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The Emergence of a Community Text

The overarching question that has guided the analysis in this book is "What constitutes a literate text in African-American churches?" This question has proven to be a complex one that has spawned other important questions and complex answers. From the analysis in the previous chapters emerge questions about boundaries within texts, roles of participants in creating and "composing texts," and expectations about how texts are used and owned. Clearly, the sermon as it is constituted in the churches explored in this book is a complex, dynamic text that has multiple layers and that functions as both process and product within its community context. The data reported in chapters 3 and 4 point to a community institution, the African-American church, in which the main text—the African-American sermon—demands that educators and researchers rethink or broaden their conceptions of what constitutes a literate text, and by implication their conceptions of composer (e.g., writer and/or speaker) and audience. This rethinking process has major implications for literacy learning and teaching.

In this chapter, I explore a number of these areas based on the analysis in earlier chapters: how we define writer and/or speaker and audience, how we think about multiple shifts in point of view, how we approach the questions of ownership of text, the relation between oral and written language, and the relation between rhetorical concepts of ethos, pathos, and logos. Finally, I explore the questions that this analysis raises for classroom practice, particularly classrooms where writing and language instruction occurs.

THE BLURRING OF BOUNDARIES

Any discussion of the definition of text that emerges from the analysis in this study must center on the blurred boundaries between ministers and

congregations and the intertextual relations that exist within the text
(between participants and texts, modes of texts, participant and
participant, and so on). Numerous theorists, particularly those
interested in reader-response and reception theory (Barthes, 1977;
Fetterly, 1978; Iser, 1974; Rosenblatt, 1978) as well as in the challenge of
computer-mediated communication (Bolter, 1991; Landow, 1992;
Lanham, 1993), have called into question the roles of the author or writer
and reader. African-American ministers and their congregations enact
such calls by virtually turning the notions of audience and writer 'upside
down, as evidenced in the churches in this book. As the previous
analysis indicates, the sermon is a dialogue between minister and
congregation. Even though a minister, like Reverend M., may write a
complete manuscript from which to preach, that minister must allow
space for the congregation to enter the text and take part in the dialogue.
In the examples cited in chapters 3 and 4, this dialogue takes place in the
form of question (direct and implied) and answer conversations,
congregants providing feedback (encouragement, affirmation, and so
on) to the minister in the sermon, and the congregation taking over the
text as when the Ohio congregation took over the song "I Thank You
Jesus" in one of Reverend M.'s revival sermons.

The earlier discussion of the dialogic nature of the sermon
indicates that time after time, the roles between speaker or writer and
audience interchanged. Audience became writer and/or speaker, at
times, co-creating the text with the minister. This practice was not just an
occasional occurrence but an expected one. The boundaries between
minister and congregation—between composer of text and consumer of
text—were at times so blurred that what clearly began to take shape
from the analysis was the concept of a community text. In fact, as I
examined the sermon and the roles of the ministers and congregations in
producing the sermon, it became increasingly difficult if not impossible
for me to conceive of the sermon as anything other than a community
text where multiple participants must be present to "write" in order for
the text to exist. That is, the African-American sermon is a text that not
only emerges from a unique community institution, but it also functions
uniquely in that institution. Its role very much depends on the
relationship between the participants in the worship service to create
and shape the text. In short, African-American sermons, a major literate
text in this community institution, are sites of interaction between writer
or speaker and audience, sites where, occasionally, audience becomes
speaker and speaker becomes audience.

This concept of interchangeable roles between writer or speaker
and audience and the expectations attached to those roles point to the
inadequacy of those terms. Particularly inadequate are the terms *writer*

and *speaker*. A more appropriate term might be *composer* rather than writer or speaker, because neither term adequately characterizes what the ministers or their audiences do. They write and speak. *Composer* encompasses both writer and speaker, yet does not privilege one over the other. It is interesting that in composition studies, there is much discussion about the composing process, but little discussion of the writer as a composer. The point here is that the composer is not a solitary individual, writing in isolation. The composer is the specific African-American church community made up of multiple participants who themselves are members of various communities. What the participants share are their cultural bonds as African Americans, their participation in an African-American worship tradition, and their shared experiences as residents of large urban cities. Each time that the participants come together to experience a sermon, to create a text, they bring with them their shared and diverse histories and experiences, their common cultural backgrounds. These shared experiences and cultural backgrounds seem to outweigh the differences in educational backgrounds, socioeconomic class, age, gender, and so on that exist in each of the churches. And it is these experiences that they share, their cultural bonds, that allow the participants to compose a community text through which they create a community identity.

This community text demands that minister and congregation—the composers—meet certain community expectations, expectations that dictate behavior related to the making of and receiving of this text. As highlighted in an earlier discussion on how the ministers prepare the sermons, the ministers, particularly Reverend M. and Dr. N., chose sermon subjects that related to the congregation members' concerns not only as Christians but as African-American Christians. The ministers also chose topics that spoke to each of them as individuals facing their own struggles. As Reverend M. described earlier, he sees himself sitting out in the pew and he asks himself, "what do I need to hear from the pulpit?" Most likely, other people need to hear that, too. Reverend M.'s point is that ministers must not separate themselves from the congregation and think that they are only preaching to "them." This participant stance, however, reinforces that ministers who place themselves among the congregation are both writer and reader, speaker and listener, composer and audience. So that when the ministers are preparing their sermons either by writing complete manuscripts, writing outlines, jotting down notes, or making mental notes, they are constantly taking on dual roles. Therefore, it is not a big leap for them to make from speaker to listener in the pulpit when the congregation demands such a move. In fact, the ministers expect to make such moves.

Thus, if the ministers occupy the dual roles of composer and audience, what then of the congregation? What is their role in relation to the text? While the ministers are clearly the participants who have the most visible control of the text—the ministers in this study chose the topics, the related Biblical Scriptures, and composed the majority of the text—the congregations were by no means passive bystanders at the mercy of the ministers. It is no secret that typical African-American congregations are active participants in the sermon. This study only confirms what many others have reported in that respect. Congregations are not without some control in the making of the text.

Because of the dialogic nature of the sermon, the congregation is a necessary participant. Not only must ministers allow spaces for the congregation to enter the text, but ministers must also be prepared for the congregation to select its own spaces where it chooses to enter. When the congregation "answers back" or encourages the minister through vocal and physical responses (clapping, standing, shouting, waving hands, and so on), they are composing, and thus, completing the text. For the three ministers in this study, most often, when a congregation remains silent throughout a sermon, a dialogue has not taken place, the congregation has not entered the text, and the text is a failure.[1] Hence, the congregation, the audience for this text, like the ministers, is both reader and writer, listener and speaker, audience and composer. For the community, listening and reading require active, verbal participation.

Within these African-American church communities, the roles of composer (writer or speaker) and audience (reader or listener) are then further complicated by the role of a higher being who composes the Word—God—the origin of the Word. Each minister, while going through complex, extensive preparatory stages of composing a sermon, points to this divine inspiration as the source of the sermons. In Reverend M.'s story about his experiences in Cuba, he says "I can't give it to you until God gives it to me," meaning he can't prepare his sermon until God gives him the Word to preach.

Mitchell (1989) stated that in most churches, particularly African-American churches, both minister and congregation believe that God speaks to the minister, who in turn passes the message on to the congregation through the sermon. In this case, the minister is also a transmitter of God's Word. Thus, this view of where the Word originates suggests a collaborative act in which there is a hierarchy: God,

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[1]Pitts (1993) rightly pointed out that there are places in African-American worship services where silence or, at least, a more meditative mood are acceptable and expected, namely during devotional services that normally precede the main worship service.

the preacher, and the congregation respectively contribute to the making of the sermon. The hierarchy, however, is not a fixed one because it is believed that in most Christian churches God can and does speak directly to the members of the congregation as well as the preacher. Consequently, the minister and congregation could even occupy the same level in the hierarchy. Again, boundaries can and do blur. At no point, however, is there a solitary writer; even when these ministers are in their studies writing or composing mentally, they are not composing alone. They are aware of the congregation who will take part in the composing event and of God's Word as the words they preach.

SHIFTS IN POINT OF VIEW

The boundaries of the composer and audience roles are further complicated by the ministers' constant shifts in point of view. Most congregants are used to preachers speaking to them in second person ("You should take time to pray," "y'all don't know what I'm talking about," "Give God the glory"), a practice followed by each of these ministers from time to time in their sermons. However, it was the ministers' shifts in point of view into first-person plural and singular that most significantly contributed to the blurred boundaries between the ministers' roles as composer and audience. It was at these preaching moments in the discourse that the ministers' dual roles were most evident and that the ministers' emphasis on their place in the community was most important. As an earlier discussion suggests, each minister emphasized the communal bonds between him and his congregation by constantly speaking in a collective voice: *we, us, our*. By consistently making the congregation and themselves one big group striving toward the same goals and facing similar struggles, the ministers were successful in establishing and maintaining the community identities I spoke of earlier. Again, in the case of these ministers, the use of first-person plural pronouns emphasizes communal bonds and eliminates distance between participants.

When the ministers shift to the first-person singular point of view, the boundaries between participants not only blur, they seem to disappear altogether. In chapter 3, there are several sermon excerpts from the ministers, especially from Reverends P. and M., in which, although the ministers are speaking in the first person singular, they seem to be speaking not only for themselves but for the congregation as well. The "I" becomes a collective "I" or a representational "I" where the minister becomes one with his congregation. As indicated in my fieldnotes, it was during those preaching moments, when the minister seemed to become one with the congregation, that the level of audience

response was at its highest. The dialogue was most visible and the congregation appeared most moved. Thus, this practice of shifting point of view that many academics would label an ambiguous point of view and criticize as something needing to be "fixed" in student essays, was viewed as neither negative nor ambiguous in these churches. Clearly, the ministers know when shifting the point of view will be most rhetorically effective. They have the authority, by virtue of their roles in their churches, to speak for the people. This authority was granted because the ministers and congregation had achieved the community identity for which they had been striving. Authority was also granted to the ministers by the congregation because the ministers demonstrated in the sermons that they could provide personal testimony to what God had done from them. Mitchell (1989) stated that, "it must be clear that he [the minister] is filled by the same joy he declares to his congregation. If indeed the preacher has not tasted and seen that it is good, he has nothing, really, to say" (p. 369). This type of testimony was another way for the ministers to identify with the congregation, to show that they, too, had struggled just like members of the congregation. The ministers could speak for themselves and the congregation at the same time because of their shared experiences; the ministers' struggles were the people's struggles.

These shifts were also strategies that made me rethink, yet again, how I view the minister as the composer of the text and the congregation as the audience. When the minister places himself with the audience and/or when his voice becomes their voice, he is both composer and audience simultaneously. At those moments, the boundary between minister and congregation is so indistinct because the minister and congregation become one, at least during the preaching moments described previously.

"WHOSE TEXT IS IT?"

The discussion thus far has centered on the roles of the participants, and particularly on the ways that the ministers and congregations interact within the sermon, complicating traditional rhetorical concepts of writer or speaker and reader or listener (and by implication the concept of text). But the discussion also has implications for an issue which looms large in the academy, namely intellectual property or ownership of text. Attitudes about ownership of text raise important issues in this study because they raise concerns about literate behavior and literate texts in the African-American church. Increased computer technology, electronic texts, changes in copyright laws, and a growing body of literature on collaboration have all led to discussions among academics, publishers,

advertisers, and countless others about "whose text is it?" Closer to academic home, Kinko's, a national copying company that was found in violation of copyright laws, eliminated its course packet copying services in order to avoid copyright infringement. The World Intellectual Property Organization is hard at work on these issues, while in the United States, the Clinton administration signed into law the Digital Millennium Copyright Act (October 1998), and Congress passed the "Sonny Bono" bill to extend Copyright to life plus 70 years. As evidence of its growing importance in Composition studies, at recent (1994 to the present) Conference on College Composition and Communication meetings, a half-day workshop has been devoted to this topic, and the journal *Computers and Composition* recently devoted a special issue to the topic of intellectual property. Additionally, there have been national and international conferences devoted solely to issues about intellectual property. In light of this growing concern about ownership of text, it is ironic that in the three churches in this study where the sermon as text is so important, ownership of text was not voiced as a major concern. Indeed, the ministers' dominant attitude about ownership of sermons contrasted significantly with prevailing attitudes in the academy and with U.S. laws.

The prevailing attitude about ownership of text in the academy is that once someone makes a statement that is tangible in a written or oral text (i.e., that is not considered common knowledge), that person "owns" that statement. Any use of that statement or any part of it must be attributed to the original source in some form of a citation. I found the three ministers in this study taking a considerably different view of ownership of text. Not once did any minister interviewed for this study indicate that once he preached a sermon it was his sermon and no one else had a right to it. Furthermore, the ministers did not expect citations.

Reverend M. made an important statement that characterizes how the preachers feel about "whose text it is." In one of our interviews (referenced in chap. 4), he states that "the sermon belongs to the moment." Once it is preached, it is impossible for the same sermon to be preached again. Mitchell (1989) and the ministers in this study suggest that even when a minister preaches a sermon a second time, it is not the same sermon. When the preaching moment changes so does the sermon. Because the sermon is a dialogue, when the congregation changes, the dialogue changes. Thus, a new text—a new sermon—is created despite the minister using the same topic and Scripture and many of the same words. This process points to the sermon as a text that is constantly being written, rewritten, and reinterpreted. Mitchell suggested that even a manuscript sermon is not a fixed entity because every time that manuscript is read, it is reinterpreted, and a new text emerges. Although

historically, literacy as equated to the printed word was meant to eradicate the problem of impermanence, in these African-American churches, even the written sermon is not permanent. Derrida (1976), of course, took great pains to demonstrate that although writing must by definition be iterable, its meanings can never be permanent.

Reverend M. makes another statement in one of his sermons (also highlighted in chap. 4) that is even more important for understanding how ownership of text is viewed in these three churches. He recalls what his father, now a retired minister, used to say to him: "Once you preach it publicly, it ain't yours no more." This statement is one that Reverend M. still follows. It is a statement, however, that is completely antithetical to academic principles of ownership of text. People who do not cite their sources are plagiarists and subject to disciplinary actions in academic and publishing circles. Yet these ministers, all of whom have been educated in traditional educational institutions, maintain that sermons are public property. This means that the ministers in this study may borrow phrases, statements, ideas, topics, and so on from other sermons preached by other ministers and that other ministers may borrow from their sermons. Rarely, however, if ever, has anyone spoken of an entire sermon being borrowed. This borrowing seems to happen with enough consistency in African-American churches that many ministers would be hard pressed to name the original sources for some statements. And they would probably argue that finding the original source is not necessary because each minister (and congregation) takes a piece of discourse and makes it his or her own within the preaching moment.

However, in light of the increasing number of collections of sermons that are being published (including a collection of Reverend M.'s sermons), this attitude about ownership of text may change because of publishing companies' copyright privileges. Although Reverend M.'s attitude has not changed because of his sermons being published, what role will the publishing companies have in dealing with copyright issues? Although sermons have been published for centuries, doing so is still a relatively new phenomenon for African-American preachers. A more popular and acceptable tradition in African-American communities has been recording sermons.[2] Reverend C. L. Franklin (father of singer Aretha Franklin) was one of the most famous African-

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[2]There are several collections of sermons by African-American preachers that have been published. Several collections of Martin Luther King's sermons (and speeches) have been published, as have sermons by Vernon Johns, a predecessor of King's. More recently, collections by J. Alfred Smith and Ella Pearson Mitchell have gained popularity. Yet, the published versions are not as popular as the recorded versions.

American preachers in the United States because of the widespread sales of his albums. Recordings of sermons are popular because they fit more closely within the oral tradition than written sermons. The recordings tend to be of live worship services so that listeners feel a sense of having "gone to church." Cassettes, of course, have taken the place of albums, and there are a growing number of churches with tape ministries—churches that record the sermons on cassette for the purpose of widespread distribution (and fundraising). With recordings and publications, certain sermons become identified with certain preachers. For example, "The Eagle Stirs His Nest" has been identified with Reverend Franklin and "What Makes You So Strong?" has come to be identified with Reverend M. Yet, there is still no major push within African-American churches to move toward a more academic practice of citing sources within the sermons.

Reverend P. and Dr. N. hardly ever cited sources other than Biblical Scriptures in their sermons. Yet, Reverend P., in one of his interviews, discusses reading and using published commentaries to help him prepare his sermons. He feels no need to mention these commentaries in his sermons. He is not expected to by his audience. Reverend M., unlike many African-American preachers, does cite sources (critical and biblical) in his sermons, yet he sees his own sermons as public property. He walks a delicate line between two community institutions' expectations about ownership of text.

The African-American church's philosophy about intellectual property has already contributed to major conflicts in academic circles. Several scholars have accused Martin Luther King, Jr. of plagiarism because he allegedly did not cite the sources for many of the ideas that appeared in his articles and sermons. Miller (1992), whose *Voice of Deliverance: The Language of Martin Luther King, Jr. and Its Sources* highlights many of the sources of King's sermons and writings, points to the traditions of the Black folk pulpit and Black Baptist preaching (particularly in the form of King's father) as having the greatest influence on King, Jr. Miller (1992) reported that "Martin Luther King, Sr., and his friend Benjamin Mays [noted scholar and former president of Morehouse College] described the practice of borrowing as "very common" among the preachers they knew" (p. 35). However, Miller reported that the elder King later denied this practice in a 1983 interview with Miller. The elder King may have felt and actually been caught between the tensions of the African-American preaching and academic traditions. His wavering position may have had more to do with his knowledge that the academic position on borrowing challenged the African-American preaching tradition.

The younger King, Baptist preacher and son of a Baptist preacher, was raised in the same Black preaching tradition as the ministers in this study. Again, this tradition taught him that no man or woman could own language—stating something in a public forum made it public property. King, Jr. seemed to have fallen victim to being evaluated by the standards of academic and publishing institutions whose rules were alien to the community with which he was most identified. Among African-American preachers, the dominant view is that only God can own words. Even if that were not the dominant view, the ownership issue would be complicated by the dialogic nature of the sermon. What part of the sermon, for example, is attributed to the congregation? If, as is stated earlier, when the participants change, the dialogue changes, then, there is no fixed text to own. Thus, "who owns the text" is a complicated question. The answer can easily be "everyone and no one" or, as stated earlier, the being with whom the Word originates—God.

EXPLORING THE ROLES OF ORAL AND WRITTEN TEXTS

Although the focus of this book is not on the relation between oral and written texts in the African-American church, key issues about that relation emerge from discussions in this text. As noted earlier, the African-American sermon is widely regarded as part of the rich African oral tradition of African Americans. Yet, this "oral" text has as its foundation a written text—the Bible (Moss, 1994). Each of the ministers in this study (as do most ministers) begin their sermons with Scriptures from the Bible, and no matter how many or what kind of secular examples they use to illustrate the sermon's theme, they point to the Biblical Scriptures as the authoritative example.[3] These Biblical Scriptures, whether parables or commandments, are interwoven with contemporary, "real" examples within each sermon. It is mostly through the sermons that the ministers are able to help the majority of the congregation comprehend the Bible and apply its teachings to their everyday lives. Thus, based on Heath's (1982a) definition of a *literacy event*—"any action sequence, involving one or more persons, in which the production and/or comprehension of print play a role" (p. 92)—these ministers' sermons are literacy events.

Although there are differences in the ways that the ministers use the Bible in their sermons (as indicated in earlier discussions of each

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[3]African-American preachers are not unique in looking to the Bible as the authoritative written text. Indeed, the Christian tradition, particularly the Protestant movement centers on the bible in the way that the Islamic religion centers on the Qur'an, its holy book.

church community in chaps. 2, 3, and 4), it would be safe to say that the sermons are illustrations of Biblical Scriptures, or illustrations of how the Bible has an answer for people's everyday struggles and concerns. As noted in previous chapters, for example, Reverend P.'s sermons are based almost solely on explication of the Scripture he has chosen for that sermon. That is, transcripts of his sermons read like a line-by-line explication of a poem. His original written sermon, about one fourth the size of the actual transcripts, consists of four or five sections. Each section is based on two or three verses of Scripture accompanied by brief explanation of those verses. Generally, Reverend P.'s sermons are based on a 9- to 12-verse Bible Scripture. He focuses on two verses of the Scripture, explains them, and then, moves on to the next two verses of the Scripture, explains them, and so on.

Reverend M. and Dr. N. are more versatile in how they incorporate Biblical texts in their sermons. Both primarily use Biblical and secular parables to illustrate particular themes, yet, both will explicate text from time to time. And, Reverend M. will sometimes cite Scriptures as support for his points the way that academicians cite sources in formal essays. In fact, Reverend M. cites nonbiblical sources in his sermons in a very academic way. This practice is highly unusual in African-American churches. Yet Reverend M.'s congregation accepts his practice without question. However, this discussion of the way the ministers incorporate the Bible into the sermons is meant as an illustration of how much this seemingly oral text—the sermon—and this written text—the Bible—are interdependent.

Other issues, of course, emerge. For Reverend M., who writes a manuscript, or for any minister who falls within the African-American worship tradition who uses a manuscript, there must be room for the oral contributions to the sermons from the congregation. In other words, a minister who writes a complete manuscript from which to preach will still have a sermon where oral and written texts mix because the congregation's part of the dialogue is always oral and always spontaneous. Consequently, reading a written sermon as the text is illusory because the oral text has yet to interact with the written text. Until the oral and written combine, the text is incomplete.

INTERTEXTUAL RELATIONSHIPS

Bloome and Bailey (1992), citing an earlier work by Bloome (1989), suggested that intertextuality only occurs within an event when participants recognize and acknowledge the intertextuality and when the intertextuality has social significance within the event. In the previous discussion, I emphasized the relation between oral and written

texts, their interdependence. That discussion also emphasizes the social significance of the relation. That is, the participants recognize the call for dialogue; they recognize and acknowledge the roles of oral and written texts through their participation in the text. This interaction allows that participation. Essentially, I emphasize the intertextual relations between oral and written language within the sermon. The analysis in the previous chapters along with the previous discussion demonstrates the complexity of intertextuality within the sermons. However, that complex intertextuality was further heightened by the role of music within the sermons and the participants' expectations about the roles of oral and written language and music within the text.

Musical Quality of Sermons

As the entire worship services of the churches in this study were characterized by intertextual relations between spoken, written, and musical texts, so, too, was the sermon characterized by those same intertextual relationships. First, it is common to think of African-American sermons as musical (see discussion of Spencer in chap. 4), with much written about the chanted sermon. Yet, even those preachers who do not use the sing-song style known as chanting tend to rely on rhythm as a tool. The rhythm of the typical African-American sermon is as meaningful as the actual words. In fact, the rhythm and words together contribute to meaning. The spoken or written words alone do not tell the story that the ministers wish to tell in their sermons. Even the dialogues in the sermons take on a rhythmic, musical quality as one can see from the longer call-and-response examples in chapters 3 and 4.

What contributes most to the rhythm of the ministers' sermons in this study is their use of intonation and repetition. Repetition of sounds, words, and phrases are used by these ministers not only for emphasis but also to establish a rhythm in their oral delivery. It is important to note that Reverend M. would often write down a phrase as many times in his manuscript as he was to repeat it in his oral delivery. He would also use punctuation marks to signal that a rising intonation was necessary. As stated earlier, Reverend M. hears his sermon as he writes it. His manuscripts include markers to signal changes in intonation and elements to be repeated, which suggests that Reverend M. is always conscious of the way the oral and written text and their rhythmic quality work together. He, like the other ministers, was conscious of the sermon as a verbal performance.

Music or Song Within the Sermon

As illustrated in chapter 4, Reverend M. not only used song lyrics in his sermons but he and the congregation (usually prompted directly or

indirectly by the reverend) also sang songs within the context of the sermon. Many African-American preachers use lines from sacred and secular songs to illustrate themes. In this case, the ministers rely on the congregation's shared knowledge to tap into their memories of a particular song and its context. Reverend M. also frequently broke into song in his sermons to make a point. Usually when this act occurred, the congregation would sing along with him. At one point, as I noted earlier, the congregation in the Columbus church took over the text and kept singing. However, the minister usually signaled when it was appropriate to use song within the text by initiating the musical interlude.

The interaction between musical, oral, and written text constitutes intertextuality in the following ways: first, the participants recognize and acknowledge that these modes interact; second, they understand that each mode invites participation from the participants within the sermon event; and third, all participants are aware that music (and song) is an integral part of the sermon (and of course the entire worship style) and that music adds another layer to the sermon. This multilayeredness is most clearly evident in Reverend M.'s text. Music is every bit as important and essential as the spoken and written words.

Finally, any discussion of intertextuality must also look at the relation between it and cultural ideology. Bloome and Bailey (1992) suggested that "there are certain cultural rules for what texts can be related at a given time" (p. 199). These cultural rules also govern who has the right to speak (or sing) at a given time. From this discussion and in chapters 3 and 4, it is clear that all the participants within the three churches in this study understood and applied these cultural rules. They understood the what, who, when, and where of rules of participation and interaction of texts. They understood that the minister took a leadership role in the constructing of the text, but that the congregations, as participants in the community institution, would become part of the dialogue and thus collaborators in the constructing of this community text.

RHETORICAL APPEALS IN AFRICAN-AMERICAN SERMONS

The analysis of the African-American sermon in this study also raises questions about commonly held notions of rhetorical appeals. Even though I have not used the terms themselves, one can easily see the relevance of the discussion in this book to the academic applications of the rhetorical proofs of *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos*. In the Western rhetorical tradition, generally, three appeals constitute the rhetorical strategies that rhetors use to communicate with an audience, whether the intent is to

persuade, to inform, or to entertain. Those appeals—logos (reason), pathos (emotion), and ethos (personal authority/persona)—have characterized rhetorical strategies from the classical period of Aristotle's time and indeed are common appeals today.

Traditionally, logos or reason has been privileged over pathos and ethos in Western thought because of its seeming reliance on rational, logical thought.[4] Rhetors who have relied on pathos and ethos have been criticized because of a "lack" of reason or logic. Only recently have scholars and teachers begun to challenge the hegemony of logos or reason in Western rhetorical thought (Foss & Griffin, 1992; Lamb, 1991). In searching for a relation between traditional conceptions of logos, ethos, and pathos and black discourse, Bizzell and Herzberg (1990) pointed to Gates, who called into question the meaning of logos as it relates to Black discourse. Although Bizzell and Herzberg suggested that for Gates "logos is an appeal not to logic in the traditional sense but to language itself," they are not able to offer a definition of logic or reason in African-American discourse, or its relation to ethos and pathos. Yet, as I examined African-American discourse in African-American churches, I have reached a new understanding of the relation among these proofs as they are united in African-American sermons.

Most studies of African-American sermons, including this one, point to the central role of the minister as rhetor. The minister's authority as speaker (and writer) holds prominence in African-American churches. Throughout this study, I have highlighted the role of the minister in using the sermon to establish a certain identity. I have highlighted the dual roles of the minister as leader and group member, and how the sermon becomes a vehicle for the minister (and congregation) in shaping his or her identity. Thus, not surprisingly, ethos is privileged in this community institution. Also well documented is the high value placed on emotion in the church setting. One of the goals of the minister as rhetor is to tap into the emotional side of the congregation so that they are moved to accept the Word of God and to participate verbally in the sermon. Thus, high value is placed on pathos.

Yet the churches in this study (or most African-American churches) are not community institutions where ethos and pathos reign, and logos has no place. The place of logos is not the issue so much as what constitutes logos, or reason, in these churches. I am reminded of Reverend M.'s statement (quoted in a previous chapter) from his sermon

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[4]Walters (personal communication, April 15, 1993) reminded me that the theory says logos matters most, but in reality, logos is no more important than ethos and pathos. We need only study advertisements or what happens in faculty meetings to see this reality in operation. Walters argued that "we privilege the illusion of logos."

"Lost and Found": "The Black way, the African way of teaching is not so much by syllogism and linear arguments; it is by telling a story." Although he is talking about teaching in general in African-American culture, Reverend M. is also explaining, as I pointed out earlier, why he privileges the story over the linear, chainlike arguments characteristic of traditional notions of logic. The story takes the place of rigid argumentative forms (such as the syllogism or the enthymeme). The story counts as logical evidence. Whereas Aristotle places the narrative (or the story) under example, a form of logos, the story, in these churches, is commonly discussed as if it were separate from logos. Clearly, Reverend M. sees the story as different from traditional logic.

What can be counted by the ministers as logical evidence may be most important in distinguishing logos in African-American religious discourse from logos in the Aristotelian tradition. As has already been established, the ultimate authority is God's Word represented through the Bible. Therefore, logic cannot be separated from the Bible. However, the story and a form of the story, testimony, also count heavily as logical evidence. As has already been established, participants in this community want to know "what God has done for you." However, the testimony cannot be separated from the testifier, nor can the story be separated from the storyteller. And neither the story nor the testimony is deemed effective unless related to the congregation in such a way by the speakers that they move the congregation to identify with the speaker, the event and the point of the illustrations. In other words ethos, pathos, and logos must work together. To produce effective rhetoric, their boundaries must blur.

In thinking about the ministers' rhetorical strategies for building community, what emerged from the data was pathos, ethos, and logos not as three separate appeals but as interdependent, bounded appeals where reason, common sense, faith, emotion, cultural knowledge, and persona are all bound so tightly together that it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to pull any one element out to stand on its own. This "way of knowing"—this way of looking at ethos, pathos and logos suggests an alternative view of the three appeals. Granted it is an alternative that needs more interrogation,[5] but one which suggests the inadequacy of any system which separates ethos, pathos, and logos or which privileges one form of logos over other appeals. In Aristotelian rhetoric, the three appeals are not separate, but often in the modern classroom, they are taught as if they can operate separate from each

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[5]That interrogation began in small part with Gates' (1988) *The Signifying Monkey*, but has been furthered by Campbell's (1993) dissertation study, *The Rhetoric of Black English Vernacular: A Study of the Oral and Written Discourse Practices of African American Male College Students*.

other. This study further suggests that ethos, pathos, and logos must be examined within the cultural context in which they are used and not looked at as universal concepts.

AN ALTERNATIVE MODEL OF A LITERATE TEXT

Although all writing is context-dependent and all writers are social beings influenced by the world in which they live and their individual cognitive abilities, the picture of the solitary writer isolating him or herself and producing a written text independent of a community of readers or the social situations in which he or she exists is still a dominant, although inaccurate, one. The dominant model[6] of a literate text in the academy, especially in classes where literacy is taught, is the written text, monologic in voice (and most often in authorship), where meaning claims to be autonomous in the text. This text is most closely identified with the essayist academic literacy identified decades ago by Scollon and Scollon (1981). In recent years, research on collaboration (Ede & Lunsford, 1990) and on the power of narrative (Bahktin, 1981) has called into question the single authorship notion of the literate text and the insistent focus on exposition. The analysis offered here provides a concrete example of the sermon as a community text, a text that enacts collaboration, narrative, and multivocality. This text, the African-American sermon, calls the single-authored, single-voiced, expository academic written text into question at the same time that it illustrates its alternative.

The model of literate text that I have illustrated in this book, however, does not supplant the academic expository essay as the dominant model of a literate text in this society. Nevertheless, as Farr (1993), Walters (1994), and Heath (1982a) suggested, the academy should acknowledge the existence of alternative models that operate simultaneously with the essayist model and acknowledge that large segments of U.S. society have as their primary model of a literate (formal not everyday conversational) text something other than the essayist model, or have more than one primary model of a literate text. Millions of African Americans, be they devoted churchgoers or not, are influenced by the model of literacy, and therefore of literate text, that emerges from the African-American church. Therefore, many African-American students come to school with that model of a community text as part of their linguistic competence.

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[6]As scholars do more studies of writing in the disciplines, more models of literate texts in the academy emerge. Abels' (1994) dissertation study of literacy in the discipline of dance is one such study.

Although they do not focus on the African-American sermon as a community text, studies done by Courage (1993) and Balester (1993) demonstrate how strong an influence African-American sermons have on the academic discourse of many of their African-American students. In particular, Janette, Courage's subject who is a pentecostal minister, and Max, Balester's student, rely heavily on the African-American sermon as a model for their formal essays. Ball's (1992) study of the organizational patterns of African-American adolescents' oral and written discourse links one of the students preferred patterns, narrative interspersion, with that of a practice associated with African-American ministers (see the discussion of Reverend M.'s use of narrative in chap. 4). Ball identified narrative interspersion, placing a story inside a text, as the African-American students' (in her study) preferred organizational pattern in informal oral and written texts and in academic written prose. With the sermon as their dominant model of a literate text, what many students like Janette, Max, and possibly Ball's students are likely to face in school when trying to achieve essayist academic literacy are several sites of negotiation between a model of literacy in their home communities and a model of literacy in their school communities.

IMPLICATIONS FOR LITERACY LEARNING: SITES OF NEGOTIATION

The previous discussion points to several key issues that, when examined in light of how those same issues are viewed in academic settings—namely settings where essayist literacy is valued as the norm—can be labeled sites of negotiation. These sites are important for those students who must negotiate their ways through them in order to maintain their literacy in their home communities and master essayist literacy in a particular academic community. These sites of negotiation can become sites of conflict that present obstacles for students—or, they can become sites of common ground on which students can build. Sites of conflict are where the practices associated with and valued in the African-American sermon model are in conflict with the practices commonly associated with and valued in the academic essayist model. Sites of common ground are those where the practices and values commonly associated with each model are similar.

As the previous discussion indicates, the most important potential sites of conflict to emerge from this study include the following:

- Shifting boundaries between writer or speaker and reader or listener.

- Shifts in points of view.
- Shifting ideas concerning ownership of text.
- Shifting boundaries between oral, written, and musical language.
- Shifting definitions of rhetorical concepts of argument, particularly logos, pathos, and ethos.

This list is by no means exhaustive, as there can be numerous potential sites of conflict in a text. For instance, Balester (1993), in discussing the "ritualized, formal language" used by her student Max in his essay, pointed to types of language and phrasing as potential concerns for students whose prose models that of the African-American sermon. It is important to note, however, that these sites are not fixed. What becomes a site of conflict or common ground depends on the participants, types of text, and the context in which the literacy event occurs. Nevertheless, examining just a few potential sites of conflict for students who have the African-American sermon as their primary model of a literate text and yet who are attempting to master the essayist academic model of a literate text should prove useful.

What Constitutes a Written Academic Text?

A major probable site of conflict to be negotiated is what the academic literate text—the essay—should look and sound like. Clearly, the sermon, with its dialogic quality, its multiple voices, and its blurred boundaries does not look or sound like the academic expository essay. That is not to say that there is not any common ground, but normally the distinctiveness of each type of text stands out.

As the entire analysis in this book demonstrates, however, the alternative literate model that the African-American sermon provides would require that students who have this model as their primary model find ways to build on what they know about the sermon as a text to compose academic texts. For example, the boundaries of an academic essay are more distinct, the form more rigid, the voice more monologic than in a sermon. Students may take major risks in trying to produce a written text which tries to incorporate oral or rhythmical qualities in their essays. The repetition of words, phrases, sentences, or sounds which are necessary parts of the sermon may be deemed by an academic audience as unnecessary distractions in an expository essay.

Conceptualizing Writer and Audience

In most academic settings, the roles of writer or speaker or composer remain separate from that of audience except when writers write for

themselves (journals, diaries) or when writers are revising their own texts. Rarely does the audience participate in the composing of the text.[7] They certainly do not take over the text. Many students who are influenced by the way the writer and audience switch roles within the sermon may have a difficult time negotiating between contrasting ideas of what a writer does within different discourse communities. In an academic discourse community, these students must negotiate the demands of composing a single-voiced, monologic text. As writers, they may make assumptions about the roles of their audience that are erroneous in an academic setting. In short, they may assume a type of active participation on the part of the audience in supplying parts of the written text that is deemed inappropriate in an academic context.

Points of View

As is highlighted earlier in this chapter, another potential site of negotiation for students operating with the sermon as their dominant model of a literate text is the concept of the writer's (or speaker's) point of view. Whereas professional or experienced writers may have freedom to shift points of view within a text, in essayist academic literacy, the composition student learns that a "good writer" maintains a consistent point of view. In the three churches in this study, a "good composer (writer or speaker)" shifts the point of view for emphasis. Many times, this shifting in point of view coincided with the ministers' shifting "voice" from that of preacher-leader to that of preacher-group member. The ministers' shifts in point of view are easy to follow and clearly are sophisticated rhetorical strategies that contribute to meaning-making in the sermon. Students who are not as skillful rhetors as the ministers or professional writers may not understand the subtleties of when and where shifts in point of view should take place. And as long as students are taught rigid rules such as never shift point of view and are not given the opportunity to investigate issues like point of view, they may not develop the sophisticated abilities that their ministers or professional writers possess.

SITES OF COMMON GROUND

Just as there are potential sites of conflict, potential sites of common ground can act as bridges that aid students in their negotiation between

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[7]The exception occurs through activities like peer response when students engage in discussions about each other's texts and brainstorming exercises where students get ideas from each other. Even though these activities take place in many writing classes, they are rarely recognized by teachers or students as moments when the audience becomes composer.

differing models. These sites of common ground allow students to make use of the strategies they bring into the classroom from their home communities. Courage (1993) said of his student, Janette, that,

> Janette had acquired language abilities, attitudes, and conceptions about reading, writing, and communication in general that facilitated her initial encounters with academic literacy. In her essays, comments during class discussions, and answers to my many questions, she exhibited a conception of speaking and writing as public acts, a sense of her own sermons as spoken texts with distinct forms and purposes, a desire to use forums such as the church and classroom to communicate useful information to other people, respect for textual authority, and awareness of an audience's need for evidence and persuasive language. (p. 486)

Clearly, the type of literacy promoted in Janette's African-American church provided her with a foundation for acquiring academic literacy. Courage described the way that Janette adapted her strategies for composing her sermons to composing an essay that required that she analyze a literary text. These strategies were quite similar to the ways that the ministers in my study composed sermons. Janette identified a key passage in the literature, interpreted it, then illustrated its relevance to people in her community. The ministers in my study treated biblical Scriptures in much the same way. Although in their planning of a sermon they may have begun with an issue and then moved toward a key biblical passage, the actual performed sermon always began with the key Scriptural passage and then proceeded with illustration and interpretation. Sometimes, the illustration of a passage's applicability to the community and its interpretation occurred simultaneously. The point is, however, that the strategies were complementary.

Other sites of common ground also emerge. These ministers' use of textual evidence, for instance, may be useful in helping students understand how to integrate written sources as evidence within their academic texts. The sermons also provide good examples of texts that integrate different types of evidence within the text: textual evidence, personal narratives, historical evidence, and so on. Additionally, the sermons in this study promote a type of literate text with a beginning, middle, and end and with a major point that the rhetor is trying to persuade the audience to accept and act on. This sense of the text as persuasive also ties in to the sermons as pieces of discourse produced by rhetors with keen senses of audience awareness and needs.

The ministers and congregations recognize that for the ministers to be persuasive, they must understand and meet the expectations of their audience and community. They must use rhetorical devices that

will be meaningful to the audience. This same principle holds true for students learning academic written literacy. Although some of the rhetorical devices that the rhetor has at his or her disposal may change based on the different community expectations, what does not change is the rhetor's need to analyze and understand his or her audience and then to use the appropriate strategies. In other words, each model recognizes the communicative purposes of their texts and participants.

The greatest problem faced by many students whose primary model of a literate text does not match that of the primary model in academic literacy is finding the tools to help them recognize the sites of negotiation, be they sites of conflict or common ground. And the next problem they face is having the proper strategies to turn these sites into resources that can make them multiliterate. These tools and strategies must be taught in the classrooms if literacy and language learning are to take place.

In *Signifying as a Scaffold for Literary Interpretation*, Lee (1993) both investigated and demonstrated how the classroom can become a site of negotiation where students are taught to turn a nonschool discourse strategy into a resource valued as a school task. Specifically, Lee investigated "the link between one specific social practice, signifying, a ritualized form of talk in the African American community, and the school task of teaching literary interpretation" (p. 9). Lee teaches African-American students in an urban high school to identify uses of signifying, a discourse practice most know from their home communities, in African-American literary texts, thus engaging them in a form of literary interpretation. She creates a bridge between "home" and school. Lee (1993) argued that for these students, "it is precisely because it is so highly valued and so widely practiced that signifying has the potential to serve as a bridge to certain literacy skills within a school environment" (p. 11). During and after Lee's study, she engaged in conversations with the teachers in the high school about how to provide students with the tools and strategies for doing literary interpretation by making use of students' prior knowledge and shared experiences. Lee demonstrated that signifying can be a site of common ground between a home discourse and an academic discourse.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PEDAGOGY

Although the sites of negotiations that students face are important to examine and understand, it is the sites of negotiation that teachers and researchers face that I view as more crucial at this moment in classrooms. The findings reported in this study and other studies of nonschool literacy and language practices will be wasted if teachers and

administrators concerned with literacy and language instruction, particularly writing instruction, do not find bridges between the community and the classroom. We cannot place the burden on the students alone to recognize and find strategies to negotiate their ways through sites of conflict and common ground.

Educators must first accept the reality of multiple literacies, and then design pedagogies, as Lee has done, which acknowledge and make use of alternative literacies. I am not suggesting that the essayist academic model of literacy be totally forsaken. Rather, I am suggesting that many more students may be successful in acquiring and using essayist academic literacy if teachers begin to understand the nonschool literacies that their students have mastered. Several ethnographers have used their ethnographic findings to design classroom activities based on the nonschool literacies of groups of students (see e.g., Au, 1980; Heath, 1982b; Moll & Diaz, 1987). These activities were successful in engaging the students in actively participating in the classroom activities; then teachers were able to design other classroom activities that moved the students toward more school-based literacy activities.

Composition teachers can also make more use of discourse analysis in the writing classroom. For example, instead of dismissing alternative models of literate texts as inferior and useless, we can design activities that make these texts as well as the academic essay sites of interrogation and analysis. Teachers can provide students with tools to analyze extended pieces of discourse—their own, examples the students and teachers bring from their home communities, examples from academic communities. These analyses should not be done to evaluate the texts but to discover those sites of conflict and common ground in them. One of the keys to this type of classroom activity is to examine the sites of conflict between the different types of academic texts (maybe from different disciplines), between the students' texts and academic texts, and between the nonschool texts and academic texts.

By asking students and teachers to bring in and analyze samples of formal discourse (written or spoken) from their home communities, several things are accomplished:

1. Teachers and students will become researchers looking at discourse outside the classroom.
2. The choices that the students and teachers make about what counts as formal discourse will provide some insight into the type of discourse that each values.
3. Teachers will broaden sites for learning beyond the walls of the classroom.

4. If enough participants bring in different types of discourse as samples, students and teachers will begin to get a sense of their home discourse as not *the* model but one model, and teachers may similarly see academic models in the same way.

I acknowledge that making bridges between types of literate texts is more complex than I have been able to present here. Although I have offered an initial suggestion of how to approach constructing such a bridge, I would be naive to think that this rethinking of composition pedagogy could occur without much hard work by composition teachers, without a change in teacher-training, and without more research on literacy in nonschool settings and how to effectively apply findings from such research to classroom practice. I also do not wish to ignore the political and social constraints that make such a move difficult.

In fact, one of the reasons alternative models of literate texts have not been acknowledged is that those models do not carry the social prestige that academic models carry nor do the communities from which many of these alternative models emerge carry much social or political power. Although the community text model presented by the sermon is highly valued in most African-American communities, its value decreases tremendously in the classroom as a model, in part because of the community from which it emerges. U.S. schools and universities still carry with them the ideology of the dominant power force in U.S. society. Although several recent movements are attempting to turn the composition classroom itself into a site of interrogation, the most notable being critical pedagogy, these movements continue to reinforce the essayist academic model of literacy as the only model and consequently, continue to reinforce the dominant ideology that operates in our classrooms. Critical pedagogists, such as Giroux and Aronwitz (1985), and Giroux and McLaren (1989, 1994) promote composition classes being turned into sites where all ideologies are interrogated, but the students are still expected to produce texts using the dominant discourse model. Feminist critics, in some instances, are beginning to question the use of dominant discourse models. This study offers those interested in such movements suggestions for how to move beyond the traditional academic forms and genres that inevitably recreate dominant ideologies.

CONCLUSION

Bloome (1987) reminded us that "literacy and literacy instruction always occur within a context (or, perhaps more accurately, within multiple contexts)" and that "literacy is a dynamic concept with shifting

definitions and shifting contexts of literacy activity" (p. xviii). Compositionists must, then, be ever mindful that there is no fixed definition of literacy, only context-dependent definitions, and be ever mindful as well of the social nature of literacy. This book offers a context-dependent definition of a literate text and, by implication, a context-dependent definition of literacy. These definitions rely heavily on the social situation from which the literate text and literacy emerges and functions. When a minister preaches one sermon to two different congregations, the sermons are considered different; when the context of literacy activities change, the definition of literacy also changes.

Rethinking literacy as a dynamic concept also reinforces the social nature of literacy. This study demonstrates that literacy in the African-American churches represented in this study is a process involving multiple participants in a dynamic setting who use shared cultural knowledge and literacy skills to create a community text, a text that itself is not fixed. Like literacy in so many other settings, literacy in these churches cannot be separated from the cultural expectations of the community. What constitutes a literate text, who can create it, and how that text functions are all tied to the values attached to reading, writing, and speaking within the churches and the broader African-American communities. This book demonstrates that literacy is a complex social process that points to reading, writing, and speaking as interrelated acts with indistinct boundaries. This study points to composers of texts and consumers of text not as having separate roles but as having interdependent, sometimes interchangeable roles. It is these interdependent, interchangeable roles, these indistinct boundaries, and the cultural norms that govern them that are at the root of literacy as a social process in African-American churches.

Finally, I end this discussion of literacy where I began in the introduction—by emphasizing literacies rather than literacy, and by emphasizing the complex, multilayeredness of literacies. Compositionists and others involved in literacy instruction must operate with broader concepts of literacy and literate texts, continue to explore the nonschool literacies of our students, and begin to build bridges between nonschool and school literacies.

Unresolved Tensions

I end this book by going back to the end of the introduction and the sites of tension. One of the misconceptions I had about writing this book before I began was that, through this book-writing process, I would answer unanswered questions about literacy and literate texts; that I would advance my argument about how we in the part of the academy in which I reside should begin to think broadly about what constitutes a

text. However, I now find that although I have advanced my argument, I have not answered the questions. Therefore, I find myself awkwardly at the end of work that feels unfinished. At this stage, there is no finite ending, only many more questions and unresolved tensions with which I have struggled throughout the writing of this book. I find that these tensions come from the feeling that all I've done is expose more gaps to study, more sites to investigate. Like the students I discuss in the previous chapter, I find that I faced, and still face, many sites of negotiation. These unresolved tensions, many of which became sites of conflict, have as much to do with what is in this book as with what is not in this book. I hope, however, that highlighting a few of the more troublesome tensions I struggled with will provide readers a glimpse through the lens that I looked through to write the story I tell in this book about the participants and their interactions with the sermons in their churches.