalize his or her voice, for instance) or the ways that a research paper that uses quotation may serve as an intertextual site for writers to “communicate dialogically with [them]selves, reflecting



critically on [their] own words and views” (Crawford 256-57). Rather than viewing the use of direct quotation as a cutting and pasting of others’ words into a new written context, manipulating them as though they are a commodity in an attempt to “own” them, we may, if we follow Crawford’s lead, “think about reporting others’ language as shared interaction, an on-going act of creation in which we must balance the meaning of a variety of voices: our own, and our past voices, the quoted author and her/his past voices” (271). The double-voicedness in the use of the Lowe and Sheed quote in the Robert Kennedy paper is one example of multivocality in an ostensibly monologic piece of writing and an opportunity for teachers to discuss the complexities of quotation use in research writing.

Such a discussion of vocal negotiation can also arise from an examination of directly quoted words from others in many of the extended definition papers I studied. Students gleaned these quotations most often, one can surmise from the speakers (Thomas Edison, Rene Descartes, Plutarch, Shakespeare) and the availability of quotation books during the process of writing the paper, from print sources. As in the case of the research papers, this is not surprising since one convention of extended definitions is that they use others’ words to enrich a writer’s own definition of a concept and since the grading rubric for the paper includes “effectively incorporated a quote and analyzed appropriately” as an assessment criterion. To illustrate students’ incorporation of quotations into their extended definition papers, I offer one writer’s use of Shakespeare to help her make the point that real friendship has staying power: “One friendship should never change another. Shakespeare once said ‘Friendship is the constant of all other things.’ I think Shakespeare was very right. Even if you don’t have anything else; you loose your job, a loved one dies, your wife leaves you, anything, you always have your friends to back you up no matter what” (14D ED). Here the writer not only brings in Shakespeare’s voice and opinion, but in reflecting on and evaluating his words, she carries on a kind of conversation with Shakespeare (and perhaps with herself) as she figures out what, at least for the moment, she believes about friendship. The result is that though an

extended definition expository essay (or a research paper) may seem like a single-voiced piece of writing, in reality it is multivocal with the various voices of the writer (as I will discuss in the next section) interacting with these others' quoted words allowed to inhabit the spaces between the writer's words.

We can see this multivocality in another instance in which the writer connects a quotation from Dostoevsky to courage: "A quote that really seems to tie in good with courage is by Fedor Dostoevsky. He says, 'Power is given to him who dares to stop and take it . . . one must have courage to dare.'" Then the writer offers his interpretation of Dostoevsky's statement: "So you need to take the step and dare and do something, no matter what the consequences may be, because something good will come from it" (21B ED/VR). In both these instances, Shakespeare's and Dostoevsky's words belong not only to them but now, in this new context, "assume a new [. . .] interpretation" (Bakhtin, Problems 195), that of the extended definition writer, thus merging two "speech plans" and making the words double-voiced—though in a rather subtle, noncontentious way since the writer and the original speakers seem basically to agree with each other about the concepts they address.

Other double-voicedness appear more prominently and stridently in quotation use in some students' mission statements. Though quotation is not necessarily a convention in a paper that has the purpose of explaining a person's goals (and neither the assignment directions nor the rubric require the strategy), some students bring in others' words to help them explain how they intend to live their lives. For example, one student's mission statement begins this way: "In the words of the great Red Green, 'If women don't find you handsome they should at least find you handy.'" This writer then uses the quotation for the purpose of creating a thesis idea to guide the details of the rest of the paper: "This quote sums up how I want to live the rest of my life. My goal is to become a person who can push the limits, a guy who knows how and when to react, and a guy who can do just about anything he sets his mind to" (17C MS). Even though one may argue

that in borrowing Red Green's words for his thesis, the writer has co-opted them, "ordered [them] on the template of convention," in Bakhtin's words (Dialogic 380), at the same time, the result of such use of quotation does not result in the "empty euphony" that Bakhtin claims is the result of exposition. On the contrary, Green's voice is too strong to be muzzled even as it is used for the new mission-stating purposes of this high school student.

Instead, Green's words are now double voiced, melding the writer of the mission statement's intentions with the many and various residues Green's motto because it is repeated at least once per episode and because it causes those familiar with the show to recall other characters and their conversations and interactions on this long-running public television program. And the vocal echo includes not only the meanings of this saying but also Green's unique character, his signature vocal tone and Canadian dialect, and all the expressions and voices of the Possum Lodge male culture he represents and parodies. The Green quote in the context of this mission statement, then, embodies all those meanings and uses from outside the essay but is also double-voiced, as in the case of the Shakespeare and Dostoevsky quotes, by the student's reinterpreting it for his own purposes.

In a second quotation used in paragraph two of this same writer's mission statement, we see this double-voiced phenomenon again, now as he invites a voice from his lived life into the essay. Here we hear echoes of "my coach," asserting, "Quitters never win and winners never quit," and because this is a common motivational speech of other coaches, as well, we may hear any number of their voices in different accents and volumes reverberating off the page. As a result, even though the writer is using his coach's words to help show his mission statement's first goal—to meet challenges "head on," even the tough ones, "instead of running away from it all" (17C MS)—as double-voiced discourse, the other uses and meanings attached to the quotation do not recede into silence but vibrate alongside the writer's intentions.

Another student even quotes himself in his mission statement, creating a double-voiced tension between I-as-worrier and I-as-one-who-thinks-worry-is-futile. He says, “Whenever I start to worry about something, I will tell myself, ‘\_\_\_\_\_, worrying about it will not do any good, if you want to actually do something about it, then do it. If not, quit worrying!’” (1D MS). As a result of being able to eavesdrop on the conversation between two parts of the writer’s psyche, readers not only hear the writer’s explanation of one of the three things he does not want in his life (i.e. “worry, weariness, and excess”) and the one main component he feels he needs (i.e. “purpose”). They also can conjure the voice of the writer-as-worrier, implied in the quotation, as well as that other part of the writer impatient with worrying. The use of self-quotation, then, helps readers listen in on the writer’s thinking processes as well as the outside voices that have helped form his inner voices in conversation with each other as he struggles to articulate his goals.

In addition to students using direct quotations in research papers, extended definitions, and mission statements, a few students also allow readers to hear directly or indirectly the voices of their survey respondents as they report and analyze their primary research findings in Part 2 of the virtue paper (written by students in the two first-semester sections in the study). One writer, for example, offers two direct quotations to show contrasting views of the virtue of work revealed in his survey:

\_\_\_\_\_, my next door neighbor could be quoted as saying “I worked as a veterinarian for many decades, and I enjoyed every minute of it, the money I was making was good, however I would have done the work for less money.” [. . .] This is a quote from a man in his 70’s, the perspective of a man in his 20’s, seems to be different. \_\_\_\_\_, a co-worker and friend of mine was quoted as saying “I can’t say I enjoy working, it’s something I do to get money, and I think most people do it for that reason.” (25B ED/VR)

In an indirect quotation, another writer shares his friend’s views to explain why the ten

percent of those he surveyed who came from what they describe as a “lenient” upbringing (as opposed to 7.5 percent each for those who had a “strict” or “average” upbringing) would choose to abandon plans with a friend when the better offer of a football game date came along: “My friend \_\_\_\_\_ told me that he sometimes took advantage of different things because he had an easy childhood. He said he had no chores that were tough, he got what he wanted, and his parents were both financially set” (13A ED/VR). Here the writer uses indirect quotation to try to explain the “why” of one of the findings of his survey. A third student shares indirectly two of her respondents’ rationales for why they answered “no” to her research question (i.e. “You were offered a great paying job right after high school. They asked you if you wanted to go to college first, do you go?”): “A couple people said that they couldn’t afford college so that is why they would take the job.” Then she shares directly the rationale for a “yes” answer: “One of the teachers I surveyed said, ‘There are many benefits to be gained from attending college’” (10A ED/VR).

These students’ use of such indirect and direct quotation allows us to hear for ourselves the voices of participants, though at the same time recognizing that these words are filtered through the words of the writer. These voices are by and large manipulated by the writers for their own purposes, “polished up,” as Bakhtin would say, and yet they still suggest that an element of double-voicedness and multivocality may exist in exposition, a kind of writing portrayed as weakly dialogic. Even the conventional writing strategy of quotation used in this way allows the reader not only to experience the words of those surveyed but also perhaps to imagine some of the interaction of the survey process, to participate in the data collection that goes on outside the confines of the paper, and to hear the voices of other surveyors collecting data from respondents from their own life experiences. As with quotations in students’ research papers, extended definitions, and mission statements, quotation in some students’ reports of their virtue study serve “social functions” (Crawford 284), creating double-voiced discourse that

reflects not only the voice(s) of the researcher but also a dialogic interplay of student researcher and his or her survey respondents, and of other researchers who engage in data collection and their respondents.

### Point of View and Multivocality

At this point, I would like to turn away from the relatively expected ways writers bring other voices into their writing to the perhaps unexpected. These, I think, are some of the more interesting findings of the study, those that burst wide open the idea that exposition is a monologue. What goes on in many of the papers I read calls into serious question notions that exposition straightforwardly explains a topic essentially from one point of view, guided by a thesis that keeps the writing “unified” while it develops this focus idea in standard three-part structure. On the contrary, papers that students in my study wrote seem to show that multivocality occurs—intentionally or not, I cannot say—in ways that go beyond conventional devices like titles, allusion, and quotation.

In the papers I examined, if we accept common assumptions about expository essay writing, we might expect to find in students’ mission statements an explanation in first person of the writer’s goals and aspirations. In the extended metaphor paper, with its emphasis on “objective” analysis, we might reasonably expect to hear explanations of the various parts of the tangible object to which the writer is comparing him- or herself, explanations of the parts of the writer’s personality that coincide with each object part, and an explanation of how these relate to each other. Such explanation would likely come in either exclusive first person or, depending on the organization of ideas, a mix of third person (to explain the workings of object parts) and first person (to make connections between aspects of the writer’s personality and those parts). For an extended definition paper, a writer conventionally, we might assume, would again stick to explaining and would do so in third person and, if he or she brings in personal examples as part of the definition, first person. In a reporting of the findings of primary research, a reader familiar with the conventions of such reporting would also expect explanations in third

and perhaps first person. Finally, with the research paper's long-entrenched status as a genre that offers "objective" reporting and detached explanation of a topic--as well as the common constraints teachers may put on the pronouns allowed in such papers--we might expect, excluding direct quotations, for writers to use strict third person. In addition, since the teacher made such a point about students' papers needing to argue for their chosen person's influence and not just functioning as a "biographical report," I expected, and found, instances in which students used such first-person phrases as "I believe" or "I think" when explaining how the facts they reported proved their person's importance.

What I did not expect, however, were the many instances in which students used first person I and second person you in these four papers and the effect of these pronouns on the "unity" and supposed monologism of these expository assignments. The rubrics, assignment directions, and information I have about teacher methodology say nothing about pronoun use, either what should be or what should not. Consequently, although there may have been discussion of such issues during the process of writing the papers (something, again, I did not observe and thus on which I cannot comment), I am assuming in the upcoming analysis that the teacher put forth no mandates or prohibitions on this aspect of the writing and that whatever pronouns and related phrasing that occurs in the papers is a result of what each particular writer felt most comfortable with to maximally express ideas.

To help us see the specifics of how the presence of pronouns in certain situations suggests that writers are taking on different roles and assuming voices that go beyond their expected role as "explainer" (or in the case of the research paper "explainer/arguer"), I have created labels to try, for analytical and explanatory purposes, to capture the wide variety of voices I see operating in these papers. At the outset, however, I want to make clear that these labels do not do justice to the richness of these voices, that other labels are certainly possible, and that any kind of codifying or labeling is basically futile. Such voices are impossible to pin down for very long since they often shift from one sentence

to the next or even in mid-sentence.

This shifting and adopting of other voices (or vocal stances) seems consistent with postmodernists' contention that the "unified" subject that Descartes posits does not exist. Instead, we might think of the subject as "decentered," as "an effect rather than a cause of discourse," according to Lester Faigley. "Because the subject is the locus of overlapping and competing discourses, it is a temporary stitching together of a series of often contradictory subject positions" (9). Just as the students involved in electronic discussions in the networked classrooms Faigley studied "try on and exchange identities [. . .] even from one message to the next" (191), the students in my study, often in the scope of a single essay, take on speaker positions that belie the notion of exposition as a uni-voiced monologue. Instead, if we look at these students' work through the lens of Bakhtin's theories (as well as those of Kristeva and Roland Barthes), we may see how discourses are continually colliding within the writer, on the page, inside the reader, and beyond, ebbing and flowing in a continual, everlasting process. Even though Bakhtin seems to exclude exposition from the dialogism he claims to be inherent in all language, faulting it for creating "an empty euphony" that makes one voice a tyrant who silences all others (Dialogic 380), I hope to illustrate in this next section of the chapter how a dialogical interplay is evident in the vocal shifting in students' expository papers I studied. For a moment, I will try to separate out some common voices I hear in their writing in order to describe the qualities of each.

### The "Commentator"

From my own experience with students trying to negotiate different genres of writing, I was not surprised to find evidence of a voice in their ostensibly monologic pieces that though closely related to "explainer" is also different in stepping away from explaining the focus topic in order to generalize or interpret an idea. This voice I call the "commentator," and it emerges in both students' mission statements and their extended metaphor papers, assignments we may expect to focus solely on explaining students'



goals or the connection between aspects of their personalities and the parts of a tangible object. Yet the “commentator” asserts itself. For example, one writer in his mission statement shifts from the role of explaining his hopes and plans for the future to commenting generally, using third and second person, about the struggles of life, before returning to further aspects of his mission. He says,

The way I want to live my life is the way I always saw life to be, happy but sad, fulfilling but empty, and pain free but pain. People show that life can be lived without all the negative feelings, but no one can. Everyone feels pain, sadness, and empty. Maybe you lost your girlfriend, or wife, maybe you lost your job, or lost a family member to death’s dark hand. Whatever the reason is, you will be sad sometime in your life. (27C MS)

Though this passage begins with the writer explaining the way he wants to proceed in life, in sentence two, the “explainer” voice focused on him gives way to the “commentator,” who uses the writer’s statements about himself as a jumping off point to generalize the inevitability of sadness in everyone’s life. From here, he returns to a focus on himself.

In another student’s extended metaphor, we also can see the “commentator” intruding on the “explainer,” who is trying to make connections between the parts of a merry-go-round and himself. After comparing his physical abilities to the ride’s motor, its colors to his changeable personality, and the pattern of the ride to patterns in his daily life, the writer takes his discussion of the merry-go-round beyond himself, generalizing it to others: “Life goes around in circles for everyone that is why a merry-go-round is a good metaphor. Like life, a merry-go-round always comes back to the same track or positioning. One day your life could change completely, but you will always have the same circle to go back to and the same area on the ride” (25A EM). The established purpose of this writer’s extended metaphor paper is not to explain how the merry-go-round is an apt metaphor for life but only to make connections between this carnival ride and his individual character, personality, life. Nonetheless, in this passage he applies his

personal metaphor to others. In addition to generalizing, this commentary also seems to give space to another voice, that of “justifier,” a voice that perhaps feels a need to show why the merry-go-round is an appropriate choice for the extended metaphor assignment.

As compared to its use in mission statements and extended metaphors, the “commentator” voice functions slightly differently in some places where it occurs in students’ extended definitions. In this usage, it acts not only as a generalizer but also as an interpreter when students bring in direct quotations (an assignment requirement) and attempt to explain them in connection to their developing definition of the virtue. For example, the writer of a paper on honesty, brings in a quotation from someone he identifies as Maxims, commenting that “Maxims once said, ‘He who says there is no such thing as an honest man, you may be sure himself a liar and a cheat.’ What Maxims is saying is if you lie it will just hurt you. It won’t hurt the person you are lying to it hurts your credibility and the trust others have in you” (10C ED).<sup>2</sup> In this passage, the “commentator” voice offers an interpretation of the quoted author’s statement, phrasing it in second person to generalize and elaborate on the meaning, rather than exclusively using an “explainer/definer” voice.

That “definer” voice, a specialized manifestation of the “explainer” expected in the extended definition paper, also interrupts the more general “explainer” voice in a “commentator” way in papers in which writers would not need to deploy it. For instance, one research paper writer allows the “definer” in briefly as she discusses the scientific contributions of Marie Curie: “It was Marie’s discoveries about radiation that led to a completely new area of science: Nuclear Physics. To generate power by nuclear fission, you must split uranium atoms into their component parts. She showed that things are made of even smaller things and you can break down the smallest things into atoms” (16C RE). Seeming to sense that the reader may not know what nuclear physics or fission involves, the writer takes a break here from discussing Curie and her influence to offer in sentence two a comment that defines the concepts.

Another writer does something similar in a mission statement. In creating space for a “commentator/definer” voice, she moves away briefly from discussing one of her major goals (“being real and staying true to myself”) in order to clarify what “being real” means, using generalizer second person. After giving concrete examples of how she tries to stay “real,” she says this: “That is being real to me. Not being afraid of who you are and not hiding behind a fake personality. Being real is telling people how you feel when you feel it and not ignoring things that need to be brought to someone’s attention” (2C MS). Shifting focus away from describing herself, the voice of the “commentator/definer” offers another viewpoint and interrupts for a moment the dominant mission statement “explainer” voice, perhaps offering more insight into the writer’s life goals than simply stating that she wants to be “real” would do.

### The “Preacher”

A second role students seem to take on when one might expect them to explain is what I call the “preacher,” “persuader/arguer,” or “urger.” In this voice, students shift away from the ostensible purpose of the assignments (explaining goals, reporting research findings, arguing for a person’s influence, defining a concept) to, in a way, lecturing the reader. They urge acceptance, argue for something not exactly connected to the topic (her- or himself, a virtue, survey results, influential person), assert propositions, and so on in ways that direct attention to the reader and what she or he should do or believe.

For example, instead of summing up the results of her survey research and drawing conclusions about what her participants’ responses say about the place the virtue of faith occupies in society today (the teacher’s goal for the assignment), one student, though she attempts to summarize what she believes her forty respondents feel about faith, goes beyond interpreting participants’ responses and puts forth what seems to be her view of faith and to argue how these people should view it (whether they do or not): “Faith in God and faith in yourself go together so well and without one of them, you don’t feel quite whole. I think people realized that or should have realized that from

the survey that I gave and should think about it a little more in depth" (23B ED/VR, emphasis added). Second person you in the opening sentence of this concluding paragraph as well as the should wording of the next sentence shows another voice of the writer, a voice that asserts itself in order to argue its point before the paper closes.

At the end of another paper, a mission statement, the writer shifts strongly into this urging and persuading voice in the last two paragraphs of the essay. Up to this point, he has basically focused on himself and explained in some detail his overall mission ("My goal in life is to be successful and seek out all the money, knowledge, and power I can get my hands on."), which he sets out in his thesis in the paper's opening paragraph. In addition, once before the complete shift at the end, the "urger" voice interrupts the "explainer." This happens in paragraph two where after telling that he wants "to be making a lot of money" in his future, the writer shifts into second person and seems to try to persuade others to think along these same lines: He says, "things people need to understand is that you can never settle for less. Always think you're underpaid. The higher your goals are set make you more likely to gain more." He returns within the next two sentences to a focus on his goals of knowledge, power, and money. However, the "preacher" voice reasserts itself two paragraphs later (to begin paragraph four) when he enjoins the reader, "More important things are goals. Goals are very important whether you write them or think of them." In the next two sentences, the "explainer" moves back in to tell how the writer sets goals for himself, then gives way to the "persuader/arguer" for a sentence ("If you don't make goals and try to wing every thing you will settle for less and fail."), and finally reasserts itself to end the paragraph. This same tension between "explainer" and "urger" carries right through to the end, as the fifth and final paragraph of the paper, quoted in its entirety below, shows:

There are a lot of concepts I have adopted and come up with on my own but it is also important to maintain individuality. In other words, stand out and make you name known (in a good way) and nothing can stop you from success. The

definition of success to me is not to be happy with what I end up with. Success to me is when I am a CEO or the owner of my own business making high six figures with my nice cars. I am sure some people won't agree with me on most of my concepts but I don't care. You can't change the way I think, I am not influenced by others, I just simply adopt their concepts on my own terms. I am \_\_\_\_\_ and this is the way I think and will continue to think until I am successful. (20C MS)

In sentence two, we again see the shift into second person that does more than explain but seems to argue for the overall importance to success of individuality for everyone. In addition, after sharing with readers his personal definition of success, the writer takes on a different kind of "arguer" voice, one that seems to anticipate negative reactions to his goal ("I am sure some people won't agree with me [. . .].") and then counters with a new kind of "rebel" voice, as though in a face-to-face conversation. By suggesting an interaction between "I" and "you," this passage brings in other voices (the ones who have or would take issue with the writer's viewpoint, which may include his mother, with whom, he implies in paragraph three, he has not gotten along well prior to the last six months) in addition to the writer's dual voices of "explainer" and "urger."

A little bit of another writer's "arguer" voice slips in while he tries to explain the connection he sees between the exhaust system of a car with its ability to rid the engine of dangerous toxins and his own methods of reducing stress:

The same applies for me. I will always have stress in my life, but stress is healthy because it just means you care. I believe that if you don't stress about anything then you wouldn't worry about it. Although stress is healthy, keeping all of your stress built up inside you is not. I find it very useful to funnel my stress into something productive like lifting weights or running. (12B EM)

Here, instead of sticking to a comparison between the way a car rids itself of "harmful toxins" and the ways the writer manages stress in his life, in sentences three and four, the

writer's "explainer" voice sits out briefly while his "arguer" voice proposes a viewpoint or attitude toward stress that focuses more on the "you" being addressed than the focus "I" of the paper.

In an extended definition, "The Beginning," the "persuader" voice takes over even more of the paper from the "explainer" than it did in the last examples. Whereas the explainer retains a strong presence in the previous mission statement, extended metaphor, and virtue paper, the expected "explainer/definer" voice in this paper on self-discipline almost entirely disappears. Though the paper begins with what we can assume is the dictionary definition of self-discipline (the writer does not use quotation marks or give attribution, but my copy of Webster's defines the word exactly as the writer does), it starts to move away in sentence four from explaining/defining to arguing for the predominance of the virtue and even, in sentence five, establishing an argument thesis for the rest of the paper:

The correction or regulation of oneself for the sake of improvement. To me that means that one does something to change something else. A correction in a paper, or walking a different way to school to get exercise would be examples of that, but to me, self-discipline is more than that. You must discipline yourself in order to function, and believe in yourself in order to succeed. Knowing this, I believe self discipline is the backbone of all virtues.

Following this beginning paragraph, nearly every sentence in the remaining five paragraphs uses second person pronouns and such constructions as "you must," "you have to," and "you can't," all of which seem more appropriate to urging or persuading the reader to see self-discipline as paramount and even to adopt it than they do to defining it. The reiteration of the thesis in paragraph three emphasizes this "arguer" voice: "These [compassion, honesty, good work ethic, trustworthiness, and responsibility] are all very important virtues, but self discipline is where it all begins." The closing paragraph cements the voice:

To have self discipline is to have true control. To be able to teach yourself, push yourself, and help yourself is the true measure of fulfillment. You can't go anywhere without goals and path to guide you, and you can't start walking until you have the fire of determination to get there. You got yourself where you are today, and you, not fate, determines where you go from here. (19C ED)

In this paper not only does the "explainer" voice not muzzle the voice that wants to urge and preach passionately about the indispensability of self-determination, but that passionate "urger" voice asserts itself and disrupts any neat explanation to which the extended definition may aspire .

Even in their research papers, an assignment, which, as I mentioned before, pushed students to go beyond expository to argument in that the papers were required to develop a thesis of influence, we find a different kind of "arguer" voice interrupting. In one student's paper, this voice moves away from the biographical argument to another issue related to contemporary society. It does not seem satisfied with arguing for the influence of the chosen topic, Napoleon, but wants to get its "two cents' worth" in about social welfare in current society. This blip of the "preacher" voice emerges in paragraph six, a place where the writer discusses Napoleon's programs for providing work for the French as an important contribution and reason to consider Napoleon influential. To open the paragraph, the writer starts with this idea but moves away from that focus for four sentences beginning in sentence six, before returning to it sentence eleven and then going on to other accomplishments of Napoleon for the paragraph's final seven sentences. As illustration, here is a portion of the paragraph (sentences one through twelve):

Under the new constitution he made laws making everybody work. If they were not trained in a trade then he would make them go to a government school and become an expert. The government would take them in and feed them for a short time. If they refused to work then he would imprison them or kill them. He even opened factories to provide jobs for the people. I think every government should

do something like this. Make everyone work. I don't think any one should have the right to do nothing and live off the wages of the working class. We should do as Napoleon did, arrest the beggars. If every body worked this would boost the economy and rid some of the unnecessary aid programs. That is exactly what Napoleon did, by doing that he gave France a balanced budget and taxed fairly. That's an amazing task. (16D RE)

Though the writer begins and ends the passage dealing with an accomplishment of Napoleon, in changing from a third-person explanation of Napoleon's work program to assertions phrased in first- ("I think," "we should") and implied second-person ("Make everyone work.") that urge current governments to adopt Napoleon's approach, the writer allows room for another, different arguer voice to have its brief say before the "influence explainer/arguer" voice takes over again.

#### The "Advice-giver"

In a slight variation of the "urger" voice, a few mission statements and virtue papers give voice to an "advice giver" or "instructor," a teaching voice that does not seem satisfied with explaining but must try to show the reader the right path of action, to give a kind of behavior pep talk. In two different mission statements, we may see this voice asserting itself.

One instance occurs a quarter of the way into the opening paragraph of the piece. Though the purpose of the assignment is for the writer to focus on herself and explain her goals for the future, she does not get to that task until the fifth sentence where she uses "I" for the first time ("I will believe in myself, my goals, and the people who believe in me [ . . . ] ." Before that, however, she first asks the reader a question, then makes a generalization about promises, and finally instructs the reader:

Do you ever make a promise to yourself, break it, and then make another promise not to break any more promises? Everyone at sometime or another makes and breaks promises to themselves, sometimes it can be a new years resolution, or an



effort to unbalanced lifestyle. Don't allow yourself to fail your goals anymore, there is a way to realize your aspirations and use them to assist you in growing as a distinct and self-assured person. You can establish a mission statement to improve your chances of reaching your objective. (10D MS)

Interestingly, this “advice giving” voice not only instructs the reader in the relation between promises and goals in general. But also, as the writer moves toward putting forth her own mission statement, it gives advice on the specific method for not breaking promises to oneself (“You can establish a mission statement [ . . . ] .”), just the task that the writer must now undertake for herself. And even after the “explainer” voice establishes itself as predominant in the rest of the paper, the voice instructing the reader about life refuses to be silenced completely, popping in briefly to give two more pieces of advice in paragraph three (“Your emotions can become too much for you to handle and you could end up not be able to continue your life like normal.”) and paragraph four (“In life you make choices and in many ways this can change your existence.”).

Even a writer who sticks consistently to discussing himself in first person and explaining the goals he has (three of them) in standard five-paragraph-theme format—with thesis at the end of paragraph one and its reiteration at the beginning of paragraph five—allows the “advice giving” voice a space to make its presence known. For one sentence this voice takes attention away from the writer’s mission in order to instruct others. In his conclusion the student says,

Everything that I have learned from my life, I have kept into consideration, and I make sure that I follow these unwritten rule that I have made for myself. The only thing I can say to other people is to follow the rules they have made for themselves through things that they have learned though lessons in their own lives. These goals and regulations are how I lived my entire life so far and I plan on not violating them for as long as I live. (2D MS, emphasis added).

Here, though the assignment does not call for the writer to instruct “other people” about

anything, but only to explain himself and his life's "mission," the "advice giver" voice of the writer seems to need to express itself, even if subtly and briefly and without changing point of view.

In two extended definition conclusions that otherwise stick to the task of writing a detailed explanation of the chosen virtue, we see the "advice giving" voice not only making its presence known but having the last word in the paper. In the first case, the teaching is less urgent than in the other, and the "explainer/definer" voice returns when the writer shifts back from second person in the first two sentences to third person in the last. The paper's final paragraph reads as follows: "The conclusion to this paper would have to be stick by the people who mean the most to you in your life even though they are going through hard times. Just stick by them and let them know someone cares about them, and all the trouble they are going through or have been in. Just being there for a person shows loyalty to another person" (22C ED).

In the second instance, the "advice-giving" voice is more insistent, and the third-person "explainer/definer" voice does not re-emerge in the closing sentence: "And so, I beseech you, the reader, to cut away those strings above your head. Take control of your self; your body, emotions, thoughts, and sensations. Become self disciplined" (1D ED). Right to the end of the paper, the voice is instructing in a way that not only uses second person to put the attention on the reader but also makes that focus more insistent by the use of first person in combination with second ("I beseech you"). The use of this clause with its rather passionately formal verb, out of character with the mild explanatory tone of the rest of the paper, and the phrase "the reader" make clear to whom the writer is addressing his message and complete the vocal shift away from dispassionate defining.

#### The "Encourager" and "Counselor"

A quieter manifestation of this "advice giver" I call the "encourager" or "reassurer." This voice can be illustrated in two extended definition papers. In one, the writer takes on the task of defining the virtue of faith. Though much of the paper is

written in second person—unconventional in this type of expository writing—it nonetheless sticks to the task of defining (e.g. “I think faith and courage go hand and hand. You cannot have one with out the other”; “Faith in yourself is having confidence that you made the right decision”). In paragraph four, however, the writer shifts from explaining to reassuring the reader, who, his advice seems to suggest, may be confused and unsure about faith:

Faith can be, at times confusing. You don’t know what to believe because there are not hard facts. You are being forced to trust in a feeling. For many this is a very hard thing to do because we live in a world with great understanding about the things around us. So how can we trust in something that we can’t see? All I can tell you is that when you do trust in something, when you open your heart you will not need hard evidence, you will just know. (6B ED/VR)

This paragraph seems to be an attempt to reach a reader that the writer suspects is having trouble understanding the ephemeral virtue of faith. When the “explainer/definer” voice does not seem adequate, the “reassurer” comes in to take on the task.

In another emergence of the “encourager” voice, also in an extended definition, the writer seems to be offering reassurance not only (or maybe even not primarily) to the reader—even though the phrasing uses second person—but to herself. This seems especially probable if one reads the student’s mission statement, which reveals life-long struggles with eye and hearing problems as well as a learning disability. The intertextuality between these two pieces gives a real poignancy to the encouraging voice that speaks out briefly in paragraph three of the student’s extended definition on faith. She says, “I’ve always been down on myself on what ever I do, I never believe that what I do is right. You’ve got to have Faith in yourself. Words that I need to say when looking to the mirror maybe they would finally make sense to me.” In this passage the “explainer/definer” voice relinquishes the stage for just a moment to the “encourager” voice, but then it recedes again as the writer moves to another piece of her definition of

faith: “To have confidence is to have faith” (1B ED/VR).

In a more strident manifestation, the “advice-giving” voice takes on a stronger, more knowledgeable tone, that of “counselor.” In this voice, the pep talk is more sustained and given more space to instruct and guide the reader than the “encourager” is. The presence of this voice is rather surprising in one mission statement, where it takes up more than half a paper that we expect to focus on the “I,” explaining the writer’s goals and life objectives. Instead, the “counselor” voice leads off the discussion in all paragraphs, and in four of seven cases, it brackets the “explainer” voice, effectively overwhelming it. Paragraphs four and five may serve to illustrate:

Always be adventurous. Learn to take risks, because life is too boring if it is simple. Be dangerous and complicated, but be safe. Safety always comes first. Life is just more fun if there is adventure. If I did the same thing everyday then I would get bored. I think I am ready to move on to college. I am ready for a new adventure. Don’t take anything for granted, and always learn from your mistakes. If you don’t learn from your mistakes, then the complicated part will become too dangerous.

If you don’t know where your life is headed, set goals, and strive to accomplish them. I’ve set goals to go to college, and get a good education, so that I can afford the things that I want. I know that I want to be able to afford a new car, and get a house. So if I have a good education and a well paid job, I will be able to get these things. If you believe in fate, so to speak, things are said to happen for a reason. Don’t let the moment pass by, because each and every second is valuable. Make every second a good one, so you don’t regret living the bad ones. (14C MS)

Contrary to being silenced by the “explainer” voice in this expository essay, the “counselor” predominates and plays a much larger role than the “explainer,” skirting, to a large degree, the stated purpose of the assignment.

### The “Reflector”

In addition the “commentator” and variations on the “preacher,” we may hear a fifth voice making itself known in the supposed-monologic expository papers of the students in my study: the “reflector” voice, one that reveals the thinking that has gone on in parts of the idea formulation and writing processes that culminate in a particular paper. One instance of this occurs in a research paper on Martin Luther King, Jr. By and large, this paper sticks to its intended purpose of arguing for and supporting with biographical details the significant effect King had on the Civil Rights movement and American society and does so in strict third person. However, seemingly “out of the blue” in paragraph eight of the paper, another voice makes its presence known. The student has just finished quoting a passage and discussing King’s “I Have a Dream Speech” and his involvement in bus boycotts in the South. About those boycotts the writer says, to close paragraph seven, “He rose up against segregation and forced the government to have schools accept blacks. Compared to everything he did for this country you could call these the baby steps of this civil rights fight.”

Then he begins paragraph eight in this way: “I sometimes wonder what the hardest part of MLK Jr.’s fight for rights really was and after I pondered this question for a while I clearly decided that the toughest thing would have been himself, because of the obstacles he had to face” (13A RE). In such conjecturing, the writer steps aside from detailing the ways King contributed to the fight for civil rights to reflect on his hardships. As this first-person “reflector” voice expresses itself, we become privy to a small part of the writer’s thinking about his topic. We see him wonder about and try to puzzle out not the extent of King’s influence but the struggles that challenged King in the work he undertook. Though the third-person, “explainer/arguer” voice takes over within the next few sentences to continue its discussion of King’s actions and their influence (e.g. “MLK forced the government to pass civil rights laws that helped change things faster than imagined.”), sustaining that purpose in the last page and a quarter of the paper, this

interrupting reflective voice manages to get a few words in (even though it does not stick exactly to the paper's thesis) before receding again into the background.

Another example of the “reflector” voice emerges as a student concludes his extended metaphor paper, in which he has spent two and a quarter pages breaking apart a guitar and matching its parts to his various aspects. Now he tries to wrap up that parts analysis and comment on the whole. He accomplishes this in his “explainer” voice at the beginning and end of his closing paragraph: “A guitar is a complex instrument but so am I, if not more complicated. There are so many things that I can relate to on a guitar. [. . .] All the parts listed of me make me who I am and flow together. Essentially we are both harmonious and flow as one.” Between these two parts of the conclusion, however, the “reflector” voice, marked by a shift from present to past tense, inserts itself: “I decided to choose the most important and most obvious items. I chose the things that matter the most, meaning of me and the guitar. I also had to make some valuable connections that actually mean something to the reader and myself” (16D EM). Interestingly, what this voice says provides the answer to the first of a list of possible questions—i.e. “How did you come up with your idea? (Not, ‘It was an assignment.’)” —that the teacher gives students to help them generate material for their process logs. In the required log for each paper, she expects students to reflect on various aspects of their process (including idea generation) as an accompanying piece that she reads along with the polished draft of the paper at evaluation time. In this writer's case, though, his “explainer” voice steps aside for his “reflector” voice in the mission statement itself, instead of making it wait to “talk” in the process log.

In an even more “up-front” and informal example of the “reflector” voice, a student writing about the virtue of loyalty in his extended definition paper lets the reader hear his initial reactions to the assignment and where he went with these. In the first four sentences in his introduction, he says, “One thing that occurred to me when I was asked to write this paper. Why am I even doing this extended definition crap? Then it was

clear to me that I was to explain what the definition means to me. This is what I came up with, an extended definition of the word loyalty in my own words would be.” In allowing his “reflector” voice to express his initial dismay in a rather rough and honest way that jars with the usual staid and formal voice and tone of a conventional extended definition, the writer gives the reader a brief glimpse into his reactions to the assignment and the way he tried to reconcile these originally resistant feelings in order, one may assume, to complete it as a requirement for passing the class. The last sentence (sentence four) of this look into the writer’s thinking process then sets the stage for the “explainer/definer” voice to take over. Its opening word “This” points to the last four sentences of the introduction in which the writer begins the expected task of defining: “A sense to have trust and or faith in something or someone like a mindless slave. The dictionary’s definition is, faithful to those persons, ideals, ect., That one is under obligation to defend, support, or to be true to. I feel that my definition is easier to understand and comprehend” (16B VR). Interestingly, even though the “reflector” voice recedes in this first part of the definition, its rebellious tone does not totally disappear but seems to lurk within the explanation that the “definer” voice offers with its use of “mindless slave” and the assertion of the superiority of the writer’s personal definition over the neutral one the dictionary provides.

Doing more than lurking behind the scenes, in another extended definition paper, the “reflector” voice not only begins the piece but essentially pushes out the “definer” voice so that the three-and-a-half-page paper reads more like a personal response and reflection on honesty and truth than a definition of the virtue honesty. At the outset, the writer says, “When I began to write about honesty I discovered that I couldn’t write about honesty without uncovering first what the truth was. I discovered that the truth is formed around what is said rather than what is said being formed around the truth.” Through the rest of the paper, he then explores that thesis and even begins to form an argument about the nature of truth in society, making recommendations, by the end of the

paper, for behavior consistent with honesty. This writer offers no straightforward definitions of honesty; no synonyms or antonyms; no quotations from others who have tried to define the concept; no stories, poems, people, analogies and so on to contribute to an understanding of its meaning—in other words, none of the conventional tools definers use to create a rich, complex extended definition. Instead, in primarily first person point of view with some extended uses of second person, the writer ranges around in the ideas of honesty and truth, exploring them, as his title (“Changing Hearts: Looking into Honesty and Truth”) anticipates. Throughout the paper, he makes statements like

- “I believe that honesty is inside of the people who speak nothing but the facts that are blatantly in front of our noses. [ . . . ] The way of the world though is to change those facts so that they fit the way that the world wants to answer the questions that are being asked.”
- “If you decide that this [lying to get out of trouble] is the way then I feel sorry for you because you will have to continue to come up with lies to cover up your lies.”
- “I discovered that who you grow up with will help you to tell the truth.”
- “When I speak more often than not I am tempted to base all of the things that I say off of non-truths.”

Such statements in the “reflector” voice show the writer wrestling with the ideas of truth and honesty, as applied to both himself and to other people, and finally settling on a viewpoint on (not a definition of) the virtue as he ends the paper: “If we choose to ignore the facts and let our tongues fly however they please, we would never know the truths that we did not see. I find all of the people on this planet guilty of having a flippant tongue but I also challenge them to keep their tongues at bay. I hope that you can find your tongue and keep it bound with your mind” (4D ED). Even though the extended definition assignment calls for the “explainer/definer” voice, this student’s “reflector” voice is strong enough that it not only finds spaces to emerge in the definition but takes over the paper and turns it to its own purposes in order to write about honesty in a way



satisfying to itself.

### The “Inviter”

A sixth voice that interrupts the “explainer” (in addition to the “commentator,” “preacher,” “advice-giver,” “encourager,” and “reflector”) not only reflects from the writer’s point of view but also invites the reader rather directly to take part in the events of the paper and to create and reflect on its meanings. For example, in a number of extended metaphor papers, this “inviter” voice tries to elicit reader participation and reader voices, rather than telling about how the writer’s chosen object fits his or her personality. Through the use of second person and the creation of imaginary scenarios, the “inviter” voice asks readers either to consider through direct experience the connection between the writers and the objects to which they compare themselves or to make new connections between the object and the reader her- or himself.

In some instances, this second-person “inviter” voice appears only briefly, as illustrated in one student’s extended metaphor paper. Here we hear it in the first two sentences of the paper before it steps aside for the first-person “reflector” voice, which comments on idea generation for the paper, for one sentence. These voices then recede as the third-person “generalizer” takes over for a sentence, and then the “explainer” voice (in first person) states its thesis and takes hold of the comparison between the writer and her chosen object (the rose) for the remainder of the paper. The paper begins

Picture yourself walking through a park on a beautiful day. You stumble across a rose bush and this one rose just sticks out as you. You wish you had a camera because it was such a neat scene. Trying to find something that I could relate myself to was a little hard in the beginning but after awhile I found myself easily being compared to, a rose. Roses have many different parts, as do people. A Rose shows my morals and the things that I keep important in my life. (26C EM)

At the beginning of this passage, one can see a brief appearance by the “inviter” voice having its say seemingly without connection to the other voices in this opening paragraph

and without any other appearances once the “explainer” voice gets control of the discussion.

In another extended metaphor paper, the “inviter” voice pops in just briefly in the closing paragraph. This piece comparing the writer to a bookcase develops typically, with him using first and third person to divide up the parts of the bookcase (foundation, shelves, books, varnish, and screws) and connect them to parts of his life (his “reason and logic,” those things—school, church, and friends—that order his life, different aspects of his personality, outward appearance, and his “will to live”). But then, as the writer closes the piece, another voice, the “inviter,” intrudes as the writer shifts from comparing himself to the book case to becoming the object and speaking to the reader in this persona: “So, try talking to me some time. Pick up one of my books and page through it. I hope you like it. If you happen to learn anything as a result, I’ve fulfilled my purpose” (1D EM). In this concluding paragraph, the “inviter” voice takes over for the “explainer” and goes beyond the purpose of the assignment (to compare self to object). It not only directly introduces a purpose for the object (i.e. to teach the reader something), as though it has a life of its own, but also implies a “writer-as-inviter” for the “you” to get to know and, he hopes, like.

In other instances the “inviter” voice has more of a presence, appearing throughout a paper rather than being confined to only one paragraph. This occurs in an extended metaphor in which the writer compares herself to a beaver dam. To begin the piece, the “inviter” voice asks readers to mentally picture a scene and themselves in the scene: “Imagine a serene river in the deep of a forest. In the middle of the river sits what appears to be a large stack of wood and sticks. Upon further investigation you discover that what seemed to be a simplistic mass, is actually quite complicated. It is a beaver dam.” Switching into first person, the writer then uses the scene that the “inviter” voice has suggested as a jumping off point for her thesis (“This beaver dam can represent me in many different ways both externally and internally”), which her “explainer” voice then

develops more specifically. That “explainer” carries consistently through the essay’s four body paragraphs, but then in the conclusion the “inviter” reappears as the writer restates her thesis in the first-person “explainer” and third-person “generalizer” voices. The paper then concludes with the “inviter” speaking:

The beaver dam is much more complex and has many different parts than what we know of. I too, am more complex and have different parts than on first observation. The dam deceptively complex; yet vulnerable to outward forces; the dam is an amazing structure. So the next time you are hiking in the woods and you come across a dam in the river, do not be so quick to judge it as a pile of sticks, but appreciate it for the complex structure that it is. (24C EM)

As this paper closes, the “inviter” voice allows the beaver dam and the reader’s experiences with and attitudes about it into the paper. Here, though we might expect the “explainer” voice—supposedly the sole speaker of an expository piece—to carry through to the end, this other voice actually gets the last word. As such, it may be what readers remember most, especially because it focuses on them and invites their voices into the piece, suppressing the “explainer” voice’s attempts to keep the focus on the writer-object comparison.

Other pieces show the “inviter” voice intruding on the “explainer” voice even more insistently. In one of these extended metaphors, the voice calls to readers throughout the piece, beginning this call in the introduction with “On this window is a picture of the Lord on a cross. This stain-glass window is the most beautiful thing you’ve ever witnessed, but then you ask yourself, ‘What would this window be without the sunlight shining through it?’” Next, it pokes its head up to speak in two body paragraphs: “As you further explore this beautiful window, you notice that only a thin metal wire holds all the pieces together” (paragraph 3) and “Then, out of nowhere, a rock breaks through the beautiful window (paragraph 5). In the paper’s conclusion, the voice helps readers complete their journey: “You leave with a story to tell. You share the

unique experience with your friends and family until you go back again. When you arrive at the cathedral you notice a new window has taken the old window's place" (8C EM). Because of such descriptions in an "inviter" voice, the writer's comments about how he compares to a stained glass window all develop throughout the paper in the context of the story of the reader visiting the cathedral and gazing at it.

In another example, the writer not only leaves openings for the "inviter" voice to speak in the course of the paper but also allows that voice to structure the entire piece with the "inviter" voice introducing the "explainer" voice in each of the six paragraphs. To illustrate, in Appendix B-1 I reproduce the writer's complete introductory and concluding paragraphs; the opening sentence of paragraphs two, three, and five; and paragraph four in its entirety (as a representative body paragraph).

The "inviter" voice, as illustrated in these excerpts, creates for readers the experience of tasting hot chocolate and, because of the comparative details, helps them understand the connections the writer sees between herself and a mug of hot chocolate. It guides the "explainer" voice and even makes judgments about the experience for the reader in the closing paragraph. In addition, because of at least some readers' personal experiences with drinking hot chocolate, the "inviter" voice's offering readers the opportunity to make a cup of hot chocolate through reading the paper may also conjure many other voices (those of parents, grandparents, friends, and so on) connected to their own hot chocolate drinking memories, creating even wider intertextual relationships.

### Voices of Authority

In more direct ways than the writer's own multivoices, the voices of others, including parents and grandparents, come into a number of students' papers as advice or words to live by. Some writers identify these truisms or societal teachings as coming to them through the voice of a particular person, while others do not attach them to an individual. For the most part, the students do not directly quote generic words of wisdom but introduce them with signal phrases that indicate a voice with which the writer

has come in contact. Prefacing the advice with such speech tags as “I was told,” “people have told me,” “all I hear is,” “someone once told me,” “I’ve heard,” and “Everybody always says,” students usher in these other voices that carry messages of wisdom like “you can do whatever go wherever and be whatever” (17C MS), “your faith is the only thing that is solid and constant” (6B EM), or “live life to the fullest” (21C MS). In other instances, writers reveal the echoes of unidentified people’s questions like “What do you want to do with your life?” (14D MS) or “What do you want to be when you grow up?” (7A MS). In these instances, readers not only get to hear the adult voices from the writer’s life; but for those who have had these same questions posed to them in their youth, these pieces of text create intertextuality in which they may also hear echoes of all the aunts and uncles, friends of their parents, and so on who have queried them in similar ways.

Sometimes writers put these words of advice in quotation marks, though they still do not identify speakers, leaving readers a broader intertextual opportunity to attach whatever specific voices they can to the words. Two examples tied personally to writers may illustrate: “All my life people have told me, ‘you can’t do this or you can’t do that because you’re not responsible enough.’ Now, as I have become a little older all I hear is, ‘you must be more responsible’ [. . .]” (9A ED/VR) and “Someone once told me ‘Just seeing you smile, could mean a different thing to each person you smile at.’ Also, I’ve heard ‘You’d better not frown, you never know who’s falling in love with your smile” (14D MS). At first, the lack of identification of speaker for these sayings may have the effect of readers imagining who in the writers’ lives may have said these words to them. But then, readers may relate intertextually to these words, attaching other identities from their own experiences to them in different ways if they have had contact with such advice. Further, in a passage in which the sayings are directly quoted but not tied specifically to the writer’s experience—“‘You can do whatever you put your mind too.’ ‘Do what you love and want to do.’ These are a couple of the *famous sayings*” (25A

MS)—the multivocality is even more broadly textured and intertextual because the way voices attach to words suggests no limitation of identity.

At other times, writers do impose some identity limitation by putting a face on the authoritative advice giver, either indirectly or directly. In an example of the latter, one writer brings in the voice of the Ten Commandments in the statement, “You can be loyal to God, by not having any other God before him and doing the right things he has planned for you” (7A ED/VR). Here the writer includes no signal phrase to identify the paraphrased voice in “not having any other God before him”; however, any reader familiar with the Bible will know this commanding voice and recognize the words’ origins without being told. Other students more directly identify the voices they invite in to “say their piece.” Parents and family provide one source, as in such passages as “my father always told me to be my own boss. He has constantly reminded me to find something I am good at and enjoy, and to excel at it” (6B MS), “The quote I think explains self-discipline is ‘No one is perfect we all make mistakes.’ This is a quote used by many friends and family of mine [. . .]” (8B ED/VR), or “My grandfather once told me that a job is not worth completing if you aren’t going to do it right” (25B ED/VR).

In the case of this last example, the writer not only passes on his grandfather’s words here but uses his grandfather’s beliefs to structure both his extended definition of work and the primary research he does on the virtue. Because the writer refers to his grandfather in a number of spots throughout the paper, carrying his voice just below the surface right to the end, not only is the “grandfather’s will to work [. . .] always [. . .] in the back of [the writer’s] mind,” as he tells readers in the paper’s closing sentence, but because we hear so much about the grandfather’s attitude toward work, his voice hovers in our minds, too, in tandem with the writer’s. Moreover, although the writers give names to their voices in these examples, that does not completely shut down other intertextual links, close off other voices that readers may attach to their words. Perhaps a teacher has told us to choose something we love and pursue it, a minister has assured us

that mistakes are okay, or a mother has preached about the importance of hard work. Even though these writers associate specific people with the words they bring into their papers, readers, in addition, may freely imagine others that have or could have said them, as well.

In a passage notable for its conversational quality, another student brings in authority and other voices both named and unnamed, quoted and unquoted, creating an even more intricate multivocalic weaving than the previous examples:

Don't shoot for something that you know can't have or that is out of your reach. Sure, you may say anything is possible. Yeah maybe so, but what are the chances of you being the one to make it possible. [. . .] Don't say you life goal is to "Rid disease and discrimination in the world." If you want this then you'll probably end up disappointing yourself. I have props for the guys that can start on this process but there is always going to be bacteria floating around. This is just like when your teacher says there is no such thing as a stupid question. We both know that's not true. (16D MS)

Suggested in this passage are the voice of the reader engaging in a discussion with the writer (in the sentence "Sure, you may say anything is possible"); the "arguer" voice of the writer ("Yeah maybe so [. . .]"); any number of societal voices vowing to get rid of "disease and discrimination, those "guys" who, against the writer's advice, mean to strive for that "life goal"; teachers who claim "there is no such thing as a stupid question"; and both the writer and the reader—according to the writer—objecting to that claim ("We both know that's not true"). Clearly, in the space of just one-half paragraph, numerous voices chime in and interact, swirling together in ways we might miss if we assume a mission statement is a monologic explanation of one writer's goals.

This effect of voices not only popping in briefly but interacting and wrestling with each other comes through perhaps even more strongly in the concluding paragraph of one student's mission statement, which in some ways is an anti-mission statement that

resists the authority voices of parents and the teacher putting pressure on the writer to have a “purpose.” It reads:

The main thing that I believe one’s life should have is purpose.

A life without purpose is a rather empty existence. I would like to say that I have a purpose in life at this time, and that my purpose is to do well in school. To a degree that is my purpose right now. However, I didn’t decide that as my purpose, it was pushed upon me by my parents. And really, that is a worthless goal, as I see it. What would one accomplish if that were their sole purpose? Unfortunately, I have no goal at this time in my life. I haven’t come up with one yet. I believe that if I came up with a purpose solely for this paper, I would either be lying in my writing or simply throwing my life toward a poorly thought-out aim. Until I come up with a purpose I am ready to aim my life at, I will live as I have said, free from worry, weariness, and excess, and looking for a purpose. (1D MS)

This paragraph is vocally intriguing first because of the interesting paragraphing that separates the opening sentence (in which the writer claims a belief in the importance of a life purpose) from subsequent sentences. Whether this is a typing mistake or purposeful is not clear, but this separation is curious given that what comes next may make a reader wonder if the writer wants to distance these words from the rest of the paragraph’s discussion, and why he might want to do so. Considering that this conclusion is the first time the writer uses the word purpose in the mission statement, could someone be pushing him to include it? If so, who? Maybe it is parents as suggested by the echo of their voices urging the writer “to do well in school” as his purpose. Through the writer’s comments about this goal being “worthless,” we can see a kind of struggle of wills between the writer who sees himself as without a purpose and the parents thrusting one on him. Further, through more intent “listening” and a little help from the student’s process log, another intervening voice seems to be operating here, pushing for a statement



of purpose. Information in this log complicates the vocal tensions in the paragraph, helping us hear someone else behind the scenes trying to move the writer's thesis (i.e. to "live as I have said, free from worry, weariness, and excess") in a direction with which he does not feel particularly comfortable. This voice, unnamed in the actual paper, becomes audible from clues in the following passage from the accompanying log:

Then I got back the Comments from the instructor, you, Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_. You told me that I should come up with a purpose, and that was kind of the point of the paper. That didn't really make me too happy. I do want to have a purpose in life, I really do. But I seriously couldn't come up with one that I could honestly see myself devoting my life to. I didn't want to just B.S. the paper, like I believe many probably did. So I added in the little section at the end explaining that.

By reading these comments, we can now see another layer of authority voices in the concluding paragraph. The teacher's—and the assignment's—voices have called for a purpose and the writer (in his "arguer" voice) tries to respond "in the little section at the end" to that call while at the same time resisting all that he believes it requires.

In a few other instances the assignment voice—though it would probably go unnoticed if we read only one student response to a given assignment or if we did not know a given paper's requirements—may also be detected whispering behind the scenes of papers where students supposedly are writing as unified subjects in a uni-voiced monologue. For example, in the first paragraph of an extended metaphor, we hear the one student rationalizing the act of comparing himself to a tangible object:

Some people may compare themselves to a person or a living being of a different species. I think that's too easy. I think it means more to compare yourself with a non-living object. That way you're comparing yourself with an object that has no personality, it makes you put more thought into it. It really makes you think about yourself in order to make a good comparison. (16D EM)

Here the assignment voice masquerades as the student's own choices. Though he

suggests that he has made his own decision to choose an object, rather than “a person or [another] living being” because doing so “means more” and “makes you think” more (and, by implication, that other writers have made other choices for the assignment), by reading the other eighty extended metaphor papers and the requirements for the assignment, one can see that this writer has no such choice. In order to do the assignment “right,” he has to pick an inanimate object for comparison to himself. And though I can only speculate, since I did not observe the teacher introducing the assignment, it may be that the rationale he gives here is all or part of the rationale she gave to “sell” this requirement of the assignment.

Such instances of the assignment voice borrowing the writer’s voice also occur in Part Two of some students’ virtue papers as they try to meet the assignment’s demand to introduce and give a rationale for their survey question and to explain their study’s design and methodology. As in the example above, this voice is not evident without reading a number of the thirty-eight papers written in response to this part of the assignment and knowing its requirements.<sup>3</sup> It disguises itself as students’ “explainer” voice reporting their primary research. Although, reading only one or a few papers creates the impression that students had total control over what form their first-hand research would take, how they constructed their question, how they created the survey, and how many people they sampled, this was not the case. For example, one student explains his reason for investigating his virtue by administering a survey: “It was best put in survey form because if you were just to ask people if they thought responsibility is an important virtue, I believe they would all say yes” (17B ED/VR). In other explanations of methodology, several students indicated that they patterned their yes-no question after those created for the board game Scruples. A number of others describe the demographic questions they “decided” to include on their survey, for instance

After I created my question I knew I wanted to ask a few smaller questions also.

This would help me draw comparisons within the main answers. I asked for age,

gender, and religion. Then I asked who raised you, how strict they were, and what your birth order was. I asked these questions because I have always been interested in how your home life affects you and how people really are affected by their birth order. (23A ED/VR)

Still others report on and sometimes explain their survey size and its limitations and the age breakdown of participants: “The number of people was also a problem. I was only able to question 40 people when 100 is usually the least number needed to get a real, accurate, survey” (12B ED/VR), or “My goal was to try to vary the group of people I questioned and keep the results out of the hands of just one demographic” (18B VR). Read out of the context of the whole collection of papers, all these sound like explanations of unique choices and decisions in writers’ individual voices. However, by reading enough of these papers and the assignment information, we can start to recognize that the voice we hear is not really that of each writer but the assignment using the writer’s “explaining” voice as the vehicle for its own expression.

The assignment specifies that students must do research in survey form (rather than in some other recognized way to conduct primary research). All had to phrase their questions as the game Scruples does (and students even played the game itself in class in order to learn the form their own questions must take). They all had to include demographic questions as part of their survey for purposes of analysis, although they were able to choose these questions from a pool of possible ones. And they all had to interview forty people, ten in each of four different age groups (some did a few more, one as many as 52 because initially he questioned too many teens). As we listen to individual students explaining their research, it quickly becomes obvious that they are repeating the same basic information and reasoning traceable back to the assignment and the teacher’s introduction and explanation of its requirements. What at first glance seems, then, to be a writer’s own “explainer” voice clearly is a disguised assignment or teacher voice internalized by the writer and acting as a kind of “ventriloquist” that uses the writer’s

voice as its puppet (cf. this idea as discussed in Crawford 269, 273).

This urge of the assignment—which has no real voice of its own—to speak can only be satisfied if it manages to use the writer’s “explainer” voice. This is also the case with the other voices of authority, named and unnamed by writers (e.g. parents, teacher, other adults, society), as shown in previous excerpts from the student writings I studied. Such insertions of authority voices show that exposition, at least in the hands of these writers, is not monologic. The voices of others invited into students’ essays in this way and through other conventional strategies discussed earlier in the chapter (i.e. titles, allusions, and quotations) all contribute to creating a multivocalic conversation, a dialogic interplay, that calls into questions assumptions that expository writing is “an uninterrupted [. . .] monolog” (Romano, *Blending* x). In addition, the different voices (i.e. “commentator,” “preacher,” “advice-giver,” “encourager,” “counselor,” “reflector,” “inviter”) that these writers take on—revealing themselves in postmodern terms as “split” or “decentered” subjects—and that interrupt their “explainer” voice demonstrate that the self with which they write is not “a pure consciousness detached from the world” (Faigley 8). Instead, each writer’s single voice is not single at all but always multiple, always in dialogue with the voices all around it. This unavoidable contact with the world does not inevitably anchor the texts that result from expository assignments in some rigidly monologic textual space but, instead, makes them highly intertextual and allows them to occupy various spots along a monologic-dialogic continuum, depending on the size of the chorus that peoples them. In Chapter 5, I explore how these students’ writings, both those assumed to be monogeneric (i.e. mission statement, extended definition, virtue paper, research paper)—by being put in opposition with multigenre papers—and their “multi-genre writer’s collage” exhibit multigenerality and multivocality in even more pronounced and dramatic ways than the instances described in this chapter.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Here, with AS, and in all instances in which I quote either teacher handouts or student texts, I have retained the bolding or italicizing they use for emphasis instead of the conventional method of underlining.

<sup>2</sup> Apparently, the student has made an error in reference, probably because of unfamiliarity with the way Bartlett's Familiar Quotations (or whatever book of quotations he consulted in writing his paper) positions the author and source of multiple quotations. Though he says the source of the quoted material is "Maxims," the real author, according to my copy of Bartlett's, is the 18th century Irish bishop and philosopher George Berkeley writing in Maxims Concerning Patriotism. In addition, Bartlett's quotes the line as "He who says there is no such thing as an honest man, you may be sure is himself a knave" (emphasis added), so it looks as though the writer has also misquoted Berkeley, intentionally or inadvertently. I point out this discrepancy only for clarification and not to hold the student's writing up for ridicule.

<sup>3</sup> The sample is smaller here since only students in the two first-semester sections did this part of the virtue paper.

## CHAPTER 5: STUDENT WRITING (2): MULTIVOCALITY, MULTIGENERITY, and INTERTEXTUALITY

Having examined student writings in the previous chapter for what they seem to show about the extensive vocal variety in ostensibly monovocalic school genres like the expository essay and research paper, I begin this chapter with a turn to what I perceive are more dramatic disruptions of a unified voice by reading the collection of student papers in my study through the lens of two doublesided concepts in Julia Kristeva's theories of narrative and intertextuality: the semiotic/genotext and the symbolic/phenotext. To review, the semiotic is that pre-linguistic, emotional, often rebellious part of a human subject that expresses itself through the vehicle of the unruly genotext, "that part of the text which stems from the 'drive energy' [in Kristeva's words] emanating from the unconscious." The symbolic, on the other hand, is the rational part of a human subject that adheres to norms and conventions and expresses itself through the thesis-driven phenotext, "that part of the text bound up with the language of communication [. . .] which displays definable structure and appears to present the voice of a singular, unified subject." Following this discussion of the ways the students' writings in my study show evidence of "this split nature of texts" (G. Allen 50), I discuss inserted genres in ostensibly non-multigeneric papers. Then, I explore the concepts of multivocality, multigenerality, and intertextuality in students' so-called multigenre papers, and I close the chapter with reflections on the data of the student writing part of my study as set out in this and the previous chapter.

### Presence of the Genotext

In Chapter 4 we saw the way voices of authority may assume a writer's voice in order to speak, or the way various facets of a writer as a decentered subject may interpose themselves even when a writing assignment calls for a single voice. In this section, I would like to illustrate how a writer's semiotic nature, which has no linguistic mechanism of its own, may find ways, as Kristeva says, to use the language of the

symbolic to express itself. As I discussed in Chapter 3, the genotext that expresses the semiotic must try to circumvent the “monological notions of language” inherent in the phenotext (G. Allen 49). Even as it borrows the only language available to it--the symbolic--it must find ways around tendencies that language has, perhaps especially in certain kinds of writing, to establish a thesis and stick to it. One would expect that designated, “approved” space for such outbursts of the semiotic/genotext would to be totally alien to exposition if we accept it as a quintessential example of the phenotext--as M.M. Bakhtin’s characterization of it as an all-powerful ruler who manages to silence all other voices suggests we might. Challenging this assumption of the domination of the phenotext in expository writing, the student essays I examined contain a number of instances in which the ideas expressed do not seem “restricted to the two poles of univocal information between two full-fledged subjects” (Kristeva, Revolution 87). On the contrary, there is more going on in these papers than a unified writer-subject explaining something in monologue to a reader-subject.

In some cases, the emergence of the genotext/semiotic is a brief blip of conversational speech not “cleaned up” and made presentable for an expository paper, or an anachronistic expression in students’ so-called multigenre papers. To illustrate the latter, one writer trying to take on the voice of John Adams describes constables as “quite lame” (14A MGP), and “Beethoven” uses the phrase “get me motivated” in another piece (21C MGP). The writer of a birth announcement for Isaac Newton describes him as “a big deal in the small town of Woolsthorpe” (7C MGP), and “Martha Washington” writes in a letter to her husband that “the children picked up the slack, as not to leave much of the physical work to me” (2D MGP). Here, though writers try to stay in character of the personas they are adopting to write various pieces in their multigenre papers and to follow what they understand as the conventions of writing during earlier time periods, a little bit of the language from their own time breaks through patterns that attempt to present a sustained, unified voice.

In two more examples, we can see evidence of semiotic bubbling not totally marshaled by conventional language practices. One involves a short phrase that “thumbs its nose at” the rather matter-of-fact, somewhat formal language expected in research paper writing. First, in phrasing that seems commensurate with the “rules” of “the” research paper, the writer says, “All in all I think that Henry Ford was very influential to our society through his production of the automobile.” Following this conventional speech, however, he breaks the rules just for an instant in a two-word phrase in the next sentence: “If it wasn’t for his great efforts and dinking around with things, who knows how we might be traveling today” (21B RE). “Unacceptable slang,” the phenotext cries when it sees “dink~~ing~~ around,” and yet the rebellious genotext remains.

In a second semiotic blip—this time in a student’s mission statement—some run-together, highly oral phrasing slips into an otherwise neat explanation of goals. The writer says, “As a young boy I could never picture myself older and grown up. I had no idea what to expect and what was going to come of me. I didn’t know if I would be sitting at a desk all day and saying yes boss yes sir all day or if I was the one to say yes boss and yes sir too” (25A MS). The contrast between the first two sentences of this passage, with no surprises in their word choice, word combinations, or punctuation, and the third sentence is rather striking. It seems jarring because it fails to follow the conventions of putting quotation marks around hypothetical quotations, using commas to signal nouns in direct address, or employing other possible punctuation and capitalization strategies to mark off a piece of oral speech brought into a piece of expository writing. It is as though the emotion of the expression cannot be contained by such conventions.

Two other writers allow odd computer language to creep into their research papers without “fixing” it. For example, in one paper we find an incomprehensible computer code—i.e. “&#8217;” as in, for example, “Einstein&#8217;s” (6A RE)—in three spots where we would expect apostrophes. Similarly, font seems to get away from another writer. In paragraphs one through the beginning of eight of her paper, everything



is typed in a typical seraph font. Then toward the end of the second sentence of paragraph eight, the font inexplicably changes to a slightly bolder sans seraph font. This new font then carries through the rest of paragraph eight and into paragraph nine, the paper's conclusion, until mixing again with the original font at the end. The sans seraph font is then used for the works-cited page with a switch back to the seraph font for the process log. (A sample of how paragraphs eight and nine look appears in Appendix B-2.) Both these examples of visual blips have the feeling of some uncontrollable and unnamable force working against a phenotext that demands order and rational patterns, not number/symbol combinations where there should be apostrophes or seemingly illogical font changes. Something that seems more like "pre-thetic," unhampered play and experimentation has gotten into the writing and wrested control from conventional practices without its presence being explained.

In a similar way, a research paper on Karl Marx shows evidence of the genotext, this time in the form of nonsensical and incomplete language. For nearly three pages, "X Marx the Spot" by and large follows typical research paper rules. It reports all its information in straight third-person point of view and fulfills the assignment's main requirement to prove Marx's influence by relaying specifics about him drawn from secondary sources. The only convention to which it does not adhere is including in-text citations for summarized or paraphrased source material; however, it does cite sources for all directly quoted wording. Then, inexplicably, at the end of paragraph four, the word BAD repeated eight times interposes itself into the middle of a discussion of the connection between Marx and Vladimir Lenin. I have reproduced this passage in Appendix B-3. In that paragraph, not only is the mantra-like BAD a curious anomaly, but when the text resumes, it does so in the midst of what seems to be a famous Marxian saying (i.e. "From each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs") that trails off unfinished before moving into a quotation about Marx's continuing influence through Lenin that closes the paragraph. The paper then ends conventionally two

paragraphs later without any more odd interruptions like this. What I think this and the two previous examples show is that even one of the most straight-laced of written forms (one so standardized that we would probably place it well toward the phenotext end of the pheno/genotext continuum)—“the” research paper—may find itself invaded by the semiotic, whether intentional on the writer’s part or not.

Before leaving this discussion of the genotext in student’s writing, I would like to share some instances in which the assignment seems unable to exclude a writer’s emotions or emotional responses. In three cases the genotext erupts in ways that merely interrupt the phenotext, but in two others, emotions and impulses connected to the semiotic are so strong that they virtually take over the piece. In one very brief occurrence of the genotext, the writer follows all the guidelines for an extended metaphor paper, sustaining a part-for-part comparison between himself and a tree. Instead of ending his paper with that, however, he tabs four lines down from his conclusion and adds a note to the teacher: “<Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_, I CANNOT work to capacity sitting where I sit between \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ [two other students]. Please SHUT THEM UP>” (6C EM). Obviously, the writer was experiencing a great deal of frustration with his classmates, as suggested in his use of capital letters in two strategic places in his note. That is not unusual. Closing the polished draft of an extended metaphor paper with such a note, however, is unconventional. Even though the student has the perfect forum for making his request (i.e. the process log that accompanies the paper)—if he does not feel comfortable talking face-to-face about the problem with the teacher (also not unusual with high school students)—he does not use that forum but breaks essay writing unity instead. His protest defies the “rules” of the phenotext in failing to follow its requirement for unification and complete focus on a thesis with no unrelated, extraneous details.

In a second student’s research paper (on Bob Dylan), feelings of frustration at least as intense as the previous example appear in the body of the paper, an even more unexpected place than in a tacked-on comment. Though the assignment cares nothing

about hearing the writer's feelings about her task, those feelings push past the barriers that would exclude them and assert themselves. In paragraphs three through five of the paper, the writer expresses extreme frustration with and resistance to the assignment's requirement to articulate Dylan's influence in depth. (See Appendix B-4 for the complete text of these paragraphs, three through five.)

Here the effect of the genotext's first emergence is that of an angry creature rising out of the cool waters of a placid explanation in order to rail against—in fairly strong language (i.e. “I don't really know what the hell I should write”)—what the writer believes to be the assignment's requirement: that she senselessly regurgitate information her audience already knows (“What else can you say about Bob Dylan? People both young and old know who he is.”). After this five-sentence rant to open paragraph four, the genotext also manifests itself in some emotional connections to Dylan the writer describes in the last three sentences of the paragraph (e.g. “The words really mean a lot to me, and they give me good memories of some of my old friends”). In these comments, she seems unable to keep from expressing her personal feelings about Dylan's music, despite their irrelevance to the assignment. These emotional outbursts that take over paragraph four then re-submerge quietly at the shift to the next paragraph (“But to the beginning [. . .]”). Here, the use of “But” and the writer's return to explaining Dylan's influence for the last four paragraphs of the paper suggest that the writer resigns herself to the fact that the phenotext is too powerful to overcome, accepting that she must again take up her “explainer-arguer” voice and carry on with the assignment's requirements. Even though the established writing task does not allow for emotionally charged complaints against the assignment or a personal response to Dylan, apparently the phenotext cannot completely silence the semiotic/genotext in this student's research paper.

In another student's mission statement, what seem to be persistent, painful feelings about the death of a close friend bubble up throughout the paper and interrupt the

writer's explanation of goals. For example, in sentence two of paragraph two, the writer first mentions her friend in connection with her goal not to let others control her. As a brief example, this seems a logical move in a mission statement. What does not follow the logic of the phenotext, however, is that instead of continuing to focus on her goals, the writer segues into a fairly detailed re-creation of an event in her friend's life, beginning in sentence three and signaled by a narrative scene-setting phrase:

I will not let my best friend's death stop me from accomplishing my dreams and goals that I have made. It was a spring day in California and my friend was on her way to school. She was approaching a four way stop. She had the right of way and the guy that hit her didn't stop. The driver hit her head on killing her instantly. When the police arrived at the scene they had said that the driver was intoxicated. I will be affected somewhat but I will overcome the fact that she is gone and still remember everything great that she had accomplished.

After the above outburst of the genotext, the writer resumes, in sentences nine through eleven that end paragraph two, her discussion of how she means to "live [her] life to the fullest extent" and to make decisions that will enhance her future (22C MS). This discussion of the writer's goals carries through to the end of paragraph four, where she articulates her intention to become a teacher. Then, however, emotional urges associated with the genotext (in the form of further thoughts and feelings about her friend) interrupt that train of thought for all of paragraph five, before she returns to explaining her mission to begin her closing paragraph six. The full text of these three paragraphs appears in Appendix B-5.

In this occurrence of the genotext, the writer makes no logical connection (e.g. in the form of transitions) between the material in paragraph five and that of four and six. However, it seems that the part of her trying to deal with complex emotions of loss (and guilt, we now know from the second passage) cannot be kept out of the paper even though, according to the "laws" of the phenotext, they do not belong. The writer says, at

first, that her friend's death only "somewhat" affects her; however, the fact that her emotional self cannot stick to a goal-oriented thesis but seems compelled to keep revisiting the friend's story and reliving her part in it suggests that feelings of sadness and regret are so strong at this point that the assignment's call for a reasonable explanation of goals cannot keep them out. Indeed, though the assessment criteria for the mission statement and research paper assignments suggest that these last two papers would earn low marks because they fail to be governed by the assignment rules, the semiotic must be so compelling that the rational part of the writer, the part that thinks strategically about the implications for such rule-breaking, the negative consequences for allowing emotion and reckless abandon to reign, cannot obliterate them. The rebellion is too strong.

In two final examples, semiotic impulses in the genotext are so insistent, the emotions seemingly so powerful, that they rebel almost totally against the requirements of the assignment—the rules of the phenotext—and essentially take over the paper. One such take-over occurs in the primary-research part of a student's virtue paper on compassion. Overall, the piece "looks the part" of a research report in that it includes the required four sections (i.e. "Introduction and Rationale," "Design and Methodology," "Findings and Analysis," "Conclusion"), all in the assignment-specified order with proper bolded labels to separate one section from the next. However, if one goes beyond appearance to read the material, everything after the first section fails to adhere at all to the assignment (something the writer admits in section two). Instead it charts its own course, in responding to it. (See Appendix B-6 for the complete text of the "Introduction and Rationale," "Design and Methodology," "Findings and Analysis," and "Conclusion" parts of the report.)

After the paragraph that concludes the supposed report of the student's survey, the paper closes with two more paragraphs that argue against those who classify homosexuals as "horrible people," that explain why too much of society is wrong for such negative labeling, and that suggest people do not have much compassion for someone

“unless the person stands up well to society’s standards” (2B ED/VR). Though the phenotext seems to make a last effort to retake control in this conclusion, it does not succeed. It does mention the target virtue of the research and gives an overall statistic that labels half the people at the high school as “not compassionate”—a common move to conclude a first-hand statistical study—however, readers find nothing in the rest of the paper to substantiate that conclusion. Thus, it comes across as hollow, as an empty move that, along with the previous two sections (i.e. “Design and Methodology” and “Findings and Analysis”), does not deliver the expected goods of a research report. Instead, the kind of primeval “anger and rage” the writer says she felt when her classmate denigrated homosexuals, perhaps aided by other unspecified problems with the research (“My survey didn’t go very well [. . .]”), seem to cause the writing to abandon its required duties in favor of the expression of those feelings, unchecked by the assignment’s goals.

In a last example of the genotext effectively overwhelming the phenotext, a classroom incident also appears to cause a welling up of strong feelings that the mission statement assignment cannot completely control. This paper does have several spots where the writer discusses his life goals (spots where the phenotext’s rules and logic try to persist); however, more than a focused, “unified” explanation of these goals, much of the paper comprises such elements as stream-of-conscious ramblings about life’s motivations, broad-brush generalizations about happiness, and random questions about these issues put to a general reader. In addition, parts seem to be directed at the teacher, pointedly questioning her and railing against what the student seems to feel was unjust action she took against him. By reading the complete mission statement (Appendix B-7), one may see an agenda based on anger and rebellion taking over the paper.

Clearly, this student’s so-called mission statement does not stick to the task set out in the assignment directions and on the evaluation rubric. Since I did not observe the incident to which this paper seems to allude, nor did I interview the student or teacher

about it, I will not speculate on what actions may have occurred to rouse the passionately negative feelings that emanate from this piece. However, I will say that no matter what happened, it seems obvious that something in the classroom (and perhaps beyond: references to “wast[ing] 30 minutes” and later “1800 seconds,” as well as the “intellectual capacity” of the administration--read through my former-twenty-year-high-school-teacher eyes--suggest the student made a forced trip to the office and/or served detention) has upset this student greatly. In fact, his anger and bitterness seem so great that even in a revised draft (“after reading this a second time” suggests that the teacher has already seen a previous version of the paper, something the process requirements for the paper confirm), the phenotext (the text that represents convention and assignment rules to stick to a thesis) cannot gain control over the genotext (that which gives voice to the rebellious, emotionally sarcastic semiotic), which displays its extreme displeasure with both the assignment (“I’m not going to answer any more of those where are you going to be in the next five or ten years questions [. . .].”) and the teacher.

Even after undergoing self, peer, and teacher response sessions, the paper seems unstructured and unfocused, wandering randomly from topic to topic, question to question, protest to attack. Its lines are un-paragraphed; its syntax and punctuation at times mixed-up. Though it uses the language of the symbolic (the only language, according to Kristeva, that it has in writing), it exhibits the emotional, pre-linguistic tendencies of the semiotic and seems to celebrate basic bodily functions. It also seems not to care about authority, not that of the administration nor of the teacher, whom, it implies, is not one of the “good teachers” from whom the writer seeks attention but someone it accuses of not carefully considering the results of her actions. This genotext is brave, considering it lashes out at the very person charged with grading the writing. Neither the structure of the assignment nor the rational parts of the writer-subject seem able to exert much control over the genotext, which operates virtually un-checked in this far-from-rigid expository essay.

If exposition has such a stranglehold on language, one might expect no room for the genotext to assert itself. However, these student papers show that is not necessarily the case. Though the goal of exposition may be to create “clear and unequivocal meaning” (G. Allen 213), that assumption does not hold in absolute terms, at least in the student examples considered here. The expository writing of these high school students tells a different story. It shows that in addition to poetic language providing space for the semiotic (G. Allen 49; Roudiez 7), it may find ways even in expository writing to “disrup[t] and temporarily dismantl[e] stable meaning, communication, notions of singularity, unity and order” (G. Allen 49). Exposition does not totally harness or obliterate the semiotic/genotext in these students’ papers. Other voices besides the ones expected or requested sing out despite the constraints of the assignments.

#### Incorporated Genres in “Non-Multigenre” Papers

Just as the examples in this and the previous chapter show the existence of multivocality in the four so-called “monologic” expository papers students wrote in *Experiences in Writing*, another look at these writings may also cause us to question both the accuracy of describing them as “monogeneric” and the tendency to set them against “the” multigenre paper. Besides finding distinct genres where we expect them in students’ multigenre papers, we may also see these in the supposedly “traditional” expository pieces they wrote. If we blur the often-too-rigid line between monogeneric and multigeneric constructs, we may recognize various kinds of textual “crots” (to use Winston Weathers’ term), distinguishable as stabilized genres in their own right. In Chapter 2 I discussed in some detail how compositions that deliberately set out to be multigeneric make use of incorporated genres in ways similar to the polyphonic novels Bakhtin describes (and in ways, he implies, exposition does not). Such genre incorporation, however, is not exclusive to the multigenre papers written by the students in my study but also sometimes occur in their other papers.

For example, some students included graphs of their survey data in the primary



research part of their virtue papers. Since their surveys included demographic questions about age, gender, family upbringing, and so on—along with their virtue questions—part of their analysis and the preliminary work to writing up the report of the research involved disaggregating data along these lines. Discussion of the data breakdown is part of all the papers I read. In addition, though, some students provide the graphs themselves as visual support for their “Findings and Analysis” commentary, placing these at various points in the paper. Two students, for instance, embed five bar graphs without labels or transitional material between the “Design and Methodology” and “Findings and Analysis” sections of the paper (10A ED/VR, 12A ED/VR). Two others place pie and bar graphs after their “Conclusion” section. One labels this section “Graphs” and discusses each of her five graphs in the “Findings and Analysis” section in the order of their placement (3A ED/VR). The other student provides no label for the graphs and discusses only two of the four (overall yes/no findings and findings according to upbringing) in the “Findings and Analysis” section (7A ED/VR). Yet another writer incorporates her four graphs into “Findings and Analysis,” placing each graph and then following it with a paragraph of discussion introduced by a connective phrase like “above is a graph” or “this graph” (8A ED/VR). In all these cases, a pie graph and a bar graph are recognizable genres, stabilized-for-now utterances that respond to rhetorical needs of readers and writers, and thus these papers, since they contain them, may be considered multigeneric (or at least “di-generic,” when the paper comprises the report and one kind of graph). Comparable to the genres in students’ so-called multigenre papers, the graphs in these research reports are set apart from other textual pieces (with lines that box them and, sometimes, intervening white space), which gives them at least a small measure of autonomy but still places them in a dialogic relationship with the text of the report.

Another type of genre embedding that occurs in students’ virtue research reports involves their survey question. Though no writer includes his or her whole survey in the paper, all students include their main virtue question, for the most part as stated on the

survey, incorporating that genre in a number of different ways that make it more or less distinguishable from the rest of the text. Incorporation techniques range from no markers (with the question blended seamlessly, in a visual sense, with the sentence in which it is embedded) to slight markers (quotation marks or a preceding colon) to more deliberate separation. Within this last group, some writers make the question its own paragraph, indenting it like surrounding paragraphs, and others block it, using either a one-inch or a half-inch left margin. Some surround the question with extra white space, and others do not. Some even change font weight (italicizing or bolding the question) or font size so that the question stands out even more. Regardless of how writers place the question in relation to the others parts of the text, however, it is recognizable as a distinct genre, especially for those who have played the game Scruples, since it uses the wording and the yes/no structure of Scruples' moral dilemma questions. Even when the writer provides no markers, most readers will be able to say, "Here is the survey question" as they reach it in the text, mentally assigning it its own generic label. Thus, we can see that an ostensibly monogeneric expository text contains at least two genres (research report and moral dilemma question).

A third way students bring one genre in contact with at least one other is through source quotation in their research papers. This constitutes another kind of genre incorporation because a group of words set off in quotation marks with attribution either in a signal phrase in the text or in a parenthetical notation is a widely recognized genre. When an experienced reader sees such a passage, she or he immediately says, "This is a quotation," acknowledging by such naming its status as a genre. Thus, even if we draw a distinction between the "multivocalic" and the more stable and formalized "multigeneric—as I think we should—those students who incorporate the genre of "direct quotation" create at least a di-generic composition in their research papers. In addition, a writer may incorporate quotation in a way that makes such phrases stand out as other, relatively more separate genres.

For instance, one student begins his mission statement with the centered quotation “Do not try to shoot fly with cannonball” set in italics with a bolded “Anonymous Author” label. This formation of text constitutes the genre “epigraph,” recognizable because the writer places it at the top of page one and separates it with white space from the beginning of his mission statement (16D MS). By manipulating text in this way, the genre “quotation” becomes the genre “epigraph” and functions in this writer’s paper, not as supporting detail (as the genre “source quotation” does in students’ research papers) but as an introduction, a hint of the writer’s thesis, and a framing device in that the paper returns to the epigraph at the end of the paper.

In another mission statement, the writer embeds a manifesto between his title and the introduction of his essay in the following way:

### **Happiness**

I want to live life like there’s no tomorrow while acknowledging that there is such a day.

If I live to be 100 and was unhappy for 50 of the years what was the point.

I will never allow anyone to oppress.

I will be accountable for what I do.

I will be forgiving.

I will always strive to improve myself. Once I obtain perfection then I’ll move onto another projects.

If any of the above doesn’t happen, well life goes on.

I just want to be free. Free from oppression by the government. Free from the daily labors of work. Last but not least free from the establishment that I am currently a member. Eventually I will free myself from these chains by gaining financial independence and education. (3C MS)

Because of its ‘I want’ and ‘I will’ phrasing and its declaration of life intentions, this piece of text is recognizable as the genre “manifesto,” in which someone declares publicly his or her “intentions, motives, or views.” It also has the presence of a separate genre because, unlike the rest of the mission statement, it is single spaced and centered on the page with four lines of white space between it and the first double-spaced paragraph of

the rest of the paper. In addition to concisely summarizing how the writer intends to live his life, an idea explicated in the rest of the mission statement, the language of the manifesto sets the tone for his explanation of goals, and it structures the language choices of that explanation (five of the paper's seven paragraphs also begin with declarative "I" statements). Like some of the genres (e.g. diary, personal letter) that Bakhtin claims "play an especially significant role in structuring novels" (*Dialogic* 321), this student's opening manifesto directs the language of the rest of his mission statement. In all, an interactive and lively intertextual relationship occurs between the two genres that comprise the essay "Happiness."

Besides the previous two essays that incorporate small genres into the openings of their papers, three other students embed genres within the bodies of their papers. In the case of one mission statement, the writer takes the five words/phrases ("cheerful," "productive," "thoughtful," "helpful," and "have fun") by which he intends to live his life and makes them into acronyms that represent more complex goals. He then places each explicated acronym, single spaced, after a paragraph that introduces and connects the goal to himself, carrying this pattern of explanatory/introductory paragraph-acronym crot throughout the paper. . (For an example of this acronym embedding, see Appendix B-8.) Using indenting, spacing, and capitalizing, this student shapes some of the ideas of his mission statement according to the genre "acronym" and then incorporates individual acronyms into his expository essay. These generic pieces not only stand apart from the essay but also interact with ideas in its double-spaced paragraphs, which intertextually relate to the imperative statements in the acronyms.

In another example of genre embedding, a research paper on Tupac Shakur, the writer inserts two complete poems by Shakur into his explanation of the deceased rap artist's influence. In one spot, the middle of paragraph five, he subtly blends the poem "The Rose That Grew From Concrete" with the surrounding text. Though the visual and textual cues pointing to the poem (the signal phrase "in the poem," the capitalizing of

poetic lines) are slight, most readers will recognize that what they are reading is not, for the moment, the genre “research paper” but the genre “poem.” This generic shift is even more apparent when the writer incorporates the second poem, at the end of paragraph five, because he sets it off in a more dramatically visual way. Here, besides the textual cue to the reader of an upcoming poem (i.e. “in the poem entitled The Event Of My Demise”), the writer’s repetition of the title and his use of single spacing and centering makes the poem stand out from the surrounding paragraphed, double-spaced text, showing clearly the genre mixing. (See Appendix B-9 for the full passage.)

In a final example of an ostensibly monogeneric text exhibiting multigeneric characteristics, one writer follows all the expected conventions of “the” research paper to the letter, but in five spots, she embeds between certain paragraphs of her researched argument quoted remarks by the person whose influence she is explaining: Retired Lieutenant General Claudia Kennedy. These stand out as distinct generic pieces because they are italicized and put in quotation marks and placed without the writer’s direct comment on or explanation or interpretation of them, and they are not linked to the paper’s explanations by any connective material. They stand alone and interrupt the expository stream of the paper in a more distinct, detached way than the other voices discussed in Chapter Four. Because of the repeated form (separate paragraphing, italics, quotation marks, and use of first and second person pronouns) and disconnected quality, Kennedy’s words constitute more than a brief vocal interruption of the exposition. Instead, they take on the status of a genre that we might label something like “reflective comment” that stands apart so vividly that it achieves a level of autonomy that these same words blended as supporting quotations into the discussion of influence would not. In set-off reflective comments, Kennedy’s voice intervenes in the story the writer tells of her influence in a stabilized-for-now utterance, a genre that has the quality of an answer to an interview question (not asked in the body of the explanation of influence) that intertextually relates to the research paper’s discussion while still retaining some of its

own generic autonomy. Appendix B-10 contains a representative example of this embedding.

What these brief examples of inserted genres in papers not designated “multigenre” intend to show is that if we think too dualistically about texts as either/or multigenre or not, we may miss interesting features and fail to recognize the complexity of compositions assumed to be highly monologic. Instead of allowing themselves to be fixed firmly at the monologic end of the dialogic continuum I propose in Chapter 1, a number of the student texts I examined refuse to be locked into monologic spot. Indeed, the four “traditional” papers the students in my study wrote not only show extensive multivocality but also may in some instances be considered “multigeneric” when the voices and utterances adopt the characteristic generic patterns and functions that fix them, at least briefly, so that readers can recognize them as a genre and so that they are separate enough to form an intertextual relationship with the material with which they come into immediate contact. In addition, they add further layers of intertextuality because they offer more opportunities for readers to bring other voices and genres from their experience into contact with these genres on the page.

#### Multigenerality, Multivocality, and Intertextuality in “The” Multigenre Paper

As my examination of so-called “traditional” papers students wrote during their semester in Experiences in Writing has tried to illustrate, the “non-multigenre” side of the multigenre/non-multigenre binarism, typically established in discussions contrasting multigenre papers with other school forms, is not as rigid as some may assume. At least in the case of these groups of students, papers one might try to characterize as “unified” and “monologic” (i.e. mission statement, extended metaphor, extended definition/report of primary research, research paper)—because they are long-standing, highly conventionalized expository forms—show, in various ways as previously discussed, often intense multivocality and even in some cases the presence of more formalized inserted utterances with genre status. Similarly, if we look at the so-called multigenre

papers written by students in the study, we may see that the kinds of innovative, less rigid and formulaic, “alternative” qualities multigenre compositions discussed in Chapters 2 and 3 exhibit may not exist in at least some multigenre papers written in a school setting. Despite the potential offered by constructs we designate “multigenre compositions” when they are deliberately composed genre collages (i.e. the promise of creativity and vocal experimentation that ostensibly “monogeneric” pieces do not allow), my research suggests that the construct in and of itself does not guarantee multivocalic “messiness.” Indeed, it does not guarantee different viewpoints, complex intertextual relationships among the generic pieces, or enough ambiguity of purpose and “point” to challenge readers to work at formulating their own varied meanings (without frustrating them so much that they abandon the piece). In the hands of some writers, multigenre compositions may be as directive, monologic, and formulaic as others have accused so-called “traditional” school writing like “the” expository theme and “the” research paper of being. A comparison and contrast of a few research and multigenre papers may serve to illustrate.

Before sharing these example papers, let me remind readers that the requirement in the classroom in which students wrote for my study was to conduct research on some person deemed to be significant to society in some way and to use that collected research, including a complete biography of the person, to write two papers. First, students wrote a mostly “traditional” research paper with an argument twist (all details of the person’s life included in the paper had to support the basic thesis that he or she was “the most influential person of the millennium,” as the assignment sheet says—or if not “the most,” at least highly influential in some negative or positive way). Then they created a multigenre paper (what the teacher calls a “multi-genre writer’s collage”), composed of four genres (for first-semester students) or six genres (for second-semester) and an end notes page explaining the purpose of and use of sources in each genre (and perhaps the individual piece’s role in the larger composition, its audience, and its “format”). Students

also needed to “package” the composition in some way that integrated the individual genres into a whole.

Before beginning my study, I knew from previous conversations with the teacher that unlike either my own classroom or others I know of in which students write multigenre papers, she directed students to keep the same topic and use the same research material for both papers. Except for a handful of exceptions, this remained the case for the papers I examined. Everyone but a few students, who either got teacher permission to switch or, according to the teacher, “weren’t paying attention” and missed this detail, wrote about the same person in both papers. Initially, the sharing of material between the two papers was one of the characteristics of this classroom and its assignments that made it attractive to me as a site for data collection. Since the papers used the same material but radically different approaches (at least what I believed to be “radically different” early on when I was caught up in the dualism of “multigenre/“non-multigenre”), I assumed I would be able to see substantial contrasts between them, attributable to one being “traditional” and the other “alternative.” That assumption, as the forthcoming examples show, did not, however, hold.

Before proceeding to this discussion, there is something else I should mention. At the outset, I did not know one key requirement of this teacher’s version of the multigenre paper assignment, learning this only later. As I began to collect assignment information and student writings, I discovered that just as the teacher requires students to carry the influence thesis through their “traditional” research papers, she also requires them to establish and “prove” that same influence thesis in their multigenre papers. Though not totally alien, this requirement surprised me. I know of one other former high school teacher who established a thesis requirement when she used the assignment with tenth graders, and I had come into contact with another approach to multigenre compositions at the college level in which one of the “steps” is to “develop a thesis” (Moneysmith, et al.). However, from the substantial amount I know about Romano’s conception of the



assignment, other teachers' use of it with different ages of students in various settings, and my own version of the assignment, requiring a standard thesis for a multigenre project is unusual. Therefore, I was interested to see what, if any, effect that would have on the papers students wrote. As with the previous papers I analyzed, my examination reveals a number of interesting qualities relating to the issues of multivocality and intertextuality.

First, if we compare some students' research papers with their multigenre papers, expecting to find a strict univocal adherence to the influence thesis in the former and a freer, multivocal play of viewpoints in the latter (given the so-called contrasting nature of each described earlier), we may have difficulty discerning significant differences along these lines. To illustrate, one student writing his research paper on George Washington establishes the thesis of Washington's importance in the opening paragraph of the paper:

When someone mentions the name George Washington, the first thing most people think about is the fact that he had wooden teeth, how he chopped down his father's cherry tree, and that he was the first president of the United States. But, for the most part, his influence came from mostly what he accomplished before he became president.

In this thesis, we see expected research paper moves. After establishing this thesis, however, in three of the remaining seven paragraphs of the paper, the writer veers away from that influence idea. Although he includes details that support the thesis in straight third-person point of view, his paper also includes prominent informational chunks that offer glimpses of other aspects of Washington that, though perhaps admirable, do not particularly adhere to the thesis. We learn about his devotion to family in all of paragraph three (e.g. "Family was very important for Washington. Washington's more than 25 year marriage to widow Martha was always strong and Martha's Grandchildren were always a joy.") and his modesty in half of paragraph six ("Washington was also a modest man. One example of this, is when at a Virginia Convention, when he realized that John Adams was about to nominate him, the embarrassed Washington left the room and went to the

library just a few feet away.”). Even in the concluding paragraph of the piece, where we would expect a reiteration of the influence thesis and a summary of main points supporting that thesis (if indeed it followed the “traditional” conception of expository school essay form), the writer brings in another unrelated point, mentioning that Washington “was very, very hospitable to other people, when he would have guests and people just visiting for only a few days, a week, or more” (2D RE).

On the other hand, just as this student’s researched argument paper does not completely fit the standard formula for its type, his multigenre paper on Washington does not shape the material differently as one might expect a multigenre composition to do (if we accept it as automatically “alternative” to a “traditional” research paper). It is multigeneric in the sense that it comprises six different genres (packaged as “Documents George Washington Mount Vernon, VA”), making it look different from the research paper (2D MGP). In substance, however, it does virtually the same work as the previous paper. For example, four of the six genres are what some might call “objective” genres (i.e. Washington’s obituary, his resume, an election poster, a timeline with important feats) similar to the third-person explanation of influence in the student’s research paper.<sup>1</sup> The two remaining pieces of the composition—a thank-you note in Washington’s voice, written after he was unanimously chosen President, and a transcript of the writer’s fictitious interview of Martha Washington about her husband’s reaction to the deaths of their children—veer away from the influence thesis and, the writer says on his end notes page, demonstrate Washington’s humility and devotion to family. However, though the voices here are first rather than third person (i.e. George’s and Martha’s, respectively) and though these genres have more of a personal feel than the other four pieces, the version of the material in this student’s multigenre paper is essentially the same as that of his research paper. Thus despite the ostensibly “alternative” approach of the multigenre paper, in this student’s hands it functions substantially like the “traditional” version.

Just as some multigenre papers, like the previous example, do not show a sharp

contrast to research papers in terms of unification around a thesis, others do not seem to exhibit any greater multivocality than their research-paper counterparts. For example, in one student's research paper on Marilyn Monroe, we find what we might expect: the basically detached third-person voice explaining Monroe's influence (e.g. "Even though she was a woman in the time when women's thoughts and opinions didn't really matter she still let people know what she was thinking and was very involved in what was going on in the world"), reasonable in its argument and with no interruptions by other first- or second-person voices like those illustrated in Chapter Four. We also find direct quotations from sources with proper parenthetical notations for attribution like "'When the Shah of Iran visited the Fox lot. Monroe refused to meet him until she found out Iran's position on Israel,' (Zoglin 120)" (10A RE). Nothing here seems surprising, and the student sticks to the requirements of the assignment.

However, in her multigenre paper, where we would expect more vocal variety, the voices that offer an "alternative" to the detachment of the research paper are very faint in the four genres it includes (10A MGP). Two of the pieces (a lab report on an experiment for making a movie star that uses Monroe's life experiences and characteristics and a timeline of important dates in Monroe's life from June 1926 to August 1962), because of their generic conventions, appear unauthored and non-voiced but "objective" and factual (though, as I discuss in Note 1, appearing and being "objective" are two different things). They essentially give no sense of a speaker different from the third-person voice of the research paper. This is also primarily the case in the other two genres of the composition (i.e. a report on possible causes of Monroe's death and her schedule on the day of a movie premier). In the report, we find a hint of other people speaking in some limited statements like "With everyone's testimonies and what Marilyn had done that day here is what the authorities are working on"; however, the "everyone's" and "authorities'" voices seem barely audible because the bulk of the piece uses a faceless "explainer" voice to record unattributed theories, possible suspects, and the contents of eight pill bottles

detailed in the coroner's report. In the schedule, we find a slightly stronger personal presence if we read the piece as Monroe's own jottings of things to do that day. The use of her husband, Joe Dimaggio's, first name in two items on the list: "6:30 pm - Stop by Joe's Baseball Practice" and "11pm - Meet up w/ Joe" suggests we might be listening to Monroe's own voice as we read about the events of her day. However, the abbreviated and impersonal wording of most of the rest of the schedule (e.g. "12 p.m. - Photo shoot" and "8 pm - Movie Premiere") gives a primarily detached feel even to this more personal genre. In all, although the writer has chosen a person who would lend herself to a passionate, conflicted, and confused treatment in order to show the contradictions and struggles of her life, this potential of both Monroe and the multigenre paper assignment do not seem to be realized in the writer's genre choices.

Even more than in the Monroe papers, in another student's writings on Martin Luther King, Jr., we find a multigenre paper that seems further detached from its topic than his research paper. Composed of a four-paragraph summary of King's life work and vital statistics (which the writer labels an obituary but which does not contain all of the expected parts conventionally included in writings that fit this genre); a timeline that repeats all the facts of the first piece and adds more; a resume listing qualifications, honorary doctorates, and employment history; and a word search that repeats information given previously and adds opinion words (e.g. "admirable" and "influential") to describe King, the multigenre paper, with one small exception, sustains the kind of "objective"-feeling, hands-off voice we might expect in the material of a "traditional" research paper but not in a multigenre composition. In only two places in the paper (both in the same genre, the resume) do we hear a voice attached to a person: King himself. To describe King's qualifications and to give details about jobs he has held, the writer uses first person and has "King" tell prospective employers about his speaking abilities and past work situations, as the following excerpts illustrate: "I am a highly capable speaker and I know what to do in every situation." and "1945 - RW's Corner

Drug - I worked there selling over the counter drugs in my spare time" (13A MGP). The extent of multivocality here is about equal to if not perhaps a bit less than in the student's research paper. In that piece, although the writer primarily uses the expected third-person "explainer" voice, his five-sentence excerpt from King's "Dream" speech (in first person), as well as two spots later in the paper—one that, using first, second, and third person, couples his own "reflective" voice ("after I pondered this question awhile") with a kind of simulation of King's voice and a hint of those African Americans to whom he was presumably speaking ("he sent the message that if I can do it then you can do it") (13A RE)—has the effect of introducing more voices (at least three) than the multigenre paper does. Expectations here, then, are turned upside down.

Similarly, whereas the King multigenre paper by and large uses a detached, factual uni-voice as much or more than its companion research paper, another student's research and multigenre papers on Madonna blur the lines drawn between the two even more. Though we would expect a contrast in multivocality between the two papers if common assumptions about them hold true, this student's writings, again, do not meet these expectations. With its informal style of questioning the reader ("Have you ever noticed that every two years there is a new look a new spiritual following to Madonna?") and generalizing ("You can't be a singer without being able to sing") in second person, as well as a four-sentence reflective narrative in first person in which the writer connects Madonna's and her own desires to disprove others' assumptions about them (22A RE), the research paper offers as much that breaks away from a detached "explainer-of-influence" voice as the writer's multigenre paper does. In that piece, the writer also connects herself to Madonna in a first-person reflective narrative that accompanies the copied song lyrics of "Material Girl" and in a tribute poem about "Material Girl" in an "explainer" voice that communicates her admiration for Madonna. The other two pieces in the paper are a third-person biographical sketch with a list of CD's and some "vital statistics" of Madonna, and a daily horoscope (in second-person) downloaded from

Yahoo.com but seemingly without any connection to Madonna at all (22A MGP). With their mixing of first, second, and third person and the prominence given in both the research and multigenre papers to the writer's personal feelings about Madonna, there is much that is similar in these two pieces that belies the ostensibly radical differences between the two kinds of writing.

Though these multigenre papers do have pieces separated from each other and written according to different generic forms, they do not seem to be more multivocal than their corresponding research papers. In substance, little difference between these examples of so-called "traditional" research papers and so-called "alternative" multigenre papers seem evident. As my data suggests, the fact that a multigenre paper is composed of pieces written to follow the conventions of different genres does not in and of itself necessarily make it more multivocal than a supposedly "monogeneric" piece like a research paper.

This lack of multivocality may even occur when a writer abandons the third-person "explainer" voice of "traditional" research and consciously works to take on a voice that tries to experiment with point of view. For example, after following quite rigidly the expected conventions for a research essay on Madonna (e.g. influence thesis placed at the end of the first paragraph, quotations from sources with parenthetical notations, all material in third person but for one instance of "I believe" to introduce the thesis), one writer envisions and packages her multigenre paper as a fictitious CD by Madonna called "Influential." The aesthetically attractive and creative paper has two parts: a compact disc with Madonna's most famous and popular songs "burned" onto it and an accompanying booklet like those typically sold with a compact disc. As interesting as this format for the paper is—visually it looks completely different from the writer's research paper—it is not, however, much more multivocal. Instead of the third-person "researcher" voice, all but one piece is written in Madonna's voice, expressing her thoughts, feelings, and perspective. What the writer in essence has done is traded one

voice for another.

In her multigenre paper, readers hear Madonna singing ten of her most popular songs; explaining their background, purpose, “meaning,” and so on; making statements about life; thanking her fans (“the people who made me who I am”); writing a letter to her deceased mother; and acknowledging friends, family, fans, and God for their support (12D MGP). Everything here is in Madonna’s voice. In only one piece (graffiti scattered throughout the booklet) does the paper break out into other voices—both the writer’s own and, as her endnote for the piece (i.e. “These words are words that came to my mind when I heard the name Madonna. Some of these words might come to your mind also when you hear her name”) suggests, the voices of readers and multiple others who have uttered the words and phrases (e.g. “drama queen,” “groovy,” “spontaneous”) in connection with Madonna or even other people and situations. In contrast to the Madonna monologue in the other six pieces of the paper, the graffiti piece exhibits the multivocalic, intertextual potential of the so-called multigenre paper; nonetheless, even this potential seems limited because the twelve words and phrases the writer chooses to include are essentially positive, even though any number of negative descriptors would probably occur to people who despise Madonna’s music and lifestyle.

One explanation for the lack of multivocality in multigenre papers students in my study wrote may be the thesis requirement I mentioned earlier. Many of the students coming into this class, according to the teacher, did not have much experience writing thesis-governed papers—some students’ process logs also confirm this—and one of her main goals for the course was to teach them how to construct a thesis and fit material to it. As incentive, I assume, to learn and use this strategy for unifying a piece of writing, all five of the grading rubrics, including the one for the multigenre paper, list “thesis” as one of the evaluation criteria. As I said earlier, such a criterion is unusual in my experience with teaching multigenre papers and seems to jar with its “alternative” intent. In the context of this teacher’s curriculum and its primary goals, however, it makes perfect

sense.

It also makes sense if we consider the difficult time students have with integrating genres so that a multigenre paper reads like a single composition and not like randomly thrown together pieces that do not mesh to achieve some even tentative sense of wholeness and coherence. Students, by the time they write their multigenre papers near the end of the semester, have had quite a bit of practice deploying thesis statements to help orient and organize their material. Thus, giving them this tool again as an integrating strategy for their multigenre papers is consistent with overall course practices. However, it may contribute to a muffling of multivocality. In the process of students attempting to fulfill the thesis requirement and use it as an integrating strategy to meet the challenge of building connections between genres to form one composition, at least some voices that get in the way of these goals and requirements may find themselves stifled. Even though the thesis requirement clashes with another requirement calling for students to “[e]xperiment with writing in different **points of view**” and for each piece to “offe[r] a unique perspective on the subject,” for some students like those in my previous examples, the by-now-familiar thesis edict may be the more powerful of the two requirements, the one that takes precedence and, because it constrains the other requirement, the one that pushes out other voices in much the same way that Bakhtin accuses expository writing of doing.

Another possibility is that students’ lack of experience with writing deliberately multigeneric compositions, with trying to shape research in different genres—rather than the assignment or its requirements—has contributed to the lack of differences I see when I compare some students’ “multi-genre collages” with their research papers. When students work to make a composition multigeneric, and have little or no experience doing so, their writing task becomes more complex and difficult than writing in other, more familiar school forms. And trying to force other voices into the writing only exacerbates the difficulty. Perhaps, then, the lack of multivocality in multigenre papers I analyzed



stems from the same difficulty that occurs when a writer confronts an unfamiliar form or trope. In trying to “master” the form of a so-called multigenre paper, the seemingly “natural” play of voices evident in the other writings students in my study did not emerge because writers’ cognitive processes are operating at a procedural rather than representational level. Shaping pieces in different genres that incorporate multivoices has not yet become “automatic” the way tasks like riding a bike or reading familiar kinds of texts become when we have done them many times and their procedures have become unconscious. In the early stages of learning any kind of language use, including genre competence, writers need to be highly aware of what they are doing. “Whether it is driving a car, playing the trombone, or writing a letter to a local council, learning to do something for the first time means being (often uncomfortably) conscious of the process. It is only when we have been doing something for a long time that we ‘automatize’ it—lodge it deep in the guts, so to speak—so that we no longer have to think about it every time we do it” (Macken-Horarik 41-2). Such may be the case here since the students in my study had not written multigenre compositions before and, consequently, may have had to focus too much on the rules to let the dialogical play inherent in writing develop. Though the always multigeneric, multivocalic, and dialogical qualities of language that Bakhtin theorizes, and that my data seem to show, exist whether a student seeks to deliberately make writing that way or whether a teacher seeks to assign a multigenre research paper, form and procedure may overwhelm dialogism in this new writing situation.

Despite a lack of familiarity with writing multigenre compositions or the requirement to use a guiding thesis, some writers in my study manage to heed the call to let other points of view, other voices, sing out in their “multi-genre collage.” In one student’s paper on Adolf Hitler, for example, the writer includes six genres: a poem written by a Nazi soldier, showing the conflicted feelings he has about the mass extermination in which he is participating; a computer-generated swastika with a short

caption explaining the symbol's African origin and a reflection on the reactions it has received since its use by Hitler; a letter from "Nick Miller," a student in the future, to his friend "Franchesca" that gives his impressions of Hitler after traveling back in time and witnessing one of his speeches first hand; an entry from Hitler's journal at the time he has been named president of Germany and starts to make plans to eliminate the Jews; an anonymous interview of "Rogue Flymour," a Holocaust survivor; and a map of Europe detailing the area Hitler controlled at the height of his power (7D MGP).

Compared to the multigenre papers previously discussed, this composition is highly multivocalic and does not seem bound to any great extent to proving a thesis of influence (though some readers may discern that "point," among many others, in some pieces like the map or the letter, for instance). In the "Rationale" section of his endnotes page, the writer indicates he is thinking about influence (i.e. "I choose these genres to show on how Hitler influenced me the most."); however, it may be that because he seems to be focusing on himself (note his use of me) and also says he wants to show "[t]he people it affected," he is perhaps interpreting the requirement for an influence thesis more complexly and broadly than those students whose multigenre paper voices show less variety. It may also have something to do with the topic itself, the enigmatic, complex, controversial Hitler whose "influence" may be difficult to define. Because I did not interview students about their topic or the effect of having to conform to a thesis, however, these are only speculation. Even so, they suggest other interesting questions for further study.

In addition to its lively multivocality, this multigenre paper on Hitler also exhibits a small bit of intertextual play among its individual genres. For instance, "Nick Miller's" comments on Hitler's power as a speaker play nicely off Hitler's own reflections on his intentions for an upcoming speech. And the Nazi soldier's poem and the interview with the Holocaust survivor offer a look at the treatment of Jews from a captor's and a captive's perspectives. In addition to suggesting countless intertextual relationships

readers may make with texts outside this multigenre paper, the intertextual connections established within the composition help create the beginnings of an environment in which individual genres not only start to interact dialogically with each other but also potentially reach out to complex interactions with other texts. However, that kind of environment in the Hitler paper does not seem fully developed. As such, it may offer only a limited opportunity for readers to generate multiple meanings because its “tissue” or fabric (in Roland Barthes’ terms) does not contain enough threads to take individual genres much beyond themselves and beyond the boundaries of the multigenre composition. Though it does not seem hampered by a voice-stifling thesis and feels spirited in its multivocality, it lacks internal connections and a progression of genres that would allow its story to develop ambiguously and help a reader construct multiple meanings from the individual pieces.

In contrast, some multigenre papers that students wrote do manage to create a more complex genre environment than the Hitler paper. In these papers there seems to be a virtual genre environment, a simulation of a genre “system” (Bazerman), “set” (Devitt), “ecosystem” (Bawarshi), or “ceremony” (Freadman)—as I discuss these in connection with multigenre compositions in Chapter 1—that allows individual genres to bounce off each other in interesting ways that connect them to other texts. In most of these more highly intertextual papers, the “influence” thesis still plays a prominent role that seems to limit the space given to any dissenting voices. However, they also include enough voices to suggest more complex qualities and struggles of a person like Princess Diana that go beyond her influence (14D MGP), to create connections between an historical figure like Sigmund Freud and the present (5D MGP), or to explore the individuals in a group like The Beatles band, a group often treated like a monolith (18C MGP). One student even manages to fulfill the influence thesis requirement while also communicating unresolved ambiguity about his biographical subject. He takes what he calls a “paradox” of Thomas Jefferson (i.e. that he owned slaves and yet argued for the abolition of the institution and

for “liberty and justice for all”)—something that occupies only four sentences of his nearly seven-page research paper—and makes it the centerpiece of his multigenre paper (28C MGP), exploring the idea without totally finalizing it.

The integrating strategy the writer uses to combine his genres is to present them as excerpts from a textbook. The title of his paper establishes that packaging: “Selected pieces from Philosophy 101’s book, compiled by \_\_\_\_\_.” In this title he announces his role as a “writer” (in the Barthian sense and in contrast to Barthes’ conception of “Author”) or as Levi-Strauss’s bricoleur, who takes existing texts and brings them together for other purposes in a new, stabilized-for-now composition. As I mentioned in the previous paragraph, this paper does have a fairly standard thesis related to Jefferson’s influence but one that leaves space for conflicting perspectives. The writer states this thesis directly at the top of his endnotes page (“**Thesis:** Thomas Jefferson has made a profound impact on moral theory and political science while himself remaining a paradox on his views”). Though the thesis does not identify that paradox, the genres themselves show that it involves slavery.

As part of the fictional Introduction to Philosophy, the first of these genres is a textbook entry detailing Jefferson’s ideas (his moral theory and philosophy) for six paragraphs. In a simulation of an actual page on which a textbook entry might appear, the opening genre starts in medias res on the top of “page 125.” This page displays the last three lines, beginning in the middle of a sentence, of an entry on John Locke that ostensibly precedes the Jefferson entry. Three blank spaces and the heading “Jefferson Thomas” then follow the Locke entry, signaling the Jefferson entry, which then finishes on “page 126” with a note about appendices (on “pages 203, 204, 220, 221, 222 and [ . . . ] 230”), alerting readers that they may find further “source information on Thomas Jefferson” later in the fictional textbook.

This initial genre functions in two important ways. First, it creates an intertextual link (for any reader who has had contact with textbooks) between the writer’s multigenre

paper and the wider world of school (including text books and other educational texts), already giving the particular ideas of the paper a broader social significance than they may otherwise have. Secondly, it creates an intertextual environment within the paper itself in that all the remaining genres serve as appendix material firmly tied to this introductory piece. The initial entry, then, holds all the pieces together explicitly, but it also does so on a subtler, more implicit level because the five succeeding pieces revisit the topics of this opening piece.

Piece two has "Introduction to Philosophy" (the textbook's title) and the number of this first page of the appendix (203) with the heading "Appendix" placed below. A short paragraph of explanation follows this to introduce the first appendix item: a copy of an artifact, a letter from John and Abigail Adams to Jefferson. Subsequent appendix pieces all have the same book title and new page number headings to simulate moving through the appendices. Like the Adams letter, a short introductory paragraph precedes the next two pieces (a draft of a speech Jefferson gave sometime during the composing and revising of the Declaration of Independence and an inventory of Monticello by someone named "Ben," presumably a person in Jefferson's employ). The fifth piece is untitled and unexplained on its appendix page (though the writer labels it a political cartoon on his notes page), and the final piece has no introductory paragraph but is labeled "Notes on the Declaration of Independence." It, like the cartoon and the opening entry, also has no author identified but seems to represent a contemporary voice (suggested by the use of "today" in "Today however Jefferson has been vindicated [. . .] ."), commenting on the influence of Jefferson and the Declaration of Independence.

All these pieces deal in some way with one or both parts of the Jefferson "paradox" in relation to slavery. The opening entry first draws an intertextual connection between it and the Locke fragment that precedes it (with such details as "Jefferson's greatest contribution to moral theory and philosophy was on his expansion of Lockean theory. Locke's theory, as was discussed on the previous three pages, [. . .] .") and then

explains some of Jefferson's influential ideas on social contract and government and brings up the issue of slavery, a "conflict of interest [that] plagued Jefferson until his death." The remaining five pieces, then, revisit this slavery problem in different ways. In the letter, for instance, the Adamses praise Jefferson's early political theories and then ask him about the issue of slavery ("A question to you though, are you saying that all men, including blacks are created equal? I'm quite interested in your answer to that particular question."). Then in the speech, slavery becomes the focus topic, with Jefferson discussing how it violates social contract theory ("The idea where certain freedoms are exchanged for certain securities. Slaves are forced to give up all of their freedoms and they receive nothing in return") and warning others on the committee that they need to address the problem now because it may develop into a difficult "storm" in the future.

On the inventory, the slavery paradox's presence is brief ("Plows: 7[,] slaves: 198[,] Oats: 200 lbs") but powerful in its understatement, especially juxtaposed to the plea in Jefferson's speech "to speak out against [slavery], and if you do own slave, free them so that you can free yourselves." That clash of Jefferson's theory and practice carries into the next genre, the cartoon. This genre places a picture of Jefferson's statue in the Jefferson Memorial in Washington, D.C with the caption "All men are created equal" superimposed on the background to the left of the statue. A second picture of a chained black man (presumably a slave), kneeling as if in supplication, then juts into the bottom right corner of the Jefferson picture, with the words "Please sir let me go, let me be free" overlapping the windows of the Jefferson Memorial picture at the feet of Jefferson's statue. Following this cartoon is the paper's last genre, which focuses on the significance of the Declaration of Independence and which the writer says in an end note "serves to bring about a conclusion" to the paper. Though this piece is the only one that does not explicitly mention slavery, its closing sentence ("He is a figure, although a complex one, who helped shape the world for the better"), leaves the door open, at least to a small extent, for a slight ambivalence about Jefferson's greatness in suggesting by the phrase

“although a complex one” the inconsistencies shown in the other genres of the paper between what he said and what he did .

Every genre in the multigenre composition relates in some way to the Declaration of Independence, Jefferson’s theories of equality, and/or the slavery “paradox,” and most deal with all three, causing the ideas and the voices to bounce back and forth among the genres. In addition, with the implicit invitation of the last piece to consider the validity of its contemporary assessment of Jefferson’s impact, these voices, genres, and intertextual relationships establish a web that goes beyond this so-called multigenre paper. Much like the “filament” of Walt Whitman’s “noiseless, patient spider,” the paper casts intertextual “gossamer thread” beyond itself until it “catch[es] somewhere” with other voices and words in wider contexts (370).

### Reflections

For the purposes of my illustrative study, most interesting and important is the fact that we can find, at least in this set of student writing, many, varied voices in texts often characterized as monologic and monogeneric and sometimes set in opposition to the so-called multigenre paper. In addition, we can see that multivocality may not automatically result just because a teacher assigns the writing of a multigenre composition. Rather, it may result from gaining facility with writing in particular genres and thus may be more an aspect of familiarity than assignment intent. Moreover, the student writings I studied also suggest the inherent dialogism (multi-voiced or double-sided nature) of language to which Bakhtin has referred, both in these students’ ostensibly “traditional” and “alternative” texts. In this one school setting, voices were sometimes silenced in so-called multigenre writing just as they exploded in so-called monologic expository papers. In this set of classroom writings, then, separating the “traditional” and “alternative” from each other was not always easy. Why this occurred is also interesting and important, I think, but somewhat beyond the scope of my study. Nonetheless, I will speculate about some possible reasons here in order to stimulate more

thinking about this topic and to suggest questions for further research into the workings of multigenre papers and other school forms.

A possible way to explain one of the most widespread usages in the papers I studied, second person you, may be the predominance of you in oral speech (face-to-face, in the media, and so on). For example, these students from early on in their language development have heard second person used to generalize (rather than the too-formal one or other indefinite pronouns or general nouns); and they, like most speakers, use you in this way, probably daily. In a situation, then, in which they are trying to formulate their ideas in writing, especially writing that puts demands on them to do unfamiliar things (like stick to a thesis)—a difficult task except for the most fluent, comfortable writers and beyond difficult to excruciating for some students—writers may be (probably unconsciously) easing that task by using phrasing that seems comfortable and sounds “natural” to them. Second person usage may satisfy that need for comfort.

Use of you also may be an attempt to satisfy the following style criterion on the teacher-designed evaluation rubrics: “uses a unique style and personal writer’s voice to keep the reader wanting to continue reading (enhances the paper).” Though this statement is problematic in its wording if we read it through the lens of postmodern theories of “self” and “voice”—and even if we only consider the myriad voices evident in the student papers under consideration—students may try to bring in what they see as their “natural” voice, (one related to oral speech) in order to create that “unique style” called for on the rubrics. In addition, in trying to make a connection to readers, using second person also makes sense since in face-to-face oral speech we often make this move to ingratiate ourselves with conversation partners.

In the first two papers of the semester (the mission statement and extended metaphor), using second person may have also served as a way for writers to talk about themselves without using first person. For students who do not feel comfortable with self-reflection in writing—and, in the case of these assignments, who cannot escape the



topic since it is mandated, not chosen—second person may give them a way to phrase the ideas they have about themselves more generally so that these do not seem so frighteningly personal. They can articulate goals or compare people to objects in ways that include themselves but do not place them in the spotlight, the glare and heat of which may be too much for adolescents struggling with who they are and not necessarily eager to go public with such struggles.

It may be, too, that the flavor of discussion and debate in contemporary American society has become more informal—more loosely structured and “undisciplined,” some might even say—than in the past, therefore modeling for student writers a kind of free-for-all approach that does not adhere to stuffy conventions (like strict third person). The reasoning here may be that if what people, including the sixteen to nineteen year olds whose writings I read, see and hear and get used to is “spouting off” about almost anything and nothing, that is all they know. Thus, it may be logical that casual and varied use of pronouns might then come into their writing, as well. At least some of these students are coming out of tenth-grade English and speech courses that vary in their inclusion of formal writing instruction. Consequently, if they have not learned much if anything about the conventions of the school essay, they may be too new to the socialization process of the writing curriculum to have expunged second person pronouns from their written texts.

Further, if students have done a lot of personal, journal, or response writing, or other forms of writing-to-learn that have not required “neatening up” to meet evaluation criteria, this may be another reason that many of their papers freely mixed point of view. Left to their own devices, they may have been following common, familiar practices of other kinds of writing in and outside of school. Concerning this issue, if I were to make one general observation about pronoun usage across the four expository papers, I would say that the multivocality is most limited in students’ research papers. Even those who mixed first-, second-, and third-person pronouns with abandon in their mission statement,

extended metaphor, and virtue paper often switched off, in their research papers, the multiple voices that such mixture achieved and stuck to explaining the influence of their chosen person in a kind of monotone straight third person. Maybe that is because as juniors and seniors they have written many research papers and the curriculum has well schooled them in that third person reporting voice. I am not sure, but exploring this phenomenon through other research methodologies than textual analysis may be something to consider for further study.

In terms of the lack of differences I saw between research papers and multigenre papers, illustrated earlier in the chapter, I have already discussed the possibility that for many students the requirement that every genre in the paper had to argue for the person's influence proved so strong as to push out voices that students could not mold to that thesis, or that formal and procedural issues in this unfamiliar approach to reporting research required so much attention that the easy play of voices did not happen. In addition, it may be that the instruction related to the other four major papers of the semester had a cumulative effect in developing a habit in students to think about all writing—even a paper that looks different, seems more creative, allows for more variety of texts (including the visual and aural), and so on—as needing to be “unified” and thesis-driven. A curriculum in which a multigenre paper assignment is just that, another assignment, may be too powerful to allow students to make a shift to the “alternative” without more support.

In addition, the required topic of “the most influential person of the millennium” may also have had a constraining effect on multivocality in students' multigenre papers. As a prewriting activity to help students decide on the focus person for their research papers (later to be used in their multigenre papers), students watch the last tape of a four-volume video produced by the Arts and Entertainment channel called “Biography of the Millennium: 100 People, 1,000 Years.” In this final part, A & E profiles the twenty “most influential people of the past 1,000 years” in some detail. In addition to watching

the video, the teacher also provides a list of the eighty people covered on the previous three videos, as well as the list of 250 names that formed the pool from which A & E chose its top 100 so that students have a large list of “candidates” to consider in picking their research topics. Though this material acts as a resource, the teacher does not limit students to people on A & E’s lists as long as they can find enough sources to help them argue for their chosen person’s influence. However, my experience with giving students lists of options tells me that except for the most adventurous, students rarely branch out beyond them and that may have especially been the case here since to come up with a name beyond the 250 A & E had brainstormed would have taken very creative thinking and depth of historical knowledge perhaps beyond the capabilities of these by-and-large “average” students. In addition, most of the people on the lists, especially those chosen for the top 100, are larger-than-life, primarily positive figures who have reached the status of cultural icons. These giants (e.g. Benjamin Franklin, Galileo, Shakespeare, Beethoven) have occupied such a prominent place in our cultural consciousness that around them have formed extensive mythologies causing people to give them uncritical devotion. This being the case, such figures may have provided students with too little ambiguity and too little opportunity to uncover a wide variety of perspectives (positive, negative, and everything in between) about them without a lot of intensive research, limiting their ability to create voices that could have offered a richly multifaceted portrait.

Still another possibility may be that using the same material for both their research paper and multigenre paper created too close a connection between the two assignments for students to break away from what they had done in the first paper in order to totally transform the material in keeping with the intentions and aspirations the multigenre assignment envisions. Students may not have had time or felt compelled to revisit their sources in order to ferret out other voices, other perspectives, other facets related to the people about whom they were writing. It may have been too easy just to take the material from the research paper, primarily, and choose genres that made sense for

reporting that material without much alteration. In this regard, use of material and genre choices may account for the strong echoes of the research paper I heard in some students' multigenre papers. And the structure and format of the researched argument may also have had undue influence on multigenre papers. Perhaps if students had done their multigenre papers before their "traditional" researched arguments, we might see increased multigenerality in the multigenre compositions. More research may help us find out about the possible influence of topic and assignment order. Regardless of the reason, however, this study suggests that "multigenre" does not necessarily mean complex open-endedness or multivocality and a more "traditional" paper is not necessarily "an uninterrupted, expository monolog" (Romano, Blending x).

## Note

<sup>1</sup> One comment about this notion of any genre being “objective: Some students, at least many that I have taught—I cannot speak for the students whose writings I studied because I did not interview them—seem from the way they talk about some genres to believe them to be voiceless, totally factual, and “objective.” Though I use that term here, I do not mean to imply that I believe this, too. What we know about words, utterances, and genres from Bakhtin shows that because they are continually being used, they are always dialogic. The voices associated with those uses attach themselves even if they are hidden, and a seemingly voiceless genre is not really voiceless at all. Thus, an obituary, election poster, resume, or timeline used in a student’s multigenre composition, because of its multiple uses in other rhetorical situations, contain the vocal residues of those other uses. In addition, because in all cases creating these pieces involves writer interpretation and selection of historical events, such genres by necessity communicate stance. Nonetheless, I call these four pieces “objective” to draw a parallel between them and the material of the student’s research paper. In the sense that they provide facts about Washington that, except for the obituary (which only lists place, date, and cause of death) speak to his influence in a detached third-person voice, they feel the same as the research paper in holding the material at arm’s length.

## CHAPTER 6: THEORETICAL AND PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF MULTIGENRE WRITING

The complexity of writing itself may be matched only by the complexity of trying to teach others to write, and there are no panaceas we can plug into a curriculum to solve the problems of either. This is not news, but I mention it here, as I conclude, because it seems important to thinking about this study's implications for negotiating such "innovative" assignments as the so-called multigenre paper. No easy answers, no simple recipes that I know of exist to try both to help students make sense of the complicated activity of writing and to aid teachers in providing that help through curricular decisions and writing pedagogies. Still, I offer some possibilities for multigenre writing, suggested by my exploration of genre and narrative theories and my examination of student writings.

One of the main questions I wanted to investigate when I began my study was "How is the concept of multigenre both constraining and generative?" Part of my reason for formulating this question had to do with all I had read in the literature on the multigenre paper assignment that suggested, in its overwhelming praise of it, that the idea is completely generative, that it opens virtually unrestrained creative outlets for students and transforms their writing. Before beginning my dissertation, the articles and books I had read and the conference sessions I had attended on the assignment powerfully affected me through their infectious, glowing endorsements and caused me to experiment with the idea in my own high school and university classrooms. However, at some point I began to look beyond my positive feelings about the assignment's value in engaging students and serving as an "alternative" (I use this term with caution, after having explored its problematic nature in Chapter 1) to other forms of research writing in an enjoyable multi-week unit, to question some of its assumptions (as I also discussed in Chapter. 1). With these new eyes, I began to wonder about constraints now that the multigenre paper as a school genre has occupied a spot in quite a few English classrooms and programs for at least five years. As a somewhat established school genre, the

multigenre paper, I speculated, has existed long enough to create “expectations for proper behavior, for generic etiquette,” to borrow Amy Devitt’s metaphor, and, as such, its conventions and its place in a school setting must constitute constraint (“Genre” 51). In studying this question, I have discovered a number of ways we may see that “multigenre” as both concept and construct involves both problems and generative possibility.

### The Problematics of Multigenre Writing

For one, certain elements already in place in educational institutions may constrain multigenre writing. As my analysis of student writings in Chapters 4 and 5 tries to show, “traditional” goals like teaching students to focus their ideas by emphasizing thesis-driven, expository writing may limit the possibilities for “alternative” writing assignments like the so-called multigenre paper. When brought into schools, messy and open-ended writing tasks like this come under institutional pressures to fit into classroom curricula and scheduling, to align with wider grade-level, departmental, programmatic, and/or school-district-wide goals, and, increasingly in elementary and secondary schools, to justify themselves as contributing to students’ performance on locally, state, and federally mandated tests. Such organizing and compartmentalizing pressures of education have little tolerance for experimentation and messiness.

Instead, long-standing structures in the schools expect students to color in the lines, exhibit neat handwriting, and often still to learn to write according to current-traditional pedagogies that move from sentence to paragraph to whole compositions like five-paragraph themes, even though such approaches have been out of favor for at least thirty years with compositionists. If one has difficulty believing that writing is still taught in this way and that current-traditional practices persist even in programs considered strong and cutting-edge, just consider that recently my tenth-grade daughter fit a discussion of her favorite activity, tennis, into a five-paragraph expository theme, an assignment staple of her highly regarded English curriculum. Also consider that many college freshmen—even (or maybe especially) those who have come through honors and

Advanced Placement English programs—think immediately and exclusively of the five-paragraph model when confronted with the term essay, having some difficulty imagining other ways to shape their ideas in writing. Ann Johns’ experience seems to parallel mine. She says,

In many secondary school classrooms in North America, The Writing Process has become standard and routinized. The written product is predictable: The Five Paragraph Essay, organized according to an assigned mode. Because of these past literacy experiences, our students [in a Freshman Success Program course at San Diego State University] brought a few templates for writing, and most attempted to apply these templates to every text, no matter what the task required. (243-44)

Because of such standardization, assignments like the so-called multigenre paper have an upstream swim in trying to escape long-held and deeply entrenched beliefs and practices that work on teachers and students in subtle, even unconscious, ways and constrain any possible revolutionary potential they may offer.

In addition, though the concept of multigenerality seems boundless and unconstrained, institutional resistance to ways of writing deemed foreign further creates problems for the “multigenre composition” genre. As a mixing of genres, it may encounter the same kind of skepticism about its appropriateness in the curriculum that autobiography does in a story Thomas Helscher tells. In this story, a professor warns a student that not everyone across the university will appreciate her including autobiography in an affirmative action essay. Helscher’s point is that though “the process of (re)defining the discursive subject of a community is ongoing” and that though at least some of us would like “to make the genres of our professional communities more fluid and open to new experiences, the reality of institutions is that they resist change and growth” (35). And some teachers’, students’, parents’, and policy makers’ lack of understanding of the complexities and politics of discourse practices exacerbates the



resistance of educational institutions (and other governmental entities that impinge on education) to practices not easily pigeon-holed for testing purposes. When these institutions exert curricular control through mandated standardized tests, the practice of writing multigenre papers is constrained further, and proponents often must try to prove the testability of such an assignment in order to justify its use (cf. the contention that teachers in Oregon can use “multi-genre writing” to conduct “targeted assessment throughout the content areas” in Davis et al. 9).

The multigenre concept translated into an increasingly codified assignment is not in and of itself powerful enough, necessarily, to guarantee what its potential offers for openness, creativity, multivocal play, and rhetorically conceived and constructed genres. When viewed as a product, a multigenre paper, as my study of student writing indicates, may not match its disruptive, alternative, generative ideal. It, like any other genre that enters a well-established, powerful, set-in-its-ways institution like a school, is subject to curricular pressure (both the rules on the books and the internalized and “hidden” curricula in the collective institutional mind and in the minds of individuals working within the institution. As Dobrin points out, we must not “overlook how powerful academic discourse can be” (55), as well the relentless pressure of testing, “one of the most powerful controls on the character of educational practice” and a stifling influence on “educational imagination” (Eisner 2).

Also, though the concept “multigenre” may be free and individual (and unfettered by practices to which we object in ostensibly templated forms like five-paragraph expository themes or “traditional” research papers), a multigenre composition—itself a genre stable enough for educators to describe in its classroom manifestations, for workshops to teach pedagogical approaches to it, and for teachers to teach students how to “do it”—has the kinds of constraints that any genre has. Even if we consider the idea more broadly in manifestations beyond the so-called multigenre paper taught in schools, a multigenre composition is by necessity constrained because it involves, as theories of

genre as sociorhetorical action have shown, “goal-directed, not arbitrary but quite deliberately selective” choices (Christie 22). First, as with all writing intended to speak to readers, each individual genre in a deliberately multigeneric composition involves choices that help shape and restrict what writers can and cannot do with their ideas through the conventions and purposes that help constitute author and audience roles, tone, style, form, and use of material.

Second, because individual generic pieces, though relatively autonomous (as discussed in Chapter 2), must work together to create a greater whole, a multigenre composition challenges writers not only to figure out how to get individual genres to work in and of themselves, to perform their individual sociorhetorical actions, but also to integrate them in ways that allow them to work with each other as egalitarian, open-ended entities that, nonetheless, do not sacrifice coherence for dialogism. A multigenre composition needs to find ways to be just chaotic enough to allow interacting viewpoints but not too chaotic. To keep readers engaged, a multigeneric piece must allow them to transact with it in ways that, though varied from reader to reader, make sense and do not cause them to dismiss or reject the text because of incomprehensibility.

Third, the topic of a multigenre composition constrains to some extent the kinds of genres that a writer may choose, and the fact that individual genres need to fit together into a comprehensible larger whole puts some limitation on genre choices. A writer needs to consider not only the appropriateness of each genre for communicating some aspect of the topic but also the fitness of one genre to interact with another in order for sensible relationships to develop among the genres. Also, because the idea of multigenre implies both “more than one” but also “different,” writers need to strive for some variety in their genre choices and cannot write all the pieces in the composition in, for example, the genre limerick or friendly letter. The process forces them to deal with the complexities of a variety of genres, rather than to figure out one kind and use it to generate and shape all their material.

For student writers, dealing with such shifting of sociorhetorical genre elements may be risky, frustrating, and even scary since doing so challenges long-standing ideas about what “good” writing is, what appropriate school writing looks like, and what constitutes legitimate goals of writing. In this, unfamiliarity can breed insecurity. Creating multigenre compositions forces students (especially those long-schooled in what counts as academic writing) out of their safety zones. They cannot, for example, conceive of their research writer role as a regurgitator of found information in a “neutral” report template. Instead, the multigenre composition assignment intends to shake up the dichotomies of creative/non-creative writing and writers, of the personal and impersonal, of the private and public, and of the subjective and the objective. In blurring the lines between such dualisms, writing multigenre compositions further challenges notions of unified subjectivity and of writing as monologic or monovocal. Indeed, such a challenge may be so complicated and unnerving that students and teachers who still hold a formulaic, container view of genre may become too immersed in form concerns and conventions in writing individual genres to use the experience of writing multigenre papers to examine and work with genre as sociorhetorical action or to explore the intertextuality of writing.

#### Multigenre as Generative: Implications for Teaching

Despite the constraints on and inherent in multigenre writing, however, it seems most powerful and generative, to answer the second part of my research question, when it provides an occasion for writers to study and understand the idea of intertextuality (i.e. the conversations all texts have with each other, the ways they draw on each other, answer each other, build meaning through their interactions). As my earlier theorizing suggests, a deliberately multigeneric composition, bounded enough to create a relatively stable environment to practice a play of texts and note their intertextual relationships, may serve as a concrete model of such intertextuality.

At the same time, however, if teachers assign a multigenre composition, they

should also recognize that as an artificial construct, it has the potential to undermine students' creative use of intertextuality even though multigenre writing seemingly contrasts with other school writing that some may view as curricularized and compartmentalized. Such school writing emphasizes discrete assignments not always connected to each other (e.g. students do a research paper for five weeks, then go on to study and write poetry, and then complete a unit on letter writing) and often are taught by writing pedagogies that continue to break up and label writing, separating out types from each other in perhaps neat but not very realistic ways. What some may not realize, though, is that in its current uses and tendencies toward the formulaic, the so-called multigenre paper may fall into some of these same traps. Thus, the practice of the assignment may jar with its potential to capitalize on the connections inherent in writing or to explore intertextual relationships. Even though writing a so-called multigenre paper may give students a less reified view of writing, even though creating a multigenre paper may also help students recognize that writing is not just a unified, monolithic practice generalizable to all occasions once we "get it," and even though it may give students an opportunity to practice rhetorical sensitivity in composing and to imagine themselves as someone other than a student writing for a grade, nonetheless, teaching so-called multigenre papers, like teaching any other genre, is not immune to reification and may only serve to point out the limitations of the construct.

The so-called multigenre paper tries to tell a different story about texts than other school writing, but its being an artificial construct of writing limits its ability to tell that story. In other words, the ideal of multigenre papers is for students to enact complex visions of their topics and write with versatility (Romano, Writing 127), to tackle their work with passion, and imagination, not to "leave the realm of self" and "feign some pure though unattainable objectivity" when they research (130). However, its status as a genre with institutional pressures on it cannot help but inhibit the multigenre paper's ability to tell its story of an escape from "[r]outine, perfunctory behavior in thinking and writing"

(130), the very same behaviors that some accuse more “traditional” school forms of perpetuating. Still, while realizing the limitations of multigenre papers, at the same time exploring in our research and teaching those pieces of writing deliberately constructed to be “multigeneric” seems worthwhile because doing so has potential to help students see that the idea of a unified subject and the duality of subjective/objective break down in practice (though in the case of the student writing I studied, this rarely came to fruition).

With sensitivity to the problematics of multigenre compositions, teachers may yet introduce them to students in order to shake them out of the box that causes them to separate themselves from researched “facts” and push them to explore the sociorhetorical contexts of these facts. Depending how we approach the process, writing a so-called multigenre paper may provide space for students to imagine other writer identities, audiences, and purposes, and it may offer an occasion for trying on a wide variety of rhetorical situations, experimenting with how these intersect with each other. It may also “help students to become genre theorists in the true sense: to destabilize their often simplistic and sterile theories of texts and enrich their views of the complexity of text processing, negotiation, and production within communities of practice” (Johns 240). In this, it may allow them to explore the concept of genre in order to see how genres shape texts, how we use genre knowledge to read and understand texts, how genre knowledge is necessary and builds over time, how genres change, and how genres use their conventions to accomplish work.

In addition, since students may not recognize a classroom as a social setting (but may view it as a place separate from their “social lives”) or as a space where “real” writing occurs for “real” purposes (and because not all schools have in place programs that connect students with situations outside a school building in the wider society), creating multigenre compositions potentially allows students to bring in other social settings and helps them escape their own skins, even, in order to try on the identity of someone else from a different time, place, orientation, gender, and so on. Such

experimentation provides an opportunity to make contact with the “other” in an activity that may bring increased understanding, appreciation, and empathy for viewpoints different from their own. Students taking on various personas for various purposes in various genres can “walk a mile” in the shoes of different people, to see how the discourses all around them affect their own ideas and language. It allows them to tell different stories about a topic and to imagine the “possible worlds” Jerome Bruner speaks of in connection with narrative.

Further, because it involves imagining many perspectives on a topic, multigenre writing is appealing from a cognitive standpoint because it requires many kinds of thinking. In fact, for those in education interested in various models of thinking and in teaching students to use their minds in multiple and complex ways, multigenre writing offers an occasion for this, as well. For instance, it provides an opportunity for students to use many of the “intelligences” posited by Howard Gardner, and it requires all the “competences” (knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation) suggested by the taxonomy Benjamin Bloom theorized over fifty years ago (though not in the hierarchical way he proposed). From a discourse standpoint, especially for those teachers and students who still think about discourse according to the current-traditional separation into “modes”—i.e. exposition, description, narration, argument, and, as first conceived by Alexander Bain’s formulation, poetry (Bizzell and Herzberg 663-64)—creating a multigenre composition provides an opportunity to reconnect some of these modes and break down what we now see as the artificial barriers erected between them. In conceiving of the whole composition, in creating connections between individual pieces, and in writing the individual pieces themselves, writers draw on and bring together different thinking and different kinds of writing. In all, the multigenre enterprise builds a complex web of meaning, generative in its posing a challenging rhetorical problem or puzzle that requires many intellectual and discursive resources to solve.

Indeed, the puzzle of the multigenre enterprise provides an occasion to generate a conversation with students about issues of language and writing that other writing pedagogies either do not address or, if they do, break into separate, unrelated parts. For example, multigenre papers allow teachers to talk about such issues as form, voice, purpose, coherence, tone, style, audience, and surface features, and to deal with written words as speech acts, social interactions, conversations, and dialogues that belong to the “universe of discourse” (Moffett) in which words are not just our own, as Bakhtin tells us, but others’ as well, resulting in double-voiced negotiations of meaning and internal dialogic struggles.

Beyond the opportunity for a contextualized discussion of such issues in an English or writing course, multigenre compositions also suggest a possible way to reorganize a course itself (or perhaps even a broader writing curriculum). In this, multigenre writing may help to break down barriers between types, similar to the way thematic approaches to teaching literature have allowed for more increased integration of poetry, short stories, novels, and so on. If we view it as an overarching principle, the concept of multigenicity may have more impact on our overall thinking about writing than if we plug the so-called multigenre paper assignment into existing curriculum structures in place of or in addition to other assignments. To be truly disruptive, multigenre writing cannot simply occupy a curricular slot as just one more unit for which teachers have only so much time before they feel pressure to move on to the next item. We need a multigenre vision, not a multigenre assignment.

Even more than its ability to pose an intellectually challenging educational puzzle and perhaps to shape writing instruction or curriculum, though, working with multigenre projects opens the door for an exploration of how the idea of “multigenre” is integral to much discourse in wider contexts (and not something invented by teachers as an “alternative” assignment or confined to obscure avant garde novels). In short, the multigenre-paper-as-school-assignment is in tune with students’ worlds. As Thomas

Newkirk puts it,

the concept of “multi-genre” is incredibly rich and, in a powerful way, matches the experience children today have with media. Simply watching my children channel-surf, sampling three soap opera plots concurrently, tells me that their concept of genre is different than mine. (They, of course, are appalled that I will sit through commercials when I could be flipping). (qtd. in C. Allen 15)

We are immersed in multigenres everywhere. “We live in a multi-world: multi-cultural, multi-lingual, multi-media, multi-educational” (Davis et al. 6). Thus, the multigenre paper assignment provides an opportunity to explore topics in multi-ways (multimodal, multimedia, multivocal, and so on) and to reach across the school/not-school divide to help students notice the complexity and excitement of our “multi-world.” It answers Frank Smith’s call for breaking down the “barricade” that school erects, “walling it off” from students’ other literacy activities, and it can bring school worlds and other worlds together (14). To accomplish this connection and help students grapple with their discursive worlds, the more tools teachers can offer the better, and a multiplicity of genres is one such tool. As Newkirk says, “a child who has mastered a repertoire of genres has a number of lenses with which to view experience: genres, while constraining, are also cognitive instruments for making sense of the world” (5), and writing instruction is remiss if it offers too narrow a range of genre experimentation.

#### Differences between Multigenre Papers and Other School Writing

In these and varied ways, multigenre writing is generative and can help us develop new ways for thinking about and approaching writing instruction in the twenty-first century. However, though we may now recognize both the problematic and generative nature of multigenre writing, does that mean that other school writing (like the “traditional” research paper) often set against the so-called multigenre paper is only constraining? To answer this, we may turn to one of my initial research questions (slightly modified from its original wording as a result of my on-going analysis): “How are



multigenre papers different from other school forms?” My discussion of student writings in Chapters 4 and 5 suggests that they may not necessarily be very different. In the hands of individual students operating in classrooms under a given teacher’s conception of the multigenre paper assignment, the experience may have varying results. And rather than setting one against the other (multigenre paper against expository essay or research paper, for example), we may learn more about other school genres if we allow multigenre papers to be a site for re-examining these more familiar and time-tested genres. Working with multigenre papers may allow us to talk about the multivocality, intertextuality, and multigenerality in many different kinds of writing (in school and beyond). Overall, though, my initial question of how different multigenre papers are from other school writings may be less important than the way allowing them into classrooms can help us think more complexly about all writing and writing instruction in school, no matter what papers we assign, with an eye to creating connections between writing in school and writing for wider purposes. Further questions, then, for both researchers and teachers may be “How and why do different writing pedagogies simplify writing processes and what effect does such simplification have on students’ ability to handle the complexities of writing for wider purposes?” or “What barriers exist between school writing and writing in other settings, and how might we break down those barriers to give students more ‘real-world’ writing experiences?”

### Theory and Multigenre Compositions

The first three chapters of this dissertation try to show how multigenre compositions (including multigenre papers in school) “work” if we view them through the lens of genre and narrative theories. To summarize briefly, deliberately multigeneric pieces simulate the qualities of genre sets, systems, ecologies, and ceremonials that some genre theorists have discussed. They vividly enact the dialogism of language theorized by Bakhtin and exhibit many of the qualities he attributed to the polyphonic novel. And they are narrative in three senses: 1) they create a plot in ways described by

narratologists; 2) they encourage narrative thinking; and 3) as a postmodern narrative, they challenge and disrupt grand narratives that tell the story of what acceptable research papers should look like and of what kinds of writing students should do in school. Indeed, they question the still all-too-typical separating out of modes of discourse in school writing and blur the lines drawn between subjective and objective discourses, personal and public writing, self and other, literature and not-literature, fiction and nonfiction, poetry and prose. In addition, they graphically illustrate the concept of intertextuality.

These theories shed interesting light on the possibilities of multigenre compositions and multigenicity operating in wider contexts and, if shared with students, may enrich their understanding of the possibilities of the multigenre papers they write in a school setting. More importantly, they show that the true import of multigenre compositions is that they provide a forum in which teachers can talk about language choices, rhetorical contexts of language, the relationships among texts, the artificiality of compartmentalizing texts, and so on. We need more of this kind of talk, but as Frances Christie laments, “[t]he last thing we ever do in schools [. . .] to my continuing regret, is teach our students to talk about language—about the kinds of things they do linguistically, and the kinds of changes and shifts in meaning (and hence thinking), which will be effected by taking up various linguistic choices” (31). From my experience, what she says seems true; however, individual teachers have it in their power to change this situation, and the multigenre enterprise can help them do this. As research has shown, even early elementary students have understanding of genre: “children as young as 7 years can have intelligent discussions about the ways different written texts are organised to make different meanings” (Christie 31). If we initiate such conversations, teachers may also continue to break down the barriers between writing done as school assignments (or, even more narrowly, writing done to fulfill English class assignments) and writing in wider contexts.

Multigenre papers have already proven to be novel, engaging, and individually satisfying for students as an assignment, and pedagogical strategies for teaching them abound in the literature. However, bringing genre and narrative theories into our work with the multigenre-paper-as-school-assignment may help connect the experience of writing such papers inside a classroom to textual processes and products beyond it. Forging such a connection may, then, extend the enthusiasm focused on multigenre papers to other language study and create an excitement about texts and their uses that may help cultivate a wider interest in language, writing, and reading, as well as a curiosity about discourse and genres for students to carry out of the classroom into their present and future lives. Given the increasing complexity of the texts of our world—written, oral, visual, electronic—exploring strategies to encourage such an interest seems an important educational goal and a site for further research.

#### Transformative Potential of Multigenre Writing

However, regardless of what strategies we may discover to teach the so-called multigenre paper (both those others have suggested and those in keeping with the theories of genre, narrative, and intertextuality I have studied in connection to multigenre writing in this dissertation), it seems to me that, as discrete assignments, multigenre papers and other “alternative” writing tasks that attempt to blur genre boundaries and experiment with conventions have limited potential to effect any kind of revolutionary change on institutionalized, acceptable, expected school writing. If we approach multigenre writing as just one more relatively short assignment we fit into a curriculum slot that occupies a few-week time/space between other units like writing a persuasive essay and studying Hamlet, the institution will probably do more to hammer it into place and smooth out its edges so that it becomes another peg that slips neatly in a curricular hole than it can do to disrupt that system. Given the increasing demands on teachers to “cover” more material, handle larger numbers of students, teach more testable “skills,” provide more writing experiences, deal with speaking, listening, reading, and writing all within 180 or so days of

a school year—and usually now (in every state but Iowa) to do all this under the threat of state-wide assessments often tied to graduation with all the political and financial baggage these tests carry with them—this is a common way for those wanting to work with multigenre writing to invite it into their classrooms. The question this situation brings up is a difficult but interesting one for further research: “What can we do to fully maximize the learning and genre experimentation potential of multigenre writing; to minimize the effects of curricularization, grading, rules, and the need to keep order; and to help teachers help students manage complex activities without reducing them to the formulaic?”

Individual teachers, even the most energetic, imaginative, and innovative, can probably do only a little to address this question, though there is certainly value in starting small. Even incrementally chipping away at language and textual barriers can make a start in isolated classrooms if we resist approaches that impose too many rules and grading practices that rigidify and reify. Though teachers’ leadership may be “constrained” by “whether administrators and policymakers see as their task the cultivation or repression of teachers’ capacities to lead both inside and outside the classroom” (Cuban 283), lead they will and their individual passion, energy, and vision can effect change. Eventually, Zen teaches, individual raindrops wear away rock. However, putting multigenre writing in a context more nurturing to its intentions and potential seems necessary to make larger changes in the way we think about writing.

For the concept of multigenerality to be substantially transformative, it needs a transformed context, a new way of reconceiving school writing. Otherwise, it cannot long remain immune to the reifying that standardized conceptualizations inevitably try to impose on anything that comes in contact with them. As Dobrin warns,

institutionally entrenched discourses like academic discourse appropriate nonacademic portions of [hybrid, or alternative discourses] with little effort because of the material weight academic discourse carries and the fact that it serves a gatekeeping function [. . .]. What I am ultimately cautious of here is that in

discussions of hybrid, mixed, or alternative discourses, that we not overlook the assimilative powers of academic discourse when it enters into a hybrid relationship with nonacademic discourse. (55)

In this warning, Dobrin focuses primarily on speakers' "home," "parent," or "personal" discourses, which are not precisely like multigenre compositions (though these too involve much personal investment and discursive risk-taking that may make students vulnerable). Indeed, there is nothing so fragile about multigenre projects that would suggest they, like "home" discourses, which intertwine in fundamental ways with a person's identity, are so valuable that we should shield them from what some see as the stultifying norming of educational institutions. However, as my study of student writings suggests, the curriculum and traditional values, like those that say a piece of writing should stick to a thesis, do work on other genres of writing that teachers may bring in to challenge the norm. If we want alternative writing assignments like multigenre compositions to have any possibility of transforming curricula, we need to consider how to give them a curriculum-shaping function, rather than treating them as just another unit in our English and writing programs, a language-tool-of-the-moment sandwiched between other units like career exploration, punctuation, or whatever. Instead of accepting the so-called multigenre paper as a pleasant diversion from the "traditional," we might ask the question "How might the concept of multigenerality transform a curriculum?"

If we stop calling the assignment a "paper" or even a "composition," terminology that anchors it into its assignment slot, but conceive it more broadly (as a multigenre project, multigenre course, multigenre program, for instance), it may serve as an umbrella that can protect and nurture most, if not all, of the language activities, kinds of writing, reading experiences, and skills we try to teach students already. We might picture a whole semester course structured by the concept of multigenre and culminating in a deliberately multigeneric project. For example, in the case of the course from which I collected student writings for this study, *Experiences in Writing*, the individual writing

assignments (i.e. mission statement, extended metaphor, virtue paper, “traditional” research paper) that preceded students writing multigenre papers could all be adapted and incorporated into a larger multigenre enterprise. Another idea may be to make the senior project that increasingly more schools require students to do as the culminating experience of their secondary education multigeneric, with students demonstrating what they have learned over the course of a year or years in some kind of multigenre project.

These uses of multigenre would not free it entirely from curricular and institutional constraints, but they may give it a role as a institutional “mover and shaker,” an opportunity to be a curricular creator (a shaping force) rather than a curricular cog. It could then be at least a part of the kind of questioning of disciplinary separation and boundaries that Stephen North describes as a “fusion-based” curriculum in Refiguring the Ph.D. in English Studies. In this curricular “experiment” (“Role” 263), the doctoral program at SUNY Albany has tried to

brin[g] disparate elements together under sufficient pressure with sufficient energy to transform them into a singular new entity, one quite distinct from any of the original components. Or, to put it in terms specific to English Studies: rather than ending the field’s divisions by breaking it up along the lines of conflict (dissolution), or packaging those conflicts for the purpose of curricular delivery (corporate compromise), the object would be to harness the energy generated by the conflicts in order to forge some new disciplinary enterprise altogether. (Refiguring 73)

In this fusion program, seven “branches” organize individual courses and interrelate with each other. Students’ course work must include at least four (but preferably) more of these branches, and each course asks students not to move centrifugally as they develop with increasing specialization into “rhetoricians” or “literary critics” or “creative writers,” with course work and subsequent comprehensive exams and dissertation marking out, separating students and their way of thinking and acting, into these different groups in

order to groom them to disconnect from each other. Instead, the program has a centripetal force (109) and cultivates “intradisciplinary inquiry” (93).

As integral to this larger program, North describes “what are essentially new forms—that is textual forms generated in response to the peculiar mixing of discourses” inherent in the program (*Refiguring* 85). He calls these “(re)combinatory” writings that “move among [a variety of discourses]. Mate them. Match them up. Merge them. Meld them” (165), and the specific examples he gives of such writings show them to be multigenre compositions like the ones I have been describing (cf. 164-230). These compositions “(re)combine,” in North’s terms, different discourses—e.g. from rhetoric and composition, creative writing, and students’ lives outside academia—through different texts and genres—e.g. an academic discussion, a “poem/story” (170), an autobiographical account—into an integrated whole that gives “equal status” to all (175), breaking down the divisions between the “‘factual’ or ‘literal,’” the “‘imaginative’ or ‘fictive’” (176), the personal and public, the academic and non-academic. In analyzing one student’s project, North admits “we have no convenient generic label” but settles on “collage” of texts as a likely name for it (185). Such labeling hearkens back to the name the teacher whose students’ writings I studied gave to their papers (i.e. the “multi-genre collage”), as well as what may be the first naming and academic discussion of a “multi-genre composition” in Winston Weather’s “Grammars of Style: New Options in Composition” from 1976 (See “Collage/Montage” 146-47). In addition, North describes performances and technology/computer-based projects that students do as “fusion experiments” in the program (*Refiguring* 189-91) that seem like the sorts of multigenre compositions I have been describing.

In all, the point here is that the kinds of “(re)combinatory” compositions Ph.D. students are creating at SUNY Albany—because they are grounded and contextualized in a larger program, in larger academic discursive practices—may (and I say may with some reservation) have more rhetorical relevance than the so-called multigenre paper used

elsewhere because, as North says, they embody “the spirit of the curricular experiment that sponsored their production.” Moreover, they may also have more disruptive and transformative curricular power as integral to a program that shares its goals. North articulates succinctly the promise, possibility, and hope of what such multigeneric writing may offer:

In our headiest moments, we find ourselves talking about writings like these [the multigeneric, multi-modal, multivocal projects he has been describing] as documents from the future of English Studies. Not documents about that future [. . .] but from it: texts sent back, as it were, from discursive places that the discipline itself has not necessarily gone yet [. . .] a context framed, as it were, by the edges of the boundaries we are used to honoring from the inside, out there on the frontier of interrelationships [. . .].

Ideally, then, North sees the vibrancy of “(re)combinatory” writings that cross borders, mix genres, give equal voice to a wide variety of discourse not as “new means to an old end,” not as “alternative,” innovative writing that gets us back to the same kind of course credit or academic degree but as a force that helps shape and establish “new ends.” The vision is more global than local, a matter of “refiguring English Studies to suit these texts” (“Role” 263) and not of finding or making room for new texts in the old regime.

His idea seems important in thinking about the potential of multigenre writing in primary, secondary, and undergraduate education. As much as I agree with Romano that there should be “equal room made at all levels of school for writing that renders experience” (Writing 7-8)—in other words, a place for narrative and multigeneric writing—when he argues that there should also “always [. . .] be room in academia for expository modes of writing” (7), he perpetuates a dualistic mindset that pits “traditional” against “alternative.” We do not stretch ourselves with a new awareness of the complexity of writing if we dichotomize narrative or multigenre writing, setting it against exposition. And if we continue to dichotomize, the so-called multigenre paper, or



any other writing assignment for that matter, can do little to disrupt this system because by itself, as my student study suggests, it is not strong enough to withstand the pressures of institutional norming influences. To achieve disruption, we need a new vision, not a new assignment. We need to imagine an educational “ecotone,” a transitional zone” in which “traditional” and “alternative” texts, old and new ends, may meet and confront the “tensions” between them and in which we may examine both their similarities and differences, rather than keeping them in separate, armed camps pitted against each other (Krall 4).

Creating such a space on the margins of these camps for dialogue through the vehicle of multigenre compositions, though, may not be easy. I, like North, am also a realist and understand the rigidity of academic institutions. I understand that much in the schools still runs on the “assembly line” model (Eisner 8), the “logic of scientific management” (Giroux 2; Apple 47), and the “banking system” (Freire 58). Such traditions mean that “classroom practices tend to be stable over time. [. . .] Instead of fundamental changes [. . .] the basic conservatism of the occupation would favor tinkering with methods, polishing up techniques, and introducing variations of existing ones” (Cuban 19). I recognize that expecting too much out of multigenre compositions is deluded thinking. Indeed, suggesting a transformative potential may simply be asking them to deliver something they cannot, or in North’s words, putting in “a pretty tall order for what are also, in some sense, ‘school’ writings” (“Roles” 263). North recognizes “the irony of [. . .] having to explore these alternatives to the hegemony of the argumentative academic prose essay in—what else?—an argumentative prose essay” (163-64). That irony resonates in my dissertation project as well and speaks maybe more vividly than anything else could to the current limitations on the ability of multigenre writing to revolutionize an academic discipline like English Studies or a high school English curriculum.

Yet, I am at heart an optimist and believe in the value of small steps. I believe in

the ability of teachers to be agents of change. Even more, I believe that what students do on their own as writers and learners, in spite of what various facets of educational systems try to force them do, make them educational leaders and agents of transformation, as well. One thing that my study suggests is that whether or not teachers are assigning multigenre papers in their classrooms, students' writing is already multivocalic and often multigeneric. Every day they are already reshaping and reforming school writing as they bring with them into classrooms all the discourse practices of their worlds. Awareness of this may be step one in tapping into and nurturing the wide variety of language use and choice in which students are engaging. Individuality, separation, compartmentalization get work done in school and beyond, but I wonder about the insights we may gain and the directions we may go if we break down some of the walls we have erected between languages, discourse types, textual forms, disciplinary and subject matter areas, school and not school—between people. What amazing things may happen if we sacrifice some of the order, efficiency, and neatness in education? That to me is a provocative question worth exploring further. Even if we worry about testing demands, even if we and our students have to follow orders and rules and curriculum mandates, the concepts of multigenerality, multivocality, and intertextuality may give us opportunities to conceptualize ways to blur boundaries and create connections between a wide variety of discourse practices. Indeed, they may provide some freedom, “a fresh breeze” as Virginia Monseu says in her editor's introduction to a recent issue of English Journal devoted to “multigenre teaching” (15), the “fresh air” Maxine Greene calls for in The Dialectic of Freedom (134), as well as—more importantly—a vocabulary to talk about these ideas with students, other teachers, parents, and administrators. In this, multigenre compositions can perhaps even effect some change in the way these people may rigidly think about writing.

As Deborah Tannen and others have pointed out, the language we use to frame ideas shapes them. For example, in discussing the combative nature of the “argument

culture” in America, Tannen points out that if we do not change our language, we will have trouble eliminating this often bitter “culture” that divides and tears down, often disheartens and disaffects, and creates “more and more anonymity and disconnections, which are damaging to the human spirit and fertile ground for animosity” (284). She says we should “all try to catch ourselves when we talk about ‘both sides’ of an issue—and talk instead about ‘all sides’” (285). In much the same way, we may do greater justice to all texts if we “catch ourselves” when we talk about writing in terms of binaries, instead acknowledging and celebrating the multivocalic and multigeneric in all texts. Rather than perpetuating dualities like alternative versus conventional, “traditional” research paper or expository essay versus multigenre paper, we should look for the alternative in the conventional and the multigeneric in the “traditional” or expository so that texts are not dichotomized but “in a constant dialectical relationship” (Freire 35) that helps us critically consider them across a spectrum. And we should avoid setting up such a spectrum of multigenicity rigidly and absolutely or thinking about it in fixed ways. On the contrary, we should allow for further reflection on and rethinking of even our spectrums, just as James Moffett continued to rethink the literary points-of-view spectrum thirty years after he first conceived it (Suhor 5-13). Fluid thinking that builds bridges, finds connections, and discovers relationships (intertextual and others), through such vehicles as the multigenre enterprise, may help us tell a truer story of the wide variety of texts being composed in our digital, multigeneric age than the dualistic story to which we still too often cling.

## **APPENDICES**

## Appendix A

*Parent/Student Consent form (with introductory letter)*

526 NE 5th Street  
Ankeny, Iowa 50021  
September 17, 2001

Dear Parents/Guardians,

As part of the dissertation for a Ph.D. degree from Michigan State University, I am doing a study of different kinds of writing inside and outside of school, with a special focus on multigenre compositions. Since your child does both what we might call “traditional” school writings and a multigenre research paper in his/her English class Experiences in Writing with Ms. \_\_\_\_\_, I am interested in analyzing a number of papers her students write for various assignments in this course. I hope to apply to these papers the writing theories I am researching.

Participation in this study involves no extra time or work for participants beyond what is usually needed to complete the papers Ms. \_\_\_\_\_ assigns. All that is required is for students to allow Ms. \_\_\_\_\_ to collect and give me a copy of the papers they turn in during the semester. Also, in inviting students to take part in my study, I want to make clear that participation is voluntary and that there is no penalty for not participating. Students who agree to be part of the project may withdraw at any time.

All results will be treated with strict confidence, and students will not be identified in the report of the research. Their work will be treated with respect and will not be judged but only analyzed for illustration and comparison purposes. I believe that students who agree to participate by allowing me to work with their writings will benefit by contributing to the growing body of knowledge about multigenre and other school writing without entailing any personal risk. In all, participants’ privacy will be protected to the maximum extent allowed by law. If requested (and within the restrictions of confidentiality stated above), results will be made available to participants.

If you have any questions or concerns, feel free to call me (515-965-1376) and/or Ms. \_\_\_\_\_ to discuss the project further. If you have questions regarding your son or daughter’s role and rights as a research participant, you can contact David E. Wright, Ph.D., Chair of the Michigan State University Committee on Research Involving Human Subjects (517-355-2180).

To indicate whether or not you agree to allow your daughter or son to participate in the study, please complete page two of this consent form and have him or her return it to Ms. Wessling by Friday, February 1, 2002.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Michelle Tremmel  
Ph.D. candidate  
Michigan State University

Yes

No

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ (student's name) is allowed to participate in writing research being conducted by Michelle Tremmel. Participation will involve him or her giving copies of papers (s)he writes in Ms. \_\_\_\_\_'s Experiences in Writing class to Ms. Tremmel for analysis. (S)he may withdraw from the project at any time, and his/her identity will not be associated with samples of writing or researcher findings in the report of the study results.

Parent/Guardian's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Student's signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**UCRIHS APPROVAL FOR  
THIS project EXPIRES:**

**SEP 17 2003**

**SUBMIT RENEWAL APPLICATION  
ONE MONTH PRIOR TO  
ABOVE DATE TO CONTINUE**

## Appendix B

### *Student Paper Excerpts with Brief Introductions*



*1. Excerpts of "Symbolizing my Life," one student's extended metaphor comparing herself to a cup of hot chocolate. These demonstrate an instance in which an "inviter" voice not only interrupts the "explainer" voice expected in this expository writing assignment but so dominates it as to serve a structuring role.*

You just stepped inside from the frigid outdoors. And what are you craving? A warm mug of hot chocolate. You love the way it feels when it goes down, warming your body step by step. So why am I talking about hot chocolate? Because the contents of hot chocolate symbolize my personality; the mug, milk, chocolate, and the marshmallows.

First you have to choose a mug. [. . .]

Next you have to add the warm milk to the mug. [. . .]

Next comes the main part of the drink, the chocolate. Without the chocolate all you have is dull warm milk. Just like in life, having fun is the main thing worth living for. Chocolate resembles my fun personality. The chocolate adds sweet flavor to the drink so that people will actually want to drink it. That's the way I hope people see me. I hope they want to go somewhere because they know I am there and will help add to the fun and entertainment. The chocolate can be either full of calories, or fat free chocolate. Just like the chocolate with lots of calories I can be fun of energy and outgoing, or I can be like the fat-free chocolate and be more relaxed and boring. Which chocolate I represent depends on what mood I am in.

Next you add the part that makes the drink enjoyable. The marshmallows [. . .]

Just like you mix the chocolate, milk, and marshmallows to make the hot chocolate, you mix friends, passion, excitement, and to make my personality. As a whole the entire experience with your chocolate should have been very calming and relaxing. Just like me, I am always there for my friends if they need someone to turn to. The

warmness of the mug of hot chocolate should have made you feel safe, so that you knew you always had something to turn to when you were cold. (23A EM)

*2. Excerpt of "Walt Disney," one student's research paper. This demonstrates an assertion of the genotext manifested in font irregularities.*

Walt Disney hits thirty and he had already become a public figure, and because of his genius he inspired other talented individuals to follow their dreams. You could see his popularity everywhere you looked, on the pages of magazines and numerous newspapers. As for his many creations they could be spotted everywhere even on children's ambulances, which were decorated inside and out to lessen children's fears when traveling to and from the hospital (Cole 72).

Walt Disney loved to work with children and always hoped that his creations would influence the creativity of others. With his creations he wanted everyone to expand their imaginations. "Walt Disney endured and built against the odds of his wonderful vision." "When you wish upon a star" ("American Dream"). Walt Disney went for his dreams and accomplished so many amazing things. Disney's accomplishments made him a legend, which have affected his and many other people's lives.

"Disney's shows and attractions were all very popular because what all of the creations did were stimulate the imaginations of people of all ages" (Cole 7). Disney later died of lung cancer on December 15<sup>th</sup>, 1966. Before Disney died he left our world with so many amazing things, and his legend has been carried on. Today children around the world watch cartoons and if it weren't for Walt Disney children may not have been able to have that chance. "The spirit of Walt Disney will continue to entertain, inspire, and stimulate our imaginations for generations to come" (Cole 101)

(8B RE)

3. Excerpt of “X Marx the Spot,” one student’s research paper on Karl Marx. This passage (paragraph four of the piece) demonstrates an assertion of the genotext manifested in the appearance of nonsensical text within the body of a discussion of Marx’s influence.

physical action and for people to participate in violent revolution if they wanted economic conditions to change. He believed that Capitalist systems were so firmly established, that it would take violence similar to the French Revolution of 1789 to bring about their downfall. Marx insisted that all history was the history of class struggles—struggles between those who had and those who had not. “Marx’s view of history became popular among the poorer peoples of the planet. They could apply his thinking more easily to their own situations” (Feinburg 69). Marx’s revolutionary political theories and ideals became known as *Marxist* ideas, or *Marxism*. “Marxism is the synthesis of revolutionary theory and revolutionary practice” (Bukharin 6).

Little did Marx know that after his death in 1883, his envisions of a new form of government supported by a classless society of the working proletariat coming to power would become real. In November of 1917, a group of dedicated Russian Marxists, who called themselves *Bolsheviks*, seized power from the new government of Russia and set about establishing a Marxist regime. Fueled by Marx’s early writings and revolutionary ideas, the Bolsheviks grew in number and began to catch the attention of Western and European governments as potential threats to their system of Democracy. “Marxism is often written off as simply a new mass religion by its opponents” (Bukharin 1). A man named Vladimir Ilich Lenin would later come into the picture BAD BAD

BAD	BAD	BAD	BAD
BAD	BAD	m each according to his ability to each	

“Marx’s ideas, as interpreted by Lenin, continued to have influence throughout most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century” (Marx 2).

(13D RE)

*4. Excerpt of "Bob Dylan: A Folk-Song Legend," one student's research paper. This passage (paragraphs three through five) demonstrates an assertion of the genotext in emotional outbursts that interrupt the reasonable phenotext-sanctioned tone in the rest of the paper.*

According to Life Magazine in the fall of 1990, "He (Dylan) didn't have much of a voice, but people listened anyway; the words he was singing required it." He defined a generation, with his honest songs of political situations and his own personal life experiences. Listening to one song could teach you a lot about the time of the sixties.

I don't really know what the hell I should write it just doesn't make sense to me. How can I explain it into more depth about this guy and how influential he is? What else can you say about Bob Dylan? People both young and old know who he is. Everybody has at least one of his songs that have touched him or her. When I first heard one of Dylan's songs, I didn't know what to think of it. It took a few more songs to get me into him, but now I'd say that I am obsessed with the guy's songs. The words really mean a lot to me, and they give me good memories of some of my old friends.

But to the beginning of Bob Dylan's career. Dylan had only been in New York for less than a year when he recorded his first album in November 1961. The folk songs that Dylan sang offered somewhat of clean breath that was honest and fair. People were and still are attracted to this type of music. (2B RE)

*5. Excerpt of "Furthering My Future," one student's mission statement. This passage (paragraphs four through six of the paper) demonstrates an assertion of the genotext in emotional recollections about the writer's deceased friend that interrupt her focus on explaining her own goals for the future.*

The time may come where I have to make a choice in my life, which I will have to deal with everyday. If I choose a decision that I don't want to do then I am struck with that choice until I get another opportunity. It all comes down to if you are willing to try your best; you can see the difference in the long run. The one decision I have chosen to make is the fact that I want to further my education. I plan on attending Ellsworth Community College, and transfer to a four-year college and major in elementary education. The fact that I love working with children gives me the idea to become a teacher. The joy I have working with children brightens my day when I am feeling down.

When you get in your car and go to school you don't expect anything to happen, you just think it is another regular day just like the day before. That wasn't the case for my best friend. She was driving to school just like a normal person when a drunk driver hit her. I will never forget the phone call that I received it was the most devastating point in my life. I cannot believe that she is gone we had so much fun together. If I would have had any idea that the night we talked was the last time I wouldn't have yelled at her telling her she was worthless. So in a way I feel to blame and I guess I will for awhile.

The way I plan to accomplish my mission statement would be to live my life to the fullest and have as much fun as I am now and keep on having fun. (22C MS)

6. *The report of primary research in "Compassion--From Friends to Bisexuals," one student's virtue paper. This second part of the paper demonstrates emotions associated with the genotext totally disrupting the phenotext.*

### **Introduction and Rationale**

To help myself understand how other people feel about being compassionate, I did a survey. The question that I asked people is what follows: You got into an argument with a good friend and you haven't seen them or even talked to them in the past three days. Do you call them to see what's going on? I hoped to understand the value of compassion to other people that I know.

### **Design and Methodology**

My survey didn't go very well so I decided to go on a different approach. I did this according to something that happened to me today.

So my paper now has nothing to do with the survey and research that I did. My paper is now about how others act towards others who are not their own kind.

### **Findings and analysis**

My best friend is bisexual. She wasn't that way when we became friends, but I helped her to realize to love who her feelings tell her to love. Then today when somebody said something horrible about gays and lesbians, I just didn't know what to do with this anger and rage for what this one person said. I have compassion for all types of people, I wish that everybody else did too.

### **Conclusion**

In my final conclusion I chose to do something different. Over fifty percent of the people at \_\_\_\_\_ High School are not compassionate towards others who are not like them. They say what they want without disregard to how the others around them feel about certain subjects. (2B ED/VR)

*7. One student's complete mission statement, which demonstrates emotions associated with the genotext taking control of the writing away from the phenotext.*

### How I will live my life

Are you happy with your life? What makes you happy?

Why is that important to you? Are these the three most important questions in your life? My mission is to live my life by what is important to me and what makes me happy, not what makes others or the greater good happy I'm gonna do it for me and maybe one other person. What makes you happy? What is it that drives you, that's what makes you happy right at least it should be your driving force in life right? To do the things that make you happy that gives your life meaning, stability, and helps you to get up the next day. That is why you get up to go do whatever you have to keep living the way you want to live. Whether it is god or money every person has some reason to get out of their beds in the morning and live their pathetic little lives with the illusion that they are contributing to the whole, Their family or even their country. Is that why we live our lives for the greater good? For ourselves?, For Jesus?, or what?. I'm not going to answer any more of those where are you going to be in the next five or ten years questions because I now know that I'm going to be happy with whatever I chose. As long as it is far away from teachers who waste 30 minutes of my time for something that they themselves do every day. I am not looking for attention I get more then I need by good teachers, good friends and my family. (How would belching a uncontrollable bodily function constitutes seeking attention any way is out of my intellectual capacity maybe not the administration's though) Back to living my life to its fullest potential that is really my point to all this that you read before you. I am tired of people wasting my time over small little things leave me alone I'm not hurting anyone am I? If I am tell me did I hurt you when I released the gas in my stomach that made me feel uncomterable did it injure you in some way offend you some how enlighten me please. Tell me how I hurt you so



bad that I had to have 1800 seconds of my life wasted did you think of that before you passed judgment on me and sent me to rot away my priceless time. That is also my mission to think of how my actions will affect others before I act. I will not allow others to take control of what is mine when I want it. To live and let live that is what my new motto will be and to help others to live that way. (those who I come into contact with any way) I hope that after reading this a second time you will stop for a moment, just a one or two minutes think about your life, done good are you doing what is important to you? I hope that you are because you can never be who you want doing what you don't.

(7B MS)

**8. Excerpt of one student's mission statement (paragraphs six and seven), demonstrating the embedding of the genre "acronym."**

I have always been a pensive person. Thinking is a huge part of my life. I'm not sure how I can do it, but when I'm in the mood I can sit somewhere and stare into space and just think for hours. I think about everything. Whatever I'm curious about or whatever is bothering me, I think about. Being thoughtful is something that I consider important in my life. You can't go through life without thinking.

T: Think clearly  
H: Have an open mind  
O: Offer your mind to help others  
U: Use your head when you need to  
G: Give To Others  
H: Have your goals in mind  
T: Think before you speak  
F: Figuring out the answers isn't always the most important thing  
U: Understand others point of view  
L: Learn everything you can

Something that I have always enjoyed doing is helping others. It has always been important to me. I like the people around me to be happy and doing what I can to help them and make them happy is something I like doing. Being "helpful" is something that is very important to me.

H: Help others  
E: Everyone is equally important  
L: Listen  
P: Patience is a virtue  
F: Friends are important  
U: Understand the problem before you try to help  
L: Love (5C MS)

9. *Excerpt of "Tupac Shakur" (paragraph five and the opening of paragraph six), demonstrating the embedding of poems in one student's research paper.*

Tupac started to be a real influence on people's lives when he joined the gang M.O.B., when he was 17. M.O.B. stands for member of the bloods a worldwide gang that got started in the mid to late 1970's. Most of Tupac's influence was in his poetry, which later in time were put to a beat were made into platinum selling records. In the time that Tupac was here he was able to write and publish a book, have 10 albums and 4 after he died, and was the main Characters in 6 Block Buster movies. In the book "The Rose That Grew From Concrete" he wrote about his life and how his life effected you like in the poem The Rose That Grew From Concrete he talks about himself in and creative way by referring to himself as a rose.

Did you hear about the rose that grew from a crack in the concrete?

Proving nature's law is wrong it learned to walk with out having feet.

Funny it seems, but by keeping it's dreams, it learned to breathe fresh air.

Long live the rose that grew from concrete when no one else ever cared

I believe that this is a perfect example of what Stephanie [a person quoted earlier in the paper] mentioned above. He was so dedicated to make you as a reader feel as he did. Tupac died for what he had faith in and that he felt like he accomplished exactly what god wanted him too that was to express his own free will as he said to Vibe editor Kevin Powell in the last interview from jail while awaiting trial. His free will was to spread the words of the black community his drama like he did in the poem entitled The Event Of My Demise.

#### The Event Of My Demise

In the event of my Demise  
when my heart can beat no more  
I Hope I Die For A Principle  
or A Belief that I had Lived 4  
I will die Before My Time  
Because I feel the shadow's Depth

so much I wanted 2 accomplish  
before I reached my Death  
I have come 2 grips with the possibility  
and wiped the last tear from My eyes  
I Loved All who were Positive  
In the event of my Demise

Tupac wasn't a very big influence on the white community but they knew that he existed. But he was the voice of the struggling black community. (16B RE)

*10. Excerpt of "Breaking Through the Glass Ceiling" (paragraph four and the first two sentences of paragraph five), demonstrating the embedding of the genre of "reflective comment" in one student's research paper.*

After spending two years as the Commander for the Staff and Faculty Company at fort McClellan, Alabama a new and exciting opportunity opened up for Claudia. During her time in WAC training she had been told to list the MOS or Mode of Services that she was interested in at the time. Although it wasn't open for women yet, Claudia listed Military Intelligence as her choice. In August 1975 she was one of three women to attend the Military Intelligence Officer Advance Course at Fort Huachuca, Arizona. This would be a monumental step in her career. Throughout her career Claudia continued to strive to be the greatest possible soldier. In July of 1976 she was one of two women to go to Korea, the only female officer. Her presence there opened the doors for the other women to participate in the field exercises that were held. Upon her return to the United States after two years in Korea Claudia attended a Cryptology course at the National Security Agency as one of three women in the class. This was all before attending the United States Army Command and General Staff College, a vital step in continuing to be promotable in the Army (Kennedy 312).

*"These days, the sound you hear overhead in the Army and at the Pentagon isn't an airplane breaking the sound barrier, it's the sound of the glass ceiling being shattered. And the Army and the Pentagon are better because of it." (Women's Stories 1)*

The change in the military that allowed Claudia to be able to take such an active role can be attributed to the movement for equal rights for women that led to demands for equal opportunity in all fields, including national defense, and a gradual removal of restrictions against them. The Armed Forces Integration Act of 1948 had given women a permanent place in the military services by authorizing women in the regular Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marine Corp. (24C RE)

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