

Chapter Two

Faculty Talk About Their Writing, Disciplines, and Alternatives

When I was at UVA the best I could hope was that nobody would hold my Smithsonian writing against me, that they'd say 'Oh, he's still doing regular physics, so this popular writing is no worse a hobby than building furniture in his basement.'

—JAMES TREFIL, PHYSICS

When we began our research with faculty in spring 2001, we wondered how readily our informants could answer questions about the conventions of and expectations for writing in their disciplines. Had they given explicit prior thought to the concept? Were they, as David Russell postulates, so imbued with the idea of the “transparency” (2002, 10) of writing in research fields that they did not recognize the rhetorical peculiarities of discourse in their own disciplines? We were in fact doubtful that scholars from outside rhetoric and composition, which studies such differences, would readily respond to our queries about “alternative discourses.”

We need not have doubted. While certainly not all our informants could speak with equal facility about nuances of the discourses they used or that they felt were standard in their fields, none hesitated to answer our questions, and all spoke thoughtfully. Their comments about their own writing and writing in their fields revealed a fairly sophisticated level of rhetorical knowledge, particularly given that we were trying to keep the interviews manageable in terms of the informants' time and we had many topics to cover. To some extent, their rhetorical awareness may be the result of our selection process: all our informants (except one) have written with sufficient success in

their fields to achieve tenure in a research university, and we chose several who have had writing success with popular as well as academic audiences. Moreover, many of our informants had taken part in WAC faculty development workshops and/or had written for our program newsletter, so we knew they had reflected on the characteristics of student writing and how to teach students to write in major courses, undergraduate and graduate.

We did not predict—but were not surprised—when their answers revealed significant differences among them in a range of categories:

- Sense of disciplines and of standards and expectations for writing in them
- Range of allowed alternatives for scholarly writing in their chosen fields
- Their own practice (and confidence) in writing “alternatively”
- Sense of objectives for student writing
- Assignments to students
- Responses to student writing
- How they deal with “alternative” writing from students

The differences in their responses were sometimes stark, but more often subtle; some responses they rationalized in terms of what they perceived to be disciplinary or academic norms, but many were based on their individual or local institutional situations—their own desires as writers or the shape of a program in which they taught. Their answers reveal tensions between perceived norms, what they want to write vs. what they actually write, and what they think students need to write.

In this chapter, we report the results of our research with faculty, focusing on the ways in which our faculty informants talked about the writing conventions and expectations in their chosen fields. We devote considerable space to their thoughts on the range of alternatives possible for scholar-writers, with special focus on several faculty who wrestle with their own places in the dynamic of changing expectations in their fields. Next we turn to those informants who—for different reasons and with varying emotions—have embarked on writing that they know falls outside academic conventions. We report their motives, experiences, speculations, and assessments.

Our presentation of findings is conditioned by the extended definitions of key terms—“academic writing,” “alternative discourses,” “disciplines,” and “genres”—from Chapter One. For example, when we refer to “alternatives,” we would expect the reader to keep in mind the taxonomy of alternatives offered in Chapter One as well as the distinction between “alternative” as “departure from a standard” and “alternative” as “one among several roughly equal options.” Also instrumental is our discussion

of the tension between reason and emotion/sensation in academic prose. Overall, our extended definitions and our review of several research traditions in the introductory chapter are intended to broaden the meanings of the terms and highlight areas of debate. We see the informant data, in this chapter and the ones that follow, as helping to clarify issues while also enriching the concepts.

We began our interviews by asking informants to define their disciplines and the “standards, conventions, and expectations” for writing in them. Our next group of questions concerned what the informants perceived as alternatives to those discourse standards and conventions.

Disciplinary Names

In Chapter One we put forward the idea of a “discipline” as dynamic and heavily nuanced; we suggested that departmental names, though often used in WAC research as synonymous with disciplines, are not sufficient to address the multiple contextual factors that scholarly writers face. We asked informants to name their disciplines in order to contextualize their comments about standards and the scope of the scholarly audience they were addressing. As we anticipated, their responses did not follow a predictable pattern.

Struppa (mathematics), R. Smith (psychology), Rader (sociology), Bergoffen (philosophy), Sorrell (nursing), Miller (dance), Williams (economics), Lancaster (anthropology), Regan (political science), and Copelman (history) consistently used the familiar names of these fields to identify the disciplinary framework of their comments.

But when some informants elaborated, more specific research fields emerged. For example, Struppa, although consistently identifying himself as a mathematician, repeatedly talked about writing in “my field,” by which he meant differential equations. This distinction became crucial when he spoke about different styles and audiences in mathematical writing. Regan, although naming her discipline “political science,” said she could identify 40 distinct branches of the field, each with its own journals and standards, and saw her own work as “technology studies,” distinct, say, from “policy studies.” Jones, who chairs a new department of environmental science, variously spoke of himself as an “ecologist,” “biologist,” and “scientist.” L. Smith, with an M.F.A. in poetry, a Ph.D. in history, and a tenure-line appointment in an interdisciplinary degree program, initially named “history” as her dominant discipline, since “my training in history has taught me to contextualize all my ideas and make connections”; but as she spoke she reconsidered. “If I have to identify a discipline, I’d say it’s ‘writing,’ because it’s not only what I do, but also what I conceptualize about.”

We could have added, even though she didn't say, that multimedia design may be her primary field, since this is what she does: she teaches such courses as "writing in multimedia" and "information in the digital age" and edits an online teaching journal. Clark was the only one of our informants who named a specific research field—literature and African American studies—rather than "English," his department, to define his discipline. Trefil was the only other exception in that he used a broader-than-departmental term to name his discipline. Though tenured as a physicist, he consistently spoke of himself as a "scientist."

Standards and Conventions

As happened when they named their disciplines, our informants initially responded to our questions about standards and conventions by describing expectations for writing in rather broad and imprecise terms. These terms tended to match the general features of academic writing we outlined in Chapter One. As informants elaborated on those expectations, however, especially in reference to their own writing, their responses became more nuanced and particular, reflecting, in many cases, distinctions between form/format and the way genre emerges based on exigence. And, as we will show in the next section on allowed alternatives, some interesting variations emerged.

In their initial responses, most of our informants easily identified standards for writing in their fields and ticked off a few general features—"clear," "logical," "reasoned and linear"—that roughly match the model we present in Chapter One. As L. Smith quipped, "You have to show off in the beginning that you've read the relevant literature, explain how you're different, and then it's just simply a matter of writing out your analysis bit by bit." The most precise among them, Struppa, provided in conversation what he called a "template" for the typical article in mathematics, "regardless of field":

So you say, "As is well-known, this such and such a topic is interesting, so and so has said this and these other guys have worked on it, and these couple of questions remain open. In this paper, we try to apply this theory to solve this thing." This is almost a template. Then you go to definition one, say a couple of words, give an example, say some more words, go to the theorem. So language is really very, very minimal.

In his initial remarks, Lancaster gave an even more simple definition of the "typical ethnography" in anthropology: "seven to eight chapters, brief intro and conclusion, recognizable rubrics—kinship, etc." Jones made passing reference to the well-known arrangement of the experimental lab report: "methods, findings, and all that," and noted its stylistic features:

“terse, compact, lots of numbers, jargon—very technical.” Sorrell’s reference to the “early” paradigm for articles in nursing was judgmental, as well as descriptive—“deadly boring, no first person, template—methods, findings, favors experiments.”

Other informants spoke to certain approaches or procedures, rather than formats or arrangements, that they considered standard. R. Smith several times noted “data-driven” as the generic motive in writing in psychology, regardless of specialty. Copelman, by way of contrasting standard history writing with a newer approach that we describe below, gave this explanation, “. . . at the heart of historical writing is the notion that you have a problem on the one hand and a question, something that you’re testing and investigating, on the other hand, and you bring to it some evidence.” Also in contrast to the work she is currently doing, Bergoffen noted that traditional philosophical writing makes “no appeal to emotion”; the emphasis is on logic—“this follows from that.”

A few of our informants did not even attempt to find a single, dominant paradigm. Regan, whom we’ve already mentioned, is one. Miller stated that dance has no academic tradition of writing, and that her voluminous writing as a teacher, choreographer, and administrator was a constant effort to “adapt” dance to the written word for diverse audiences that had little knowledge of the field and that in some cases were hostile to it. Multimedia theoretician/teacher/designer L. Smith reacted to our questions about convention with a laugh. In her field, standards are constantly evolving with advances in technology, and conventions are rapidly formed and then disappear. Perhaps the convention is anticonvention. “I’m always thinking about new possibilities. I don’t push my students to strive for what is, but to imagine what never was, but could be.” Nevertheless, she was also careful to note “precision,” “making every word count,” and “contextualizing” as goals in all her work.

Disciplinary vs. Academic Standards

To the limited extent that these faculty named dominant conventions of approach, arrangement, and style in their fields, their comments for the most part confirmed our general definition of academic discourse, as described in Chapter One. That one standard is careful, thorough study respecting the precedents of past researchers was illustrated by all our informants: such terms as “evidence,” “beginning with the text,” “data-driven,” “rigorous,” “contextualizing,” and “footnotes” typified their language. Williams’s frequent mention of “the King’s English” as a standard for writing in economics illustrates particularly sharply this academic drive to precision and to respect precedent. Indeed, respect for discipline and careful study characterizes not

only those discourses and methods that our informants named as dominant or traditional, but the many alternatives that they also identified, as we'll detail below. For example, although Regan mentioned that there were 40 distinct subfields of political science, each differing rhetorically, she characterized all of them as stressing "good scholarly writing": clear, hypothesis-based, and logically and systematically argued.

Moreover, our informants thoroughly corroborated in their answers our principle regarding audience: that academic writing presupposes a skeptical, coolly rational readership whose objections should be anticipated. In describing their own writing histories, the faculty frequently mentioned both the reception of their work by fellow scholars and their anxieties about response. For example, Bergoffen told the story of how her paper on theories of deconstruction had been praised by a conference audience, only to be rejected by a panel of "more traditional" readers when she submitted it for the volume of conference proceedings. Regan spoke of her anxiety in stepping out of her field to submit an article to a policy journal. Trefil, in explaining the impersonality of style in scientific articles, noted the seriousness of many issues and the competitiveness of researchers; hence, the convention of an impersonal style, as he sees it, is an effort to reduce the potential for animosity.

Some of our informants implied audience concerns when they drew a contrast between academic prose and writing that "might be perceived as too popular." "The idea of engaging the reader is often viewed with suspicion," Lancaster said. "One of the most insulting things you can say in academics is that it reads like journalism. If it's too readable, it's not taken seriously." Historian Copelman also mentioned the academic reader's "suspicion" of texts that are too "seductive." If historical writing is "totally gripping and easy," she said, readers won't be likely to see the complexity of events and the differences in interpretations. Academic historians say "wait a minute, it's more complicated than that." Untenured faculty, she noted, *should* "run away" from any demand by a publisher to write what she called "history without footnotes."

Indeed, the anticipation of a skeptical, critical audience leads almost all our informants toward a narrowly cautious attitude in regard to advice they would give to newer scholars hoping for that most important achievement of career academics: tenure. While acknowledging the riskiness of all scholarly efforts, all of them urge untenured colleagues to avoid unnecessary risks. For example, Struppa spoke at length about variations of style in mathematics articles, with one fairly frequent rhetorical flourish being the inclusion of short excerpts from poets or other writers in a preface. He spoke about a doctoral student of his who was fond of including sayings from Sufism. "I allowed these," he commented, "because his math is good. But if his math was less solid, I'd have told him to take them out." Clark, who was in the midst of

his tenure-decision year when we interviewed him (he received tenure later that year), spoke admiringly of the conservative training in textual analysis that he'd been given in graduate school. He distinguished carefully but clearly between the originality of both his subject matter and his critical views of it and what he regarded as "circus acts," i.e., writing differently for its own sake rather than because the material demands it. He went on to describe (detailed in the section on allowed alternatives) less traditional work he's beginning to do now that he has published two books.

The Analytic Academy: Tension Between Reason, Emotion, and the Body

The third of our three principles of academic writing in Chapter One was also confirmed by our informants' comments; the next section shows many ways in which the tension between reason and emotion/sensation is being played out in the academic writing of our informants. As the examples of alternative discourses in Chapter One demonstrate, writing that foregrounds passions and sensual richness may still exhibit the analytical control that the academy puts first, but this tension is an issue for some of our informants in their own work. Our informants ranged from those who strove in all their writing for analytical objectification to those who were struggling to balance the claims of systematic analysis, of emotion, and of the life of the body.

The faculty who were most comfortable with the academy's emphasis on impersonal analysis were R. Smith, experimental psychology; Jones, environmental science; Regan, political science; Struppa, mathematics; and Copelman, history. Physicist Trefil and economist Williams might also be included in this group, but their significant alternative careers as nonacademic writers qualify their inclusion. Neither quarrels with the need for "rigor" and objectivity in their academic disciplines, but that each has devoted years and many writings to reaching nonacademic readers and developing a less rigorous style demonstrates their desire as writers to work outside of academic strictures.

Psychologist Smith, for example, is fully at home in the genres he has most cultivated: the experimental report and the funding proposal. In his answers, he was unwavering in his stance that all students of psychology, regardless of specialty, need to be driven in their thinking by what the data reveal; they need to practice and learn experimental design and the skills of careful observation and recording. Writing should be dispassionate and impersonal, guided by the APA Manual. In emphasizing his discipline's commitment to the "data-driven" model and its only limited tolerance of alternative forms, he told us of one colleague, a clinical psychologist, who had built a successful career as an advocacy writer on mental health issues but who had

only recently been recognized as a serious scholar in the field for this kind of work. His own careful research on the long-term effects of controlled substances, Smith argued, is no less passionately engaged for being written in a dispassionate style and it, too, serves the wider community.

In the context of reason vs. emotion, we stress the distinction between the passion with which a scientist such as Smith conducts his work and the dispassionate methods and rhetorical forms he uses. Similarly, while to be a good observer of his subjects' behavior he must cultivate a highly nuanced sensory awareness, he must also strive for a method of sensory perception that ensures consistency and reliability, and he must use a rhetoric that emphasizes his reasoned control.

Chris Jones, too, is passionate about his and his colleagues' work, their focus the freshwater ecology of the Potomac River basin. As an environmental scientist and activist, he gives part of his time to writing public policy statements and testifying to regional governments. But he carefully distinguishes between this nonacademic writing/speaking and the writing by which he conducts his experimental research in the scientific community. Jones in particular rejects the idea of using "I" in his research prose: "'I this' and 'I that'—that's prissy," he said. His main concern is that research documents be "quality-controlled and quality-assured," and he expects of himself and of his students a traditional formal consistency that reinforces and exhibits the care of the research design and procedures. He does acknowledge formal differences among poster presentations (the least formal), journal articles (the most), and books, but in all these venues he prefers a basically impersonal, dispassionate style that mirrors his concern for quality assurance.

Political scientist Priscilla Regan took a slightly different stance toward uses of the personal in academic prose. Like Smith and Jones, she sees her academic prose as focused on the objects and themes of her research, not on her experience nor on her feelings about her topics. To illustrate, she noted that even though the expertise for her book, *Legislating Privacy: Technology, Social Values, and Public Policy*, came in part from her five years as a technology specialist for the U.S. Congress, she does not mention this experience in the book and does not use her experience as evidence for the recommendations it makes. She built the arguments in her book on the findings of other researchers and on her own data collection following her government employment. This separation of perspectives carries over into her observations on appropriate style. She does not use "I" in her scholarly writing. Like Struppa, she does, however, distinguish between the text of the book or article and its preface, where, she says, she permits herself to use the first person in acknowledgments.

Struppa, in his elaboration on the “template” for articles in mathematics, gave examples of how personal emotion enters, usually shyly, into the systematic and highly conventional style of the writing. In further illustration of the use of the preface noted earlier, Struppa spoke about one of his articles, in which he included a dedication to an uncle who had attempted suicide. Without mentioning the context for the dedication, Struppa merely inserted into the preface a quotation from the Japanese writer Yukio Mishima. “Human life is limited, but I would like to live forever.” Mishima’s words, Struppa said, “were a message from me to my uncle that I knew what he was going through. This is as personal as I get. And that is allowed. But it’s not very typical.” As another example of the slight intrusion of emotion, he cited an article by a Japanese scholar in his field, who had concluded a proof with a metaphorical expression of his scholarly satisfaction: “How beautiful is the view from the top of the mountain.”

This confluence of reason and emotion, of the impersonal and the “I,” appears in still other ways in our informants’ words. Although Copelman denies the academic validity of using the personal in her writing of history, she recognizes the influence of personal background and experiences on her work. Since Copelman identified herself as a feminist historian and is also a member of the women’s studies faculty, we wondered whether and how she might mark her identity as a woman in her scholarly work. “I find the use of ‘I’ annoying in academic writing,” she said, but, later in the interview, she told us about a conference paper in which she combined “a lot of very different material—fiction, historical documents, autobiography—to explore marginality in the immigrant experience.” The paper was “purely an indulgence,” she said, “not even recognizable as a history genre” but rather a chance to address something she cared deeply about as an immigrant herself. That immigrant aspect of her identity, perhaps even more than her feminism, is, she said, a pervasive influence in her work, “a kind of a hum in the background,” but one which she plans “someday” to address explicitly. In that she characterized the conference paper as “serious intellectual work,” even though indulgently alternative, we see that her immigrant experience informs and inspires her research and writing even while she feels the need to submerge that experience in the relatively impersonal style of the historian.

In contrast, Bergoffen is already working in a much more personal way in philosophy, making what she considers risky arguments and choosing to write in an alternative style to enact her feminist and postmodernist philosophical positions. While she sees this kind of work as increasingly important to the discipline, she also mentioned a number of times the nervousness she felt about her choices. Her nervousness and sense of risk, as we recount here and in more detail in the next section, illustrate, we think, the dilemma many

scholars feel when they are somehow caught in a transitional moment in a discipline. Though they may feel that the discipline endorses such work, at least in theory, there are few models to help them understand allowed variations and, further, those models might be the subject of intense debate.

Feminism has “permitted” the “I” in philosophy and the personal pronoun is now almost “expected,” Bergoffen told us. “It’s understood that everyone speaks from a certain perspective and that perspective needs to be identified”; even so, she said she occasionally finds herself slipping back into the more traditional “we” when she writes. Bergoffen also sees “more and more personal, autobiographical material” being included in scholarly philosophical work. Still, that fact did not assuage the nervousness she felt in writing about herself for the collection *Portraits of American Continental Philosophers*, for which all the contributors were asked to reflect on “how their lives had led them to do the work they do.” That she was asked to write for this collection demonstrates philosophy’s recognition of the phenomenological and feminist work Bergoffen does. “Given what phenomenology was doing,” Bergoffen said, “feminism just had to happen. If you have a philosophy that’s starting to talk about the importance of the body, that talks about your body as your access to the world and different bodies have different access, you’ve got to hit the sexual difference.” Illustrating the change Bergoffen has perceived is her story about a colleague who took “phenomenology and ‘writing the body’ seriously” by using her perspective as a gay woman, along with autobiographical details, to frame her analysis of Foucault. Even though the book “provided an analysis that is lucid and clear,” the colleague worried that she would be perceived as sensationalist. Nevertheless, the book, according to Bergoffen, was “very well received.”

We’ve used Bergoffen as a transitional figure between this section and the next on “Allowed Alternatives” because her observations illustrate that no matter how fluid the discipline is perceived to be, how firmly new theories and genres may seem to have taken hold, nor how thoughtfully reasoned the work may be, scholarly writers are still likely to feel that there is some risk involved in choosing to express themselves in alternative ways, even when the alternative is perceived to be allowed as a roughly equal option to the standard discourses.

Allowed Alternatives

As with Bergoffen, many of our other informants, when we asked them whether they had written in alternative ways, responded by explaining how shifts in theory had opened up the discipline to different ways of thinking and writing. We were not surprised to hear them describe how new theoretical

perspectives not only shaped ideas and content in the discipline but also, for several, necessitated new methods, forms, and even language for articulating work that could not be adequately reflected in conventional manners. To go back to Carolyn Miller's formulation of genre as social action, we can say that the "exigence" of a new theory motivated a different kind of discourse, a discourse which could relay the values of some of its members and which, in the process, was gradually reshaping the mainstream discourse.

However, as we will show in this section, there is often considerable tension around this process even in disciplines perceived to be fluid and evolving. The degree of contentiousness around alternative methods and genres, our informants' descriptions suggest, might be related to how heterogeneous its members perceive the discipline to be.

"My discipline is history," Copelman told us, "but the truth is that's not really an adequate description. History is a very fluid category and, at least in the way I was trained, really quite open to new influences." For Copelman, this means that she has had the freedom to do feminist work, which she described as "a kind of alternative discourse created within the standards of historical discourse." Her work is feminist in its focus on women, their status as teachers at a particular historical moment, and on the examination of records, however tangential, that might be relevant to understanding this status.

Somewhat more controversial, though still allowed in her discipline, according to Copelman, is her current work for which she is "using an individual as a sort of launching pad into a variety of different issues that are all interrelated. It's not a biography and it's not something that is linear. It's more of an alternative discourse—I don't even know yet if it's an article or a book."

Similar to Copelman, Clark has also been experimenting with strategies that will allow him to show the larger cultural moments in which/by which black male bodies are interpreted. While Clark said he may be an "anachronism" because he prefers the standard critical voice in which he was trained, he noted that English and African American Studies allow for a diversity of content and styles, particularly given the theoretical frames of gender, queer, and cultural studies. Clark admires the "iconoclastic" work of Gerald Early, who "does fascinating things, blending politics, sports, Mike Tyson/boxing, literature, all these wonderful things, just seamlessly." Still, Clark sees a "literary hegemony" based on the standards he himself has followed and says he admires Early more for his content than his stylistics.

In contrast to Copelman's and Clark's qualified confidence that their disciplines would accept work that proceeds in a nonlinear, postmodern way from the "cultural moment to the text," Bergoffen described the "huge argument among philosophers about whether the alternatives [postmodernism and deconstructionism] are even philosophy." Even given this climate, however,

Bergoffen was somewhat surprised when a paper she had presented at a Derida seminar, and which she was invited to submit to a mainstream journal, was rejected for being “disorganized” and “skewed.” She described the style as being “sensitive to the fact that every piece of writing is gapped and when you make declarative statements you’re hiding the gaps—and so for me that means I won’t be hiding the gaps; I’ll be putting them out there for exploration. Which also means I’m not going to be drawing conclusions. I’m going to be asking questions. I’m not going to be moving in this linear way. It all fits together but you have to work a little bit to put the pieces together. I’m just not going to map it straight out for you.”

Without alluding to specific theories, Struppa also saw in mathematics standards the influence of change. He explained, for example, that “the template is era-dependent, not really language-dependent, because the notion of what is rigorously proved changes with time. In 1915, 1920, people had a different notion; what seemed fully proved then might not be fully proved now.” Struppa’s remark about mathematics corroborates a broader statement he made in a recent article from his perspective as Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences: “Thus, even very traditional disciplines constantly evolve towards a breaking of boundaries, towards an enlargement of their objects and, essentially, towards a more interdisciplinary view” (99).

We can see this process in Sorrell’s description of how nursing opened up to admit a phenomenological approach, which it borrowed from philosophy. Sorrell told us that, at the time she began her research career, in the 1980s, nursing was dominated by a quantitative approach, with qualitative work becoming more accepted. But neither of these paradigms fits with the work she wanted to do, which was to value nurses’ intuitions and the stories they told about their practice and commonly shared with other nurses. Nurses always talk among themselves, she noted, about “their feelings, say, that a patient is going bad, but they didn’t want the docs, mostly men, thinking that they were crazy to go on intuitions about a patient.” She knew that these data would be useful toward improving patient care, but would this type of analysis be accepted in the scholarly community? When Sorrell heard nursing scholar Patricia Benner describe using nurses’ stories as data to analyze phenomenologically how they develop nursing skills, she thought she could use the same approach to analyze nurses’ intuitions, which “had been downplayed because there were too many gender stereotypes to contend with.” To learn how to do phenomenological analysis, Sorrell attended the Advanced Nursing Institute for Heideggerian Hermeneutical Studies. That there is such an institute in nursing studies indicates the degree to which this analytical approach and the objects of analysis have become allowed by the discipline.

Lancaster provided a very different view of standards and allowed alternatives in his field, anthropology. "For a big chunk of the nineties, it was almost mainstream to be alternative in anthropology," Lancaster told us. Since the 1920s, he said, ethnographic writing has always had a certain tendency to be "literary in quality, often experimental, inviting to be read." Following from Malinowski, the point has been "to take on the received wisdom, to dislodge the idea of clear universals, to problematize conceptions of what human beings are like," so experimentation in method and style were—and are—acceptable. Also central to anthropology, according to Lancaster, is its "fundamental check according to empirical everyday experience." To illustrate, he contrasted the methods of anthropology with those of formalist literary criticism. While someone doing a formalist literary analysis of Freud, for example, "would invoke the integrity of the text," the anthropologist would be centrally concerned with the "integrity of the social practice" Freud was describing. "What field experience did Freud base his work on?"

Given the paradoxical call for experimentation within an established framework, it is easy to see why a writer like Lancaster would feel ambivalence about what constitutes an alternative text. "I suppose a text could be aesthetically and compositionally alternative, but politically and socially quite mainstream. Or it could be the opposite, politically and socially alternative and still quite mainstream in terms of composition and aesthetics." At the time he was writing his book *Life Is Hard*, an ethnography about the Sandinista revolution in Nicaragua, he saw it as both politically and compositionally alternative. In the preface, he asserts that the book is deliberately written "against the grain," that "it misbehaves," and that it is "better to see the ethnographer in the ethnography." Better because, he argues, "Partisan analysis is the only resistance to power that a writer, as writer, can effectively offer" (xvii–xviii). To make his text "mirror the discombulation of a failed revolution," Lancaster created a kind of postmodern collage, composed of journalistic and impressionistic passages, raw fieldnotes, chapter-length interviews and life histories, newspaper articles, and letters. Though he thought at the time that he was "gambling with [his] career," the book is now mainstream reading in many anthropology classes. Labels such as "risky, alternative, avant garde" are tricky because "those things are always changing," Lancaster noted.

Thus far we have attempted to illustrate the range of views that our informants have about standards, conventions, and expectations in their academic disciplines. We have seen how many of our informants describe changes in their disciplines that allow scholars to work in alternative ways—ways that might formerly have been closed to them. For several of our informants, the terrain is unstable and ambiguous in troubling ways. They see alternative ways of thinking and writing that colleagues are pursuing and that

they might wish to pursue, but they are unsure of the standing of those methods in the scholarly community. We now turn to a group of our informants who for various reasons have chosen to work extensively outside what they see as the clear boundaries of their disciplines.

Working Outside Disciplinary Boundaries

“What happened as I was working on *Signal Through the Flames* was that Mitch Snyder required me to jump in and get involved with the homelessness movement, and that changed my life,” sociologist Victoria Rader told us when we asked how she happened to write her first book for a wider audience than just her colleagues—when she was still untenured. We also wondered why she has continued to pursue writing projects that take her well outside the boundaries of traditional sociological analysis. As a committed advocate for the homeless, Rader said she was determined that she would not make the same mistake as “those well-meaning and very well intentioned sociologists” whose initial response had been to count the homeless as a way to quantify the problem. As Rader explained, counting risks undercounting, which, in turn, can make people believe that the need is not as pressing. Rader’s main goal was to educate the general public, so she “made sure there were a lot of quotes and stories about homeless people, even though that strategy may not have really furthered my argument among sociologists.”¹

We begin this section with Rader’s comments because they capture the desire, expressed by many of our informants, to say something significant about their scholarly work to audiences other than their colleagues in the academy. For the five faculty we focus on in this section, choosing to write for different audiences meant that they might have had to break disciplinary conventions in many ways, such as by shifting assumptions about audience knowledge and attitude; changing vocabulary, sentence structure, and format; becoming more personal both in voice and content; allowing themselves to write with greater emotional intensity and with a clearer political bias. Yet, as

¹ She acknowledged that there were some models for writing about social change that combined quantitative and qualitative data. She mentioned Doug McAdam’s work on the civil rights movement, which included a survey to determine how many people went into socially conscious areas after their Mississippi Freedom Summer experience and follow-up interviews with many of those people. “So he had a count of how many people went into socially conscious areas but he also had this wonderful rich qualitative data. What he did was he even had a control group, which were the people who applied for Freedom summer but didn’t end up going.” McAdam included himself by making evaluative comments, e.g., “in this exceptional person’s life,” but, Rader said, “You would never hear how moved he was by his experience of interviewing all these people.”

we will show, each of the five we discuss is unique in the audiences they want to address, their motives for addressing these audiences, and thus in the kinds of rhetorical changes that are demanded.

While we find these scholar-writers interesting for the choices they have made and the motives behind their choices, we also think there are important implications for us as writing teachers. As we will discuss in the next chapter, most of our informants, while they may themselves write within the conventions of their disciplines, do not necessarily want undergraduates to learn to write within these conventions. Rather, for many, it is important for students to connect what they are learning in school with either their outside experience and/or ideas in the popular media and to write about these connections in a variety of forms.

While our discussions of the first four informants in this section are roughly similar in length, the fifth, focused on Lesley Smith, a tenure-line faculty member in the field of hypermedia, is much longer. We've devoted a large part of the section to Smith because she illustrates the degree to which new media shape both academic and personal exigencies, which, in turn, lead to new genres. Though Smith is in the technological vanguard, her career signals the thoroughgoing impact that technology will have on the methods and rhetorics of all disciplines. All academic writers will be affected, as they consider what qualifies as knowledge and the ways in which that knowledge can be communicated. Therefore, we need to study closely how Smith is negotiating these changes—for herself and with her students—and helping to bring them about.

The Persona Is Political

While Rader's primary goal in *Signal Through the Flames* was to put a human face on the homelessness movement in order to educate the general public, she felt constrained enough by her disciplinary training to avoid showing, in a sense, her own human face, other than in the introduction to the book. However, the success of *Signal*, which is often assigned as a textbook in undergraduate courses, convinced her that she wanted to include her own story of personal growth through social activism in her current book on accompaniment theory; that is, the theory of how "you walk with people who are struggling for their freedom without trying to take over." The book, which she has been working on for more than seven years, is an attempt "to offer support" for people like herself—white, privileged, middle-class—who are "socially concerned and don't know how to get involved, or they've gotten involved and gotten burned and need help going through emotionally difficult changes." But she also wanted to write a book her students and colleagues would read.

These overlapping goals and senses of audience have meant that she's having a great deal of difficulty characterizing her book in progress—to herself and to others. “So it's not a textbook, it's not a self-help book, it's not sociology exactly.” Because of this unorthodox combination of motives, she has had trouble finding the right voice to make her central argument, which is that “our healing and our growth lie in reconnecting with the world, reducing our distance, and learning to give up control.” At first, Rader said, she was “just going to tell these success stories, like people do make a difference, like privileged people can be allies, my own story.” But, as she realized that the strength of the book would depend upon the story of her own growth (“Why else would anyone be doing this work?”), she committed herself to “going the full distance, at least as far as I'm able, emotionally and spiritually, in terms of the risk taking.” Yet, because she's always mindful of the academic context within which she is working, she says that she tries to integrate sociological analysis in each chapter by referring to authors who have been helpful in putting the issues in perspective. “It's been hard,” Rader said, to find the right voice and “to hold everything together in the sociological frame.” Given these competing exigencies, we can see why it has been hard for her; she's struggling to find a form for a genre she's creating even as she writes.

Perhaps even harder has been finding a publisher, since she is trying to straddle several popular markets—how-to, self-help, self-actualization—while still maintaining credibility as a scholar in her discipline. For an academic publisher, she recognizes that “the spirituality stuff would have to go” and “there would need to be lots more references and footnotes.” While “there isn't a lot of respect for a popularizer,” Rader did see applied sociology as a possible niche for a book like hers because “you're writing to professionals—psychologists, social workers—to teach them how to use, for example, self-help groups.” Still, she noted, even in applied sociology, she would have to leave herself out of the story, something she is not willing to do. In the end, what she cares most about, she said, is the response from her activist friends, not her sociology colleagues. “If my activist friends hate this book, that would be heartbreaking. If my sociology friends hate this book, I'll consider what they say, but it won't feel like so much is at risk. Maybe that's the privilege of tenure.”

Putting on a Public Face

Unlike Rader, physicist James Trefil has for many years drawn a sharp line between his popular science writing and his scholarly work. His writing for a broader public moved over the years from a hobby to a second writing career to a commitment to scientific literacy. In addition to regular articles for *The Smithsonian*, he has written or coauthored seven books and serves as general

editor of *The Encyclopedia of Science and Technology* (2002). Early in his career, Trefil did what he calls “the standard academic stuff”: “I was in high energy theory and also worked with some people from cancer therapy; I was publishing about three or four papers a year, doing talks at conferences and so on.” He achieved tenure and promotion to full professor through his research, and so it was without significant risk to his career when his writing for a popular audience “just started to take over, because there was then, and still is, such a need for it and so few people were willing or able to do it.”

His popular science writing began with a lecture on quarks that he was asked to give at a University of Virginia event for parents and students. He was encouraged to submit the talk as an article to *The Smithsonian*. “So I sent it there and that’s how I got started doing that kind of writing.” For some time, he continued writing for both his physics colleagues and for the more general reader. The scientific community regarded the popular writing as a “hobby,” he says. But he also noted a very different attitude elsewhere in the university to his growing popular audience: “Deans kind of liked it, provosts loved it, and presidents just ate it up, because that’s great PR for the university.”

The differences between scholarly writing in the sciences and popular forms he ascribes to specific exigencies. He describes scholarly scientific writing—“never using the first person, putting things as often as you can into the subjunctive, into a very formalized style”—as fulfilling “a real function in the community.” The formality and the impersonality he sees as a means to contain the hostility that can arise during the “sharp debate” over conflicting results, “where each experiment costs a million dollars, and people’s careers and reputations are at stake. A person might want to say, ‘I think you’re a real jerk,’ but instead you say, ‘I don’t understand how you got to that result.’” He sees the same exigency across all the sciences. “The nomenclature changes, but not the very formal style.”

As Trefil began to understand the stylistic requirements of science journalism—“I kept telling myself, ‘No footnotes!’”—he continued to honor in his prose the science community’s respect for other scientists. “I won’t call a scientist for a comment and then do a hatchet job on the guy. Good reporters often delve into the personal conflicts, but I try to stay away from them.” Trefil also has tried to maintain the third-person objectivity of the scientist. Unlike Rader, whose personal story is essential to the alternative goals she tries to fulfill, Trefil told us that he almost never writes about himself in his journalism. Although Trefil is careful to maintain an objective stance in his popular prose, he has developed a distinctive voice, as we pointed out to him. “I’m not conscious of having developed a voice; when I’m writing I don’t think about that. I have a person in mind (a banker, a stockbroker), somebody who is very smart in a demanding profession but who doesn’t

know much about science; I talk to this person. One of the hardest things in learning how to do this kind of writing is to get rid of the formal scientific style; it took a while. My main goal is to get across a picture; I supply people with these mental videocassettes they can put on—‘so the Big Bang...oh there it goes!’—so they can see it.”

Economist Walter Williams explained his now 20-year alternative career as a syndicated columnist by quoting his colleague, Nobel laureate James Buchanan: “Economists are ‘intellectual imperialists’—we feel entitled to get into anyone’s field and comment on it.” An “economic way of thinking, the analysis of costs and benefits,” can be applied to any issue and can be translated for the nonacademic reader, Williams noted. That Williams has enthusiastically applied this credo is clear from his prolific writing career: a weekly column appearing in 160 newspapers, frequent radio and TV commentaries, and six books. Unlike Trefil, Williams began to write for a broad public audience—the *Philadelphia Tribune*, one of the oldest black newspapers—while still an untenured assistant professor at Temple University. He told us that the seeds of his ability to write for newspapers had actually been nurtured a few years before by his “tenacious mentor” in the Ph.D. program at UCLA, who had convinced him that the true test of one’s knowledge of a subject is the ability to explain it to an ordinary person. He does not regard the writing he does for the broader public as a particularly difficult alternative to scholarly writing.

Indeed, he has similar standards for both. The scholar should be “terse. . . . The language might not be as beautiful or colorful as it could be; the point is to make the analysis logical and clear. Graphs and equations can do much of the work; written explanations should be brief. Footnotes should be used judiciously.” He emphasizes brevity and clarity in his newspaper columns as well. “I’m given 600 words, so I write defensively. This means that I like to come in under 600 words, so the editor has no reason to mess with my prose.” When we asked him for an example of how he’d write differently for the two audiences, he offered “airline fares” as a topic. “For economists, I’d talk about the principle of elasticity, but for my column I’d talk about the differing needs of business travelers.”

In a sense, writing about dance is always writing for the public, Linda Miller, professor of dance, told us, because one “just can’t use the kind of terminology that people in other disciplines can use and be understood. If you try to use pure dance terminology, most readers won’t know what you’re talking about. So our writing, I would say, is probably closest to making a translation from one language to another.” Interestingly, Trefil and Williams both said that one of their goals for writing outside the academy is to translate their discipline to nonacademic audiences. For dance, however, as Miller sees it, there is no such distinction between academic and nonacademic writing.

Whether dance writers are academics or dance critics, she said, they are trying to describe “the intellectual process that is being manifested physically” and that process is not conveyed by “the vocabulary of dance technique. You can’t say, for example, ‘they did three jetés and two pique turns’ and expect anyone, even dancers, to understand your thinking.”

Miller talked about her own writing as a “kind of missionary work,” with one of her major responsibilities being to “articulate a nonverbal discipline to people who know nothing about dance in order to make a case for funding.” Faculty in other fields, she said, don’t have to explain why they need a lab or more resources, because people understand these fields. “Dance scares some people. We don’t have standardized tests for assessment that people can relate to; most everything we do in the academy has to be explained to someone not in our discipline.”

While Miller talked at length about the challenges of writing in the academy, we could also hear her enthusiasm for writing and her sense of growth, both as a writer and as a teacher of writing. Part of this growth, she said, entailed gaining the confidence to talk back, in writing, to people inside and outside the dance community who “thought dancers can’t think, let alone write.” Then, too, there were the gender dynamics, which, for a long time, prevented her from being able to assert herself in writing. “Women in dance used to grow up taking direction most often from male dance teachers; it was engrained in me to curtsy—‘thank you for the class.’” Through years of working with faculty from a wide array of departments, especially on committees, she learned to appreciate her intellectual and communicative talents, among them “to attend to details and to follow through.” By developing her writing ability in this context, she gained respect from academic colleagues not usually accorded dancers.

Multimedia and the Intergeneric

“I don’t think that I can define my discipline,” Lesley Smith said in response to our question about her interdisciplinary study of multimedia and innovative technologies. With her Ph.D. in history, she noted that she feels she is always in some sense “teaching history no matter what I teach in that I’m always looking for context and connections, which is a kind of historical methodology.” If she had to name a discipline, she said it would probably be writing. Immediately, however, she wondered if writing could be counted as a discipline. “Because I’ve got such a traditional academic background, I suppose I never think of writing as a discipline. I always think of writing as something that happens in lots of different disciplines.” Still, she acknowledged, “Writing is what I’ve done for most of my life—writing for history, writing

scripts for television, writing when I did my M.F.A., when I'm teaching, or the kind of writing I do now."

It's the kind of writing Smith does now—writing (in) new media—that made us want to include her as one of our informants. We see this writing as "intergeneric," a term we'll explain later in this section when we describe her current scholarly output. We want to begin, however, by describing the uneasiness Smith feels about expectations for her scholarly work as she moves toward tenure in an interdisciplinary technology-rich college. We believe that her confusion vividly illustrates both the difficulties of working between and across disciplinary traditions, and the particular challenges of working in media that are so fluid and subject to so many artistic influences. "I think that I'm being put in the academic and not the creative box," she said. "Maybe it's because I'm seen as having an academic background, with degrees in history and in poetry, which to most academics seems like an academic degree."

Still, she brings to her position a background that makes it difficult for her or any observer to categorize. Following her history degree, she worked for 14 years in British television, writing and producing documentaries, including a 60-part series on the history of Britain. After marriage to an American historian, she moved to the United States and entered the M.F.A. program at Mason. While completing her creative writing degree and teaching English composition, she began to experiment with applying new computer technologies to teaching, an interest that became over several years her forte in the university. The tenure-line position in New Century College, which she began five years ago, gave her the opportunity to develop these talents in a curriculum that prizes experimentation, builds interdisciplinary "learning communities," and balances conventional academics with service learning and preparation for the postmodern workplace.

The rub for Smith is that achieving tenure means not only winning the approval of the tenured faculty of New Century, but also that of the more traditionally academic faculty of the College of Arts and Sciences in which it is housed. Although her third-year review produced strong endorsement of her teaching and program development, it also produced the judgment that her scholarly agenda was too broad; she was urged to focus her writing on articles about her creative experiments with technology and teaching for such journals as *Computers and Composition* or *Kairos*. Certainly, few observers would consider such advice conservatively academic, at least not in terms of the journals named nor in its acknowledgment of the scholarship of teaching; nevertheless, Smith's response to the advice pinpoints a basic distinction, perhaps almost a dichotomy, between the nature of academic discourse and that of discourses in which Smith is more experienced

and which she much prefers. Moreover, it also pinpoints a conceptual distinction between most academic fields and the discipline in which she now works: hypermedia.

If dance, as we noted in the previous section on Linda Miller, is a tremendously fluid discipline that “scares some people” because of the difficulty of pinning down conventions, standards, and even a vocabulary for academic writing, what might be said about the discipline of hypermedia? To address that question, it is useful to compare hypermedia, as a field, with dance. While Miller, like Smith, is uncertain about the role of scholarly writing in dance, she has no doubts about the measurability of a dance performance. After all, there are models in dance, some going back thousands of years, which performers work within or against. The same can be said about other artistic academic fields. Toulmin, whom we discussed in Chapter One, makes a similar judgment about the fine arts, calling them “quasi-disciplines” because, while there has been a traceable “historical evolution of [their] collective techniques” (a characteristic of “fully disciplined” fields), individual artists enjoy a “creative autonomy and independence [that] gives every artist the liberty to employ the collective techniques of his profession in the pursuit of essentially individual goals” (398–99).

In contrast, hypermedia is a field that is still too new to have the evolution of its techniques historically documented, at least in the definitive sense in which Toulmin means it; moreover, its standards, methods, and materials are constantly—almost frenetically—evolving as technology evolves. The models for “good” hypermedia exist only until the next generation of tools; the critical theory that would help people understand, analyze, and evaluate hypermedia cannot keep up, the many efforts of scholars notwithstanding. Indeed, while understanding and analysis are typically thought to be much the same intellectual operation in most academic fields, in hypermedia they are not. Similar to the way in which a reviewer responds to a dance or a musical performance in the moment and through many senses, so the user or reviewer of a hypermedia creation must understand its multisensory complexity from moment to moment. But the models in dance provide a critical lens for the reviewer, a way of putting the performance in context. Moreover, from performance to performance the dance will remain essentially the same, though reviewers may receive it differently. By contrast, a good hypermedia work will change from use to use because the user is actively participating in the “performance.” In addition, the software and hardware on which hypermedia is based are constantly changing, so the context of any performance is also always changing.

Given the volatile nature of this new discipline, it is easy to understand why Smith feels uneasy about her niche. Indeed, the idea of “niche”—a

comfortable place—may be antithetical to the field. In her responses to our questions, Smith consistently expressed an impatience with stasis, which she illustrated through her distaste for the demand on academic analysts to dissect and write about, often over years, what has already occurred or has been created earlier. With her doctorate in history, her impatience is ironic, to say the least. But Smith, as a hypermedia specialist, feels pressure not to get behind when the models and tools (i.e., methods) are constantly changing. Moreover, she knows that if you treat the hypertext object as static, which you have to do in order to be able to analyze it, you are, in a sense, losing ground.

So Smith is torn between the demands of academic writing, even liberally defined, which the academic hierarchy has committed her to meeting in order to achieve tenure, and her two writing loves in the new field: (1) critical writing about—and for—mass media and (2) hypermedia composition, much of it to support her teaching in New Century. She knows what the academy expects of her, but she finds it uninteresting. Smith chafes at what she sees as the redundancy and belatedness of this act: “When I’ve created something new for the classroom and then used it, I’d much rather just think and write about what I’ve learned as part of the process of building that learning into what happens the next semester, rather than sit down and write about it for academic readers once it’s dead and gone.”

Moreover, she sees the analytic academic model as deadly for understanding hypermedia—not to mention producing it. “Despite all the work that people are doing now in visual literacy and visual storytelling, in fact writing about hypertext still follows a very strong literary paradigm,” she noted. She makes a sharp distinction, however, between “actively working with a relatively fixed text,” as one does with literary analysis, and moving into hypertext, hypermedia, and multimedia where one is being “active with a dynamic text.” Further, she said, unlike the dynamic texts of film or television, which move along in time, hypermedia not only passes in time, but “every time it passes in time it could be different. And, if it’s a complex piece of hypertext, or hypermedia, or multimedia, it should be different every time.” For Smith, it’s “a sign of failure if a piece of multimedia is the same every time you look at it.” Not only does the literary paradigm not work, she said, but there’s the danger that hypermedia creators will try to produce work that can be analyzed more traditionally, “and you end up not necessarily getting great theory and you get horrible multimedia.”²

² See Wysocki and Hocks, among others, on visual literacy changing the face of composition studies.

Adding to Smith's conflict as a scholar and writer is that this new discipline also privileges a rhetoric, in particular a sense of audience, that goes against the academic grain. In Chapter One, we stressed that academic writing continually shows other scholars that the writer is a careful student of the subject by demonstrating knowledge of the prior literature. This performance is formalized in style manuals and in journal after journal. We also stressed that while academic writing may appeal to some extent to the senses and the emotions, the intellectual, analytic persona is primary. In this sense, academic writing is highly self-conscious: even if the "I" is only implicit in the piece, as is most frequently the case, the presence of the scholar's consciousness is everywhere. In contrast, hypermedia, as Smith defines it, succeeds only when it hides its intellectual processes and background—its careful study—and presents to the user/reader an array of facades that appeal to the eye (and perhaps other senses) and that draw attention to the subject and away from the designer. When we asked Smith, as we did all our informants, about the presence of the "the personal" in her work, she likened her ideal presence in her work to that of the "auteur" in film—"you can often tell who the director is by the style of the work, but there is no 'I' in the film and we never see or hear the director. Yes, there are ways of saying 'I' and having my view, my signature," but if she has to use the explicit "I" in some way in her hypermedia creations, she feels that she has "somehow failed."

Further, even though the skilled designer of hypermedia is a dedicated student of the work of other designers, successful hypermedia—in order to be useful to its users—never is explicit about these influences. To be useful, hypermedia strives for simplicity—i.e., "user-friendliness"—and the irony in this elegance is that those who use the materials rarely appreciate the depth and intricacy of the work that goes into them. One of Smith's worries about the academic readers she must please for tenure is that their inexperience with the technical, production side of hypermedia will keep them from appreciating the sophistication of analysis and judgment—not to mention the sheer volume of hours it takes to learn and apply new software—that goes into well-crafted hypermedia. "Unless the person doing the evaluating is a person who also does this work, it's not seen as research. Somehow people think that I've been touched by the finger of God and so just know all these new programs."

To better understand ourselves what is involved in writing (in) new media for the academy, we asked Smith to describe her writing process(es). Currently, she said, her main work has been in course development, specifically designing new curricula to "flesh out" the multimedia concentration in New Century College. Since she tends to write extensive online syllabi for all her courses, she talked about the ongoing experimentation this entails.

There's finding the right tone, for example. "It's easy to sound very stuffy on the Web if you use the same style you use on a paper syllabus." More complex than stylistic choices, however, are decisions about navigational structures. She described one unsuccessful experiment with a "very playful hypertextual syllabus." She said, "I know from experience that even though students are sophisticated in their uses of technology, they are still highly critical of a website that isn't absolutely crystal clear. They want it to have flash and look wonderful, but they also want to be able to read all the links wherever they are and get to the key piece of information they need."

In the 10 percent of the time she estimates she has available for her own "pleasurable" multimedia writing, she's been experimenting with "the ways abstract visual images trigger moods or words"; these experiments, which she calls poems, started when she wanted to learn better ways of using Adobe® Photoshop®. "So I began playing around with images and then I found that the images started crying out for words, so I added words to them. Next I'd like to pull the poems together into a big series." Because she wants to make these poems interactive, she's also become interested in "programming in the interactivity, so that the programming is one kind of creative writing and the text that appears with, under, through, and by the programming is another kind of creative writing." Also squeezed into this 10 percent are the film, television, and DVD reviews she writes for *PopMatters*, an ejournal that "tends to be very strict about not having 'jargony' language or getting too cultural studies-ish, but, at the same time, wants things to be set in an intellectual and cultural context."

The conflict for Smith, as we suggested earlier, is that she thrives on the dynamism of new media, which doesn't sit still for the kind of disciplined analysis and reflection characteristic of academic writing. Perhaps more significant to our discussion of alternative disciplinary discourses is that her work, more than that of any of our other informants, is "intergeneric" in that she crosses many genres and invokes multiple audiences. So, for example, when she talks about multimedia and hypertext, she invokes audiences ranging from the end user of a piece of software, typically the student, to people who have to produce parts of the software, to readers of hypertext journals and creative writing (e.g., her poetry experiments), and, always in the back of her mind, the academic audience who wants her to step back and reflect on the scholarship of teaching with/on/about the Web.

So what is a scholar like Smith supposed to do, when working in a discipline whose genres—the "typified recurrent actions," exigencies, and audiences, as Carolyn Miller identified them—are still being defined and may be indefinable, yet who works within academic culture, which presupposes rational and deliberate principles of scholarship?

To think about this question, we want to come back to Toulmin's discussion of quasi-disciplines, e.g., the fine arts, which are "quasi" in that they can be characterized by a certain continuity over time but also by the "nondisciplinable" personal goals of the individual artist. Yet, Toulmin says, the idea of the "unconstrained individualist" is relatively new. Until the late nineteenth century, there was little distinction made between artists and craftspeople, i.e., those who put their art to practical use, as denoted in the terms "artisan," "industrial arts," and the "Royal Society of the Arts," which was devoted to technological innovation. Thus the "arts" originally described "repertories of practical skills" and "developing sets of technical methods" transmitted by an apprenticeship in a particular school. As the distinction between arts and crafts evolved, however, the "artist" was set apart from the "run of the mill 'artisan,'" who emphasized "mass market" production—the "not so-fine arts" (397–98).

How does Smith's creative hypermedia work fit into this historical trajectory? Because of its newness and its connection to popular technology, hypermedia lacks the prestige of other fine arts, perhaps most so because of its mass-market accessibility. Hypermedia is public in a way that most other fine art production is not; the audiences are enormously varied, which potentially multiplies the exigencies that any hypermedia design could possibly serve. So, for example, when Smith is given instructions for writing reviews for *PopMatters*, it's implied that she's writing for a nonacademic intellectual audience *and* a popular audience any place at any time. Moreover, these audiences, as we've noted, read/write new texts according to their own goals, whims, and motives; they are very unlike the disciplined, linear, deliberate readers imagined by academic scholars as they lay out their carefully reasoned arguments. Nor are they like the historically adept, critical, deliberate readers of the academic poetry that Smith wrote for her M.F.A. Make no mistake: those academic audiences are included in the vast group of users of hypermedia, but even academics, trained as they are, most often expect from Web-based materials—unlike scholarly prose—the same visual and other-sensory sophistication, plus ease of navigability, that nonacademic users expect.

If she chose, Smith could jump the academic hurdles that her committee has recommended. She already has among her credits a few analytical, even theoretical conference presentations and a couple of articles of that nature. Moreover, if she did choose, as her committee has recommended, to define herself as a "computers and composition" specialist, she could request to be evaluated within the guidelines approved by the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC) for scholars who "work with technology" (<http://www.ncte.org/about/over/positions/level/coll/107658.htm>). Among the several recognitions in this statement are the following:

... the rapid pace of technological change means that each case will need to be decided on its own merits, and each case is in a sense precedent-setting.

CMC [computer-mediated composing] technology, particularly the World Wide Web, is blurring the distinctions between traditional areas of evaluation for promotion and tenure; i.e., research, teaching, and service. For example, developing web pages for class, department, university, or global use might fit all three categories.

The CCCC statement implies that faculty such as Lesley Smith should not have to choose between scholarship that appears to be “more academic” and work that does justice to the full range of the candidate’s scholarly and creative talents. In Smith’s case, it suggests that she could see her creativity as all of a piece, a coherent 100 percent productive work, rather than the bifurcated 90 percent/10 percent she worries about now. The statement sets aside the standard boxes and advocates a flexibility that may be foreign to the academy but that is the essence of the new technologies that the academy claims to embrace.

The five cases presented in this last section show academics who have chosen, for very different reasons and in different situations, to pursue what they view as distinct alternatives to the academic paradigm described in Chapter One. Unlike their colleagues in the first two sections of this chapter, who have either found workable accommodations in the conventions of their disciplines or who see their disciplines changing to accommodate them, these five have chosen to work outside academic convention to meet exigencies important to them and the readers whom they most want to reach. Nevertheless, as in the case of Lesley Smith, the academy can move, albeit with deliberate speed, to adapt to the vision and energy of its members who are willing to cross borders, whether disciplinary, technological, or rhetorical.

In Chapter Three, we turn from our focus on the faculty as writers to them as teachers. Does our informants’ thoughtful, often bold endeavor in their research and writing carry over into their work with students? How do these writers’ struggles with subject matter, with academic strictures, with their senses of integrity and personality affect how they teach? In particular, how are their own sometimes circuitous and multiple paths as writers reflected in how they teach their students to write: in the assignment they give, the criteria they espouse, the responses they give? Do they, by and large, preach conformity to academic principles? Do they tolerate, even encourage, alternatives, and how far from the conventional will they allow students to venture?