FROM PAGE TO SCREEN: CHANGING TEXTUAL LANDSCAPES IN A DIGITAL WORLD

by

MELANIE KITTRELL HUNDLEY

(Under the Direction of Mark Faust)

ABSTRACT

New digital technologies are being invented and refined at a rapid pace making available new tools for writing narrative fiction; these new tools open possibilities, provide opportunities, and create challenges for the authors using them. This study uses poststructuralism, Bakhtinian (1981, 1986) theories, Urban's (2001) accelerative culture, and Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) concept of the rhizome to theorize writing narrative fiction in a hypertext medium. The study uses three data sources: library and Internet research, an interview study with authors of hypertext fiction, and a self-study of a novice hypertext writer. The library and Internet research provided a theoretical explanation of the changes that occurred in the move from writing print fiction to writing hypertext fiction. The participants in the author interview study and self study described (1) the importance of the use of visual structures, (2) a shift in how they perceived their final products, (3) a change in how they used traditional story elements, and (4) a resistance to linearity in their hypertext fiction. I examined the data gathered in library and Internet research, interviews, and writing journals looking for common themes, disjunctures, and similar terminology. The data gathered for this study were collected and analyzed in a hypertext that allowed for cross-linking between the library research, field notes, interviews, and writing

journals. Both the library research and the participant data depicted multiple ways in which writing fiction changed as the medium changed. Both sources of data described the disruption of the linear text with the use of internal and external linking and branching, non-sequential and multisequential plotlines, resistance to closure, incorporation of image, sound, and movement, as well as explicit reader choice. The results of this study—the writing of narrative fiction does change as it shifts mediums from print to screen—have implications for classroom teaching. This research project produced a different view of writing narrative fiction than is currently present in traditional school classrooms.

INDEX WORDS: Hypertext, Digital Fiction, Computer, Writing, Narrative, Storytelling, Bakhtin, Deleuze and Guattari, Foucault, Author, Poststructuralism, Writing Process Theory, Hypermedia

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DEDICATION

For Granny who provided unwavering support and love as well as an endless supply of stories.

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CHAPTER ONE

WRITING AND TECHNOLOGY

In one of my first graduate school classes, I was asked to provide a list of terms that described me, who I was, where I fit. The first two words I chose were *teacher* and *writer*. These dual identities frequently came into conflict while I was a classroom teacher. I often felt, as a writer, that school did a great deal to take the joy out of student writing. The kinds of writing that I taught were very different from the writing that I did on my own.

I taught high school in a county in Georgia that was both suburban and rural. Roughly half of the county was heavily populated with stores and subdivisions, apartment complexes and parks, movie theaters and restaurants. The other half of the country was populated with family farms, corporate dairy and poultry farms, and professional hunting clubs. The demographics of the students in my classroom were very much like the county. Roughly half of my students were accustomed to the pressures of suburban life while the others were accustomed to the pressures of farm life.

I had twin boys in my eleventh grade American literature class. Over one weekend, they shot (with a BB gun) the tractor on their parents' farm. They chose to write about it as part of their weekly writing assignment. At first, they tried to write the story separately. That didn't work because they wanted to include how they both felt. Then, they tried to write the story together. That didn't work either as they disagreed vehemently on several points. Finally, in a writing group session, we decided that they would do a combination of the writing together and separately, and they would present their story using the PowerPoint computer program. Jake and John (pseudonyms) wrote five sections together: The Beginning, The Argument, The Fight, The

Shooting, and The Repercussions (See Figure 1.1). Then each boy wrote his version of the rest of the story and linked them to the screens that they had created together. This was a story that both Jake and John were happy with as each told his version, and no one version was more important than the other. This equality would not have been possible in a print text, but in this hypertext version neither story had priority over the other. I watched as the boys and the other students in the class read and reread the PowerPoint story and thought, "Huh, there's something going on here." This classroom event was a turning point for me in several ways. It was a time when I allowed my writer's instincts to overpower my teacher's instincts. It was also a time that led me to examine the role that technology could potentially play in narrative, storytelling, and the classroom.

Figure 1.1

Background of the Problem

I was trained to read, write, and teach based on print texts and print literacies. Although I included art, film, and drama in my teaching, I considered those texts as supplements to the print texts. I was a product of the type of schooling I had, and I reproduced much of it as a teacher. In school, students are trained to read traditional print texts; the familiar canon texts taught in school are usually taught as singular works of a singular author. They are also trained to write according to literacy practices associated with print texts. The characteristics of what counts as good writing is based on print texts; the emphasis is on linearity, strong beginnings and endings, and closure. Bolter (1991b) argued that the "shift to the computer will make writing more flexible, but it will also threaten the definitions of good writing and careful reading that have been fostered by the technique of printing" (p. 2). The reading and writing strategies for print texts do not necessarily translate to the reading and writing of digital texts.

I allowed Jake and John to create a text for a classroom assignment that did not match any of the forms I was expected to teach. The English department in my school had a checklist for its teachers that listed the genres and forms that were to be taught at each grade level. There was little creative writing on the checklist. Because I am a writer as well as a teacher, I worked hard to include narrative and poetry wherever possible; however, I made sure that I taught all the forms on the checklist first. As a teacher, I struggled (albeit briefly) with the decision to let the boys use PowerPoint to tell their story. As a writer, I saw the value in choosing a format that fit the story. I realize that by "changing the material conditions of the reading and writing experiences, computer technology is changing and will continue to change readers' expectations of text and writers' goals and strategies for producing texts" (Hill and Mehlenbacher, 1996, p.

264). Jake and John's digital story created several issues for me. I had to rethink what counted as good writing for the assignment and figure out how to assess a collaborative story.

My generation is a transitional one—a bridge between the dominance of print and the emergence of digital technologies. We have come (or not) to digital technologies as adults, and we learn these technologies with a strongly ingrained print sensibility. We were trained in print reading and writing practices first, and this influences how we work with digital technologies. The students in our classrooms have had very different reading and writing experiences outside of school that have influenced their expectations of text. They come to digital technologies as children and grow up with digital texts sitting along side print texts. Hill and Mehlenbacher (1996) argued that "more and more of our reading and writing is done online, and this changes the ways in which we approach the task of reading and writing in ways that are obvious, and others that are subtle, yet profound" (p. 258). The changing textual landscape requires changing strategies for reading and writing as Hill and Mehlenbacher asserted, saying, "the forms in which digital texts are produced, transmitted and received require new strategies for reading and writing effectively" (p. 258). These theorists are not naming what these new strategies are or will be as digital technology is still in its infancy and not enough work has been done to be able to articulate specifics. Digital technologies are developing rapidly, but their use or the implications of their use is not being theorized. Hypertext provides the

> opportunity to remap [our] conceptions of literacy, to reconsider the complex, interdependent nature of the ties between technology, society, and the individual in the acts of writing, reading and thinking. Adding the concept of hypertext to theory does not replace other definitions or conceptions of writing and reading; it opens those definitions up to debate and change." (Johnson-Eilola, 1994, p. 204)

Because hypertext is a new technology of reading and writing and is changing the textual landscape, it offers the opportunity to re-examine and reconsider what counts as literacy[1].

A recent babysitting experience provides an illustration. In early November, I was babysitting the three-year-old daughter of a fellow teacher. The little girl asked me to read her a story. I told her to go and get the book she wanted me to read to her. I expected *Goodnight Moon* (Brown & Hurd, 1947/1997) or *Green Eggs and Ham* (Seuss, 1960/1988) and the familiar scenario of the two of us in the rocking chair with her in my lap and a book in hers. This is not what happened. She brought me an interactive storybook cd-rom rather than a hand-held book. She is already working with a different paradigm for text, for the book, than I am. As more and more children for whom print and digital texts are interchangeable reach our classrooms, we as teachers are going to have to figure out what this changing textual landscape means for the teaching of reading and writing. Gee (2003) maintained "we never just read or write…we always read or write *something in some way*" (p. 14). The technologies of reading and writing can change both the *something* (product) that is read or written and the *some way* (process) in which it is read or written. Hypertext not only offers a new kind of process and a new kind of product, it also blurs the boundaries between those concepts. Hypertext allows for a

> field of linkage and associational play whose meaning depends upon permutations. In reading as well as writing, electronic text thus erases the invidious distinction between process and product by allowing us to reformulate the text not as a limited artifact nor as a theoretical 'heteroglossia', but as a medium for the actual intersection of discourses." (Moulthroup, 1991c, p. 260)

[1] I am using reading and writing as examples of what typically counts as literacy; however, I prefer a definition of literacy that includes reading and writing (print and digital texts), image, art, music, orality, and performance.

The meaning in hypertext depends not just on the structure created by the author but also on the choices made by the reader. The product is not fixed; it is reformulated in the reading. The author and the reader explicitly share in the construction of the text. In print texts, the reader's role as co-constructor of the text is easy to hide. Hypertext makes the co-construction visible.

While I am very interested in what hypertext will be able to offer schools and classrooms, I did not choose to focus my dissertation on the educational impact of digital technologies. I am a teacher who has been trained in a particular way to teach reading and writing, but hypertext is challenging that training in profound ways. As a new writing technology, hypertext offers the potential to change or reshape reading and writing just as other writing technologies (scroll, pencil, etc.) have done. Because of that, it is necessary for me, as a teacher and writer, to change as well.

Rather than do a study focused on the classroom uses of hypertext, I took a step back and considered, *What do I as a teacher and writer need to know to teach and use hypertext?* I felt that I needed to have a solid theoretical grounding in what hypertext was and the implications for writing. The focus of my study is developing a theoretical perspective on the problems and possibilities of writing narrative in a digital environment.

Writing Technologies

Writing in the broadest sense has existed for some twenty thousand years (Gaur, 1984, p. 35). The technologies used to produce written texts have evolved over the centuries; in the history of writing, people have used a variety of tools and canvases to produce their texts. From paint on cave walls to stylus on wax tablets to ink on medieval manuscripts, the tools for producing written texts have changed as industry and technology have changed. Baron (1999) called the computer the "latest development in the history of writing" (p. 15) and explained that

"we often lose sight of writing as a technology" until a "new technology like the computer comes along" (p. 16). With the new technology, "we are thrown into excitement and confusion as we try it on, try it out, reject it, and then adapt it to our lives—and, of course, adapt our lives to it" (p. 16). Technological change provokes excitement and hope as well as fear and concern.

Socrates (trans. 1989) feared that the new technology of writing would change culture; he believed that in the change from an oral society to a written society, people would rely too much on printed text and not enough on memory. He believed that wisdom was linked to memory; a good memory helped develop wisdom. Because he believed written texts to be inferior to memory, he thought reliance on written texts would have the appearance of wisdom rather than true wisdom. In the *Phaedrus*, Socrates argued:

> The fact is that this invention [writing] will produce forgetfulness in the souls of those who have learned it. They will not need to exercise their memories, being able to rely on what is written…once a thing is put in writing, the composition, whatever it may be, drifts all over the place, getting into the hand not only of those who understand it, but equally of those who have no business with it. (pp. 520-521)

Plato followed the lead of Socrates, his teacher, in condemning writing. Ironically, he condemned writing in writing. Plato, like Socrates, believed that writing would change the way that people think and would destroy memory.

The printing press caused another transition in the history of writing, one that was heralded both as a great advance for society and the potential for its downfall. Trithemius, the abbot of Sponheim, spoke out against print, believing that it was more impermanent than parchment. The quality of the paper used in printing did not match the quality of parchment. Because it was easier and faster to make books using a printing press, he felt that the

proliferation of texts would decrease their intrinsic value. He also believed that the discipline of copying was good for the monks' souls (Tribble & Trubek, 2003, pp. 526-530). The printing press brought the standardization of margins, spacing, and spelling. Texts were also repeatable; a text could be printed multiple times, and it would be identical to the first printing.

The technology of writing—the ways in which texts are written and produced—have provided significant social changes. Changes in the Catholic Church occurred when the common people no longer needed a priest to interpret the Bible because they had their own copy for reading and study. Changes in society occurred as people began to write about oppression and societal issues in pamphlets that could be distributed to large groups of people. These changes did not occur immediately after the invention of the printing press. Rather, it took time for the printed texts to make their way to the masses. Not only did the products take time to be dispersed to all levels of society, it also took time for those masses to be able to read those products. Something more than just the presence of the technology had to be in play in order for technology to be an impetus to societal change—technology had to be accessible.

Changes in Writing Technology

Baron (1999) examined the history of writing and determined that each change followed a similar pattern. In the first stage, a technology is developed for a particular task and is available to a select few. The technology at this stage is generally cost prohibitive for the general public. In the second stage, the technology is gradually disseminated to the general public and adapted to wider uses than its original intent. In the third stage, the cost of the technology decreases as it becomes more widely used and "a new literacy spreads across the population" (p. 16). In the fourth stage, "the technology come[s] into its own, no longer imitating the previous forms…but creating new forms and new possibilities" (p. 16). The fifth stage involves "a kind of backward

wave" where "the new technology begins to affect the older technologies as well" (p. 16). Digital technologies are following these stages as well; however, these stages are occurring much more closely together than they have in previous technological evolutions. As with previous changes in writing technologies, people celebrate, welcome, fear, and denounce the new forms and possibilities.

Socrates' (trans. 1989) prediction that writing would produce forgetfulness became both true and false. The prediction is true in that people no longer have to retain large amounts of content in their memories and false in that writing has provided a kind of physical collective memory. Would we know Socrates or Plato today if their thinking had not been recorded in print?

At each change in the technology of writing, there have been both proponents and detractors. Some have seen the technological changes as heralds of a great new age of writing while others have seen the changes as detrimental to the current form of the art of writing. Twain, one of the first American authors to turn in a typed manuscript to a publisher, bought an early model of the typewriter in 1874. At the time, the machine was a novelty. Twain (1905/2003) wrote about his adventures with the early typewriter. His humorous account of his learning how to type on the machine that was "full of caprices, full of defects" described both his wariness of the new technology and the changes that he felt it made to the business of writing (p. 502). He claimed to use the typewriter "to astonish visitors" and "resumed the pen for business" (p. 502). His essay, though humorous, showed clearly his questioning of a new technology for writing. Over a hundred years later, the typewriter is again something of a novelty as the computer has become the dominant technology for producing print.

With the advent of the computer and digital environments as a space for creating texts, there is again the potential for a radical shift in how texts are created and read. Just as the transition from an oral society to a print society caused both excitement and fear so, too, does this potential change to writing technologies. Bolter (1991a, 1991b, 1992, 2003), Landow (1992, 1994, 1997), Joyce (1995, 2000), and Murray (1997) have celebrated the arrival of hypertext as a form of digital writing. They have been gleeful in their descriptions of the potential of hypertext to liberate the word from the confines of the printed page. Birkerts (1994), like Socrates and Plato, who felt that print was inferior to orality, has been vehement that hypertext is inferior to the book. He revered books as sacred, as Art, and feared what the new technology might do to culture.

Birkerts (1994) was concerned about the psychological and cultural effects of reading and writing in digital environments. He argued that the "context cannot but condition the process. Screen and book may exhibit the same string of words, but the assumptions that underlie their significance are entirely different depending on whether we are staring at a book or a circuit-generated text" (p. 128). Like Socrates and Trithemius, Birkerts was aware that the medium used to communicate often shapes the message, and changing the medium has the potential for cultural change. While others celebrate the potential for change, Birkerts was one of the voices questioning what will be lost in the change. He valued the permanence that print allows and worried about the transience of digital texts.

Perhaps it is too early for Birkerts to sound the alarm at the potential loss of print culture. Digital fiction, a kind of literary hypertext[2], is a relatively new genre of writing. Joyce's (1990) *afternoon, a story*, is part of the emerging canon, but that canon is less than twenty years old

[2] I use digital fiction and hypertext interchangeably.

while the canon of Western literature is much older. Murray (1997) used the term *incunabula* in connection to the development of hypertext writing. Incunabula is a term used to indicate the emerging stages of print during the first 50-100 years after the development of the printing press but before the standardization of the format (margins, spacing, pagination, etc). Murray saw a parallel between what was happening in early print texts and what is happening now in the early hypertexts. The advent of print and printing technologies had a profound influence on texts and story; these effects have been so reified as to become common sense and transparent.

Remaking a Familiar Technology

The scroll, the manuscript, the printing press, and the typewriter are technologies of writing involving devices, rules, and specialized skills; these technologies of reading and writing have became so imbedded in culture as to be nearly invisible. A recent video posting to YouTube showed a monk contacting the monk help desk as he switched from the scroll to the book (Nærum, 2001). The monk needed help with where to write, how to turn the pages, how to move from the bottom of the page to the top, and what to do when the book was turned upside down. This video highlights the issues that emerge in the transition from a familiar way of working with text to an unfamiliar way. New digital technologies have highlighted previously obscured aspects of reading and writing and have the potential to alter our conceptions of reading and writing. Although the appearance of a new technology for writing does not necessarily render prior technologies obsolete, some have gleefully announced the death of the book while others are fearful of that possibility. Bolter (1991b) argued that electronic

> technology remakes the books in two senses. It gives us a new kind of book by changing the surface on which we write and the rhythms with which we read. It also adds to our

> historical understanding of the book by providing us with a new form that we can compare to printed books, manuscripts, and earlier forms of writing. (p. 3-4)

A remaking of the book, considered by some critics (e.g., Birkerts) to be the foundational element of our culture, is a frightening prospect. A remaking of the book, if it is a foundational component, would require a remaking of society. The technology of the book has become so familiar to us as to become invisible. It is only when it is juxtaposed with the technology of the computer, that we recognize both the advantages and the limits of the form of the book.

Bolter (1984, 1991a, 1991b, 1992, 1999), a hypertext theorist and classics scholar, often takes the view that hypertext and other electronic technologies will replace the book. While I do not agree with that aspect of Bolter's (1991b) ideas, I do agree that the "computer frees the writer from the now tired artifice of linear writing, but the price of this new freedom for the writer is that the writer must allow the reader to intervene in the writing space" (p. 146). Bolter's distinction that linear writing is artificial is a complex one. The physical form and shape of the book lends itself to linear writing. Some print authors have pushed against the boundaries of the traditional forms of text, and I will discuss their work later. Bolter's (1991b) point that the form of the book or the space of the computer promote different kinds of writing possibilities draws attention to the ways in which we have been trained to interact with texts. In a traditional print text, the author creates a path for the reader and assumes the reader will choose to follow the path the author designed. In a hypertext, the writer creates multiple paths for the reader; the reader chooses what paths she will follow.

The technology of the book created the current expectations of print literacies. What digital literacies will the technology of the computer create? Ong (1982) argued that "[t]echnologies are not mere exterior aids, but also interior transformations of consciousness, and

never more than when they affect the word" (p. 315). Ong furthered the idea that "writing is a technology that structures thought" (p. 315). Hypertext, as a technology, has the potential to affect the word and how it gets used. Students in classrooms are becoming increasingly products of their digital environments. Teachers in classrooms are less familiar with the technologies influencing their students. I think it is important for me to explore and theorize the ways in which hypertext is changing reading and writing.

Problem Statement

New digital technologies are being invented and refined at a rapid pace making available new tools for writing narrative fiction; these new tools open possibilities, provide opportunities, and create challenges. This study attempts to theorize writing narrative fiction in a hypertext medium using three sources of data: library and Internet research, an interview study with adult writers of hypertext fiction, and a self-study of a novice hypertext writer.

Research Questions

- What happens when narrative fiction writing moves from a print medium to a digital medium? What are the affordances of hypertext, and how do those affordances account for changes in writing as a form and practice?
    - What does current scholarship on hypertext say about writing narrative fiction in a digital environment?
    - How is hypertext taken up and used by selected practitioners in the writing of digital fiction?
    - How has my personal experience with writing digital fiction contributed to my understanding of this new type of writing?

Theoretical Framework

To frame the theorizing of writing narrative in a digital medium, I am using Urban's (2001) notion of accelerative culture as a force that reshapes existing practices into something significantly new and the New London Group's (1996) multiliteracies as a way that modes of representation are being remade by their users. Additionally, I am using theorists Bakhtin and Deleuze and Guattari, because I believe their work informs the ways in which hypertext forms texts. Bakhtin's (1981, 1986) concepts *utterance*, *heteroglossia*, and *appropriation* and Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) concept of the *rhizome* played large roles in my theorizing and in my data analysis. I will discuss these theorists in chapter two. In this section, I will introduce Urban and the New London Group and discuss briefly the relationship between hypertext and poststructuralism. Morgan's (2000) dramatic claim that "the birth of hypertext was attended by poststructuralist theorists" (p. 130) has been echoed by literary theorists such as Landow (1992, 1994, 1997, 2006), Bolter (1984, 1991a, 1991b, 1992, 1999, 2003), Lanham (1993), and Johnson-Eilola (1997) as they argued that poststructuralist theory "can give a theoretical account of hypertext" (Morgan, 2000, 130).

Urban on Cultural Change

Urban (2001) described one way of looking at culture as something that "recedes into a past…it must be salvaged, dug up, preserved" (p. 2). This nostalgic view, he argued, missed culture's dynamic construction, seeing it as preservation rather than as forward motion with "its restlessness, its itchy movement into uncharted and mysterious futures" (p. 2). He described culture and what causes it to move in terms related to the principle of inertia. Culture moves forward in one way because of what is already there, what already has a prior presence. An element of culture "tend[ed] to be copied just because it [was] there already" (p. 15). Urban

called this existential or habitual inertia or culture. He used the example that a child learns a language because "that is the language spoken by those" around her (p. 15). To take the idea of existential inertia into the school setting, one might say that a child learns to write a particular way because that is the way the people who surround her write.

Urban (2001) contrasted this habitual culture with accelerative culture, explaining that accelerative culture is "on the side of futurity…characterized by newness and novelty, rather than oldness and familiarity" (p. 15). In order to be accelerative, there must be something "significantly new" that is not a just a replica of something that went before. He argued that the new object must be both recognizable and significantly different. For example, accelerative culture represents "a new combination" of earlier practices even "as it contributes something new to them" (p. 16). It both builds on previous habitual practices, weaving them together in new or unexpected ways, and also contributes something unique to those practices. As an example of accelerative culture in a current school setting, a student might choose to produce a digital movie that blends images, sound, movement, and oral text rather than a traditional print essay in response to a writing task.

Urban (2001) used the metaphor of an entrepreneur and its association with risk to look at culture as both habitual and accelerative. He argued that an entrepreneur "takes something old into a new world, or tries something new out on an old world" (p. 2). The risk to the entrepreneur is to try out something in the presence of habitual culture in the hopes it will become an accelerative force to move or change the entrenched practice. Accelerative culture can "cut new pathways, can reshape social space by harnessing different strands of extant inertial culture" (p. 19). This interaction between cultural forces, either for stability or change, make culture dynamic—both "once and future" (Urban, 2001). The flexibility of the entrepreneur to see both

the past and the future allows that entrepreneur to potentially serve as a cultural accelerant. Flexibility is key to being able to adapt or create something new and novel. Some new and novel practices get picked up, used, and repeated by a culture until they become habitual.

Urban's (2001) habitual culture and accelerative culture can be extended to the current tension between print and digital technologies. Print and digital technologies promote different kinds of writing practices. In considering the once and future practices of writers, it is important to look at what print technology afforded as a practice and what digital technologies can afford as a developing practice. We are intimately familiar with the writing practices promoted by the older technology of print while we are still developing the writing practices afforded by digital technology. Part of the developing tension is between the habitual practices associated with print and the entrepreneurial practices associated with hypertext or digital fiction. For example, one of the arguments against hypertext or reading stories on the screen is that the computer cannot be read in the bathtub. While this argument is humorous, it draws attention to the familiar and comfortable habits of print reading. As readers, we have the expectation that print texts are contained, bound, in a particular form. We know how to interact with that form. The new technology comes into conflict with an entrenched way of acting with the cultural object.

Hill and Mehlenbacher (1996) contended "[r]eaders who grow up in a world of hypertext…will have different expectations of text than our generation does, and writers will have a different set of constraints and opportunities than writers do now" (p. 264). The authors currently creating digital fiction are, to use Urban's (2001) term, entrepreneurs working to remake or reshape the practices of older print technology to meet the affordances of new digital technologies. They seek to create stories that are recognizable as stories but that build on and rework previous practices into something new and novel. These authors serve as entrepreneurs

who are working to take something old into a new world and create something new in the old world.

Multiliteracies and Pedagogical Change

While this paper focuses primarily on theorizing writing in a digital environment, it does so within the context of a larger discussion of literacy and literacy practices. Many teachers currently in the classroom are not part of what Tapscott (1998) defined as the Net Generation—children born after 1977 who will have grown up with digital technologies. These teachers have the unique opportunity to serve as a bridge between print and digital literacies. As part of the transition from a view of literacy as reading and writing print to a literacy that includes multiple forms of writing and expression, we must ask: *what will it take for our students to be considered literate now and in the coming years?*

The New London Group (1996) began the challenging process of developing a theoretical approach to literacy that included the changing social, technological, and educational environment as well as the increasing need to be culturally and linguistically inclusive. In their work, the focus shifted from a view of literacy pedagogy as "teaching and learning to read and write in page-bound, official, standard forms" (p. 60-61) to a literacy that encompassed multiple ways that students interact with texts. They explained the necessity of incorporating multiple modes of meaning-making into literacy pedagogy and saw the necessity of students' being able to cope with, adapt, and use various technologies and technological change. A singular view of literacy as print reading and writing or as language only is not possible in the increasingly global and connected world. "Literacy needs to be conceived within a broader social order" that "recognizes that reading and writing practices, conceived traditionally as print-based and logocentric, are only part of what people have to learn to be literate" (Snyder, 2001, p. 119).

In contrast to a singular view of literacy, the New London Group (1996) emphasized multiliteracies that "focus[ed] on modes of representation much broader than language alone" (p. 64). The New London Group (1996) argued "[m]ultiliteracies also creates a different kind of pedagogy, one in which language and other modes of meaning are dynamic representational resources constantly being remade by their users as they work to achieve their various cultural purposes" (p. 64). This view of literacy pedagogy as something that can be remade according to how it is used is helpful to me in rethinking writing pedagogy as it applies to the theorizing of hypertext in the study. For example, traditional views of writing and how it functions came into conflict with some of the author and self study participants' writing practices as they composed their hypertext fiction pieces. Looking at the challenges they faced as writers initially trained in traditional print literacies but now working in digital writing environments helped me theorize hypertext and could also potentially help writing teachers develop a multiliteracy writing pedagogy by examining how certain participants remade their writing practices.

Although my goal is to add to the discussion of multiliteracy, for this dissertation I am focusing on a narrow portion of literacy practices—the writing of narrative fiction. Because of this narrow focus, I will not address the digital divide or issues of access. Hill and Mehlenbacher (1996) argued that as more of our writing is done online, it will change "the ways in which we approach the task… writing in ways that are obvious, and others that are subtle, yet profound" (p. 258). In this dissertation, I show some of those obvious and subtle changes to the process of writing narrative fiction as it moves from page to screen.

Hypertext and Poststructural Theory

Hypertext, as a form of writing, is often celebrated as embodying the characteristics of poststructural literary theory (Morgan, 2000; Landow, 1992, 2006; Bolter, 1991b, 1992;

Lanham, 1993). Elements of poststructural theory—decentering of the text, questioning authorship, disrupting metanarratives, using multiple voices, etc.—are made visible in hypertext. Morgan (2000) argued

> Foremost…among the claims for hypertext's poststructuralist credentials is that it blurs the boundaries between authors and readers, giving to the latter more power to construct the text in the reading by choosing the pathways through the material and thereby juxtaposing textual segments in a once-off assemblage. It demonstrates intertextuality through the display on-screen of texts visibly associated with one another. It promotes multivocality with the dynamic launching of one screen after another. (p. 131)

Hypertext provides for its own textual deconstruction, calls into question the authority of author and reader, sees text as a network, resists closure, and provides multiple paths through the text. Landow (1992, 1997) argued that there is a convergence of poststructuralist theory, computer theory, and literary theory that gets played out in hypertext. Landow and other hypertext theorists (Bolter, 1991a, 1991b; Joyce, 1995; Moulthrop, 1994) saw hypertext as a "laboratory in which to test…ideas" regarding "textuality, narrative, and the roles or functions of reader and writer" (p. 2). These theorists saw hypertext as a format that physically manifests the claims they had been making for traditional print texts.

Hypertext draws attention to the shape of the text as it is rendered in a digital environment. Bolter (1991b) proposed that hypertext is "topographical writing"; he explained that topography "originally meant a written description of a place, such as an ancient geographer might give" (p. 25). "Electronic writing," Bolter contended, "is both a visual and a verbal description. It is not the writing of a place, but rather a writing with places, spatially realized topics" (p. 25). While there are forms of writing that are topographic without being dependent on

a computer or a hypertext program, "it is only in the computer that the mode becomes a natural...way to write" (Bolter, 1991b, p. 25). What seems unnatural or awkward in print format seems natural in a digital environment. I think back here to Jake and John's PowerPoint hypertext story; they struggled to find a print format that allowed both of their versions of what happened when they shot the tractor to have equal structural value. What was awkward in the print version of their stories became natural in the digital version.

Hypertext has been described as structure of structures (Bolter, 1991b), an event (Morgan, 2000), a network of possibilities (Hayles, 2002), and non-linear text (Nelson, 1981). Hypertext, however, is in its infancy as a literary form and these definitions are fluid. The language for hypertext is just beginning to be developed. Currently, digital fiction is described primarily in terms of how it differs from traditional print texts and how it is like film or art. The junctures of technology, visual literacy, postmodernism, film theory, and writing pedagogy offer me a way to talk about digital fiction. Hypertext, as a digital technology, is not just text or image or sound but a combination of all of these. Writing that includes text, sound, image, and movement resists the current technology of the book and finds, instead, a place in digital writing environments.

The technology of the book produced changes in reading and writing just as the technology of the computer is currently producing changes in reading and writing. Bolter (1991b) argued for the idea that the "computer is restructuring our current economy of writing" as well as "changing the cultural status of writing as well as the method of producing books" (p. 3). Much has been said about how the computer is "changing the relationship of the author to the text and of both the author and the text to the reader" (Bolter, 1991b, p. 3).

Poststructuralism already critiques the concepts of author, text, and reader. Both Barthes (1968, 1977) and Foucault (1972, 1977) described print texts in terms that seem prescient to the current descriptions of text. They used terms like “network” and “node” to describe text. Poststructuralism critiques language systems, structures, and systems of power (Derrida, 1976, Foucault, 1977). It opens the idea of language and writing to other possibilities than just to mean. St. Pierre’s (2005) question, “What else can writing do but mean?” finds an echo in the writings of hypertext theorists. They ask, *What else can writing do, what else can it become?*

Poststructuralism resists the effort to create a totalizing or essential truth and recognizes the existence of multiple truths. Poststructuralism questions the idea of an essential self, a core identity, and calls into question neat, tidy, coherent social science research claims that do not take into account the often ambiguous, messy, and fragmented research subjects. Crotty (1998) explained that poststructuralism “typically engages in a radical decentering of the subject” and “delights in play, irony, pastiche, excess—even ‘mess’” (p. 185). While I may think that Crotty’s explanation is not as generous as it could be in describing poststructuralism, I do recognize several key elements in his description. Poststructuralism sees the instability of text and recognizes that the meaning of language, of words, is derived from their context and their relationship to one another. This challenges the idea that text and meaning can be fixed in an object. “There are no absolute truths and no objective values” Rue (1994) explained, “There may be local truths and values around, but none of them has the endorsement of things as they really are” (p. 272-3). Poststructuralism resists the idea of an absolute truth or reality. “As for reality itself, it does not speak to us, does not tell us what is true or good or beautiful. The universe is not itself any of these things, it does not interpret. Only we do, variously” (Rue, 1994, pp. 272-3). Patton (2003) argued that research “like diplomacy, is the art of the possible” (p. 12). Each

theory, each way of viewing and being in the world, creates what it is possible for the researcher to see and to write. Hypertext offers another way of writing, reading, thinking, and being in the world.

The Study

I have endeavored to theorize narrative writing in a digital medium. I used three data sources: library and Internet research, an interview study with selected practitioners, and a self-study of a novice hypertext writer. As a teacher and writer, I am interested primarily in writing fiction and poetry. Because of this interest, I am choosing to focus on narrative hypertext rather than informational or academic hypertext. Focusing on how hypertext changes the reading and writing of narrative provides me with a narrow and more manageable focus for the study.

This paper does not use a traditional dissertation format. In the chapters that follow, I draw on all three sources of data to theorize writing narrative fiction in hypertext. In chapter two, I introduce the idea of hypertext theory being developed at the crossroads of other theories and foreground the theoretical work to discuss hypertext. I use the metaphor of the crossroads to explore the interconnected relationships between the theorists that I have used to help me think about hypertext. In chapters three and four, I continue the theoretical work and also include the voices of participants from the self study and the author study. In chapter five, I begin to think about possible implications for the classroom as well as implications for future research.

Reading about Hypertext

I spent five years reading books, articles, and Web sites on hypertext. My first text on this topic was Snyder's (1996) *Hypertext: The Electronic Labyrinth*, and this book made me question long-held assumptions about texts. It also helped me recognize some of what was going on in Jake and John's story about shooting the tractor. What my students and I had stumbled into by

accident seemed larger and more important than it had that week in my classroom. I moved from Snyder's text to one to Landow's (1997) *Hypertext 2.0* and Joyce's (1995) *Of Two Minds: Hypertext Pedagogy and Poetics*. I mention these three specifically because they influenced and shaped how I began thinking about hypertext. A portion of my hypertext reading list is included as Appendix A. I list only the books that I read, not the articles or the Web sites. It is not that I think the books are more important than the articles and Web sites; rather, it is that I had to pare the list down to a manageable size to include it as an appendix. As many of the Web sites have moved or no longer exist, it made sense not to include them. Many of the articles came from Web sites that I no longer have access to so I did not include them in the list.

In order to develop the reading list, I used the bibliographies of the three texts that were so influential to my thinking on hypertext. I looked for books and articles that had been cited in all three texts. My list grew from there. I read about hypertext fiction for a year before I actually read a hypertext fiction. I read Jackson's (1996) *Patchwork Girl*. I walked away from it after a few screens. I walked away not because it was hard to read although it was; I walked away because I was overwhelmed by the reading experience. It was so much bigger than I expected it to be. I came back to *Patchwork Girl* a few days later and was absorbed for hours. I read and reread this novel over several weeks. It was at this point that I began generating a list of print texts that contained hypertextual elements. I read more hypertext fiction and continued reading about hypertext.

Theorizing Hypertext. The major portion of this research study involved the theorizing of hypertext using multiple sources of data. During this time, I was also taking graduate courses that introduced me to Bakhtin, Deleuze and Guattari, Foucault, and postmodern and arts-based

research. I let the words wash over me until I began to make connections that allowed me to begin theorizing hypertext.

I read books and articles by the leading hypertext theorists and created charts listing how they defined hypertext, what they theorized about the writing and reading of hypertext, and where they chose to situate their work. The four hypertext theorists who most influenced my work are introduced in chapter two. I maintained a research journal during the five years I spent reading in hypertext theory. This journal was the place where I questioned what I was reading, listed new terms and their definitions, noted the differences between major theorists, and predicted what I thought would happen during the writing of a hypertext narrative. My research journal was an important source of data informing my theoretical work. Appendix B includes a discussion of using hypertext in the research process.

Because so much of what I was reading was theoretical with few concrete examples of work in hypertext, I wanted to take my work a step further. I added a self-study component to my work. I wrote a hypertext fiction and kept a writing journal as I created it. In this journal, I wrote about my struggles and successes in creating a piece of fiction different from anything I had created before. I began the journal with the question, “How hard can it be to write a story in hypertext?” I discovered that it was a great deal harder than I thought. As I wrote through my struggles, I noticed that my work was mirroring what the hypertext theorists predicted would happen.

I decided to add a third component to the study and interview writers who had published in both print and hypertext. I wondered if their experiences writing hypertext would be similar to mine. I also wondered if and how their writing practices had changed as they moved from writing for print to writing for digital environments. Several of the theorists that I read also wrote

hypertext fiction (those were the few with examples that I mentioned earlier). In Appendix C, I discuss the methods for the author study and self study.

This chapter concludes with a description of the methods of analysis I used to make sense of the data generated by library and Internet research. I will discuss the methods I used to systematically examine the texts I read to draw conclusions about writing narrative fiction in hypertext.

Research blog. When I first began reading about hypertext and hypertext theory, I kept a research journal in a word processing program. After several years of this format of journal, I changed to using a blog format. The blog is an online log that can be sorted by date or topic. I created my blog and entered my earlier research data. The research blog is the web page I used to store my research notes, field notes, and tentative analysis ideas. The research blog became a part of the hypertext I created for my data collection and analysis. The entries in a blog have titles and the possibility for comments. I used the comment feature to elaborate on ideas that were part of the entry or to contradict my initial thoughts. I also used the comment feature to add ideas about theorists from graduate classes. I did not make my research blog open to the public. While my blog is a web page, it is not posted on the Web; rather, it is hosted on my personal server which means that I am the only one with access to the files.

I chose a blog format for my research journal as it most closely resembled what I would have created in print. This may seem contradictory as I usually encourage using all of what a program or technology affords, but I felt that maintaining some continuity with the way that I was taught to take research notes would be useful to me. The format of the blog offered the familiar structure of a journal but also opened up its form to comments and linking.

Using the blog format made it easier for me to incorporate the blog as a part of the data and analysis hypertext. Because the blog is already hypertext, it works easily with another hypertext. The research blog included my library and Internet research notes, questions about hypertext and writing, comments I made on earlier research entries, new terms and definitions, charts and tables of theorists and their contributions to my thinking, and connections to the theorists I was learning about in graduate classes. I was immersed in theoretical readings. My research blog was the site for my musings on what I was reading.

A common question in my research journal was, *What happens*? Sumara (1996) introduced the idea of the *hap* in his work on reading groups and classroom practices. The hap, as he explained it,

> is what remains after method; it is what occurs beyond what we predict; it is what exists beyond our willing and doing. The hap may be understood as all the moment-to-moment unpredictable experiences that contribute to our remembered, lived, and projected experiences. (p. 176)

Sumara saw the hap as the unexpected experience that occurred in teaching, in research, in life. It is what occurs that we cannot prepare for or predict. The hap "usually catches our attention with its unexpected arrival" and "if interpreted, haplike occasions can bring us to new awareness and understanding" (pp. 176-177). Sumara argued that

> We have all experienced the importance of those events that slip between known and predicted categories…The hap, however, is often ignored, marginalized, and devalued in our retrospective discussions of events. Because the hap is seen as "the remainder"—it. Like a daydream or fantasy, is often not accorded status and, as a consequence, not interpreted. (p. 177)

I expected to be surprised by what occurred in the three parts of the study. I wrote about the surprises and the unexpected happenings in my research journal. I think “What happens” is a valuable and open-ended question that allows me to look at the “the events that slip” between what I expect and what surprises me. Writing about my reading and about what I was learning helped me recognize and think through the “haps” that occurred.

Writing was an important part of my research process. I used it as a “method of inquiry” (Richardson, 2000) and discovery. Writing used as a method of inquiry “provides a research practice through which we can investigate how we construct the world, ourselves, and others, and how standard objectifying practices of social science unnecessarily limit us and social science” (Richardson, 2000, p. 924). I wrote to record what I was learning. At times, I wrote through a challenging or difficult topic so that I could understand it. I wrote about my topic to help me think through it, to theorize it, to question it, to examine elements of it. Through synthesizing, organizing, and questioning my readings, I developed initial theories, more questions, and numerous connections. My writing practices were a tool to help me theorize hypertext and writing in hypertext.

CHAPTER TWO

AT THE CROSSROADS

In small southern towns, it is a common notion that big and dangerous things happen at the crossroads. Mothers warn their children not to walk the crossroads on dark, moonless nights, and the warning not to talk to strangers is often followed by the addition *especially ones met at the crossroads*. There is something mythical, magical about the intersection of two roads. Robert Johnson, Blues musician from the Mississippi Delta, is said to have sold his soul to the Devil at the crossroads. In exchange for his soul, he received incredible musical talent and an impressive, if dangerous, talent for attracting women. Another Blues musician, Tommy Johnson, told stories about how he met a mysterious stranger who tuned his guitar for him at the crossroads. The idea that someone could meet a stranger at the junction of two roads and have his or her life changed forever occurs in my own family's stories. I think about the strangers I have met at the academic crossroads of my graduate program, of the theorists who "tuned" my thinking, of the thinkers who have seduced me, and of the writers who have given me new tools and new words even as they have taken away others.

The strangers I met at the academic crossroads—Bakhtin (1981, 1984, 1986) and Deleuze and Guattari (1987), Foucault (1972, 1977) and Barthes (1968, 1974, 1988), Nelson (1981) and Joyce (1988, 1995), Morgan (2000) and Snyder (1996, 2001) —shaped my thinking about hypertext and writing in digital environments. Bakhtin introduced me to utterances, heteroglossia and multivocality. Deleuze and Guattari challenged me to rethink hypertext not as a web but as a rhizome. Foucault and Barthes prompted me to re-vision the concept of the author while Nelson

and Joyce forced me to examine the relationship between writing and technology as a tool for writing. Morgan and Snyder helped me to name the changes that hypertext can bring to writing. These theorists, no longer strangers, have helped tune my thinking.

Hypertext at the Crossroads

They're little nowhere towns—Wadley, Kite, Wrightsville, Swainsboro—ghost towns scattered off winding state roads in the heart of Georgia. Not destinations but pass-throughs. Travel up or down Interstate 16 from Macon to Savannah and you will see signs for these towns or a hundred others just like them. Take state road 53 off of I-16 and you will find yourself meandering down a narrow two-lane highway past fallow fields and pastures, past crumbling plantation houses, past tidy, picturesque farms, past mill houses and trailer parks, past ponds with docks and ducks, past family cemeteries. You'll drive through leftovers of towns that lost whatever industry that kept them alive, and you'll feel the slowing down of time. You may see distant figures driving tractors or hauling hay or shoeless children with kool-aid smiles playing with puppies beside concrete steps leading to a porch.

I have made the trek from Athens to Wadley driving through the "nowhere towns" on the dusty back roads of Georgia more times than I can count. I have stopped at a crossroads waiting my turn to leave Highway 53 and turn onto Old Number One. It is at this point in my drive that I have to make a choice. A left turn at the crossroads takes me to my maternal grandparents' farm; a right turn takes me to the small town of Kite where my paternal grandmother lives. Where will I go first? I won't be able to return to this particular crossroads again today. Whichever way I turn will lead me to a different set of crossroad choices.

As a driver I have to make a choice when I come to an intersection; a reader of hypertext must make choices as well when she discovers links and paths in a text. At its simplest,

electronic hypertext is defined as “non-sequential writing—text that branches and allows choice to the reader…a series of text chunks connected by links which offer the reader different pathways” (Nelson, 1981, p. 2). Defining hypertext as text that branches and allows choice doesn’t necessarily get at the full textual consequences of branches and choice. Hypertext disrupts traditional, common sense assumptions about texts. These assumptions include the idea that text is stable and fixed, has a clearly established beginning, middle, and end, and provides closure. In talking about hypertext, Morgan (2000) said, “No single voice or viewpoint can have a stable privileged claim to authority or centrality when it can be replaced (juxtaposed or overlaid) by another, maybe dissenting, point of view” (p. 131). When no one voice or viewpoint can be asserted as THE absolute authority, the boundaries of text are exploded. Traditional print-based texts have a clear beginning, middle, and end; no matter the order in which the story is told, there is this idea that you begin at the beginning of the text and go through to the end. Traditional print-based texts are tangible and static—what is on page three is always on page three (although you may read it differently each time you return to it); the physical representation of the text is the same. Hypertext challenges the linearity of text and challenge the material construct of text. Morgan (2000) offered the format of hypertext as a realm of possibility when she said, “But the form of hypertext permits no such relentless triumph of narrative coherence toward closure” (p. 139). Hypertext theory must address the issues that are disrupted.

Hypertext “challenges narrative and all literary form based on linearity” and “calls into question ideas of plot and story current since Aristotle” (Landow, 1997, p. 181). In Western culture, much of what we are taught about narrative and dramatic structure can be traced back to ancient Greece. Aristotle’s (trans. 1968) *Poetics,* a series of lectures and writings, examined dramatic structure. In this treatise, he outlined the criteria for a well-structured drama. These

criteria are so ingrained into Western literary traditions that they are assumed to be natural or common sense; Western culture has embraced and extrapolated these characteristics and applied them to most narrative forms. Aristotle argued that a well-constructed plot had a clear beginning, middle, and end. Additionally, the plot must have a "certain order in its arrangement of parts, [and] also be of a certain definite magnitude" (p. 23). Aristotle's descriptions promote linearity and order. Landow (1997) argued that hypertext "calls into question (1) fixed sequence, (2) definite beginning and ending, (3) a story's 'certain definite magnitude,' and (4) the conception of unity or wholeness associated with all these other concepts" (p. 181). Hypertext calls these Aristotelian concepts into question and challenges the commonsense assumptions we have about texts.

Much of hypertext theory has been formed at the crossroads of other theories—literary theory and computer theory, art theory and composition theory, critical theory and poststructuralism. This is not to say that these theories mesh into a singular theory of hypertext; rather, the scholars who are theorizing hypertext draw on elements of these theories to illuminate aspects of hypertext. In this chapter, I will review the scholarship that has helped me theorize hypertext. The scholars and theorists don't necessarily fit neatly together. In order to illustrate the connections that I made between the scholarship and hypertext, I will use examples from Jackson's (1996) digital novel *Patchwork Girl*, one of the first hypertexts that I read that really demonstrated to me what linking and branching could bring to narrative, in the next section.

Bakhtin and Hypertext

I begin the section on the scholars who helped me theorize hypertext with Bakhtin (1981, 1986). Bakhtin was one of the first theorists whom I encountered when I began my graduate program. He was too hard to read and I wasn't ready on my first reading or second reading to

understand him. I detoured away from him, turning instead to different scholars. However, I continued to encounter Bakhtin, kept turning down particular roads that lead me to his work. I was at a crossroads in my theory work four years into my program. This time, instead of turning away from Bakhtin, I turned toward him. Bakhtin, a Russian philosopher and literary critic, wrote about the operations of language in literary works and in the socially and historically situated world. Although much of Bakhtin's (1981, 1986) works focused on the role of discourse in the novel, several of his ideas have helped me theorize hypertext.

Utterance

A key element in Bakhtin's (1986) notion of communication is the *utterance*. An utterance is the primary building block of dialogue, a thought which is given voice either in speech or written format; it does not exist in isolation. Instead, an utterance is always in relation to the utterances that preceded it and the utterances expected to follow it. Bakhtin explained that any "utterance is a link in a complexly organized chain of other utterances" (p. 69). For example, I recently reread Jackson's (1996) hypertext fiction story *Patchwork Girl*. This work, a feminist retelling of the Frankenstein story is one utterance in a chain of utterances that includes Shelley's (1831/2003[3]) original Frankenstein story, its history and context, as well as Jackson's reading of and response to the original story. When I read *Patchwork Girl*, I create a chain of utterances that includes my previous experiences with the Frankenstein story, my knowledge of the monster metaphor in literature and technology, my readings in nineteenth century literature, even my

[6]The reference citation for Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* was a challenge to create. *Frankenstein* was originally published anonymously in 1818. It wasn't until it was revised and released in 1831 that her name was attached to the novel. In order to give her credit as the author of the novel, I have chosen to use the 1831 date as part of the citation rather than 1818. The reprint edition I used was a reprint of the 1831 revised edition.

familiarity with quilting terms as well as my current reading of the hypertext[4]. As I click on links and read each new utterance, I respond to what I read, what I have read, and what I expect to read next.

Bakhtin's (1986) *utterance* and *chain of utterances* are similar to hypertext's *lexia*. Hypertext "denotes text composed of blocks of text—…a lexia—and the electronic links that join them" (Landow, 1997, p. 3). Barthes' (1974) term *lexia* has been co-opted by hypertext theorists and applied to the discrete blocks of text joined together by a link. Barthes described an ideal literary text where

> the networks are many and interact, without any one of them being able to surpass the rest; this text is a galaxy of signifiers, not a structure of signifieds; it has no beginning; it is reversible; we gain access to it by several entrances, none of which can be authoritatively declared to be the main one; the codes it mobilizes extend as far as the eye can reach, they are indeterminable…the systems of meaning can take over this absolutely plural text but their number is never closed." (pp. 5-6)

Barthes' view of the ideal text certainly seems to fit hypertext. Barthes' ideal text is described in terms of a network of texts that have multiple entrances and no clearly defined ending. The terms *network* and *code* that Barthes used are also computer terms. While he used these terms to describe an ideal text, these terms and the way he used them are also applicable to hypertext. Hypertext links blocks of text in a network. No one link can be "declared to be the main one" and the linked blocks of text extend as far as the reader can see (Barthes, 1974, pp. 5-6). Because of the links between lexias, the text itself cannot be closed. The text is dispersed across lexias and links and has a fragmented feel to it.

[4] I want to comment here that this is a very rhizomatic reading experience. I don't get to Deleuze and Guattari until the next section though.

Patchwork Girl is as fragmented as the Frankenstein monster. The reader can gain access to the text of the hypertext story at multiple entry points; no one entry point is the main one. The text is also reversible; the reader can backtrack on purpose or stumble on a path that returns her to a lexia that she read at an earlier time. The Creature, Jackson's (1996) name for the monster, announced:

> I am buried here. You can resurrect me, but only piecemeal. If you want to see the whole, you will have to sew me together yourself…you will make use of a machine of mysterious complexity to animate these parts ("a graveyard[5]").

The "resurrection" of the Creature serves as a metaphor for the reading of hypertext—the reader sews the lexias/utterances together to see the whole. The hypertext does not claim to be whole, only that the reader can make a whole from the pieces provided. In further musings on how the reader must put her together, the Creature states:

> What holds me together is what marks my dispersal. I am most myself in the gaps between my parts, though if they sailed away in all directions in a grisly regatta there would be no thing left here in my place.
>
> For that reason, though, I am hard to do in. The links can stretch very far before they break, and if I am the queen of dispersal then however far you take my separate parts…you only confirm my reign ("dispersed").

The links and gaps in a hypertext provide a great deal of its structure and meaning. Jackson's (1996) *Patchwork Girl* provided a visual map of the places, or nodes, for the reader to choose. The text is divided into five subsections (See Figure 2.1): the graveyard, the journal, crazy quilt, story, body of the text. While these subsections crosslink and connect, they do not build on each

[5] Hypertexts do not have page numbers so it is difficult to cite a passage. Jackson's hypertext has headings on each windows of text. I have chosen to use the headings as the "page number."

other the way that sections of a print narrative often do. No single path through this story has priority; each path provides a reading, and no one reading of the text is privileged over another.

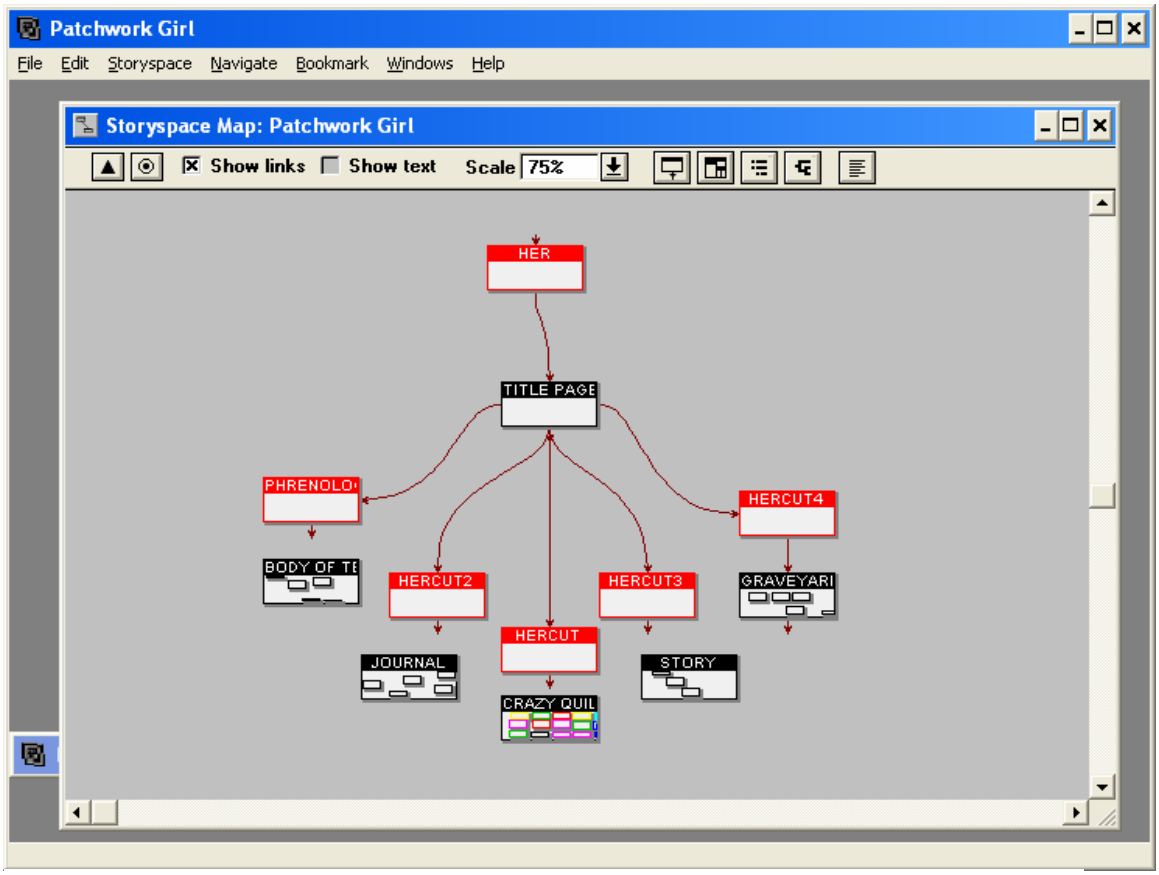

Figure 2.1

The lexias in Jackson's (1996) hypertext are part of a network with no set beginning or end. Much like Bakhtin's chain of utterances, hypertext lexias exist in relationship to each other. Embedded within this connection is the notion that the utterance/lexia cannot be isolated from the sequence in which it occurs. It is part of what precedes it and what follows it. The utterance/lexia may be discrete but it does not exist in isolation. The speaker/writer of the utterance/lexia responds to the history and context of previous utterances; the utterance/lexia also predicts or anticipates a particular response. The predicted utterance/lexia is situated within

cultural expectations. Hypertext lexias often disrupt the predicted response by deliberately choosing an alternative response.

While *lexia* is a term that has been co-opted by hypertext scholars (Landow, 1992, 1994, 1997, 2006); Rosenberg, (1996, 2001), it has not been as useful to me as utterance has. Lexia and utterance are not completely interchangeable or synonymous. Utterance as a term to describe the blocks of text in hypertext brings with it a fluidity of movement and meaning that lexia does not. Utterance also brings with it a sense of the relational aspects of reading or conversation. An utterance, as Bahktin used it, does not exist in isolation; it exists as both a response to a previous utterance and in anticipation of a future utterance. Lexia seems limited to text and textual relationships while utterance includes both text and the reader/writer of the text. Utterance also includes the role it plays in conversation; it is not limited to text. Lexia, as Barthes used it, has a fixedness to it that I find problematic when I apply the term to hypertext. Hypertext is ephemeral, what is on the screen is replaced or covered by another screen as the reader moves through the hypertext. The text of hypertext cannot be fixed in the way that a text lexia can be. Utterance as a term brings with it the ephemerality of dialogue. An utterance exists in the interaction. It is the broader uses of utterance that makes it more useful to me than lexia. While I may prefer the term utterance, I am aware that many hypertext scholars use the term lexia. In order for me to use lexia, I must redefine it to include the elements of utterance that I find most useful. Lexia, for me, is defined as a block of text that is linked and in constant, shifting relationship to other blocks of text. This view of lexia incorporates the ephemeral and fluid nature of spoken conversation.

Dialogue, Appropriation, and Multivocality

Bakhtin's (1986) terms *dialogue, appropriation,* and *multivocality* are useful to me as I think about hypertext. I see many similarities between hypertext and dialogue. Dialogue, as Bakhtin conceived it, exists between the self and the other. While the self is at the center of the relationship in this conception of dialogue, dialogue requires the other. An utterance, as part of dialogue, is always directed to someone. An utterance has *addressivity*. Holquist (1990) explained that dialogue "expresses the general condition of each speaker's addressivity, the situation of not only being preceded by a language system that is 'always already there,' but preceded as well by all of existence (p. 61). A dialogue consists of utterances that exist in a language system that is already there—already part of the context and history of the dialogue. Addressivity is "the quality of turning to someone else" (Bakhtin, 1986, p. 99) and is a necessary part of dialogue. Meaning "is relative in the sense that it comes about only as a result of the relation between two bodies occupying simultaneous but different space" (Holquist, 1990, p. 20). Meaning in dialogue is constructed in the context and relation between the participants. Similarly, in hypertext, the meaning of the lexias is constructed in the relation between the lexias as they are selected and juxtaposed as well as in the relation between the reader and the lexias.

Hypertext, like dialogue, exists in the active performance of it. Dialogue requires that the participants respond as "every concrete act of understanding is active….Understanding comes to fruition only in the response. Understanding and response are diametrically merged and mutually condition each other; one is impossible without the other" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 282). A hypertext reader must actively construct meaning from the utterances, from the gaps between the utterances, and from the juxtapositions of the utterances. Hypertext continues toward a response, a choice that the reader/speaker must make.

> The word in living conversation is directly, blatantly, oriented toward a future answer-word: it provokes an answer, anticipates it and structures itself in the answer's direction. Forming itself in an atmosphere of the already spoken, the word is at the same time determined by that which has not yet been said but which is needed and in fact anticipated by the answering word. (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 280)

The structure of hypertext, like living conversation, is oriented toward choice and participation. In order to construct meaning, a reader must do more than merely answer or respond to an utterance; the reader must engage in a constant meaning-making where the utterances inform and are informed by her reading. The Creature in Jackson's (1996) *Patchwork Girl* says that "What holds me together is what marks my dispersal" ("dispersed") as an explanation that she (the Creature) is both constructed and fragmented by the reader. The Creature is constructed in the dialogue between utterances and the reader, both built and dissected by the choices the reader makes.

In choosing to write a feminist retelling of the Frankenstein story, Jackson (1996) provides another example of a Bakhtinian (1986) term that has been useful to my theorizing of hypertext: *appropriation.* Appropriation is absorbing, internalizing, and recreating the utterances of others. Appropriation is a necessary component of dialogue as it establishes a speaker's familiarity with the usual structures of discourse. It is also a tool that allows a speaker to reshape the elements of familiar discourses to form a response that both fits in the context of what went before but also anticipates a future response. Appropriation is a pilfering of language that is then reinterpreted, reshaped, reworked for the use of the speaker; it demonstrates the speaker's facility with the original as well as the speaker's new vision. Jackson (1996) used the idea of the Frankenstein monster from Shelley's (1831/2003) original work and recast that monster as a

woman. This appropriation incorporates elements of the original recast in a new form. In addition to the appropriation of the themes of *Frankenstein*, Jackson appropriated the traditional form of the novel and reinterpreted that form for a digital environment. Both the monster and the text are appropriated and recast.

Patchwork Girl uses multiple voices in the text and illustrates another aspect of Bakhtin's usefulness in theorizing hypertext. Bakhtin (1984) described a dialogic, multivocal novel as "constructed not as the whole of a single consciousness, absorbing other consciousnesses as objects into itself, but as a whole formed by the interaction of several consciousnesses, none of which entirely becomes an object for the other" (p. 18). This conception of the "whole text" does not imply that the text is singular in voice or that the "whole text" is in fact complete. Dostoevsky, the author to whom Bakhtin referred, achieved multivocality in his novel because he managed "to visualize and portray personality as another, as someone else's personality, without making it lyrical or merging it with his own voice—and at the same time without reducing it to a materialized psychic reality" (Bakhtin, 1984, p.13). Dostoevsky's work contained multiple voices, none of which subsumed the others. These voices remained separate though part of the same work. *Patchwork Girl* includes the voices of the townspeople, the Creature, and the author within the lexias. These lexias speak to and across each other. Their voices add to the text but one voice does not subsume the other.

Heteroglossia

Bakhtin (1981) argued that the "authentic environment of an utterance, the environment in which it lives and takes shape, is dialogized heteroglossia, anonymous and social as language, but simultaneously concrete, filled with specific content and accented as an individual utterance" (p. 272). *Heteroglossia*, multiple voices engaging in dialogue within a text, is particularly useful

in a discussion of hypertext. The structure of hypertext promotes heteroglossia with its multiple lexias and links. Because no one lexia has authority over another, the hypertext does not create a unified, singular voice. Hypertext can also easily accommodate multiple genres. In describing the novel, Bakhtin (1981) argued that heteroglossia can enter the novel through "[a]uthorial speech, the speech of narrators, inserted genres, the speech of characters" and other "fundamental compositional unities" (p. 263). These elements "permit a multiplicity of social voices and wide variety of their links and interrelationships" (p. 263). Hypertext, like the novel, allows for the insertion of multiple genres, paths, and relationships. Bakhtin's use of the term "link" implies a network of connections built in the relationships between genres, between social voices, and other interactions. While Bakhtin was describing the stylistics of the novel when he said that the distinguishing characteristics were the "distinctive links and interrelationships between utterances and languages, this movement of the theme through different languages and speech types, its dispersion into the rivulets and droplets of social heteroglossia, its dialogization" (p. 263), his description applies easily to hypertext. Hypertext is built on the links and interrelationships between utterances/lexias. The movement through the text is dispersed along multiple pathways. The terms links, interrelationships, and movement imply terminology of computer networks. It is not just the language of the genre or utterance that is important—it is that language in relation to the other languages of the text, the languages/context that existed before the text, and the languages that will exist after.

A lexia—a discrete block of text and images (as applied to hypertext)—is a stand alone piece unless it is connected (linked) to another lexia. It is in the connecting that the lexia becomes hypertext. The building of a hypertext from the linked lexias/utterances is both concrete

"with specific content" and individual as the reader chooses the lexias/utterances. Hypertext can also be expanded in far reaching ways which would seem to be to be very heteroglossic.

Deleuze and Guattari and Hypertext

While Bakhtin (1981,1986) gave me terms to describe what I saw happening in hypertext, Deleuze and Guattari (1987) gave me a different organizing structure for hypertext. In *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia,* Deleuze and Guattari introduce the idea of rhizome as an alternative to the more familiar Western tree metaphor as a structure for organizing information. Although the concept of the rhizome has been useful to me, I have struggled to find ways to discuss it. In order to talk about how I see the rhizome and hypertext, I am going to talk briefly about the structure of the Internet and World Wide Web.

Many people use the terms internet, Internet and World Wide Web interchangeably; this is incorrect. An *internet* is two or more connected networks. The *Internet* is the large global collection of interconnected networks that use TCP/IP protocols; it is a massive network of networks. Information travels over the Internet using a variety of languages that are called protocols. *Protocols* are an agreed upon format for sending information; programs and programmers use these formats. The one commonly used on the Internet is TCP/IP. The *World Wide Web* is a layer added on top of the Internet to make accessing information more user-friendly. The Web is an information sharing model that uses HyperText Transfer[6] Protocol (HTTP) to transfer data across the Internet. The Web is a massive hypertext system.

Although the metaphor of a web is used to explain the organization of the content on the Internet, the structure is really more of a cloud. The web metaphor contains traces of linearity while a cloud metaphor emphasizes the complex and multidimensional ways that the content can

[6] The word *Transport* is often used interchangeably with *Transfer*.

be linked. Any Web page can be linked to any other page on the Web by the actions and choices of the reader. The connections get produced by what people do, by the links they select or the paths they follow.

Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987) introduced the concept of the rhizome as a metaphor for a different kind of organizing structure for information. It is a descriptive for structures that are in constant production, constantly emerging. A rhizomatic structure is not based on the kind of structure generated by the more common tree structure. A rhizome, unlike a tree structure, “ceaselessly establishes connections between semiotic chains” (p. 7) and does not rely on the same type of support structure that an arborescent structure does. The rhizome, in its ceaseless movement to establish connections, becomes an event. It exists in the production of links, of semiotic chains. Like the Internet, the rhizome exists in the choice of links, in the connections made. These connections are not pre-established paths, rather, they exist as a process of linking. A hypertext, like the rhizome is “composed not of units but of dimensions, or rather directions in motion” (p. 21). The movement in a hypertext is multidirectional—not just forward and back or even forward, back, and sideways. Hypertext loops and circles, moving in three dimensions rather than two. The idea of dimensional movement expands the relative flat movement implied by a web.

The rhizome as a structure for organizing information allows for a different way of thinking. Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987) explained that, "There are no points of positions in a rhizome, such as those found in a structure, tree, or root. There are only lines" (p.8). Like the Internet, the rhizome is made of lines and links. The lines and links do not have a beginning or an end; they are all middle. Deleuze and Guattarti described the middle as the place

> where things pick up speed. Between things does not designate a localizable relation going from one thing to the other and back again, but a perpendicular direction, a transversal movement that sweeps one and the other away, a stream without beginning or end that undermines its banks and picks up speed in the middle. (p. 25)

A hypertext or rhizomatic structure is all middle; it is created in the transversal movement. It resists the hierarchy of a more linear structure without creating chaos. A hypertext, like a rhizome, works with a different type of logic because it is a different type of structure than a book or outline or some other structure for organizing information. The work of the hypertext and the rhizome is in the middle; to work in the middle is to “"establish a logic of the AND, overthrow ontology, do away with foundations, nullify endings and beginnings" (p. 25). Rather than work with the idea of a structure with a clear linear progression based on beginnings, middles, and ends, the hypertext and the rhizome connect using the idea of “and and and.” The connections spread out and out in the links that the reader makes.

The rhizome structure differs from the more familiar structures of the book or outline. Because the reader is in the middle of the structure, she may have difficulty orienting herself within the hypertext. As Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987) argued, “It’s not easy to see things in the middle, rather than looking down at them from above or up at them from below, or from left to right or right to left: try it, you’ll see that everything changes” (p. 23). The lack of structural hierarchy can be daunting for a reader. Hypertexts, as rhizomatic structures, are complex and multidimensional structures. These structures are events that exist in the performance of the reader. They become as the reader makes choices.

While the structure of the rhizome seems particularly applicable to the Internet, it also describes hypertext fiction. Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987) proposed a book “composed of

plateaus that communicate with each other" rather than one "composed of chapters" that has "culmination and termination points" (p. 22). In geography, a plateau is a place of flat terrain or an area of stability. While Deleuze and Guattari don't use the term to mean a flat place, they do use it to mean a place where there is a pause, a connection, a location, a space. A rhizome "is made of plateaus" and "each plateau can be read starting anywhere and can be related to any other plateau" (p. 21-22). A plateau differs from a page in that it doesn't follow a particular order. A "plateau is always in the middle, not at the beginning or the end" (p. 21-22). The rhizome is not a structure that promotes a hierarchy or an ending; rather, it is always in the middle.

The view of hypertext as a rhizome rather than a tree or a web is useful to me because it provides an illustration of the decentered nature of hypertext. The rhizome resists hierarchy much as hypertext does. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) proposal for a book made of plateaus is remarkably similar to the grouping of lexias in a hypertext. If I look at Jackson's (1996) *Patchwork Girl* as a series of plateaus/lexias that communicate/connect with each other, I get a different view of the story than if I were looking for a more traditional format that included chapters. A visual view of one section of *Patchwork Girl* provides an illustration of how the organization of the hypertext fiction differs from a traditional print story (See Figure 2.2). This view shows one layer of how the lexias of the story can connect; the hypertext story is multidimensional in that the links can be connected in many directions There are multiple entry points for Jackson's hypertext so the concept of a chapter followed by another chapter does not apply. The hypertext, like a "plateau is always in the middle, not at the beginning or the end" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, pp. 21-22). The structure of hypertext, with its lack of a center or root structure, lends itself to always being in the middle.

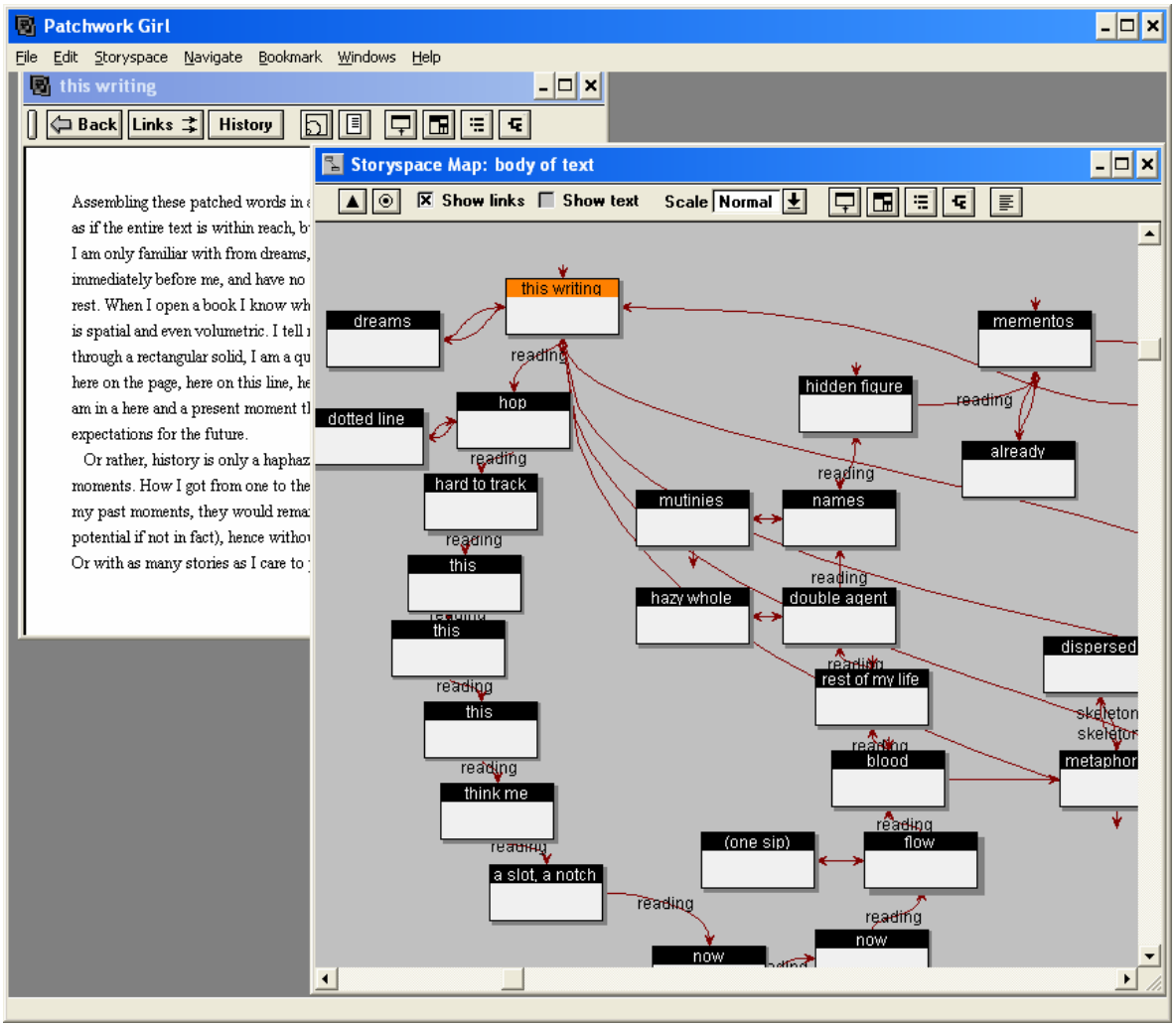

Figure 2.2

The Author in Hypertext

Bakhtin (1980, 1984, 1986) and Deleuze and Guattari (1987) contributed to my understanding of hypertext as a text, but I still had questions about the author in hypertext. Just as hypertext disrupts commonsense notions of text, it also disrupts long-held, if romanticized, notions of what and who an author is. Because hypertext "is a plural text without a discursive center, without margins, and produced by no single author" it is "always changing and becoming, it is associative, cumulative, multi-linear and unstable" (Snyder, 1996, p. 60). The

idea of a plural text that is multi-linear and unstable disrupts the romanticized view of a singular author creating a singular, textual whole. While postmodern scholars and other literary theorists had already called into question the role of the author in print texts, the image of the author as an isolated person who is solely responsible for the construction of a singular text has lingered. Hypertext challenges traditional assumptions about text—that the text is a singular whole, that it has a clear beginning, middle, and end, and that it is stable and fixed—and in challenging those assumptions about text, also challenges commonsense assumptions about the author.

Current literary scholar, Birkerts (1994, 1996), viewed hypertext as a form that is undermining the structure of society because it resists the shape and structures of the book. He saw the book as a sacred foundational element of Western Culture. As a reaction to hypertext, Birkerts (1994) believed that electronic texts and hypertexts are killing the author. Birkerts seems to hold on to the idea of the singular author creating a whole text. He argued that in traditional reading situations the author, the "flesh and blood individual" (p. 96) is at one end of a continuum. The "flesh and blood reader" (p. 96) is at the other end . Birkerts then placed the text, the "words on the page [that] don't change" (p. 96) between the author and reader on the continuum. While Birkerts' view of the author, reader, and text don't fit with the view that I have of the author, reader, and text, I can see the value in thinking of these as individual elements. It certainly makes teaching reading and writing easier if I can focus on a singular writer of a singular text. Hypertext, however, disrupts this view of the individual author, reader, and text.

I return to Jackson's (1996) *Patchwork Girl* as an example. Who is the author of this hypertext? Jackson has appropriated Shelley's (1831/2003) *Frankenstein*. Who is more the author? Jackson or Shelley? The imprints of both authors are all over the work. To echo Foucault (1977), the names of the author "[remain] at the contour of the texts…defining their form, and

characterizing their mode of existence" (p.122). Both Shelley and Jackson are at the contours of this work. While Jackson may have constructed the actual text of *Patchwork Girl*, her work is an appropriation, a retelling and reshaping of Shelley's text and relies on a network of references to the original text. In traditional print pieces, the author arranges the pieces of the text in the way that she (the author) wishes the reader to discover them. The author creates tension in a fairly linear path in order to guide the reader through the text she has constructed. That is part of her role as author. On the other hand, Jackson requires the reader to construct the text in order to read *Patchwork Girl*. Jackson provides the pieces, but the reader chooses which pieces and in what order. Does this then make the reader the author? The text of *Patchwork Girl* can be activated, resurrected, but only in pieces. The text exists in the reader's performance of it. Who then is the author?

In hypertext, the functions of author and reader become more deeply entangled as hypertext "emphasizes the impermanence and changeability of text, and it tends to reduce the distance between the author and reader by turning the reader into an author" (Bolter, 1991b, p. 3). There is a transfer of some authorial powers to the reader.

> One clear sign of such transference of authorial power appears in the reader's ability to choose his or her way through the metatext, to annotate text written by others, and to create links between documents written by others. Hypertext… narrow[s] the phenomenological distance that separates individual documents from one another in the world of print and manuscript. In reducing the autonomy of the text, hypertext reduces the autonomy of the author. (Landow, 1992, 71)

In a traditional print text, the assumption is that the reader will follow the author-constructed path through the text. This does not mean that the reader does not make choices as she reads; she

does continually. Some of the choices are conscious choices but others are not. For example, I know that I can immerse myself in the world of print so deeply that it is a struggle to pull myself out of a book. Part of this immersion is in the movement from beginning to end. Turning the page when I reach its last line, and moving my eyes to the top of the next page are physical movements that I am not aware of as I read. The physical movement through the text is invisible to me. I enter a book and suddenly I am at the end—there's been a world in between that I have traveled[7]. And, yet, if I stop partway through the text, I can orient my position with the physical text. I can place my finger on the page where I am and see how far I am from the first page and how far I have to go to get to the final page. As I enter the world of a hypertext fiction, I am aware at each decision point that I must choose—physically click a link, consciously choose one path and not another. If I stop on any one link, I am not sure how much farther I have to go to reach the end of the text. I am not even sure that there is an end—the idea of an ending in hypertext is something that is constantly deferred or provided in multiples. As a reader of a hypertext, I share some of the author's power.

Hypertext provides an additional challenge to the concept of an individual author of an individual text. Not only does it blur the lines between the author and the reader, it also blurs the lines between texts. In "Death of the Author," Barthes (1977) argued

> We know now that a text is not a line of words releasing a single theological meaning (the 'message' of the Author-God) but a multidimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash. The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centers of culture. (p. 116)

[7] I am aware that this is a naturalized practice for me. I am a highly practiced reader of print texts. I am aware that if I were not a fluent reader of print texts, my reading experiences would be different.

While Barthes is talking about traditional print texts, his description applies even more powerfully to hypertext. Or, rather, hypertext makes visible Barthes "tissue of quotations" and illustrates that texts are not singular constructions. Barthes questioned the idea that a text is ever a stand-alone work, and in doing this, called into question the idea of the author as the singular origin of the text. Snyder (1996) explained that if "no text is ever more than the assemblage of fragments, then its author is merely the personage charged with collecting and arranging such material" (p. 63). Hypertext is a multidimensional space where multiple nodes and texts can be read and linked. Not only did Barthes (1974) see the text as multiple, he also saw the author as plural. He argued that the "'I' which approaches the text is already itself a plurality of other texts, of codes which are infinite" (p. 10). The "I" approaching the text, either as author or reader, is already multiple, not a singular self.

The structure and form of the book encourage the idea that a text is a whole, unchanging document written by a singular author. Bolter (1991b) explained that the "printing press encouraged us to think of a written text as an unchanging artifact, a monument to its author and age" (p. 3). The structure of hypertext with its linking and branching calls into question the notion that the text has a center and that it is unchanging. Barthes (1974) described the text as a network with "no beginning" and that we gain "access to it by several entrances, none of which can be authoritatively declared to be the main one" (pp. 5-6). A text with no beginning and multiple entrances but not an authoritative starting point has no center. Hypertext is a text that is formed in the reader activation of the lexias and links; it is formed and reformed in the reading of it. This concept of an infinitely reforming text demonstrates that not only does hypertext have no clearly defined center, its boundaries are also blurred. Hypertext makes explicit what many literary theorists have argued occurs in print texts.

Hypertext challenges the boundaries of a text. Foucault (1972) wrote about print texts in terms of networks and links. He stated that the “frontiers of a book are never clear-cut” as the book is “caught up in a system of references to other books, to other texts, other sentences: it is a node within a network…[it is a] network of references” (p 23). While he is discussing print texts and arguing that print is part of a network, his view of the book as a node in a network applies to hypertext. While a print text is seen as part of a network of allusions, as part of the context of when it was written and read, the print text still has bound physical form. A print book may conceptually be a part of a network of referents; a hypertext is physically part of a network. Hypertext is not bound to the same form as a print text. The author of a print text is culturally given the form of the book; the author of a hypertext is not (yet) given a cultural form. The unbounded form of hypertext creates an author who is dispersed across the network and nodes of the text.

The unbounded form of hypertext raises the question of the boundaries of a text or an author’s work. Foucault (1977) used the example of a scholar attempting to put together the complete works of Nietzche to show the arbitrary nature of the boundaries placed around an author’s works. In his example, he argued

> Assuming that we are dealing with an author, is everything he wrote and said, everything he left behind, to be included in his work? This problem is both theoretical and practical. If we wish to publish the complete works of Nietzsche, for example, where do we draw the line? Certainly, everything must be published, but can we agree on what "everything" means? We will, of course, include everything that Nietzsche himself published, along with the drafts of his works, his plans for aphorisms, his marginal notations and corrections. But what if, in a notebook filled with aphorisms, we find a reference, a

> reminder of an appointment, an address, or a laundry bill, should this be included in his works? (p. 119)

This is more than a question of what can feasibly be published in a collected works of a particular author. Foucault is questioning where the boundaries of an author's work are. Implicit in this questioning is the examination of the term "author." What do we mean by author? Who counts as an author? What counts as the author's work? In Foucault's example, he seemingly gave publishing priority to "everything that Nietzsche himself published, along with drafts of his works, his plans for notes, his marginal notations and corrections" but then drew attention to the word "everything" by asking if a reference to "an appointment" or a "laundry bill" should be included as part of "everything." At what point does an author stop being an author? What work counts as the work of the author? These questions are relevant in hypertext as well. The complete work of Nietzsche in print is limited by the form and function of the book. It would be extremely expensive to try to include everything that Nietzsche wrote whereas the structure and form hypertext makes it easy to include every text, list, and note that Nietzsche wrote[8]. The question then becomes what are the boundaries of the author's work, what is the intended shape of the text and what should be included as part of that text. Additionally, in a hypertext that included both Nietzsche's published work and his laundry lists, both texts would have equal footing because hypertext does not use the same hierarchical structures that print texts use. Hypertext uses rhizomatic structures without centers or roots and disrupts the structural authority that a piece of text could have because of its placement.

[8] Additionally, there is the question of what to do with the handwritten pages, the doodles, sketches, lists, and things on odd-sized pieces of paper. What if Nietzsche wrote an early version of an argument on a cocktail napkin? Would you want to retype it or make a copy of the napkin or include a sample napkin with his argument printed on it in the print book? Whatever print method was used would relegate by virtue of its print hierarchies some of the texts to "lesser" positions.

As I look at the author in hypertext, I find that I must also focus on the text. Because hypertext reconfigures the physical and conceptual form of the text, it also reconfigures the author. I return again to *Patchwork Girl* to illustrate the points I want to make. The title screen of the hypertext novel contains a subtle play on the idea of the author in hypertext. The text is credited to Mary/Shelley, & Herself. Mary Shelley is, of course, the author of the 1831 version of Frankenstein. Shelley is the first name of the author (Jackson) of *Patchwork Girl* (See Figure 2.3). In this play on Mary/Shelley, Jackson is giving a nod to the author of the text she has appropriated. She acknowledged with this playful subtitle that she is aware of network of texts that her text is a part of and that more than she and Shelley are the authors. The reader stitches together the pieces and parts of the story and the Creature (Herself) and, therefore, also shares in the creation of the text. The authors of the text are multiple as is the hypertext version of the story. The authors and the story are dispersed among and along the links and lexias of the story to be activated by the reader's movement. The boundaries of *Patchwork Girl* deliberately extend beyond the lexias of the text. In consciously choosing to appropriate *Frankenstein* and to allude to that text's author, Jackson helped to unbind her text. She invited the reader to be a part of the chain of utterances (Bakhtin, 1986) that includes both her text and Shelley's text.

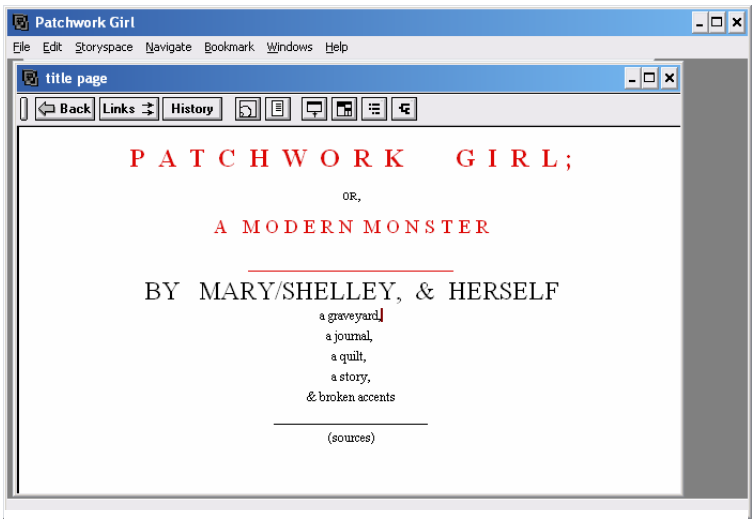

Figure 2.3

Hypertext changes the form of text and alters what text can do. In doing this, it also changes the author. Johnson-Eilola (1992) argued that in hypertext "control explicitly shifts away from the author, who begins to lose both the need and the opportunity for the great degree of control an author has in print because the hypertext author's task is not to provide a narrow, fixed product but something closer to a space for conversation with other texts, readers and writers" (p. 382). Author control is tied to the idea of an author as the origin of the text, as the solitary creator of a singular whole. In "Authors and Writers," Barthes (1988) attempted to define what an author is by explaining the difference between authors and writers. His definition focused on the work, the texts, the author or writer created. His work is limiting in that it focuses on defining the author in narrow terms. Foucault (1977) attempted to define the author by asking a different question. He asked, *how does the author function?* So, the question is not, *what is an author in hypertext?* Rather, it is, *how does the author function in hypertext*? In hypertext, the author's function is not to provide a fixed text but a space for conversation.

Hypertext Visionaries

My journey to understand and theorize hypertext has also included several hypertext visionaries. These are scholars who began thinking and writing about hypertext before the technology was readily available to create sample hypertexts. These scholars contributed to my thinking by taking the turns at various crossroads that I may not have taken or may not have realized that I should take. Nelson (1981), Joyce (1995), Morgan (2000), and Snyder (1996, 1998, 2001) considered the question of what happened to text, whether informational or narrative, when it moved from the fixed medium of the page to the computer screen.

Nelson

Nelson (1981) coined the term “hypertext” and continues to challenge the developing notions of what hypertext can be. Nelson’s great vision of an electronic publishing system that incorporates writing texts, storing documents, and non-hierarchical linking may never be realized, but his innovative ideas have helped shape modern hypertext systems. His focus is more on the shape and features of large hypertext structures and less on the shape of hypertext as a tool for storytelling. His work, however, has been useful to me because of his questioning of what hypertext can do.

Nelson (1981) defined hypertext as “non-sequential writing—text that branches and allows choice to the reader, best read at an interactive screen. As popularly conceived, this is a series of text chunks connected by links which offer the reader different pathways” (p. 2). Nelson believed in associative linking and the importance of establishing connections between texts and links. His vision for hypertext has yet to be fully realized. He dreamed of a *docuverse* where all data is stored once, is accessible via links from anywhere, and is never deleted. A document in his system would contain links to the original document (stored in his system) rather than copies of parts of the document; Nelson called this *transclusion* (transfer + inclusion). Nelson has yet to determine how these files would be housed. The Web partially reached this vision; however, there are files, documents, Web pages that are deleted or are stored in more than one location.

Nelson, a controversial figure, had a penchant for combining words to create new terms; some of these terms were adopted (hypertext, hypermedia, docuverse) while others

(humbers[9],intertwingled, transclusion[10]) are less well known. What are well-known throughout the computer world are his multiple failures to create a working version of Xanadu.

Xanadu

Nelson (1988) envisioned a hypertext system where everything that has been written is stored in a "docuverse" creating a "universal instantaneous hypertext publishing network" (p. 225). His vision, Xanadu, has been in the works for nearly 40 years and has never been fully implemented. Nelson (1974/1987) describes Xanadu as "file-server program for linked compound documents" (DM p. 148[11]) and then goes on to explain that it is not just a storage system, it is also an electronic publisher that incorporates sideways and non-hierarchical linking, modifiable documents that retain their links even as their form shifts, and multiple paths through texts for people who think differently. Nelson's focus on sideways and non-hierarchical linking creates a view of hypertext as multidimensional rather than flat and weblike.

Nelson (1999) was deeply critical of the World Wide Web and HTML stating, "The World Wide Web – I say this with a certain amount of outrage, scorn, and mourning – took the niche that my XANADU project was intending to grab and did it wrong - way wrong. They did

[9] Humbers is a coined term; Nelson merged humongous and numbers to create humbers. Humbers are large numbers that can be used to create infinitely forking paths.

[10] Another coined term. This one is a combination of transfer and inclusion. Transclusion is the inclusion of a resource or a part of that resource within a new one. For example, a citation would include a link to original that you were citing rather than a copy of what was in the original. Each time the document was read there would be a dynamic link to the original source.

[11] A note about citing Ted Nelson's opus *Computer Lib/Dream Machines*—it is quite difficult. The book is two books in one; that is not the difficult part. The difficult part is that you hold the book one direction to read *Computer Lib* and then flip it over to read *Dream Machines*. This means that in order to cite a page from one of these books, you must specify *CL* or *DM* before the page number. Additional problems include the lack of an index or table of contents, random commentary, multiple first chapters, and multiple internal cross references. This is a set of books that would benefit greatly by being made digital hypertext. He designed the book to show the interconnectedness of knowledge; there is a tremendous amount of movement back and forth on the pages as well as between the two books. What is awkward and unwieldy in this print text would be fluid and "natural" in a digital text.

the flashy, easy part and, as we predicted, it changed the world and has done an enormous amount for mankind" (Scope1, paragraph 5). He argued that the World Wide Web, while powerful, presents a limiting view of the ways in which hypertext can be used and developed. He described three types of hypertext: *chunked* which uses static links to allow the reader to move from page to page, *stretchtext* which uses his idea of expansion links, and *collateral* which allows for side-by-side viewing of different or parallel versions of a document. The World Wide Web is an example of a hypertext system that uses chunked text. Stretchtext expands as a reader navigates the text; it stretches to reveal previously hidden commentary, digressions, annotations, contradictions, additional information, etc. In chunked hypertext, the reader clicks on an active word or phrase and is moved to a new screen. With stretchtext, the information is displayed on the current screen. Collateral hypertext connects related documents on the same or similar topics, allowing them to be viewed together. The terms chunked and stretchtext are useful to me as I look at the structures of hypertext fiction stories.

The current World Wide Web uses chunked texts and, as Nelson (2003) argued, "two traditional, conventional constructs: the simulation of hierarchy and the simulation of paper" (ACM, paragraph 3). Nelson found this to be problematic because he felt that hierarchies are limiting and that crucial forms of information cannot be represented in this format. The simulation of paper keeps many of the problems with print in place.

Nelson has influenced the ways in which hypertext has been initially conceived and implemented, he probably could not have predicted the sudden acceleration of the use of these ideas brought about by the enabling technology of networked computers. The ubiquity and power of today's digital computers allows for the implementation and exploration of these concepts outside of technological and scientific disciplines. The proliferation of computers

coupled with the increased connectivity via the Internet has opened the world of hypertext to people from a wide variety of disciplines. The use of digital hypertext now flourishes among widely diverse groups (e.g., artists, writers, musicians, students, families, social groups, and special interest groups). Nelson, as a hypertext scholar, has allowed me to think about technology as a tool to reconceive the shape of text.

Joyce: Hypertext Author and Theorist

Joyce (1988, 1990, 1995, 2000), the author of two of the hypertext works that are part of the emerging canon of hypertext writings, is also a print author of poetry and novels. His scholarly work on hypertext explores the writing of hypertext, how hypertext disrupts print, and how hypertext can potentially change the way that readers and writers read and create texts. Joyce (1995) explained that hypertext "embodies information and communications, artistic and effective constructs, and conceptual abstractions alike into symbolic structures made visible on a computer-controlled display" (p. 19). Hypertext, for Joyce, is " before anything else, a visual form" (p. 19). His descriptions of hypertext focus on the structure and visual nature of the text. He referred to hypertext as a "city of text" (p. 106). This focus on the visual form of the text moves it from the linear format that accompanies print to the architectural format that accompanies hypertext. The view of hypertext as a place of text rather than a product of text re-imagines what text can be. Joyce explained that "hypertext is reading and writing electronically in an order you choose…structures for what does not yet exist" (pp. 177-179). Both the reader and the writer in this description are working with structures that do not exist until a choice is made. The text must be activated for it to exist.

In hypertext, the "nomadic movement of ideas is made effortless by the electronic medium that makes it easy to cross borders (or erase them) with the swipe of a mouse, carrying

as much of the world as you will on the etched arrow of light that makes up a cursor" (Joyce, 1995, p. 3). The movement through the text is described as nomadic, contingent on the movement of the mouse, not the reader movement through a print text. Each link provides a crossing where "world of possibility can be spewed out in whole or in kernel" (Joyce, 1995, p. 3). This movement through the text following the mouse clicking on a link can be disorienting for the reader. Joyce described the "contours of hypertext" as "the space of inscription for a reader, the emerging surface of the constructive text as it is shaped by the reading" (p. 93). Viewing text as an emerging surface for the reader disrupts traditional notions of text. Contour, a term used more often in art and art theory than in literary theory, establishes that the hypertext has shape and form but does not delineate a structure for that form. Navigating the contour of hypertext becomes the challenge for the reader. While the contour provides a shape for hypertext, this shape does not conform necessarily to the reader's expectations. The reader's expectations have been built through interactions with print texts, and hypertext does not behave as a print text does. This can lead to reader disorientation.

The disorientation that readers often feel in hypertext is part of what makes it a challenge to read. There's little to physically orient a reader in a hypertext as there is in a print text. Aarseth (1997) described the struggle to navigate a hypertext[12] as a loss of the sense of the whole. He called this condition *aporia* and defined it as the constant reminder that there are "inaccessible strategies and paths not taken, voices not heard. Each decision will make some parts of the text more, and others less, accessible, and you may never know the exact results of your choices; that is, exactly what you missed" (p. 3). I experienced Aarseth's aporia during my

[12] Aarseth used the term cybertext rather than hypertext. In his work, he carefully delineates between what he sees as cybertext, hypertext, interactive fiction, and ergodic literature. For my purposes here, I have not drawn those distinctions. There are also hypertext scholars (Landow, Bolter, and Murray) who do not draw those same distinctions.

first three readings of Joyce's (1990) *afternoon*[13]. *afternoon*, part of the emerging canon of hypertext literature, is a story about Peter, his estranged wife, his son, and an accident. Depending on the path the reader takes through the places of the story, Peter may have seen an accident involving his wife and son or may have caused the accident. In some readings, Peter is frantically trying to find his son and in others, he discovers that his estranged wife had an affair. The story changes significantly depending on the choices the reader makes and the paths and places the reader finds. Some places in the story can only be accessed after a particular path has been followed.

In his hypertext novel, *afternoon: a story*, Joyce (1990) made several references to the concept of words in texts that *yield*. These words that yield allow the reader to choose a word and follow the links to another section of the story. He said,

> Closure is, as in any fiction, a suspect quality, although here it is made manifest. When a story no longer progresses, or when it cycles, or when you tire of the paths, the experience of reading it ends. Even so, there are likely to be more opportunities than you think there are at first. A word which doesn't yield the first time you read a section may take you elsewhere if you choose it when you encounter the section again; and sometimes what seems a loop, like memory, heads off again in another direction. ("Work in Progress"[14])

Words that yield are words that provide the reader with alternate paths, other directions for the progression of the story. Joyce (1990) explained that he "[hasn't] indicated what words yield, but

[13] *afternoon* is considered to be the first significant hypertext—a hypertext story that is a work of literary art.
[14] I am continuing with the pattern of citation that I established with Patchwork Girl. As the screens do not have page numbers, I am using the title at the top of the screen as the identifying device.

they are usually ones which have texture" ("Read at Depth"). Words that have "texture" make available movement through the text. In the text of *afternoon: a story*, there are arrows that move the reader through a default path through the story. The reader may use the arrows to go forward or backwards through the text. There are also words that are marked as links that allow the reader to move to different areas of the story. Additionally, there are words that "yield" and provide more choice and depth for the reader.

Like Bakhtin (1984, 1986), Joyce provides terms and definitions that are useful to me as I begin to work with hypertext. Joyce (1988) defined two kinds of hypertext: exploratory and constructive. Exploratory hypertexts "encourage and enable an audience (*users* and *readers* are inadequate terms here) to control the transformation of a body of information to meet its needs and interests" (Joyce, 1995, p. 41, emphasis in original). Exploratory hypertexts, like the web pages on the World Wide Web, allow the reader to assemble a text by following links and information that are interesting or valuable to her. While the reader participates in building trails through information, she does not create the information or the form in which the information exists. So, while a text is assembled from the trails, it is a discovered text rather than a created or constructed one. The reader in this context does not have the capability to build on or extend the text she has assembled.

Constructive hypertexts, as defined by Joyce (1988), are hypertexts that "require a capability to act: to create, change, and recover particular encounters within the developing body of knowledge" (p. 12). Constructive hypertexts, like exploratory hypertexts, use "trails, paths, webs, or notebooks" to create versions or store readings within the set corpus of a text. These versions, however, are not merely the storage of a particular path through information. Rather, these are "versions of what they are becoming, a structure for what does not yet exist" (p. 12).

For example, *Patchwork Girl* is a constructive hypertext because the story is created as the reader acts on the text. The reader creates the path through the text. The story is created, then, in the reader's choices, in the lexias/utterances and the gaps between those lexias/utterances. The reader creates versions of the story, developing a structure that does not exist until the reader constructs it. Like Bakhtin's (1986) chain of utterances, constructive hypertexts require participation and anticipation.

Morgan: Poststructual Scholar and Hypertext Theorist

The pass-through towns that mark my journeys from Athens to Wadley and Kite serve as indicators of my progress. Based on the town I am passing through as I am driving, I know how far I have to go until I am sitting on my grandparents' porch or in my granny's living room. The theorists whom I have talked about to this point also serve as indicators of my progress. Each one has contributed to my developing theory of hypertext. This progression through Bakhtin, Deleuze and Guattari, Barthes, Foucault, Nelson, and Joyce leads me to Morgan (2000) and Snyder (1996, 1998, 2001). In "Electronic Tools for Dismantling the Master's House: Poststructuralist Feminist Research and Hypertext Poetics", Morgan (2000) described a project in which she provided a "convergence between postfeminist research in the social sciences and a poststructuralist hypertextuality" (p. 132). She explained that there are examples of hypertext being used as "organizational or presentational tool for research data" but argues that it has not been "exploited as a re-presentational medium" (p. 132). Morgan saw the possibilities inherent in hypertext structures and what types of knowledge those structures make possible. Morgan's project was to create a hypertext version of *Troubling the Angels: Living with HIV/AIDS* (Lather & Smithies, 1995, 1997) using Storyspace, a computer program designed for creating hypertexts. Morgan described *Troubling the Angels* as "a book that aspired to the condition of hypertext" (p.

133) with its non-traditional print structure that includes a split text with the women's stories on the top of the page and the researcher's notes and processes, factual information, and conversations on the bottom. Lather and Smithies (1997) described the book as a work that "puts things in motion rather than captures them in some still-life" and that moves "from inside to outside, across different levels and a multiplicity and complexity of layers" (p. xvi). Morgan's hypertext, *Monstrous Angels*, links the Lather and Smithies' multiple texts and notes as well as her own commentaries.

In Morgan's (2000) analysis of her project, I found connections to my own work. One of the first elements of hypertext I noticed was the slipperiness of the text. I couldn't seem to hold on to the text as it was replaced on the screen with each click of the mouse. In traditional print texts, I can flip back and forth between the pages and follow the linear construction of the text. The text on page four does not disappear when I move on page five. Morgan (2000) contended that "hypertext is always an event—a text just in the process of becoming as we read and ceasing to exist in that sequence when we quit the program" (p. 133). The idea of text as an event contrasts with the seeming fixedness of traditional print texts. As I questioned what to call the result of my own hypertext story writing experiment, Morgan proposed that print "is presented as a product; hypertext is necessarily a reader's performance, an event" (p. 131). This naming of hypertext as performance or event allowed me to reframe how I viewed the story that I was writing. The fixedness that I was accustomed to from my print writing was absent in the final version of my hypertext story.

Morgan (2000) situated hypertext firmly in poststructural theory arguing that "hypertext tests [poststructural] theory and even realizes it in ways not previously possible" (p. 130).

Hypertext pushes the boundaries between authors, texts, and readers and challenges the illusion of a seamless text. Morgan stated:

> Foremost, therefore, among the claims for hypertext's poststructuralist credentials is that it blurs the boundaries between authors and readers, giving to the latter more power to construct the text in the reading by choosing the pathways through the material and thereby juxtaposing textual segments in a once-off assemblage. It demonstrates intertextuality through the display on-screen of texts visibly associated with one another. It promotes multivocality with the dynamic launching of one screen after another. (p. 131)

Like Bakhtin (1986), Morgan saw the multivocality inherent in hypertexts. She also recognized the chain-like relationship of the screens "visibly associated with one another." Her work, with its echoes of Bakhtin, helped me build toward my own theory of hypertext.

Snyder: Hypertext Theorist

While Morgan (2000) helped me identify what I saw going on in my own work, Snyder (1996, 1998, 2001) helped me think about what else could be going on in hypertext that I had yet to recognize in either my own work or in the other hypertexts I was reading. She pointed out that the "quandary in writing about hypertext is how to describe in a linear text an anti-linear style of writing and technology" (p. xi). Part of the reason that I struggled with how to write about what I was doing was that I was limited by the words I was trying to use. Hypertext "alters the experiences associated with reading, writing and textuality" and is therefore "problematic to describe in terms so closely connected with print technology" (p. xi). This idea that the technology of hypertext was difficult to write about led me to think about the why—why was technology particularly problematic? One of the reasons is certainly that I am still locked in to my print literacy training and am struggling to understand what I experience in hypertext.

Another is that hypertext is an "emergent technology that is still subject to transformation" (Snyder, 1996, p. 2). Slatin (1990) argued that "all indications are that accelerating change is an inherent characteristic of this technology. It may *never* stabilize" (1990, p. 873). How do you write with a technology that is constantly changing? Snyder (1996) explored the idea that to "write for the screen is to be unconcerned with a printed product" and that hypertext is "a wholly electronic form of writing that uses the computer as a medium in its own right, both for the creation and the reading of texts" (p. 13) Her focus on the writing space of the computer rather than the writing space of the book helped me rethink the writing structures that surrounded my print writing practices as I moved to writing for the screen.

Conclusion

The warning to be careful of the people you meet and the choices you make at the crossroads flickers through my mind as I write the conclusion to this chapter. There is no doubt that there is possible danger in the meetings that occur at the crossroads—certain theorists can seduce you, change the way you see the world. Others introduce new ideas that cause you to rethink your beliefs. For me, the theorists introduced here helped me shape my theory of hypertext, gave me the words to name what I experienced as I read and wrote hypertext, and blazed a trail of solid scholarship that I could follow. Choosing to work with one theorist over another meant making a turn at the crossroads that couldn't be undone. The crossroads served as a metaphor for the places where their theories intersected. It also served as a site for my own choices, which turn I made in my theorizing. Knowledge is always dangerous, seductive. In choosing to theorize hypertext, I made a choice at my own crossroads. In making that choice, I gave up simplicity for complexity, absolutes for what-ifs, and foundations for contingencies. Crossroads can be dangerous places.

CHAPTER THREE

SINGULAR STORY IN MULTIPLES

I come from a long line of storytellers; my grandpa's voice was amazing, melodic, fluid, like smooth jazz. His words flowed together in a drawling, musical cadence; he could mesmerize with his stories and his voice. I remember sitting on the ground next to the rough wood of the porch steps on summer nights and listening to the adults tell stories. Grandpa sat in the place of power—a high-backed rocking throne on the center of porch. The rhythm of the rocking matched the pacing of his words, the creak of the chair providing syncopation. I remember breathing in air heavy with humidity and honeysuckle and feeling surrounded by stories. The stories lasted long into the night—the up-and-down fluidity of the words flowed from man to man, from man to wife, from mother to child. The words blended and merged with the sounds of the breeze rustling the green black leaves of the trees and the melancholy chirp of the crickets. When I was tired, I could crawl into a lap and be rocked to sleep surrounded by the rumble of sound and story.

Those family storytelling sessions were a large part of the music of my childhood; it didn't matter that some stories were told over and over. In chapter two, I mentioned briefly the role that the crossroads played in my family stories. I know at least eleven versions of the time when my grandpa's sister, Ossie[15], met a woman at the crossroads. The short, undecorated version of the story is that Ossie's son, Elton, caught some sort of severe illness that damaged both his mind and his body shortly after she met a woman at the intersection of Woody's Mill Road and Gumlog Creek Road. I first heard my grandpa's version of this story on a moonlit

[15] Ossie is pronounced O-See.

night in late summer. The moon was full tinted just a bit with red—my Grandma Rowland called it a wicked moon when it had just that faint wash of red. In Grandpa's version of the story, Elton was cursed by a witch he and his mama, Ossie, met at the crossroads because he wouldn't sing a particular song for her. His version was full of ghosts, spells, and creepy sounds. Grandpa's other sister, Alma, told her version that night as well. In her story, Ossie refused to sell Elton to a woman she met at the crossroads and then was plagued by a series of disasters, one of which was the loss of her son to illness. In yet another version, Ossie and Elton were cursed by a witch because they accidentally killed her familiar at the crossroads. In each of these versions, the main characters—Ossie, Elton, and the woman—are the same; the setting—the crossroads—is the same; the results are the same—Elton suffers.

These oral family stories differ in the details and "decoration" to use one of my Grandma Rowland's terms. The tellers of the story take the simple bones of Elton's story and add layers, inserting their own particular interests and interpretations. Each retelling is different; the tellers often change their own versions in the multiple retellings. No doubt, my grandpa's version told on a dark night by the light of a wicked moon would have been different had it been a spring evening with the sun setting over fields of daffodils. I appropriated Elton's story for a graduate school project (see Appendix D). These multiple versions exist in my family lore without any argument over which version is the true one. All of them are true, and all of them are fabrications. The story exists side-by-side in multiples.

The oral narratives and my written narrative in my research follow the traditional form of a story. Although my print version lacks the performative element of the oral stories, each of these versions has a clearly signaled beginning, middle, and end. Each of these stories follows familiar narrative conventions although the space of the story changes. The oral stories exist in the

performance space of the porch while the print story exists in a document. In this chapter, I will briefly discuss narrative conventions, describe certain print novels that disrupt narrative conventions, introduce several hypertext novels, and then explore my data.

Narrative Conventions: A Historical Perspective

In Western culture, much of what we are taught about narrative and dramatic structure can be traced to ancient Greece. Aristotle's (trans. 1968) *Poetics,* a series of lectures and writings, examined dramatic structure. In this treatise, he outlined the criteria for a well-structured drama. These criteria are so ingrained into Western literary traditions that they are assumed to be natural or common sense; Western culture has embraced and extrapolated these characteristics and applied them to most narrative forms. First, a narrative should be a "whole" with "a beginning, middle, and an end" (p. 27). These sections—beginning, middle, and end—should be clearly defined; there should be nothing before the beginning and nothing after the ending. A well-constructed plot "must not begin or end casually, but must follow the pattern" (p. 27). Second, the highest point of tension should correspond to the middle of the narrative. Aristotle referred to this as the "tying and untying of the knot" (p. 41). He described tying the knot as "from the beginning up to the point immediately before the change to good fortune or misfortune" and untying the knot as "from the beginning of the change to the end" (p. 41). The tension or the change occurs in the middle—after the beginning but before the end. In Aristotle's definition of plot, sequence was vitally important. Tension is ratcheted up as the story progresses, released, and resolved as the story winds down. These ideas, particularly the idea of the narrative having a clearly identifiable beginning, middle, and end, have since been used in a variety of ways and adapted and expanded over time.

Freytag, a German novelist and critic, applied Aristotle's ideas to create a useful, graphic model of the structure of a plot (Meadows, 2002). Freytag's pyramid is initially divided into the following three sections (See Figure 3.1): desis (rising action and complication), peripeteia (climax), and denouement (falling action). Not all narratives fit perfectly onto Freytag's pyramid conception, but it still works as a useful, visual framework for teachers and students in particular. What's more, the pyramid can be subdivided infinitely to represent the subplots of a complex narrative. In classroom conversations about plot in story and drama, Freytag's pyramid offers a structure on which to map the plot. One of my previous writing teachers required that the students in her class plot their stories on this pyramid structure. This structure is not wholly useful for hypertext because of its limitations; it is "great for linear narrative or narrative that is interested in presenting a problem and then solving it" (Meadows, 2002, p. 23). While Freytag's pyramid can be used to show multiple plot lines, it does not easily allow for multisequential plots.

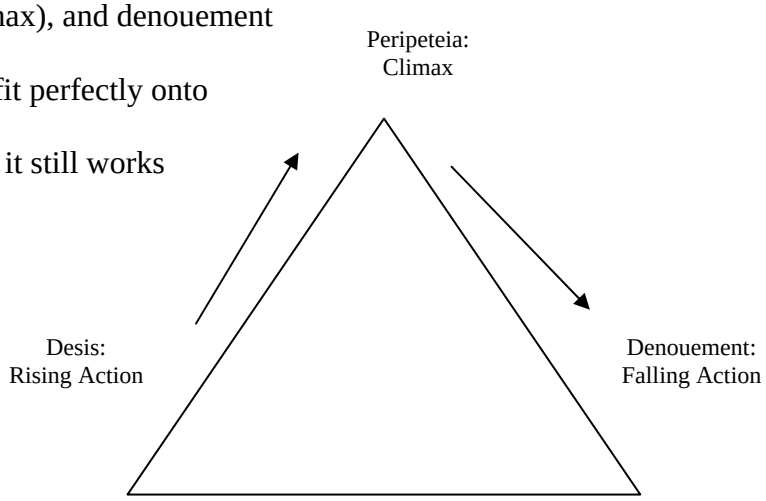

Figure 3.1

Hypertext as a "new medium of expression allows us to tell stories we could not tell before, to retell age-old stories in new ways, to imagine ourselves as creatures of a parameterized world of multiple possibilities, to understand ourselves as authors of rule systems which drive behavior and shape our possibilities" (Murray, 2004, p.8). Print writers have used or resisted the rule systems based on Aristotle's *Poetics* that have long encouraged narrative unity and linear

plots with clearly defined beginnings and endings. The beginning-middle-end structure creates the sense that good narrative and story is clearly ordered. Pullman (1999) argued, “In the Western tradition of philosophy there is a long-standing presumption…that a well-ordered mind produces well-ordered prose, and that disordered prose signifies a disordered mind” (p. 24). Texts that do not follow a form that is “well-ordered” are considered non-traditional or experimental texts. Canonical writers such as Faulkner and Becket and hypertext writers such as Joyce and Jackson resisted tidy narrative conventions and gesture toward the new parameters and rules systems that govern new writing possibilities.

Resistant Texts: Literary Precursors to Hypertext

I first read *As I Lay Dying* in my ninth grade English class. What struck me about this novel was the way the story was told. Faulkner’s (1985) *As I Lay Dying* is a novel that begs to be read in a hypertext format although I did not realize it then. It is constructed as a series of chapters told from different characters’ points of view. From the mentally challenged Vardamen to the perpetually lazy Anse, each member of the Bundren family provides a portion of the narrative describing the journey to bury Addie. It is possible to read the novel from first page to last, creating a mosaic of the stories until the narrative is clear. It is also equally possible to read just the chapters belonging to a particular character—following a single character’s narrative. Each reading path provides a clear movement through the story and a sense of beginning and end. The chapter by chapter reading asks the reader to construct a chronological story from the parts. The mother, Addie, doesn’t speak for herself until after she is dead, which throws off the reader’s sense of time and disrupts what seems to be a chronological telling of the story. Following Dewey Dell’s story throughout the novel provides the reader with a more linear narrative but misses the nuances of her familial interactions. Without seeing Darl’s side of a

conversation about the trip to bury their mother, Dewey Dell's reflections on her brother's nature seem shallow. The multiple narrators and multiple viewpoints ask the reader to make choices about which, if any, of the characters are reliable. The story is broken into distinct parts and can be constructed and reconstructed in a myriad of ways.

Nabokov's (1962) *Pale Fire*, a novel renowned for its hypertext-like qualities, is divided into four distinct sections, each of which can be taken as a complete story. Only when the four pieces are read together does the reader begin to piece together a different view of the story. The four pieces are each different genres—poem, commentary on poem, Foreword, and index—and the story constructed by the reader could very well depend on which genre the reader gives more credibility. Each genre adds a layer to the story the reader constructs.

Beckett's (1956) *Waiting for Godot*, a play, tells a linear story that adheres to the dramatic unities of time and place. The play's structure is traditional but the story is not. The play ends but doesn't provide closure. Vladimir and Estragon wait throughout the entire play for Godot to appear; the play ends without Godot ever appearing and with Vladimir and Estragon still waiting. In an early scene in the play, Vladimir and Estragon discuss the story of thieves as it appears in each of the Four Gospels[16]; they wonder what makes one version of the story more accurate than another. As a reader, I see this as a clue to question the reliability of text. It reminds me of the multiple versions of Elton's story that I grew up hearing.

The deliberate repetition of lines and actions both provides emphasis and alters meaning. The importance of waiting for Godot grows through repetition during the play until it reaches an almost cult-like religious fervor. Vladimir and Estragon frequently talk about leaving the plateau and the tree but they do not. The first few times they mention leaving, the reader believes they

[16] Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John in the New Testament of the Bible.

might, especially after Lucky and Pozzo leave. Their leaving is deferred until after they meet Godot who never arrives. The reader runs out of words on the last page but is left with a sense that the story is not complete. There's an ending but no closure.

Cisneros's (1991) lyrically beautiful *The House on Mango Street* provides moments from Esperanza's life in a series of vignettes. These brief vignettes provide an almost movie-like montage of scenes from Esperanza's childhood; the reader has the sense of moving forward but not a clearly delineated chronology. The reader doesn't know if this is a year in her life or five years, nor do we know how much she has aged from beginning to end, but we can, however, construct the story of her loss of innocence. The beauty and intensity of each vignette almost overpowers the sense of a complete story and renders it obsolete. These vignettes serve as Bakhtininian (1986) utterances in a chain of utterances. Each vignette stands alone, and, the reader can read the whole of the book or an individual vignette to find a sense of closure. The story is more collage than linear construct.

Erdrich, Tan, Morrison, Barth, Borges, and Cortazar are other writers who have challenged linear notions of text and storytelling in their print texts and helped scaffold me as a reader of hypertext. While their stories resist traditional narrative forms, the physical constructs of their texts do not. These texts are print books with a front and back cover and interior pages. To begin one, the reader opens the front cover, turn the first few interior pages, find the clearly signaled beginning of the text, and read. The reader can orient herself as a reader of that text; she knows where she is in relation to the physical representation of that particular text. She is on page three and has a certain number of pages left to read. While it is true that she could open the book to page seventy, read forward from that point and change her view of the story, she still

knows as a reader where she is in the text. She knows how much she skipped and how far she has to go in physical terms.

Reading Hypertext Novels

Some text (Brooks, 1984) and hypertext theorists (Bolter, 1984, 1991a, 1991b, 1992, 1999, 2003 ; Landow, 1992, 1994, 1997, 2006; Morgan, 2000; Snyder, 1996, 2001) contend that each reading, each following of the links produces not THE story but A reading. Bolter (1991) argued that "there is no story at all; there are only readings…the story is the sum of all of its readings…Each reading is a different turning within a universe of paths set up by the author (pp. 124-125). Like Jackson's (1996) Creature, each reading is sewn together creating a piecemeal "machine of mysterious complexity" to be animated by the reader. Although Brooks (1984) was describing postmodern novels rather than hypertext when he said that narrative "becomes a *combinatoire*: a game of putting together…the trying out of one possible ordering of materials which is then superseded by another 'reel,' which will play itself out in turn" (p. 316), his description certainly fits hypertext fiction. He further argued that the "reader never is vouchsafed anything we would want to call a plot, in the traditional sense, but he is himself forced to engage in plotting, if not toward the creation of meaning, at least in exploration of the conditions of narrative meaning" (p. 316). For Brooks, the reader must actively fill in the wholes and gaps in the story to create the plot, to create meaning in the text. Hypertext "when it is read, has no primary axis of orientation, no given top or bottom, no center or periphery" (Morgan, 2000, p. 137). This lack of orientation disrupts the reader's textual expectations and forces the reader to engage in plotting, in questioning the text. Hayles (2002) explained, "Since Aristotle, stories have been conceived as having a beginning, a middle, and an end. But in electronic hypertexts

there is often no predetermined path, so the narrative exists not as a set sequence but as a network of possibilities that the reader can activate in many different ways" (p. 573).

Like many of the print novels I mentioned earlier, hypertext fiction stories challenge traditional narrative conventions. These hypertext novels challenge linearity in storytelling, resist providing definitive endings or closure, and re-figure traditional story structures.

Hypertext Novels

While many print novels incorporate some of the same challenges to narrative conventions that hypertext novels do, hypertext provides a level of resistance to traditional formats that the print text cannot. The book is characterized by "spatial fixity" and the "electronic text is continuously various" (Snyder, 1996, p. 52). Hypertext is, to use Urban's (2001) term, an entrepreneurial technology that is seeking to remake a more traditional form. Hypertext changes both the space of the reading (the screen) and the form of the text as "no text appears on the screen until a reader summons it with a key stroke or a click of a mouse" (Snyder, 1996, p. 84). In a book, the print is present even if the reader does not choose to look at it. In a hypertext story, the text is absent until the reader makes a choice and activates it. This disrupts the idea that a text is intact and complete and "hypertext "trashes the writer's dearest beliefs…that a work is a single shapely whole, that the writer guides the reader" (Gates, 1995, p. 72). For example, in my readings of Joyce's (1990) *afternoon*, I have read both that Peter caused and didn't cause the accident that killed his son. I have read that Peter both had and didn't have an affair. Because these multiple storylines exist in the space of the hypertext novel and in my multiple readings, the novel itself is not whole or shapely. It is fragmented and multiple.

In my first reading of *afternoon*, I used the default option to move forward through the text; I achieved a linear read of a version of Peter's story, but I didn't discover whether his son

was dead or just missing. I was continually aware that in choosing the default path, I was missing something, some character, or some clue. During my second read, I found the author's notes on writing the story, which made me less interested in the story and more interested in the *creation* of the story. I explored the links looking for author commentary and not story. My third reading of the story introduced me to two new characters and solidified my concern that Peter had caused the death of his son and estranged wife. Each time I've read *afternoon*, the text of the story has been different, the path I've taken through the text has been different. When I read it again, I will follow a different path and get a different story. I have multiple *afternoons* in my head with no single reading having claim to textual authority. These multiple readings provide examples of Bakhtin's multivocality. Not only are there multiple voices within the novel, there are also characters who are multivocal. A character in one version may act and behave a particular way only to be different in another reading. Douglas (1992) argued that there is "no single story and, contrary to our expectations based on reading print narratives, readings do not provide varying versions of this story or collections of stories" (p. 14). Like the multiple versions of Elton's story in my family lore, these stories exist without one being named as the true story or the correct version. There are multiple *afternoons* existing side-by-side.

The idea of multiple paths through a text is not new. The labyrinth in Borges' (1964) "Garden of Forking Paths" represents multiple plots rather than a traditional single plot (with subplots) leading to a single outcome for the protagonist. The story rejects the idea of a choice that cannot be made or a road that cannot be taken as all of the roads can be taken and each road and the choices made on that road lead to different outcomes. The story of the garden is framed by the story of Yu Tsun, a spy who must get certain information to the government who hired

him. He makes a choice that will lead to his execution; this choice and this outcome is only one of the paths he could have taken.

Moulthrop's (1987) hypertext *Forking Paths* based on Borges' work allows the reader to explore the multiple paths mentioned in *The Garden of Forking Paths*. According to Douglas (2000) there are no less than twelve "points of closure—places where…the tensions or conflicts which have given rise to the narrative strand are resolved" (p.97). Multiple points of closure for a hypertext is not the same as having an ending to a novel; part of the ending to a novel is that all of the plots and subplots are resolved. In a hypertext, it is possible to render a reading in which one or none of the narrative strands are resolved. As "hypertext fiction does not have the fixed, tangible beginnings and endings of print stories and books, readers decide where their experience of the text ends" (Douglas, 2000, p. 23). Grace, a participant in the study, explained that with "a digital piece, I don't have a clear sense of the shape of the end product. I don't have a physical piece that I can hold in my hand and flip through. The expectation of the end of a piece of digital fiction is not to value THE reading but a reading—not a whole but a possible whole, a maybe end or a series of maybe endings."

Hypertext, Landow (1992) argued, "redefines beginnings and endings" (p. 57). If reading *Forking Paths* provided me with multiple "endings," reading Moulthrop's (1991) *Victory Garden* provided me with multiple beginnings. I first encountered three screens with lists of places and paths—if I did not make a choice about which path I wished to take or place I wish to visit, the three screens looped until I made a choice or I exited the text. I couldn't enter the text of the story until I made a choice about a path or a place. While I may pick and choose how I enter an academic text by skimming the table of contents for a selection that appeals to me or looking up a particular term in the index and visiting each of the pages on which it is listed, I do

not do this with fiction. I begin reading a fiction piece where the signaled beginning is—the first word on the first page. I know nothing of the places and paths listed on the opening screens in *Victory Garden*—is there a best path to follow? Is there a right choice? With a more traditional piece of fiction, I begin where the author tells me to begin, and I follow the author's order throughout the text, at least on my initial reading. In traditional texts, I follow the path designated by the author from beginning to end. Like *Forking Paths* and *afternoon*, *Victory Garden* provides multiple points of closure; however, a reader may not find these points of closure. Brooks (1984), in discussing contemporary fiction, announced that ends "have become difficult to achieve. In their absence, or permanent deferral, one is condemned to playing: to concocting endgames, playing in anticipation of a terminal structuring moment of revelation that never comes, creating the space of an as-if, a fiction of finality" (p. 313). Hypertext incorporates physically and structurally this refusal to provide closure or finality and makes this deferral visible. The lexias in the hypertext become part of a chain of utterances in which there is a continual anticipation of an utterance that is permanently suspended.

Fiction pieces that don't end or begin in multiple ways provide a challenge for the reader. Many hypertexts include directions on how to read the text in the introduction or body of the hypertext. *Izme Pass* (1991) and *Uncle Buddy's Phantom Funhouse* (1992) incorporate directions on how to navigate or read the story into the introductory text. Guyer and Petry (1991) provide these directions for readers of *Izme Pass*:

> This is a new kind of fiction, and a new kind of reading. The form of the text is rhythmic, looping on itself in patterns and layers that gradually accrete meaning, just as the passage of time and events does in one's lifetime. Trying the textlinks embedded within the work will bring the narrative together in new configurations, fluid constellations formed by the

> path of your interest. The difference between reading hyperfiction and reading traditional printed fiction may be the difference between sailing the islands and standing on the dock watching the sea. One is not necessarily better than the other (opening text).

Bolter (1991b) describes hypertext fiction as "a structure of structures" (p.144). The physical structure of the hypertext is not always visible to the reader as the physical structure of a print text is. Like print texts, hypertexts often follow structural patterns in order to orient the reader. Some hypertexts choose to disorient the reader immediately as a signal that traditional reading patterns may not necessarily help navigate this text.

Brief Introduction to Author and Self Study Participants

The five women—Claire, Kate, Joy, Felicity, and Grace—who are part of the author and self study have experience as both teachers and writers. Three of them are leading hypertext scholars and authors. Each of them expressed interest in texts, either print or hypertext, that resisted traditional formats. For a more detailed description of the participants as well as the methods used to select them, see Appendix C.

Claire. Claire teaches college composition at a university in the western part of the United States and has published print and hypertext fiction and non-fiction. While she teachers college composition, she also teaches workshops on writing hypertext. Claire has written full-length novels in hypertext format. Her work incorporates image, text, movement, and sound.

Felicity. Felicity is a professional crime fiction novelist who teaches writing at creative writing workshops and writing pedagogy to preservice elementary teachers. While Felicity is well-known for her print novels, she has also written several fiction and poetry hypertexts. Felicity has served as an author-in-residence for a creative writing program. Her work incorporates image, text, and movement.

Joy. Joy has taught college composition in several colleges and universities on the east coast. Although she is one of the premiere people who have written about hypertext, she no longer works in this field; her reasons for this are primarily economic. She has published numerous books and articles on hypertext as well as several digital fictions. Her hypertext fiction incorporates text and movement.

Kate. Kate has taught college composition for over ten years in several colleges in the northeast and Midwest. She, like Kate, is a pre-eminent hypertext scholar. She has published numerous articles on hypertext, participated in two large collaborative hypertext fiction experiments, and written several digital fictions. Kate describes herself as a visual artist first and as a writer second. Her work includes co-authored hypertexts that use movement, image, and text.

Grace. Grace has taught writing at the middle school, high school, and college levels. She has had short print and poetry pieces published in various literary magazines. Her work incorporates image, text, and movement. Grace wrote her first hypertext as part of this study. While writing the hypertext, she kept a writing journal detailing her process, issues, struggles, and celebrations.

Rethinking Structure

The participants in the author and self study expressed an often nostalgic view of print writing and reading that contrasted with their view of hypertext writing as futuristic. Urban (2001) described a nostalgic view of culture as one that "recedes into a past…it must be salvaged, dug up, preserved" (p. 2). Grace provided an example of a nostalgic view of her print writing practices when she said, "Sometimes I just want to chunk the computer out the window and pick up pen and paper. I want the comfort of the pen, the familiar feel of it scratching across

the page. I want to hold on to that." While the participants gave nods to the nostalgic view of their writing practices, they also embraced the newness of their digital writing practices.

The participants' print writing practices were part of their habitual cultural practices. Culturally, these writers were trained to read and write according to established print practices. While several of the participants spoke of writing texts that were resistant to the existing expectations of text, they were still culturally given a particular form to write toward. They were culturally given the form of the book, the concept of the page, and the structures that accompany those formats. In their resistance, they were pushing back against the linear structure of the book.

A common theme for the participants was how the medium caused a rethinking of the structure of text. With print, writers are given the structure; they are aware of the linear format that print technologies promote. Hypertexts allows for different possibilities for structure. Coover (1992/2003) argued that with "hypertext we focus, both as writers and as readers, on structure as much as on prose, for we are made aware suddenly of the shapes of narratives that are often hidden in print stories" (p. 707). The physical structure of the hypertext is not always visible to the reader as the physical structure of a print text is. Like print texts, hypertexts often follow structural patterns in order to orient the reader. Bernstein (2005), hypertext theorist, computer programmer, and owner of Eastgame.com, wrote extensively about the emerging structural patterns in hypertext fiction. He focused on describing a "variety of patterns of linkages observed in actual hypertext" proposing that "by considering these patterns, or patterns like them, writers…may be led to more thoughtful, systematic, and sophisticated designs" (p. 22). He and other hypertext theorists (Bolter, 1991a, 1991b; Douglas, 2000; Landow, 1992, 1994, 1997) predict that as writers and readers become more sophisticated users of hypertext fiction, structures will become more creative and refined. Each of the patterns Bernstein

describes is accompanied by a graphic providing both a visual and textual representation of the structure.

Grace, as a novice writer of hypertext fiction, grappled with the structure of hypertext in ways that Claire, Joy, and Felicity did not. Initially, Grace struggled to envision a story that she felt could only be told in hypertext. She did not want to write a "dressed up print piece" but wanted to create a story that "utilized what a computer could do that paper could not." She struggled, however, to fit her idea of what a hypertext story could be with her previous experiences in writing print. Her habitual (Urban, 2001) cultural writing practices interfered with her writing in an unfamiliar medium. It wasn't until she had a visual metaphor to use as a structure for the text of the story that she was able to begin writing. She used the initial metaphor of a quilt being stitched together to begin writing and then later changed to a more complex metaphor as she got further into the construction of her story. While Claire, Joy, and Felicity spoke in sophisticated ways about the interplay of story and technology, of image and movement, Grace struggled to see her story as something more than words. Her breakthrough came after five weeks of what she termed "writing paralysis;" in her journal, she wrote

> Well, hallelujah. I finally got started…It took me finding a visual metaphor for the story, a metaphor that gave me a place for text and image and movement, and suddenly the story was there. Rough and a bit shaky but I could see it. Because I could see it, see how it wove together, I could then start to write it. Although write feels like the wrong word. It's not enough for what I think I am doing. I can see how I can use the computer program to create the world of my story. I needed that visual metaphor to see how the pieces of the story could be connected.

Grace's visual metaphor of a quilt and her later metaphor of a town served as an organizing point for her writing; it allowed her to see a structure for the text she was creating. Neither matched the beginning-middle-end structure that she was accustomed to using for her print writings.

Grace's habitual cultural practices of how readers and writers work came into conflict with her accelerative hypertext writing practices. While Grace struggled to change her habitual practices, both Claire and Joy described habitual writing practices that included hypertextual writing practices. For these women, their hypertext composing practices were already habitual. Claire explained that hypertext allowed her to structure a story that contained "symbolic, technical, and scientific complexity…linking ideas and shaping a story within a metaphorical and spatial construct." She saw hypertext writing as writing with a multidimensional space. Grace, as a novice writer, did not recognize the spatial aspects of the writing. Joy echoed the idea that hypertext was spatial in that she described "a conceptual map, a guide for the reader" that was a part of her writing process, a process that she described as spatial. Like Joy, Claire described in visual or spatial terms, an element that she needed to have in place before she started writing. Claire needed a fulcrum or balancing point for the story. Because of their experience with writing hypertext, both women began their writing with a visual organizer. This visual organizer, a habitual practice, helped them decide what to keep as part of the narrative. The visual organizer was an accelerative practice for Grace, one that has not become an ingrained element of how she considered the story as a writer. Grace was forced to remake her composing practice in the new digital medium. The New London Group (1996) explained that multiliteracies "focus[ed] on modes of representation much broader than language alone" (p. 64). Grace struggled with the multimodal elements of writing hypertext because it was unfamiliar to her.

Technology and Writing

The participants in study attempted to take "something old into a new world" or try "something new out on an old world" (Urban, 2001, p. 2). Urban (2001) called those attempting to change cultural practices *entrepreneurs*. The participants worked against habitual print writing practices by moving those practices into the new digital medium. The conflict between habitual practices and entrepreneurial practices makes culture dynamic. The forces working either for stability (habit) or for change (newness) demonstrate the "once and future" possibilities for culture. The entrepreneur has the flexibility to see both past practices and future possibilities. Flexibility is key to being able to adapt habitual practices or to being able to create new and novel entrepreneurial practices. For the participants, the move from print environments to digital environments caused their habitual and entrepreneurial practices to come into conflict.

Grace's struggle to reconceive structure was directly related to the move from one technology to another. She understood how to write in the familiar structure of print but she was unfamiliar with how to conceive of structure in hypertext. In her first attempts to develop her hypertext, she seemed unaware that she might need to reconsider how she thought about structure to write for this new environment. Grace rarely connected writing and technology in her early journal entries about her process. She kept the elements of writing her story separate from what she knew how to do with the computer program that she chose to work with for her story. She wrote about her struggles to develop a story and then in separate paragraphs in the same journal entry, explained the progress she was making in learning the computer program. She finally connected the writing and technology. She wrote

> I was sitting at my desk with the scraps of paper where I had been doodling pieces of dialogue and character descriptions and short scenes. I had multiple screens open…one

> was opened to Word where I had been trying yet again to get the story started and one of the others was opened to Dreamweaver where I had been practicing rollover buttons. I was randomly moving my mouse over the buttons I had made—because to be honest, it was pretty damn cool and I was having more success learning the program anyway—and suddenly it clicked. Well, rolled over. I could see the story laid out as a series of places for the reader to go, rolling over a word or a name could give you access or change the character's point of view.

Realizing what the technology could offer her as a writer allowed Grace to construct text differently. Connecting technology and structure allowed her to reshape part of her habitual print writing practices that conflicted with the writing practice she was trying to develop for her new writing environment. This recognition allowed Grace to remake her habitual practices and to incorporate more entrepreneurial practices.

Of the participants, Claire had the most experience in writing hypertext, and this experience showed in how she talked about her writing processes. Claire's explanation of how she composed in a digital environment provided the most integrated use of fiction writing terminology and technological terms. The entrepreneurial practices that Grace was just beginning to incorporate were already habitual practices for Claire (Urban, 2001). She explained that "hypermedia is not at all about simply translating some print text onto an electronic slate." Whereas Grace struggled to see the role technology played in the structure of a text, Claire did not. Claire recognized that "the various possible elements of an electronic piece—the software, the coding, the imagery, the structure, the color, the pacing, the layout, the sound, and the text – are all critical to the 'language' of a work." She saw the elements of the hypertext as integrated pieces of the text she was creating. The elements normally associated with technology like

software and coding were intimately bound up in the development of her story. To look at this in Bakhtinian (1986) terms, Claire's story utterances included more than just the textual elements. For her, image, text, sound, and movement were integrally tied up in each utterance. Claire's utterance had expanded to include narrative elements in addition to text.

While Claire did not use the term "visual metaphor" to describe her starting point, she did use a term that implied a visual structure. She looked for the beginning point for the story—the "fulcrum or balancing point"—that dictated the shape of the piece. So, Claire looked for the element that would provide the support for the structure of her story, the pivot point that would allow the story to move. She explained that the fulcrum is determined by the "specific requirements of the piece." She called the fulcrum the "still point" that represented "an intersection of the story requisites and the technology possibilities." She did not divide the elements of the story from the technology that was used to construct it; she saw them as inseparable.

Joy, like Claire, has extensive experience with hypertext. She has been working with Storyspace, a hypertext composing program, since the mid-eighties. She talked about the structure of her stories in terms of architecture and maps. She explained that in order to compose hypertext, she "started to think about a cognitive map structure that would enable readers to most easily perceive what the overall structure of the narrative looked like before they delved into it." Like Claire and Grace, she talked about the composing of the hypertext story in visual terms. Joy explained that the map "influenced the story [she] told and how [she] could tell it." The cognitive map provided her as a writer a form for the story and also provided the reader with the shape of the story. Like Claire, hypertext writing practices had become habitual for her (Urban, 2001). Because the form of hypertext stories is often unfamiliar to readers, Joy felt that the maps

provided the visual shape of the story to help readers orient themselves in the narrative. Joy linked the narrative and the visual representation of the narrative when she said that the visual representation helped her "decide what could be included in the actual narrative." The visual map of the story provided her with both the starting point and a guide for what could be included in the narrative.

Felicity's explanation of her composing process focused on her starting point—an image—and moved through her developing the events and emotions of a hypertext fiction piece. In describing the writing of one of her more complex hypertexts, she said, "I had to have the [structural} image first" before "I could start composing a full piece." She separated the need for an organizing structural metaphor for hypertext from the writer's use of visual images Many print writers rely on "image to instigate a scene or passage"; the difference for Felicity is "the structural metaphor that hypertext requires because it is not culturally provided." She described a contrast between her expectations as a print writer and her experiences as a hypertext writer several times in her interviews. Like Claire, she spoke with relative sophistication when considering what the "technology could offer, the technological affordances" that could be utilized for the creation of her hypertext pieces.

Both Claire and Felicity considered the technological effects that could be used to influence the text as part of the discussion of their processes. Claire said that although she "can imagine the overall use of technology and the effect that [she] would like to create, the realities of what can be done on the computer are always a factor," while Felicity talked in terms of what the programs "afforded" her as a writer. Claire and Felicity spoke of the computer technology used to construct their stories as part of the "form" of the story. Claire provided an example of technology as form when she explained that for one of her pieces "the controlling factor was the

phases of the moon; the dark/light of the text and the visibility of parts of every page needed to depend on selective mouseover action coded into the html structure. What [she] couldn't work into this system simply fell away." In this particular hypertext, Claire used the visual structure of the phases of the moon to serve as a structure for the story. She used the shape of the moon to shape the text as well as to shape the story. She used the dark and light provided by the phases of the moon on each lexia of the hypertext. The light and dark in this hypertext was used to illuminate or hide words and images on the lexias. Any image, text, or sound that did not fit within this visual structure was removed.

Felicity, like Claire, asserted that technology offered multiple options for configuring text and image. She argued that rather than laying out a linear progression for the reader, she could invite the reader "in to play in the space" technology allowed her to create. These hypertext conceptions of text contrasted with more established and habitual conceptions of print.

Joy focused on the theoretical aspects of hypertext explaining that her early interests were in what hypertext changed about traditional texts. She argued that "in a sense a lot of reading is predicated on the sense of an ending, and our ability to understand something is predicated on a move toward a certain ending." She then asked, "What happens when that ending, that sense of a definitive ending is permanently suspended?" She focused on "what made a text hang together" in both print and hypertext. She looked at text as both a habitual and entrepreneurial form. She said that working in hypertext "underscored for [her] the importance of the way in which sentences fit together." She explained that "there are these huge gaps between sentences themselves and that leaping of the gap, the inferential gap, that writers tend to leave between sentences is perhaps the most taxing aspect of reading." These gaps are more physically apparent

in hypertext, and so the writer has to be very aware of the architecture of the story so that all the sentences and screens hang together.

Grace, Claire, Joy, and Felicity reshaped their expectation of text in order to work in a digital environment. Each writer developed a visual construct that allowed them to restructure a traditional print format in order to be able to move it to a new medium. For each of these writers, the text functioned differently in the digital environment, and functions of the text were intimately linked to the technology. The practices associated with writing these texts for these participants were tied to medium in which the texts were produced.

Resistance to Linearity

One of the struggles for the writers of hypertext is anticipating how the text will be read. Grace complained several times that her "writing group didn't know how to read and critique a text that wasn't linear." She found this to be true with both non-linear print pieces and hypertexts. She said, "In a linear piece, I take the responsibility for leading my reader through the text. I expect them to work to understand it but I take a big responsibility for guiding that understanding." This contrasted with her expectations of non-linear print pieces and hypertexts. Grace explained that she expected the "reader to do a different read—that [she wasn't] leading instead [she provided] pieces they need to put together." Bakhtin (1981) contended that "every concrete act of understanding is active….Understanding comes to fruition only in the response. Understanding and response are diametrically merged and mutually condition each other; one is impossible without the other" (p. 282). Speakers in a dialogue or readers involved in a text must be active participants in the act of understanding. Felicity echoed this idea when she said, "Readers sometimes read a piece of conventional text I've written and they want more navigation directions--they want me to be the kind of author who guides them through the text. In those

cases, I have to go back and see how much navigation and explanation I need to give so that I do not undermine the purpose of the text." Different texts require different levels of commitment from the reader to construct the reading.

Perhaps the most obvious difference between hypertext and traditional text is the difference in linearity. Traditional texts are read in a sequence with little or no branching. Hypertext "forces us to reconsider the writer's use of sequence in order to control the passage of readers through the text" (Snyder, 1996, p. 66). Claire, Felicity, Joy, and Grace expressed in nuanced ways a sense that the way they constructed hypertexts was significantly different from the ways that they constructed print pieces. Grace was the most explicit in her arguing that she "was writing against what [she] had been taught about how to write" and that "the process of writing was as linear for [her] as the product [she] was expected to produce." Grace maintained that the pull to linearity in her writing was detrimental to her composing her hypertext story. Like Grace, Claire, Joy, and Felicity connected linearity with print; their comments, however, focused more on how linearity served them as a writer in a particular context.

Felicity connected linearity with the fiction genre in which she writes. She argued that as a crime fiction writer, she works with a particular story construction in which tension is built, for the reader, in a linear format. There is a forward movement through the text in which clues are provided and tension is ratcheted up and released until the mystery has been solved. For Felicity, her process for writing print was tied to her expectation that there would be forward movement through the text. She explained that she was "pretty linear" in her print writing because she knows that what she writes "has got to move [her] through time," whereas she doesn't adhere to that "movement through time" in her hypertexts. Felicity linked the overall structure of the text

she was trying to produce to her process. She began at a particular point and moved through the text. With print, she moved from the opening scene through to the resolution.

Although Felicity's print novels frequently moved back and forth in chronological time, her expectation was that the scenes she wrote would move the plot forward. She explained that she wrote the scenes in the order they occurred in her novels, keeping her movement through her writing fairly linear. She did not feel the same obligation to linearity in her hypertexts, explaining

> But what I've found with hypertext is I tend to go with ideas and emotions…if I am writing on an idea I will stay with that idea regardless of where it takes me in time. Or if I am trying to evoke a certain emotion, I will work with that emotion regardless of where it goes in the story because the placement of it in the story isn't as vital anymore. I don't know where the reader is going to access it. So it isn't as critical for me as a writer to produce it in a certain order.

Felicity connected reader movement through the text in either a linear or non-linear format to her writing process. Because she saw the movement through her print text as linear, she focused on a linear writing process. Although this linear movement through the print text was part of her writing practice, she did acknowledge that she knew writers for whom this did not hold true. Reader movement through a hypertext does not necessarily follow a specific path, so Felicity did not feel obligated to follow her print writing practices in this format. She still created movement through her texts, but the movement was based on a non-linear construct. Here, Felicity discussed how she anticipated her reader's response when she wrote her hypertext. She also considered her role as a writer in the dialogue between writer, reader, and text. In a hypertext, her role as writer is different than it is in print text. She considered the overall understanding or

story rather than the individual pieces of the dialogue as she wrote. She created her dialogue in anticipation of the reader and the text, expecting the reader to actively respond to her text.

Like Felicity, Grace drew a connection between reader movement through the text and the decisions she made as a writer. Felicity adjusted her writing process to adapt to the reader's movement, but the awareness of the reader's movement through the text was troubling to Grace as a writer. She said, "I had to make decisions not just about what a character said but also about how the reader would navigate through the text to discover what the character said." She contrasted this with her expectations of a reader's movement through a print text, explaining:

> When I write a traditional narrative, I don't have to consider multiple reader paths through the text. I expect the reader of a print text to begin on page one and move through sentence by sentence, paragraph after paragraph all the way to the end. In a print text, I know what came before the piece of dialogue; in a hypertext, any one of a number of paths could have lead to that particular piece of dialogue. I have to consider not only the scene I have in my head but also the possible paths to the scene...Those multiple possibilities were paralyzing for me as a writer. In a more traditional piece of writing…the reader may choose to skip around or not follow the path I created, but my expectation as a writer is the reader would have read particular sections in a particular order. I have no such expectation as a writer of digital fiction.

Grace found the non-linear movement of readers through the text challenging to her expectation of how she should write. She began writing a hypertext story with the idea that she would create **A** story, a singular text. She explained that in writing for print, she worked toward a cohesive whole but in hypertext, she worked to create a "singular story in multiples." At several points in

writing her hypertext, Grace articulated, "I can't think and write this way…with this many possibilities in my head."

The idea of multiple potential readings caused Grace problems as a writer because it asked her to consider story in a different, non-linear way. In order to work in the digital environment, Grace had to figure out how to resist the entrenched linearity of her print writing practices. Grace explained that she felt "out of control of the text" and that made her uncomfortable as a writer. "I finally got the story going," she explained, "but now it feels like I am drowning in all this middle." She felt that the story was getting away from her. She finally felt that she had control again when she discovered another way to think about her story. She stated, "I'd been doing this all wrong. Even though I started with this visual shape for the story and that got me going, I kept trying to make a familiar type of story, the beginning work to the end stuff I was used to." Grace felt the pull to linear storytelling even as she was working in a format that was not conducive to that. She said that when she "looked at the story as a place, as a space" rather than a "computer page," she was able to move forward in her writing. "Writing in a space," she elaborated, "meant that I could have things happen that at first didn't seem connected by anything other than the space but that could later mean something more."

Joy mentioned reading short stories by Coover[17] and being aware that the "linearity of the page was kind of limiting" to what stories could be. Joy linked linearity to her writing for print explaining, "I'll just jot down some notes to myself about how [the argument] plays out…And then it will be the completely linear thinking after that." She explained that her thinking for both hypertext and print is spatial, and the writing either continues that (as in hypertext) or becomes

[17] In this instance, Joy referred specifically to *The Babysitter* but also mentioned that Coover wrote a great many short stories that she found to be limited by the linearity of the page.

completely linear (as in print). She explained that the "plot for hypertext is dictated completely by spatial concerns."

Claire described one of her early print novels as a "print prototype for a hypertext narrative." She positioned her early print writings as texts that "resisted linearity and nudged closer to forms of hypertextual media integration." In describing her process for these novels, she explained that she wrote and rewrote in longhand. She later adopted "many of the pre-writing practices…free-associating, mind-mapping, outlining, list-making" that she used with her students. She believed these strategies were "methods of 'breaking free' of the tyranny of linear text succeeding itself page upon page." Claire found the structures allowed by the digital environment to be freeing and that hypertext was "the ideal medium for the kinds of stories [she] wanted to tell." She believed her print writing resisted linearity, and hypertext allowed her greater freedom in her storytelling.

These writers associated linearity with print—either with their process for creating it or with the expectation of progression through the text. Felicity, Joy, and Claire moved easily between their writing processes for print and hypertext. Grace, however, struggled to rethink the writing of her story without thinking in terms of linearity and linear movement.

Appropriation of Terms

Appropriation is a Bakhtinian (1986) term that means absorbing, internalizing, and recreating the utterances of others. Appropriation is a necessary part of dialogue because it shows familiarity and facility with the discourse. The participants in the study show both their familiarity with the discourse of writing teachers as well as their familiarity with computer discourses. Claire and Felicity in particular spoke of the technological effects of the computer on the text as part of their description of their processes.

Both Claire and Felicity talked about technology with a fluency that novice hypertext writer Grace lacked. Grace explained that she wasn't "comfortable enough with what the programs could do to be able to play and experiment." Her lack of experience with the technology influenced her writing because she couldn't "do some things because although [she] could see it in [her] head, [she] didn't know how to bend the technology to [her] whim." Claire and Felicity were much more fluent with the technology and talked about how they worked with it in more sophisticated terms than Grace did. Claire wote her own computer programming so her familiarity was even more advanced than the typical hypertext writer. Both Claire and Felicity appropriated terms from computer technology into their talk about their writing process. The term "afforded" is a computer term used to explain the capabilities and capacities of a particular technology or software. Rather than just use this term to talk about what the computer or program allows, Felicity appropriated the term and applied it to her hypertext writing. It is not linked to a particular program because she used several nor is it linked to a particular computer; it is used to describe both the writing and the possibilities of the medium in which she worked. Grace was unable to do the kind of appropriating that Claire and Felicity were able to do because she was unable to fully internalize and use the terms for her own needs.

Awareness of the Medium

The participants' awareness of the various mediums in which they worked allowed them to focus on the structures allowed by that medium. Grace explained, "I keep fighting against all the familiar forms I am used to for my stories. I need to find a way to think about story that lets it grow and connect across and around." Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) structure of the rhizome provided another way of thinking about structure. Although many print texts resist the hierarchical structure that print incorporates, Grace found that she tried to impose "a structure

that worked like a print piece on an environment that resisted it." She said, "I kept trying to make the hypertext work like my print story and it [the story] just didn't make sense because the structure didn't fit." A rhizome doesn't have a center or a hierarchy that implies that one plateau is more important than another. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) explained that, "There are no points of positions in a rhizome, such as those found in a structure, tree, or root. There are only lines" (p. 8). A hypertext structure, as Grace discovered, resists the kind of positioning that print texts provide. The hypertext, instead, provides multiple lines between and among. The rhizome supplies a potential figuration for a story told in an electronic medium.

Claire, Joy, Felicity, and Grace demonstrated an awareness of the medium in which they worked as they described their composing processes for print and for hypertext. They demonstrated that "writing is not an event isolated from its medium but is, to varying degrees, an engagement with its medium" (Glazier, 2002, p. 23). Grace and Felicity addressed the idea that engaging with print is often invisible because of the way the book is embedded in Western culture. Hayles (2000) explained that "hundreds of years of print have made the tradition of the book transparent to us" (p. 1). Grace clarified

> I was consciously aware of the medium in which I was writing, not just the genre, not just the format, I was aware of the tool. The computer, the screen, the keyboard, the mouse, the movement between screens. I know that pen and paper are technologies, but I have worked with them for so long that they are invisible to me. I was viscerally aware of how each choice in my hypertext made other choices possible or not possible.

Hayles (2002) argued "[w]ith both print and screen, the specificity of the medium comes into play as its characteristics are flaunted, suppressed, subverted, or re-imagined" (p. 33). In order to

work with the medium, the participants had to engage with its affordances. They had to consider what this medium could offer them as writers.

Readers and writers find that "they must learn to conceive of their text as a structure of possible structures. The writer must practice a kind of second-order writing, creating coherent lines for the reader to discover without closing off the possibilities prematurely or arbitrarily" (Bolter, 1991, p. 144). The rhizome provides a possible structure for these writers to work within (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987). In order to write in a digital medium, the participants had to reconsider the structure of the texts and create a visual form that allowed them to see the form of the story before they could write it. Grace explained, "I had to get in my head that the story wasn't flat. It wasn't for the page, it was for the screen. Not flat, it had a shape, a visual shape and I needed that to write." Joy echoed this idea when she said that she was "tremendously aware of the architecture of the stories" she was writing.

CHAPTER FOUR

ONCE AND FUTURE PRACTICES

My grandmother, Blanche Kittrell, told me that there was once a movie theater in Kite, a small, whistle-stop town in south Georgia where she was born and raised (See Figure 4.1). It was on the upstairs level of the old Bailey auction house. My father remembers walking to the picture show with his brothers and sisters on Saturday afternoons. For a quarter, they could see the show. For a nickel they could get an RC Cola, a small bag of peanuts, or a moon pie. Granny said, “My children, took after me and loved to read, but, lordy, when them picture shows came to Kite, they loved them stories too.” Both Granny and Daddy tell me that Kite used to be a much bigger town with small restaurants, a library, a school, an auction house, and the movie theater. Apparently, there was an outcry when the theater came to town; several of the town elders were worried that the library would lose patronage when faced with the new technology of moving pictures.

Figure 4.1

Granny explained,

> Once the shine of it being new wore off, the picture show didn't take nothin' away from the library. People still wanted book stories just as much as they wanted picture shows…Me, and a lot of the older folks didn't have the time for the pictures but books were whenever we could get to 'em. We saw them picture shows when we could get the money and the time. Weren't new for long.

The picture shows were a new technology for this small town. There was genuine fear that this new format for storytelling would take something away from the more familiar format of the book. Granny didn't talk about the two kinds of storytelling in terms of literacy or literacy practices; rather, she mentioned the newness of the movies and how there was a "shine" associated with that format that wasn't there for books. The newness provided both excitement and fear. People were lured into theaters to see a new form of story. Others saw this new format as something that could damage what they already had. In reality, the picture shows didn't cause the library to close down nor did they keep people in Kite from reading. They did introduce a new form of storytelling, of narrative, and the literacy practices that accompanied that new form. Reading a film was different than reading a book. School didn't necessarily address this change in literacy practices then nor has it since.

Changing Practices

The New London Group (1996) recognized that any new approach to literacy must "account for burgeoning variety of text forms associated with information and multimedia technologies" (p. 61). Tapscott (1998) described today's students as the Net Generation, explaining that they are "the first to grow up surrounded by digital media" and are "so bathed in bits that they think it is part of the natural landscape" (p. 1). Just as the innovative technology

from previous generations becomes commonplace to the following generation, digital technology has become commonplace to many of today's students. What this means for the classroom teacher is that while we may remember a time before the Internet and desktop computers, our students do not.

The changing textual landscape requires changing strategies for writing because digital texts have created new definitions of effective writing. Just as the participants' concepts of text and story changed as they worked in a digital environment, so too did the practices they used to compose their stories. The purpose of this study was to theorize narrative hypertext using three data sources: library and Internet research; an interview study, and a self study. What happens to writing narrative fiction when the writer uses hypertext? How do the practices of writers change as they shift mediums from print to screen?

Writing changed for the participants in the author study and self study as they moved from medium to medium. The participants described changes to their habitual (Urban, 2001) writing practices, creating writing situations in which they had to develop entrepreneurial composing practices that challenged their already established writing habits. My participants described a variety of functions that changed as they moved from print writing to digital writing. For some of the participants, hypertext was a technology they welcomed and saw as an accelerative (Urban, 2001) force that would change cultural practices. Coover (1992/2003), in an early work on how narrative is remade by hypertext, described some of the challenges to habitual practices when he argued that hypertext had

> [n]o fixed center, for starters—and no edges either, no ends or boundaries. The traditional narrative time line vanishes into a geographical landscape or exitless maze, with beginnings, middles and ends being no longer part of the immediate display. Instead:

> branching options, menus, link markers and mapped networks. There are no hierarchies in these topless (and bottomless) networks, as paragraphs, chapters and other conventional text divisions are replaced by evenly empowered and equally ephemeral window-sized blocks of text and graphics—soon to be supplemented with sound, animation and film" (p. 707).

The participants in this study echoed many of the changes that writing in digital environments forced them to make. Like Coover (1992/2003), the participants discussed how the conception of beginnings, middles, and ends in their stories had to be remade in order to work in the digital environment. These participants also discussed the feeling that what they created in digital environments was "significantly new," which is an element of Urban's (2001) accelerative culture. One participant, Grace, stated that she "was building a story in a way that was completely new and different from any writing [she] had ever done before." Kate, another participant, argued that "fiction had to wait until [she] found hypertext" because print didn't allow her to write with images in the way that she wanted to write. As a visual artist, Kate was accustomed to using images in her to tell stories or create a response in her viewer. She was a visual artist before she was a hypertext fiction writer. Kate needed the merging of image and text in order to create her fiction stories. Kate uses images as part of her narrative.

Writing with images is a complex idea. What does it look like? I will provide an example from a participant's hypertext fiction. In Grace's hypertext, the first screen takes you to a sepia toned picture of a church. On one side of the church, you see headstones in the cemetery. On the other side of the church, you see the shape of buildings in the town. There are several places in the narrative where you return to this image. The repetition of the image, like the repetition in *Waiting for Godot*, provides both emphasis and alteration. The repetition of the image

emphasizes that the church is somehow central to the lives of the people in the town. Your perception of the image alters as you realize how much happens at, near, or because of the church. The church is a place where people mark the beginnings, middles, and ends[1819] of their lives. It is a place of fellowship, faith, family, and for some, fear. You realize as the image repeats that the church is somehow consuming the space around it, its shape is changing, colors are getting darker. As you read deeper into the story, you discover that the church is the site of several terrible events—race-related hangings, a suicide, a rape, and forced marriages. The image of the church changes again, growing taller and darker, a place where things are hidden in the corners and buried under the porch. So, a picture that shows one of the central character walking up the steps alone into the church sets an ominous tone, cues the reader that something unpleasant is about to happen. The narrative is in the image, and no words are needed. The repetition of the image tells the story, the church is not a safe place for this girl; it has not been a safe place for a great many people. When you see the image of the church again and the image is the same as one at the beginning of the story, brightly lit and welcoming, you notice what you missed the first time. The shapes of the buildings in the town eerily match the shapes of the headstones. The shade trees cast shadows that look like fingers of darkness reaching toward the church, the cemetery, and the town. The print narrative of the story relies on the images to help carry the narrative weight. If a reader glosses over the images and does not include them in her reading of the story, she misses a great deal of the story. The images are part of the constructed narrative.

[18] Births, baptisms, marriages, funerals.

[19]

The participants in this study acted as examples of Urban's (2001) entrepreneurs in that they took "something old into a new world" and tried "something new out on an old world" (p. 2). These writers initially took their habitual print writing practices into the digital writing environment. These practices, which will be elaborated later in this chapter, needed to be remade in order for the participants to create the stories they wanted to create. As writers of digital fiction, these writers are entrepreneurs sharing a new form of storytelling with the old world. Being an entrepreneur is risky, and several of the participants acknowledged this risk. Both Felicity and Joy said there had been economic issues in their choices of writing formats. Felicity discussed a print book she had written that contained multiple genres and multiple time lines—both can be called characteristics of hypertext fiction—that did not sell. While she loved the book, many of her readers did not. She made a financial decision not to write another book with that format. Joy also discussed her decision not to write any more of a particular kind of text for financial reasons. She chose to stop writing digital fiction because she said "there's no money in it" at the current time. She argued that there will need to be more changes to technology and culture before hypertext fiction will be profitable.

The tension between print and digital technologies can be viewed as an example of habitual and accelerative practices coming into conflict. Print and digital technologies promote different kinds of writing practices. When a writer is accustomed to particular habitual practices of writing, she may struggle with changing those practices. Grace announced, "I've been writing stories one way for so long that I don't know if I could do it differently." Other participants spoke of an awareness of what each medium "afforded" them as writers. As writers, the participants were aware of their composing practices in each medium.

In describing his hypertext writing class, Coover (1992/2003) explained that "confronted with hyperspace, they [his writing students] have no choice: all the comforting structures have been erased. It's improvise or go home" (p. 707). For Grace, the idea of "improvise or go home" was one with which she could readily identify. She had the least experience with writing hypertext when the study began and repeatedly described the frustration of not knowing how to write in digital environments. She said, "I'm entering a brave new world and don't have a clue about how to negotiate it." Like Grace and the other participants in this study, Coover's writing students had to develop entrepreneurial practices in order to write in hypertext. Coover said,

> Some [the writing students] frantically rebuild those old structures, some just get lost and drift out of sight, most leap in fearlessly without even asking how deep it is (infinitely deep) and admit, even as they paddle for dear life, that this new arena is indeed an exciting, provocative if frequently frustrating medium for the creation of new narratives, a potentially revolutionary space, capable, exactly as advertised, of transforming the very art of fiction, even if it now remains somewhat at the very fringe, remote still in these very early days, from the mainstream. (p. 707)

Coover's students and the participants in this part of the study showed both the resistance to changes in habitual practices as well as the use of entrepreneurial practices in the description of their composing practices. Grace frequently bemoaned her lack of awareness of how to use what she knew about writing in this new world of writing; she argued that her "old writing strategies don't make sense" and her new practices "are too shaky to be reliable." Urban (2001) talked about the once and future practices of culture, the participants discussed the once and future practices of writing.

Multiliteracies

My participants' composing practice pointed to the New London Group's (1996) emphasis on multiliteracies rather than singular or limited forms of literacy. Kate introduced this concept when she said, "In my visual art, I always needed to bring together different media and/or different topics. So hypertext seemed nearly perfect for me in its inherent multiplicity." Kate began as a visual artist and did not turn to writing until she found a form that afforded her the inclusion of multiple genres (e.g., in art and in writing) and media forms (e.g., film, paintings, photography, print). Hypertext as an art form allowed Kate to use the multiple ways in which she was literate (e.g., painting, photography, fiction writing, academic writing) to tell her story. Like Kate, Grace also felt that hypertext allowed her to incorporate multiple forms of literacy. She said, "I've done many multigenre projects that included art and image but with this hypertext, I've done something new. I've worked to have the image not supplement the words (print) but stand in place of them." In this description of her practice, Grace expressed her use of both print and image as narrative practices. Claire described her writing in terms of multiliteracy—she wrote equally with text, image, and computer code.

Claire is the only participant who also writes the computer programs she uses in the creation of her hypertext fictions. Writing the program becomes part of her writing process; it is possible for the reader to view sections of the code she has written. *The Matrix Trilogy* is a series of movies that critique society, the reliance on and abuse of technology, systems of control, perception and reality (to name just a few). Remember the scenes in *The Matrix* in which the ones and zeros that represent computer code dominate the screen? As movie viewers, we see the computer code as art rather than a language that creates entire worlds. A programmer would likely see something entirely different from the non-programmer. Movie directors made it easy

for the non-programmers in the audience by designing scenes that showed the worlds created by the code, just in case we missed the importance of the virtual, the code, in the process of becoming.

Claire's expansion of her writing process to include the computer code she uses in the programs she writes to create her stories introduces an element I have not yet discussed. If Claire considers computer code as part of her writing, then she has expanded her literacies to include composing not just with text, image, sound, and movement but also with numbers and computer languages. The code she writes makes the narrative possible; making that code visible makes it part of the narrative. A friend of mine who is a programmer described programmers and their codes as distinct. Just as authors are often identifiable by their writing style, so, too are programmers identifiable by the style in which they write code. Good code is artistic and effective. My friend said:

> Good code is very well-written, highly efficient and doesn't waste a line in getting the job done. Good code is tight code. And tight code is sexy code. There's nothing more satisfying than knowing that you've created the most succinct expression possible while achieving the seemingly impossible. You feel like you've matched the breviloquence (brevity + eloquence) of DNA. God writes tight code.

This is a literacy I have little concept of; will future creative writers working in hypertext be critiqued by the code they write as well as the stories they compose?

The other participants in the author and self study used off-the-shelf computer programs to create their hypertexts. These programs do not display their code for the users, the computer code is there but it is hidden behind a user-friendly interface. The participants interacted with the interface but did not create their own computer code. For example, I use Word, PowerPoint,

Dreamweaver, and other programs. I know how to use the programs, what commands to give to get the computer to do what I want, but I don't know the computer code to do the same thing.

Bakhtin

Bakhtin's (1981, 1986) conception of text is remarkably similar to hypertext. His concepts of utterance and chain of utterances are infinitely extendable. In this view, a text composed of utterances does not end and can be added to and extended (in multiple directions). Hypertext, like Bakhtin's texts, remains open and changeable. Snyder (1996) explained that in "hypertext there is no final version and therefore no last word: a new idea or a reinterpretation is always possible" (p. 57). Bakhtin's view of a whole text does not indicate finality or completion; the text is always incomplete and open to change. The participants incorporate Bakhtin's concepts of utterance, heteroglossia, and appropriation in their discussions of their writing processes.

Utterance

The fluidity of Bakhtin's (1986) utterance is also evident in the participants' discussion of their composing practices. The utterance, as an element of dialogue cannot exist in isolation. The participants discussed how the lexias or screens of their stories worked with each other. Grace explained:

> I write and I'm thinking of the screen I just wrote and the one I need to write next. I think about the images I want to use and how they will talk to each across the screens. In the last set of screens I wrote, I used pieces of the same image in different colors and sizes focusing on different sections that helped tell the story. I can read the section just using the images because they talk to each other and talk to the text.

Grace's explanation of how these screens, the text, and the images talked to and across each other demonstrates Bakhtin's utterance and chain of utterances in action. For example, Grace explained that as she composes her current text, she also thinks about what she just wrote and what she will write next. This consideration of what was in the previous utterance (screen) and anticipation of the next utterance (screen) shows that, for Grace, these texts do not exist in isolation. Grace also discussed how distracting this could be for a hypertext writer as there are multiple utterances that could lead to the current utterance she is writing and multiple utterances the current utterance could lead to in the story.

Felicity also demonstrated an awareness of how utterances or lexias in a hypertext interacted with each other. She explained that with hypertext she tends "to go with ideas and emotions…if [she] am writing on an idea [she] will stay with that idea regardless of where it takes [her]...Or if [she is] trying to evoke a certain emotion, [she] will work with that emotion regardless of where it goes in the story." Felicity lets the emotions of the story guide her utterances. For example, in her hypertext about a family haunted by secrets from the past, Felicity created a mystery—the discovery of the secrets that haunted the family. If she were writing this story as a traditional mystery, she would have written the scenes in the order the reader would read them, slowly releasing the information so the reader could solve the mystery. (As explained in a previous chapter, Felicity described her print writing practice as very linear.) Felicity told this story in hypertext rather than print, so how she constructed the story changed. She allowed the emotions of the characters, the rising sense of dread and concern, guide her writing. The reader does not discover the clues to the mystery in a linear format; instead, she discovers the clues as the characters do, out of order and in messy ways. Tension is not created in

the ratcheting up of a linear progression; rather, it is created in the slow building of dread in the characters.

For both Grace and Felicity, the screens or lexia are utterances in a chain of utterances. As writers, they seek to create meaning in the active dialogic interaction between the screens. They create a chain of utterances that has meaning for them with full awareness that the reader may create an entirely different and unexpected meaning.

For Grace, this awareness of the reader "almost paralyzed and immobilized" her to the point that she couldn't function as a writer. She asked, "What if I don't want them to take a different path? What if I want to control where they go?" Grace struggled to let her readers create their own chain of utterances because she wanted to control their progress in what she saw as her text. "This is my story," she explained "and I want to choose where they go." It wasn't until she realized that the story was a shared work, "like a conversation," that she let go of some of her desire to control the chain of utterances in the hypertext she created. The hypertext writer, like the hypertext reader, must actively work to make sense (Deleuze & Guattari, 1972/1983) from the utterances, from the gaps between the utterances, and from the unexpected collision of utterances. Coover (1992/2003) argued that we "are always astonished to discover how much of the reading and writing experience occurs in the interstices and trajectories between text fragments. That is to say, the text fragments are like stepping stones, there for our safety, but the real current of the narratives runs between them" (pp. 707-708).This view of the text fragments (utterances) as pieces of the narrative that are connected by a current that runs between them fits well with Bakthin's (1986) chain of utterances. Both Grace and Felicity showed an awareness of how the utterances were connected not only with what they wrote but also with what they

anticipated. The chain, or as Coover called it, the current, connecting the utterances is part of the intentional sense making from both the author's and the reader's point of view.

Heteroglossia

Hypertext as a format for narrative promotes heteroglossia; it has the capability of producing multiple genres, multiple art forms, and multiple links. Heteroglossia is the multiple, layered, shifting, and contextual languages in a text or dialogue. The form of hypertext with its many links and cross-lexia connections does not allow for a single, unified voice. In hypertext, as in Bakhtin's (1981) texts, "everything means, is understood, as part of a greater whole—there is a constant interaction between meanings, all of which have the potential for conditioning others" (p. 426). The participants in the study acknowledged the heteroglossia of hypertext in their discussions of their composing processes. For example, Felicity described a hypertext she had written as part for her Masters program. In this hypertext, she built the text

> off a poem…set in the present and involving three characters. It set up somewhat of a mystery in that there was this sort of unresolved story that hung over this family in the poem. Then [she] built the hypertext using that poem so that starting from the poem you could click and it would take the reader into the first person accounts of these different characters and this story, this series of events that sort of haunted this family...So once the reader started going into that hypertext I had no control of over where they were going other than where I allowed the links to go.

As the author of this hypertext, Felicity incorporated multiple voices and multiple genres. She included a poem, first person accounts from different characters, and other forms of text. This format "permit[s] a multiplicity of social voices and wide variety of their links and interrelationships" (Bakhtin, 1981, p. 263). The reader of Felicity's hypertext actively follows

the links, experiences the different voices, and constructs the events that have haunted this family.

Grace, like Felicity, incorporated multiple genres in her hypertext story of a funeral in a small Southern town. It includes diaries, sermons, songs, letters, poems, and the text and images used to connect the multiple genres. The settings in Grace's hypertext also provide elements of heteroglossia. There is language particular to certain locations. The patterns of the preacher's sermons and the Southern Baptist songs and song lyrics contrast with the language of family dinners. The main character's lack of the local dialect is used to show her status as outsider in the town. The multiple texts and languages (both formal and informal) contribute to the heteroglossia of the hypertext story. The images Grace uses to carry part of the narrative weight of the story also add to the heteroglossia of the hypertext.

Appropriation: Writing Practices in Transition

Participants in the author and self study were familiar with various forms of the writing process model. They neither promoted it nor disparaged it. Rather, they focused instead on their own writing practices. Despite the writing process model's widespread use in classrooms, there are those who critique both the model and the way that it has been incorporated into classrooms. Elbow (1973) maintained there is a "basic misconception about the process of writing" (p. 14); he explains that most of the advice writers get "follows this model: first try to figure out what you want to say; don't try to start writing till you do; make a plan; use an outline; begin writing only afterward" (p. 14). This is the advice I received as a beginning writer and the advice I often gave to beginning writers. I noticed that "central to this model is the idea of keeping control" (p. 14). Pullman (1999) contended that "if writing process were an adequate theoretical description of writing, then all writers, regardless of what kind of texts they produce, from novelists to

webmasters, would write in essentially the same way, using the same interactive sequences of brainstorm-draft-revise-peer review and so forth, and each of these steps would be essentially similar" (p. 26). There is room for movement and play in the familiar format of writing process; the participant/writers in this study developed in both their print and hypertext composing practices that helped them create the stories they wanted to tell.

A common critique of the writing process model is that it is very linear; that was certainly my own experience with the process model. First, I figure out what I want to say, then I plan it out, then I write it. There is little room in this process model for writing as a method of inquiry (Richardson, 2000). Sometimes I don't know what I want to say until I start writing; I often write to know what I am thinking about a topic. The recursiveness that is supposed to be part of the writing process was not there for me as a writing student. As a teacher, I struggled to include it in my classroom; however, I am well aware that time constraints limited the revisiting and revisioning of text. The idea that a writer decides what she is going to write, makes a plan, and then enacts that plan is the process model with which I am most familiar. Elbow (1973) contended "virtually all of us carry this model of the writing process around in our heads and that it sabotages our efforts to write" (pp. 14-15).

While the participants that I worked with did not go so far as to say that the writing process model sabotaged their efforts to write, several of them did struggle with how to think about writing and writing practices as they moved into digital environments. The participants were women who were comfortable with identifying themselves as writers; they acknowledged that they had **A** process for writing both print and hypertext; they did not necessarily name the elements of the traditional form of the writing process in their description of how they composed

print and hypertext. Grace, the novice hypertext writer, came the closest to naming the stages of the writing process when she said

> This is not the way I was taught to write. I don't know how to think about telling the story. I know the story, well, mostly, that I want to tell. I've got my ideas, and I am ready to plan, but I don't know how. I don't know how to make a plan for this story. I don't know how to get started. I can't even skip the planning stuff and just start writing because I can't imagine how the piece will look. Who knew that that would be important?

Grace explained that she had her ideas ready but couldn't create a plan and, therefore, couldn't move on to writing. Her description of her struggles uses the stages of writing process. She is consciously, or unconsciously, trying to use a familiar strategy in writing her hypertext. The other participants demonstrated a much more flexible approach to writing hypertext which is most likely because of their experience in writing in both mediums. Claire, Kate, Joy, and Felicity were already established writers of hypertext fiction.

Felicity described a different approach to her hypertext story about family secrets. While Grace wanted to be able to develop a plan that helped her see where she was going as a writer, Felicity's focus was different. She took her cues from the pieces of the story that she had in her head. She explained:

> With hypertext, I think I am looking forward. I mean I write, I don't have a sense of, there's not this progression in my hypertext fiction. It's not like I have this linear story and then I try to break it up so that the reader accesses it in different ways. The plot is created based on what I am writing at any given moment. For instance, in the story in the family with the story of the family that had the events that affected each subsequent

> generation. I didn't know what those events were until I was in the act of construct[ing] those characters.

Some print writers work this way; however, Felicity's print writing practices in print differed from what she describes as her hypertext writing practices. Grace wanted to create the plot before she began writing, and Felicity was comfortable letting the plot emerge from the writing. Felicity specifically stated that she was not writing a linear story that she could then break into pieces for the hypertext readers. In her early writing attempts, Grace attempted to write that kind of story. She said, "I tried to write a regular story that I could chop up…but when I tried to move it to the screen, it didn't fit…it looked and acted like a chopped up print story. Flat." Grace discovered what Felicity already knew: composing for hypertext meant composing for a different type of storytelling environment.

Felicity's composing process for creating the hypertext story began with the poem she used as her starting element. The poem provided both a visual and a textual framework for the hypertext. The visual shape of the poem supplied a framework for the hypertext. The text of the poem provices the initial links around which Felicity built the story. She said,

> What the poem had given me was the fact that the grandfather had come home from the war with syphilis and had passed it on to his wife. And that secret had just been buried by the family. The daughters knew that there father had died not long after the war and they knew that their mother had shakes and perspiration but there was never any mention of what it was actually and how it had affected the family and that's all that I took into the hypertext. This knowledge that there was this secret of syphilis that had been buried in the family but as it turned out the events surrounding that fact of syphilis didn't emerge until I was writing the hypertext. And then it had to do with not the physical illness of

> syphilis but with the mental conditions that surrounded bringing syphilis back from the war and into this Southern family. And those things, I didn't know what those events would be surrounding that until I wrote them and then they were just sort of collected.

The poem provided a shape for the hypertext and allowed the mystery to emerge. Felicity, as the writer, explained that the "events emerged" as she was writing the hypertext. She did not have an outline or a jot list to guide her writing; rather, she wrote "in the moment." This contrasted with Grace's need for a plan but fits with Claire's description of finding a pivot point for her story. It also fits well with Joy's concept of a conceptual map that guides her writing.

Each of the participants appropriated elements from their print writing process and applied them to their hypertext writing process. Appropriation, a Bakhtinian (1986) concept discussed in chapter two, is an active component of hypertext writing. The participants in the study demonstrated appropriation, the pilfering and reuse of language, in various forms. The participants appropriated aspects of their print writing process and incorporated those aspects into their changing process for composing digital fiction. For example, Grace made a conscious choice to remake her writing process. She said,

> I have tried to write the way I know how to and that just isn't working. I've been thinking about what I need to do differently. I think I need to focus more on the story as a whole rather than on a specific sequence. I am trying to hard to create a plan for a story that doesn't fit any patterns that I have used before. I had a little success when I put all that aside and just thought about stitching the pieces together. Maybe I should look at the story as a whole, get a picture of it, an image or a metaphor and then try to write. I have to think of the story as told in space rather than told in a line. I need to think space not page. Navigation not sequence.

Grace had to consciously choose to think differently about her planning for the story. She had to "put aside" what she was accustomed to, keeping only the components that were successful and replace the components that were not. Grace's familiar and habitual practices for writing didn't work for her in hypertext so she appropriated the practices that did work and reshaped them for the new environment. Rather than think of the story as a line, she saw it as a space. The shift from line to space also caused a shift in how she saw reader movement through the text. She thought in terms of navigating the space of the story rather than following the sequence of the story.

Terms from other art forms were appropriated into the participants' discussion of their hypertext composing processes. Both Grace and Felicity referred to collage while Kate mentioned both collage and montage. Ulmer (1992) described collage as a new discursive form that is emerging in digital writing. Collage, a form appropriated from art, is a way to organize information based on pattern. Collage forms rely on contrast, juxtaposition, and pattern to communicate information. Grace used the term collage to describe the screens of her hypertext. She contended, "I think of my story as a type of collage, with all these screens that are also collages. Image and text. I have to think of it more visually because it makes sense that way. Layers and colors and other shape-y things matter in collage." Felicity also compared her hypertext to collage. She said

> Hypertext is collage. It is collage and I intentionally sought to use it to disrupt the normative constructs of narrative. I sought to disrupt the constructs of voice and time and genre. I used malice aforethought—the hypertext was a collage of intentional moves. It was intended to be disruptive to narrative. The whole thing was a pastiche.

Felicity saw her hypertext writing as intentionally disruptive to narrative; she saw it as a way to break up narrative and the normative properties of narrative. She looked for ways to make narrative behave differently and used the term collage to describe how she saw her work. In collage, pattern is important; it is a deliberate structure. Felicity saw that deliberateness of pattern as an element of her hypertext fiction. Ulmer (1992) focused on the value of pattern as a means of organizing information. He saw the move from print to screen as a change in the dominant forms of organizing information. He explained that "the dominant forms for organizing information in print have been narrative and exposition…with pattern dominating only in the arts, at the bottom of the hierarchy of knowledge in the relations among science, social science, and the humanities" (pp. 160-161). Hypertext changes this, allowing for an appropriation of another art form. Ulmer (1992) contended that '[s]tory and document are still operating in collage, but they are subordinated to and manipulated by the operations of pattern, which transform their signifying effects (pp.160-161). The narrative in Felicity's hypertext story was organized by pattern rather than by time or traditional narrative form.

The montage, like the collage, is an organization of information based on pattern. Montage includes movement as part of its pattern. Movies and television shows often use a montage of images and scenes to show the passage of time and growth or change in a character. The layering and juxtaposition of images and scenes allows for visual storytelling that does not rely on dialogue or verbal text. Bernstein (2005) developed a listing of the emerging structural patterns in published hypertext. Montage was one of the patterns he described, defining it "as several distinct writing spaces appear simultaneously, reinforcing each other while retaining their separate identities" (p. 24). Like collage, montage is a visual format for organizing information. Kate, with her background in art, talked about creating "a visual arrangement that is a signifying

part of the final work." Kate argued that visual organization of the lexia could add a level of understanding and meaning to the reading of hypertext. The visual organization, like collage or montage, provides information in a pattern format rather than a textual one. Montage and collage, as appropriated terms, provide a different possibility for organizing the digital fiction story.

Deleuze and Guattari

Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* is often considered a print text that strives to be hypertext. Moulthrop (1994) describes this text as an "incunabular hypertext" (p. 300). The print book was designed differently than other print books in that it "was designed as a matrix of independent but cross-referential discourses which the reader is invited to enter more or less at random" (Moulthrop, 1994, p. 300). This lack of specific sequence or hierarchical order creates a print text that acts much as hypertext does. A hypertext provides a fluidity of movement between and among the plateaus of the text that the print text cannot provide. The task of the reader is to create connections in a rhizomatic reading of the text. A rhizomatic reading, unlike a hierarchical or arborescent reading, allows for connections between plateaus that otherwise have little to connect them. In an arborescent structure, the main body provides a structure for branching. No matter how many branches off of other branches occur, the structure is rooted by the main body structure. This kind of grouping implies a broader connection than just the link. The tree and the branches are expected to be a group with *something* (other than links) to connect them. In contrast, a rhizome has an and-and-and structure. The sections may be singular with nothing to connect them other than that the reader who makes the link. The participants in this part of the study study incorporated Deleuze

and Guattari's concepts of the rhizome, rupture, and sense making into their discussions of their writing processes.

The Rhizome

For Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987), the rhizome is a structure that is "always in the middle, not at the beginning or the end" (p. 21). The participants in the study also saw hypertext as a structure that resisted closure, consisting of multiple middles. Grace contended, " I have so many middles in my head that I can barely remember how the story started and can't guarantee there was any sort of closure." She explained, "Right now, I am quite happy with my messy middles." Felicity also described the concept of lexias as middles when she explained that with print writing she wrote scenes in the order the reader would see them but with hypertext, she didn't write that way. She said, "I don't know where the reader is going to access it. So it isn't as critical for me as a writer to produce it in a certain order." The lexias in a hypertext are accessed at different points depending on reader choice. There isn't a hierarchical order to guide the reader, so once the reader enters the hypertext, it is all the middle.

Rupture and Rhizome

Hypertext and the rhizome share some of the same characteristics, one of which is multiplicity. It encourages multiple voices, multiple genres, multiple readings, even multiple authors. Grace explained that her writing group had trouble helping with the revision of her hypertext because "nobody in the group read the same screens or had a big picture view of where the screens were going in the story. They didn't know how to offer plot help because they kept finding that stuff they thought was missing was on a screen they hadn't seen yet." The multiple readings of a multiple text disrupted the writing group's expectations of text. Their expectation was that they could read the story and provide comments and critiques as they normally did.

Another characteristic of the rhizome is the asignifying rupture. A rhizome "may be broken, shattered at a given spot, but it will start up again on one of its old lines, or on new lines" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p.9). The rupture, unlike a structural break in a traditional text, does not necessarily carry with it meaning or form. The rupture does not necessarily signify. Grace explained that she "broke [her] story" by creating a set of ends that didn't end a section or a character. She said, "I had a character who kept having troubles that forced her to start over, to pick another path for her life and that seemed significant." Grace created several story arcs for this character that just ended, most of them without warning and without completing the "intended" story arc. What this did was force the reader into a rupture in the text. The reader then had to do something else to move to a different screen because continuing that series of links wasn't an option. For example, in one scene Annie (the character) is packing to leave for college. There are no exits from this screen; Annie doesn't go anywhere and neither does the reader until the reader realizes that "back" is the only option. The repeated rupture of the hypertext and Annie's life became a trope for Grace to use as she created the hypertext. The reader had certain expectations based on the context clues provided by the lexias and their expectations of a link to *somewhere* were ruptured. The links were missing. The hypertext story had to start up somewhere else on an old line or on a newly discovered one.

Making Sense

According to Deleuze and Guattari (1972/1983), the question of what something means is the wrong question to ask. Rather, we should ask what it does or the purpose it serves. For these theorists, "[h]ow it works is the sole question" (p. 180) because "what it means does not tell what purpose it serves" (p. 180). As readers and writers of hypertext, this is an important distinction to make because one of the difficulties reading or writing hypertext is giving up the idea that things

mean. Getting wrapped up in meaning or the search for meaning is counterproductive for the reader/writer of hypertext. They should, instead, focus on making sense of how the lexias work together, the purpose that the lexias serve in the telling of the story. Felicity echoed this idea when she explained that she will often re-examine a piece "to see how much navigation and explanation [she needs] to give so that [she does] not undermine the purpose of the text." In this context she was talking about the print pieces she writes that are heavily influenced by hypertext writing practices. Because of the hypertext influence on these print texts, Felicity has to consider the purpose of the format and navigation. She does not examine the piece for how the sections make meaning but rather how they serve a purpose for the text. Grace considered this as well, explaining that she "had to think about how the screens worked to produce the story."

Deleuze and Guattari (1972/1983) explained that "literature is… a process and not a goal, a production and not an expression" (p. 133). This view of literature and Morgan's (2000) view of hypertext as a performance and event work together. Both Felicity and Grace provided descriptions of their hypertexts as productions. For Felicity, her hypertext was a playground; for Grace, her hypertext was an improvisation. Kate viewed her hypertext as a landscape, and Joy described her hypertext as architecture. In these descriptions, hypertext is a production, a process; it is not the goal of a finished piece. Hypertext is defined by "what causes it to move, to flow, and to explode—desire" (p. 133). The writer creates links and lexias for the reader to activate. The hypertext is defined by the links that make it move and flow. Meaning in this context is not made; instead, the story happens and the reader works to make sense of it. Making sense is a different concept that making meaning. Meaning implies that the reader discovers something in the text. The reader does not do this; instead, the reader works to make sense of what she reads, she reads the lexias, the gaps between them. Meaning implies a right answer or a

right reading. Hypertext with its multiple possible productions of the text calls for readers to make sense. Grace explained, “I find myself in the middle of this writing space and I am trying to make sense of the process I am using and I read my hypertext and try to make sense of the words and images and how they play together.” The goal in hypertext is performance not discovery, creation not exploration.

Hypertext and Composing

Participants in the author study and self study struggled to determine how their composing processes worked in the two different mediums. The terminology associated with one particular aspect of the writing process seemed particularly problematic for them. As Grace explained, “I can’t say a piece is done, ended, finished even though my part is concluded because I don’t know what the reader’s gonna do to it.” The participants were unable to name their product in terms that denoted a neatly packaged, finished piece. They redefined their product to make the product less of a goal and more of a process.

Renaming Story: Describing Their Product

Morgan (2000) contended that “hypertext is always an event—a text just in the process of becoming as we read and ceasing to exist in that sequence when we quit the program” (p. 133). The idea of text as an event contrasts with the seeming fixedness of traditional print texts. In writing a traditional print story, the goal is the final product, the finished, publishable piece. As the participants discussed their composing practices, each one either directly or indirectly shifted how they talked about their final products. Claire, Joy, Felicity, and Grace referred to their print publications using terms that denoted finality. Felicity talked about her print novels as “fixed forms,” while Claire and Grace used terms such as “final draft” and “finished piece.” Joy talked about writing her “book” and getting it ready for “publication.” In describing their print

practices, each writer talked about working toward that fixed, final form. Print and print practices lend themselves to that kind of terminology. Grace explained that she knew how to write for print because she understood what the form of the text would be. There is an expectation, she said, that a final draft of a "print piece is unchangeable, locked forever in that form," and "all a reader has to do is pick it up and read it from beginning to end."

Grace's description of her hypertext piece did not use the same language she used to describe her print pieces. She described her print stories as narratives that weave together different genres but that have "clear beginnings, a definite middle, and a definite ending." The stories she writes, she explained, look like the stories that she reads. The hypertext story that she wrote reminded her not of the stories that she had read but rather of a performance from school. She redefined story in the digital environment as improvisational theater, explaining

> Writing (again, such the wrong word) this piece reminds me of doing improv in drama classes. I can remember getting a situation or character and having a clear idea in my head of how I thought the scene should go. I would throw out pieces of dialogue or actions hoping that the other actors would pick up on a particular vision of mine…Some part of someone's vision will get picked up and change how the scene goes in that moment…It's a performance. A collection of moments. That's how I see hypertext. I'm putting out pieces to be picked up by another actor or reader and every choice shifts where it goes.

In this context, Grace sees the reader as a co-constructor of the performance which contrasts with her view of the reader of print pieces who just needs to "pick it up and read from beginning to end." Grace sees herself offering pieces for performance that the reader then picks up or not to construct a text that is created in the moment of reading, in the moment of performance.

Felicity, like Grace, redefines story for the digital environment. Instead of a linear print construct that pulls the reader through the text in the path predetermined by the author, Felicity sees the hypertext as a place where the reader is invited to participate. She explained, "I create a playground and then invite the reader in to play." The writer provides the space for play, and the reader chooses how to play in that space. Glazier (2002) described writing in digital environments. He said,

> Writing thus becomes less a matter of a canonical 'laying down the law' and more of a dance between the possibilities of representation. It requires a writer who can create a work that aims for a proposed rendering—a work with a program not a floor plan—a rendering that is adaptable, flexible, and able to communicate by placing writing in a suspension between possibilities, not by fixing it with any given finality" (p.15)

Grace and Felicity reconceptualized their product and defined it in terms that were inclusive and participatory rather than exclusive or final. Their new definitions of product included the idea of reader performance; they used terms that mimicked Glazier's notion that hypertext writing is "a dance between the possibilities of representation" and described their product in visual, artistic, or spatial terms. Both Felicity and Grace talked about writing needing to be flexible because, as Grace stated, "the writer can't be sure what the reader is going to pick up or skip over."

Participants in the study discussed in various ways that hypertext was a "proposed rendering" (Glazier, 2002) and, as writers, they had to work with that uncertainty. A proposed rendering is not a structure with finality. Like Deleuze and Guattari's (1980/1987) rhizome that endlessly seeks connections and links, a proposed rendering exists only in the act of choosing, of rendering. In a hypertext, a reader chooses what elements are activated. To use Felicity's metaphor of the playground, the reader chooses where and with what she will play while she is

on the playground. Each visit to the playground may or may not introduce new elements for the reader to play with. Glazier (2002) argued that because "much or all of your text may not be received, you must, to be successful, create a text that is somehow suspended between various possibilities of reading; such an e-text is provisional, conditional, and characterized by its multiple renderings" (p. 15). The multiplicity of hypertext reading must be a part of hypertext writing. Grace talked about "writing in multiples" as she created her hypertext.

The concept of final product as play and performance differs from the concept of final product as fixed form. The print writing practices these authors described focused on thinking of the end product as something final and unchangeable. This concept of the story as a fixed form did not survive for these writers as they worked in the digital environment. They had to reconceive their definition of story to fit this medium. A hypertext story, for the participants, resisted linearity and closure and contained strongly visual components. Pattern was an important part of the structure of hypertext storytelling. The participants talked more about the role the reader played in their hypertext writing than in their print writing. Grace explained that she had certain expectations of print readers that she did not have of hypertext readers. She said, "I don't really think about the reader when I am writing a print piece because I expect the reader to what they're supposed to do. Start where I tell them and move on." Felicity and Joy spoke explicitly about the choices they made as hypertext writers based on their awareness of their readers. Felicity mentioned that she considered the order in which the reader would read the scenes in her print pieces but did not in her hypertext stories. Joy explained that she created a conceptual map to help the reader situate herself within the text. This conceptual map is not to be confused with an outline or a structure that provides a linear progression. Joy describes her

hypertexts in terms of architecture and uses the conceptual map as a way to orient the reader in space. She also used the map to guide her narrative choices.

Once and Future Writing Practices

The movie theater in my grandmother's story did not cause the library to close. The people in the small town of Kite had mixed reactions to the new technology. Some embraced the newness of the picture shows while other feared the loss of the book to the screen. Movies did not replace books; rather, they shared storytelling space with them. Granny described both as a source for stories. As I now look at the book and computer, I see both as a site for stories. There are those like Birkerts (1994) who fear the cultural loss of the book and others like Murray (1997) and Bolter (1991b) who celebrate the computer and see the book as moving to the margins of culture. Lanham (1993) contended that the "long reign of black and white textual truth has ended." While there has not been a dramatic turn from the book to the computer screen, the "nature and status of textual truth has been altered," and the boundaries of text have been exploded (Lanham, 1993, p. x). He claims that this shifting "movement from book to screen promises a metamorphosis" (p.x). Three of my participants are women who were in the vanguard of the proposed metamorphosis. They've expressed varying degrees of continued commitment to hypertext fiction. Joy no longer writes hypertext, in part, because she says the technology has not advanced as she thought it would. She expected more hypertext fiction to have been written than has been. Joy explained that she doesn't think hypertext will be a truly relevant technology until there seems to be a particular use for it, a use that nothing else provides. She used the example of the fax machine. She contended that fax technology was around for decades before it was in common use in business. It became a relevant and useful technology when businesses learned that they could send documents across great distances without losing the form and design they

had created. The one use became a significant one and the fax machine was adopted for business and personal use. Joy argued that hypertext was trying to do too much right out of the gate and seemed too complicated to be adopted by everyday users. Hypertext fiction has not achieved what she originally hoped it would, and she saw this as directly related to how it was taken up or not by the communities involved in its production.

Kate and Claire both still write hypertext fiction but are aware that the field is not yet what they hoped it would be. Kate was part of several different large-scale hypertext experiments that she described as interesting but not really replicable. She and a group of writers created a site based on the concept of a hotel. The writers could "check in" and write pieces for the ongoing, existing narrative. They could add to scenes, rewrite other writer's scenes, add dialogue, create links, or develop new story lines. The idea that another writer could enter and change "your text" was quite a challenge for the writers to work through. One expressed that she struggled with this shared authorship because "pieces of [her] text kept getting rewritten" by people "who weren't very good writers." She didn't like feeling as though she had no authorial control over her own work. Grace agreed with this explaining,

> I tried writing a collaborative hypertext with some friends of mine and I couldn't do it. The first time they changed my prose to something that didn't have nearly the punch that mine did, I gritted my teeth and took it. The second time, I changed it back and locked it so that they couldn't change my words. I guess I didn't share very well but it just didn't work for me. It didn't feel like shared writing, it was mine and theirs and when they changed my words, I felt attacked. I really resented it when some of their writing was…well, just not very strong.

Grace's protective instincts over her writing notwithstanding, there are those who are working with hypertext as collaborative writing experiences. Wikipedia is an example of a hypertext that has multiple authors and can be revised by those who visit the site. Landow, a professor at Brown University, has several Web sites that are produced and created by multiple authors. He oversees The Victorian Web and The Hypertext Web. The students in his classes add to and change lexias on both of these sites.

Claire's hypertexts are vastly elaborate and often daunting to their readers. She published her most recent hypertext on the Internet as she was constructing it. She maintained an ongoing explanation of her development of the hypertext as she created it. As the hypertext neared "completion," she removed it from the Internet. Displaying the hypertext in its developing stages allowed readers familiar with her work to be a part of the development; it also allowed new readers to discover the hypertext and see what possible story structures could be created in this environment. The complexity of Claire's hypertext can be overwhelming to the novice reader of hypertext. She does provide directions on how to read the hypertext, but those directions aren't necessarily easy to find among the plethora of visual stimuli and links. Claire creates the kinds of works that she wants to read and hopes that there are other readers like her.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

In the first chapter, I explained that I consider myself to be both teacher and writer. In chapters two, three, and four, little of my teacher voice was present. Instead I highlighted my researcher and writer voices in order to explain how I theorized and wrote hypertext narrative. It is my intention to foreground my teacher and researcher voices in this chapter. I will discuss the implications for hypertext in the classroom as well as discuss opportunities for future research. I begin with a section from an early graduate school interview with my grandmother, Blanche Kittrell.

Although Granny dropped out of school when she was in the third grade to work on her grandparents' farm, she read widely and voraciously. During the interview about her reading practices, she said something that started me thinking about texts used in schools and how those texts were produced. In this interview, she talked not only talked about her reasons for dropping out of school and her love of reading but also about society and its expectations. She explained that it was rare in the area of the rural South in which she grew up for people to stay in school long enough to graduate. She said:

> I had learned my letters and some addin' and subtractin' so it was mostly a matter of practicin'. Ma had some books from when her children had been in school, a Bible and a book with a lot of stories in it. Sometimes Pa'd bring home a newspaper. We read those until we got good at it. Those was mostly the same things we read at school anyhow so it didn't seem no different to me. It wasn't

> like now with all the books you gotta read or all them calc'laters or that fancy stuff you showed Randy. Things is different now 'cause of what you gotta know to get along. Books ain't enough.

That "fancy stuff" that I showed my uncle Randy was a PowerPoint presentation of family pictures. While PowerPoint didn't seem that strange to me as I had used it in my classroom for several years, it seemed alien to my grandmother. She had trouble imagining how it would be used in school because it was so different from the texts she had used in her school experience. I remembered how much I had struggled in high school with learning a programming language called Basic; at that point, a computer seemed to be something I would never have a reason to use.

Getting Along in Society

Of course, I was wrong about never having a reason to use the computer; it became an integral part of my classroom during my twelve years of teaching language arts. Many of my students were much more comfortable with technology than I was. They had created their own Web sites and blogs[20]; others played games in online MOOs[21] and MUDs[22]. Most of them were active cruisers and readers of the Internet. As one of the requirements of my English department, students were required to keep a log of the number of pages they read during the semester. Several students tried to record pages that they read online. At a department meeting, we discussed whether or not Web pages or online stories counted as texts. The majority of the

[20] Blog is a sort of public journal. Blog is short for web log.
[21] MOO stands for MUD object oriented. It is a multi-user game or online site that allows for multiple people to participate in a game or online story.
[22] MUD stands for multi-user domain. It is a type of computer program that is played (usually over the Internet) and allows for multiple people to play. These are usually role-playing or virtual reality games.

department said that online texts were not “real” texts, only books and other print texts counted for this requirement.

During the interview with my grandmother, I kept circling around the question of what counted as text for school and how those texts helped (or not) teach what was needed to “get along” in society. Hill and Mehlenbacher (1996) contended that “[r]eaders who grow up in a world of hypertext and discussion groups will have different expectations of text than our generation does, and writers will have a different set of constraints and opportunities than writers do now” (p. 264). For my grandmother, the texts used in school were not so different from the texts her mother and grandmother had used. As a student in the seventies and eighties, my school texts included not just books but also filmstrips and movies. My students’ texts included videotapes, dvds, cds, Webcasts, email, Web pages, video games, and hypertexts. They engage with these texts outside of school settings; they often come to school as experienced readers and writers of these kinds of texts. While I may agree with Hodas (1993) that many of the previous technologies (video discs, overhead projectors, etc.) added to classrooms have had little impact on actual teaching practices, I believe that the use of digital technologies both in and out of school will force changes in pedagogy.

The digital reading and writing experiences the students have outside of school will affect how these students engage with texts. A teacher at a recent conference commented, “Already my students act different with texts. They want the same things from books we read in class that they get from YouTube or video games.” She talked about how her students “push[ed] against assignments they see as busy work or not relevant to their lives.” Prensky (2001b) claimed a need for pedagogical change to meet the needs of digital students, arguing for a balance between “legacy” content (traditional curriculum) and “future” content (digital and technological content

as well as the “ethics, politics, sociology, languages and other things to go with” the changing content); he also argued for a change in methodological approaches to content (pp. 3-6). He asserted that changing the content but not the form of instruction would do little for the students accustomed to the “twitch speed” of video games, television, and movies and the “instantaneity of hypertext” (p. 3). A teacher at a presentation I gave commented that she had to “change the way she talked about literature because her students were tuning out” and explained that she had to “figure out what they most needed and put it into smaller bits and group work.”

The majority of my students read digital texts with the speed and fluency with which my grandmother read the Bible or I read novels. These students “represent the first generations to grow up…surrounded by and using computers… and tools of the digital age” (Prensky, 2001b, p. 1.). There is a disconnect between the reading and writing practices promoted by schools and the digital reading and writing practices the students engage in out of school. The digital lives of students are almost completely separate from their school experiences. Gee (2003) made a case for the kinds of situated learning that occur when students learn and play various videogames. He argued that video games are “a new form of art. They will not replace books; they will sit beside them, interact with, and change them and their role in society” (p. 204). The idea that new technologies will sit beside old ones and interact with them causes alarm in many people. A new technology that replicates more traditional practices is acceptable, but technology that challenges those practices is something to be feared. For example, word processing technology was quickly accepted and used because it replicated, but made faster and more efficient, an already existing practice.

While hypertext narrative may seem far from the traditional high school classroom, digital technologies are not. The impact of digital technologies on our students’ lives outside of

school cannot be ignored. The three-year-old girl I discussed earlier in this dissertation will enter kindergarten in two years. Already, her experiences with texts differ from those students who entered kindergarten ten years ago. She and many other children her age will see digital and print texts as interchangeable and digital stories and print stories as exchangeable. What will she and her peers need in order to be literate and prepared for their futures? What will future writers need to know to be successful in a changing textual landscape? What will this mean for the classroom teacher?

Pulling It Together

In this study, I examined the question of what happens when narrative fiction writing moves from a print medium to a digital medium. I considered the affordances of hypertext and what those affordances allowed. I used three sources of data in this study—library and Internet research, a small author interview study, and a self-study of a novice hypertext writer. As a medium of composition, hypertext provides linking and branching, allows for non-sequential or multisequential plotlines, includes internal and external linking, and allows for the incorporation of image, sound, and movement. Hypertext resists the linearity prevalent in print texts and challenges narrative forms based on linearity.

The move from print to screen changed the writing of narrative fiction and disrupted the ways in which writers approached the creating and writing of their fiction pieces. The affordances of hypertext—linking and branching, non-sequential and multisequential plotlines, external and internal linking, inclusion of images, sound, and movement, explicit reader choice—changed how narrative fiction was written in ways that were both subtle and profound (Hill and Mehlenbacher, 1996). In theorizing the changes that hypertext afforded the writing of narrative fiction, I turned to Bakhtin (1981, 1996) and Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987).

Hypertext is a text that is created in the reading, the performance of it. This notion that the text is created in the performance disrupts the idea of a text as a whole. Bakhtin's (1986) concept of the utterance provides a way to think of the hypertext as a text whose discrete parts are linked in constant, shifting relation. The structure of a print text is provided culturally while the structure of a hypertext is not. Deleuze and Guattari's (1980/1987) rhizome provided a way to think of structure in a non-linear, non-hierarchical manner. Hypertext, like the rhizome, is multidimensional with the potential for any one screen to be linked to any other screen. This multidimensional structure allows for multiple paths for the reader to take through the text and forces the writer to rethink how she moves the reader through the text.

Hypertext disrupts commonsense notions of text and author and further challenges the writer to rethink how she conceives of her final product. Snyder (1996) argued that in order to write for hypertext, the writer must be "unconcerned with a printed product" and that hypertext is a form of writing that uses "the computer as a medium in its own right, both for the creation and reading of texts" (p. 13). It is not that the print product is obsolete, it is that print cannot fully replicate what hypertext affords for the creation and reading of texts. The writer of a hypertext cannot think in terms of a print product and create a hypertext structure. The structure of hypertext demands a different way of thinking about text. This fluidity of how text is defined is echoed in the works of Bakhtin (1981, 1996) and Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987). Hypertext is much like Bakhtin's chain of utterances where each utterance is linked and exists in response to and in anticipation of other utterances. The structure of the chain of utterances does not imply the linearity of a traditional print text; rather, it implies the immediacy and fluidity of dialogue. Deleuze and Guattari's rhizome and rupture also provide a look at text that is organized in a way that promotes its own deconstruction. Because a hypertext is created as the

reader explicitly chooses links, its deconstruction is also apparent. The reader is conscious of the choices she makes to produce the hypertext, so she is also aware of how the pieces came together and how the screens can be replaced by other choices. Hypertext, like the chain of utterances and the rhizome, is a visual structure. Both the writers and readers are working in a multidimensional *space* when they are composing or reading hypertext. The idea of writing as a space that the writer creates and the reader activates requires a different view of text and writing.

Returning to the Research Questions

I began this study with the overarching question of what happens when writing moves from print to screen. I wanted to know what happened when fictions writers shifted from the medium of print to a digital medium to tell their stories. I used three sources of data to help me theorize writing narrative fiction in a digital medium. In chapter two, I focused on what the current scholarship on hypertext had to say about writing in a digital environment. In chapters three and four, I continued with the theory but added the voices of participants from the author and self study.

Using hypertext to write narrative fiction did cause changes in the writing practices of the participants in the author and self study. The women in the study discussed the importance of a visual structure to the form of the story. Grace could not begin writing until she had a visual metaphor to provide a shape for the story. While these women may pay attention to visual components in their print writing, they frontloaded them in their hypertext fiction writing.

The multidimensional aspects of hypertext narrative caused the participants to rethink how they worked with the text of the stories. Coover (1992/2003) explained

> The most radical new element that comes to the fore in hypertext is the system of multidirectional and often labyrinthine linkages we are invited or obliged to create.

> Indeed the creative imagination often becomes more preoccupied with linkage, routing and mapping than with statement or style, or with what we would call character or plot (two traditional narrative elements that are decidedly in jeopardy). (p. 707)

Participants who were more experienced with hypertext fiction writing expressed a need to limit the navigational elements of the story to a reasonable number. None of them, however, could be specific about what constituted a reasonable number. Grace described her experience with the multidirectional linking in her hypertext, saying, “I got a bit overwhelmed with the links in an early draft of my story. I was having so much fun making them that I forgot they [the links] needed to have a purpose.” Later, Grace returned to the idea of links and explained, “I think links are like metaphors or puns. Done well and done at appropriate times, they add to the reader’s experience. They’re a tool the author can use to do something unique or special. Done wrong, they create a big mess.” New and inexperienced writers often make mistakes that more seasoned writers do not. Grace’s experience with the multidimensional linking that hypertext added to narrative fiction demonstrates this.

The hypertext scholars and the study participants discussed hypertext as a text in performance. Morgan (2000) described hypertext as an event. Felicity described her texts as a playground. Kate described her stories as a landscape her readers could visit. Joy and Claire described their stories in architectural terms, while Grace described her text as an improvisation. In all of these figurations, the product is described in terms that resist finality, resist the idea of an end. This is, perhaps, one of the most significant of the remakings that the scholars and participants described. Not only did their practices change, the product also changed. How it was named, how it was interacted with changed in the move from page to screen.

Hypertext and the Future

As a teacher and writer, I am both excited by and fearful of the possibilities of hypertext. None of the participants in the study predicted the end of the book nor did they completely abandon their print writing strategies. Claire, the most experienced and committed of the hypertext writers, said that she sees a future for both books and hypertext. She explained, "I still consider an afternoon in the shade with a print book one of the sweetest pleasures of life!" The other participants expressed their belief that the print book and its writing practices have a future. Claire contended,

> I believe that print will always be with us—and rightly so… print is still the most economical way to share ideas worldwide. We are seeing print material either being duplicated or replaced by electronic sources, but I think that this evolution happens mainly when the electronic application solves a problem that was present in the print form. For example, take the case of the e-book. Since most folks can afford a paperback, can take it to the beach, and can share it with others, an e-book does not serve to improve upon either the economics or distribution logistics of the paperback novel. On the other hand, I think we will see e-books coming gradually to be used in classes where the textbooks must be updated all the time and are very expensive (medical and scientific subjects, perhaps). In this case, a student could use one e-book throughout grad school and update the material as needed.

Both Claire and Joy discussed print and electronic books in terms of their use and their cost. They see the value in both forms of text and see a future for both formats. All of the participants acknowledged that hypertext as a format for writing is still changing. Grace announced that "the technology used to write hypertext" is changing and updating faster than she "can learn it and put

it to use." The constantly evolving technology is one of the difficulties of writing hypertext. Claire writes her own computer programs in order to create her fiction pieces, but the other participants rely on commercially available programs.

Participants in the study did not abandon their print writing practices in favor of their digital writing practices. Rather, they use their print writing strategies when those strategies are appropriate and develop new or revised strategies for their digital writing environments. The participants considered the writing situation, whether they were writing for print or electronic mediums, in order to determine which practices to use. They did acknowledge that there were times when they felt their processes merged. Felicity explained that she often merged her writing practices for political reasons. She said,

> I actually try, for political reasons, to integrate hypertext writing practices into my print writing. I do it because I think it is important to challenge the "naturalness" of writing—the assumption that writing is a natural process that all people can take a part in if they only tried hard enough. Teaching writing, I've come to see the danger of that assumption. People who do not write "well" are stigmatized. For that reason, I strive to expand the definition of writing so that more people can participate in the practice. One way of doing that is through hypertext—or hypermedia—because it combines modalities, giving writers a choice of tools with which to work. So, to carry that commitment into print, I frequently try to bring hypertext-like moves onto the page by combining genres, interrupting texts, asking the reader to do some navigating on their own.

Felicity sees hypertext as a way to challenge the supposed "naturalness" of print writing. This challenge is a political move for her. She is acutely aware as both writer and writing teacher of the ways in which people are judged by their work. She disrupts her own print narratives by

using multiple genres and images. Like the writers who write for hypertext, she has the expectation that her print writers will “do some navigating on their own.” This contrasts with the idea that a well-crafted print piece pulls the reader through the text.

Although Felicity consciously chooses to include hypertext-like features in her print pieces, she acknowledged that she occasionally has to lessen the amount of disruption she includes in her narratives. She explained,

> I also find myself struggling NOT to bring hypertext moves into print. By that I mean I've gotten so used to thinking in linked texts that it's sometimes hard to create a conventional print text. Readers sometimes read a piece of conventional text I've written and they want more navigation directions—they want me to be the kind of author who guides them through the text. In those cases, I have to go back and see how much navigation and explanation I need to give so that I do not undermine the purpose of the text.

For Felicity, the role of the hypertext reader as navigator and co-constructor of the text has influenced how she writes print pieces. She expects a level of commitment from the reader and acknowledges that the text is more structurally challenging because it disrupts the expectations of a print piece. The reader in this context may find a disrupted print piece more challenging to read than a hypertext because they bring certain expectations to print pieces.

An interview study with another set of adult writers of digital fiction might certainly provide different data about changes in their writing practices. For these five participants, their writing practices changed in significant ways as they moved from writing for the page to writing for the screen. They found they needed a visual metaphor or visual structure in order to organize their story. They resisted the pull to linearity and sequence in the telling of their story and also resisted using terms that implied finality or fixedness to describe their product. They also seemed

to foreground the reader's participation in the text. Additionally, they appropriated terms from other art forms to describe their writing or the format they used for their writing.

Writers who are currently working in this new field, these entrepreneurs who are remaking habitual print writing practices into something new for digital technologies, can offer insights into the possible ways that writing pedagogy may need to be adapted. For example, the participants described in this paper used a visual image or metaphor to shape the structure of their texts. Their experiences mirror the writing forms of other hypertext writers such as Jackson (1996), Moulthrop (1991), and Larsen (1998) who also used visual structural metaphors in their work. The question for schools then is this, is the use of a visual structural metaphor an emerging facet of digital writing practices? Grace argued that it "would have made the beginning of the writing easier if someone had told me to start with a visual image to build the story around." The visual structural metaphor could become one way to conceive of a story in a digital environment.

These writers are not the first who resisted the pull to linearity and sequence in their work. Grace, the novice hypertext writer, struggled with writing against the way she felt she had been taught to write story. She found that "thinking about collage and writing in modules" helped her rethink the kind of writing she was doing. Bell (1997) argued that what "modular design can do is liberate the writer from linear logic, those chains of cause and effect, strings of dominoes always falling forward" (p. 215). Modular design in narrative presented an alternative for me as a writer looking for a way to plot a story that did not follow a linear path. According to Bell, "modular design replaces the domino theory of narrative with other principles which have less to do with motion (the story as a process) and more to do with the overall shapeliness (the story as a fixed geometric form)" (p. 215). Bell did not argue that linear narratives do not offer internal diversity or complicated plot structures. He said, rather, that the internal diversity in a

print narrative “must be incorporated into the forward linear movement of the whole, as if the writer had taken a number of strands to make a braid” (p. 216). The forward motion of a linear narrative contrasts with modular design in which the elements of the story can “be treated less like strands and more like bricks” that “can be managed as if they were discrete, particular—capable of being assembled in more than a single way” (p. 216). Anderson’s (1919) *Winesburg Ohio* is an example of a print text that used modular design. Each piece of the novel can stand alone as a module, but when combined with other modules, provides a larger, coherent story. The idea of the modular design of a story moved Grace closer to writing for hypertext; it was a stepping-stone practice that helped her “figure out how to tell a different story.”

The participants reconceived their products as they moved into a digital medium. They shifted from using terms that implied finality to terms that incorporated movement. Grace described her realization that her product wasn’t fixed when she said that “words on the screen move and change. They’re ephemeral. They get replaced by other words, other images.” The lack of a fixed or static product is a key element of hypertext writing and one participants had to consider as they wrote their hypertexts.

Not only did the participants in the study resist using final product language in their discussions of their hypertext stories, they also featured what they saw as the role of the reader in their stories. Grace described readers as actors in an improvisation. Felicity explained that she created a playground and invited the reader in to play. Kate described her hypertexts as landscapes for the readers to explore. Joy talked about her hypertext as architectural spaces; she provided conceptual maps for the readers so that they could orient themselves. In each of these descriptions, the reader is an active participant in the construction of the text and the reader’s choices activate the story.

Finally, the participants' use of appropriated terms demonstrates their expanded idea of what writing is in electronic environments. Graced contended that "writing was the wrong word" to describe what she was doing when she created her hypertext story. The use of terms like collage and montage, borrowed from art and film, to describe the kind of writing done for these hypertext stories draws attention to the use of pattern, image, and movement as storytelling devices. Not only do these devices help carry the narrative weight, they also become part of the storytelling structure of the pieces. Kate described the writing of hypertext as creating a landscape. She said, "I tend to work on a hypertext in a broadly pictorial way, as a large painting, for instance, where I may paint over here or over there, then stand back and get a sense of it." While there are print writers who work in largely imagistic ways to create their narrative, Kate's hypertext writing foregrounded the image work and subordinated the narrative to the image.

Implications for the Classroom

A multiliteracies writing pedagogy has the flexibility to adapt to both the technology being used and the practices that accompany its use. A multiliteracies writing pedagogy recognizes that meaning making is fluid and dynamic and changes from medium to medium. This kind of pedagogy maintains its flexibility so that the practices associated with meaning making can be reshaped as needed by the users of the various communication technologies. The multiple ways these participants described story would be possible in a multiliteracies pedagogy.

Both Felicity and Grace offered advice for classroom teachers who wanted to include digital writing in their classrooms. Felicity offered the following:

> Just like with print writing, I think it's important to start where the student is. Some students are going to be novices with digital writing while others may already be creating mash-ups or original shorts and publishing them on YouTube. In fact, some students will

> no doubt know more than the teacher—things are changing so quickly in the digital arena. For novice digital writers, I would start with combining image and print, either drawings, paintings, collage, photographs, depending on the available hardware. All it really takes to get started is a computer, scanner, and software such as Powerpoint, iMovie, MovieMaker, and, if available, a digital camera and image editing program. And patience. Just like with print writing, digital writing is a process of exploration and experimentation. A lot of the basic principles of writing process theory can be transposed into digital writing, including immersing students in rich examples.

Embedded in Felicity's advice for the teacher to start where the students are is the idea that the teacher can only start where she is. A teacher cannot wait until she has mastered the technology before she tries to use it in her classroom. If she waits for mastery, she will never use the technology since the technology is always being updated and must be relearned. "Just start where you can" Grace advised. "Start small. The students will surprise you with what they can do with just a little technology." Felicity reminded teachers that teaching writing requires patience and good, rich examples. Grace echoed the need for examples and also stressed that "the use of technology in this way [as a format for storytelling] can be messy and challenging." Both Grace and Felicity talked about teaching writing whether in print or electronic mediums as teaching that encourages exploration and experimentation.

While I believe strongly that digital technology will force changes in our writing pedagogy, I am not unaware of the increasingly regimented and test-oriented climate in which we work. The emphasis on student performance on regulated writing exams and standardized tests has already created tension in school classrooms. A teacher may feel obligated to teach only one particular form of writing. The rapid advancement of digital technology also makes it

challenging for a teacher who is already pressed for time to keep up with frequent changes in computer programs. Time is a big issue in writing hypertext—each of the three participants mentioned that it took them significantly longer to compose and revise their hypertext pieces than for print pieces.

Time is always an issue for teachers, so it is no surprise that adding a digital component to projects would increase the time needed to do them. Digital technologies have a high visibility in the current culture. The high visibility of these new technologies and the recognition that they will need to be included in the classroom raises a possibility of change for teachers. Although teachers are required to do a certain amount of coursework or staff development in order to maintain their certification, the current climate does not support or encourage the idea that teachers are learners. In order for teachers to be able to use and teach with digital technologies, they will need instruction in and ongoing support for those technologies. The need for digital technologies in the classroom has the potential, perhaps more than any other issue, to demand a restructuring of the culture to be more respectful of teachers as learners. Digital technology makes this need more visible. This brings me back to my original reason for choosing to write a theoretical dissertation. I needed to know as both teacher and writer how to theorize and use hypertext before I could begin to use it effectively in my classroom. I needed to learn before I could teach.

Implications for Future Research

As a writer, teacher, and researcher, I am interested in how digital and electronic texts will be created by writers, interacted with by readers, and taken up in classrooms. Most immediately, I am interested in examining the view of product as performance. Would other hypertext writers describe their work in similar terms? Does the idea of product as performance

help a new hypertext writer work in this field? How would the idea of product as performance work in classrooms? In classroom writing groups?

Another significant research project for the future is the use of hypertext narrative in video games. My interviews with four of the participants who were heavily into gaming and gaming narrative (See Appendix C for more information) highlighted that narrative was being taken up in different ways by different groups of users. How does hypertext narrative function in gaming environments? As there are a myriad of video game genres, this study would require a considerable amount of research. My failure as an interviewer for these participants made me realize that the world of hypertext is much broader and more complex than I can currently imagine. In spite of my work with hypertext narrative, my print-based training limits what I can conceive of as narrative.I was even more illiterate in the world of hypertext narrative than I thought, because the world of hypertext narrative is even more radical than I believed.

I realized that many of us bandy the terms new literacy, new media, hypertext narrative, and hypermedia without really considering the larger implications. I looked at hypertext through the lens of a print writer and teacher. I theorized what hypertext meant to the forms of narrative with which I am most familiar. I see that as valuable to my teaching and scholarship; however, I also see that there is a larger world of narrative possibilities than I originally considered. Participants who were heavily into gaming and gaming theory spoke another language. They worked with a technology that required them to both manipulate a machine and also learn both the language of the machine and the language of the gaming world. Gaming requires not only skill but also multiple languages. As the narratives in games become more complex and more central to the gaming experience, the language and structure of those narratives will have long

term implications for how gamers participate in the culture. For example, I grew up reading mythology from print texts; gamers may grow up playing mythology as a video game.

I see gaming and gaming narrative as an avenue for future research as well as an avenue for future personal academic development. I may have students in my classes who have matured reading in the narrative spaces provided by a computer. Those students will be able to teach me more than just how to do certain things (play the games); they will be able to help me able to think certain things.

I plan to include the reading and discussion of digital texts in my literature classes; I will also incorporate the creation of electronic texts in my writing classes. As an instructor in those classes, I will observe and document how the students discuss, resist or embrace, compose and use digital texts. How do students who have active digital lives outside of academic classrooms take up (or not) digital technologies as part of classroom practice?

From a Classroom

I close this dissertation with a story from a high school classroom. I had been working with a high school teacher and a preservice teacher from my university's English Education program on ways to incorporate hypertext into the classroom. These teachers chose to shift a writing project based on Master's (1915/2004) *Spoon River Anthology* from print to screen. Rather than compose a print epitaph modeled on the anthology, they decided to ask students to create a digital movie or presentation using software in the school computer lab. The students' prewriting included a storyboard and software training. After their prewriting and storyboard explanations, the students spent four days in the computer lab creating their epitaph. Some students created digital movies; some created PowerPoint presentations; others created video

mashups[23]. This assignment was a first step toward creating a new language for constructing narratives. These students used technologies that framed narrative differently from the way in which schools generally do. What the students (and teachers) found as they did this assignment was that the text, the print word, was the least important part of the narrative.

The school had recently experienced a rash of student suicides and one of the students chose to address that issue. The opening image was one of a smiling girl. Music played and portions of the image changed. The text of the student's poem wove through the changing images—some drawn by hand, some photos, some taken from the Internet—often shocking in their beauty and their violence. As the poem concluded, the images repeated in silence with different pauses than the ones that accompanied the text. Without the text to distract us, we focused on the images and saw the additional layers the student had woven into her piece. The student argued in text and image against what she saw as the waste of life. The class spent six days on this project; they would have spent three on a print project.

The use of digital technology in this assignment expanded the possibilities for what the students could create. They were not limited to a singular mode of expression or meaning-making. Image, text, sound, and animation worked together in the student example to create a powerful anti-suicide message that was stronger because of its multimodalities. Digital technology allowed the students to do a different kind of writing. The teacher and preservice teacher in this example remade an already existing assignment allowing their students to create something new.

[23] A video mashup is a type of video that has been edited together from several sources to appear as a singular video. Music and commentary is added. Generally, the goal of the mashup is to provide a critique by pairing startling contrasts or by using something that is usually negative in a positive light.

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Appendix A

Hypertext Book List

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Appendix B

A COMMITMENT TO DWELL IN THE FRUSTRATION: HYPERTEXT AND RESEARCH

I drive to Athens every day from Loganville. It's a long drive so I have a lot of time to think, to plan papers, to reflect on interviews and data analysis. I travel down Highway 78 towards Athens in the morning, and in the evening I head back towards Loganville. I drive and the scenery blends with my thoughts on my research. There are fields thick with grass to be cut and rolled into hay come fall. There are large mansions and houses with rusted tin roofs. There are pastures with cows and fenced yards with chickens. I pass the towns of Watkinsville and Monroe. When I am almost home, I pass through a town called Between. It's not much of a name for a town; it doesn't recall a founding family or a great event. It's descriptive and, to be honest, funny—Between is pretty much halfway between Monroe and Loganville and halfway between Athens and Atlanta. It's a place and, believe it or not, people live there. For me, Between is a pass-through town, not a destination. It is somewhere I go through on my way somewhere else. I speed up when I get there because I know I am getting close to home; if I go a little faster, I will get there sooner. This is the way data collection and analysis have been for me in my research classes; they were something I had to pass through on the way to Implications or Conclusions.

Lately, I've been driving and thinking about this chapter on hypertext in the research process. As I get to Between, I keep thinking about how well it describes where I am in my

research and my writing. I am between the beginning and the end[24]—I am in the middle. Exciting things happen here. Deleuze and Guattari (1980/1987) described the middle as a place where things "pick up speed" (p. 25). I can see Between as an interesting place rather than a pass-through, a place where things happen.

Dwell in the Frustration

In one of the early interviews for my study, Felicity, a participant in the study, explained that in order to read hypermedia you have to "make a commitment to dwell in the frustration to get to the experience of reading." I realized as I was listening to her that I had to make a similar commitment to "dwell in the frustration" as a researcher. Research for my dissertation study seemed much messier than it had in the projects I did for my research courses. In my research classes (which I took in the prescribed order), I learned to do the stages of the research process in a particular order. The directions were fairly formulaic; first I do A, then B, and so on. By the time I get to E, I should have a qualitative research project completed. Maybe it was because I did the different steps of the process in different courses, but the stages in the process seemed pretty neat and tidy. I did each step as it was assigned, constantly moving forward with the next step and a clear goal in mind. The research process was described as recursive and even messy, but I didn't see it. At least I didn't see it until I was working with the data for this research study; the interviews weren't neatly packaged, story-filled texts that provided support for my ideas. Instead, they were messy, contradictory, and full of unexpected connections. I found myself dwelling in the frustration of being "between"—between what I expected and the work I needed to do with the data. St. Pierre (2005) contended "that work is in the making, that it is gathering

[24] Okay, so there's a bit of irony here. While I write about hypertext as a form that resists closure and endings, I still think in terms of beginnings and ends for this research project. Perhaps it is because I am producing a print product (the dissertation) or perhaps I am so ingrained by the expectations of print (beginnings, middles, and ends) that the language slips into my work.

itself together, that a certain intensity, an enjambment is occurring. Lines are running together, taking off in new lines of flight to do work that doesn't ask for meaning" (p. 2). As I work with the messiness of my data, I am "doing that work now. [I am] in play…in the middle where things pick up speed" (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980/1987, p. 25). The place of my frustration is also the place where things get interesting, where they pick up speed.

St. Pierre (2005) presented "Accountability in Representation in the 'Democracy to Come'" at a session of the American Education Research Association; in this paper she talked about what we, as researchers and writers, ask of writing. She challenged us to think as she asked, "What can writing do but mean?" I think of this question as I look at what writing does in hypertext environments. What else can writing be other than a final product? What other purpose can writing serve for researchers? St. Pierre (2005) argued that "[t]hinking of writing not as representation and rest but as method and movement asks a great deal of writing" (p. 4). Thinking of writing as movement rather than a fixed product seems particularly appropriate for hypertext and the lack of fixedness to its texts.

As a researcher who uses hypertext in each stage of my research work, I wonder what the lack of fixedness does to a text that is supposed to have academic authority. Kolb (1994, 1997) discussed academic argument and hypertext using the field of philosophy as an example. He asked what hypertext writing could make possible for philosophy. Kolb (1994) situated his question within the larger body of philosophical argumentation when he said that the "principal argument against web writing in philosophy is straightforward: philosophy essentially involves argument, and argument essentially involves a beginning, middle, and end, so that a truly philosophical text needs a line" (p. 326). Like Moulthrop (1995), who saw the writing of hypertext as tightly tied to the reading of hypertext, he argued that part of the problem of writing

philosophical inquiry in hypertext is the contrast between the way that argument is intended to be read and the way hypertext is intended to be read. Moulthrop (1995) stated that "the act of reading in hypertext is constituted struggle: a chapter of chances, a chain of detours, a series of revealing failures in commitment out of which come the pleasures of the text" (Mosaic, paragraph 6). Kolb (1994) echoed this idea in his discussion of philosophical argumentation and hypertext, exploring how an argument can be if it is not linear. An argument that provides a beginning, middle, and end is in sharp contrast to text that provides chances and detours. How does an academic argument develop without linearity? It develops in the movement between screens, in the gaps between the ideas presented, in the juxtaposition of conflicting ideas, in the constructed performance of the reader.

Richardson (2000) explained that she "experimented around three interrelated questions" as she thought about academic writing. The first question, "how does the way we are supposed to write-up our findings become an unexamined trope in our claims to authoritative knowledge," (p. 157) calls into question the form in which academics are expected to write. The form is often an unexamined element of the research process, an unnoticed element that can potentially guide the way that researchers work with their data. As I found in my working with data from my interviews in both print form and hypertext form, each medium enabled different ways of thinking about data. Richardson's second question, "what might we learn about our 'data' if we stage it in different writing formats," (p. 157) challenges the researcher to consider what might be discovered if other genres and text formats come into play. Arts Based Researchers Behar (1993, 1996), Cahnmann (2003), Barone (1997), and Eisner (2005), have been using narrative, multigenres, art, poetry, drama, and other art forms in their research to expand what is possible to learn from and explore in the data. Richardson links the form of writing, the staging of the text,

with what is possible to learn from it. Her third question, “what other audiences might we be able to reach if we step outside the conventions of social scientific writing?” (p. 157) explores the idea of audience. Who is the audience of social scientific writing? Is that audience limited by the form of the writing? If the form does limit the audience, would expanding the formats reach a larger one?

These questions are applicable to me as I have been thinking about the ways in which hypertext changes a text as well as how writing in this medium changes not just the product but the process of writing. When I write a hypertext, I don’t construct a linear text because I want to take advantage of the affordances offered by the medium—I want to construct a text that draws the reader in but also allows her to construct a possible argument rather than asking her to follow me as I construct an argument for her. The reading of the text then becomes a performance by the reader—a text as an event (Morgan, 2000). An event does not allow the same claims of authority that a traditional social scientific text allows. A traditional text builds its authoritative claims in a linear path while a hypertext builds its knowledge in the accretion of screens, the layering and collage of screens and movement.

If the final product is an event, what about the work along the way? How do I work with all of this data—the interview, the writings, the conversations—in a way that makes them part of the event? What are the possibilities? What is it possible for me to do with data working with the theories I have and the tools that I can use? In this chapter, I will discuss academic writing in hypertext, hypertext as it was used in my research process, and some data in its hypertextual form.

Academic Writing in Hypertext

Academic writing in hypertext is difficult to envision. There are few strong examples of academic hypertexts. Landow (1997) argued that most "current examples of hypertext take the form of texts produced by the hypertext author in and for another medium, generally that of print" (p. 151). What this means is that most academic hypertexts were print texts first and, therefore, retain many of their print characteristics. Most of what currently counts as academic hypertext varies little from more traditional print-based academic articles. These hypertexts use links in limited ways, but little else about their form changes in the transition from print to screen. Kolb (1997) argued that the "neglect of scholarly inquiry hypertexts may be because…scientific writers presume that scholarly writing will be handled as the Web was originally designed to do: individual lexia will be scientific papers or their equivalent, with links offering cross references to evidence and to related papers" (p. 29). The assumption that scientific or other research writing will remain the same when it become hypertext is erroneous. Even the most limited forms of linking will disrupt the text. For example, imagine a research article that is placed online in a limited hypertext format. Perhaps only the references contain links; even this restricted ability to follow a reference to a web page with a mouse click opens the text to include additional texts.

Academic argumentation, that form that asks a question and then builds to an answer, is well-suited to linearity. Kolb (1994, 1997) attempted to answer the question of what hypertext could offer philosophy by providing a context for academic inquiry within the field; he began by explaining that one of the first tasks of the young philosophy scholar is to 'find the conclusion' in a text. The young scholar is then told to 'outline the argument' (p.327). Outlines are important here because an "outline contains constant indications of its structure" (p. 327). The structure of

the argument is necessary because “one needs to know where one is in the larger structure, so that one can see what is being claimed and be able to criticize it” (p. 327). He contrasted this linear argumentation with “hypertext webs that may have no fixed beginnings or endings, are hard to explore, may have no conclusions, and may deliberately avoid being caught in any totalizing overview” (p. 327). Creating an outline of the argument in a hypertext is not necessarily possible as the reader may not be able to find the ending (if there is one) in order to work backwards constructing the outline of the argument.

The use of the term “argument” in describing the structure of academic writing is problematic for me. The term seems tied to a type of writing based in an epistemology that does not allow for play or resistance. While the hypertext theorists (Bolter, 1991a, 1991b; Kolb, 1997, 2004) who are currently writing on the use of hypertext in academic writing use the term, I find it limiting. While all academic writing has a purpose and formats designed to develop and support that purpose, not all of it is argumentation in the scientific format of premise, support, and conclusion. Argumentation implies a rigid format for academic writing that I don’t often see in the studies and articles that I read in hypertext, education, teaching, postmodern and arts-based research. The books and articles that I read have a clearly stated purpose that is then supported by the remaining text.

If the reader of academic hypertext cannot construct a well-supported argument or purpose from the lexias of the hypertext, how does she know that the author of the hypertext has done what she was supposed to do? An academic hypertext in this context is judged as though it were a print piece. The “hypertext structure is always under pressure from print habits of reading and writing, and especially in argumentative, expository, and scholarly contexts” (Kolb, 2004, p. 26). We often read hypertext with our print expectations firmly in place expecting hypertext to

perform the way print does. Landow (1992) claimed that "we still read according to print technology, and we still direct almost all of what we write toward print modes of publication, but we can already glimpse the appearances of hypertextuality and begin to ascertain some aspects of its possible futures" (p. 57). The majority of what is written for publication—whether the venue is print or the Web—is written using the modes of print as the guidelines. There are many reasons for this. Hypertext is a nascent technology; writers and scholars are still playing with the possibilities opened up by hypertext systems. They are still asking: what does writing in this format get me?

While my study is focused on the theorizing, reading, and writing of hypertext fiction, I have briefly discussed the writing of academic hypertext. My purpose for this has been two-fold. First, I wanted to draw attention to the already expanding boundaries of what counts as academic texts and introduce the idea of academic hypertexts. As the possibilities for print expand, so too do the possibilities for hypertext as a format for research and academic texts. Second, I have used a combination of print and hypertext for my dissertation. While I am intrigued by the possibilities offered by hypertext as a medium of representation, I am also cognizant of its limitations. Hypertext is challenging to read; it requires the reader to use a form of technology that is not as familiar as the format of the book. In the drafting and presentation of my dissertation, I have incorporated more traditional print structures as well as explored what hypertext has to offer.

Hypertext in the Research Process

As a researcher, I know that research is a non-linear process. Although I know this, I approached this research project in a fairly linear way. I realized that although I paid lip service to the recursive nature of the research process, I had certain expectations about how the research

process would go. First, a researcher (me) chose a topic and then designed a study. After the researcher designed the study, she collected data to be analyzed. After analyzing the data, she wrote her research findings. Somewhere in all of this, she was expected to use theory work to provide citational authority for her findings. These findings were to be written up in a format that included an introduction, a literature review, an explanation of the research study and methods, conclusion, and implications. This kind of writing was the end product of the research. Knowing this process shaped the design of the project as well as the analysis and writing. At each point of the process, the researcher is aware that she is building toward an academic argument for a print-based paper.

In collecting and analyzing data, I was constantly aware that only part of my product would be a print-based academic argument. The struggle for me was how to balance the print

Figure B.1

product and the hypertext performance of my data. I focused on three aspects of the research process as I worked in both mediums: *data collection, data analysis, data presentation*. What I learned was that as I created the print pieces, I was working to smooth out the edges of the data, to create a cohesive, structural argument. As I worked in hypertext, even if it was with the same data, I approached it differently. In the hypertext versions, I was regularly looking at data segments in relation to other data segments. The movement between the hypertext screens facilitated this relational approach. I focused on fragments rather than attempted to create a cohesive whole as I did when I worked with data in print. I found that hypertext demonstrates its own deconstruction both as a process and as a product. At each point in my working with the hypertext version of data, I was aware of how data came together, how screens collided and changed, how text and images were replaced with the click of a mouse. The awareness of the text as my reading performance allowed me to see also how the text was deconstructed in the movement of the screens. As I worked with the data in a hypertext format, I was constantly aware of the instability of the text.

Part of what hypertext adds to the research process is the fluidity with which ideas can flow and tangents can be followed. Hypertext is a medium that encourages Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) rhizomatic lines of flight. Building in the possibility of multiple lines of interpretation can alter the design of the research project as well as the analysis. In an example screen (Figure B.1) from the hypertext version of my data, there are multiple choices for a reader to make. The reader could choose the default path and just click to the next screen without following any of the blue links or using any of the navigation buttons (See Figure B.2). Or, the reader could choose to follow a particular line of flight by selecting a link to follow. Researchers may already examine multiple lines of interpretation in more traditional research; however,

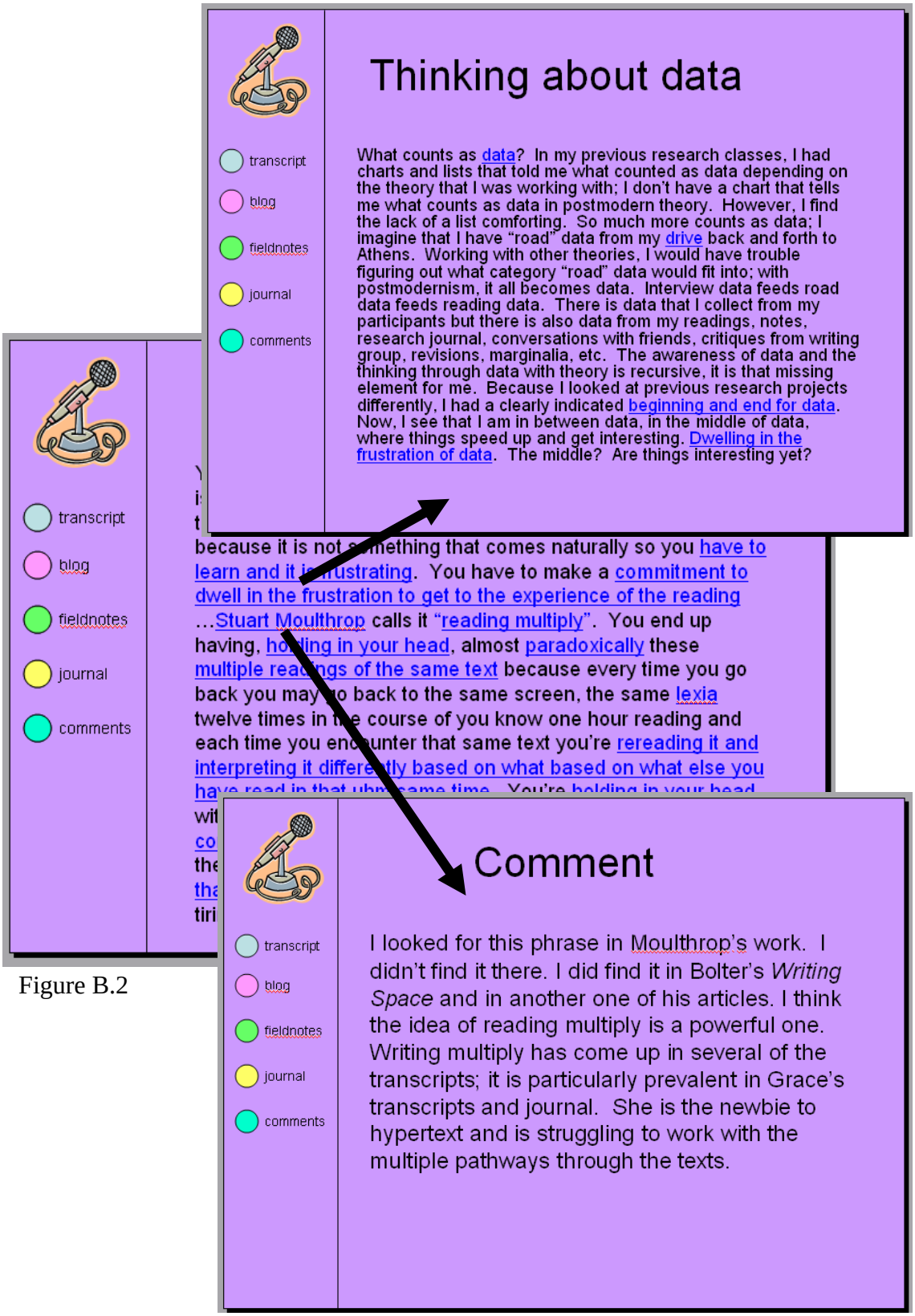
Thinking about data
What counts as data? In my previous research classes, I had charts and lists that told me what counted as data depending on the theory that I was working with; I don't have a chart that tells me what counts as data in postmodern theory. However, I find the lack of a list comforting. So much more counts as data; I imagine that I have "road" data from my drive back and forth to Athens. Working with other theories, I would have trouble figuring out what category "road" data would fit into; with postmodernism, it all becomes data. Interview data feeds road data feeds reading data. There is data that I collect from my participants but there is also data from my readings, notes, research journal, conversations with friends, critiques from writing group, revisions, marginalia, etc. The awareness of data and the thinking through data with theory is recursive, it is that missing element for me. Because I looked at previous research projects differently, I had a clearly indicated beginning and end for data. Now, I see that I am in between data, in the middle of data, where things speed up and get interesting. Dwelling in the frustration of data. The middle? Are things interesting yet?
transcript
blog
fieldnotes
journal
comments
because it is not something that comes naturally so you have to learn and it is frustrating. You have to make a commitment to dwell in the frustration to get to the experience of the reading
…Stuart Moulthrop calls it "reading multiply". You end up having, holding in your head, almost paradoxically these multiple readings of the same text because every time you go back you may go back to the same screen, the same lexia twelve times in the course of you know one hour reading and each time you encounter that same text you're rereading it and interpreting it differently based on what based on what else you
Comment
I looked for this phrase in Moulthrop's work. I didn't find it there. I did find it in Bolter's Writing Space and in another one of his articles. I think the idea of reading multiply is a powerful one. Writing multiply has come up in several of the transcripts; it is particularly prevalent in Grace's transcripts and journal. She is the newbie to hypertext and is struggling to work with the multiple pathways through the texts.

Figure B.2

hypertext makes this use of multiple lines more explicit and, potentially, more fluid. Multiple lines of interpretation are not as easy to represent in print media as they are in hypertext. As a medium, hypertext displays its own practices and draws attention to the condition of the text, to the possibilities of the text as constructed by the reader. A hypertext research piece would by design draw attention to its own construction and deconstruction. Glazier (2002) described writing in digital environments as "an overlapping, hybrid, and extendible terrain of parts of writing, parts that fit together at times awkwardly and out of joint, to compose a textual continuum through which writing practices weave" (p. 2). Hypertext, as a form of writing, draws attention to its own weaving in the movements of screens and nodes.

Fragments to the Whole

Moving from page to screen as a choice for collecting, analyzing and presenting data created several unforeseen dilemmas. Like Scheurich (1995), I found myself questioning the interview process and representations of the interview text. Scheurich argued that in the traditional methods of transcribing an interview, the "physical, non-verbal aspects of communication disappear" along with the "variations in tone, intensity, and rhythm" (p. 240). Even though I had the option to include the voice of my participants in a hypertext, I still had to create a detailed transcript of the words the participant and I used in the interview. The words of the transcript "are totally decontextualized" (p. 240), and while I attempted to keep the text in a form that closely represented what was said, there was still a disconnect between the richness of the interview and the flatness of the transcript. Although the hypertext version of the transcript has links to the actual interview, the written text and the oral text of the interview are still separated. Even in the hypertext format, the written text of the interview is privileged over the oral text as the researcher or the reader has to click on the microphone link on the screen of the

written text to access the oral text of the interview. While hypertext may still privilege the written transcript, it does allow for the presence of the oral text in a way that a traditional print text does not. Allowing someone other than the researcher to hear, and therefore interpret, the oral text of the interview opens up the research process. The researcher is not the final interpreter. Both the interview and the transcripts are presented as fragments to be constructed, reconstructed, and interpreted by the researcher or reader.

The text of the transcript as well as the text of the interview is fragmented on the screen. As a researcher, I made choices about how the text would be divided and placed on the screen. I attempted to divide the transcript into what I called "complete fragments[25]." Like Bakhtin's (1986) utterances, the complete fragments are always in relation to each other. I wanted the text on the screen, both oral and written, to stand alone as well as to stand in relation to the other texts I was collecting; so these fragments, like utterances, are complete in that they express a complete thought but also, like utterances, exist in relation to the utterance that preceded it and the utterance that will follow it. Morgan (2000) argued that, after Derrida (1976)

> textual theorists can no longer accept the notion of self-contained text distinct from others…we recognize that texts mean in relation to other texts, which they may quote or allude to explicitly, parody, or reject—or which they may implicitly engage with as part of a larger conversation, whose discourses and genres mingle together in the spaces of a culture. (p. 137)

[25] I should have used "utterance" rather than "complete fragment" but at the time I was working with the transcript, I was still resisting the pull to Bakhtin. I included the "complete fragment" phrase because I used it often in my research blog. It was on a rereading of the hypertext version of my data and the recognition that my "complete fragment" was an "utterance" in a "chain of utterances" that solidified my acceptance of Bakhtin as a theorist to guide my work.

I viewed the transcripts in my interview study of adult authors of digital fiction as texts in constant relation to each other. Even though I may have divided the transcripts into complete fragments, I was constantly aware that these fragments existed in relation to the other fragments of the transcript, other transcripts, and other data sources. I linked the fragments to each other and across transcripts, my research blog, writing journal, and other texts that were part of my data. The medium of hypertext displayed the relations between the fragments and allowed me to create multiple relationships between fragments. The multiple genres of these fragments create a different kind of interview transcript.

Scheurich (1995) questioned mainstream interviewing that "disregards alternative interpretations and ignores the ambiguities of communication" (p.243). In creating hypertext versions of my transcripts, I was able to consider alternative interpretations of my data. For example, in a member check, one participant disagreed with my interpretations. In my print write-up of this section, I changed my words to reflect her corrections, but in the hypertext

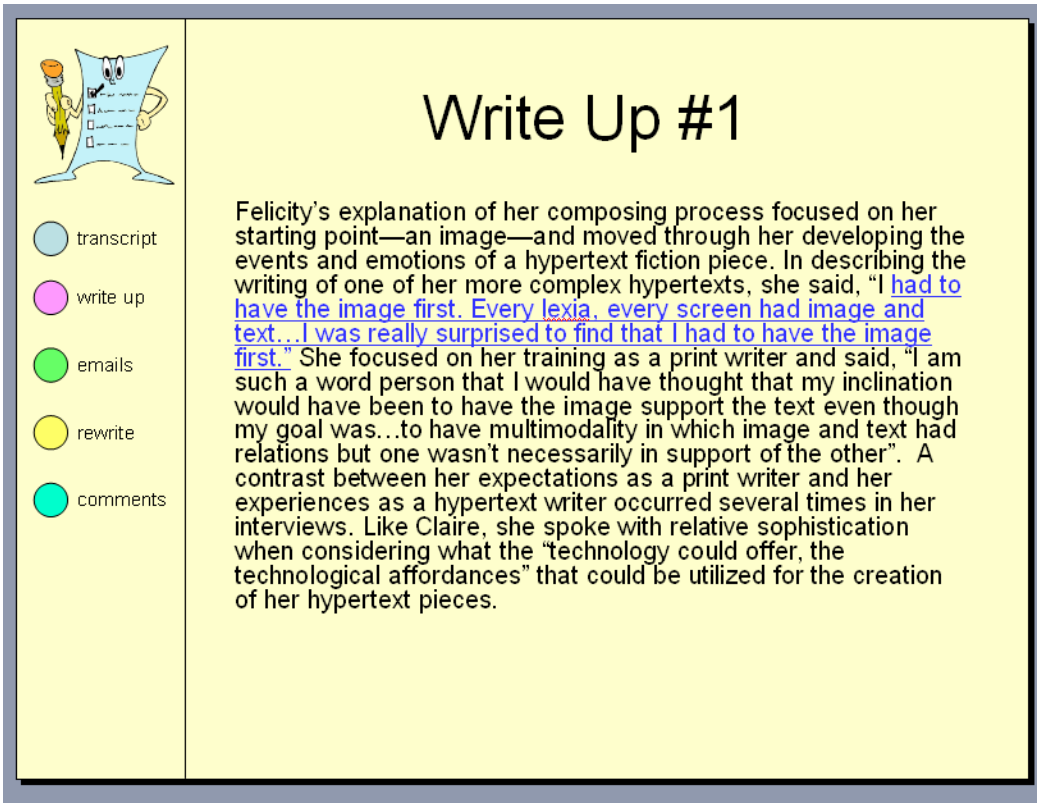

Figure B.3

version, I included my interpretation (See Figure B.3), her disagreement (See Figure B.4), the rewrite that we agreed on (See Figure B.5), and my reflection on her disagreement (See Figure B.6). The reader is then able to see the progression of the interpretation, and how it was shaped in the process of writing and rewriting. The multiple versions of the interpretation make for a messy research project. In my print versions, I smooth out and control the data in ways that I do not do when I move to hypertext.

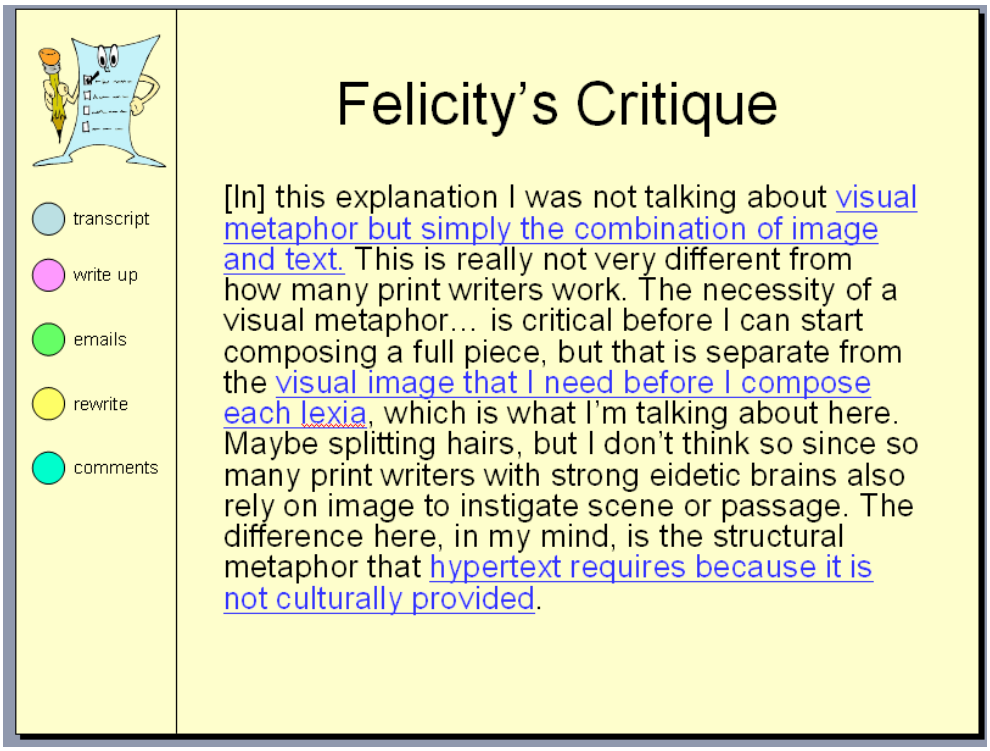

Figure B.4

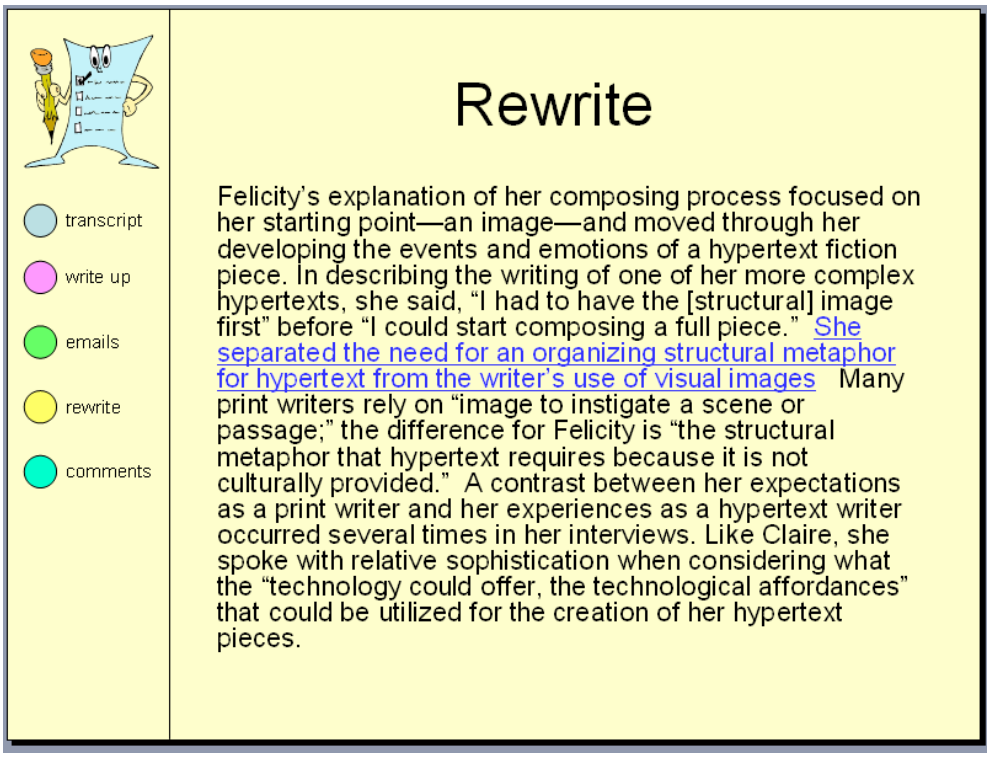

Figure B.5

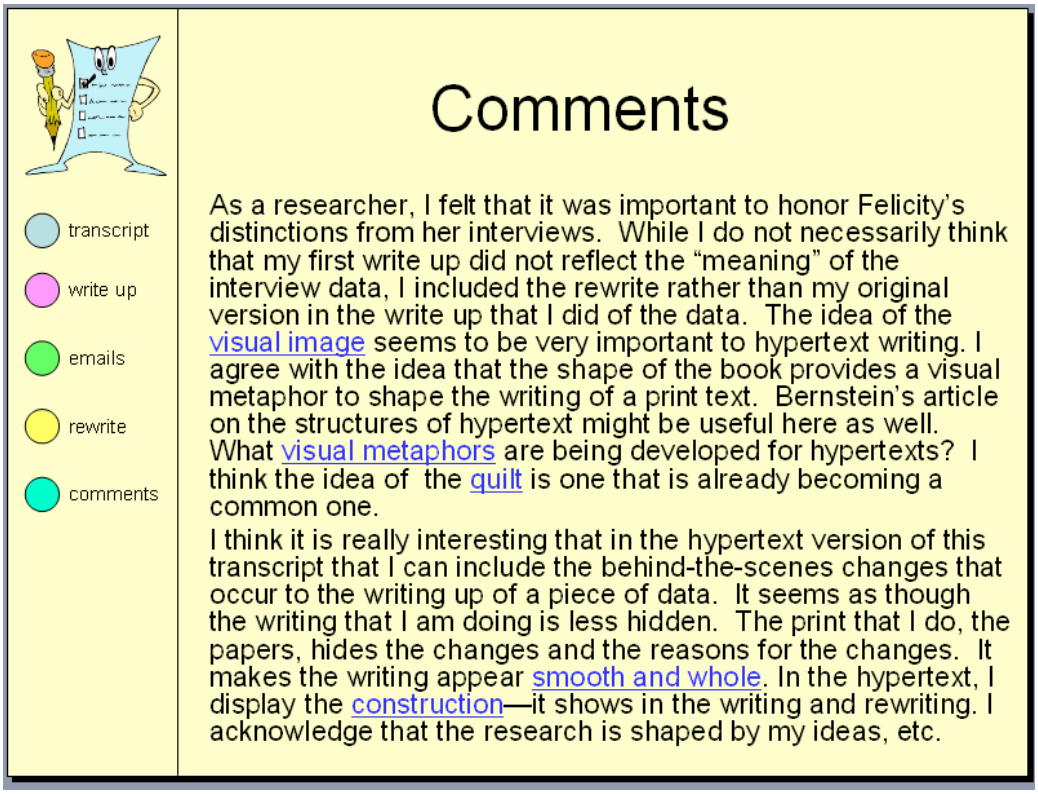

Figure B.6

In hypertext, the medium lends itself to multiple interpretations, fragmentation, and ambiguity. I am reminded of Campioni and Grosz's question (as cited in Lather, 1991); they asked, "Why is it necessary to unify/solidify what may be fluid, diverse, and changing, if not in order to block and control it?" (p. 24). In print, I have authorial expectations of control whereas in hypertext, I do not feel the same need for that kind of control. Landow (1992) argued that hypertext may "weaken and perhaps destroy any sense of textual uniqueness" (p. 53). In a print text, even a research text, part of my goal as a writer is to create a fluid, unique text. Hypertext is a text created in the performance where the "dynamic mélange…goes well beyond what the static juxtapositions of a printed page allow" (Morgan, 2000, p. 136). Hypertext does not easily allow for unity or solidity. In collecting my data in this format, I found myself very aware of its fragmented structure. Glazier (2002) connected medium and structure when he argued that there "are certain limits and specific effects concomitant with the materials of a given medium. Further, the medium affects the materiality of the work" (p. 4). Glazier was writing about the role of digital technology in the fields of writing and composition. He argued that "[w]hat writing *is* becomes altered by how it is physically written down through its production technology" (p. 4). My awareness of the data as fragments of a whole is directly linked to the production technology of the hypertext medium.

I find this connection to the production technology of a text echoed in Morgan's (2000) work on hypertext. She explained that the physical form of the print text created scholarly social science texts that make "make overt intertextual references in citations, quotations, and bibliographies; however, these are not only necessarily limited in size and scope, they are also placed in a fixed position at the end or set off within brackets and indentations from which position they can only set up a subvocalizing murmur" (p. 136). These intertextual references in

traditional scholarly works are placed in a hierarchical structure that configures them as paratexts, as extra to the main text. The main text, then, has textual priority over the references, footnotes, glossaries, indexes, and other paratexts. In print texts, images, charts, graphs, and illustrations often serve as additions to the main text. Whereas, in hypertext

> such materials can more easily be explicitly, fully present. Not only are they center stage on the space of the screen when the node containing the intertextual material is opened, but links can be made to other corpora included in the hypertextual space or (perhaps) accessible online. (Morgan, 2000, p. 136)

In hypertext, such additional material does not have to be relegated to a particular place in the body of the text. The fragmented structure of hypertext opens up the text and allows for the reshaping of the text based on what the researcher or reader is interested in. Morgan stated, "When any node—even material that would be marginal in a print text—is opened up on the screen, it does not have a fixed subtextual dependency on any other" (p.138). Rather than a fixed dependence on another node or screen, it has "a kind of impermanent preeminence in time and also in place" (p. 138). The text, then, is constantly being reshaped, becoming a new text or new form in the performance.

Deconstruction of the Research Text

The repetition of the mouse click, the conscious choosing of each new layer of hypertext, both activates the text and undoes it as a traditional, coherent, linear form. Joyce (1996) argued that "a world of possibility can be spewed out in whole or kernel" with each click of the mouse; Douglas (2000) continued this idea when she said each rendering of hypertext "breathes life into a narrative of possibilities" (p. 67). She expanded on the idea of narratives of possibilities as she described the ways that the encountering of the same passage in hypertext fiction is both the

same as the first encounter and inclusive of the reader's reaction and perception of the passage and the passages that bracket each reading. Multiple renderings of a research text in hypertext allow for myriad readings depending on reader interest.

In hypertext, the researcher renders the links between ideas, images, and text visible. The reader has the choice in determining whether to follow the links, but the writer draws attention to them. The medium of hypertext is what allows the particular type of rendering that the hypertext author creates. Like many modern artists whose work forces the viewer to be aware of the medium of construction, hypertexts creators use the affordances of digital environments to develop possibilities for the reader. For example, Fer (2002), an art critic who wrote about many modern artists, described Hesse as an artist who drew attention to the materials that she used; part of the message of her art was how she played the materials against each other (Fer, 2002, p. 81). Joyce (1995) declared the "nomadic movement of ideas is made effortless by the electronic medium that makes it easy to cross borders (or erase them) with the swipe of a mouse, carrying as much of the world as you will on the etched arrow of light that makes up a cursor" (p. 3). Part of what is different about hypertext in the research process is "what has been rendered significant" and what has been "made effortless." Fer (2002), in describing Hesse's work, argued that the "repetition both activates the surface and undoes it as a coherent composition" (p. 82). The artist Hesse's use of layering and repetition as part of the process and product of her art, much like the layering of screen upon screen in hypertext, served as a way to draw attention to the media and the message.

While my emphasis in creating the print analysis of my data has been on creating a coherent narrative of my data stories and theory, my emphasis in the hypertext version has been to create a text that exists in multiples, a text that opens up many possibilities for construction

and interpretation. I wanted to create a text that is "an organic growth that is all adventitious[26] middle, not a deterministic chain of beginnings and ends" (Moulthrop, 1994, p. 300). In print, I write for an ending; in hypertext, I write for the adventitious middle. Morgan (2000) explained that hypertext may "enable us to think otherwise about the explicit propositional form of chained argument, which seeks to close down positions and to subsume the voices of others in order to effect singularity and closure" (p. 139). An academic argument that is all middle does not create a chain of support that leads the reader to a specific goal.

My third comprehensive exam question asked me to "Describe some possibilities opened up by hypertext in data collection, analysis, and representation with respect to Arts based approaches and postmodern approaches to inquiry. Develop some specific examples using hypertext media." My committee and I agreed that I could create an answer to this question that was a hypertext rather than the traditional format. Changing the format to a hypertext was an attempt to "assemble lines of argument differently" (Morgan, 2000, p. 139), and I discovered that some of my readers—my writing group, classmates, and committee members—desired coherence, closure, and structure. I kept that in mind as I worked to create hypertext versions of my collected data and data analysis. I also kept in mind the question, what can hypertext make possible for research? My third comprehensive exam question, done entirely as a hypertext, demonstrated its own weaving and unweaving. The text did not obey the print text conventions associated with comprehensive exams. As a hypertext, the exam question created an argument that "exhibit[ed] its own textual deconstruction, subverting the conventions of coherence in structure and viewpoint through a network of contingencies" (Morgan, 2000, pp. 131-132). Two members of my writing group and one of my committee members printed out every screen of the

[26] Adventitious—associated with something by chance rather than as an integral part; extrinsic (www.dictionary.com).

comprehensive exam question. I asked them why they chose to print the screens. One explained that she couldn't read well on screen. Another was concerned that she would miss something if she tried to read it on screen. One was resistant to the idea of hypertext as a text and explained that it didn't feel like a real text unless it was on paper. While printing the screens allowed them to see and read every screen, it also limited the possibilities afforded by the medium of hypertext. It allowed them a more familiar reading structure but it lost the idea of text as movement. The printed pages lost the dynamic juxtapositions of screens, missed the arguments constructed from the ideas presented side-by-side or as contradictions. These readers created a coherent text from a format that was not intended to be that. The hypertext argument was intended as a text where its "multisequentiality invite[ed] divergence from the singular, onward-driving linearity of conventional narrative and argument" (Morgan, 2000, p. 132).

Hypertext is a "text that displays the patterns of its weaving" and "promotes the mind's tendency to play over and through its web to produce other readings" (Morgan, 2000, p. 135). McGann (2001) connected the idea of poetry and hypertext as he explains that the "object of poetry is to display the textual condition. Poetry is language that calls attention to itself, that takes its own textual activities as its ground subject…Poetical text operate to display their own practices, to put them forward as the subject of attention" (pp. 10-11). He connected this to the way that hypertext operates to display its own practices. The hypertext version of my research was much more playful than the print version; the print version appeared static and complete while the hypertext version seemed constantly in play, constantly shifting. Hypertext calls attention to the condition of the text, to the possibilities of the text as constructed by the reader. Ederfield (1997), in writing about Diebenkorn's Ocean Park series, explains that the erasure present in the series and the "implication of obliteration of the old by the new" draws attention to

the “temporality and renewability of a culture and its structures” (p. 112). Hypertext also displays this temporality and renewability because of the ease with which the text on the screen can be replaced by other text.

Instability of the Research Text

The ease with which I could change the data that was on the screen as well as the ease with which I could link the data to commentary, video clips, other examples, and other data fragments allowed me to think of text differently. Glazier (2002) explained that hypertext requires a “writer who can create a work that aims for a proposed rendering”; the writer does this by “placing writing in a suspension between possibilities, not by fixing it with any given finality” (p. 15). In collecting, analyzing, and presenting my data, I was attempted to create a proposed rendering. The data itself was suspended between the possibilities of interpretation. The order in which the data or the other texts were activated by me as a researcher or by the reader affected the way the data could be interpreted. This lack of definite order, this suspension of data between possibilities helped create a text that drew attention to its own instability. Rather than the illusion of stability, of certainty connected with the print texts I created, my hypertexts were constantly in motion. No one screen had authority over another, no one participant’s voice was privileged over another’s.

Analysis of a text that is in motion is a challenge. Scheurich (1995) described the interactions between the interviewer and interviewee as “a shifting carnival of ambiguous complexity, a moving feast of differences interrupting differences” (p. 243). While I felt that my participants and I were often using words differently, I felt even more strongly that my data was “a shifting carnival” of complexity. Each time I activated the data in my hypertext, I found new connections and juxtapositions. How do I work toward an analysis when the texts with which I

am working are in motion? Even though the links and connections were ones that I had made originally, each of my readings created a different combination of texts. Many of which I did not anticipate. Although I had created a proposed rendering of the data, new possibilities were created in the collage and montage of the screens. The multiple possibilities of readings and interpretations drew attention to the instability of the text.

Appendix C

TYING IT UP WITH A RIBBON:

ABOUT THE AUTHOR AND SELF STUDY

My great-great-great uncle Jimmy Earl Rowland told a story about how his second cousin Jeremiah Kersey was conjured to the crossroads by a love potion. Story has it that Jeremiah fashioned himself as a bit of a Lothario, chasing and wooing the local girls and then moving on to the next conquest. Grandma said he loved the chase more than the catching. Apparently, Jeremiah played fast and loose with the heart of a young woman named Annabelle. Annabelle didn't take kindly to being discarded by a man who had professed to love her more than the moon loved the stars. As the granddaughter of a conjure woman from the Louisiana bayou, she had the knowledge and the power to punish Jeremiah for his inconstancy. Story has it that she placed a photo of Jeremiah, the gifts he gave her, and a lock of his hair in a cigar box. She tied a red ribbon around the box. She then wrote out the words to two different spells on small pieces of paper. She rolled up each spell and tied them with ribbons as well. One ribbon was red and the other was black. Late one summer evening, she walked around the small town. Everywhere she went, she heard the crying of women whose heart had been broken by Jeremiah. Story has it that she also saw Jeremiah paying court to Preacher Jack's middle daughter, swearing to love her more than the moon loved the stars. Later that night, when the church bells tolled twelve, Annabelle buried the box at the exact spot where the roads intersected. She said some words, and poof, the spell tied with a red ribbon disappeared. She said some more words, and poof, the spell tied with the black ribbon disappeared. She said a few more words, and poof, she disappeared as well.

On the first full moon after Annabelle disappeared, a beautiful woman appeared at the crossroads and met Jeremiah. Jeremiah swears he fell in love with her the moment his eyes met hers. She swore to love him more than the moon loves the stars. She warned him though, the moon is an inconstant lover. After the full moon, she was gone, never to be seen again. During every full moon for the rest of his life, Jeremiah wandered the intersection of the roads waiting for her to come back to him. He stopped his chasing and his wooing of other women and remained constant in his love for his "moon" woman.

This is a strange story and a bit out of character for some of the family lore that I grew up hearing. While many of the family stories are shadow tales full of doom and gloom and cautions about mishehaving, this one is a bit more overt than the others in the linking of bad behavior, punishment, and magic. It is true that Jeremiah Kersey was a handsome devil who never married; however, there is no proof that he was cursed by a scorned former lover. Plenty of my cousins have tried to find the cigar box as though the presence of the box would be proof enough of the spell. It's not uncommon for them to slip out of their houses on the night of a full moon to try to dig up the box. In seventy some-odd years of searching, they've not managed to find the evidence of Annabelle's spell, a neatly packed cigar box tied with the ribbon.

Not everyone attributes Jeremiah's strange behaviors to Annabelle's spell. Grandma argued that it was most likely Jeremiah's own behavior—the wooing and leaving, the drinking and nighttime walks—that doomed him to being alone. She draws attention in her tales about Jeremiah to his drinking particularly. He was fond of Levy Walker's moonshine. Story has it that Jeremiah bought himself a jug of Walker moonshine every full moon, and then wandered backwards around the intersection of Walker Pond Road and Bethany Church Road. Story also has it that he did the drinking and walking backwards as naked as the day he was born.

There are lots of theories as to why Jeremiah behaved the way he did. Family gossip is full of them—theories neatly packaged in boxes and tied with ribbons. Everybody's got their own take. I can think of many reasons why a handsome man might choose not to marry, might drink heavily, and might be prone to wandering around at night. My beliefs about his behaviors, my looking at the data about his actions, grow out of my theories about life and the world, and what those theories allow me to think. I may not explicitly articulate those theories, but they are implicitly present in what I say about Jeremiah and what I believe caused him to act the way he did. I look at the data I've collected about Jeremiah, apply my theories to that data, and poof, I have a neatly packaged explanation of what I see.

I read and reread library research data, self study data, and empirical interview data and realize that I am like my cousins looking for the cigar box and red ribbon as proof of something magical, as though the presence of neatly packaged and labeled categories is proof of good theory and analysis work. I do the work, but I am suspicious of the package. In this appendix, I write about how I collected interview and self study data, how I analyzed the data, the problems I experienced, and issues I see with using hypertext in the stages of research. I am at the crossroads where the library research data, self study data, and interview data intersect, collide, and make turns. It is a magical place, and, while I may not provide the cigar box, I will endeavor to provide the ribbon.

The Study

This three-part research project focuses on theorizing writing in a hypertext medium using three data sources: 1) library and Internet research, 2) an interview study with adult writers of digital fiction and 3) a self-study of a novice writer of digital fiction as support for the theorizing. My own theorizing of hypertext fiction was a necessary component of the study

because of the complexity of what hypertext can potentially offer to or change about reading and writing. While hypertext theorists Coover (1992/2003) and Landow (1992, 1997, 2006) used hypertext in their writing classrooms, there are few examples of empirical hypertext research studies. To supplement data gathered from my library research, I chose to include data from writers using hypertext in their work. I chose adult writers of digital fiction because I believe these writers are a transition generation trained in print writing practices who have engaged in those writing practices both personally and professionally. These writers have also made the transition to working in digital environments. I chose to do conduct a self-study as part of this research project in order to examine how my own writing practices changed (or didn't change) as I created my first hypertext fiction. I wanted to explore what happened when I wrote in a different medium. Did my experiences and the experiences of the adult authors of digital fiction match what I had theorized about hypertext writing?

I examined the current scholarship on hypertext as a starting point for my theorizing. The author and self study were supplemental to the work I was doing to theorize hypertext. I was interested in how selected practitioners—me and other hypertext authors—used or remade their writing practices in order to write in a digital environment.

Recruiting and Selecting Participants. The author-study portion of the research study focused on interviews with authors who have written in both print and hypertext formats. The participants in the sample included those who believe that the medium in which an author works has implications for both the process and product that is produced. To recruit participants, I solicited authors from the author listings at Eastgame.com and HypertextKitchen.com. I sent an email letter (See Appendix B-1) to twenty authors (See Appendix B-3)—several of whom were prominent names in the field of hypertext. I also used personal connections with several print and

hypertext authors to recruit participants. I received twelve responses to my emails. There were eight who did not respond to either of the introductory emails. Two of the thirteen responses indicated that the potential participant was unable to participate in the study due to time conflicts. Ken (pseudonym), one of the authors unable to participate recommended one of his graduate students as a replacement participant. I contacted the graduate student, Nate (pseudonym), and he agreed to be a participant. I had thirteen potential participants that I then narrowed down to ten. I chose to interview only those participants who had published in both print and hypertext. The publications could be academic pieces, fiction, poetry, or screen plays. My initial sorting criteria was that the writers had published either print fiction or print academic pieces and hypertext fiction or hypertext academic pieces. I will introduce my participants and final sorting criteria later in the following sections.

The final five participants were a result of elimination. Two of the original ten participants stopped responding to emails and were eliminated from the study because of that. Four of the participants, were eliminated from this particular study because of their discourse. Each of these participants used a discourse focused on interactive narrative used in video games. Their data was interesting and exciting, but I was not familiar enough with gaming theory to be able to adequately address what they said. Their interviews are a potential future research project.

Interview Guide. Gee (1996) discussed the role that discourses play in the ways that people interact and use language. Particular discourses make certain choices and interactions possible. For my interview study, I interviewed ten participants. Six of those participants shared a common discourse—the discourse of writing and composition teachers, and I realized as I conducted the interviews that my interview guide questions were designed for participants in that

specific discourse. While all ten of my participants were published print and hypertext authors, five of them were published authors and composition or language arts teachers. One participant was an artist and writer. While the other four participants were also writers, they approached their work from a different discourse—that of programmer or engineer. They did not use the same discourse when talking about their writing process as the author/teachers did. Two of the four denied have a writing process at all. The questions in the interview guide (See Appendix B-2) for the first interview were intended to be open-ended. I adapted the questions in the course of each interview.

While these questions in my interview guide seemed open-ended when I conceived them, I realized as I interviewed participants that these questions were geared toward participants who shared a common discourse with me—that of teacher and writer. As I interviewed those four participants who were writers but not educators, I struggled to revise the questions to get the answers and language that I expected. The focus, of course, was the wrong one. I wanted these four participants to provide information that fit my particular discourse. I had to step back and examine the initial interview questions for unexpected bias. Embedded in these questions is the language of writing process theory and education. When I shifted the question from "Tell me about your writing process for print or hypertext" to "Describe what you do when you create a print or hypertext piece," those four participants were able to describe more about their writing practices than they were able to when I asked the first version of the question. Instead of asking these participants how they created tension, I asked them how they moved the reader through the text.

I used the interview guide as that—a guide. After the first interview with a participant who did not share the discourse I had unintentionally embedded in the interview questions, I

considered not having a guide at all. Deleuze and Guattari (1981/1994) stated that "we require just a little order to protect us from the chaos" (p. 201). The idea of not having a guide at all seemed inappropriate; first, because the interview could become a waste of the participant's time if I did not have some idea of what I wanted to ask, and second, because, while my first interview guide was embedded in a particular discourse, it did not follow that having no interview guide would be useful. All researchers have an agenda; trying to pretend otherwise is disingenuous. The better course of action was to have various versions of the questions, not fixed and rigid versions, but rather versions that allowed for freedom of movement.

Read My Book., I want to write briefly about a problematic contact I ultimately chose not to pursue as a participant. Bob (pseudonym) is a leading hypertext theorist who teaches at a major research university. He has written and edited several of the most respected academic texts on hypertext. He has written numerous articles on hypertext and writing. Additionally, he uses hypertext in his university classroom with his students and has them write about their experiences. I have read each of his books and almost all of his articles. I have explored his students' work on-line and read their reactions to creating hypertext. I used his work as I developed the questions I wanted to ask my participants. I sent him the initial email, and he responded promptly. Bob's response, however, was not what I expected. I expected him to tell me that he was too busy to participate as another of the leading theorists had done. At best, I expected him to suggest a graduate student for me to interview. Instead, the response I received was critical of the questions I had included in my email. These questions were general questions about writing practices (See Appendix B-1) and were only included in the email to give the potential participant an idea of the kinds of questions that might be asked in an interview. The response also included the suggestion that I read his latest book as he had answered my questions

there. I responded that I had read all of his books and the majority of his articles and that was why I thought he would be a strong participant for the study. I explained how I had used his work to develop several of the questions. He then responded that perhaps I should reread his work.

I felt that Bob was asking me to prove my scholarship to him, to show that I was worth his time. I believed there was evidence of his work already present in the questions I wanted to ask. I wasn't sure how to prove to him that I had read his work (as well as that of many other hypertext scholars) so after the first series of emails, I sent a final email thanking him for his time and withdrawing my request for an interview.

At this point in the interview process, I had heard back from numerous female hypertext theorists and authors who generously provided both time and encouragement. His response was the first I had received from a male hypertext theorist. I wondered if this was a gender issue. Was it a status issue? After all, I was a graduate student, not another professor or a professional writer. Was he trying to intimidate me? Demonstrate his power? I don't know. I felt intimidated and resentful of his questioning of my scholarship. I also questioned my decision not to pursue him as a participant. Should I have continued to try to prove myself to him in the hopes that he would consent to an interview? Was I playing his game by withdrawing the interview request? Ultimately, I decided that his work had played such a part in my theorizing of hypertext that he was a participant in my study whether he consented to an interview or not. My question about whether his response was related to my gender or my status resonates still and will no doubt find its way into a future study.

Introducing the Almost Participants. I offered the final ten participants multiple ways in which to be interviewed; they could be interviewed in person, by telephone, by email, or by

some combination of those. One participant, Nate (pseudonym), asked for another option. Nate was not one of the original authors I contacted. Ken, a leading hypertext theorist who was unable to participate due to time pressures, recommended his graduate student, Nate, as a replacement. As a graduate student at a major research university, Nate has co-edited several significant texts on hypertext and new media. I contacted Nate and requested an interview. He responded that he preferred to be interviewed on his blog.

Nate and Alex. Nate's blog, shared with five other contributors, focuses on hypertext, gaming, and new media writing. I explored the blog before I agreed to use it as the site for the interview. The blog contained essays in which he and the other contributors invited and received commentary. It also contained a great deal of reflection on the development of hypertext and discussion on the field of new media. I agreed to the use of the blog as the interview site although I was unsure of how to incorporate responses from people other than my intended participant. In my previous experiences with interviews, there was an element of privacy that was integral to the interview. What would happen to the intimacy of the interview when it was on display in a relatively public space? The blog can be accessed and commented on by anyone who knows about it. How do the roles of interviewer and interviewee shift when the format changes not only from an oral interview to a written one but also from a private conversation to a public one?

I sent Nate the questions, and he posted the questions and his answer on the blog a few days later. Most of his responses to the questions consisted of asking for more explanation on the questions. For example, his response to several of the questions began with "It depends by what you mean by…" In a face-to-face interview, I would have been able to use body language and context cues to help me determine what additional information he needed. Because the interview

was written, I lost the use of those cues and was forced to try to figure out from his text what he needed to know more about so that he could answer the questions. This interview was also public so I was aware that there was an audience watching the interplay between me and Nate. I was uncomfortable with the way he responded to my questions. His answers seemed out of context to me as the initial email and the email that included the questions had a great deal of the information that he was asking for in the blog. I then wondered if I had not been clear or if this was a performance because of the public nature of his blog. I answered his questions and waited for his next response. His second response was much like his first; he answered some questions but also used the familiar line, "It depends on what you mean by…" Again, I answered his questions but then shifted my questions to ask directly about a poem he had written and posted on his blog. I reframed each of the questions to ask explicitly about how he created the hypertext poem. I hoped that a shared text would make it easier for us to discuss his writing practices.

Nate continued to be a challenge to interview via the blog although focusing on his poem allowed us to have a common text to discuss. He explained, "The way I work on a day-to-day basis is determined to a large extent by the formal constraints of the project, the nature of my collaboration (if the project is collaborative), and the physical location in which I'm writing, not to mention other things else I'm trying to avoid doing by writing." The back-and-forth writing in the blog gradually developed richer responses from both of us. Although I did not use his interview for this particular study, I do intend to use his interview data in future writing projects. I noticed as I interviewed Nate that he was working with a discourse that I wasn't not familiar with—that of gaming and gaming theory. I am familiar with hypertext terminology but not that associated with gaming theory. One of the reasons that Nate and I initially struggled to find

common ground was our search for common terminology. I would do a disservice to his contributions to my study if I attempted to write about him at this point.

While I was waiting for Nate's answers to the questions about his writing practices, one of the other contributors to the blog chimed in to answer the first set of questions I had asked. Alex (pseudonym) was also a graduate student at the same research university Nate attended. Alex's primary interests were in gaming and screen play writing. I added Alex to the list of participants and responded to his comments. Alex seemed to separate his screenplay writing from the writing that he did for games. He explained that comparing writing for print with writing for digital environments was "a bit like comparing apples and oranges." Alex is an avid filmmaker who writes games, digital comics, and some hypertext theory (See Appendix B-4). While I believe strongly that Alex has a great deal to offer as a participant, his time was so limited that I was unable to get additional interview/blog time from him. He had other writing commitments with immediate deadlines. Alex is someone I would like to interview as part of a future research project although I could not use him as part of this project because of the limited amount of text from him. Although what little I had from him is powerful, it needs to be fleshed out and expanded on to do him justice as a participant.

While I could take Nate and Alex's comments about writing hypertext out of the intended context to support my own ideas, it would not be ethical. If I do research into gaming theory, I will have richer understanding of how these participants define hypertext writing in broad contexts, how they see their work, and what they see as the future of hypertext writing. Interactive narrative in video games and hypertext fiction were competing discourses in the study.

Scott, Seth, and Steve. Scott, a graduate student who worked as a programmer for a computer software company, described himself as an avid gamer who worked to support his video game habit. Scott chose to be interviewed via email because he worked odd hours and found it easier to "communicate with the world asynchronously." He was working on his second hypertext fiction piece when we began our email correspondence. He was interested in writing and creating narrative for video games because "a good game, one that lasts beyond the first play, has to have a good story." After the first two email contacts, Scott had to withdraw from the study because of a new assignment at his work. Although he was unable to continue as a participant for this study, I see him as a strong participant for a future study. Like Nate and Alex, Scott's conversation is peppered with gaming terminology; perhaps future work with Nate and Alex will include Scott.

Seth, like Scott, was a programmer and avid gamer. He was particularly interested in online gaming environments (MOOS, MUDS, RTS, and MMORPG). Seth chose to be interviewed via email. From the beginning of the interview process, Seth was resistant to talking about his writing practices. He said, "I don't have writing process. I just do what I do." While I agree that he may not have a singular process, I struggled to get him to talk about what it was that he did do when he created hypertext pieces. I revised my questions and tried to get him to discuss his writing practices for particular pieces he wrote. He talked in-depth about programming but did not consider that writing because it wasn't what he had learned writing was in school. I am interested in his definition of writing and why he doesn't see programming as a type of writing. (Other participants in the study have discussed programming as writing.) Seth was extremely eloquent in his discussion of online gaming, particularly his participation in MMORPGs: massive multiplayer online role-playing games. Although Seth had published

several hypertext stories, he was more interested in writing for online game environments. While Seth did not withdraw from participation in the study, his answers to my email questions became shorter and shorter until he stopped answering at all. I felt that if I had been more conversant with the games he was playing, I might have found ways to ask more productive questions. I am interested in his explanation that he doesn't have a process. What does he think a writing process is? How does he describe what it is he does do? I think there is something here for future study. There were definitional issues at work here in our interview, but I didn't know how to get past those issues in the interview format.

Steve. Like Scott and Seth, Steve was a programmer. He chose to be interviewed via email as well explaining that he was awake "when the normal people were snoozing," so he tended to "keep in touch with friends and family" using email. Steve had written one hypertext before he went to work for a company that created video games. He explained that he spent his days writing code and stories. Steve did not have good experiences with writing in school and explained that he tended to avoid talking about what he did as writing. Like Nate, Alex, and Scott, Steve was interested in gaming narrative. Again, I felt at a loss as to how to connect with these writers. My lack of experience with and knowledge of games and gaming theory created a barrier in how we discussed writing. A study on the interactive narratives created for video games would be interesting to me. Several theorists (Ryan, 2001; Montfort, 2003) are already writing in this area and would be good resources. Although I find Steve's responses to be compelling, I did not choose to include him in this study because I do not feel adequately prepared to include gaming theory.

Beth. Beth (pseudonym) was an international hypertext theorist who wrote one of the seminal texts in hypertext theory. She enthusiastically agreed to be a participant in the study,

generously offering to do either email or phone interviews. We agreed to email interviews because of the difficulties of coordinating schedules across time zones. She talked extensively about her theorizing of hypertext but admitted that her work was entirely theoretical. She does not have experience creating a hypertext although she has been attached to several academic hypertexts in the early stages of their development. She has not used hypertext in her classroom nor does she think she will be able to do so as she has been moving more and more into administration at her university. We discussed the questions I was asking (as I was still stinging from Bob's critique of them) and looked for ways they could be expanded or reworked. Although her theoretical work has influenced my own tremendously, ultimately, we decided that she was not the type of participant I needed for this study. We met in person at a conference at a university in Great Britain in the fall of 2006. Beth did not look at all as I had pictured her. She was shorter than me and dressed elegantly in a brightly colored suit. Her red hair was streaked with silver and curled wildly. She was constantly in motion even while seated in the tightly packed conference room. In person, she was even more enthusiastic and generous with her time and praise. Initially, I believed Beth would fit in both the library research data and interview data sections of the study but found that she fit best in library research data.

Sarah. After Beth withdrew from the study, I contacted Sarah, another hypertext author to see if she would like to participate in the study. Sarah worked for a computer software company in addition to writing hypertext fiction. Initially, she seemed enthusiastic about being a participant. She chose to be interviewed via email, and this seemed problematic from the beginning. She was slow to respond to the questions. The answers that she did provide seemed thin, often only a word or two. I reworded the questions to make them less teacher-like, and this seemed to help for a while. She often answered only one of the questions in an email so I sent

her the questions two at a time rather than in a series as I had done for other participants. She finally just stopped responding to my emails. My impression is that she lost interest in being a participant and found it easier to ignore my emails rather than withdraw from the study. I am not sure why she became disenchanted with the study. Was it more work than she wanted to do? Did she get busy with her own projects? Did she, as another participant did, feel uncomfortable providing written answers to an English teacher?

These participants were not ultimately a part of the small author study I did to supplement my theoretical dissertation. Nate, Alex, Scott, and Steve were part of a different discourse that I was unable to adequately address within the context of my research questions. I also lacked the knowledge of gaming and gaming theory that I would need as a researcher in order to do justice to their interview data. I see their data as a site for future research. Additionally, I see a potential study in Seth and Sarah. I am interested in what causes someone to become disenchanted with a research study he or she has agreed to participate in; is it more likely for a participant to withdraw by inaction in text-based interviews?

Description of the Participants

In the course of gathering data, I found that in order to address my research questions in depth, I needed to focus on a smaller number of participants. I chose four of the participants from the original ten by a process of elimination in order to focus on how they talked about their writing practices as they moved from one medium to another. I was the fifth participant. The following criteria described the participants in this part of the study:

They were writers of print and hypertext fiction.

1. They were published writers of print and/or hypertext.
2. They had written about writing hypertext in either print or hypertext formats.

3. They were veteran teachers of English, composition, or Language Arts.

The participants were all Caucasian women in academia. This was not a purposeful sample; I did not set out to do a study with hypertext women writers nor did I intend to include only academics. While being in academia affords these women a certain power and status, they are also a minority in their fields. Several leading scholars in hypertext are women (Douglas, 2000; Malloy, 2003; Morgan, 2000; Murray, 1997; Ryan, 2001; Sloane, 2000; Snyder, 1996, 1998); however, the field of technology is dominated by white male programmers, theorists, and business owners.

These five participants were veteran teachers with ten or more years of experience in teaching print writing. They identified themselves as both teachers and writers. While they write hypertext fiction and poetry, they do not necessarily incorporate hypertext in their writing classrooms. Three of the participants hold doctorates in composition and rhetoric or English education; two are currently working on their doctorates in Language and Literacy Education. Of the five participants, three teach composition, rhetoric, or professional writing at the university level. The other two are currently graduate students who have taught writing, creative writing, or professional writing previously. These two participants intend to teach writing and teachers of writing and literacy in their future academic careers. Four of the participants have written academic articles or books about the writing of hypertext.

Three of the women were prominent in the hypertext field. One has published a leading text in hypertext theory. Two of these three participants have published fictions that are part of the hypertext canon. Although the participants had varying degrees of experience in writing hypertext, each had several print publications. Because of their backgrounds in teaching composition classes, these participants used similar terminology in their descriptions of writing

and the writing process. Although three of the participants teach writing or composition at the university level, they do not necessarily incorporate writing for digital environments into their classroom teaching. Their decisions not to include hypertext writing were based primarily on the requirements and expectations of the courses they teach.

Pseudonyms. Two of the three participants said they did not mind if I used their names rather than a pseudonym. The women who said this are prestigious scholars in the field of hypertext. I cite both their academic works and their interviews. Because of their dual role as participants in my study, I chose to use pseudonyms for them when I used their interview data. Two of the participants requested that I use a pseudonym. Using a pseudonym allowed me to keep my research log and writing journal separate, particularly in the hypertext version of the data. Using pseudonyms for the women who participated in my interview study and who are also women whom I cite for their published work on hypertext made it easier to keep their roles in my research separate.

I am a participant in this study. Because it was easier to write about myself using a pseudonym, I chose to do that. In order to maintain consistency with how I wrote about the other participants and their data, I wrote about myself as a participant in third person. My intent was not to hide myself among the participants, but rather to maintain a consistent writing voice. My dissertation is also written in a fairly conversational tone, and I use first person regularly when I discuss my library research, theory, and other data sources. Writing about my participant-self in the third person helped me as a writer.

Grace. I chose the pseudonym Grace for myself. I have taught writing at the middle school, high school, and college levels. I have had short print and poetry pieces published in various literary magazines. I worked for the Georgia Department of Education for three years

creating materials and lesson plans for middle school and high school language arts teachers. I wrote my first hypertext as part of this study using an off-the-shelf computer program. My work incorporates image, text, and movement. While writing the hypertext, I kept a writing journal detailing my process, issues, struggles, and celebrations.

Claire. Claire teaches college composition at a university in the western part of the United States and has published print and hypertext fiction and non-fiction. She designed the software she uses to construct her hypertexts. Of the five participants, she had the most experience in the field of hypertext and computer technology. While she teaches college composition, she also teaches workshops on writing hypertext. While the other participants have written hypertext fiction, Claire is the only one who has written full-length novels in hypertext format. Her work incorporates image, text, movement, and sound. Claire has been writing hypertext since 1985. She has published numerous articles on the writing of hypertext.

Claire chose to be interviewed via email because of the time difference between our locations. Claire, an active member of the hypertext community, was a generous scholar who agreed readily to a part of this study. While I have not seen her in person, I have heard an interview with her, and I have seen her picture on her Web page. She has dark, curly hair and a bright smile. In the interview I heard, she was articulate and enthusiastic. Her answers to the questions were thoughtful but often infused with laughter. She spoke of her family and her teaching. I had read one of her hypertext novels, several of her Web publications, listened to or read all of her online interviews, and read all of her academic articles before I contacted her for an interview. I found it easy to work with Claire; she answered the questions I asked promptly and thoughtfully. My only contacts with Claire were via email. She highlighted her experiences as both writer and teacher in her responses to my questions. She described several of her novels

in the course of her interviews but did not ask if I had read them. We briefly discussed our shared love of print reading.

Felicity. Felicity is a professional crime fiction novelist who teaches writing at creative writing workshops and writing pedagogy to preservice elementary teachers. While Felicity is well-known for her print novels, she has also written several fiction and poetry hypertexts. In addition to her work with preservice teachers, Felicity has served as an author-in-residence for a creative writing program. While she has had experience writing hypertexts, she worked with existing, off-the-shelf computer programs in their creation. Her work incorporates image, text, and movement.

I conducted three face-to-face interviews with Felicity as well as multiple email interactions. The first interview was in the crowded graduate student office she shared with two other graduate students. Because we are long-time friends, there was none of the usual awkwardness that occurs at the beginning of interviews. She sat comfortably in her desk chair with her leg propped up on a stool. She held her ever-present cup of coffee and made frequent eye contact as she answered my questions. She did not hesitate to ask for additional information if she didn't understand the questions. She also felt free to answer the question she thought I should be asking. Her answers were peppered with personal examples from her writing and her teaching. She frequently referenced scholars she knew we had both read.

Because of her serious coffee addiction, our second and third interviews occurred at a local coffee shop. She was late to the second interview because of a meeting at her youngest daughter's school. "Those darn IEP meetings," she explains as she slides into the chair across from me and digs into her purse for money for a large cup of coffee. We talked about her daughter and the meeting before we started the second interview. No doubt because of her

experiences at the meeting, she highlighted the limitations of text-only writing and expounded on the benefits of multimodal writing. The third interview occurred at the same coffee shop, but this time I was the one who was late. Felicity explained that our meeting was her third in a row for the day and that she was mentally exhausted. A student from my former life as a high school English teacher recognized me and came over to talk to me. After she left, I mentioned how I felt uncomfortable being "Mrs. Hundley" when I was in this college town. "I am a graduate student when I am here: I am not supposed to be that teacher in this place." Felicity compared the experience of being a published author at the same time she was also the mother of a daughter for whom words and reading were a struggle. This segued into our final interview. Any follow up questions I had were done via email.

Joy. Joy has taught college composition in several colleges and universities on the east coast. She is currently working on a print novel because she says "there's no money in trying to publish hypertext." Although she is one of the premiere people who have written about hypertext, she no longer works in this field; her reasons for this are primarily economic. She has published numerous books and articles on hypertext as well as several digital fictions. Her hypertext fiction incorporates text and movement. One of her works is in the emerging hypertext canon. I have read Joy's hypertext fictions as well as her book and her articles.

I conducted a phone interview with Joy. I was astounded by how fast she talked! I could barely get a question out during her brief pauses for breath. She worked with David Bolter and Michael Joyce in the early days of hypertext fiction and Storyspace. She told the story of meeting David Bolter in the late eighties, watching him demonstrate Storyspace, and then rushing out to upgrade her MAC so that she could begin using it. Once she worked with Storyspace and had an idea of what hypertext was capable of, she changed her college major

from film studies to education. She felt that she would have more freedom and more support in the education department to explore what she wanted to explore. Her dissertation became one of the seminal texts in hypertext theory. Unlike most of the theorists working in hypertext at the time, Joy focused on what hypertext does to reading rather than to writing. Like me, she thinks the two (reading and writing) are so tightly linked that they cannot really be separated.

Joy is tall with long dark hair. She is prone to wearing black clothes with dramatic scarves and dangling jewelry. She often speaks at conferences. I saw her speak at a conference several years ago; she was a dynamic, vibrant presence as she was speaking. She leaned on the side of the podium or walked from side-to-side on the stage. She is currently working on a print novel.

Kate. Kate has taught college composition for over ten years in several colleges in the northeast and Midwest. She, like Kate, is a pre-eminent hypertext scholar. She has published numerous articles on hypertext, participated in two large collaborative hypertext fiction experiments, and written several digital fictions. Kate describes herself as a visual artist first and as a writer second. Much of her academic writing is in the field of art and art studies. Her work includes co-authored hypertexts that use movement, image, and text.

Kate chose to be interviewed via email. Like Claire and Joy, Kate has a long history with hypertext. I have read her hypertext fictions as well as her academic articles. Kate often writes with a collaborator, and much of her work focuses on hypertext as a site for collaborative writing. We discussed the problems of collaborative work, particularly when someone else has the power to change your words. She had a similar experience to one that I had. In one of the hypertext experiments that she participated in, she had written a piece and posted it to the site. Another writer edited the piece and changed a section that Kate did not think needed changing.

Kate was upset because what the other writer had added was not as strong or as tightly written as what Kate had written. She said that it was an interesting experiment in writing but that it would be hard to duplicate. An early hypertext that she wrote with her writing partner is part of the hypertext canon. Kate is passionate about the blending of image and text and what that blending opens up for writing.

While Claire, Felicity, Joy, and Kate expressed confidence in their writing for print outlets, only Claire and Kate expressed both confidence in and commitment to writing hypertext fiction. Felicity and Grace expressed a commitment to using multimodal writing in their classroom and to bringing some of the characteristics of that kind of writing into their academic writing.

Limitations of the Study. The limitations of the author study portion of the research study became evident through the work. One of the things that I learned was that the world of hypertext fiction is larger and more complex than I originally conceived. My focus was on the types of fiction closest to what I knew as a reader of print fiction; I had not considered the multiple instantiations of hypertext fiction across other media. The interviews with people with whom I could not follow through set the stage for future research projects. The multiple instantiations of hypertext fiction (hypertext novels and poetry, digital movies, interactive games, online role-playing games) also caused me to wonder about the different practitioners. The participants in the author-study portion of this research project represent a limited perspective in terms of race, class, and gender; a study that focused on other hypertext authors or participants in one of the other instantiations of hypertext fiction would produce different identity category representations. However, though the participant sample was limited, these women offer a unique and valuable perspective on writing hypertext fiction.

On Email and Blog Interviews. After conducting the interviews for this study, I find that I do not like email or blog interviews as a form for gathering information. While both of these formats allow for the asynchronous gathering of information, they lose the intimacy of face-to-face, video, or phone interviews. I found the text-only format to be extremely limiting to me as an interviewer. I couldn't read the participant's body language, facial expressions, or tone of voice. Often, I didn't understand the questions the participants asked in response to my questions. While I may have provided information for them in emails, I had no way of knowing if they had read that part of the email. The only contact I had with them was written, and I wasn't sure how to get demographic information from them. So much of the race, class, and gender information that becomes part of what researchers include in their participant descriptions comes not from direct demographic questioning but rather from stories the participant tells, tangents the interview takes, and interviewer probes.

Another element that I noticed was missing from the blog and email interviews was the personal information that is usually dropped into oral interviews. The participants in the email and blog interviews offered fewer personal examples to illustrate their points; they also offered less personal information. When I was writing about Beth, I explained that she looked nothing like I had pictured her. I have no idea what the email and blog participants look like. Because I am active in several online communities where I have no idea what the other members look like, their gender, or their age, I didn't expect this lack of knowledge to bother me. It did, however. I found myself wanting the kind of interaction I had with the participants I interview in person or over the phone with these participants. I didn't feel that I knew the email and blog participants as well as I knew the participants that I interviewed orally. The idea that I know my participants at

all is an illusion, but it seemed that I knew less about the ones with whom I only had written communication.

As I thought about the interviews conducted in email or in blogs, I realized that I felt intensely the loss of visual or verbal cues in the interview and thought the interviews lacked the depth that the other interviews had. I don't have as much sense of personality of participants when I have not met them or talked to them. I am sure that there are ways to develop a relationship in written communication that approximates the kind of relationship developed in a more traditional interview format. Like writing for print or hypertext, interviewing in print or orally allowed for different kinds of answers and participation. In the future, I will spend more time in the initial emails getting to know my participants before I begin asking questions.

Both Seth and Sarah chose not to respond to my emails. As an interviewer, I find this to be challenging. In an oral interview, the interviewer can revise the questions in response to the interviewee's cues. In an email, there is little to cue the interviewer to how the participant is feeling, if something has upset her, if she is bored or uninterested in a particular series of questions, or if she is confused. Seth's participation in the study trickled away, and I don't know why. Sarah's participation was thin from the beginning, and it stopped abruptly in the midst of a series of questions. Again, I have no feedback about why their participation waned. In future studies, I will incorporate a feedback form to help alleviate this lack of knowledge.

While I appreciated not having to transcribe several hours of interviews, I found that I missed the analysis that occurred in the transcription process. Prior to the email interviews, I was excited by the idea that I wouldn't have to spend a great deal of time creating transcripts. I was surprised that I felt less invested in the text of the email and blog interviews; I hadn't done as

much interacting with the actual words of the emails and blogs. I saw these transcripts as print texts first while I saw the transcripts from the oral interviews as hypertexts first.

Data from Interviews and Self Study

As with most qualitative research projects, my data included interviews, fieldnotes, researcher's log, transcripts, and materials and artifacts from my participants.

Data hypertext. I created a hypertext containing the multiple data sources and my analyses. Due to confidentiality issues, I have chosen not to make this hypertext available to the public. I will provide screen shots of selected lexias in sections of this dissertation and in articles write in the future. This hypertext included the transcripts from all the interviews, writing journal, field notes, research blog, and research journal. This data is linked across the hypertext, following different lines of thought and associations. The hypertext that I created became data itself.

The hypertext also includes commentary on the links, the process of creating links across the multiple data sets, notes from the member checks, and my analyses. Because of the structure of the hypertext page, I entered comments on my initial analysis, links to information that either supported or contradicted the analysis, incorporated images and sound, and included links to external Web pages. Because I do not wish my data hypertext to be accessed by the public or tampered with by outside sources, I am housing it on my own server. As an added level of security, I have added a password that must be used in order to access the hypertext

Books and articles. In order to prepare for the author interviews, I read or reread books and articles by the participants in the author study portion of the research study. I read Joy's book, four of her online interviews, and eleven articles she wrote. I read two of Claire's hypertext novels, two of her online interviews, and four of her articles. I read Kate's hypertext fiction story

as well as three of her articles. I also explored a Web site that connects hypertext theory and feminist theory. The creators of this Web site cited Kate's work extensively. I read Felicity's four fiction novels as well as several conference papers.

Transcripts. I conducted multiple interviews with Claire, Felicity, Joy, and Kate. In my initial recruitment email, I offered multiple interview formats for the participants as an option. These interviews were semi-structured (Kvale, 1996) and lasted (on the phone or in person) one to two hours. Participants chose the format that best suited their schedules. Joy preferred a phone interview with follow-up questions via email. I audio-taped the telephone interview and transcribed the interview as soon as the interview was completed. I emailed her any follow-up or clarifying questions that I had. My emails to her and her responses became the follow-up interview transcript.

Both Claire and Kate chose to be interviewed via email. Claire's complicated schedule and a three-hour time difference between our locations made scheduling a telephone interview difficult. Kate preferred an email format for the questions and chose that rather than a phone interview. I emailed both the questions from the interview guide, and they emailed me their responses. I emailed back with any questions that I had, and they, in turn, responded. Email "allows asynchronous interviews one-to-one" (Mann & Stewart, 2003, p. 250) which means that we were able to use the question-answer format of traditional interviews but did not have to be in the same place at the same time. The back-and-forth of the emails became the transcript for these interviews. Because of the back-and-forth nature of an email interview, there is no distinguishing break between the initial interview and the follow-up interview.

I conducted interviews with Felicity at her office and a coffee shop. The interviews were audio-taped with her permission. I transcribed the interviews as soon as they were completed.

There were also email follow-up conversations that became part of a separate transcript. I had another graduate student interview me in my role as Grace.

I have two versions of every transcript: a hypertext transcript and a print transcript (See Appendix B-5). I interviewed Claire and Kate via email; I consider the multiple emails to be part of the same transcript. I have two email transcripts (one hypertext and one print) for Claire and Kate. I interviewed Joy on the telephone and asked follow-up questions via email. I have two transcripts for the phone interview and two email transcripts for Joy. I have six transcripts from Felicity's three face-to-face interviews as well as two email transcripts. I have two interview transcripts from Grace's interview. I worked with a total of eighteen transcripts for the author and self study portions of the study.

Writing Journal. Grace maintained a writing journal detailing her practices and problems as she composed her first hypertext fiction. This journal, as well as the hypertext fiction she created, became part of the data I examined. Grace's journal is approximately one hundred typed, single-spaced pages. There are sticky notes on many of the pages with comments or questions that she had about what she wrote. The writing journal focuses on the creating of the hypertext story and does not include explicit citation references to hypertext or writing theorists. The journal emphasizes Grace's struggles to adapt to writing in a digital environment. I included the full text of the writing journal in the research hypertext I created. I also excerpted specific sections of the journal and placed them in individual lexias.

Fieldnotes. For each of the interviews I conducted, I maintained a set of notes that detailed my preparation for the interview, any specific works of the author's that I might want to refer to, optional questions that I might want to ask, and my expectations from the interview. If the interview was a face-to-face interview, the fieldnotes included a brief description of the

interview location, a physical description of the participant, and notes about the conditions of the interview. The fieldnotes also include my reactions during the interview, comments that I scribbled in the margins, and the specific questions I asked. Additionally, the field notes include my response to the interview after it was completed, questions I wished I had asked, and readings that I thought connected with the interviews. Like Grace's journal, I included the full text of my fieldnotes, but I drew attention to specific segments when I excerpted them to individual lexias.

Data Analysis

I looked for similar themes, words or ideas that were repeated or were contradictory, and descriptions of the breakdown of habitual writing practices. As I was doing the analysis, I realized that what I was doing was looking for intersections and disjunctures. The print transcripts contained informal markups (highlighting, underlining, arrows, sticky notes, marginalia) while my hypertext transcript substituted linking for markups.

In the course of the interviews, I performed the initial purposeful analysis of the data. This analysis occurred in my interview field notes and marginal notes as I noted key ideas, comments that connected with the literature, issues that I wanted to pursue further, and resulted in my changing the interview guide to adapt to the interviewees. The second analysis occurred in the transcription of the interviews as a hypertext. I attempted to include my impressions of the interview, the connections I made while interviewing, the intersections with other participants and the literature on hypertext, and an initial linking of key words and phrases. I decided initially to transcribe the interviews using a hypertext format. As I transcribed the interviews; instead of focusing just on transcribing the words, I also included the connections I made while listening, the questions I wished I had asked, and the places where the participant's comments intersected with my research blog. This multi-focus work slowed down an already slow process but I felt

connected with the transcript in ways that I haven't when working with different transcripts. This added a layer of writing to a stage of research, and this writing helped me think differently about the data. Because I present my transcript as a hypertext, the reader can see the various notes, comments, connections, questions, and links I made as I created the transcript, which, in fact, is analysis. This allowed the reader to see as much or as little of the messiness of data analysis as she wanted to; the print transcript contains only the text of the interview. I have nine hypertext transcripts and nine conventional print transcripts (See Appendix B-5). The layers and layers of analysis are embedded in the hypertext transcripts while the layers of analysis for the conventional print transcripts are separate documents. Each layer of reflection and analysis of the print transcript becomes a separate print document.

As I looked at the hypertext transcript I created, I saw additional associations for my links and more connections that I found in my readings and writings. Of course, "found" is not the word I want to use here—I don't feel that I uncovered something that is hidden, some magic understanding. My hypertext transcript does not look like a "real" transcript; instead it looks like a web page with dynamic links that take me away from the data and then bring me back. I revisit and revision my transcript; data and analysis, analysis and data. I can't separate them nor do I want to; whatever separation I might make would be a false one. While this transcript does not feel as neat and contained as does my print transcript, it contains a wealth of data not included in the print transcript.

The email transcripts proved to be more difficult to interact with as my contact with the participants was limited to what was written on the page. In these transcripts, I included the follow-up questions as well as questions I should have asked. Follow-up questions in this format were different in tone from those in the oral interviews. I was less able to react to tone or

inflection; I was also less able to tell that a question might not have been clear. I emailed a print transcript of their interview to the participants who requested to see the transcripts. The participants who were part of the email interviews did not want to see the transcript "since it was already in the email inbox" on their computer. They made few changes to their transcripts. One of the participants made no changes to her transcripts but had issues with how I had interpreted one of her comments. We discussed the changes that she wanted to make and I included the revised version in my print write-up of the data. I thought the difference in interpretation reflected how meaning in an interview situation was "unstable and ambiguous" (Scheurich, 1995, p. 240).

Writing the research.

In my study I used reading and writing as a method of inquiry and analysis (Richardson, 2000). Richardson (2000) explained that when we use writing as a method of inquiry, "we experience 'language-in-use'" and we see how we "word" and "reword" our world (p. 923). I believe that something mysterious happens when I write, whether on page or screen; ideas come together, readings coalesce, *something* occurs and I write ideas that are unexpected. I *word* and *reword* my world in ways that are mysterious and unpredictable. Murray (1996) described writing "as an experimental act"; he also said that in "the search for meaning, the writer—the artist, the actor, and the scientist—proceeds by trial and error" (p. 136). He wrote about writing as the search for meaning and suggested meaning comes through experimentation. This is the idea that I have been schooled by—writing *means*. It captures, it collects, it holds, it reproduces. St. Pierre (2005) asks "what else might writing do but mean?" (p. 2) What else might writing research do? Hypertext provides a format for me to experiment.

I read and reread both the print and hypertext versions of the transcripts. On the print version of the transcripts, I highlighted key words and phrases. I created a chart that listed participants and key words. I focused on the connections between the participants. I added marginal notes in the print transcripts. As I did a close reading of the print transcripts, I felt that I progressed through the text, a forward motion from beginning to end. As I analyzed the data from these transcripts, I noticed that I was working to smooth the edges, to find similarities and to downplay differences and contradictions. That observation became a topic for a research blog entry. In the multiple readings of the hypertext, I found that I was unable to accomplish the close reading as I had in the print transcripts. While I might read the same lexia multiple times in my rereadings, it was in a different "place" in my text and, therefore, in a different context in each reading. Each reading of the hypertext was a new one. This hypertext became a site for analysis. In each version of the transcript, I looked for themes and for recurring big ideas that addressed the research questions.

After my initial analysis of the interview and self study data, I focused on three particular strands: comments on the medium and what it affords for writing, resistance to linearity, and revisions to the definition of story. The medium used to tell the story affected how the story could be told. Changing the medium seemed to change the writing practices the participants used to create and structure the story. Hypertext as a medium for storytelling resists the pull to linearity that seems common in print. The participants described their final products in terms that are strikingly different from the terms used to describe print products. These particular themes occurred not only in the participant data but also in the current body of literature about hypertext (Bolter, 1991a, 1991b, 1992, 1999, 2003; Douglas, 2000; Joyce, 1988, 1990, 1995, 2000; Landow, 1992, 1994, 1997, 2006; Moulthrop, 1987, 1989, 1994, 1995; Morgan, 2000; Murray,

1997). The first theme, how the medium causes the rethinking of structural options as a writer, focused on how the medium in which the story was to be constructed and read shaped how the writer thought about text. For example, the participants discussed how the medium in which they were working influenced how they thought about plot structure, i.e., beginnings, middles, closure, tension. This theme focused on the functional parts of writing. The second theme, resistance to linearity, is tied to structure but draws attention to a reader's expectations of text and how the writer is influenced by that. The third theme, the writer's redefining of the product she created, focuses on how the five participants reconceived or redefined story to make it work for the digital environment. I focus on the first theme, how the medium affects the writing, and the second theme, resistance to linearity, in chapter three and the third theme, a new definition of the product, in chapter four.

Appendix C-1

Email Solicitation Letter

Dear (enter participant name here):

My name is Melanie Hundley and I am interested in talking to you about your print and hypertext writing practices. A portion of my dissertation research focuses on the composing practices of authors who have written both print and hypertext. My major professor is Dr. Mark Faust in the Department of Language and Literacy Education at the University of Georgia.

Before studying at UGA, I was a high school and middle school English teacher for twelve years. The technology boom of the 1990s played out in interesting ways in school classrooms; both teachers and students were encouraged to use computers as word processing or presentation tools. However, this focus on computers as a publishing tool did not take into account its potential as a composition tool—as a tool that could be used for the reading and creation of new kinds of texts. My students were avid consumers of various types of computer texts—Web pages, emails, Internet movies, blogs, newsgroups, gaming groups—and were beginning to compose specifically for these environments.

My experiences with students composing texts for the screen rather than the page and my own experiences as a writer attempting different composition mediums provided me with the impetus to study the composition practices of authors who have published in both print and hypertext.

With this letter, I am asking whether you would consider being part of my study to investigate how authors compose for print and screen. I am interested in your composing process for these media. Some of the questions that I'm interested in asking you are the following: How did you become involved in writing print or hypertext? What is your process for constructing a

print piece? What is your process for constructing a hypertext piece? What limitations do you see for print? What limitations to you see for hypertext? I plan to use these questions to investigate how writers think about and compare their writing processes in print and hypertext.

If you would be willing to participate in this study, I would like to schedule a one hour interview with you between March and May 2006. I can meet with you in person or call you on the phone at a time that is convenient for you. If you would prefer, I could also correspond with you via email or Internet chat. Would you respond to this email to let me know (1) whether you are willing to participate in this study and (2) if so, could you email me several dates and times that are convenient for you? If you have any questions that I can answer, please email me and I'll get back to you right away. If you would like to call me, my phone number is (770) 466-2799.

I appreciate your considering my request.

Sincerely,

Melanie Hundley
Doctoral Candidate
University of Georgia
Department of Language and Literacy Education

Appendix C-2

Interview Guide

Page to Screen: Reading and Writing Hypertext

Initial Interview Questions

- Tell me about your experiences writing print texts. How did you first get involved in writing in this medium?
- Describe your writing process for a print piece. (Follow up questions may include questions about conceiving the piece, audience, tone, voice, plot, linearity, and tension.)
- Describe any limitations that you see in this format.
- Tell me what you think the future of print is—both in general, and for you, specifically.
- Tell me about your experiences writing hypertexts. How did you first get involved in writing in this medium?
- Describe your process for writing a hypertext piece. (Follow up questions may include questions about conceiving the piece, audience, tone, voice, plot, linearity, and tension.)
- Describe the changes composing for the screen rather than the page made in your process. (Follow up questions may include questions about the tendency of hypertext authors to include theory or metanarratives about composing in their hypertexts.)
- Describe any limitations that you see in the hypertext format.
- Tell me what you think the future of hypertext is—both in general, and for you, specifically. How do you see yourself using this medium in the future?
- Is there anything that we haven't talked about that you would like to add?

Appendix C-3

Participant Summary Chart

*For confidentiality purposes, I have removed the two columns that provide the names of and contact information for the author.

Pseudonym	Initial contact	Preference for future contact	Contact / formats	Notes
Abe	1/23/06 initial email sent 2/15/06 second email sent	*no response to initial email *no response to second email	Initial contacts only	Male Hypertext author Graduate student at major research university
Alex	No initial email sent, part of blog interview with Nate	Blog interview	Blog contacts only	Male Graduate student at major technology university Graphic artist, screen play writer, hypertext author (not formally published)
Amy	1/23/06 initial email sent 2/15/06 second email sent	*no response to initial email *no response to second email	Initial contacts only	Female Asian American hypertext author
Ann	1/23/06 initial email sent 2/15/06 second email sent	*no response to initial email *no response to second email	Initial contacts only	Female University professor, hypertext theorist Works frequently with Kate (pseudonym)
Ben	1/23/06 initial email sent 2/15/06 second email sent	*no response to initial email *no response to second email	Initial contacts only	Male University professor, hypertext theorist
Beth	1/23/06 initial email sent 1/26/06 follow-email with questions 10/3/06 met at conference	*prefers email interview	Initial contact, follow up email, met at conference	Female University professor, wrote seminal text in hypertext International scholar Explains that her work is theoretical, she has no experience actually writing or creating hypertext so questions are difficult for her to answer. Theoretical work is very strong. Excited about my work ☺

Bob	1/23/06 initial email sent 1/26/06 response email sent 2/4/06 response email sent	*decided not to pursue this contact		Male University professor at major research university Wrote seminal texts on hypertext, leading theorist Uses hypertext in classes with students, examples on web "Read my book." Didn't like my questions, suggested that I read his book because he has answered those questions already in his text. Suggested I revise my questions. I explained that I had read his books—all of them—and he didn't seem to believe me. Not going to pursue this contact due to concern about being able to "prove" my scholarship to him. How many hoops would I have to jump through to prove that I had read his work? I will pursue an interview with him at a later time; I am very interested in how he uses hypertext in his classroom.
Claire	1/23/06 initial email sent	Prefers email interview, send questions		Female University professor High profile hypertext author, writes hypertext novels Writes her own computer programs
Felicity	1/23/06 initial email sent	Prefers face-to-face interview, follow up questions via email		Female Graduate student at major southeastern university Crime fiction novelist, hypertext author,Writing workshops, WP instructor, graduate instructor

Grace	Self Study Participant	Initial interview performed by graduate student, follow up questions in writing journal		Female Graduate student at major southeastern university Published poet Classroom teacher, graduate instructor, worked with university WP Self study Wrote first hypertext as part of study
Joy	1/23/06 initial email sent	Phone interview Follow up questions via email		Female University professor in Southeast Teaches writing to medical researchers Wrote seminal text in hypertext theory, focuses on reading rather than writing of hypertext, however, sees them strongly linked
Karen	1/23/06 initial email sent 2/15/06 second email sent	*no response to initial email *no response to second email		Female Asian American hypertext author
Kate	1/23/06 initial email sent	Prefers email interview Answered initial email questions then was too busy to do follow ups		Female Artist & hypertext theorists One of her hypertext part of the emerging canon
Keith	1/23/06 initial email sent 2/15/06 second email sent	*no response to initial email *response to second email		Male International hypertext scholar & author Unable to participate due to time constraints, appreciated the request but not able to do this at this time.

Ken	1/23/06 initial email sent	*unable to participate		Male University professor, theorists Would like to participate; however, due to publishing, speaking, and teaching commitments is unable to do so. Recommended one of his graduate students as a replacement. His graduate student is a writer/theorists I am already familiar with.
Leigh	1/23/06 initial email sent 2/15/06	*no response to initial email *no response to second email		Female Graphic Artist & hypertext author
Lynn	1/23/06 initial email sent 2/15/06 second email sent	*no response to initial email *no response to second email		Female Hypertext author & scholar Focus on hypertext, cyborg, & feminism *Although no response to the contacts for this interview, I want to pursue an interview with this scholar at a later time perhaps for a different study. Her work focuses on the need to re-imagine what writing is and who writers are.
Nate	3/23/06 initial email sent	Prefers to do the interview on blog shared with several other hypertext writers/theorists		Male Recommended by Ken. One of Ken's graduate students. Graduate student at major technology university Nate has edited two major books on hypertext. Some concerns about blog interview. Will see what happens.

Sarah	3/23/06 initial email sent 3/35/06 follow-up email with questions 4/16/06 revised questions sent 4/20/06 follow up email sent	*prefers email interview		Female Hypertext author, lots of images Quick initial response to email but slow response to questions. Reworded questions for her so that the questions sounded less "teacher-y." Ultimately did not use Sarah as participant. I think the problem lies in my questions and the email format chosen for interview. Her answers were thin; in a face-to-face interview I might have been able to respond to her visual and verbal cues in order to get richer responses from her.
Scott	3/30/06 initial email sent 3/26/06 email sent with questions	*Prefers email interview		Male Programmer, hypertext author, gamer Unable to continue participation in study due to work schedule.
Seth	3/23/06 initial email sent 3/29/06 email sent with questions	*Prefers email interview		Male Programmer, hypertext author, artist, gamer Interested in on-line gaming, discusses writing for the role-playing games that he participates in Seth would be an excellent participant for a study that focuses on on-line gaming. He is extremely eloquent as he discusses virtual worlds. He was less interested in talking about the writing he did for the creation of the worlds than in talking about the worlds themselves.

Steve	3/23/06 initial email sent 3/26/06 email sent with questions	*Prefers email interview		Male Programmer, hypertext author, gamer Interested primarily in gaming, writes the narrative for video games While I did not use Steve for this study, I think that the area of narrative and gaming is ripe for study. Several hypertext theorists write extensively about gaming and gaming narrative. This is not currently an area of interest for me.

Appendix C-4

Sample from Alex's Blog Response

Q. Describe the changes composing for the screen rather than the page made in your process.

(Alex) Writing for AI-based characters is a combination of building a machine (programming) that manipulates text, e.g., character dialog and descriptive behavior, and then writing a massive collection of bits of dialog and behavior that the machine uses to create a coherent experience for the reader/player. Often I write a sample fixed, extended text of the output, including sample player interactions, that I wish the experience to potentially be like. That is, I write several "sample traces" of what interacting with these AI-based characters could be like. Then I deconstruct that sample trace, trying to understand what the machine would need to be doing to generate such a trace. The final system may not actually be able to exactly produce the sample traces I started from, but it can create something similar, with many variations not originally in those sample traces.

Q. Describe any limitations that you see in the hypertext format.

(Alex) I'll refer you to one of my first blog posts, from 3 years ago, *I Can't Get No Satisfaction,* for my feelings on the limitations of hypertext itself. As for the limitations of AI-based characters, they are enormous, at least from the reader/player's perspective, because you raise your expectation level so high for what such characters should be able to understand and say. However I prefer the tradeoff of a much richer interface (e.g. natural language) that doesn't always fulfill one's expectations, versus a highly restricted interface of clicking a few links per lexia.

Appendix C-5

Transcript List

Participant	Transcript Type	Hypertext Version	Print Version	Total Number
Claire	Email	1 Hypertext Transcript	1 Print Version	2
Kate	Email	1 Hypertext Transcript	1 Print Version	2
Joy	Phone Interview	1 Hypertext Transcript	1 Print Version	2
	Email	1 Hypertext Transcript	1 Print Version	2
Felicity	3 Interviews face-to-face	3 Hypertext Transcript	3 Print Version	6
	Email	1 Hypertext Transcript	1 Print Version	2
Grace	Interview face-to-face	1 Hypertext Transcript	1 Print Version	2
Total number of transcripst				18

Appendix D

Elton's Story, The Bard on the Porch

In small southern towns, it is a common notion that big and dangerous things happen at the crossroads. Mothers warn their children not to walk the crossroads on moonless nights, and the warning not to talk to strangers is often followed by the addition "especially ones met at the crossroads." There is something mythical, magical about the intersection of four roads. Robert Johnson, a Blues musician from the Mississippi Delta, is said to have sold his soul to the Devil at the crossroads. In exchange for his soul, he received incredible musical talent and an impressive, if dangerous, talent for attracting women. Luring the wrong woman got him poisoned by her jealous husband. Another Blues musician, Tommy Johnson, told stories about how he met a mysterious stranger who tuned his guitar for him at the crossroads. The idea that someone could meet a stranger at the junction of four roads and have his or her life changed forever occurs in my own family's stories.

I first heard the story of Aunt Ossie and the crossroads when I was a teen.

Thirteen of us sat on the porch after supper: Grandpa, his sisters Alice and Alma, Grandma, Aunt Geri, Mama, Daddy, Uncle Harrison and his wife Willa Jean, Aunt Sis and her husband Nob, Brother Jack, and me. It was a perfect night for storytelling. The air was crisp but not cold; it was cool enough to keep the bugs away but not so cool that anyone needed a sweater. Grandpa lit a pipe with a match he had struck against the heel of his boot and began to tell the story of how his sister, Ossie, met up with three witches at the crossroads and lost her first-born son. Another version of the story followed his. Another and another until the night was full of this the story—multiple stories, fabrications, makings. All true, all lies.

This is my retelling of Elton's story. The rhythms of the oral tale don't transition smoothly to print—in my head, I hear their voices. Slow and deep and musical.

The Story

My grandpa's sister, Ossie, and her three-year-old son, Elton, often walked from their farm on the Bartow road to the Rowland farm. They sang songs to pass the time on the five mile walk. Even at three, Elton's voice was strong and beautiful. He and Ossie often sang at Sunday services at Gum Creek Baptist Church. Elton was as beautiful as he was talented possessing golden ringlets, dimples, and bright blue eyes. Grandma described him as looking "like a storybook angel." Ossie's husband traveled a great deal on business; when he was gone, Ossie and Elton stayed with my grandpa and grandma. To get to the Rowland farm, they had to cross

the intersection of four roads. One day in late September, Ossie and Elton were late starting out on their walk to her brother's farm and so they arrived at the crossroads at early twilight. A tall, dark-haired woman holding a basket and a cat stood on Ossie's left. "Evenin'" she said.

"Evenin'" Ossie replied leaning down to pick up Elton. Even though it wasn't the dark of night, something about this woman made her uncomfortable. Elton continued singing even though his mama no longer joined in.

"Beautiful boy you got there." The woman said rubbing her chin across the top of her cat's head. Ossie realized that the woman and the cat had the same yellow-gold eyes.

"Thank you." Ossie moved to go around the woman and continue on to my grandpa's farm.

"Would you give him to me? I have always wanted a son."

Shocked, Ossie said 'no' and hurried on to her brother's house. Each time she turned to look behind her, she could see the woman and the cat. The closer she got to the house, the sillier she felt for panicking. She relayed the details of what happened over supper. Grandma tucked Elton into bed with her youngest child, Harrison, and said an extra prayer asking the Lord to protect the children. She said that same prayer at all of the entrances to the room where the children were sleeping. She carefully placed her Bible in front of the window that faced the crossroads. Grandpa and Ossie laughed at her for her actions. Grandma said that nothing good had ever come of a meeting at the crossroads. That night a storm blew in and tore up several trees. When the adults got up the next morning to check the damage, they found that an oak tree had just missed crashing into the window of the room where the boys slept. Years later, Grandma and Grandpa told in whispers how the tree had been on a straight path for the window, and it looked as though it had been wrenched away by a mighty hand.

For almost a year, Ossie was careful not to walk the crossroads at twilight. Each time that she and Elton walked from her home to my grandpa's home, she felt a little safer until she couldn't even remember why she had been scared; the woman, the cat, and the storm were forgotten.

On a beautiful Saturday in late September, Ossie and Elton set out to walk to my grandpa's farm. They were going to spend the night with my grandparents and then ride with them to the Revival over at Kite where Ossie and Elton were intending to sing. About a half a mile from her home, Ossie realized she had forgotten her Sunday-go-to-meeting clothes and she and Elton hurried back. The delay cost them an hour or so of daylight and so it was early twilight when they approached the crossroads practicing the songs they were going to sing come Sunday morning.

Two tall, dark-haired women stood at the intersection of the roads holding baskets. One held a cat and the other held a large toad. "Evenin'" they said.

"Evenin'" Ossie replied leaning down to pick up Elton.

"Beautiful boy you got there." The woman said rubbing her chin across the top of her cat's head.

"Talented boy you got there." The other woman said. The toad croaked in agreement.

"Would you give him to us? Sister has always wanted a son." The woman with the toad asked. Ossie shook her head and hugged Elton closer.

The woman with the cat said, "It would be better for him if he came to live with us." Ossie whispered a prayer and hurried past the women. Each time she turned to look behind her, she could see the women, the toad and the cat. The closer she got to the house though, the sillier she felt for panicking. She relayed the details of what happened over supper.

Grandma tucked Elton into bed with her youngest child. Again, she said a prayer at the entrances to the room where the children were sleeping and placed her Bible in front of the window that faced the crossroads. That night a storm blew in and tore up several trees. When the adults got up the next morning to check the damage, they found that an old plow had just missed crashing into the window of the room where the boys slept. Years later, Grandma and Grandpa told in whispers how the plow had been left in the field closest to the crossroads and shouldn't have been anywhere near the house.

For almost a year, Ossie prayed every morning and every night. For almost a year, Ossie was careful not to walk the crossroads at twilight or at night. Each time that she and Elton walked from her home to my grandpa's home, she felt a little safer until she couldn't even remember why she had been scared; the women, the cat, the toad, and the storm were forgotten.

On a beautiful afternoon in late September, Ossie and Elton set out to walk to my grandpa's farm. My grandma was having a baby and Ossie was going to help around the house by cooking, cleaning, and tending to the other children. About half a mile or so from her home, Ossie realized that she had left the basket of canned vegetables that she had put together for grandma's laying-in gift at home. She and Elton hurried home, grabbed the basket, and headed back down the road to my grandpa's farm. Elton practiced a new song he had learned; he intended to sing it for his new baby cousin and his Aunt Evelyn. It was early twilight when they finally reached the crossroads. Just past the intersection, Ossie could see the lights of my grandma's kitchen. Ossie looked around and did not see anyone. She took a deep breath and stepped into the intersection of the four roads. An eerie wind whispered through the trees; Ossie began a prayer but before she could get to "Amen," the wind settled and she heard a voice call her name. She turned.

Three tall women stood beside large baskets on Ossie's left. One held a cat in her arms, another held a large toad, and the third rested her long fingers on the head of a huge black dog. "Evenin'" they said.

"Evenin'" Ossie replied leaning down to pick up Elton. At six, he was almost too big to tote especially since she also carried the basket for grandma.

"Beautiful boy you got there." The woman said rubbing her chin across the top of her cat's head. Ossie again noticed that the woman and the cat had the same yellow-gold eyes.

"Talented boy you got there." The other woman said. The toad croaked in agreement.

"Thank you." Ossie whispered.

"Be a shame to lose him." The third said.

"Yes, it would." Ossie turned toward my grandfather's farm. She concentrated on the light in my grandma's kitchen window.

"Would you give him to us? Sister has always wanted a son." The woman with the toad asked. Ossie shook her head and hugged Elton closer.

The woman with the cat said, "It would be better for him if he came to live with us." Ossie whispered a prayer against the threat. She concentrated on the light in the kitchen window.

"Sister has always wanted a son." The third woman said as she moved and blocked the view of the window. Ossie watched as thin white fingers stroked the black dog's head.

"She can't have mine." Ossie said hugging her child tighter. The woman moved her hand from the top of the dog's head. He circled Ossie and Elton three times and walked back to the woman.

"It is done, Sisters." Ossie ran toward the protection of the house. Behind her she could hear the whispered chanting of the three women. As she stepped onto grandpa's porch, she heard

the howl of a large dog. She relayed the details of what happened over the supper she fixed for Grandpa and the children. Grandma and the midwife were in the back room of the house

Ossie tucked Elton into bed with her youngest nephew, Harrison, and said an extra prayer asking the Lord to protect the children. She waited with Grandpa while Grandma labored to give birth to a daughter. During the night, a storm blew in and tore up several trees around the house. The sound of shattering glass sent the adults running into the room where the boys slept. Although a piece of fence rail had shattered the window, none of the glass had landed on the boys. Grandpa snatched up his son checking for scratches and bruises. Ossie snatched up her son and as she hugged him close to her, she heard a strange croaking sound. Elton opened his mouth and out came a tiny toad.

After that night, Elton no longer sang songs. He grew thin and pale and dark. His bright blue eyes faded to a dull gray. He died in early twilight on an evening in late September when he was nine years old, a faded shadow of the boy he had been. Ossie blamed herself; although she had said a prayer for the children's protection, she had not said it at all the entrances to the room and, most of all, she had not placed a Bible in front of the window facing the crossroads.

Years later, Grandma and Grandpa told in whispers about how the only damage done to the house had been to the window of the room where the boys slept. They talked about how Ossie and her husband had spent three years going to churches, faith healings, and conjure women trying to find a cure for their son who once had the voice and appearance of an angel.