4

CONSTRUCTING DESIRE
Genre and the Invention of Writing Subjects

> [P]erforming a genre concerns a joint agreement to perform certain positionalities within an institutional regime—to "be" or "become" certain kinds of subjects. Crucial to "becoming" is the notion that the "self" that writes or reads is assembled at the site of utterance, is the point of convergence of a range of possible subject positions brought into being at any particular historical moment for the achievement of a social action.
>
> GILLIAN FULLER and ALISON LEE, "Assembling a Generic Subject"

> A boundary is not that at which something stops but . . . the boundary is that from which something begins its presencing.
>
> MARTIN HEIDEGGER, "Building, Dwelling, Thinking"

We cannot understand genres as sites of action without also understanding them as sites of subject formation, sites, that is, which produce subjects who desire to act in certain ideological and discursive ways. Genres are defined as much by the actions they help individuals perform as by the desires and subjectivities they help organize, which generate such performances. For example, the genres D. H. Lawrence writes in not only help him organize and articulate different desires, especially in relation to his mother; they also, as the Latin root of the word *genre* suggests, help generate these different desires to enact that relationship. In this way, genres are sites of action *as well as* sites of invention, topoi in which invention takes place.

To offer that genres maintain and elicit the desires that they help writers to fulfill, however, is not to suggest that writers are simply the effects of genres. As Fuller and Lee point out, the

subject produced at the generic site of utterance is a "convergence of a range of subject positions" (2002, 215), each presumably with its own ideological and libidinal attachments and defenses. Although part of the work that genres perform is to assemble and recruit a particular subject position for the achievement of a particular social action, this assemblage does not and cannot entirely evict the multiple, sometimes competing, commitments that converge at this site of articulation. Certainly, some genres enforce their subjects more powerfully than others, but this subject formation is nonetheless a negotiated stance. As Robert Brooke and Dale Jacobs observe, "we're endlessly in negotiation with the internal structures of the ideas we're building and the external structures that come from what we know of [a particular] genre. In the process of this negotiation, our ideas are transforming themselves. So are the ways we think of ourselves as writers, the roles we use to describe ourselves" (1997, 216). This negotiation, which also includes the relationship between a writer's material, local conditions, and the genre's ideological and discursive demands, accounts in part both for how and why writers resist and transform genres and for textual variations within genres, as I will discuss later in the chapter. After all, no two texts within a genre are exactly alike. Each textual instantiation of a genre is a result of a unique negotiation between the agency of a writer and the agency of a genre's conditions of production. Because of this ongoing negotiation, generic conventions always exert influence over but do not completely determine how writers think and act because these conventions rhetorically maintain larger social motives (predispositions or desires to act) which writers acquire, negotiate, and articulate when they write. It is within the discursive and ideological space of genre—which I will later describe as the intersection between a writer's intentions and the genre's social motives—where agency resides. In this chapter, I examine this intersection in order to demonstrate how agency involves both the performance of an action as well as the construction of the desires that elicit such performance—in

short, the processes by which writers are articulated by the very genres they use to articulate themselves, their commitments, relations, and social practices. Looking at several examples, I analyze how genres situate writers within such positions of articulation.[1]

GENRES AS RHETORICAL ECOSYSTEMS

Human beings are rhetorical beings. We are not only different from other animals because of our capacity to use language as symbolic action or because we can use language to express ourselves in rhetorical ways; more significantly, we use language to construct rhetorical environments in which we exist, interact with one another, and enact social practices. We are constantly in the process of shaping our environments as we communicate within them, speaking and writing our realities and ourselves. Within these rhetorical constructs, we assume different subjectivities and relations, and we perform different activities as we negotiate our way from one environment to the next, often balancing multiple, even contradictory, subjectivities and activities at the same time. While on a visit to Florida a couple of years ago, I was struck by the extent to which this is the case. Seemingly everywhere, the geography of Florida is rhetorically demarcated by such slogans as "the *real* Florida" or billboards that promise real estate that allows one to "experience the *wild* in your backyard." These slogans and billboards ironically stand interspersed between billboards advertising the staged realities of Disney's Epcot Center and Universal Studios. Marking Florida's highways, these signs appear to be engaged in a rhetorical argument with one another: the "real" Florida versus the "tourist" Florida. But this binary does not hold. The "real" Florida is as much a rhetorical formation as is the "tourist" Florida. That is, Epcot is as complex and dynamic a discursive and ideological site as any wilderness-designated area; one is no less "artificial" than the other. Both are rhetorical demarcations—ways we organize, conceptualize, and participate within these formations—and both are at work in constructing the narrative of what we mean when we say what Florida "is."[2]

Anthony Petruzzi notes that "human beings dwell rhetorically through rhetoric's most primordial function: the 'making-known' of being which discloses the modes of human existence through articulated self-understanding" (1998, 310). Rhetorical practices not only help individuals communicate their realities to one another; they also help organize these realities. The Greek Sophists understood the contingent and rhetorical nature of human reality. Like the so-called "new rhetoricians" (Richards, Burke, Perelman) who followed them in our own century, the Sophists recognized that rhetoric is epistemological, involved not just in how we order particular arguments, but more significantly in how we order and come to know reality, which itself becomes a cultural argument or mythos writ large. The Sophists referred to this rhetorical construction of reality as *nomos*, what Susan Jarratt defines as "rhetorical construct" or "habitation" (1991, 42). Within this rhetorical habitation, human customs of social and political behavior are historically and provisionally situated and reproduced through cultural narratives, which, according to Kenneth Burke, shape the symbolic conditions in which we identify and relate to one another (1969b). These habitations, these nomoi, do not exist only on the symbolic level, however. As Jarratt explains, they are also realized syntactically and rhetorically so that, as the Sophists understood, rhetorical habits sustain the very habitats within which "reality" and "truth" get enacted. As the Sophists also understood and used to their advantage, a disruption of syntactic and rhetorical habits could also disrupt the social habitats upon which they are predicated. Our interactions with others and with our environments, therefore, are mediated not only by physical conditions but also by rhetorical conditions that, in part, are ideologically and discursively organized and generated through genres. Genres—what Catherine Schryer defines as "stabilized-for-now or stabilized-enough sites of social and ideological action" (1994, 108)—thus constitute typified rhetorical sites or habitations in which our social actions and commitments are made possible and meaningful as well as in which we are rhetorically socialized to perform (and potentially transform) these

actions and commitments. As Carolyn Miller explains, "rhetoric provides powerful structurational resources for maintaining (or shoring up) social order, continuity and significance" (1994, 75). Genres rhetorically embody these structurational resources, helping "real people in spatio-temporal communities do their work and carry out their purposes" as well as helping "virtual communities, the relationships we carry around in our heads, to reproduce and reconstruct themselves, to continue their stories" (Miller 1994, 75). In this ecological scenario, genres coordinate a symbiotic relationship between rhetorical habits and social habitats.

Within material constraints, then, our social relations, subjectivities, commitments, and actions are rhetorically mediated by genres, which organize the rhetorical conditions within which we enact and reproduce our social relations, subjectivities, commitments, and actions. In this way, genres are not merely passive backdrops for our actions or simply familiar tools we use to convey or categorize information; rather, genres function more like rhetorical ecosystems, dynamic sites in which communicants rhetorically reproduce the very conditions within which they act. Within genres, therefore, our typified rhetorical practices support the very recurring conditions that subsequently make these rhetorical practices necessary and meaningful. This is why genres, far from being innocent or arbitrary conventions, are at work in rhetorically shaping and enabling not only social practices and subjectivities, but also the desires that elicit such practices and subjectivities.

We notice the extent to which genres function as rhetorical ecosystems (rhetorical habits and social habitats) if we look at the example of the physician's office. A physician's office is both a material and a discursive site in which doctor and patient interact. The genres used within this site coordinate this interaction. Prior to any interaction between doctor and patient, for example, the patient has to complete what is generally known as the Patient Medical History Form.[3] Patients recognize this genre, which they encounter on their initial visit to a physician's office, as one that solicits critical information regarding a patient's physical statistics (sex, age, height, weight, and so on)

as well as medical history, including prior and recurring physical conditions, past treatments, and, of course, a description of current physical symptoms. This is followed by insurance carrier information and then a consent-to-treat statement and a legal release statement, which the patient signs. The genre is at once a patient record and a legal document, helping the doctor treat the patient and presumably protecting the doctor from potential lawsuits. But these are not the genre's only functions. The Patient Medical History Form (PMHF) also helps organize and generate the social and rhetorical environment within which the patient and doctor use language to interact and produce meaningful, situated action. For instance, the genre supports and enacts a separation between the mind and the body in treating disease, constructing the patient as an embodied object. It is mainly rhetorically concerned with a patient's physical symptoms, suggesting that we can treat the body separately from the mind—that is, we can isolate physical symptoms and treat them with little to no reference to the patient's state of mind and the effect that state of mind might have on these symptoms. In so doing, the PMHF reflects Western notions of medicine, notions that are rhetorically naturalized and reproduced by the genre and that in turn are materially embodied in the way the doctor recognizes, interacts with, and treats the patient as a synecdoche of his or her physical symptoms. (For example, it is not uncommon for doctors and nurses to say, "I treated a knee injury today" or "The ear infection is in room three.") The PMHF, then, locates the individual who completes it in the position of "patient" (an embodied self) prior to his or her meeting with the doctor at the same time as it works on the doctor who reads it, preparing him or her to meet the individual as an embodied "patient." So powerful is the socializing power of this genre in subject formation that individuals more often than not become willing agents of the desires embedded within it. As Tran explains: "Also on the [PMHF], there is a part that says 'other comments' which a patient *will understand* as asking whether or not he or she has any other physical problems, not mental ones" (1997, 2; my emphasis). Even when a

patient ostensibly has a choice, the genre and the ideology it reflects and naturalizes are already at work constituting the patient's subjectivity in preparation for meeting the doctor. Thus, the genre compels individuals to assume certain situational positions, positions established by our culture and rhetorically articulated and reproduced by the genre.

The PMHF thus becomes a site for the material exchange of language within which the doctor and patient enact specific practices, positions, and relations. As a genre, it is both a habit and a habitat—the conceptual habitat within which individuals perceive and experience a particular environment as well as the rhetorical habit by and through which they function within that environment. But the PMHF does not function in an ecological vacuum. It is one of a number of genres (genres such as prescription notes, letters to insurance companies, referral letters, various medical records, etc.) that function in relation to one another and that together enable their users to maintain and participate in the situated activities that constitute the larger "ecosystem" we call the physician's office. Each of the genres in this constellation of interconnected, competing, and sometimes conflicting genres constitutes its own micro-environment—specific social situations, commitments, practices, and relations (relations between nurses and doctors, doctors and other doctors, doctors and pharmacists, doctors and insurance companies, and so on). Together, these genres—what Amy Devitt has called "genre sets" (1991)—interact to constitute the macro-environment we recognize as the physician's office. As a result, the physician's office becomes an intra- and intergeneric environment. Within this genre-constituted and genre-mediated macro-environment, communicants assume and enact various heterogeneous desires, language games, social practices, relations, and subjectivities—multiple ways of identifying themselves and relating to others in particular situations, much as we write ourselves into the position of patient in the PMHF and, in so doing, shape and enable not only our social practices and relations, but also "the ways we think of ourselves as writers, the roles we use to describe ourselves" (Brooke and Jacobs 1997, 216).

JoAnne Yates and Wanda Orlikowski, drawing on Bazerman (1994a), describe how "genre systems serve as organizing structures within a community, providing expectations for the purpose, content, form, participants, time, and place of coordinated social interaction" (2002, 104). By identifying a system of genres such as the one at work in the physician's office, researchers can examine how typified textual practices mediate complex forms of social organization. Carol Berkenkotter, for example, has recently demonstrated how psychotherapists and their clients are engaged in a network of related genres that synchronizes their activities and subjectivities. In the process of their interaction, for example, therapists and clients will engage in a number of genres, including the "client's narrative during the therapy session," the "therapist's notes" (which are taken during the session), and the "psychosocial assessment" (which the therapist writes after the session). Each of these genres, which Berkenkotter argues are coordinated in part by the metagenre of the DSM IV (*Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*), maintains the rhetorical and ideological underpinnings for how therapist and client identify one another, interact, and perform their activities. As Berkenkotter explains:

> The psychotherapist's practice of making notes and reports that recontextualize the [client's] self-reports and interactions within psychiatric discourse begins the work of drawing the individual clients into the systems of reimbursement, health care, research, and medical reasoning. Perhaps even more importantly, psychotherapy notes and reports are the site at which we see the therapist constructing accounts that may influence how the clients themselves may begin to recontextualize their own perceptions of themselves. (2001, 341)

Taken together, these related genres coordinate the complex, multitextured social organization and activities of psychotherapy as well as "recontextualize" their users into different subjectivities within this organization.

Within systems of genre, some genres might perform regulative and managerial functions. For instance, Peter Medway

(2002) presents the difficult case of the architecture students' sketchbooks and wonders if these sketchbooks constitute a genre, especially since they do not share patterns of format, organization, or linguistic features—the traditional markers of genre. In fact, they do not even seem to produce an obvious typified social action. Part of Medway's conclusion, however, is that these sketchbooks do constitute a genre because of their affiliative function: by possessing them, students identify themselves as budding architects and practice the sensibilities that underwrite that subjectivity. While they may lack typified textual features, the sketchbooks can nonetheless be defined as a genre by the typified subjectivity—the architectural identity—they help their users perform (146). Even more interesting, however, is the function these genres might be serving in relation to the other architecture genres students are learning. Medway explains, for example, that these sketchbooks contain drawings, measurements, personal notes, formulas, maxims, notes, quotations, bibliographic information, pasted artwork, maps, building designs, drafts of arguments and texts, evaluations, and so on (131). Some of what the sketchbooks contain are examples of the other architecture genres students are expected to learn, which raises the question of whether this genre is not only a site of subject formation but also a site for regulating students' interaction within the generic system of relations of which it is a part. In this way, the sketchbooks enable students to acquire and practice the subjectivities and desires that facilitate their various genred performances within the architectural genre system.[4] In the remainder of the chapter, I analyze how writers position themselves within such genred ecologies and acquire, negotiate, and perform the desires and subjectivities that shape the choices they make when they write.

MOTIVATING INTENTIONS: GENRE AND THE TRANSMISSION OF DESIRE

In "Building, Dwelling, Thinking," Martin Heidegger argues that we begin our "presencing"—our coming into being—within boundaries (1992). Similarly, Erving Goffman explains

that "the individual . . . [is] a stance-taking entity, a something that takes up a position somewhere between identification with an organization and opposition to it. . . . It is thus *against something* that the self can emerge" (1961, 319–20; Goffman's emphasis). How does this identification and "becoming" happen within the ideological and discursive boundaries we call genres? How, that is, are "selves" always situated and hence always presencing into identity as they are recontextualized from one genred site of action to the next, even within a constellation of genres such as the physician's office or, as we will consider in the next chapter, a first-year writing classroom? Anthony Giddens's work in sociology can provide an answer.

The environment and its participants' activities and subjectivities are always in the process of reproducing one another within genre: the Patient Medical History Form, for example, rhetorically maintains the situational conditions within which doctor and patient enact their roles and activities, and their roles and activities in turn reproduce the very conditions that make the PMHF necessary and meaningful. Anthony Giddens, in *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration*, describes this ecological process as the "duality of structure" (1984). Giddens's theory of structuration is largely an attempt to reconcile what he perceives as inaccurately dichotomized views of human agency and social systems, what he calls "hermeneutic sociologies" ("the imperialism of the subject") versus "structuralist sociologies" ("the imperialism of the social object") (2). Both sociologies are inaccurate, Giddens argues, because they overlook the extent to which human actions both enact and reproduce social structures. In their social practices, human beings reproduce the very social structures that subsequently make their actions necessary, possible, recognizable, and meaningful, so that their practices reproduce and articulate the very structures that consequently call for these practices.[5] Genre is a site in which this dialectic of agency takes place.

For Giddens, structures, as I have been arguing about genres, do not merely function as backgrounds for social activities;

instead, they are "fundamental to the production and reproduction of social life" (36), including especially identity formation. Structures function on two simultaneous, homologous levels: the conceptual and the actual. On the one hand, structures are concepts, virtual rules and resources that exist ideologically and that dwell in memory traces regardless of whether we are conscious of them or not (25). They function on the level of ideology, as what Pierre Bourdieu calls "predispositions" (1990; 1998) that frame the ideological and epistemological boundaries of what we assume to be knowable, doable, or at least possible in any given situation. On the other hand, structures do not just have a conceptual existence, but are actualized as social practices that "comprise the situated activities of human agents, reproduced across space and time" (Giddens, 25). According to Giddens, social practices, manifested as certain technologies, conventions, rituals, institutions, tools, and so on, materialize structures. These structural practices are the social means (the tools, resources, conventions) by which we put ideology into practice, the means by which we enact ideology as social action. Thus, they allow human agents to enact and hence reproduce ideological structures—the two recursively interact to form a "duality of structure" on both an epistemological and ontological level. Structures, in short, are both the ideology and the enactment of the ideology. As Giddens explains, "the rules and resources drawn upon in the production and reproduction of social action are at the same time the means of system reproduction" (19). Referring back to our discussion in chapter 2 of Halliday's work (1978) on language as social semiotic, we can compare structures to what Halliday calls "semantic potential" and social practices to what Halliday calls "actualized potential" so that structures constitute the potential for action, and social practices, recursively working within structures, constitute the actualization of that potential. As such, structures both provide a defined, socially recognized, and ideological action-potential (what individuals can do in a given situation) as well as the means of instantiating that potential as actualized social practice

in space and time (what individuals actually do in a given situation).

Insofar as structure represents the ideological potential for action, it is linked to "motive." According to Giddens, motive exists on the conceptual level of structure, meaning that it is already conceptually built into the structural framework of a situation. He explains, for instance, that "motivation refers to potential for action rather than to the mode in which action is chronically carried out by the agent. . . . For the most part motives supply the *overall plans or programmes* . . . within which a range of conduct is enacted" (6; my emphasis). Given this explanation, we can combine Halliday and Giddens to define structure as a motive-potential which frames the possible ways of acting and meaning in any given time and space. Operating on the conceptual level of structure, motive frames the ideological boundaries that socially define and sanction an appropriate "range of conduct" within a particular situation, thereby regulating the possible ways we can act in a specific situation. This notion of motive is related to what Carolyn Miller has defined as exigence. If exigence, as Miller argues, is "a form of social knowledge," a learned recognition of significance that informs how and why we respond to and in a situation, then, indeed, exigence constitutes "an objectified social need" (1984, 157) or motive-potential for action. In short, exigencies inform our desires to act in certain situations and under certain conditions. Often, social motives are so sedimented a part of our social knowledge, so ideologically naturalized, that we as social actors are unaware of their constitutive presence. Motive becomes such a part of what seems our "natural" or logical desire to act that we no longer consider the ideologies that compel our actions. We rarely pause to consider how or why we come to recognize a situation as requiring a certain action. We just act.

We function, then, within motive-potentials that constitute in part what Giddens calls structures. But, as we discussed earlier, structures are not just potentials and desires; they are also actualizations of potential and desire. In order for us to actualize the

potential for action—in order, that is, for us to become agents of social motives—we must internalize and transform social motive into individual action, and this is where intention comes into play. Intention is where motive-potential becomes internalized by actors and then articulated as agency. Whereas motive is socially defined, intention is an individualized interpretation and instantiation of social motive. Intention is a form of social cognition—an embodiment of desire and the means by which individuals become social agents, interpreting and carrying out the social motives available to them. According to Giddens, intention can only exist *in relation to* motive, since "for an event to count as an example of agency, it is necessary at least that what the person does be intentional *under some description*, even if the agent is mistaken about that description" (8; my emphasis). Intention must have some socially defined motive in order to be recognized as a meaningful social action, something that gives it generalizable meaning and value within a particular environment. It must be intentional under some *described* social motive. Yet whereas motive is largely unconscious, intention is conscious, goal-driven, and spatially and temporally bound. Intention is, finally, the acquisition, negotiation, and articulation of motive as social practice, motive being the desire within and against which individuals enact their intentions *and* their agency—their coming into being, their presencings.

The "motive-intention" interaction described above is situated within and reproduces structure, which provides both the ideological conditions and the socio-rhetorical conventions agents need for enacting their social practices. These practices, in turn, reproduce the very structures they enact. This recursive process at work in what Giddens calls structures is similar to the one I have been describing as at work in genres. Genres are structures in that they maintain the ideological potential for action in the form of social motives and the typified rhetorical means of actualizing that potential in the form of social practices. Genres are ideological concepts and material articulations of these concepts at once, maintaining the desires they help individuals fulfill. This

actualized activity (the patient completing the PMHF, for instance) reproduces the ideological conditions—how physicians conceptualize their practices and respond to their patients—that in turn result in the kind of patient-physician interaction that prompted the PMHF in the first place. Intention is where motive is enacted as socio-rhetorical action, and socio-rhetorical action is where motive is reproduced as ideology, so that the enactment of motive as intentional action reproduces the very motive that made it possible. Genre is central to this ecological process.

Returning to Heidegger (1992), then, we notice that genre is both the boundary and the presencing, both the ideological construction of a situation and its rhetorical enactment—in short, the boundary that makes presencing possible. To assume, therefore, that the writer is the locus of invention because he or she is the most immediate agent of his or her intentions is to overlook the larger spheres of agency, such as genres, which organize and generate writers' desires to act. We will now look at some examples of how writers act as they are acted upon by genres.

GENRE AND THE INVENTION OF WRITING SUBJECTS

The power of genre resides, in part, in this sleight of hand, in which social obligations to act become internalized as seemingly self-generated desires to act in certain discursive ways. This does not mean, however, that writers' desires are completely determined, as evidenced by the fact that textual instantiations of a genre are rarely if ever exactly the same. Every time a writer writes within a genre, he or she in effect acquires, interprets, and to some extent transforms the desires that motivate it. As such, every articulation necessarily involves an interpretation, which means that different writers will interpret, to some extent, the same genre motive slightly differently, based on their social and psychological experiences, the demands of their immediate conditions, their social position and location within the larger sphere of culture, their metacognitive awareness of the genre, their knowledge of other genres, and so on. Genre motive alone thus does not "do" anything; it is a potential that requires

individual interpretation and articulation in order for the motive to become actualized as social action. As a result, genres "are always sites of contention between stability and change. They are inherently dynamic, constantly (if gradually) changing over time in response to the sociocognitive needs of individual users" (Berkenkotter and Huckin 1993, 481). This is why no two texts within a genre are exactly alike and also why genres are not completely deterministic. Genres exist at the intersection between the writer as agent of his or her actions and the writer as agent on behalf of already existing social motives.

And so, although genres exert influence over situations and individuals' desires to act within them, there is still room for their users as agents to enact slightly different intentions or even to resist the ideological pull of genres in certain circumstances. Of course, such resistance—to be recognized and valued as resistance and not misinterpretation or, worse, ignorance—must be predicated on one's knowledge of a genre. For example, writers who successfully transgress certain genres often do so because they have established a certain degree of authority in the sphere in which the genres function coupled with a critical awareness of the genres' conventions, in particular what habits of mind are underwritten by these conventions and which of these conventions can be transformed to greatest effect. The intention and the ability to transgress genres is thus *still* connected to the knowledge of the social motives that these genres maintain and articulate. Certainly, some genres—Peter Medway calls them "baggy genres"—provide more room for transgression than others (1998). Generally, we think of literary genres as "baggy" in this sense, meaning they allow for more resistance and playfulness than most nonliterary genres. In fact, they elicit this playfulness as part of the very motive that writers must internalize in order to become considered "creative" writers. Conversely, patients completing the PMHF are less likely to have the same playful intentions, being motivated by different situational exigencies, so that if a patient were, say, to describe his or her symptoms using personification and an allegorically based dialogue between various

body parts, he or she would either be denied treatment or, more likely, be asked to receive psychological treatment instead, a move, ironically, that then situates that individual in another genre system with its own set of relations, subjectivities, commitments, and practices, as Berkenkotter has described in her study of psychotherapy genres. In any case, in doing so the individual has probably succeeded in resisting the patient subject position that the PMHF compels—opting instead, ironically, for a different, perhaps more literary, genre identity—but in so doing, the individual has altered not only the situation into which he or she was attempting to enter, but also the potential relationship between himself or herself and the doctor as well as perhaps even the kind of treatment he or she might receive.[6] In short, the individual has most likely written himself or herself out of one site of discursive and ideological action and into another.

To be sure, then, there is room for resistance and transformation within genres, some genres more than others. And any account of invention, including this book's, must take this into account. The potential for resistance and transformation, however, does not preclude the fact that invention takes place within genres, within the social motives that are sustained rhetorically by generic conventions. As such, transgression, which itself depends on the conventions it seeks to resist, remains a function of genre. According to Brooke and Jacobs, "genre is a site of identity negotiation. . . . Our relationship to genre as writers, thus, follows the same logic as our relationship to social roles as individuals. In the same way we create a self by negotiating our stance toward the social roles we inhabit . . . so we create our self *as writer* by negotiating our stance toward the genres we use" (1997, 217; Brooke's and Jacob's emphasis). Regardless of how we may position ourselves within genre-mediated situations, then, the point remains that we write and speak ourselves in relation to the social and rhetorical conditions we call genres. As Bazerman explains, "through an understanding of the genres available to us at any time we can understand the roles and relations open to us" (1994a, 99). These roles and relations are articulated in various

genres, some more powerfully than others, so that these already available subject positions will inform but never completely determine our more immediate circumstances as writers.

We find remarkable evidence of this phenomenon in Kathleen Jamieson's research on antecedent genres, which complicates Lloyd Bitzer's now classic notion of rhetorical situation by exploring the role that genres play in shaping rhetorical action. Bitzer regards rhetorical situation as "a natural context of persons, events, objects, relations, and an exigence which strongly invites utterance" (1968, 303). According to Bitzer, the context and exigence that form the basis of a rhetorical situation have an ontological status as "real, objective, historical events" existing independently of human definition (C. Miller 1984, 156). That is, the situation that calls for a rhetorical response exists prior to and independently of our rhetorical participation. Jamieson counters, however, that when individuals are faced with an unprecedented rhetorical situation, they often respond "*not merely from the situation* but also from antecedent rhetorical forms" or genres (1973, 163; Jamieson's emphasis). These carry with them the social knowledge individuals have of particular situations (what Giddens refers to as motive) as well as the rhetorical conventions for enacting that knowledge as social action (what Giddens calls intention). As antecedent forms, then, genres constitute the ways we perceive situations, including unprecedented situations, as well as the ways we define our positions within them—that is, they maintain the motives that make our intentions possible.

As an example, Jamieson cites George Washington's response to "the Constitutional enjoinder that the President from time to time report to Congress on the state of the union and recommend necessary and expedient legislation" (1975, 411). Faced with this unprecedented situation, the first president of the United States, who had earlier led a successful rebellion against the British monarchy, promptly responded by delivering a state of the union address "rooted in the monarch's speech from the throne" (411). That is, Washington adopted an already existing

genre to respond to the demands of a new situation, a situation, ironically, that had emerged as a reaction against the situation appropriate for that antecedent genre. Even more remarkably, this presidential address, so similar to the"king's speech" in style, format, and substance, in turn prompted a response from Congress which, far from being critical of the president's speech, reflected the "echoing speech" that the House of Parliament traditionally delivers in response to the king's speech (411). As Jamieson explains, "the parliamentary antecedent had transfused the congressional reply with inappropriate characteristics," characteristics which not only masked an approval not felt by all members of Congress, but also, "because patterned on a genre designed to pay homage and secure privileges," carried "a subservient tone inappropriate to a coequal branch of a democratic government" (413).

What Congress was responding to in its reply to Washington's state of the union address was *not* so much the rhetorical situation as Bitzer describes it as it was the genre function as embodied by the "king's speech." Members of Congress assumed a subject position motivated by the king's speech and consequently enacted that role by responding in ways that were made possible by the "echoing speeches" of Parliament. One genre thus created the socio-rhetorical condition for the other in what Anne Freadman has called an "uptake," a concept adapted from speech act theory to refer to the inter- and intrageneric relationship between texts, in which one text—the king's speech—prompts an appropriate response or uptake from another—the echoing speech—in a particular context or ceremonial (1988, 95; see also 2002). "Patterning the first presidential inaugural on the sermonic lectures of theocratic leaders," Jamieson claims, "prompted an address consonant with situational demands" (1975, 414), demands motivated by the genres communicants had available to them. Antecedent genres thus play a role in constituting subsequent actions, even acts of resistance. Despite efforts to resist monarchical practices, Washington, perhaps unconsciously, assumed a monarchical position when he wrote

his state of the union address as a king's speech, turning to an already textured position to respond to a more immediate and idiosyncratic circumstance. Aware of the powerful constraints antecedent genres impose, Jamieson asks: "How free is the rhetor's choice from among the available means of persuasion?" (1975, 414) She answers:

> To hold that"the rhetor is personally responsible for his rhetoric regardless of genres," is . . . to become mired in paradoxes. We would by that dictum have to interpret our founding fathers as deliberately choosing monarchical forms while disavowing monarchy . . . but those rhetors would be held"personally responsible" for rhetorical choices that in fact they did not freely make. (414–15)

It took until Woodrow Wilson's 1913 presidential address for the state of the union address to completely break from its generic antecedent—one hundred and twenty three years (Jamieson 415). Uptakes, Freadman reminds us, have memories—indeed, very long memories (2002).

Jamieson's research illuminates the role that genres play in constituting not only the ways we respond to and function within unprecedented situations, but also the subject positions we assume in relation to these situations. Genres have this generative power because they maintain the desires that elicit their use—socially sanctioned motives for "appropriately" recognizing and behaving within certain recurring situations—which become part of our intentions as social agents and which we then enact rhetorically as social practices. So even when unique circumstances such as the first state of the union address and the democratic ideals on which it is based call for new intentions—require the invention of something "new"—George Washington, as the writer of this address, performs a subjectivity that is informed in part by the desires embedded in the"king's speech." Washington's intention to invent, thus, does not simply stem from some deep-seated impulse located within him, as popular theories of invention would have us believe. The first state of the union address does not begin only with Washington, although

he is certainly the most visible agent of that beginning. Rather, Washington invents by locating himself within the social motives embedded rhetorically in an already existing genre, which represents a larger sphere of agency within which his own agency takes place. Invention, in this case, is an act of turning outward, not just inward, a way of positioning oneself rhetorically and ideologically at the same time as it is a way of discovering and exploring ideas. When we consider the locus of invention, therefore, we need to look not only at the writer, but also at the genre within which the writer functions. We need to look, that is, at how the writer—whether it is George Washington or D. H. Lawrence—acts as he or she is acted upon. As Anthony Paré and Graham Smart conclude, after conducting research into the workplace genre activities of social workers and bank employees, genres conventionalize collective roles "despite the idiosyncrasies of the various individuals who fill the roles" (1994, 150). Such conclusions challenge us as scholars and teachers of writing to expand and complicate our notions of agency in ways that more fully account for how and why writers invent.

Because they are so entrenched in how we are socialized to respond to recurring situations, genre-constituted desires, subjectivities, and practices are difficult but not impossible to resist. Genres change, among many other reasons, because writers, over time, challenge the genre positions and relations available to them, especially when these positions and relations conflict with other subject positions and relations—gendered, racial, class-based, ethnic—that constitute writers' experiences, as in the case of Patricia Williams, whose *The Alchemy of Race and Rights* (1992) transgresses legal genres by introducing the element of autobiography. This autobiographical turn in legal studies seeks to undermine the ostensibly "objective" nature of legal discourses, in much the same way as ethnography seeks to expose the subjective nature of quantitative research (Helscher 1997, 32–33). But the fact remains that Williams is using autobiography, another genre, to subvert already existing legal genres, which means that she is turning to one subject position, this time an autobiographical

one, in order to resist another subject position, that of an objective, rational lawyer. Autobiographically, Williams is positioned as a chronicler of events—one who has acquired what Brad Peters calls "an autobiographical grammar" that allows her to name the self, contextualize the self, and detect "thematic patterns in the development of the self" (1997, 204). These patterns form the autobiographical plot that organizes the life being narrated. As Eileen Schell notes, in the "autobiographical tradition, there is a double referent in the 'I' who writes—the 'I' who is constructed as the Subject in the current narration of events, and the 'I' who remembers the past events and reconstructs them" (1997, 172). Quoting Shari Benstock's work on autobiography and authority, Schell describes how "the 'gaps in the temporal and spatial dimensions of the text itself are often successfully hidden from the reader *and writer*, so that the fabric of the narrative appears seamless, spun of whole cloth.' . . . This 'seamless' autobiographical writing is magical, 'the self appears organic,' and the writer appears to have control over her subject matter" (1997, 172; my emphasis). To assume, then, that autobiography in some way enables writers to express a more authentic self, something more "personal" or "inherent" in order to resist the apparent objectivity of law, is to overlook the power of genre, any genre, to shape and enable writers' identities even as they transform the genre.[7]

Writers, of course, do not occupy only one genre position. They assume multiple positions and relations as they enact various social practices, both within genre systems and between genre systems. These subject positions and relations are always shifting, always multiple, as they are enacted by individuals within different genres. These positions also carry with them the ideological and libidinal desires that inform them, and which are manifest in terms of various attachments, values, repressions, and defenses. Within genre systems, as we saw in the case of the architecture students' sketchbooks, some genres function to organize and regulate these multiple subjectivities and desires, giving them a kind of coherence and logic. Janet Giltrow has recently described this unifying principle at work

within a system of genres as "meta-genre" (2002). Metagenres are not genres per se, but more like "atmospheres surrounding genres" (Giltrow, 195) which provide the background knowledge and assumptions that tie the genres together and sanction their use, "patrolling or controlling individuals' participation in the collective" and "foreseeing or suspecting their involvements elsewhere" (203). On the one hand, a metagenre helps organize individuals' multiple subjectivities and desires within a genre system in such a way that it reduces the potential friction between these multiple subjectivities and desires. It works to repress conflict. On the other hand, individuals carry this metageneric knowledge with them from one collective to the next, and it is when one metagenre conflicts with another that the possibility for resistance and transformation arises.

Although writers occupy various subject positions, they are not committed to these positions evenly. Because of training, experience, attachment, and/or proclivity, a writer may certainly feel more "at home" in one genre position than another. Such a default or alpha genre position travels with the writer as he or she negotiates various and contradictory genre positions and practices from situation to situation and from day to day. As Marshall Alcorn explains, "subjects contain a great deal of discourse, but some modes of discourse, because they are libidinally invested, repeatedly and predictably function to constitute the subject's sense of identity" (2002, 17). This alpha position and its discursive attachments could very well inform the different subject positions the writer assumes, affecting how the writer, in these different subject positions, interprets and performs different genred desires. Such attachments to certain subjectivities and desires, Alcorn reminds us, are very durable, and individuals will aggressively defend them, which explains both why certain genres persist even when they no longer serve their user's best interests (as we saw in the example of the state of the union address) and why writers will resist certain genres that conflict in some way with their commitments. The multiplicity of subject positions and desires within and between genre systems,

thus, while it certainly makes transgression possible, does not mean that transgression is motivated by an extradiscursive, prerhetorical inherent intention. As Nikolas Rose proposes:

> Resistance—if by that one means opposition to a particular regime for the conduct of one's conduct—requires no theory of agency [as popularly conceived as self-willed]. It needs no account of the inherent forces within each human being that love liberty, seek to enhance their own powers or capacities, or strive for emancipation, that are prior to and in conflict with the demands of civilization and discipline. (1996, 35)

More accurately, resistance arises from the contradictions individuals experience in their multiple subject positions—in their "constant movement across different practices that subjectify them in different ways" (Rose, 35). What appears as an interior desire to resist generic conventions and identities might actually be what Rose calls a "kind of infolding of exteriority" (36), an effort on the part of writers to work internally through the contradictory subject positions and relations they assume as they write various genres.

As Pierre Bourdieu explains it, resistance and change occur when there is a breakdown in logic between practice and ideology, that is, when individuals begin to experience a tension between the materiality of their practice and the "systems of structured, structuring dispositions" that Bourdieu calls "habitus" (1990, 52). The habitus endows practices with a "logic" or "common sense." But when the actual conditions of practice no longer support the "common sense" that underscores and motivates them, a breakdown in logic occurs that the habitus can no longer sustain. Such is the case with genres, which also predispose specific practices by endowing them with a certain common sense. When a breakdown occurs between the writer as agent *of* his or her actions and the writer as agent *on behalf of* the genre, writers, as we saw in the case of Patricia Williams, can try to transform the genre to make it reflect more accurately the actual conditions of practice.[8]

Genres, then, shape and enable our positions as writers, even as they serve as the potential sites of resistance, because they maintain powerful desires which writers work within and against as they move from one situation to the next. This process of socialization and transformation takes place discursively, and is dramatized in the ways that individuals are taught and learn to write (see, for example, Bartholomae 1985; Bazerman 1994a; Berlin 1987; Bizzell 1992; Brodkey 1987; Cooper and Holzman 1989; Faigley 1992; Freedman 1993a; Lu 1991; Schryer 1994; Villanueva 1993). Anthony Paré, who for years has studied the role of writing in the socialization processes of social workers, describes how this process works. One genre social workers frequently write is the "assessment report," which contains a social worker's initial review of a client's condition and needs. In his research, Paré observes that the assessment report, like other social work genres, is loaded with such "self-effacing constructions as 'the undersigned believes' and 'the worker recommends,' as well as completely self-erasing phrases, such as 'it is believed,' 'the assessment is based on,' and 'recommendations include the following'" (1998, 1). These rhetorical self-erasures, meant to mimic the ostensible certainty of science and its positivistic observation of phenomena, is common in social work, "where allegiance to 'objectivity' is like a professional mantra" (2), socializing employees into the institutional life of social work. Interestingly, however, Paré finds no "official" documentation of this mantra: "Although I have not in 10 years of looking actually found a printed or explicitly stated regulation against the use of the first person pronoun, and despite the fact that students and workers are often not clear why they shouldn't use it or who told them not to, there is almost universal obedience to the rule in social work" (1–2). We can, following Giddens, speculate that such a rule exists on the ideological level of genre, where motive has a virtual existence as "objectified social need" and where individuals enact motives unconsciously, only aware of them as they are instantiated in textual and social practices. In any case, when social workers enact their institutionally motivated "professional,

disembodied persona" (Paré, 4) in such genres as the assessment report, they are at once rhetorically instantiating as their intention that motive for objectivity and, in turn, recursively reproducing that motive as part of social work ideology. In short, they are writing themselves into the very conditions that they are reproducing in their writing.

Paré's research shows how writers acquire desires and subjectivities as they learn to write genres. For example, the following transcript from a discussion between a social work supervisor and a student named Michael reveals the early stages of this socialization. The student asks, "It has to be impersonalized as in 'the worker,' even if it's you, you have to say 'the worker'?" (2002, 67). The supervisor's answer is illuminating, and so I cite it in its entirety:

> That's right. So you wrote here, "I contacted." You want to see it's coming from the worker, not you as Michael, but you as the worker. So when I'm sometimes in Intake and [working] as the screener, I write in my Intake Notes "the screener inquired about." . . . So it becomes less personal. You begin to put yourself into the role of the worker, not "I, Michael." . . . [I]t's a headset; it's a beginning. And even in your evaluations . . . the same thing: as opposed to "I," it's "worker," and when we do a CTMSP for placement for long-term care, "the worker." So it positions us, I think. It's not me, it's my role; and I'm in the role of a professional doing this job. (Paré 2002, 67; my emphasis)

What does the supervisor mean by "it's a headset; it's a beginning"? A beginning of what? According to Heidegger, this beginning could refer to the moment of presencing that begins in relation to boundaries, the moment when the supervisor becomes "interpellated" or "hailed"—to borrow terms from Louis Althusser—by the genre into the subject position of social worker. As Althusser formulates it, ideology interpellates individuals as subjects, who actualize that potential both in the texts they produce and the identities they assume as social workers. This process of interpellation works consensually, Althusser

insists, by making it appear as though we are *choosing* the subject position imposed on us, choosing, that is, our own subjectivity (1984). As the supervisor tells the student, "*You* begin to put *yourself* into the role of the worker." This interpellation is what the patient undergoes as he or she completes the Patient Medical History Form in the physician's office. It is the process of presencing into subjectivity that the supervisor alludes to—in this case, the process by which the student, Michael, becomes positioned by the assessment report into the role of professional "doing this job." Once again, writers begin to write by locating themselves within rhetorical ecosystems we call genres. It is within genres that writers invent themselves, their subjects, and their texts.

As a writer, Michael occupies multiple subject positions both within social work genre systems and within various other genre systems. He might be a patient, a social worker, a student (and as a student, a first-year writing student, a sociology student, a physics student, and so on), a defendant, a job candidate, and so on. Each of these positions is mediated by a variety of genres at work within the various situations and activities Michael encounters and performs everyday.[9] To say, then, that the assessment report is a self-effacing genre, as some might claim, may not be entirely accurate. It is not so much that the genre is self-effacing as it is self-constructing, although this constructed self may very well repress the other possible selves that could be performed in this genred site of action. The emerging professional persona that the assessment report helps make possible is no less a self than the self that emerges from writing more intimate, "personal" genres, such as the classroom "log" or "journal." Recall, for example, D. Gordon Rohman's suggestion (described in the previous chapter) that teachers should encourage student writers to keep journals as a way of discovering themselves (Rohman 1994, 44–45). Rohman's assumption is that the journal, as a genre, allows students to access and actualize their true selves, to establish, in the words of one of Rohman's students, "a discovery of myself" (45). In fact, however, Aviva Freedman and Peter

Medway argue that the classroom journal, promising to provide students with the opportunity to express and explore their thoughts in a manner unfettered by formal conventions and strict rules of argumentation, actually constitutes a new set of institutional conventions, conventions seemingly overlooked by Rohman and others who espouse an introspective theory of invention (Freedman and Medway 1994b). As Freedman and Medway explain, "although the writer's focus was now claimed to be solely on thinking about the topic, the rhetorical demands had not disappeared; they had simply taken a new form" (1994b, 17). The new rhetorical demands made by the journal required a "self" as constructed as the more restrictive social work self constructed by the assessment report. Although the generic criteria of the journal were not made explicit, research by Barnes, Barnes, and Clark revealed that

> clever students knew they were there and learned to manipulate textual features to create an impression of artless expression. The genres the successful students evolved were an effective response to the new rhetorical exigence, part of which was an expectation that texts be produced of a certain length, expressivity, unconventionality, and sparkiness and that they mix observations about the material with indications of personal enjoyment, frustration, or amusement. Many of the texts fulfilling these expectations were indeed refreshing and delightful; less apparent at the time was that they were refreshing and delightful works of literary artifice. (Freedman and Medway, 17–18)

The classroom journal, then, like the assessment report, locates the writer within a discursive and ideological formation, in which he or she acquires, negotiates, and articulates particular desires, subjectivities, and activities. Even a genre like freewriting, which gives the illusion of a free space from which writers can begin to write, situates writers, consciously or unconsciously, within positions of articulation. As such, rather than assuming the writer to be the primary locus of invention, we should think of the writer as always positioned by genre within

situated desires in order to perform certain social practices in a certain rhetorical manner.

Rather than claiming that a certain genre "effaces" self, then, it is perhaps more accurate to say that a certain genre replaces or, better yet, adds to the range of possible selves that writers have available to them. This way, we avoid problematic claims such as the ones Lester Faigley and Randall Popken make about the way the résumé as a genre ironically asks job candidates to construct a self while formally and rhetorically denying that self (Faigley 1992, 140-42; Popken 1999, 92–93). Faigley, for instance, describes how "agents are consistently deleted in résumé descriptions" in such subjectless sentences as "Maintained power control packages" and "Performed and supervised technical training of personnel" (141). In addition, social actions become represented as abstract nouns such as "sales effectiveness" and "personal relationships," all together leading to the representation of the agent in an abstract nominal style which renders him or her absent (141). Certainly, these résumé conventions, along with others, such as the generic categories ("career objectives," "work experience," "education") in which candidates must represent themselves; the spatial limitations (one or, at most, two pages); and the "topical prohibitions" (generally, no discussion of home life, nonwork interests, and so on) all impose severe limitations on how a writer represents himself or herself in this genre (Popken 1999, 92–93). Doubtless, these generic conventions elicit the writer of the résumé into the subject position of "job candidate," a commodified subject trying to sell himself or herself by embodying his or her skills, work experiences, and education (Faigley, 142). But to make this claim is not then to conclude that the résumé effaces its writer's subjectivity (142) or, for that matter, that "the résumé has few properties that permit writers to reveal 'presence' . . . a sense of *an individual human being who produced the document*" (Popken, 93; Popken's emphasis). If anything, actually, the résumé invokes presence, a particular résumé identity that is as "real" as any other genre identity that writers have available to them. To a great extent, writers will be more attached to one

genre identity than to others, perhaps because it is a subject position they most frequently occupy and so seems more "natural," or because they feel emotional attachment to it, or because it is one in which they are most successful, or because it is a position that aligns them with institutions of power. This default or alpha identity will push up against the genres a writer encounters, from the most to the least "personal," but nonetheless, these genres maintain the situational conditions within and against which individuals invent and define themselves as participants.

GREETING CARDS AND THE ARTICULATION OF DESIRE

I will conclude this chapter by briefly analyzing how even "humble genres" (Bazerman 1997a, 298) such as greeting cards organize and generate a range of possible and at times conflicting desires that regulate and help individuals perform situated activities and subjectivities. Although there are variations, generally, we typically recognize greeting cards (GCs) as folded cards with some kind of illustration and message on the front, a brief message on the inside sometimes written in rhyme (which usually remarks in some way on the front message and/or illustration), and a blank space for a more personal message from the sender. The back of the card includes the name of its manufacturer, its price, as well as a bar-code. The GC is also fitted with an envelope for delivery purposes. (More recent e-greeting cards add multimedia and dispense with envelopes and so forth, but they still organize a similar discursive and ideological space.) Traditionally, GCs bear messages of goodwill and are used on socially acknowledged special occasions, such as birthdays, holidays, anniversaries, and graduations. However, GCs have recently come to be used on more commonplace occasions such as a promotion at work, a retirement, or a move to a new city and to exchange more everyday sentiments such as "thinking of you," "thank you," "good luck," and so on. In fact, as we observed in chapter 2, the cards now seem to sanction, and, in turn, reproduce, the very occasions that call for their use in such examples as the "secretaries' day card," "the bosses' day card,"

"the grandparents' day card," and so on. These cards not only respond to certain occasions; they also maintain these occasions as certain desires that their use helps fulfill.

Any serious examination of the GC will have to take into account its various subgenres. If we define genres as typified sites of action that at once elicit and reproduce recurrent situations by organizing and generating the desires, activities, subjectivities, and relations that take place within these situations, then we have to consider the possibility that a "humorous birthday card from a friend" is a different subgenre from an "anniversary card from a husband." In fact, the *"humorous* birthday card from a friend" would even have to be a different subgenre from the *"serious* birthday card from a friend," or, for that matter, the "serious birthday card from a *wife."* Each of these subgenres orchestrates a more specific site of action, engaging the sender and receiver in a specific textured economy with its own attachments, relations, subjectivities, and consequences.[10]

Whatever we wish to call this constellation of related subgenres and however finely we wish to distinguish them, what is of interest here are the various social relations and subject positions these sub-genres make possible to us as a culture. When an individual approaches a GC display, he or she is confronted with hundreds of choices: cards for various occasions and cards representing various social relations, including receiver and sender subjectivities. These situations and relations are labeled on the display stand. First, there are the overarching labels, indicating the occasion the card represents: birthday, anniversary, Mother's Day, Christmas, and so on. Below these labels are more specific distinctions, which represent various subject positions: friend, wife, husband, son, daughter, daughter-in-law, father, mother, lover, and so on. Although these positions generally refer to the recipients of the GC, they indirectly regulate the cultural positions that the senders assume as a result of engaging in this relationship with the receiver. If I choose, for example, a GC labeled as "wife," then I enter into this relationship in the role of husband. I might instead have chosen a card

for a lover or friend, or a general one about age. Each would situate me in a different position of articulation. In each case, the GC has begun to reproduce larger cultural prescriptions as to who can engage in what relationships, when, and under what conditions. The occasions represented on the CG display, organized by subjectivities and relations, are largely indicative of what our culture sanctions as the potential social relations and identities we can assume on a given occasion, textually embodying the range of possible occasions, desires, relations, and subjectivities available to us. This GC-maintained motive potential informs the ideological superstructure which for Giddens defines the allowable sentimental intentions we can internalize and then enact. Subjects who do not find themselves represented in or who opt out of these subjectivities, desires, and relations will often have to enact their subjectivities in opposition to these formations.

An individual, of course, "chooses" from these various GC relations and subject positions. It is not uncommon, in fact, to find oneself lingering for lengthy periods of time before the array of desire-able subjectivities and relations trying to locate the card most suitable for one's particular situation and one's particular relation to the receiver. We struggle because we want to find the right card, the one that appropriately actualizes *our* relation to the receiver as well as *our* sense of who *we* imagine ourselves to be. Yet what we choose is always going to situate us within a discursive and ideological formation that frames who we are and how we relate to the receiver. We choose, that is, a subject position in the Althusserian sense of being interpellated. The GC does what an ideological apparatus does: it procures from individuals the "recognition that they really do occupy the place it designates for them as theirs in the world" (Althusser 1984, 52). It positions us as agents of the desires it elicits. So no matter what our "real" relation is to the receiver, that relationship becomes in part mediated by the socio-rhetorical environment of the card. Once chosen, the card becomes not merely a textured representation of its receiver, but rather situates the receiver within a

desired subjectivity that is then invoked by the sender. At the same time, when we as senders write our personal message (PM—and not all senders write PMs), we too are being invoked by the card: the GC position we chose to occupy, the style of the card (humorous, somber, serious, playful), the relation established by the already existing message and illustration, etc. That is, the GC in which we write our PM is not some free, open space we use to communicate a message we invented beforehand; rather, it informs the nature of the relation between us as writers and the receiver as audience because to some extent both writer and audience positions are already partly defined by the card and its genre. Within what Freadman calls the "jurisdiction" (2002) of the genre, the PM becomes an "uptake" of the card's message and illustration.

Of course, PMs particularize the GC to our immediate circumstances. I have received cards in which part of the printed message was crossed out by the sender in an effort to make the card apply specifically to our relationship. Frequently, senders will write their PM in direct relation to the GC's message or illustration, extending the printed message or resisting it. But even this act of resistance is made possible by the situation of the card, which we identify with and/or rebel against in our uptake. An example of such identity construction and the possibility of resistance can be seen if we look at a line of Hallmark GCs. Called the "Mahogany" line, these cards are designed specifically for people of color in an effort, presumably, to include people of color in these commodified desires, subjectivities, and relations. Not surprisingly, these cards represent cultural stereotypes. For example, non-Mahogany GCs that offer congratulations for the birth of a child will commonly represent the birth of a child either as a solemn, blessed occasion or as an occasion for sleepless nights for the parents, great joy, and endless bottles and diapers. But rarely if ever would we find a card such as the following, from the Mahogany line, which describes the newborn African-American infant as "the pride of his race" and then admonishes his parents to instill "morals and values"

into the child. In this case, individuals may resist the card in a number of ways, either by choosing not to purchase it, by choosing to write a letter of complaint to Hallmark, or by using the occasion of the card to comment on or subvert its racial assumptions in their PM to the receiver. Regardless of the form of resistance, however, the fact of the card remains as one more cultural formation of African-American identity. These cards not only embody the desires that inform their racialized assumptions, but they also position writers and readers of these cards within these desires, which organize and generate the choices writers make when they write in these genred spaces.

The fact that as writers we always confront representations of who we are and how we should behave whenever we write within a genre does not mean we do not or cannot contest them. We do. But, as I have been arguing, we do so not by escaping genre and entering some genre-free environment in which we can access some inherent identity. Rather, we do so in part by engaging other genres, which draw on other subject positions and desires. This way, our identity is always plural and always in the process of presencing as we are informed by desires which are reproduced and rhetorically actualized by the various genres we use every day. Ignoring the constitutive influence of these genres leaves teachers and scholars of writing with only a partial view of agency. And so a great deal of the invention techniques we research and teach begin with the writer. We teach heuristics such as freewriting, clustering, and brainstorming in order to help students discover and explore ideas to write about. Our overriding assumption continues to be that the writer is the locus of invention.

To argue that writers' intentions are also generated and organized by the genres they have available to them, however, is to posit genres, not just writers, as the locus of invention. Writers invent by locating themselves within genres, which function as habits as well as habitats for acting in language. Social workers, for example, must invent themselves within the genre of the assessment report as they are writing an assessment report. The assessment report, therefore, does not only provide social

workers with a habitual way of using language; it is also a habitat for using language, a way of conceptualizing and enacting social work practices, desires, relations, and subjectivities—indeed, a way of *being* in the world as a social worker. In researching and teaching invention, we need to redirect our attention from the writer to the writer's social and rhetorical location in the world, the habitat in which the writer functions. In a way, as I described in the previous chapter, we need to return to a more rhetorical theory of invention, in which invention takes place, quite literally, within a place—what classical rhetoricians called the topoi or commonplaces. These conceptual and rhetorical places served as the general sites to which rhetors would turn to discover ideas and means of persuasion for any given situation. In this chapter, I have considered genres as such sites of invention, situated topoi within which writers invent themselves as well as their subjects. In the next chapter, I will examine how writers reposition themselves within sites of invention by looking at an environment that is coordinated by a set of genres, each of which embodies its own "topoi" or habitat—social activities, relations, subject positions, and rhetorical conventions for enacting these activities, relations, and positions—within the overall environment: the first-year writing classroom. Embodying and helping communicants to enact these habitats within the classroom, genres can teach us a great deal about why and how writers invent as they reposition themselves from one genre to another. The case I have tried to make in this chapter, that genres situate writers within positions of articulation, and the more detailed analysis I will provide in the next chapter lead me to argue, as I will in the final chapter, that we can and should teach students how to access and interrogate these genred positions of articulation so that students can participate in these positions more meaningfully and critically.