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Tracing Turns: Affect in FYW

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Abstract

Through the application of affect theory to a case study of a multimodal student artifact, this paper argues that attention to affect in FYW assignments allows them to operate as sites of inception wherein affective channeling can occur over a temporal process, named here as turns, where affective intensities are concretized and continually altered into (re)newed emotions. These are argued as productive features of composing whereby students can voice their experience. This is done in a material, sensorial fashion via sonic events, such as playlisting music. Once this argument is made, speculative conclusions are drawn about the importance of affect in composing for developing agencies, as well as how attending to affect can be effective in FYW.

“I aim here only at revealing myself, who will perhaps be different tomorrow, if I learn something new which changes me.”

—Montaigne, 1:26:109

Introduction

Multimodal Scholarship has long been concerned with utilizing modal and technological differences to facilitate a classroom pedagogy that emphasizes the materials we compose *with* as much as what we compose at all (The New London Group, 1996; Selfe, 2009; Kress, 2010; Banks, 2011; Shipka, 2011; Palmeri, 2012; Brooke, 2014; Ceraso, 2018; Buckner, 2019). Many explorations of these concerns provide explicit examples of activity and assignment construction, classroom execution, and assessment. A significant amount of these explorations focus on more explicitly aural, or sound based, compositions, by asking students to either write about sound, listen, or even compose sound itself; music is constantly referred to as a frame or even source for future composing within these approaches.

For example, Adam J. Banks (2011) asks students to write pieces describing the soundtrack they would apply to their life experiences around technology and composing (p. 81). Banks (2011) centers his conversation on the African American traditions invoked by the DJ, who remixes and samples the tracks of others to negotiate personality, local community, and public memory, developing a sense of individual-communal identity in the process. Jason Palmeri (2012) provides examples of recording, editing, and transforming voice recordings via audio technologies, to critically reflect on the role of voice in rhetoric (p.58); Palmeri’s whole text, *Remixing Composition* (2012), is organized by tracks, reverberations, and the “remix

perspective;” Even Steph Ceraso (2018), critical of the individualist practices encouraged by musical focuses, must attend to it as a source of sonic pedagogy.

These scholars’ emphasis on the aural/musical inspired me to establish an experimental First Year Writing (FYW) course at the University of Minnesota, centered on concepts of Affect, identity, voice and personal soundscaping. In this course, the student-composers attempted to represent and evoke the transformation of sensorial and affective experiences into emotive—and therefore identifying—memories by designing both a playlist and a letter to their past selves. After conducting this course, I acquired a substantial archive of student work that I have titled “Affective Playlist Compositions.” By taking a case study from this archive, I intend to demonstrate the role affect plays in key aims of FYW, such as developing the self through *self-fashioning*, (Hanson, 2002; De Marzio, 2012; Pritchard, 2016) through the modulation of affect and sensation over time into emotive, *voiced* experiences (Lechuga, 2014; Frischerz, 2015).

By reading these assignments as moments of *self-fashioning through voicing*, I contend we can determine the importance of both affect and emotion in the composition processes, distributions, and ethics thereof. We could also motivate the effectiveness of multimodal pedagogy in communicating this importance. This can serve to inform (non)multimodal pedagogues of the transferability of sonic pedagogy to FYW contexts, but also further motivate the importance of considering material realms, technologies, and affects in the composing process, argued for by many (Banks, 2011; Palmeri, 2012; Adler-Kassner & Wardle, 2016; Ceraso, 2018; Harley, 2018).

In this application, we’ll explore the way a student artifact operates as a site of inception wherein affective modulation is traced as a process of change over time, or “turns.” I will begin by providing more detail on the specific assignment, its construction, and the goals it was meant to accomplish in a First Year Writing course in relation to multimodal scholarship, to properly contextualize how I applied conceptual work in pedagogical praxis. I will follow up by explicating the key theoretical lenses from affect theory and educational philosophy in more detail, before moving into an analysis of the artifact.

On Sound and Affect in Pedagogy

Context: assignment design and the artifact of study

The assignment for which this artifact was developed came out of theory intersecting public facing rhetoric, sound studies, and multimodal pedagogy (Banks, 2011; Goodman, 2012; Palmeri, 2012; Ceraso, 2018; Harley, 2018). By looking at soundscapes, or ecological networks of “sound, bodies, aesthetics, materials, technologies, and spatial features that make up an environment” (Ceraso, 2018, p.71). The assignment looks to demonstrate the intersection of social and personal soundscaping by connecting personal soundscaping not only to the “ontology of vibrational force” (Goodman, 2012, p.xv, p. 46) in the social realm, but also the

way material technologies that produce sound are bound by individual composers in collective memories and rhetorics, such as the compositions circulated by Banks' DJ (2011).¹

The assignment was also meant to attend to how affect shapes identity—in particular using music to, as Harley (2018) notes, experience emotions in richer ways and co-create senses of identity—so an assignment revolving around composing playlists to re-experience affectively charged events allowed the co-creation of identity to extend to agency, our ability to enact or not enact the identities we form from engagement with sonic-events. For example, playlists could potentially invoke events of success, calm, belonging, failure, or trauma, and give composers the ability to recast their affective responses to these situations through tracing affective importance.

Our case study is an artifact wherein the student explores the affective attachment developed for a space—and the way that affect is modulated when a shift in space is imposed upon them. The Playlist is meant to represent a shift in emotional representation of the student over time, operating as a “as a tribute to the emotional instability [they] felt when [they] had to leave a place [they] had always considered home” (Artifact D2, p.1). The Letter, making up half of this artifact, is set up as a persuasive, educational supplement to the playlist, directed to the student's past self undergoing this emotional shift. The hope is to help their past self “process their emotions” to avoid the hostility and misery they experienced.² We might consider this an act of social or *lived* argumentation as articulated by Lechuga (2014).

Lechuga takes social argumentation from Natanson on risk (1965), and argues that *lived argumentation* is a way by which bodies or selves are called into argumentation while “opening them to the risk of being moved by affect” (p.88). These affects are felt changes in intensities¹ that once felt and mediated by the self, are narrowed into emotions and this occurs through movement “within those environments of fluctuating intensities” (2014, pp. 86-89). Insofar as this list and letter state their intentions to argue with oneself over the importance and transformative nature of the list, we can imagine the student opening their current selves and past selves to risk by explicitly attending to the affective importance of their movement through the environment. As such, attending to the tracklist as it develops over time, with the supplementation of the student's letter, will help us see how affect tracks over the course of time, as mediated materially via these compositions. In this temporal exploration, affect and educational theory can allow us to explore the ways this act of composing can develop a sense of self/agency, using the lenses of voicing and self-fashioning.

¹ Other authors also argue about the importance of attending to the “bodily process” of the senses as rhetorical, therefore socio-culturally mediated, or as a way of revealing how selective naturalizations of sensory experiences or selective personifications of them can be employed to colonize and oppress (Hamilakis, 2013; Edgar, 2017). Listening, for example, is also subject to cultural mediation, as compositions and practices of listening reify cultural memory

² Other students, of course, had their own aims in their letters and playlists, some wholly unrelated to misery or hostility—these aims are idiosyncratic to the student-composer

Voicing and Self-Fashioning: How to look at sound and music

Compositionists in writing instruction have preferred to build off our conversations of voice as a metaphor for communication of the authentic internal self, rather than on the material voice as an extension of embodiment. This misremembers much of our expressionist history, and its attention to the material voice as a method for instruction, identity formation, and personal development (Palmeri, 2012, p. 55) as well as critical pedagogical tradition around speaking, listening, and responding to particular bodies in space (hooks, 1994; Freire, 2000). Moving forward, I'll be defining and tracing the history of some key terms and a justification of their application to our case study.

I take voicing as a practice from affect theorists and multimodal compositionists, wherein “[i]ndividuals cull personal psychic experiences from interior depths and articulate those experiences to the spaces of shared and collective discussion, action, and politics” as well as “a sense of affective agency through this practice” that offers a “contact zone” for reconsideration of the self (Ahmed, 2004; Frischerz, 2015, pp. 261-268). Voicing also blurs the boundaries between self and other in a material way, by the weaponization or invitation to intimacy, as scholars note the permeating power of corporeal sonic events (Edgar, 2017; Harley, 2018). Edgar, for example, discussing sonic abortion rhetoric, notes how the voice always “points to a physical, live person... the communication of a secret inner self...as a direct extension of the material body” (2017, p. 354).³ That is, voice mediates a sense of self and person in its voicing.

So voicing operates as a mediating act between the individual and the collective, at once a deeply personal, internal action and yet one that cannot occur without an audience/collective to *listen*. Attention to voicing in this case study, then, will be as much as socio-individual exercise as the decision to focus on music was in assignment design—being able to *voice* is predicated on a material and social (what’s the difference?) location to voice out of. In looking for voicing, we are looking for moments in which the student remixes the compositions of others, thereby invoking their histories and significances, to also speak to others about themselves, providing a voice to their own experience. These we may consider actions self-fashioning.

Self-fashioning terms an enacting or making actual a sense of self, as argued by Montaignian educational theorists—composing is an act of becoming, being made in relation to the social milieu in which one is composing (Montaigne, 1965/1588; Hansen, 2002; De Marzio, 2012). De Marzio (2012) finds the examples of Montaigne and Plutarch, and their epistolary exercises as understood through Foucauldian analysis of ethical formation, to be “pedagogical in that they are the actual products of a teaching, the aim of which is to shape and influence, ideas, actions, and beliefs of their recipient” (p.387). By acknowledging these letters as a part of widely circulated texts, De Marzio argues the pedagogical value of these exercises is far from mere

³ I take issue with this notion of external expression of the inner, often discussed as the Authentic Self, as it’s often weaponized to prevent “less stable” categories from voicing their experiences of struggle and oppression. See *Bi!* (Eisner, 2013) for a critique of authenticity as it applies to sexuality. As I argue later, a Montaignian theory of education avoids this problem.

knowledge transmission—they are essentially evidence of “the attempt by their respective writers to initiate a transformation in the lives of the recipient” (2012, p.388).

In short, when writers like Montaigne state examples of proper tutoring, or effective pedagogy—the critical assessment, modification, and reapplication of past knowledge referred to as “Cultivation of Judgment”—he models this act of cultivation in *forming himself by describing himself*, and describing himself by expressing thoughts, feelings, and judgments on the thoughts, feelings, and judgments of others (De Marzio, 2012, p. 391). The self, for Montaigne,

is not something that is pre-formed and thus waiting to be described as it is... The only truth the self reveals is its own self-contradictory intentionality— a constant becoming other than it is by grasping hold of “different attributes or aspects” of the subject. The self—that is, Montaigne’ self—takes part in its own becoming “not accidentally” but “intentionally” (De Marzio, 2012, p.389)

What follows from the intentionality of self-fashioning is not reiteration of knowledge, or a passing down of it, but a mutual transformation of character and behavior—that is self-fashioning. This is only possible through material technologies—writing—and the material produced is considered by Montaigne to be consubstantial with his self, a material extension that forms him as he forms it—his voice does not cull internality and express it, as in the expression of the authentic, but rather makes the self externally, and materially (Montaigne 1965/1588, Section III: II, p. 611-612).

This could be seen as a process of negotiating what Eric Darnell Pritchard (2016) calls *literacy normativity* and *restorative literacies*, countering and repurposing the standardizing practices of learning to restore a sense of “self- and communal love” for the purposes of “making a life on one’s own terms” (p.33). While Pritchard’s (2016) work is designed by and for Black queer/LGBTQ+ literacy development and theorizing, restorative literacy as a method of repurposing practices one is exposed to in an effort to subvert their harmful effects is resonant with the broader idea of self-transformation through composing articulated in self-fashioning. Whereas Pritchard (2016) challenges us to consider the queer, intersectional applications of a fashioning pedagogy, this piece seeks to welcome affective experiences into pedagogical space alongside these features of the self. Self-fashioning, I would argue, pairs especially well with queer and intersectional approaches to literacy in the classroom (Alexander, 2008; Pritchard, 2016). Bi+ and Queer theory in general is aimed at disrupting static notions of identity, and approaches like Bi+ politics/history (Angelides, 2001; Eisner, 2013), my other primary interest in rhetoric/pedagogy, inform the hybridic and chimerical nature of self-fashioning in this project.

What we will want to look for, then, in applying affect and the writing about it, is how it operates as a way our student can *voice who they are*, insofar as voicing operates to procedurally fashion their behaviors, thoughts, feelings, and beliefs. As affect is prelinguistic and conceptually mediated through emotional language, while also in some ways determinative of potential behavior or initial thoughts, it plays a motivating role in composing the self;

understanding the role this plays in self through self-making can be key in motivating the value of it in composition (Lechuga, 2014; Frischherz, 2015).

Description of Analysis

I will read our case study through the lens Michael Lechuga's (2014) "channeling of affect," an embodied, ecological/process approach of identifying how affect manifests, through technologies, to "manifest moments of immediacy where the self is at risk of being moved" (p.90). In doing this, I will be drawing also on Lechuga's notion of Affects as "felt changes in intensities" that are "deeply embodied, and activated by certain somatic perceptions that happen prior to thought" (Lechuga, 2014, p. 88). The case studies then, will be looking for how the artifacts fit into a process of affective modulation—or "the packaging of affects for channeling"—through personal soundscaping and reflection (Lechuga, 2014, p. 90). Modulation allows subjectivities and boundaries to be drawn around material bodies, creating felt changes in intensity, and therefore experiences/enactments of agencies (Lechuga, 2014). This requires attention to:

- How the artifacts operate as an "act of inception" which embodies affect—how does the sonicity and textual features of the artifact serve to "illuminate that field of relation" in which a body and/or self is located (Lechuga, 2014, p.90)?
- The way in which the artifact constitutes an act of *Voicing*—how does this personal act generate a social relationship via the "culling" of psychological experiences for public expression? How is affect "packaged" here, perhaps into discrete emotion(s), over time (Lechuga, 2014; Frischherz, 2015)? Theory on discrete emotions, such as Ahmed (2004) on fear, or Lorde (2007) on anger, might be useful in this analysis in identifying more implicit moments of discrete emotion or how they operate in the act of inception.
- In the act of voicing, how are selves fashioned, made sense of, and shaped in material/semiotic ways? How might we be able to indicate within these acts of inception, the boundaries and subjectivities of affect that are articulated? How does this propel into motion activated bodies, even if those bodies simply are the composer themselves (De Marzio, 2012; Lechuga, 2014; Frischherz, 2015)? This may include how discrete emotions effect somatic responses, behaviors, and changes in patterns of behavior.

With this laid out, we can turn to our object of study: the tracklist.

Emotion from Movement: "From CO to MN"

The tracklist below is composed by one student, consisting of 10 songs totaling 35 minutes, which I will lay out here.⁴ Within this list, I will be discussing both my initial impressions of the tracks in relation to each other and the way the student purported to be using the tracks to express features of themselves. In doing so, I hope to weave in narrow discussions of how the tracks move affects, name them, and how their organization modulates them for a different act

⁴ This playlist and letter were collected in a pedagogical study within IRB guidelines in my institution, and with the explicit informed consent of the student-author.

of voicing than the track in isolation. Some of these tracks are discussed in tandem as they are interwoven in purpose. These tracks are also discussed in tandem with the secondary artifact.

Relevant to this analysis is my own familiarity and history with the tracks—beyond BROCKHAMPTON, Lana Del Ray, and Childish Gambino, I was unfamiliar with all the artists in their capacity as musicians upon my initial engagement with the playlist, and the two particular tracks I did know (“Me and your Mama” and “WASTE”) are not common knowledge in my musical world. This means that the artists and their own projects outside of their inclusion for the student’s purposes were largely unknown to me, and I myself was often tasked with acting in a self-transformative manner by researching each track and artist as they were revealed to me, albeit with some aid from the letter portion of the artifact. While the assignment is obviously transformative for the student, learning as I read and engaging with the student emphasizes the transformative nature of the assignment for *me*, allowing me to further fashion myself in the process of advising my student’s own fashioning process.

Tracking Affect

1. “Love” by Lana Del Ray (2017)

A love track, producing feelings of nostalgia and yet forward movement, with lines like “The world is yours and you can’t refuse it” and “it doesn’t matter because it’s enough/to be young and in love” (Del Ray, 2017).

According to the student, Lana “wrote this song as a nostalgic piece about the feeling of being young and in love, whether that is with a person or just life in general. I used this song as my first track to portray my feeling of comfort and complete contentment that I originally felt when living in Colorado.” They argued to their past self, “I feel that you will be able to relate to her because although I eventually found happiness and refuge in Minnesota too, I don’t know if I can say it will ever be the same feeling” (Artifact D2, p.1).

This moment of recognizing a continuing disconnect for their relationship to Minnesota will be important later, but for now we can clearly see the beginning of voicing—the student is culling experience to provide to others some “tribute” to a time in which their sense of emotional agency is being disrupted, changed, and challenged—but this starts with establishing a “site” wherein this journey occurs—the feeling of happiness and contentment in Colorado, a “comfort” or sense of belonging. This is the initial “world of affects in which the self is found” for the student (Lechuga, 2014, p. 86). It is in this presumption of comfort and connection that the students' world will begin to shift, and is as such where the voicing, the articulation, the “social argumentation” of how it changes, begins (Lechuga, 2014, p. 86). The student starts at the existing network of bodies in their past selves’ current environment. Starting here allows them to mediate the way the affect is modulated through movement in the tracklist itself—operating both as representative of and itself *is* an “act of inception” or that which embodies/mediates affect through a composition.

2. “Me and Your Mama” by Childish Gambino (2016)

A dissonant and jarring track, Gambino starts with a soulful approach and a dramatic shift in tone to a rock-style ballad full of anger and anxiety, with lines like “Can’t stand it/backhanded/they wanna see us fallin’ apart!” (Gambino, 2016).

The student explains that this track was utilized to “illustrate how hard it hit me when I was told my family was relocating” and pointed out the dramatic contrast within the song to represent how their emotions “turn” at this news (Artifact D2, p.1). Because of the established histories, their current environment “perfectly embodied how [they] wanted to live [their] life” and the “guitar riff embodies that blindsided feeling of anger” at the news (Artifact D2, pp1-2).

While the process of packaging had begun within the comfort and belonging of the first track, and this channeling maintains a consistent key through a portion of Gambino’s music, what I find interesting here is the way the student employs the jarring transition of the track to create an affective “turn” in this process of modulation, something like a key change—this idea of “turning” helps us understand the way affect can change over time, here suddenly, into something different through extreme ruptures in one’s environment.

Tracing these “turns” in affect operates as a method by which the student can understand the “felt changes in intensities” and allows us to see the way affect changes over time in its modulation and channeling through material technologies—what was once a nostalgic yet pleasant mood of comfort and belonging is ruptured and torn into a sense of shock and awe, mediated through the vibrations of guitars and speakers. The feeling of anger is made out of this, which “blindsides” even the body undergoing the experience, the student—meshing well with the pre-linguistic, somatic uptakes of affect discussed by Lechuga (2014) prior to modulation—and is only named retroactively in the process of voicing/packaging. Moving forward, we might be able to see how these momentary ruptures generate a new *mood*, or persistence of affect, and a more gradual affective “turn” as the tracks progress.

3. “Riot” by Jaden Smith (2019); 4. “Badlands” by Bakar (2018)

A very aggressive and claustrophobic track, “Riot” seems to build off the energy of the previous track, and themes of anger well up as Jaden “Can’t breathe” along with a sense of toxic interpersonal dynamics, as he seems to assert to someone “I care about you so much more than you know/I’m calling girl, but you don’t answer the phone” (Smith, 2019). The content of the lyrical work seems less important than the oppressive beat, frustrated vocal work, and increasing tempo. “Badlands” spins off this claustrophobic track, starting a trend of specifically emphasizing certain spaces, Bakar is speaking of the grim “dungeons” in the “town of hard times called London” and to himself about being his own worst enemy in fighting the grim day this space creates (Bakar, 2018). The pace is still high and seems to be channeling some sense of despair or frustration.

Both “Riot” (2019) and “Badlands” (2018) are explained by the student as ways to “imitate the short-lived angsty phase that you [their past self] will go through whether you like it or not” and notes this time was a point of hiding the “biggest anxieties about moving” with “rage and resulted in some questionable decisions for a 16 year old” (Artifact D2, p.2). The affect of anger was produced in lieu of sadness because the student “hadn’t fully accepted what was happening...until [they] were practically across the border” (Artifact D2, p.2) they instead wished to deny the possibility of this movement occurring.

As a pair, these tracks are interesting in the ways they’re being used to trace a maintenance of anger and anxiety over time, some mood like “angst” in an attempt to avoid the emotional impact of loss. Rather than accept or continue the modulation of emotions beyond the immediate shock and anger, therefore accepting the loss of a space along with the belonging in it, the student makes sense of their behaviors in that space prior to moving as those of a “angsty phase” that circulates out beyond them into the environment via “questionable decisions” left undescribed.

This feature of affective maintenance that the student articulates around anger is provides interesting contrast from common articulations of anger in the literature—particularly Audre Lorde (2007), who sees anger as a galvanizing force, that which creates actions that are “liberating and strengthening act[s] of clarification” and provide focused calls to behavioral change over thing like guilt and hate (p. 127). Anger in my student’s case, however, develops into an affectively stagnating mood of angst, which chooses to express itself in destructive or cacophonous capacities, more akin to what Lorde might call hate, or a cacophony of anger in contrast to a symphony of angry voices (p. 129). In this way the mood is shown to restrain movement emotionally in an effort to deny a more obvious spatial transition in the move from CO to MN—this stagnation that only ends with the actual physical removal from the state, a cross of borders that mark out the student’s world of affect. From this stagnation we will begin to see a slow turn of affect into a sense of loss with the next three tracks.

5. “Westcoast Collective” by Dominic Fike (2018); 6. “WASTE” by BROCKHAMPTON (2017); 7. “Creature Fear” by Bon Iver (2007)

“Westcoast Collective” has a slight return to the nostalgic content of the first track—a focus on “used to live” and memories of the past space wherein one lives, with a more west coast twang in the rock to boot (Fike 2018). “WASTE” is reminiscent of regret and wonder, implying themes of embodying new points of view and moments of infidelity and loss; lines like “Sat by the fire, behind your eyes.... but I might see something I don’t like/like your hands in his shirt” provide a basis for this vague feeling (BROCKHAMPTON, 2017). Another soft song regarding the world as a place of loss, “Creature Fear” expresses a sense foreignness, but belonging to someone (“I was lost but your fool”) and an interesting moment of resistance (“don’t let it form us/don’t let it form us”) centering around a moment of “creature fear” (Bon Iver, 2007).

The student takes “Westcoast Collective” to represent “transition,” in particular, the “the changeover from resentful to depressed” and tells their past self that “it was almost as if you

had been evolving..." in relation to this song (Artifact D2, p.2). This is the second time transition or changing of affective charge is pointed too, from the initial happiness and shock of Gambino to the sullen move from anger to sadness in Dominic Fike. "WASTE" is argued by the student to further the transition into a sense of loss and sadness from track 6, as "the song encapsulates the loss of control and uncertainty [they] experienced when moving to a place [they] didn't know" (Artifact D2, p. 2). This affect of desolation and isolation maintains into the next track as well.

The third of the tracks representing sadness and loss, "Creature Fear" and the prior two tracks are all discussed together as a slower turn and progression into new affects—"Creature Fear" develops out of the "Cliques" nature of the new school the student was starting in Minnesota, which pushed them to "spend [their] time in high school just trying to get through everyday....without [their] friends and community...[they] felt so small" which produced in them a "creature fear" (Artifact D2, pp.2-3). They would later argue, however, that this fear of isolation and emotional smallness would dissipate as the third transition occurs.

Fear is often associated with distance between bodies, involves "relationships of proximity" especially in the way bodies are marked and organized by those marked—Sarah Ahmed's (2006) discussion of a racialized cannibal fantasy helps us note that the politics of fear is weaponizing the prospect of "being incorporated into the body of the other" and how such a sublimation threatens our very existence (p.64). This itself allows the blending of loss and fear apparent in the student work as they are forced into a new environment, a proximity that generates a series of "cliques" in their new school, and the feeling of being small in their proximity to the other (Minnesota and their school) and distance to the self (CO and their friends and family).

This also meshes with the way affect, in more circulatory views, can mark, bound, and subjectivize individuals in its channeling, especially in negative affects (Lechuga, 2014, p. 90). Negative affect can be activated as fear in modulation, and this is an emotion directly named in the tracklist—in this case, their personally formed affective relationship to the new environment seems to activate a fear-driven response from the student, such as avoiding new connections, just trying to "survive the everyday" as a "somatic response" to the space (Lechuga, 2014, p.91). Once the student is forced to accept that which their angst allowed them to avoid, they articulate being faced with a sense of loss, of distance, and the accompanying fear of the other being forcefully presented to them both *in* and *as* a space. Their negative affect, modulated as anger, is now further modulated as fear, as the forceful tearing away from space is complete. It's important to note how this results in changed behaviors and somatic responses on part of the student as it makes sense in their composition—it acknowledges the fear created real changes in approaching the world.

8. "Pretty Ugly" by Tierra Whack (2018); 9. "Feeling Good" By Avicii (2015)

"Pretty Ugly" operates in an interesting fashion—the track itself seems to operate as a transitory moment to a more uplifting affective charge—"feeling good" and filled with confidence with one's "ugly glow" and how it might clash with the target (Whack, 2018).

After realizing they were going to have “to make an effort” to achieve any sense of comfort they had previously felt, the student began to realize that there are similarities in the states of CO and MN, using this track to note “the light at the end of the tunnel.” (Artifact D2, p.3). Though they still miss home, new relationships occurring in the location helped “fade” both the anxiety of loneliness and the anger towards their parents—by the time we get to this track, they “no longer thought about Colorado every day and [they] began to call [their] new location ‘home’” (Artifact D2, p.3)

Made an especially impactful shift by the quick cut and ending of the prior track, “Feeling Good” expands on the uplifted nature and deepens it. An emphasis on literal altitude (“Birds flying high”) and newness associated with dawn and daylight (“It’s a new dawn/it’s a new day/it’s a new life for me”) allow the communication of “feeling good” that builds off the previous shift (Avicii, 2015). It’s very interesting that this track is given no explanation for its presence nor how it fits into the other tracks. Ostensibly, the way it explodes out of the prior track, one can assume what is said about the prior track applies, but the silence on this one speaks volumes to the potential place it does or does not take up in the sense-making of the student, given that it’s the only track not even name-dropped. The student’s letter simply skips to the final track.

The affective turn into a gradually more positive affective environment, as friendships are made and connections forged with the other, is not insignificant to the tracklist, as it shows the following of certain narratives wherein the student feels they must articulate overcoming the negative—it’s the end of the arc, the claiming of the victory—but it is interesting how subtle and understated these features of the tracklist are in their articulation, both there and in the letter. As noted, the dedicated space in the letter to describe their function is minimal—one of the tracks isn’t even mentioned—and this can make us wonder how much the student misses in their capture of these moments. In one way, this can remind *us* that affect is always in excess to attempts to name it or express it—playlists included—and this has been a standing feature of affect as pre-linguistic (Ahmed 2004; Lechuga 2014; Frischerz 2015; Hawhee 2015). We can also consider the way prior environments and exposures to affective arcs in other materials may or may not condition the way a student may think emotions *ought* to change over time—not to mention the contemporary purposes of writing this for an instructor who may or may not be someone they feel comfortable deviating from known scripts of emotions or desires (Ahmed, 2004). We will return to this in the last track.

10. “The Other Side of Paradise” by Glass Animals (2016)

Somewhat “feels” fitting and yet is an interesting swerve from the uplifting experience of the last two tracks, this one provides some interesting expressions of regret, numbness (“the bullet hit or maybe not/I feel so fucking numb”) and settling for the non-ideal (“I’ll settle for a ghost I never knew”). Mystifying and nostalgic symmetry with the initial track on the list.

This song is the most interesting track for several reasons—it represents a time skip of a whole year for the student’s narrative, moving from the junior year of high school to the senior year

(artifact D2, p.3). It also is supposed to represent a “realization” of taking one’s life for granted; the student had not thought about Colorado for “a while” and the track “represents [their complete transition to [their life] ...the line ‘bye bye baby blue,’ represents the feeling of euphoria when [they] finally realized that everything was going to be okay...” (Artifact D2, p. 3)

The symmetry and almost at times contradictory expressions from the song itself here and the authorial intent in its usage by the student are fascinating, both as additional examples of how affect can never be fully captured in mediation, even when accounting for “turns,” as well as reminding us of small moments of resonance in the beginning of the list and letter. Despite being able to acknowledge this new environment as a “home” or place of belonging, the student had stated that they couldn’t know if “it will ever be the same feeling” as the sense of belonging in Colorado (Artifact D2, p.1).

This refusal to identify the positive sentiments towards the locations as the same can be taken to imply there’s more to this turning of affect than the student either knows or lets on here— but this also doesn’t mean we should reject the way the student transforms this modulation in a tale of victory. Acknowledgment of difference here along with the notion of “settling” *could* make that argument, but it could also be a simple recognition that no two affective worlds are identical, and that belonging in one is not the same as belonging in another. This would mesh well with the idea of turning and modulation of boundaries in affect theory, as well as the transformative capacities of composing on the self in educational theory (Hansen, 2002; De Marzio, 2012; Palmeri, 2012; Lechuga, 2014; Frischerz, 2015).

What we *can* see here in this act of inception, is a representation of affective channeling, carving new boundaries around a single person *over time* as they process movement, removal, and acceptance in a composition all their own. While doing this, the composition also operates as an act of inception, using this trace to effect modulation and induce new boundaries on listeners and readers. In short, the student both traces (represents affective channeling) their emotional progression, therefore making sense of it, and is itself a material product of said emotional progression (act of inception itself) in process, as they composed the playlist/letter. This is rendered especially visible (though is not a necessary condition for this visibility) by the subject matter of movement itself, making this a kind of exemplary case for demonstrating the fruits of such an assignment.

Tracking Self Fashioning

Immediately, we find the combination of external sourcing for affective material and epistolary model functioning in the mode of ethical transformation that we might find conducted by Montaigne, or an act of self-fashioning (De Marzio, 2012). Much like how “the teacher works at self-transformation at the same time that they work toward the transformation of the student,” the author here had organized the compilation of songs not only to make sense of their current relation to the past, but also ostensibly transform their dialogic counterparts’ experience of the same events (De Marzio, 2012, p.338)—even if this possibility is simply imaginary, we can also consider the broader methods in which this can be applied, in the same way De Marzio argues for the broader pedagogical applications of Montaigne and Plutarch’s letters.

These features and exercises performed by the students (saying nothing of their instructor's exercises in providing feedback) can serve not only as procedural substantiation of identity, but a model insofar as the product of such a process provides evidence of a substantive act for audiences far broader than the specific individual being voiced to. As we all know, voices can carry. This also meshes well with the consideration of the material "moments of immediacy" can mediate movement of the self in social argumentation (Lechuga, 2014, p.89).

Attendance to affect is necessary to understanding the relevance of a such a composition to the composer and other—in order to ascertain the potential impact of the artifact, one has to attend to the way the songs capture, induce, or channel affective experiences, environments, and turns. That is, only by acknowledging how the artifacts voice the experiences of the student beyond the discursive, and points toward the "affective, bodily, *lived* experience" of the student can we see how the composition serves the goals of developing rhetorical and compositional awareness, such as using the sources of others, or expressing a sense of identity. (Palmeri, 2012; Frischerz, 2015; Ceraso, 2018).

By producing a *personal soundscape*, the student is able to enact their sense of self agentially, circulate out to the social soundscape—in some ways composing themselves in the process, in other ways attending to how others might wish to make sense of themselves. In order to see this, one has to recognize the way a student articulates feeling, intensity, and its impact on their bodily responses/actions, and this is enabled by attending to affect. The student attends to affect in their own way, naming experiences, feelings, moods, emotions, and spaces, to better understand how their identity and sense of self was built into the environments they moved through. We attend to how that affect modulates, "turns," and circulates via their own attendance to it.

Concluding Speculations: Voicing Affect in FYW

In short, what we have explored here is how to apply the theories around the mediation of affect, modal technologies (in particular audio and textual composition), and educational theories in the design and analysis of student assignments. This study was conducted in the hopes of revealing the importance of affect and sound in composition classrooms, as it can reveal a value of "writing to think" beyond making sense of only discursive thought; it can also help us make sense of our material environments and emotions (Banks, 2011; Palmeri, 2012; Ceraso, 2018; Harley, 2018). This helps us develop voice, a sense of agency, the limits of that agency, and the roots of that agency in the world around us. We can develop this voice by practicing it, by voicing our experiences in the act of inception (composing) and channeling affect to self-fashion.

As we wind down, there are a few limitations of this case study to attend to, as well. While my methodology for exploring the artifacts at my disposal was holistic, I also could not take the time to articulate interesting comparisons to other artifacts, which may have included ways these artifacts did *not* do some of the things this artifact set did. This was also influenced by the way this case in particular was exemplary of the conceptions of circulation, turning, and movement via the subject matter, and other artifact sets did not focus on these features in the

same way. The real test of the importance of these features is to attend to them in a more systematic fashion than done here, across artifacts of similar aims but different worlds of affect. In the future, I would hope to both focus on comparative work between artifact sets, but also decenter the discursive emphasis presented in my own receptions of the tracks—attend to the material sound, as Ceraso (2018) may ask us to; the limitations of this alphabetic text may have contributed to this as well—it may also be that voicing affect necessarily includes the discursive.

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