c. sentence-level rhetoric

III. content
   a. page/page summary of the website
   b. paragraph summarizing the entire website

IV. response (This section should include your feelings about the hypertext essay in terms of both form and content. This section is really the moment where you look back on the rhetorical analysis and content and reflect upon the value of the essay. Did you learn anything? Was the essay informative? engaging? boring? Why? What did you like? What did you dislike about the piece? This section is for you to develop your subjective response to the essay).

THE EVALUATIVE ESSAYS:
THE PREVIOUS USES OF HYPERTEXT

To look at the practice of distributive peer assessment, I begin with students' evaluative essays. In their evaluative essays, students developed sophisticated responses that attempted to show both their knowledge of rhetorical structures and their responses as readers or "users" of the hypertext projects. This practice differed from the knowledge produced in previous studies of student hypertexts such as Michael Joyce's "Siren Shapes" (1988), George Landow's (1992, 1994, 1997) *Hypertext, Hypertext in Hypertext*, and *Hypertext 2.0*, and Stuart Moulthrop and Nancy Kaplan's (1994) "They Became What They Beheld," because the evaluative readings and descriptions of hypertext projects here are written by students rather than by teacher-researchers—the process of research as well as assessment was distributed.

Although the hypertext projects themselves were fascinating, I am less concerned with hypertext as a revolutionary writing technology and more concerned with the social process of including students in the assessment of each other's work. The students' responses ranged from praise to criticism depending on the hypertext being read. And, although the tone and the details used in the evaluations varied depending on who was doing the reading, what struck me as intriguing was the agreement, what assessment experts call the interrater reliability, among the student readers about the quality of the hypertexts they were evaluating. This chapter looks at Moulthrop and Kaplan's (1994) analysis of a work by one of Kaplan's students (Karl Crary), and then examines the evaluation of a highly successful hypertext (Women in Asian Societies) and a less successful hypertext (Sex and Sexuality) from my courses at Stevens Tech (Fig. 6.1).

Thinking about how the students describe works by other students highlights the complexities of composing html documents and demonstrates the value of including student descriptions in an assessment process. Their evaluations solidified around their descriptions of each other's works; their acts of observing pieces of writing, of viewing hypertexts and describing their reading experiences, moved me as a teacher and evaluator away from speculative discussions about students'
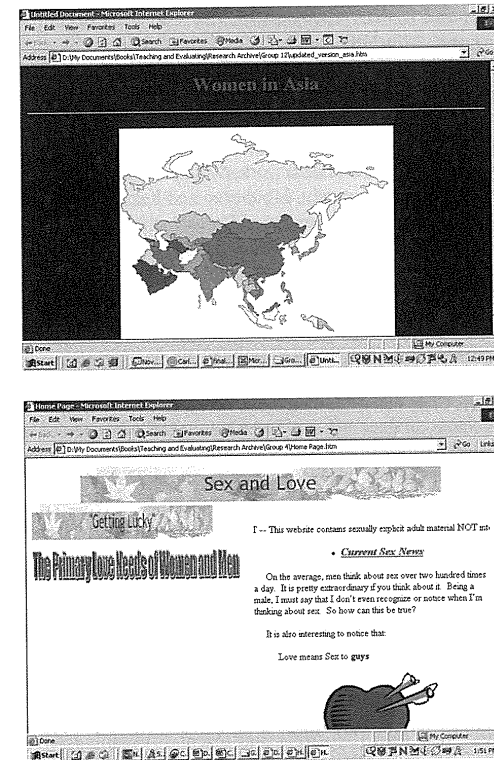
FIG. 6.1.   Student Web sites: "Women in Asia" and "Sex and Sexuality."

composing processes and forced me to ground my comments on students' descriptions of the effects that texts have on them.

A CLASSICAL STUDY OF STUDENT HYPERTEXT:
KARL CRARY'S "GARDEN OF FORKING PATHS"

In their discussions about student work and hypertext, Joyce (1988), Landow (1992, 1994, 1997), and Moulthrop and Kaplan (1994) focus on the students' writing processes. When they discuss reading hypertext, as Landow does when he talks about the Dickinson Web, the focus is on hypertext's implications for reading liter-

ature. Moulthrop and Kaplan (1994) blur the lines between reading literature and student writing (pp. 223–228); however, by using Borges' "Garden of Forking Paths" and Moulthrop's hypertext rendition of this story called "Forking Paths" as the basis of the student work, they continue the practice of student writing as responsive commentary about master works of literature. Their study of the hypertext created by Kaplan's student, Karl Crary, is a descriptive evaluation of a student hypertext, but it is a reading of a student work, a student reading, created in response to Borges' literary piece. Ultimately, Moulthrop and Kaplan conclude that Crary's reading of Moulthrop's hypertext version of Borges' story fails in its attempt to create "an anatomy of [this] pastiche, an attempt to classify all its parts according to a comprehensive taxonomy" (p. 233). Kaplan and Moulthrop argue that the medium of hypertext subsumes the student writer into the (hyper)text story:

> In this case, the reader might reasonably consider "Karl Crary" (quite contrary) not an external commentator but just another self-conscious *lector in fibula* (see Eco *Open Work*). As Crary notes, "Forking Paths" already includes several such characters. Crary's fourth category makes as much sense of his own antithetical structure as it does of these previous discursive oddities. Contrary indeed to his textual resistance, Crary's commentary helps the Garden grow. (p. 234)

They suggest that "Crary's failure stems from the very strength of his attempt" (p. 234). By writing in hypertext instead of print, Moulthrop and Kaplan claim that Crary challenged "the medium on its own terms" (p. 234). His strong reading "never stood a chance," because "in this medium, there is no way to resist multiplicity by imposing a univocal and definitive discourse. Hypertext frustrates this resistance because, paradoxically, it *offers* no resistance to intrusion" (p. 235).

I would argue, however, that Crary's "failure" is less the result of hypertext as a medium and more the result of the power Moulthrop and Kaplan give to Borges' literary text and their own (hypertext and teacherly) readings/versions of that work. One simply needs to look at a corporate Web site today to see that it is possible to present "a univocal and definitive discourse" using hypertext. By using hypertext within a literary course, Kaplan's section of the Reading Texts course at Carnegie Mellon University, Moulthrop and Kaplan invariably, and unintentionally, make certain that Crary's hypertext will be subordinated to the literary work. The social structure and the educational process of teaching reading subordinate and contain the textual technology used for reading and writing.

To move toward a course that explores the relation between reading and writing, especially within students' everyday lives, the technologies of textual representation and reproduction enabled by computer-mediated communication must be combined with a question that David Bartholomae (1996) has raised. In "What Is Composition," Bartholomae asked himself and composition teachers: "What does it mean to accept student writing as a starting point, as the primary text for a course of instruction, and to work with it carefully, aware of its and the course's role in a

larger cultural project?" (p. 24). This question has immense relevance for the projects about student writing and literary works outlined by Joyce, Landow, and Moulthrop and Kaplan. Joyce, Landow, and Moulthrop and Kaplan envision transformations brought about in English studies by hypertext as a medium. The most student-centered of all these projects, Moulthrop and Kaplan's, aims at transforming students' relation to literary texts through cut-and-paste methods and hypertext commentary on the literary work. Whereas these works describe student hypertext essays and sketch out the implications of these essays for writing pedagogy and literary study, they preserve the role of teacher-researcher as observer and evaluator. The implications of their work combined with Bartholomae's question, however, lead directly to my project. If teachers accept not only student writing but student reading of that writing (really student-to-student communication) as the starting point for a course of instruction, then how do they develop methods of assessment (the end points of a course of instruction) that reflect the complexities, the engagement, and the risks students take as writers and readers? How can learning be measured? How can communication be measured?

The answer is apparently simple (e.g., "Ask the students. Include the students in the process of reading and evaluating each other's work."), but the implementation of this answer in institutionalized higher education is not. An entire complex, a knowledge ecology, drives the process of teaching. Chapter 3 sketched the elaborate setup needed to reach the point where students can read each other's works and evaluate them. Whereas questions about the interactions among reading, writing, and evaluation emerged for me in part through reading Joyce, Landow, Moulthrop and Kaplan, and Bartholomae, they became embodied through the students' hypertext compositions. By ceding some of my control over how the student hypertext works were evaluated, a different classroom dynamic emerged and a new pattern of research became clear. The students would describe each other's work. They would observe and comment and evaluate. And I would listen. I would read. Their comments about each other's writing, as well as their writing and hypertext designs, would gain new weight. They would not become what they beheld and have me comment on their brilliant failures, but rather they would describe what they were learning and what they were seeing, and, I thought, might catch a glimpse of what is to come.

WOMEN IN ASIAN SOCIETIES: STUDENT DESCRIPTIONS AND DISTRIBUTIVE EVALUATION

The first hypertext project was a group research project on women in Asian societies. This group used chapters 2 and 3 from John Berger's (1985) *Ways of Seeing*, which we were reading in the class, as a framework for discussing the roles of women in Asian society. The group consisted of a student from China, a student from Korea, and two students from New Jersey (one whose parents had emigrated from Pakistan). As a group, then, I could understand why they felt