



*The Journal of
Multimodal Rhetorics*

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**Rhetoric in/and Everyday
Media**

FROM THE EDITOR



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This issue was composed, edited, and published within the traditional territories of the Akokisa/Orcoquiza and Karankawa peoples.

To be oriented is also to be oriented toward certain objects, those that help us find our way. These are the objects we recognize, such that when we face them, we know which way we are facing. They gather on the ground and also create a ground on which we can gather. Yet objects gather quite differently, creating different grounds. What difference does it make what we are oriented toward?

—Sara Ahmed, “Orientations: Towards a Queer Phenomenology” (2006, p. 543)

Welcome to Issue 2.2 of the *Journal of Multimodal Rhetorics*. In this issue, you’ll find a collection of essays and reviews that speak to the rich complexity of everyday life and our diverse engagements with the objects and spaces that we engage with in making said life. However, as the authors of the included works demonstrate, just because some elements *seem* commonplace is no reason to dismiss their edifying dimensions. Social media and other digital

texts prove potent communicators of our communal values and biases (Vetter et al.; Hutchinson), but they can also inform our teaching praxes in new and meaningful ways (Shepherd). New pedagogical approaches to teaching (with) multimodality are always needed (Martin).

Modes on which we typically rely for information and entertainment influence how we construct our realities, teaching

us to interpret spaces, places, and even other people, whether aurally or through audiovisual means (Wetherbee; Harley; McIntyre). Music confounds the separability of canons, merging invention and memory so that its effects can be translated into other media (Peres). Conversations provide pedagogical models, based in theories of and in the flesh (see Moraga and Anzaldúa) and real world praxes (Gonzales and Zobel).

Furthermore, rhetorical connections between culture, history, and modes like the visual and material compose the tropes through which we make sense of the world. These modes, media, and frameworks help those of us from marginalized communities to contend with histories of violence and oppression and their current manifestations. The crucial connections also illustrate and substantiate acts of survivance (see Stromberg, 2006; King, Gubele, and Anderson, 2015) that counter forms of erasure demanded by colonization, colonialism and colonality (Whitebear; Garcia).

Even the ordinary objects that inhabit and make up what might be termed by many “unremarkable locations” exercise great power over our notions of identity and agency. How comestibles are labeled and stocked may determine if and how we strive for consubstantiality with others (Roncero-Bellido). Often ignored except under unexpected or messy circumstances, the walls of a home can invite children to strive for self-determination and prompt adults to ponder ideas of liminality (Lunsford).

On behalf of the insightful, thought-provoking writers featured in this issue, I want to convey our shared appreciation. Thank you for reading and for joining us in this multifaceted look at rhetoric in/and everyday media.

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Wikipedia's Gender Gap and Disciplinary Praxis:

Representing Women Scholars in Digital Rhetoric and Writing Fields

Matthew A. Vetter, John Andelfinger, Shahla Asadolahi, Wenqi Cui, Jialei Jiang, Tyrone Jones, Zeeshan F. Siddique, Inggrit O. Tanasale, Awouignandji Ebenezer Ylonfoun, and Jiawei Xing, Indiana University of Pennsylvania

Wikipedia's gender gaps, the result of a predominance of male editors and the correlating uneven participation and coverage of marginalized groups, are by now both well-known and well-documented (Cohen, 2011; Collier and Bear, 2012; Glott, Schmidt, and Ghosh, 2010; Gruwell, 2015; Wadewitz, 2013). This article seeks to interrogate these gaps in coverage as they manifest in discipline-specific representations, especially representations related to the academic fields of computers and writing, digital literacy, and digital rhetoric. Preliminary analysis of articles related to these fields demonstrates a severe lack of coverage which, given these fields' attention to digital literacies, should be improved. This article employs a bibliometric method of citation analysis (Eyman, 2015; Kaur, Radicchi, and Menczer, 2013) across five Wikipedia articles related to these fields to show how the gender gap manifests in the absence of cited research by non-male scholars. To address these content gaps, co-authors of this article move beyond analysis to define and engage in acts of critical digital praxis within Wikipedia, editing the encyclopedia to improve representation of women and women's research in computers and writing and digital rhetoric fields. Descriptions of such editorial work and its implications, furthermore, provide a model for disciplinary praxis, and graduate pedagogy, in which authors work together to engage in the critique and remediation of Wikipedia's disciplinary content and gender gaps. As a larger example of critical digital analysis and participation, this article also aspires to unpack and critique the ways in which media, even those professing an open-access and democratic ethic, perpetuate social hegemonies of marginalization.

1. Introduction: The Free Encyclopedia Anyone [White Males] Can Edit

Incredibly successful in terms of size and scope, Wikipedia is often praised for its collaborative model in which self-motivated editors work through a

democratic process to build a global repository of knowledge. However, Wikipedia's gender gaps—the result of a predominance of male editors and the correlating uneven participation and coverage of marginalized groups—are by now both well-known and well-documented (Cohen, 2011; Collier and

Bear, 2012; Glott, Schmidt, and Ghosh, 2010; Gruwell, 2015; Wadewitz, 2013).

According to a global Wikipedia survey conducted by a partnership between United Nations University and UNU-MERIT, only 13% of Wikipedia contributors are women (Glott, Schmidt, and Ghosh, 2010). While there has been some improvement in these numbers since this initial survey, more recent studies demonstrate how the lack of women editors contributes to ongoing problems of gender representation. For instance, a 2017 study of biographical articles in Wikipedia across languages found that only 17% of the biographies in the English Wikipedia focused on women figures (“Wikipedia Human Gender Indicator,” 2017). Wikipedia’s problematic gender politics exemplify the androcentric norms that often define online cultures and gender differences among males’ and females’ internet usage (Joiner et al., 2005). Beyond gender, Wikipedians are also typically technically skillful, formally educated, English speakers, age 15–49, from developed and majority-[Christian](#) nations (“Wikipedia: Systemic Bias,” 2017).

Speculation on why this unevenness of participation emerges varies by research and researcher positionality, and often perpetuates or advances heteronormative or stereotypical discourses. Benjamin Collier and Julia Bear (2012) posited that one possible reason for women’s reluctance to contribute might be related to a negative self-perception regarding their knowledge or ability, or a general discomfort in editing others’ work. In

addition, Eszter Hargittai and Aaron Shaw (2014) found that Wikipedia’s gender bias might be caused by women’s low internet skill or lack of interest. Adrienne Wadewitz (2013), forwarding a more sensitive and nuanced perspective, argued that women—who typically are expected to perform more invisible and unpaid labor in their lives—have less free time to devote to volunteer projects such as Wikipedia.

Whatever its cause, the lack of women editors has concrete consequences regarding what’s represented in the encyclopedia. Noam Cohen (2011) tracked some of these consequences through a (somewhat heteronormative and simplistic) analysis of representation, noting that traditionally “male” subjects, such as toy soldiers or baseball cards, are often elaborated on in a lengthy article, while many subjects favorable to female audiences are underrepresented. It is important to realize, however, that gender gaps on Wikipedia have substantial, negative impacts beyond coverage of the subjects discussed by Cohen. As Wadewitz (2013) has recognized, “Wikipedia’s sexism lessens its legitimacy as a producer and organizer of knowledge” and forfeits its goals of diversity and openness.

Wikipedia’s gender problems go beyond content gaps or participation, however. The encyclopedia’s adherence to western, logocentric norms of knowledge production limit its capacity to welcome diverse epistemologies (Gruwell, 2015; Vetter and Pettway, 2017). Unlike male editors, who tend to write more

“objectively,” female editors, more often than not, engage their bodily experience in writing (Gruwell, 2015). Wikipedia fails to “accommodate feminist ways of knowing and writing” and instead facilitates “reduced notions of objectivity” (Gruwell, 2015, p. 121). More broadly, because Wikipedia fails to create a genuinely diverse and multivocal space that includes and encourages women’s voices, the encyclopedia favors gendered norms and epistemologies to the exclusion of a more democratic and multicultural encyclopedia.

In this article, we seek to interrogate Wikipedia’s gender problems further, especially as such problems manifest in discipline-specific coverage of subjects related to the academic fields of computers and writing, digital literacy, and digital rhetoric. Our focus on content related to these academic fields emerges from the situated context in which this article was envisioned and written: a doctoral-level seminar in Technology and Literacy we participated in (as professor and students) in the Composition and Applied Linguistics PhD Program at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. In addition to exploring the digital and cultural ramifications of Wikipedia’s gender gap, this project helped us achieve the objectives of learning and applying conceptual knowledge from these fields. Beyond traditional academic goals, we were also interested in engaging a mode of intellectual work that eschews normative academic spaces and epistemologies for more public, intellectual writing as digital action. The citation analysis and

Wikipedia edits described in this article (as well as the drafting of this article itself) were a collaborative course assignment in English 808: Technology and Literacy. But they were also more than that: an attempt to move beyond traditional academic curricula and to practice a type of research that valorizes *doing* (praxis) over other types of both primary and secondary research that emphasize reviewing, collecting and analyzing as epistemological processes. Accordingly, this article—in its discussion and interrogation of Wikipedia’s disciplinary gender gap—attempts to work towards two central goals. First, our analysis of articles related to computers and writing, digital rhetoric, and digital literacy, demonstrates how the gender gap emerges and influences Wikipedia’s production of knowledge within a disciplinary ecology. Second, and in response to the findings from this analysis, we also move beyond analytics to define and engage in acts of digital praxis within Wikipedia, editing the encyclopedia to improve representation of women and women’s research within the disciplines explored.

In the following sections, we attempt to theorize the type of digital praxis we engaged in as critical reflection and action. We see such praxis as having very real material and multimodal effects, especially as we seek to remediate Wikipedia’s discursive representation of women scholars—and the accompanying cultural capital and ethos production that accompanies such representation. Our theoretical framing of this work (see Section 2) introduces and contextualizes

both the analytical and reflective accounts of our engagement with digital praxis. Our procedure for a type of citation analysis (see Section 3) seeks to quantify and materialize the omission of women scholars from discipline-specific articles. Furthermore, our reflection (see Section 4) on the specific accounts of editorial praxis—what was added to specific Wikipedia articles—is also grounded in this theory. In the final section, we speculate on the implications of this type of project for graduate pedagogy. What are the challenges presented by collaborative authorship within doctoral coursework? What are the opportunities and constraints of critical digital praxis beyond Wikipedia?

2. Digital Praxis and Embodied Multimodality - Extending and Applying Theoretical Frameworks

Our examination and remediation of Wikipedia's disciplinary gender gap engages two sets of theories in digital rhetoric: (1) what Matthew Vetter, Theresa McDevitt, Daniel Weinstein, and Kenneth Sherwood (2017) have previously termed "critical digital praxis," a mode of rhetorical praxis in the tradition of media praxis (Fotopoulou and O'Riordan, 2014) and following a Freirean and Arendtian lineage for liberatory action (Arendt, 1958; Freire, 2007), and (2) theories on the embodied materiality and multimodality of discourse (Jones, 2010; Rohan, 2010; Selfe, 2009; Shipka, 2011; Yancey, 2014; Wysocki,

2012). This article also responds to a recent feminist rhetorical analysis of Wikipedia's epistemological practices performed by Leigh Gruwell in which she calls for more critical pedagogical approaches to the online encyclopedia (2015).

2.1 FROM MEDIA PRAXIS TO CRITICAL DIGITAL PRAXIS

Media praxis has its roots in the philosophical and pedagogical works of Hannah Arendt and Paulo Freire, respectively, both of whom were working in a Marxist tradition. Praxis "brings together theory, philosophy and political action into the realm of the everyday" (Fotopoulou and O'Riordan, 2014, para. 3). Building upon this understanding of praxis as a form of theory into practice, Alexandra Juhasz defined queer feminist media praxis as the "making and theorizing of media towards stated projects of world and self-changing" (qtd. in Fotopoulou and O'Riordan, 2014, para. 3). In other words, digital media praxis not only serves as a bridge between theory and practice but also functions as feminist action that is fluid and ever changing. Drawing from Marxist and Arendtian definitions of praxis and Juhasz's uptake of media praxis, Aristea Fotopoulou and Kate O'Riordan (2014) reconfigured feminist media praxis as a form of political action rendered possible by digital media platforms, such as social media sites and technological tools. For instance, the online community SusNet (<http://reframe.sussex.ac.uk/susnet/>) brings together feminist practitioners,

researchers, activists, and artists, opening avenues for feminist knowledge reproduction in digital media spaces. In a similar vein, the feminist multimodal journal *Ada: A Journal of Gender, New Media, and Technology* (<http://adanewmedia.org>) creates a space for sustaining feminist praxis within academic discourses and communities. Recent efforts to bring media praxis into disciplinary conversations in rhetoric and composition (Vetter et al., 2017; Vetter and Pettitway, 2017) re-framed the term to emphasize critical digital praxis as “a model for making writing interventions in public digital cultures in order to both better understand the writing activities of those cultures and make meaningful impressions with/in them” (Vetter et al., 2017).

In Wikipedia, critical digital praxis allows for conscious reflection and action regarding the encyclopedia’s gendered politics of access, representation, and epistemology, and how those politics shape material realities both online and offline. Citing Freire, Vetter et al. (2017) redefined praxis as “both reflection and action aimed especially at transformation” (para. 22). Such a definition moves beyond the longstanding platonic dichotomy splitting theory/thought and action/practice in western rhetoric (Arendt, 1958). Instead, critical digital praxis signals an amalgam of both thought and action. In the same work, “Critical Digital Praxis in Wikipedia: The Art+Feminism Edit-a-thon,” Vetter et al. (2017) theorized the Art+Feminism Edit-a-thon, a one-day public Wikipedia editing event specifically aimed at remediating the

encyclopedia’s gender gap, as a type of critical digital praxis that “engage[s] both students and faculty in practical action that goes beyond the walls of the institution—that participates more fully in the public sphere, and that leaves a lasting impact in our (digital) world” (para. 23). Such work reminds us that Wikipedia might be one of the most effective and lasting ways in which students (and other members of a university community) can create embodied change in the digital world beyond their classrooms. It also serves as a precursor to the more sustained and disciplinary-focused mode of scholarship this article attempts to describe and theorize.

Finally, the examination of critical digital praxis as rhetorical action also opens up opportunities for recognizing the materiality and multimodality of digital media and discourse. Just as all forms of communication are both embodied and multimodal (Shipka, 2011; Wysocki, 2012), communicative praxis in digital spaces is always embodied and multimodal, and always creates specific material impacts in our everyday lives.

2.2 MULTIMODALITY, EMBODIMENT, AND WIKIPEDIA’S DISCIPLINARY KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION

Forging connections between multimodality and embodiment may help develop a better understanding of how Wikipedia has material consequences beyond the encyclopedia. To theorize some material aspects of Wikipedia, it might be useful to turn to Kathleen Yancey’s (2014) explanation of electronic

portfolios. Yancey wrote that, “the potential of arrangement is a function of delivery, and *what and how you arrange*—which becomes a function of the medium you choose—*is who you invent*” (Yancey, 2014, p. 81, emphasis in original). Despite the focus on the ePortfolio, Yancey’s discussion also has implications for any digital archive. If we consider similar links and arrangements in Wikipedia, the encyclopedia also emerges as an important multimodal hypertext arranged to deliver particular material realities and identities.

Other scholars have explored the multimodal and multisensory nature of composition (Ceraso, 2014; Jones, 2010; Rohan, 2010; Selfe, 2009; Shipka, 2011). Cynthia L. Selfe’s (2009) history of aurality in composition referenced the importance of both metaphorical and embodied voice in composition, and her notion of voices connects to the multivocal nature of Wikipedia. Further, we might look to Shipka’s (2016) “transmodal” pedagogy that examined how writers use both modal and linguistic resources more freely. By looking at both modal and linguistic variation in texts, we might see Wikipedia as continually shaping multimodal and translingual space with embodied consequences. Jody Shipka (2011) also reminded us that “when our scholarship fails to consider, and when our practices do not ask students to consider, the complex and highly distributed processes associated with the production of texts (and lives and people), we run the risk of overlooking the fundamentally multimodal aspects of *all* communicative

practice” (Shipka, 2011, p. 13, emphasis in original). When all texts are examined as multimodal, all texts can also be understood as sensory and thereby embodied both in how they are perceived and crafted.

Wikipedia epistemologies reflect the world outside Wikipedia by reconstructing and/or reinforcing global knowledge with both material and embodied repercussions. Matthew A. Vetter and Keon Pettiway (2017) point out that Wikipedia’s attempt to collect “‘the sum of all human knowledge’ has, so far, been a project taken on by predominantly young, white, western males” (para. 7) while also examining how a “queer approach [to Wikipedia]... is likely to be more focused on bodies, identities, genders, and/or sexualities, but can also interrogate the intersectionality of such subjects with reality, ontology, or... epistemology” (para. 3) Here, Vetter and Pettiway (2017) showed how Wikipedia references and enacts actual *physical* bodies and how including more diverse Wikipedians and representing people beyond those often acknowledged by “young, white, western males” has real, embodied consequences beyond the encyclopedia. To critically analyze the encyclopedia’s marginalization of non-male disciplinary scholars, and then to remediate that marginalization through inclusive efforts to better represent these scholars, as we have done in this project, is to engage in a form of critical digital praxis with both multimodal and embodied effects.

Vetter and Pettiway (2017) paralleled claims by Gruwell (2015) that while the encyclopedia is predominantly male-centric, Wikipedia can work to adopt a more inclusive and ecological model by appealing to existing epistemological processes in its ongoing production. Gruwell recognized these processes, arguing that “Most [Wikipedia] articles are written by several different authors over time, apparently privileging multiplicity and resisting the notion of single, hegemonic Truth. This kind of multivocality is, in fact, a key tenet of feminist research and writing” (p. 121). To move more concretely toward a vision of multivocality, however, we must encourage and enact both a criticality of Wikipedia’s uneven and biased production *and* participation by editors outside the dominant demographic. This article, and the acts of critical digital praxis it describes, represents our attempt to answer the call made by Gruwell (2015), and to enact both criticality and participation through direct editorial remediation of the encyclopedia’s gender gap. In the following section, we explore how this gap manifests in very tangible, material ways through quantitative and qualitative analysis of representative articles on topics related to digital rhetoric, computers and writing, and digital literacy.

3. Wikipedia’s Gender Gap and Disciplinary Representation

While researchers have worked to understand the extent of Wikipedia’s

gender gap in terms of participation (Glott, Schmidt, and Ghosh, 2010), possible causes (Collier and Bear, 2012; Hargittai and Shaw, 2014), and systemic or structural factors (Gruwell, 2015; Wadewitz, 2013), most research on how content gaps manifest has been limited to anecdotal (and stereotypical) findings (Cohen, 2011) or more narrow studies (“Wikipedia Human Gender Indicator,” 2017). Our own analysis of Wikipedia’s gender gap as it manifests in disciplinary-specific articles is, admittedly, also limited, especially in terms of the number of articles it studies. We forward such analysis, however, with two specific goals. First, we seek to quantify and materialize the omission of women scholars in computers and writing, digital rhetoric, and digital literacy fields to help make the gender gap—what is essentially an absence—more visible. Second, we are also hopeful that our method for citation analysis, which we describe below, will be taken up in other research (both on Wikipedia and outside this context) as a way to materialize gender bias across scholarly discourses.

Our analysis of Wikipedia articles related to computers and writing, digital rhetoric, and digital literacy, began with informal examination of Wikipedia categories related to these fields (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portal:Contents/Categories>). We identified the following relevant categories—Media theories, Composition, Writing, Computing and society, Digital

humanities, and Rhetoric—and used a digital tool, Yanker (https://tools.wmflabs.org/pirsquared/ts_archive/mzmcbride/yanker.py/yanker.py), to identify and explore articles within these categories. Next, we manually selected Wikipedia articles that were directly and closely connected to the fields we were interested in. Finally, we identified five specific articles to study:

- Digital rhetoric (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Digital_rhetoric),
- Multimodality (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Multimodality>),
- Computers and writing (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Computers_and_writing),
- Digital literacy (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Digital_literacy), and
- Media theory of composition (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Media_theory_of_composition).

To determine how these five articles represent or fail to represent non-male scholars, we employed a type of citation analysis. As an area of bibliometric research, citation analysis examines citations in scholarly articles and other texts as a means to establish and measure relations between authors, articles, texts, and academic fields. Citation analysis allows researchers to examine frequency, patterns, and graphs of citations in books, articles, and other texts which utilize similar academic systems of reference.

The use of citation analysis, as a method for quantifying a text or author's uptake by other scholars, as well as for analyzing authors' citation networks, has increased considerably in recent years as a means to quantify researcher impact across disciplines (Kaur, Radicchi, and Menczer, 2013). Although he acknowledged its limits regarding overall consideration of a text, Douglas Eyman (2015) asserted that citation analysis constitutes the most obvious and traditional method to trace the use and value of texts. The five articles we identified in this project vary in terms of their length, comprehensiveness, and the quality level rated by Wikipedia. However, each article includes a references section from which we could examine how many non-male scholars and their works are cited in the production of the article. Ultimately, we view this type of analysis as a useful heuristic for visualizing Wikipedia's gender gap along disciplinary lines.

In employing this method of citation analysis, we worked through the following procedures and considerations. First, we counted the total number of references used in each article, including those that led to broken links. We then counted the number of non-male authors cited in the references to identify the percentage of non-male scholars to male scholars being cited. If the same citation was included in the references more than once, it was only counted once. Next, we identified the gender of the authors cited in the references section based on their names (when obvious). If the gender was not apparent from names, we utilized the links

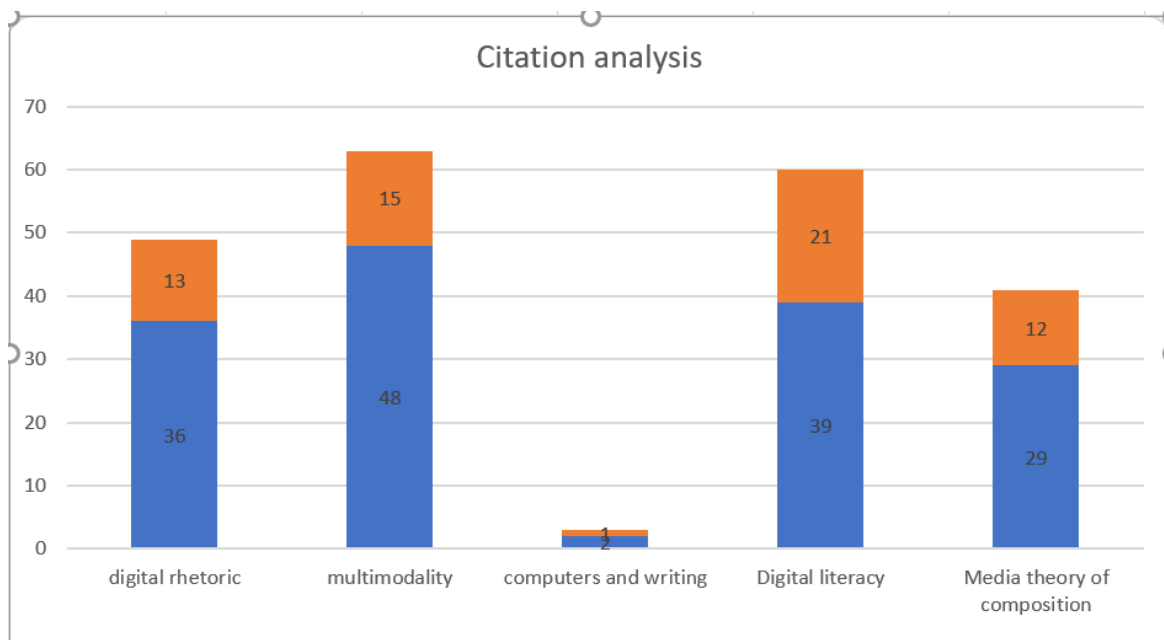


Figure 1. Graph of citation analysis shows number of non-male (orange) references and total (blue) number of references cited in Wikipedia articles on or before November 7, 2017.

included in the references or performed informal internet research to access authors' websites, published articles and/or books, and identified gender based on biographical information from these sources. If there were multiple authors in one citation, we counted a non-male citation when at least one of the authors was non-male. In utilizing these methods for gender coding, we also acknowledge the problematic assumptions we are making about how individuals identify across a gender spectrum that may not be immediately visible and/or code-able by name or informal web research. However, we ultimately see such gender coding as useful in that it allows for the initial identification and analysis of patterns of citation across gender differences.

For the five articles, we counted the total number of all citations and citations

from non-male scholars respectively. The total number of citations across the five articles vary, ranging from 2 to 48, depending on article development. Articles at the level of start-class (a low-quality rating according to Wikipedia's grading system) include fewer citations, and are typically less comprehensive regarding content. For example, the article "Computers and writing" included only two citations at the time of analysis. To promote a standardized measurement, we conducted citation analysis of all articles being studied across a consistent time period, using Wikipedia's "history" function to assess article citations on or before November 7, 2017. Since we would be editing some of these articles as part of this project, we also made sure to perform this quantitative analysis *before* making our own edits.

Article	Total number of citations before November 7, 2017 (n)	Total number and percentage of citations of non-male authors before November 7, 2017 (n, %)	Article quality rating
Digital rhetoric	36	13 (36%)	Start-class
Multimodality	48	15 (31%)	B-class
Computers and writing	2	1 (50%)	Start-class
Digital literacy	39	21 (54%)	C-class
Media theory of composition	29	12 (41%)	Unassessed

Figure 2. Citation analysis data shows number and percentage of non-male scholars referenced in 5 Wikipedia articles, and the class of each article.

Figures 1 and 2 display the results of our citation analysis in a visual graph and quantitative data set. The article “Digital rhetoric” included 13 (or 36%) citations of non-male scholars out of 36 total references. Following this general trend, in “Multimodality” we found 15 (or 31%) of 48 references to be from non-male scholars. In “Media theory of composition,” only 12 of 29 references (or 41%) pointed to non-male scholars. “Computers and Writing” and “Digital literacy” demonstrated a more balanced relationship between total and non-male citations. The former included only 2 citations, and an even 50% split between gender identities. The latter, “Digital literacy,” showed a slightly larger percentage of non-male citations (21 out of 39, or 54%). As becomes apparent from these results, Wikipedia’s gender

gap, while perhaps not as pronounced as might be expected, manifests in the percentage of non-male scholars being cited in each article. Only one article, “Digital literacy” showed a higher percentage of non-male scholars being cited. These findings help to visualize the gender gap further as it emerges within disciplinary representations pertaining to the fields of computer and writing, digital rhetoric, and digital literacy. In the next section, we describe our critical response to Wikipedia’s gender gap. We edited three of the five articles analyzed above, “Multimodality,” “Digital rhetoric,” and “Computers and writing,” with the explicit goal of increasing representation of non-male scholars by adding and representing scholarship written by women researchers.

4. Materializing New Disciplinary Representations

Wikipedia edits that work toward inclusion of non-male scholars in discipline-related articles, as a form of critical digital praxis, help materialize the scholarship of women researchers through discursive processes of representation and legitimization. In the following subsections (4.1, 4.2, 4.3), we reflect on our work with three Wikipedia articles—“Multimodality,” “Digital rhetoric,” and “Computers and writing”—reporting on their development before our edits, as well as the specific content and scholars we added to improve their representation of women researchers. In addition to these reports, we also focus on the implications of this project for disciplinary knowledge, graduate pedagogy, and disciplinary representation, respectively.

4.1 “MULTIMODALITY” AND DISCIPLINARY KNOWLEDGE

On our first read of “Multimodality,” in addition to the issues suggested by Wikipedia editors within the article itself, we found a number of specific content gaps which pointed to a lack of disciplinary knowledge. For example, in “Classroom literacy,” a subsection under “Education,” there were only two paragraphs with a brief review of literacy as defined by Gunther Kress and a list of modes utilized in contemporary classrooms. Furthermore, the “Education” section showed an overall lack of development when it came to applying visual or multimodal literacy to

educational topics. Accordingly, in “Education,” we added research by Lesley Gourlay (2010), to more clearly describe the impact of multimodal pedagogies on higher education. The section already emphasized the connection between education and multimodality, while also providing some context for classrooms. However, it did not explicitly broach the subject of higher education, so we chose to fill that gap. In the “Multiliteracies” subsection (immediately following), we added another scholar, Kathy Mills (2011), outlining her research on the importance of multiliteracies in education.

In addition to these edits, we also found that contemporary theory-based classroom practices were not included in the current version of the article. To correct this omission, we edited the article by adding two subsections, “Gaming” and “Storytelling,” which review additional applications of multimodality. In addition to these content gaps, we also attempted to improve the article’s gender gap. To accomplish this, we added research conducted by Diana George (2002) pertaining to the application of visual literacy and other mass media in English classroom and postsecondary writing instruction from 1946 to the twenty-first century. We also added Jody Shipka’s (2005) proposal for a multimodal task-based framework, emphasizing the importance of having students experience the system of delivery, reception, and circulation of their digital products.

Wikipedia is heralded as “the free encyclopedia that anyone can edit” and

egalitarianism and equality are expected among editors regardless of background, gender, races, class, and ability. However, the prevalence of gender gaps among articles has ramifications for the representation of disciplinary knowledge. In working to add references and information produced by women scholars such as Gourlay, Mills, George, and Shipka, we sought to bridge the gender gap in this article, while improving its representation of disciplinary content, and answering calls made by Gruwell (2015) for more critical interrogation and participation of Wikipedia.

4.2 “DIGITAL RHETORIC” AND GRADUATE PEDAGOGY

In our initial analysis of the “Digital rhetoric” article, we noticed that less than half of references came from women or non-male authors. Accordingly, we were interested in trying to bridge this gap by bringing in more women rhetoricians and further improving the article’s development. In our assessment of the article’s needs, we identified five specific areas to contribute to, which correspond to the following sections or subsections: “Collaboration,” “Copyright issues,” “Multimodality,” “Electracy,” and “Education.” To the subsection on “Collaboration,” we introduced the work of Catherine Braun and Kenneth Gilbert (2008) to more fully describe processes of academic and interdisciplinary collaboration. In “Copyright issues,” we introduced the scholarship of Danielle DeVoss (2010) which outlines remix strategies for using digital materials in the

composition classroom. In “Multimodality,” we made edits to include a conceptual definition of multimodality as inclusive of all communication (Ball and Charlton, 2014). In the subsection on “Electracy,” we added the work of Sarah Arroyo (2013) to extend Gregory Ulmer’s theory of electracy to examinations of participatory culture. Finally, we fleshed out the education section by introducing Elizabeth Clark’s (2010) discussion of ePortfolios, digital stories, online games, Second Life, and blogs as teaching practices. We also added a brief review of a recent multimodal textbook in rhetoric edited by Elizabeth Losh, Jonathan Alexander, Kevin Cannon, and Zander Cannon (2017).

Reflecting on this project’s significance for graduate pedagogy, we especially noticed how it opened up our experience with digital rhetoric and writing beyond conventional coursework. Editing Wikipedia allowed us to move beyond print practices to engage a more public audience and practice digital and pragmatic approaches to rhetoric and communication. As educators, this project also enabled us to begin thinking about how we might interrogate traditional pedagogical strategies and theories, especially in relation to digital technology. We began to think, especially, about the opportunities for other types of active and public pedagogies that this model of education encourages, and how we might enact similar projects in our future classrooms. As an assignment that required public writing, furthermore, this project also enabled us to use Wikipedia as

a professional platform for academic writing. Finally, because many of us identify as women, our editorial work in the encyclopedia further helped us to challenge the gender gap by merely expanding its editorial demographic through our participation.

4.3 “COMPUTERS AND WRITING” AND DISCIPLINARY REPRESENTATION

“Computers and writing,” the final article we worked on in this project, was significantly under-developed before we began editing and remains somewhat under-developed even after our updates. The article’s lack of development also highlighted the arbitrary references used in its creation. There were only two references—one a book by James Gee and Elizabeth Hayes (2011) and the other a link to the website for the academic journal *Computers and Composition: An International Journal*. It seemed strange that the only reference to academic writing linked to a book on digital literacies (as a field that is certainly relevant but ancillary to computers and writing). This link seemed particularly problematic after researching the history of the sub-field and conference because so many of its scholars were absent from the article.

To improve the article’s representation of the many women scholars in the subfield of computers and writing, and to improve the article’s content development, we created a section on the conference’s history, added information about how the field supports minority scholars, and, finally, added a review of the concept “cultural ecology” to better

represent theoretical work of women scholars more directly related to the computers and writing community. Creating a section about the history of the conference helps highlight the important work of scholars in this field—many of whom are women—and also allowed the conference and field to be noted for having feminist roots. For this edit, we relied especially on the historical work of Lisa Gerrard (1995; 2006). To better represent the field and conference’s support of minority scholars, we added information about an award presented annually at the Computers and Writing Conference, the *Gail Hawisher Caring for the Future Scholarship*, as well as how such an initiative supports efforts for inclusion (Butler et al., 2017). A final goal of this editorial work was to add an informative review of the theoretical concept cultural ecology. Drawing from seminal works by Gail Hawisher, Cynthia Selfe, Brittney Moraski, Melissa Pearson (2004), and Kristine Blair (1998), we contributed to the disciplinary representation of female voices in this article while also updating its illustration of major disciplinary theories.

By bringing in scholarly discussions by these women scholars, furthermore, our edits serve as a collaborative effort to help alleviate the gender gap on Wikipedia. We seek to inject diverse voices into the Wikipedia’s coverage of computers and writing. As such, this Wikipedia editing practice, albeit not offering a conclusive solution to problems of representation of women on the digital platform, serves as an initial effort to make Wikipedia a more inclusive space for all scholars.

5. Implications and Opportunities for Graduate Pedagogy

As a form of public and disciplinary engagement, the Wikipedia contributions theorized in this article represent a form of critical digital praxis applied to a public intellectual project. Such praxis, in a Freirean and Arendtian tradition, begins as critical examination and reflection on the encyclopedia as an inherently biased and uneven site for the production of knowledge. Wikipedia's gender gap, as shown in our citation analysis, emerges even along disciplinary lines, and becomes manifest in specific articles through its omission of non-male scholars. This project sought to remediate this gap through direct editing to include these scholars. Such work materializes the scholarship of women researchers through representation in what has become the defacto encyclopedia and global source of public knowledge, Wikipedia. As part of the coursework in a doctoral seminar in Literacy and Technology, our work on this project also allowed students to engage with research related to course topics (multimodality, digital rhetoric, computers and writing) as they updated and added to Wikipedia articles.

Our decision to attempt a collaborative scholarly article that reports on this project, furthermore, represents a conscious effort to engage in more meaningful coursework that deliberately breaks with traditional academic norms of individual performance and assessment in graduate education. Writing a collabora-

tive scholarly article with multiple authors (10, in this case) presents specific challenges in terms of organization, coherence, and task delegation. It also poses challenges for assessment of individual work. However, engaging students in this type of collaboration ultimately facilitates collaborative writing practice and encourages professional applications of course projects.

This project sought to unpack, analyze, and remediate systems of social oppression in Wikipedia, especially those stemming from and intersecting with the well-documented systemic bias related to the community's gender problems. It also sought to illustrate the embodied multimodality of knowledge production in what has become *the* encyclopedia of our time. Wikipedia's representation (or non-representation) of non-male scholars *matters* because such processes dictate and produce discursive and material realities related to ethos, authority, and academic reputation to a wider public audience outside academia. Our edits, although limited to a handful of articles, work towards broader representation of and materialization of women scholars in fields related to digital rhetoric and computers and writing. Although these acts of public writing were focused on and in Wikipedia, we also hope, through this project, to encourage other scholars and teachers of rhetoric, writing, and digital media to imagine performances of critical digital praxis in new contexts, especially those immediately accessible to our students. What might critical digital praxis look like when applied to other digital

communities and interfaces? What might be accomplished through those acts? We conclude by asking our readers to consider those questions.

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Walking (in) the Ethnic Aisle:

Latinidad/es Stocked in the Market

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In this essay, I examine ethnic grocery store aisles to demonstrate how the spatial rhetorics communicated in these aisles mirror discriminatory discourses in other public spheres. Combining testimonio, spatial rhetorical analysis, and a holistic culinary approach (Abarca, 2014; Abarca and Salas, 2016) to pose food, culinary practices, and market shelves as sites of transborder connections, I show how the placing of “non-American products” in these “ethnic” aisles emphasizes the Othered status attributed to cultural practices resulting from purchasing these products. Instead of being inclusive or celebrating diversity, these spaces and products compose a space of cultural imperialism where products targeting a Anglo-American clientele are stocked to satisfy their appetite for cultural consumption. In so doing, these spaces reinforce a sense of U.S. nationality built through the imposition of linguistic, sociocultural, and geopolitical borders, and reinforce the homogenization these labels exert upon the Other. Nevertheless, I also assert that these spaces mark “a presence instead of an absence,” turning the ethnic aisle into a space of survivance (survival and resistance) (Powell, 2002, p.

400) and of transborder connections between the many Latinx communities.

To better understand the ways in which ethnic food aisles become sites of transborder connection and negotiation of *Latinidad/es*, we need to view Latinxs as translocal subjects, since “with the intensification of transmigration, growing numbers of Latin@s and Latin Americans today embody similarly shifting registers, positionalities, and epistemes” (Alvarez et al., 2014, p. 4). Hence, *Latinidad/es* “is[/are] always already constituted out of the intersections of the intensified cross-border, transcultural, and translocal flows that characterize contemporary transmigration throughout the hemisphere” (p.2). These transnational and translocal subjectivities blend within one’s “geographies of selves,” or the ways in which our knowledges are inscribed in and on our bodies (Anzaldúa, 2015, p. 68-71).

The translocality of *Latinidad/es* and its impact on one’s geographies of selves also explain my personal urgency to study these aisles. My study emerged from my struggle to understand where I fit within hegemonic U.S. racial and ethnic labeling discourses; this situation becomes even

more pressing within the space of the market where the labels *Hispanic*, *Latino* and *Tex/Mex* are commonly used. Because of some of my experiences in the U.S., I have come to feel as if the terms *Hispanic/Latina* are reflective of certain aspects of my identity—even if I may phenotypically seem part of the whitestream, my use of Spanish in public and/or my Spanish-accented English marks me as Other because in Anglo-American society, the Spanish language and an accent have become major ethnic markers that work to homogenize Hispanic and Latinx communities despite the sociopolitical and cultural differences that exist among them.

Yet, in a society where the meanings embedded in the Latinx/Hispanic categories are synonymous with race, I am confronted with the legacy of a colonial history that governs the historiography and politics behind these labels. As a Spanish woman living in the U.S., I find myself experiencing the imposed need for others to identify what I am along a spectrum of labels that are radically problematic and unstable. And so, in an attempt to find an answer to the question, “What am I and where do I belong?”, my

study demonstrates the ways in which my relationship to the Hispanic/Latina labels shifts depending on the geo-socio-political contexts where I am located, while the sense of community I have developed with other Latinx communities travels with me across these borders.¹ My own entering into these spaces has made me become more aware of my intersecting identities as a Spanish woman in the U.S., and encouraged me to develop transborder relations with other members of the Latinx communities based on the relationships I establish with some of the products located in these aisles. At the same time, however, my study of these spaces underlines how ethnic aisles bear witness to the complicated colonial history of labeling discourses, the homogenization and racialization of *Latinidad/es*, and consumption of the ethnic Other.

Understanding the Multimodality of the Grocery

In studying the rhetorics of the ethnic aisle, I view space as rhetorical, for space, place, and their organization are socially produced embodied texts, which, within the space of the market, reproduce

¹ According to the 1990 U.S. Census of Population definition, I am definitely Hispanic. Nonetheless, through her study of the Hispanic/Latino controversy, Suzanne Oboler points out that, even though the U.S. Census of Population from 1990 includes Spaniards, “most scholars limit their policy-related research on Latinos to populations with ties to Latin America” (2). Spaniards’ exclusion from the umbrella covered by these pan-ethnic labels is not only exerted within academic circles. As Maria DeGuzmán (2005) and Debra Castillo (2005)

explain, even though U.S. definitions of the Latino/Hispanic labels incorporate Spaniards, many U.S. Latinos usually do not. The inclusion/exclusion of Spaniards within the pan-ethnic Hispanic/Latina labels illustrate the ways in which place and the individual/collective subjectivities shaped in these spaces intersect with the social formation of these labels and the intersectionality and positionality of identity. Depending on where I am located, and given the social and colonial construction of these labels, I can be considered Hispanic, Latina, both, or none.

hegemonic discourses that Other Latinxs. Thus, I am not only concerned with studying the space of the market, but also how this multimodal text affects (my) embodied experiences, (my) understanding of my identities, and individual/collective compositions of this space. Even though mapping has historically been posited as an objective and scientific practice, mapping indeed reflects sociocultural, historical, and political ideologies shaping the rhetor's subjectivities. As a process of multimodal composition, cartographical practices affect how space is conceived and perceived, and, in turn, how individuals act in said space and what knowledges they create (McDowell and Sharp, 1997; Mignolo, 1995; Proppen, 2012). Likewise, the organizational principles shaping a particular grocery store are never arbitrary, but are rather illustrative of the sociocultural and political ideologies of a particular society, thus further shaping an individual's subjectivities and how they conceive their relationship to other members of the communities around them (Dale and Burrell, 2008).

Like street labels in the city, the labels heading each aisle at the grocery market—with its names and its numbers, usually on both ends of the aisle—act on clients' bodies by directing how they ought to move across and around these spaces. As “spatial signifiers” (de Certeau, 1984, p. 98), the aisle markers and directories are meant to help clients choose whether they want to enter into the space contained within the aisle and, therefore, whether the individual wants to establish a

relationship with the produce stocked in this space and with the other clients navigating this space. Here, I follow Michel de Certeau's view of walking as a rhetorical practice, as the way we choose to walk through the spaces of the market creates an “urban text” of the store's planned spaces (p. 93). Each aisle creates a linear path that obliges individuals to either walk the entire aisle, or to walk back and forth to exit; there's no communication between the aisles—no shortcuts. The linearity of the aisles and their labels (aisle markers and other price and special offer labels) impact consumers' ways of operating (in) these spaces, while also allowing them to transform the space as they act on them (Sen and Silverman, 2014)—a process of multimodal embodied composition where consumers' bodies engage with and act upon the space of the market.

De Certeau (1984) distinguishes two forms of experiencing place and space, thus two forms of “language of space”: the act of seeing, that is, the act of knowing the order of places, and the actual moving within them, that is, “spatializing actions” (p. 119). Along this path, I posit that a rhetor's conceptualization of time-place-space through the use of a set of prepositions affects how certain places, or the objects emplaced there, are described, and, therefore, one's own understanding of the movements that can possibly be performed within said space. Indeed, my contemplation of the spaces of the market is a moment where my bilingualism becomes more transparent, as I always struggle with the correct standard use of

prepositions in English. The influence of my Spanish on my understanding of space permeates my use of English, thus giving voice to a constant communication, negotiation, but also confrontation, between two different systems of thoughts, each of which conceptualizes prepositions in different ways. These differences reveal divergent understandings of space, place, and embodied space, as well as how individuals are located in said space, place, and time. For example, I usually see myself sitting *en el porche*, which I would translate as *in the porch*, while I am told that the standard English translation means I am *on the porch*.

And yet, while this explanation may be far off from the actual meaning of these prepositions, to me, the contrast between locating myself *in* or *on* the porch shapes a different relationship between my body and this space, hence to a different construction of this porch and the objects it holds. Thus, I posit that a rhetor's conceptualization of time-place-space through the use of a set of prepositions affects how certain places, or the objects emplaced there, are described, and, therefore, one's own understanding of the movements that can possibly be performed within said space. Likewise, my movement through the market aisles and labels influence how I conceive my position within these spaces, and how I relate to the produce and individuals who are also acting upon these spaces.

Along these lines, my study of the rhetorical spaces of the market considers the ways in which the landscaping and

labeling of these rhetorical spaces—by means of aisles, shelves, aisle markers, and labels—foreground specific rhetorical categories (Royster and Kirsch, 2012) which engage bodies in different ways. It is essential to acknowledge the ways in which my able-bodied privilege empowers me to engage in this specific rhetorical study of the spaces of the market, because I am able to move through these narrow spaces and reach the products they stock regardless of how high or low they are located on the shelves. This strongly influences the ways in which I interact with the spatial signifiers shaping this multimodal urban text; my ability to easily walk through the market impacts my rhetorical operation, transformation, and theorization of the spaces of the market, and therefore, my understanding of this text as a process of multimodal embodied composition.

Ultimately, my conflict with English-Spanish prepositions shows spatial relations that do not transfer from one language to the other, thereby further illustrating the ways in which space reflects a particular sociocultural and political viewpoint. Further, if space in English is conceived differently in Spanish, then my difficulty with the bilingual use of prepositions may hint towards the untranslatability of space. This untranslatability of space further complicates the ways in which space and place can be conceived, narrated, and theorized, and emphasizes the ways in which the very writing of this essay becomes an embodied multimodal practice where I deconstruct and reconstruct the urban text of the

market and my Self. In other words, my embodied, bilingual interactions with the multimodality of the market leads to a continuous shifting of my subjectivities and positionalities: a reciprocal relationship as the space and its organization affect my understanding of my intersectional self, my positionality within the construction of this space, and my connections to other bodies who may or may not occupy these spaces.

These divergent understandings of an individual's relationship to space, place, and their organization also lead to different conceptualizations of the type of relationships that can exist between an individual and their communities. A sense of community can be developed regardless of the place in which individuals are located, and even if a seemingly monolithic community is located in a specific place, this situation "in no way implies a single sense of space" or a single sense of community (Massey, 1994, p. 153). These different modes of conceiving embodied space, individual/collective relationships, and one's subjectivities, emphasize the need to contemplate the grocery market as a space where negotiations take place by means of aisles, labels, and produce while encouraging the forging of transborder individual/collective relationships.

Testimoniando (in) the Market and "A Holistic Culinary Approach"

My use of testimonio is informed by Latina feminists' reclaiming of the genre of testimonio for the development of Latina feminist epistemologies and coalitions across borders by foregrounding commonalities without erasing difference. Turning personal experience into a source of knowledge, testimonio breaks the constraining object/subject, theory/experience, mind/body binary systems that govern academia, and it exposes and censures the close relationship between the shaping of hegemonic knowledges, power, and colonialism (Córdova, 1998; Cruz, 2006; Delgado Bernal, 1998). As I have explained elsewhere (Roncero-Bellido, 2017), these Cartesian binaries are embedded in the English verb "to know," which in Spanish translates as "saber" or "conocer," depending on whether the act of knowing has taken place through memorization or through experience, respectively.² This distinction is blurred in the English language, where the verb "to know" implies both an act of possessing information (saber) and an act of perception (conocer). The blurring of the ways in which the act of knowing can take

² This is a general definition of the difference between "saber" and "conocer," especially because the verb saber also includes the "training" of the body to perform certain activities, such as reading, writing, speaking a foreign language, swimming or cooking, where the body memorizes how to do certain things. In contrast, the verb conocer mostly refers to the knowledge that

emerges through the act of experiencing places, people, or objects. Given the complexity of the meanings of these verbs, it is not my purpose to offer a linguistic study of these verbs, but rather to highlight that the Spanish language acknowledges different ways of making knowledge: memorization and experiencing.

place reinforces the hegemonic binaries established between the mind and the body, theory and experience, and objectivity and subjectivity ruling academia, thus the possibility of multiple forms of truths and knowledge, as well as the role of embodied experience in the shaping of these.

Testimonio facilitates the theorization of embodied experience, as I engage in a process of raising awareness, thinking about the ways in which my positionality and my intersectional identity affect my growing subjectivities. In other words, theorizing through testimonio allows a process of de/constructing the body—a deconstruction of the “geographies of selves” and the identity categories inscribed on the body, but a construction through the theorization of the knowledge emerging from it. My study of space through testimonio, then, fosters the disruption between the mind/body, theory/experience, saber/conocer dichotomies, as [my] testimonio foregrounds the *sabiduría* and *conocimiento* emerging from my/the body. Specifically, my use of testimonio for my study of the ethnic aisle allows me to disrupt the hegemonic binary established between the two languages informing my rhetorical practices: *inglés* y *español*. My *sabiduría* y *conocimiento* of these languages provides me with the opportunity to draw connections between the knowledge I have developed through my experiences as a speaker of both languages in different settings, and the knowledges I have acquired through my academic learning.

Weaving testimonio and spatial rhetorical analysis with a “holistic culinary approach” enables me to view food, culinary practices, and food related discourses as sites of historical transatlantic, transnational and translocal connections (Abarca, 2013; Abarca and Salas, 2016). A holistic culinary approach posits culinary encounters as the “connections that food and cooking practices have had and have with a global community” (Abarca and Salas, 2016, p. 252). This approach allows me to foreground the translocality of *Latinidad/es*, emphasizing the similarities that exist between cross-cultural culinary encounters without erasing difference. Within the space of the market, this holistic framework reveals the colonial history of culinary traditions across the Americas as a whole, and of the U.S. food industry specifically. This colonial history is often narrated in the visual texts used to market these produce (Ibid).

A holistic culinary approach, for example, reveals the ways in which the complexity of *Latinidad/es* is embedded in a plate of *fideos*, described by Chicano John Philip Santos as “a ‘quintessential’ dish of *mestizaje*” (qtd. in Abarca, 2013, p. 253). Originally, *fideos* were popular among the wealthy Spaniards from Andalusia prior to the conquest, a delicacy that could only be enjoyed after Marco Polo brought wheat pasta to Europe during the 13th century. This example demonstrates the significance of applying a holistic culinary approach to my personal study of labeling discourses in the spaces of the grocery market. Specifically, this

method allows me to contemplate my personal dis/connection to fideos which are, still today, an important part of the Spanish Mediterranean diet; even though I do not personally connect to the Latin American mestizaje of the fideos given my Spanish heritage, its colonial history is part of my national history. Engaging with a holistic culinary approach thus allows me to contemplate complex ways in which this meal can make me feel at home in the U.S. while acknowledging the long history of Spanish and U.S. colonialism leading to the view of fideos as the exemplary representation of mestizaje.

Further, by weaving this holistic approach with testimonio and my understanding of space as articulated above, my study emphasizes the embodied knowledges individuals create while interacting with the products stocked within the market space. In other words, I pay attention to the connections individuals create between the placement, categorization, and marketing of products with their knowledge of individual and collective modes of food preparation and space navigation; and, I contemplate the relationships that can emerge between these products and the community members navigating these spaces. Foregrounding these connections, then, my study of these spaces constructs and (re)presents a set of multimodal transcultural encounters within the space of the market, and with the labels and packages of the products it stocks.

Walking (in) the Market

Engaging in an analysis of my own embodied experiences within the spaces of the grocery market proves a difficult task, as I talk about a set of spaces where my Spanish identities are usually misconstrued, if constructed at all, in the same way as are the identities of the many (other) members of the Latinx communities. Each store has a different organization depending on their location—a different understanding of what is ethnic or not—as well as a different set of labels that are used to mark these aisles and produce. And while I am aware that part of this form of labeling and storing products is often related to food safety maintenance, such as the need for refrigeration, my study of these spaces reveals a set of organizational and labeling patterns that continue to negate the complexity of *Latinidad/es*. This essay bears witness to a process of de/construction of my embodied experiences as I observe and fight against the fragmentation of my own identity as it is stocked on these shelves.

Here I study a grocery market where I frequently shopped in South Chicago, an area that was mainly inhabited by immigrants from Germany, Ireland, the Czech Republic, Poland, Italy, and Lithuania around the 1920s and 1930s (Knox, 2004). These demographics began to change in the 1970s as Mexican families began to populate the area. According to Douglas Knox (2004), about 10.8% of the



Figure 1: The two "ethnic" aisles are located next to each other. However, the Latinx aisle is standalone, while the other is designated as a Polish, Kosher, and catch-all "Ethnic" aisle.

population identified as Hispanic in the 1990s, with these numbers rising to 51.9% of the population identifying as Hispanic or Latino in the 2000. These changing demographics—both in terms of numbers and ethnic identification, from Hispanic to Latino—are indeed registered in the organization and labeling of products at this particular store, where there are two different ethnic aisles: the “Tex/Mex-Latino,” situated next to the “Polish-Kosher-Ethnic” aisle. It should be noted that there is a full aisle labeled “Tex/Mex-Latino,” while the “Polish-Kosher-Ethnic” aisle turns into the “Pasta-pasta sauce-Italian-soup” aisle halfway through the corridor.

The Polish-Kosher-Ethnic and Tex/Mex Latino aisles extend before me as I stand by the Fish & Butcher Department, and I wonder: which part of me is Ethnic and what part of me is Tex-Mex-Latino? A quick glimpse at the “Polish-

Kosher-Ethnic” aisle lets me know this space is very much like mainstream ethnic aisles I am used to seeing at other grocery stores in Illinois—Simply Asia, Thai Kitchen, and Marion’s Kitchen cooking kits, while this one also stocks Polish salsas, pastas, and other produce in packages I cannot read. Halfway through this aisle I see boxes of pasta sporting different brand names, products that are now considered mainstream. As the label in the market indicates, the Italian section is a different part of the aisle, one that is not considered ethnic anymore, even though prior to 1914 Italian food was seen as antihygienic and detrimental (Levenstein, 2002)—rhetoric that, as I will shortly discuss, was also used to describe Mexican food in the U.S.

I head towards the Tex/Mex-Latino aisle and I see no other modifiers have been chosen to describe the products stocked in this aisle. The contrast between

the Tex/Mex and Latino labels chosen to describe this space shows an effort to unequivocally identify the Mexican-American population, while also making sure to include other Latinxs who may shop at this store. As I enter this aisle, I observe six full shelves filled with religious candles to my right. Blue and white candles on the top shelf with images of Jesucristo Nuestro Señor, la Virgen de San Juan de Los Lagos, La Virgen de Guadalupe, and San Antonio guard the entry to the aisle, reminding one of the role of Catholicism during the Conquest. On the next set of shelves I find many pots and pans, strainers and graters that, as far as I know, are commonly used kitchen utensils. But next to them I see different sized and shaped comales, flat griddles I have recently learned are used to cook and warm up tortillas. Next to these, I see tortilla warmers, molcajetes—the Mexican version of a mortar and pestle to ground and hold freshly made salsas—and hand-held lemon squeezers. These are technologies I now know are common to any traditional Mexican kitchen, tools I had never seen before but are as basic as a paella pan or a ham-holder stand in most Spanish-peninsular homes.

I find products of Mexican-origin to my left, like bottles of Jarritos and Mexican sodas, some of them unfamiliar to me. As I continue walking down the aisle, I find bags of Mexican candy followed by at least five stands filled with spices in bags and plastic jars, tamale

leaves, and lots and lots of chiles. These are facing the corn oils, another product this aisle has marked as ethnic by separating it from the other oils located in a different, mainstream aisle with other baking products. As I keep walking, I can see how the path I am following through this aisle reproduces, and helps me construct, a non-provided recipe, for after heating up an oily pot for the homecooked meal, Maggi bouillon cubes and seasoning kits are in order. So far, this aisle defines *Latinidad/es* not only in terms of the actual items stocked on the shelves, but also through the cooking rituals these products—most of them labeled as Mexican—help to enact.

As I continue to navigate through the store's commercial construction of Tex/Mex-*Latinidad/es*, I see shelves filled with packets of rice and legumes, and I finally see something that does target home: a package with a starting kit to make *paella valenciana* from a brand still new to me, Vigo. Except for the Spanish name, "*Paella Valenciana*," everything else on this package is written in English, including the capitalized word "*Authentic*"³ preceding the Spanish "*Paella Valenciana*," and followed by a mistranslation of the traditional Valencian rice dish into the explanatory "completely seasoned yellow rice and seafood dinner." Underneath these words there is an image of a *paella* or *paellera* filled with (yellow) rice, shrimp and mussels, an image that aims to ensure consumers that Vigo's *paella* kit

³ For more on the problematic politics of claims of authenticity, read Abarca, M. E. (2004), "*Authentic or Not, It's original.*"

provides an “authentic Spanish recipe.”⁴ In doing so, Vigo contributes to an essentialist understanding of Spanish foodways, a monolithic view of the Spanish traditional dish that is nonetheless conflated with the very name of the product: *paella valenciana*, that is, from the region of Valencia. With this I want to point out the ways in which a space like the ethnic aisle not only homogenizes *Latinidad/es* in national terms, but also the regional differences that exist across nations.

Vigo’s construction of “authentic” Spanishness is further complicated as Vigo’s *Paella Valenciana* is located next to other rice boxes from two brands commonly known for targeting the Latinx clientele: *La Preferida*, a local company that takes pride in producing “authentic Mexican food,” and *Goya Foods, Inc.*, which presents itself as “a Hispanic-owned food company” (Basque, by way of Puerto Rico) and “the premier source for authentic Latino cuisine” (About Goya).⁵ Each of these brands has a fascinating history that, observed from a holistic culinary approach, further complicates the ways in which a Spaniard like myself can relate to the food narratives contained within this space, as the amalgam of the Basque, Spanish, Puerto Rican, Mexican, Latino, and Hispanic labels emphasize the transborder complexity of *Latinidad/es*.

Thus, before continuing to analyze the rice boxes stocked next to Vigo’s *paella valenciana*, it is important to observe the history and commercialization of each brand, especially given their role in the homogenization of *Latinidad/es* but also the forging of a pan-ethnic Hispanic-Latinx solidarity through identity.

Specifically, *La Preferida* illustrates the impact of the Mexican and Puerto Rican populations in the introduction of the so-called Latino products into mainstream supermarkets such as this store. The founder of *La Preferida* was Henry Steinbarth, who opened a butcher shop in the European ethnic neighborhood of the Southside of Chicago. As this neighborhood became Puerto Rican and Mexican, Steinbarth began producing and packaging chorizo to meet the demands of the Mexican community (Arellano, 2012, p. 194). Since then, *La Preferida* has expanded its production “into a complete line of Mexican specialties that covers more than 250 products” in order to “accommodate both Latino and non-Latino consumers” both with its produce and its bilingual packaging (*La Preferida*). While trying to meet, as the company states, the needs of “Latinos and non-Latinos,” *La Preferida* insists that their products are Mexican, even if the original butcher shop Steinbarth opened in South Chicago sought first to meet the needs of

⁴ There are many versions of this traditional dish made with rice; thus, the name changes depending on the descriptive words given to the word “*paella*.” *Paella* refers both to the pan where this rice is cooked and to the bomba-rice dish seasoned with Spanish saffron and Spanish sweet paprika.

⁵ Given the purposes and scope of my analysis, I will not discuss the politics of Basque nationalist identification and the Spain-Basque Country conflict.

European immigrants, and then Mexicans and Puerto Ricans.

In contrast, Goya presents itself as “a Hispanic-owned food company” and “the premier source for authentic Latino cuisine,” offering products specifically designed to meet the needs of Caribbean, Mexican, Spanish, Central and South American cuisines. Indeed, Goya was founded in 1936 by Prudencio Unanue, a Basque who left Spain and settled first in Puerto Rico and then in New York. It was in New York that he first started to import Spanish products such as olives, olive oil, and sardines (“About Goya”). Yet, the Unanue family worked to cater to the specific needs of the newly arrived communities: Puerto Ricans after World War II, Cubans in the 1950s, and Dominicans in the 1960s (Carlyle, 2013). Goya thus exemplifies a company that has grown along with Latinx populations in the U.S.

As of today, Goya caters to “the taste of the totality of the Hispanic market through the diversification of products” (Dávila, 2001, p. 91). This explains its use of both the Hispanic and Latino labels to define itself, and its location in the Tex/Mex-Latino aisle. Goya, like La Preferida, illustrates how the imposed category of Hispanic/Latino is “subject to constant negotiation with regard to the multiple identifications of Hispanics” while also contributing to the market’s construction of Latinxs as “a nation within a nation” (Dávila, 2001, p. 91). This shows the power of food discourses to convey a sense of U.S. nationalism which is based on “geopolitical nationhood”

(Socolovsky, 2013, p. 3), that is, in terms of spatial and geographical borders. These borders create a cultural divide that marks Latinxs as outsiders regardless of their place of birth, legal status, or colonial heritage. Particularly complicated is the case of Puerto Ricans, whose U.S. citizenship, marked by colonial status, disrupts the many borders this ethnic aisle so strongly seeks to establish.

Importantly, the growth of Goya shows how the foodways of a Spaniard like myself are indeed reflected in the space of this grocery market, by reproducing the history of Spanish colonialism that ties a Spaniard like me to the foods stocked in this space, just like the fideos previously mentioned. Before the 1970s, Arlene Dávila (2001) explains that “Goya’s version of Hispanidad was publicly conveyed by pointing to the Spanishness of its products, such as its olive oils, advertised in the 1970s as ‘coming from Andalucía’ and being ‘pure, virgin, and Spanish,’ or else by alluding to the products’ connections with Puerto Rican culture” (pp. 91-92). Dávila asserts that this encouraged Puerto Ricans to identify with the Hispanic label, which clearly proves 1) the role food discourses play in the construction of a sense of ethnic identity; 2) the privileging of Spanish heritage over other elements of Puerto Rican *mestizaje*, specifically, and Latin America as a whole. Indeed, Vigo’s *paella valenciana* is located next to other rice boxes from La Preferida and Goya, which are being marketed as Spanish rice. While Vigo’s *paella* kit seems to actually offer the possibility of reconstructing a recipe

that is originally from Spain, La Preferida's Spanish rice and Goya's two forms of Spanish rice offer three different products that are not traditionally from Spain. The box of Spanish rice from La Preferida showcases a picture of a yellow rice dish with bell peppers that seems to mainly differ from Vigo's paella in its lack of seafood. La Preferida does not offer a Spanish translation for the Spanish rice meal, while Goya features a bilingual text for its two types of Spanish rice—which is translated as arroz con tomate, or rice with tomato—and its yellow rice-Spanish Style, which is explicitly targeted at non-Latinos (Carlyle, 2013)—simply translated as arroz amarillo.

By reinforcing the use of the term “Spanish” and ensuring the authenticity of these products—the Paella kit, Goya's Spanish rice, Goya's Yellow Rice, and La Preferida's Spanish rice—and in an aisle that has been labeled Tex/Mex-Latino, these boxed rice packages contribute to the commercialization of a homogeneous understanding of Latinidad/es by using a “Spanish fantasy heritage.” To explain, the use of the term “Spanish” to refer to food practices originally from Mexico dates back to the end of the 19th century, when Charles Fletcher Lummis and other restaurateurs and cookbook writers added the Spanish label to traditional Mexican dishes in order to make these meals more pleasant for the Anglo-American public (Abarca and Salas, 2016; Arellano, 2012; Valle and Torres, 2000). Yet, Lummis was not the first or only person to use the term Spanish. Californians, Tejanos, and New Mexicans also used this term to

define themselves to emphasize their European heritage. This form of identification allowed them to claim a “pure Spanish heritage” while denying any Indigenous or mestizo ancestry (McWilliams, 1948, p. 21). This fantasy heritage was also reinforced by the Anglo population who used this as “a tool for subordinating Hispanic peoples” (Rosales, 2006, p.163) in the very same way that marketing and labeling practices identify these products as Other.

After the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848, travelogues and newspapers would employ a “culinary analogy to illustrate Mexican savagery and depravity to mark a community as racial Others” (Valle and Torres, 2000, p. 74). To fight against such racist culinary rhetoric, cookbook authors such as Lummis or Bertha Haffner-Ginger would engage in the rhetoric of a Spanish fantasy heritage. The work of Haffner-Ginger (1914) helps us to better understand the use of the Spanish label within the space of this aisle. In 1914, Haffner-Ginger published the *California Mexican Spanish Cook Book*, juxtaposing the Californian, Mexican, and Spanish labels to reinforce the Spanish fantasy heritage in a way that very much resembles the labeling discourses enacted in this Tex-Mex/Latino aisle. A quick peek at the table of contents—which she calls “Classification of Recipes”—reveals that the Spanish label has been affixed to most of the recipes, either with the English word “Spanish,” or with the Spanish translation “Espanol” (sic), to insist on the European heritage of these recipes (p.

125). The rice section, which Haffner-Ginger has titled “Arroz a la Espanol” (sic), features four rice recipes, which are “Spanish Rice: Mint Flavor,” “Spanish Rice,” “Spanish Rice au Gratin”, and “Green Peppers with Rice” (p. 99).

None of these recipes is familiar to me, and none of them resembles the paella dish featured in Vigo’s paella packaging. Thus, I find Haffner-Ginger’s rationale for her use of labels, as provided in her “Word to the Readers,” rather amusing. Written in 1914, Haffner-Ginger’s fantasy heritage rhetoric voices some of the concerns I have when I see the use of the descriptive adjective Spanish to describe foods I know are not part of the culinary tradition I grew up with. As Haffner-Ginger states:

It is not generally known that Spanish dishes as they are known in California *are really* Mexican Indian dishes. Bread made of corn, sauces of chile peppers, jerked beef, tortillas, enchiladas, etc., *are unknown in Spain as native foods*; though the majority of Spanish people in California are as devoted to peppery dishes as the Mexicans themselves, and *as the Mexicans speak Spanish, the foods are commonly called Spanish dishes.* (p. 14; my emphasis)

With these words, Haffner-Ginger insists on the Spanish heritage of these foods, defining them in terms of language, rather than nationality. This form of identification indeed characterizes the homogenization enacted through the imposition of the Hispanic label, since the term “Hispanic” refers to people who have ancestry from a Spanish speaking country

(Oboler, 1995). In doing so, both the use of the word “Spanish” and the term “Hispanic” engage in a form of identification that reduces the many members of the Latinx communities to their relationship with Spanish colonialism and its colonial language, while ignoring the U.S. imperialism affecting Latinxs within and beyond this Tex/Mex-Latino aisle.

And yet, Haffner-Ginger insists that, despite the origins and ethnic labels attributed to these meals, they are appropriate for the Anglo consumer. They have even been “revised,” which is to say, appropriated, to fit the expectations of the Anglo palate, further colonizing the cultural heritage of the traditional Mexican cuisine and creating a racial hierarchy of taste, and, consequently, of the people. This practice of adaptation continues today, as La Preferida and Goya have produced different items labeled as “Spanish rice,” reproducing the racist rhetoric of the Spanish fantasy heritage while promising the “authenticity” of the “revised” recipes so as to satisfy the Anglo-American clientele even if Haffner-Ginger warns that these recipes are completely unknown in Spain.

Quite shocking are the images Haffner-Ginger includes at the end of her cookbook, where she juxtaposes two Spanish women, one dressed in a more middle-class gown and labeled “a type of Spanish women” (sic) while on the other page we have a picture of a woman wearing a rebozo and holding a guitar with the inscription, “Another type of Spanish women” (sic) (p. 117-18). The need to

mark an ethnic Other and the legacy of the Spanish fantasy heritage are not only present in these boxes of rice or other foodstuffs in this aisle. This helps me to better understand my first experiences as an international exchange student in Arkansas, when I first found myself confronted with the ignorance that pervades the stereotyping of minorities living in the U.S. It is only now that I understand why people were shocked to hear the response to the question always triggered by my Spanish accented English: “Where are you from?” I guess sometimes I would say that I was from Spain, while at others I responded just by saying that I was Spanish. Either way, I often got the same reaction; to them, I was “too white to be from Spain.” This response puzzled me, since the forms I had completed before arrival to the U.S. only described me as an international exchange student; I had not yet been formally assigned a racial/ethnic category.

Now returning to the market, at the end of this aisle I find the label “Tortilla Center”: a movable shelf holding tortillas of different brands. There are both wheat and corn tortillas of different brands, and on the top shelf I see packages of tostadas, the flat deep-fried tortillas that accompany many traditional Mexican meals composed of seafood or hearty stews, or form the base for other toppings (a “tostada”). This “Tortilla Center” also tells a story—a story of how the growth of the Mexican population in Chicago after 1960 led to the opening of many tortilla factories, such as Atotonilco or Sabinas in Pilsen, as well as to the selling of tortillas in many

chain supermarkets such as this grocery store. Many of these tortillas/tostadas have been locally produced by companies such as El Milagro Tortilla Products or Mission Foods, while others come from different Mexican-American companies spread all over the country, such as La Banderita.

These tortilla packages feature what the U.S. food industry would likely describe as traditional symbols to address the Mexican-American community or to further reinforce their promise of authenticity. For example, La Mission products feature an image of a bell that makes one think of the church bells that rang to announce Mexico’s War of Independence against Spain in the town of Dolores Hidalgo in 1810. Faithful to its name, La Banderita products feature a Mexican flag with either cereal grains or an ear of corn in lieu of the Mexican coat of arms. Next to these, the packages of Tortillas El Milagro, produced in Chicago, illustrate how this Tortilla Center aims to cater to Mexican-American and Anglo clientele, as both English and Spanish are written on the front of the package, while the back of the package offers cooking instructions in English.

By stocking both wheat and corn tortillas, which are produced both locally and nationally, these shelves create a crossborder U.S.-Mexico connection while targeting the Anglo-American clientele; and, by seemingly adapting to the Anglo ways, they testify to the ways in which the presence of these products entails a tactic of resistance. This situation dates back to the time of Hernán Cortés,

as does the colonial appropriation of Indigenous foods, when the Aztec civilization was forced to feed the Spanish colonizers who thoroughly enjoyed the native food (Arellano, 2012, p. 16-17). While the Spaniards embraced tamales, tortillas, chiles, and cocoa beans among other local offerings, “they introduced bread along with beef, lamb, pork and chickens, and other flora and fauna that profoundly changed the Mexican diet” (p. 17). Nevertheless, the Indigenous community did not fully accept these impositions and refused to eat wheat in favor of their corn tortillas and tamales. The imperial power inscribed within food practices becomes clear at this point, as the Franciscan friar Bernardino de Sahagún insisted on the natives’ need to eat wheat, for only then would they become as strong, pure, and wise as the colonizers (p. 18). As can be seen, the conflict between wheat and corn illustrates a discourse more complex than mere different eating habits. The Indigenous Other is defined in opposition to the “strong, pure, and wise” colonist, and only by embracing the colonizers’ ways would the Other achieve a “civilized state.”

Nevertheless, according to Arellano (2012), Indigenous communities resisted and continued making corn tortillas and tamales, in spite of threats of punishment and promises of evolution made by the colonizers. Hence, corn tortillas and tamales illustrate negotiation and resistance against colonizing discourses, for it was not only corn that the natives kept, but also their cooking practices. The making of corn dough was a process that

embedded “the centerpiece of the diet for most of Mexico’s indigenous, one filled with mystery and ceremony” (p. 18-19). And so, even if Indigenous communities incorporated some of the colonial products in their cooking rituals, the act of making corn tortillas becomes an act of “survivance” (Powell 2002) against colonial ways.

These rhetorical acts of survivance continue today, as these shelves become the space of negotiation where discriminatory discourses are projected, but also, the place where the subject Other maintain their cultural food knowledges. As the genealogy of some of the brands and produce analyzed evidence, these acts of negotiation lead to the continuous growth of this complex space. It is because of this continuous morphing that the more and more I contemplate the meanings of the Ethnic, Tex/Mex, Latino aisles and the history of the products they contain, that bringing this study to a close becomes difficult, but also problematic. I believe that the ever-evolving meanings of this space need to be studied further, as new products are stocked on these shelves.

Implications

As one can see, the multimodal spaces of grocery store aisles invite us to ponder how we construct (our) identities and relation-ships. Company geneologies reveal how Latinidad/es identities are stocked and (mis)represented on market shelves. A market functions as a testament to a complicated colonial history, including the labeling discourses that

shape these spaces and Latinx communities. Landscaping and labeling practices of the public spaces of a market will change depending on location and the communities navigating these spaces. Thus, there is a need to study how public spaces like a market can impact the shaping of Latinidad/es. And yet, the rhetorical practices that can be/are enacted in a market can turn a space such as the Ethnic aisle into a space of survivance against Othering hegemonic discourses and negotiation of transborder Latinx solidarities. Everyday practices in public spaces can shape the development of our complex subjectivities and individual/collective embodied knowledges.

Different modes of conceiving and experiencing space and place affect the construction of the self and individual/collective relationships. My wrestling with the narration and theorization of space in English and Spanish reveals a pressing need to study how multimodal rhetorics may reproduce spatial discourses that force individuals to constantly negotiate and translate their complex subjectivities. The untranslatability of space demands that we contemplate how different communities understand, recount, and experience space because divergent constructions of space will inevitably lead to different forms of *conocimiento* (knowledge from experience) and *sabiduría* (knowledge from memorization). Connections between the narration of space and linguistic practices call for the incorporation of multilingual studies into

scholarship on visual, spatial, and multimodal rhetorics. Even if I studied the English language more extensively, my *conocimiento* of space influences my *sabiduría* (as academic learning) of the standard uses of prepositions in the English language. My embodied knowledge of space determines my perceptions, conceptualizations, and rhetorical representations of it. A rhetor's linguistic *sabiduría* and *conocimiento* affect the study of space and other multimodal rhetorical acts, problematizing the Cartesian mind/body, theory/experience, and *saber/conocer* binaries and hopefully, promoting a decolonial reconsideration of canonical scholarly practices.

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Sounding Intimacy

Ben Harley, Northern State University

SONIC ESSAY TRANSCRIPT

["Romance" by Wild Flag]

Hello, my name is Ben Harley, and welcome to my sonic essay. I am a compositionist by trade; that is, I am someone who studies the different ways beings, mostly human but not exclusively, communicate with each other to create their worlds. My work predominantly deals with risk, but today I want to talk about a growing trend in the field and its relationship to a word some people may find uncomfortable. First, we are going to talk about sound, and then we are going to talk about intimacy.

["Ten Thousand Men of Harvard" by A. Putnam]

Perhaps surprisingly, sound has only recently become a common topic within the field of composition. Though humans and nonhumans often communicate sonically, sound has been widely ignored because of composition's sordid history. See, composition only got its start in the late 19th century, with many scholars pointing to Harvard's English A course as its first instantiation in the United States. As Susan Miller (1991) argues, these early composition courses, like many contemporary composition courses,

functioned as a means of enculturating students from outside the ruling elite with the misogynistic, nationalistic, and racist values of the dominant class through education in what was referred to as "correct" grammar. Students with different language practices and cultural literacies were taught to adopt the style, voice, and values of the ruling elite.

As Cynthia Selfe (2009/2014) argues, such training was focused on writing because this was seen as the most important communication practice for institutions of business, governance, manufacturing, and science during the 20th century. Composition's emphasis on writing can perhaps most clearly be seen in teachers of speech seceding from the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) in 1914. And though the field of composition has since [taken strides to] become much less colonialist—for instance, the Conference of College Composition and Communication acknowledged in 1974 that students have the right to their own language—the emphasis on writing as the privileged mode of discourse has largely remained. It was not until 2005 that NCTE (2005/2014) issued a statement of multimodal literacies expressly acknowledging the importance of "the interplay of meaning-

making systems” beyond the written (p. 17). That’s right, it was not until the 21st century that English as a discipline officially recognized the importance of other semantic channels of knowing and sharing our various ways of being in the world.

[“Eve” by The Roots]

Based on this history, it is not completely surprising that 2006 is something of a watershed moment for the discussion of sound in composition studies. While there had been some articles published prior, this is year that sound received some real attention when the disciplinary-specific journal *Computers and Composition* published a special issue titled, “Sound in/as Composition Space.” This issue didn’t much focus on sound as an independent phenomenon, but it did discuss it in relationship to music, film, and oral argumentation. Some contributors studied music to reconsider scholarly assumptions about knowledge creation, citation, and world building; others demonstrated the ways in which sound contributes to the meaning of multimodal compositions; and still others argued that sound functions as a tool for teaching rhetorical principles and helping students develop new literacies. All of the texts were rich and interesting but they didn’t explicitly address what it is that gives sound its uniquely affective affordances.

The uniqueness of sound was the focus, however, in 2011, when the disciplinary-specific journal, *Currents in Electronic*

Literacy, published an issue focused almost entirely on the ways in which sound uniquely affects people emotionally and physically. In the introduction to this issue, Diane Davis argued that sound—music specifically—is impactful “despite (or because) of its stubborn refusal to mean.” The rest of the issue builds on this idea, with scholars claiming that the field must pay attention to the differences between how sound and written texts build community and make meaning. Two years later this was the focus of another special issue devoted to sound in the journal *Harlot* where scholars used a variety of case studies to explore the ways in which sound cultivates community by connecting people, places, and things.

Since then, there has been a proliferation of composition scholarship about sound from scholars such as John B. Killoran (2013), who studies the audio responses writing instructors have recorded for their students; Jonathan W. Stone (2015), who studies John and Alan Lomax’s 1933 recordings of Black men incarcerated in Southern labor camps; Jonathan Alexander (2015), who gives a great reading of Glenn Gould’s audio documentary “The Idea of North”; Jared Sterling Colton (2016), who studies digital sampling through an ethics of care; Jean Bessette (2016), who discusses having her students create audio collages in response to listening to gay liberation radio shows; Trisha Nicole Campbell (2017), who studies digital empathy; and the team of Mary E. Hocks and Michelle Comstock (2017) who focus on teaching students to compose a variety of sound-

based multimodal projects that take advantage of the embodied and dynamic affordances of the mode. And to be honest, this is just a small sample of the compositionists studying sound right now. I actually feel quite bad for all of the great scholars I didn't list here, but there are too many to name. That's how hot of a topic sound is right now.

I mean, in the last five months Steph Ceraso (2018) wrote a book on sonic pedagogies, Byron Hawk (2018) wrote a book on composition as a quasi-object that uses musical examples, and Courtney S. Danforth, Kyle D. Stedman, and Michael J. Farris (2018) published a collection on teaching soundwriting. There was even a Symposium on Sound, Rhetoric, and Writing in Nashville this year where a bunch of compositionists got together and shared their scholarship with one another. Sound is becoming quite the subject in a discipline that once ignored it in favor of an almost exclusive focus on alphabetic written texts.

["Station to Station" by David Bowie]

Too a large extent all of this scholarship invokes and investigates the idea that sound is a particularly affective communicative mode that uniquely impacts bodies and connects them to the larger world. The scholarship asks why and how sound affects us so impactfully. Of course, these questions are inherently unanswerable, but by providing arguments, compositionists learn a little bit more about how sound works both

communicatively and extra-communicatively, how people use it, and how we might teach students to compose with it. So, in the spirit of churning this question around, I would like to hazard a brief argument here as to what it is that makes sound so meaningful for so many. I am going to provide a way of thinking about sound that might help us think about why it evokes such joy, pleasure, sadness, pain, and fright. In short, I am just going to say that sound is intimate.

I should note here that between the time I originally wrote this piece and it being published, the cultural theorist Dominic Pettman released a book called *Sonic Intimacy* (2017) that, as the title indicates, deals explicitly with this same topic. It is a wonderful book that argues that the voice is what creates intimacy, both fleeting and lasting, among human and nonhuman actors in ways that are both constructive and destructive. My argument is similar to his except that he focuses on the ways in which humans can attune to different voices, whereas I focus on the ways in which sound as a material medium intrinsically impacts the human. Ultimately, we both argue for an understanding of sound as vibrations that permeate bodies, demonstrating their connection to one another in a shared world, but the ways we get there are quite different.

["Embers" by the Kilimanjaro Dark Jazz Ensemble]

Intimacy is a really old word. It comes from the Latin *intimus*, which means

inmost, deepest, or most profound. Interestingly, it is also related to the Latin word *intus*, which simply means within, and that prefix *in*, in the Latin word *intus*, literally translates into *in*, in English. So when something is *intimate* it means that it is within us either physically, or emotionally, or cognitively, or whatever. And you can see this internality continue as the word evolves in the seventeenth century to refer to something essential or intrinsic. At this time, it also comes to refer to a close connection, union, or familiarity such as being intimately acquainted with someone. In the twentieth century it gets its colloquial meanings as a reference to women's undergarments and the act of sex, and in all of these iterations it never really loses this idea of closeness, of being near, with, or within.

Sound is, by its very nature, intimate. It enters our ears and bodies, it resonates in our chests, it puts us into the mindset of others, and it breaks down borders between individuals. When we speak, sound resonates deep within our bodies through our throats into the air and the bodies of others. This is intimacy. And contemporary scholarship on sound serves to demonstrate the different ways in which it is intimate: communally, cognitively, emotionally, psychologically, and materially.

["Be Thankful for What You Got" by William DeVaughn]

The intimacy of sound helps to build community. In his sonic memoir of the

1960s, John F. Barber (2013) discusses the ways in which the sounds of that decade changed who he was and how we grew to see the world. The emotions and expressions of others that entered his body through his television changed who he was and made him a member of a society. In a more embodied example, Erin Rand (2014) discusses how the LGBTQ activist training event, Camp Courage, used structured storytelling, clapping, and chanting to build a sense of community. By having people create embodied sounds together, the camp helped them identify with one another as a collective.

["The Ecstatics" by Explosions in the Sky]

The intimacy of sound is also cognitive; as sound enters our brains, it impacts how they operate. A group of researchers led by Robin W. Wilkins (2014) demonstrated that when people listened to their favorite songs—regardless of genre, presence or absence of lyrics, tonal quality, regardless of all these things—when people listened to their favorite songs circuits in the brain involving memory, self-awareness, and social emotion consolidation started connecting in astounding ways. In other words, when listening to music they like—regardless of what type of music it is—people are more capable of recalling the past, imagining the future, discovering new possibilities, and analyzing their own emotions.

Interestingly, this is not true when people listen to music they dislike. Neural circuits are literally composed differently

depending on whether or not the listener enjoys the music. The listener, their experiences, and the music co-create the neural pathways of the individual's brain, and the researchers speculate that sound could drastically alter how brain networks are organized. At least this all seems possible for the 21 young adults on which the experiment was conducted. These folks didn't seem to represent a very neurodiverse population, and obviously, there is need for more research, but the work does suggest that sound intrinsically coproduces who we are in a very intimate way.

["Shake it Off" by Taylor Swift]

Keeping in mind what it can do to our brains, it is no wonder that people experience such an emotional closeness to music. Neuroscientists like Daniel Levitin (2006) discuss how since music connects memory, emotion, and language centers in the brain, we are literally experiencing patterns—or grooves—as pleasure, pain, and memory. Sadly, academics don't talk much about emotions; historically, it's not our strong suit. Instead we talk about affect, which can be similar to emotion, but is definitely not the same thing. For this reason, I argue that some of the best writing and theorizing about emotional closeness to music comes from music critics. Carl Wilson (2007) discussing how the saccharin guitar pop of Buddy Holly invokes the feelings of being with his ex-wife when they first started dating, Tavi Gevinson (2013) discussing how the music of Taylor Swift made her feel like she was

an average eighth-grade girl instead of someone sacrificing her childhood to a fashion blog, or John Darnielle (2008) discussing how Black Sabbath was the only thing that made sense to him during a stay at a youth psychiatric hospital. These texts are testaments to the ways in which music makes us feel—how it helps us experience and understand our own, personal emotions. They are testaments to the ways in which sounds co-create the identities of their audiences. This is not surprising to compositionists, seeing as scholars in our field such as Jenny Rice (2005) and Laurie Gries (2015) have studied the ways in which written and visual texts co-create and reassemble the publics through which they circulate. If the critics are to be believed, sound also rearticulates us, if not as publics, at least as individuals.

["Call Me Star" by All Them Witches]

If emotions are psychological, then it's no surprise that there has been much discussion about how sound affects us psychologically. Roland Barthes (1985) claimed that by listening to others we are empathizing, and through empathy we are able to recognize their innermost desires. He went so far as to claim, "to recognize this desire implies that one enters it, ultimately finding oneself there" (p. 256). Through listening to the voices of others we project ourselves onto the Other's desires and succumb to them; as such, we risk both re-creating the desires of others in our own image and replacing our own desires with theirs. Listening carries the

risk of synthesis: the risk of consubstantiality.

This synthesis is similar to what the rhetorician Kenneth Burke (1950/2001) referred to as *identification*, where, through their joined interests, people become “substantially one,” that is they become simultaneously independent entities and parts of a larger whole (p. 1325). Unlike Burkean identification, however, Barthes’s listening is sonic, intimate, and affective. While Burke argues that people are persuaded to identify with one another through a myriad of small repeating signals that he refers to as a “body of identifications” (p. 1328), Barthes argues that it is specifically the voice of the Other that threatens to subsume the listener through empathy, regardless of whether or not they share interests with the speaker. The relocation of the self into the desires of the Other is not based on shared interests but rather on an extra-discursive empathy enabled by the materiality of sound.

[“Sleep” by Godspeed! You Black Emperor]

Sound is not abstract; it is physical and material, which means that it intimately interacts with us in tangible ways. As Veit Erlmann (2015) notes, the resonant quality of sound has been a staple of Western philosophy for centuries because it shows how the vibrations of the world enter into our ears and brains, and how the vibrations of our own bodies resonate not only inside of us but also outside of us.

Resonance makes us question our being solitary, independent subjects. Steph Ceraso’s (2014) work on listening as something that occurs viscerally in our bodies, auditorily in our ears, visually through our eyes, and psychologically in our anticipation should similarly make us question not only how we hear but also how separated we are from what we hear. The multiple ways our bodies interact with sound blurs the border between the inside and the outside—the us and the not us. Sound demonstrates our porous nature and our being in the world.

[“For You Pleasure” by Roxy Music]

This is intimacy. The world flows into us via sound waves, permeating our borders, and changing how we think, feel, and act both individually and collectively. Sound acts on us, changing how we understand ourselves and our relationships with others. Sure, we are individual subjects, but sound helps us to realize the ways in which we are also intimately connected to and co-produced by our world and the other human and nonhuman actors who have coproduced it, are coproducing it, and will coproduce it. Material sound and the acts of both hearing and being heard connect humans through space and time.

This is not an abstract connection but a material reality that moves through our bodies changing how we socialize, think, feel, and act. New materialists such as Stacy Alaimo (2010), Karen Barad (2017), Jane Bennett (2009), and Bruno Latour

(2005) have all argued in different ways that our social worlds are composed through the actions and interactions among material bodies, including those of humans. They argue that the world moves through us, composing us as we simultaneously compose it; the intimate nature of sound—the ways in which it literally moves through, reverberates off, and is absorbed by bodies—makes this connection salient.

It is significant that sound is not merely a material actor in the world but one that interacts with us in a particularly intimate fashion. Sound represents not just a relationship *to* the world but a *close* relationship *with* the world. As such it is a communicative mode, a semiotic channel, and a way of engaging one another that allows not only for persuasion but also for rearticulation of who we are in relation to ourselves and a whole assembled host of others. This intimate nature makes sound a particularly powerful communicative force, capable of great things both constructive and destructive—both unifying and divisive. Contemporary compositionists are fortunate to work in a time where their discipline once again considers it within its purview to study such a force instead of reifying a version of alphabetic writing honed to the specifications of the corporate ruling classes of the twentieth century. By acknowledging that sound is important, teachers can begin to once again help their students ethically and productively utilize it to meaningfully engage and coproduce their worlds. As we do so, we should

remember that sound's intimacy is its power—its closeness makes it impactful.

Thank you for listening.

["Romance" by Wild Flag]

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Corrido-ing State Violence

Romeo García, University of Utah

“This land’s all mine...I need every last inch of it...”

—*Texas Rangers in Action*, no. 8 (p. 28)

Content warning: This article contains discussions of physical and symbolic racial violence targeting colonized peoples and its depiction in various media.

Corridos and Community Listening as Cultural-Rhetoric Practices

Since the 15th century, a colonial and imperial design, axiologically premised upon logics of domination, management, and control of land, resources, and people, has functioned in the U.S. This colonial and imperial design, in my opinion, is best captured by Américo Paredes’ work in *George Washington Gómez*. The following passages reflect these logics:

- A few English-speaking adventurers moved in...Then came the railroad early in the 20th century, and with it arrived the first real-estate men and the land-and-title companies, and a Chamber of Commerce, of course, which renamed the little town “Jonesville-on-the-Grande. (p. 36)
- Mexicans labored with axe and spade to clear away the brush...To make room for truck farming and citrus groves. And the settlers poured in...while Mexicans were pushed out

of cattle raising into hard manual labor. (p. 36)

- So what if the Mexican had been killed by a Gringo? The Gringo would have got off with a year. One divided into twenty: A Mexican then is worth one-twentieth the value of a horse. (p. 178)

Together, these passages reveal a historical depiction of the appropriation of land, exploitation of labor, extraction of resources, racial distribution of work, and a subject/object binary. Settlers came to Texas and the region today known as the Lower Rio Grande Valley (LRGV) in the early 1800s. But they never left. Settler colonialism then must be thought of as a series of projects carried out, as Paredes depicts, that ensures that even if the temporality of the political order of colonization has passed, Texas and its people will re-write itself as colonial.

In Texas, there is a settler public memory that did and continues to desire to forget and remember in colonial ways. Jacques Derrida once captured this desire

(and the kind of literacy and rhetorical work needed to be carried out) in *Specters of Marx* when he spoke of Western conjuration practices: “let us make sure that in the future it [the specter] does not come back...in the future, said the powers of old Europe...it must not incarnate itself, either publicly or in secret” (p. 48). This kind of desire to forget is inextricably linked to literacy and rhetorical work, from classroom education to storytelling to ceremonial celebrations. Settler public memory resounds in characters such as K. Hank Harvey, as portrayed by Paredes, who as an invited keynote guest at a high school graduation, tells a population that is predominately Mexican:

May they [the graduating students] never forget the names of Sam Houston, James Bowie, and Davey Crockett. May they remember the Alamo where they go...When our forefathers rose on their hindlegs and demanded independence...when they arose with a mighty shout and forever erased Mexican cruelty and tyranny from this fair land. (p. 274)

Settler public memory desires to forget how the cruelty and tyranny of settlers both attempted to erase the “Other” from history (physically and historiographically) and emplace structures of management and control of land, resources, and people through a series of violent projects. Rather, settler public memory functions

through and with literacy and rhetorical work, as depicted in the scene above, to ensure a kind of ecological impact on humans of Texas. An impact, I argue, that ensures Texas will re-write itself as colonial (as in the colonial will traffic in the normative) as it forgets and remembers in colonial ways and confirms a haunting.

Specters haunt Texas. Before becoming an academic and encountering influential figures such as Américo Paredes, Rolando Hinojosa, José Limón, and the Saldívar family, who also illuminated this reality, I had knowledge of this haunting from my community. I was born and raised in the LRGV where there is a different kind of literacy and rhetorical work at play. Work that reflects a kind of community expression of responsibility and justice that seeks, without certainty, to create a space for and to give back speech to specters that haunt Texas. An example of such work are corridos, which carry a collective memory of tragedy and hope. Corridos, or Mexican folk ballads, have one corridista (singer), who is channeling society through a first or third-person perspective as they bear witness hypothetically to a tragedy, reinforcing both shared community perspective and collective memory (Limón, 1992).¹ Typically, the corridista identifies a place, recognizes the wronged and the wrongdoers, articulates a metanarrative of a triste verdad, and announces an urgency to communicate both in the form of

¹ See José Limón (1992), also, for an insightful conversation on the theme of masculinity, which might very much be the limitation of corridos.

refusing to forget and an expression of remembering so as to bear witness to an inheritance. The corridista's propositional intent, without certainty, is to implicate others to bear witness to this inheritance, to interpret it, and to orient the self to it. The affective value of the corrido is its circulation and flow, which keeps its secret even as it is expressed as a form of public memory. In the márgenes of the LRGV, there are communities educated through this kind of literacy and rhetorical work that undermines official Texas history. An education, I argue, that begins by cultivating community listening towards a memory of tragedy and hope.

Together, Grandma and I listened to corridos. One in particular continues to serve as inspiration for the work I do. In one corrido, "Pistoleros Famosos," the corridista announces a place, "Por las márgenes del Rio [as in the Rio Grande River]," which situates the subject, the "pistoleros," and proclaims the urgency to communicate, "Murieron por que eran hombres...no por que fueran bandidos" (Garza and Arredondo, n.d.). In the exchange between rhetor and audience, the audience is implicated by the corridista, called to listen to stories of tragedy and hope and pushed to listen in ways that create presence from absence and sound from silence. Corridos are an expression of a cultural rhetorics practice of speaking back—back to a white truth or white narrative that doubles down on settler colonial rhetoric and the narratives that justify the violence they inflicted on the Mexican and Mexican American communities in South Texas in the name

of modernity. When the corridista states in "Pistoleros Famosos," "Murieron por que eran hombres...no por que fueran bandidos," they are calling and pushing la gente de las márgenes to hold settlers answerable to their past actions. The past, however, still is present and still makes a sound in the present because of the literacy and rhetorical work that takes place throughout the communities of Texas—settler public memory and public memory of the márgenes.

For Grandma, it was important for me to listen. It was a kind of listening that ensured every act of seeing, being, and doing in itself was with my community in mind. She was preparing me for a life of tragedy and hope—the burden of our historical bodies and material conditions. Corridos were but one exercise in listening to what was at stake when submitting to the literal translation of *así son las cosas*. Perhaps for no other reason the commencement of the corrido "Jefe de Jefe" was significant to Grandma: "A mi me gustan los corridos por que son los hechos reales de nuestro pueblo...Si a mi también me gustan por que en ellos se canta la pura verdad" (Bello, 1997). For Grandma, it was important for me to recognize and acknowledge que no hay una sola verdad. Rather, similar to the above lyric, there was always a verdad from gente like us that challenged a singular truth. Grandma exercised my listening to ensure I knew this:

Grandma: "Ay, esta canción me encanta."

Me: "¿Por qué?"

Grandma: "Pos, está pesada."

Me: "¿Pesada?"

Grandma: "¡Sí, pesada! ¿Entiendes?

Ábre tus oídos, ¿me estás escuchando?"

Me: "Estoy escuchando"

Grandma: "Te digo esto para que sepas y aprendas."

Me: "Yo se, Grandma."

Grandma: "La gente se cantan los corridos con padre, ¿que no? Es una triste verdad."

The translation of "pesada" is "heavy." But the word itself is expounded in the sentiments it conjures. Her charge for me to open my ears suggests that listening goes beyond the mere act of listening. The "pesada" component of this exchange is something that resides within the gente de las márgenes who inherit stories of tragedy and hope. Grandma was preparing me for community listening, a kind of listening that not only recognizes what is being said literally but also metanarratively. In the tense usage of "Murieron por que eran hombres...no por que fueran bandidos," they [the "pistoleros"] are humans then and now. Cultural rhetorics practices such as corridos and community listening enact a kind of literacy and rhetorical work meant to ensure that the dominant white power does not circulate and flow smoothly as it assumes it does.

Texas will always re-write itself as colonial. Corridos announce this consequence to the community in which they circulate and flow. Corridos, like archives, are structurally spectral. They

are sung to announce that hegemony is synonymous with the human condition and to confirm a haunting. Perhaps for no other reason is it common to hear a variation on these words pronounced throughout corridos: "diles que nunca olviden and ay que prender la lección." Jose Limón (1992) speaks to the spectrality of corridos when he writes that corridos "return the dead to the living and to the politics of the present" (p. 73). Because the telos of Western epistemology is a topos of intelligibility, rationality, and totality, there is an effort to mark and display the "Other" as "dead." The "dead" stand juxtaposed *to* and *with* the present (de Certeau, 1988; Cushman, 2013).

The corridista, however, in naming a place, time, subjects, and/or atrocities, ensures that an exorcism of the past is impossible. This resistance reflects, perhaps, the limits of Western epistemology; it cannot avoid the "surreptitious return of what it effaces" (p. 96). Corridos, like specters that haunt, are a kind of "slow hemorrhage of knowledge" (de Certeau, p. 96-97). Similar to how Adam Banks (2011) discusses the role of the griot as someone who is a "canon maker," a "time bender," a "keeper of history," and an "intellectual" of the local community (p. 3, 23), the role of the corridista is to enact a politics of memory, inheritance, and generations that take shape en las márgenes para los que saben (the wronged) y los que nunca aprendieron (the wrongdoers). In doing so, the politics of the present are

interrupted by what remains present—the “Other.” Creating presence from absence and sound from silence is a kind of being with specters, in the present.

The corridos I listened to with my Grandma often depicted the Texas Rangers as “Rinches cobardes.” This depiction was contrary to how I learned about them in the classroom. From corridos, I learned how the “Rinches” played a central role in the de/re-territorialization of Texas (see Deleuze and Guattari, 1972). Therefore, when the words “diles que nunca olviden” are articulated, it is a call and a push to remember how the loss of life and land and the projects of dehumanizing Mexican and Mexican Americans in Texas were caused by settlers and Rangers. The lesson of the corridos, once more, is the message that they/we [“pistoleros”] are humans, then and now, and not “bad hombres” simply because “we” refused logics of domination, management, and control. In this way, corridos run counter to the practices of Western cultural rhetorics of claiming some “event” as the last (see Rushdy, 2012), forgetting and remembering in settler ways, and moving on. Instead, as I have asserted above, corridos are structurally spectral. They call and push la gente de las márgenes to create space and give back speech to specters, even if only ever channeled through our bodies in the present.

All this brings me to the following question: how do we bear witness to an inheritance and debt, especially when the call to responsibility and justice at times seems so ungraspable? I am reminded of

my conversations with Grandma in the context of listening to corridos together. I understood the words in the corridos. But the readability of their meaning was not a given—these words kept their secrets even as the corridista revealed their formation in an utterance.

Much has been discussed with regard to the music that emerges from la gente de las márgenes (see Paredes, 1958/1976; Peña, 1985; Herrera-Sobek, 1993; Sánchez, 2006; Noe, 2009; Aparicio, 2013; Ríos, 2017). Little has been done to put this genre into practice within Writing and Rhetorical Studies (WRS). From once personifying that “palomita” in corridos that is tasked with picking up the “urgent message” and passing it along to others, to now embodying the spirit of corridistas, I attempt here a corrido-ing approach that calls and pushes the audience to listen. Abre tus oídos as I submit here a praxis of corrido-ing and community listening in this, the first of a trilogy of projects on national, state, and local violence.

This project is about the atrocities in Texas which resulted as a consequence of the encroachment of settlers and the formation of the Texas Rangers. Specifically, it focuses on how the *Texas Rangers in Action* comic book series engages in a kind of literacy and rhetorical work justifying settler colonial logics of domination, management, and control in the name of modernity (salvation, progress, and development). Its literacy and rhetorical work contribute to a public memory that ensures Texas will rewrite itself as colonial. But an intervention can be made into the supposed smooth flow

and circulation of hegemony. In the spirit of corridos, I first name a place, time, subjects, and/or triste verdades and tragedias, and second, I call and push the audience towards acknowledging an inheritance and debt. So I ask you, the reader, to pick up the message, however ungraspable it may seem, to get “caught up” by a sense of responsibility, and to pass it along to others so as to indict them also in the project of social justice. I submit this work pa’ los que saben y pa’ los que nunca aprendieron with the hope that we can create a new ecological impact that is more humane.

El Siglo XIX: Settler Colonial Logics, Narratives, and Rhetorics

The Mexican American War (1846-1848) resulted in the Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo in 1848, which gave the U.S. the present U.S. states of Texas, New Mexico, and Arizona. This result was set into motion decades before, though. Mexico declared its independence from Spain in 1821. Mexico considered the Northeastern province of Texas its territory (e.g. Northern Mexico-the Province of Coahuila y Tejas). But before the Texas Revolution (1835-1836), the founding of the Republic of Texas (1836-1845), and the annexation offer to Texas (1845), Mexico invited Anglo settlers (e.g., Green Dewitt and Moses Austin) with the intention of having these settlers act as a buffer between the Republic of Mexico and the Comanches (see Hämmäläinen, 2008). Underwriting Texas

Independence and the emergence of the Republic of Texas is a mythology that is part of public memory—that settlers “earned” Texas because they alone “possessed the masculine and martial vigor to wrestle that land away from the Comanches and savagery” (Hämmäläinen, p. 201).

In the 1830s, settlers said the frontier needed protecting, first, from “The Indian” (see Berkhofer, 2011). Stephen F. Austin, son of Moses Austin, came up with the idea to form a “common defense” known today as the Rangers. As Austin proclaimed, “I therefore by these presents give public notice that I will employ ten men in addition to those employed by the Governmt to act as rangers for the common defense” (qtd. in Ivey, 2010, p. 253). Then, in 1835, the frontier needed protecting from “The Mexican.” Amidst escalating tensions between Anglo settlers in Texas and Mexico, Austin expressed his intentions to settle Texas in a letter to his cousin, Mrs. Holley:

The situation of Texas is daily becoming more and more interesting.... It is very evident that Texas should be effectually, and fully, Americanized—that is—settled by a population that will harmonize with their neighbors on the East, in language, political principles, common origin, sympathy, and even interests. Texas must be a slave country.

All that is now wanting is a great immigration of good and efficient families this fall and winter.... They

can get lands.... The government of Mexico cannot complain—it has invited immigration.... A large immigration will prepare us, give us strength, resources, everything.

It is well known that my object has always been to fill up Texas with a North American population.... The cause of philanthropy and liberty, also, will be promoted by Americanizing Texas.... The more the American population of Texas is increased the more readily will the Mexican Government give it up. (qtd. in Barker, 1910, p. 271-271)

When Austin writes, “nothing shall daunt my courage or abate my exertions to complete the main object of my labors—to Americanize Texas” (p. 273), it is important to pay attention to the characteristic he ascribes to himself—courage. It is also significant to note the phrase, “object of my labors,” because the public memory surrounding Austin and settlers is typically projected in positive ways in Texas. However, the idea of effectually and fully Americanizing Texas, a Texas “settled by a population” that shares “common origins” and “political principles,” suggests there are other objects that could result from Austin’s labor. These other objects are evident when Austin refers to “The Mexican” as “strange people” who “must be studied to be managed” (p. 273).² One object of his

labor, thus, is the management and control of a people, while another is the management and control of land. Settlers didn’t just come to Texas—they stayed.

The Rangers would assist in Austin’s objects of labor with a series of projects, including the official formation of the Texas Rangers. In 1835, on the verge of the Texas Revolution, in San Felipe, outside the present-day Texas capitol of Austin, delegates from around Texas, including Austin, formed a “Permanent Council” and established a “Consultation” (Barker, 1910, p. 274). Here, Daniel Parker, a member of the “Permanent Council,” petitioned a resolution for the creation of a corps of Rangers. It was resolved, “On motion of Mr. Parker of Nacogdoches,” that a corps of Rangers be formed with the “business” of ranging and guarding “the frontiers” (qtd. in Ivey, 2010, p. 254). Herein emerge, at least partially, settler colonial rhetorics and narratives. With regard to “The Indian,” Mirabeu Lamar, second president of the Republic of Texas, argued that “[t]he white man and the red man cannot dwell in harmony together. Nature forbids it” (qtd. in Webb, 1989, p. 31). And with regard to “The Mexican,” settlers found that “during a century of residence in Texas,” Mexicans had “failed to improve their status and environment” (de León, 2010, p. 12). Settlers and the Rangers would be charged with bringing civilization and progress to the land of Texas. Together, these rhetorics and

² The significance of “The Mexican” is not only an indicator of colonization, but of a presencing of colonial logics, logics that connect “The Mexican”

to “histories, rhetorics and images” that accumulate negative affective value (see Wingard, 2013, p. 9).

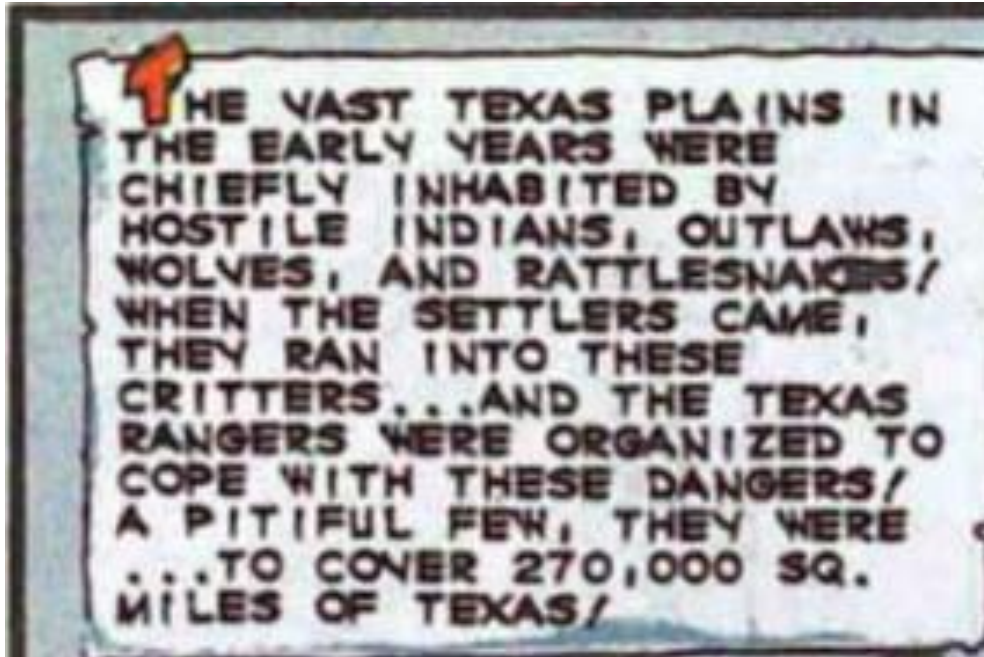


Figure 1: *Texas Rangers in Action*, no. 56, p. 19

narratives would inaugurate a hierarchical structure that benefits settlers to the present day.

Settler colonialism is neither philanthropic nor a liberty-for-all project, as Austin would have us believe in his letter to his cousin. Yet, Western historical discourse, and the *Texas Rangers in Action* series (1956-1970) in particular, argue otherwise. White settlers “came” to Texas.³ This arrival was an event in historical time. It happened. But white settlers also came to “stay.” They reflect a continuous structural happening (see Wolfe, 2006). To provide clarification on this structural happening, I deploy “history” as a category of my analysis to read the *Texas Rangers in Action* comic books (issues 1 through 63). Jan

Blommaert and April Huang (2009) argue that to invoke history as a category of analysis, there must be a toolkit of concepts that “points towards connections between the past and the present in terms of social activities” (p. 3-4). I have identified these social activities as the institution of law, order, justice, and the articulation of rhetorics and narratives of modernity.

Frontier Immortals: Esos Que Quitan y Matan

The *Texas Rangers in Action* comic book series often grounds itself in historical discourse. It is common to read: “From the archives of the Texas Rangers.” And from the archives, the reader encounters a

³ Little information is available as to how large of a production was and how wide of a circulation this comic had.

racist history: “The Texas Rangers were organized before the battle of the Alamo!” for the purposes of protecting this land and defending settlers from “The Injun” and “The Mexican” (no. 5, p. 3). From the archive of the Rangers, we also find depictions of Texas and the Rangers. There are two types of moves articulated. On the one hand, Texas and the Texas border were a “blazing frontier of outlaw guns, Apache arrows, and swaggering bad men!” (no. 5, p. 11). As the image above reads, Texas was “chiefly inhabited by hostile Indians, outlaws, wolves, and rattlesnakes!” As the passage continues, “When the settlers came, they ran into these critters...and the Texas Rangers were organized to cope with these dangers!” (no. 56, p. 19), the first move becomes evident. “The Injun” of Texas, a stereotype for people from tribes such as the Nazan, Pinta, Harices, Comecrudos, and Tejones, is stripped of his history and presented as part of the wild (e.g., critters). This reduction reveals a paradigm of rational knowledge at work where either “The Injun” or the “bloodthirsty Mexican bandits” (no. 60, p. 24) are presented as external to “reason” and objectified as nature (see Quijano, 2007).

The other move consists of presenting a people as pre-civilized, and thus, an empty landscape where the inhabiting bodies of the Other “vanish” or “evaporate.” Texas, in this context, is “a new land—rough and raw—untamed” (no. 11, p. 13; no. 33). This “squalid” land, therefore, is “up for grabs” (no. 60, p. 15), needing to be civilized because no

law, order, justice, or honest men exist in it (no. 46; 54). With both moves, space is created to articulate a rhetoric and narratives of salvation, progress, and development (see Mignolo, 2007). Such discourse ensures that settler specters continue presencing in the present—as a legacy. That is to say, as the discourse of settlers announces the commencement of civilization at the turn of the 19th century, as marked by the arrival of the settlers, and pronounces a commandment that dictates this is so because settlers are men of vision and integrity, it is emplacing structures that ensure the image of the settler is both creator and finalizer of progress and development on a Western stage of time.

There is something to be said about the importance of land and the transferring of lands to these settlers. We could turn to the novel, *Squatter and the Don*, a fictional depiction of California’s history with settlers, which provides one example of the many tactics Anglo settlers took. In one scene, the question is posed, “But the law does not open to settlers private property, private lands?” The response by one of the characters is, “Yes it does, because land is not considered private property until the title to it is confirmed and patented” (p. 123). Despite the decree of Spanish and Mexican land grants, there was still the “surveying” of land, challenges to land ownership, and litigation that took years in the courts to settle. To return to an earlier quote, Américo Paredes’s novel, *George Washington Gómez*, provides some context here with regard to Texas: “A few



Figure 2: *Texas Rangers in Action*, no. 48, p. 33

English-speaking adventurers moved in.... Then came the railroad early in the 20th century, and with it arrived the first real-estate men and the land-and-title companies” (p. 36). Again, despite the decree of Spanish and Mexican land grants, companies emerged to question the authenticity of said titles. Legal proceedings often meant money, and for money landowners mortgaged their land. Settlers simply had to outlast the landowners in court, which many did.⁴

History is central to the comic book because it allows for a discourse of commencement and commandment. “The history of the Texas Rangers,” the comic book announces, “is crammed full” of true accounts (no. 12, p. 28). The Rangers are depicted as honest, dedicated, and

courageous men (no. 24). The Rangers could make Texas “fit for progress” (no. 37, p. 19). If “progress was to continue,” the comic book reads, “a semblance of law and order had to be maintained” (no. 35, p. 10). The mission or social activities of the Rangers thus consisted of instituting law, order, and justice. “The Injun” or “The Mexican,” as the comic book refers to both populations, needed to be “repelled” (no. 5, p. 18), using a logic of elimination. In the “coming war for freedom” (no. 11, p. 38), as the comic book refers to it, the Rangers were then responsible for going from one “lawless” or “squalid little settlement” (no. 46, p. 9) to another to clean it up (no. 13, p. 7) and/or “cure” it (no. 35, p. 4). This action was their “impossible task” of “bringing

⁴ It is important to recognize and acknowledge that these land grants are also colonial claims, ones that ultimately displaced tribes who lived there.

law and order to a wild, young, land” (no. 60, p. 24). But no one attempting to stop them, it is written, was ever a “match for the highly-skilled Texas Rangers!” (no. 45, p. 33). Whether the Rangers were guarding the Gulf coast (no. 12) or defending the border against Juan Cortina and his bandit army (no. 21), they were successful in and for making Texas safe and lawful (no. 24, p. 27). As they battled for the land “yard by yard” (no. 60, p. 15), the Rangers emerged as “Valiant heroes of the Wild West” (no. 19, p. 1). Texas, it can be read, is a “shining monument to their greatness” (no. 56, p. 21).

¿Que es la Verdad?

The comic book recognizes that the Apaches and Comanches had “ruled Texas” before the “white men came” (no. 56, p. 31). But, as the image in Figure 2 claims, “The Indian” sought to “halt the Westward march of civilization!” (no. 48, p. 33). The settlers had a word for “The Injun,” according to the comic book, *siwash*: “An Indian...not being up to the white man’s standard” (no. 7, p. 32). It is a matter of historical fact that there was resistance to the encroachment of settlers. But defiant? Defiant implies that the “Westward march of civilization” already existed. Defiant they were, because they were against a type of “modernity” that justified the expropriation of land, the loss of life, and Western historical discourse and how “truth” reflects a particular type of morality and taste. The comic book received a “Seal of Approval,” for instance, which means that its “truth” narratives had

been “carefully reviewed” and “met the high standards of morality and good taste” of the Comic Code Authority. But what are the “high standards of morality,” and who determines “good taste”? Are we to think of taste in the ways Hugh Blair did, as “proper” or “correct” taste (see Golden and Corbett, 1990)? If so, we must approach the *Texas Rangers in Action* comic book series as an attempt to induce effect and affect at the level of taste and morality by presenting history. We must then hold the comic book accountable or responsible for justifying state-violence through its literacy and rhetorical work, for creating an ecological impact that is a matter of human rights.

Morality and taste circulate in the title of the comic book—*Texas Rangers in Action*. The relationship between Rangers and action is meant to cement into written form and public memory the idea that the Rangers were always in action. This stance is supported both by the comic books’ covers and their focus on the instituting of law, order, and justice. In and across the issues, depictions of Rangers are as follows: Rangers riding their horses with a six-gun shooter (no. 5); Rangers fighting border jumpers (no. 7); Rangers saving a white woman (no. 8); Rangers as “harmless” beings saving towns (no. 16); and Rangers as “Heroic Men of Action” (no. 48). This is underwritten further by the statement, “From the archives of the Texas Rangers.” “From the archives” lends itself to a particular kind of authority, an authority that seeks to invoke history and memory in particular ways. How fitting it is, I would say, to find the following

passage—"Fiction doesn't follow life. Just the other way around. You dream up something in fiction and then watch it happen in real life" (no. 25, p. 25). This passage contextualizes the onslaught of Westernization in relation to a land and people and yet is cloaked by settler colonial rhetorics and narratives of salvation, progress, and development.

Morality and taste are also depicted in the representation of groups. "The Mexican" and brown bodies are always predominantly presented with a sombrero and sash, described as having a "quick temper" (no. 7, p. 3), shown as semi-literate—"will" vs. "weel" (no. 9, p. 14) and "these man" vs. "these men" (no. 31, p. 28)—and when confronted by the Rangers, are typically depicted as scared and confused. These are not the standards of the Western subject, who are cast as men of vision and integrity, endowed with the authority to direct the course of civilization and be in control of said direction for all eternity.

In no. 29, when Juan Cortina's group encounters the Rangers, they are presented as frightened, with the words "Eet ees the Gringos" uttered (p. 12). In no. 55, we see "The Mexican" simply as ashamed rather than concerned with the atrocities caused by the Anglo-settlers or Rangers. "The Mexican" is a caricature: a funny man (no. 48), a "muy malo" and "bad hombre" (no. 62), a supernatural (no. 55), and collectively a group who wants to halt the West's march towards civilization. On the other hand, the Rangers are presented as *cool* and *courageous* with a "burning desire to fight



Figure 3: *Texas Rangers in Action*, no. 29, p. 12

for justice" (no 12, p. 17; also see no. 17). This portrayal is why the words "critters," "siwash," and "squalid" are so important. They depict notions of savagery and wilderness meant to stand as binary opposites to Western subjectivity, intelligibility, and reason. By the word "commencement," readers are to understand when civilization begins, while "commandment" clearly means readers to see the law of settlers as representative of men of vision and integrity.

All truths, as presented in these comic books, though, must be subject to questioning, especially in the context of settlers and their exploration of a "New World" or "unknown West." What is meant, for example, by the following statements—"opening the wilderness" (no. 7, p. 18); "Without the brave lawmen, the West could never have been built up" (no. 46, p. 17); or "I had been sent out by our great father to explore the Western country...were not women to be turned by words to go back...we were

men well armed and would sell our lives at a dear rate to his nation” (no. 29, p. 26)? When we come across statements like these and the following—“Today we think of a clear cut line that does separate our law enforcement men from the criminal element...but it wasn’t exactly that way in the days of the Old West” (no. 36, p. 18)—we must remind ourselves that not only is there not a clear cut line, but that the very term “law enforcement” is fraught with a Western morality and taste that seek to justify violence in the name of modernity. This is evident throughout the comic book series. For instance, when Texas Ranger Clint Shelby sends a telegram to his chief giving his resignation so as to be able to enter Mexico, we find a Captain who reports he never received any telegram (no. 5, p. 17). Or, in the case of Juan Cortina, we read the following from one Ranger Captain: “Of course I can’t order you to cross into Mexican territory to get him! But, if you should somehow, in the dark, cross the Rio Grande without knowing it...” (p. 12). Such a passage clearly signals settler morality.

In the Ranger comic book, the improvement and growth of the land represent solely the accomplishment of settlers and the Rangers. It is a matter of historical fact, however, that the Rangers “ruled” by their “six-guns.” So, when the comic book authors write, “Texas Rangers’ [six-guns] brought law and order” (no. 52, p. 39), we must

acknowledge that the de/re-territorialization of Texas land and the extraction of resources were done with the “six-gunner.” The kind of literacy and rhetorical work here proves that sometimes settler colonial logics don’t even need to be cloaked by a rhetoric and narrative of modernity.⁵ The rhetrickery (see Booth, 2004) presented in the comic book series obviously has implications. And these implications are most evident in the public memory that circulates and flows in Texas, a state which celebrates Anglo and European settlers and Rangers, a settler collective public memory that accepts one verdad and claims it never knew otherwise. I was reminded of this one day as I visited the Texas Department of Public Safety website, where we see the Rangers described as playing an “effective, valiant, and honorable role throughout the early troubled years of Texas” (“Historical Development”).

Para los que Nunca Aprendieron

La verdad is that the settlers and Rangers stole land and they also killed (see de León, 2010). The Rangers would be responsible in South Texas and the LRGV for intimidating and/or eliminating “The Indian” and “The Mexican” from their claims to the land. They did so in the name of law, order, and justice. Yet, en las márgenes, like the LRGV, one can find corridos that confirm specters haunting

⁵ I am reminded of an early 1900s *Laredo Times* article that states, “there is a serious surplus

population there that needs elimination” (qtd. in Johnson, 2003, p. 3).

Texas. There is a memory in such places that speaks to una triste verdad y tragedias that the people refuse to forget.

The “Corrido of Juan Cortina” partially accounts for both the land-grabbing and violence (Elizondo, n.d.). Cortina is known for witnessing a Brownsville city marshal arrest a Mexican American and pistol-whip the man. After a verbal argument, Cortina shot the marshal. Months later, he returned to Brownsville to release unfairly imprisoned Mexicans and Mexican Americans (Thompson, 2010). The corrido begins by stating, “1859 para ser preciso,” and with the corridista noting, “la tierra se han robado.” It continues by accounting for how the people, particularly Juan Cortina, knew what was going on: “leyes y tratados sirven solo a los Americanos.” The treaties and laws, particularly enforced by the “rinches,” provided the means to steal “el ganado” and “la frontera.” And so, there emerges a long resistance to Anglo colonization along the LRGV and South Texas. In “Pistoleros Famosos,” this is partially accounted for. “Por las márgenes del Rio” is where the corridista begins. He continues by listing those “pistoleros” who died resisting the Texas Rangers. The corridista defiantly names the cause of their deaths, “Los Rinches que son cobardes.” And for such reasons, the song continues by stating that “En los pueblitos del Norte...siempre ha corrido la sangre.” The words “Es cierto no son mentira” expound the final parts of the song: “Desde aquí se les recuerda... Cantándoles sus corridos... Murieron por que eran

hombres...no por que fueran bandidos.”

Corridos pesados.

Siempre ha corrido la sangre. La Matanza, for instance, describes the period of 1915 to 1919, a period in which words such as “vanish” and “evaporate” were used to account for the estimated 5,000 killings of “The Mexican” in South Texas (see Ivey, 2010; Villanueva, 2017). To name a few, there were Jesus Bazan, Antonio Longoria, Paulino Serda, and Florencia García. The Rangers indiscriminately harmed and/or killed “The Mexican” in the LRGV and South Texas. The corridos not only provide an opportunity to remember the past but also remind us that even in the present day the colonial continues to traffic in the normative. “Los Rinches de Tejas” is one such corrido. The scene is Starr County in the LRGV (1967). “Voy a cantarles, señores, de los pobres infortunios” are the first lines (n.p.). The poor and unfortunate farmworkers “[q]ue brutalmente golpearon esos rinches asesinos,” the corridista continues. Those assassins, “Esos rinches maldecidos,” were sent by “el gobernador” to “proteger los melones.” The corridista accounts what happened to Magdeleno Dimas, one of the victims, who states, “Yo no opusé Resistencia. The song continues, “Me golpearon sin conciencia” (n.p.). Near the conclusion, the corridista sings, “Esos rinches maldecidos... Los mandó el gobernador a a proteger los melones.” Past and present, the Rangers have “protected” the land and resources. In the state of Texas, a place where land is

capital and ranching is capitalism, a rhetoric of modernity must cloak colonial logics and imperial designs.

The wreckage of settler colonialism is a matter of fact. At the turn of the 19th century, “The Mexican” was displaced from the land, politically disenfranchised, and forced to be economically dependent on a settler-colonial capitalist order (Montejano; 1987; Rodriguez, 2007; Bedolla, 2009; Carrigan and Webb, 2003). Such wreckage emplaced structures and logics of domination, management, and control still felt today in and across all of Texas. The settler colonial rhetorics and narratives of “The Mexican” as the “ill” of society enabled Juan Crow segregation in Tejano society (e.g., “Mexican Colonies”) and schools (e.g., “Mexican Wards” and “Mexican Schools”). And yet, even when the courts ruled Latinos could not be segregated from white students on the technicality of being white (Martinez, 1997), arguments that language deficiencies needed to be remedied were made (Foley, 2014). As a result, “The Mexican” was taught inferiority both in material ways (school equipment, facilities) and through pedagogical approaches (Menchaca and Valencia, 1990; Menchaca, 1997; Spring, 1996; Córdova, 1998; San Miguel, 1998; Valencia, 2000; Guajardo and Guajardo, 2004; Blanton, 2007). In Texas, these projects of domination, management, and control were the work of settlers and the Rangers. These projects carry on in the present day in such a way that Texas will always be re-written as colonial.

Towards Developing a Language and Practice of Spectro-Politics

Settler public memory exhibits the desire to forget and remember in colonial ways. And yet, from las márgenes there is a memory of hope (El Primer Congreso Mexicanista of 1911, The Tejano Revolt of 1915, The Harlingen Convention of 1927, the League of United Latin American Citizens, and the American G.I. Forum) that refuses to forget. What I have submitted here is an effort towards developing a language and a practice of spectro-politics that has implications for research and classroom education. When Derrida writes, “Everyone reads, acts, writes with his or her ghosts” (1994, p. 174), he is calling and pushing us towards acknowledging how we are all interwoven and entangled by a constellation of stories, genealogies, and hauntings. In this universe of constellations, we have the ability, as Derrida would say, to imagine, to think about, and to project the visibility of the invisible (p. 125). Community listening eradicates mere presence as a marker for listening. It focuses on learning how to be with specters, as a form of responsibility towards an inheritance and as an expression of social justice where it is not yet. When I write that it is important in my community to create presence from absence and sound from silence, it is a kind of seeing, being, and doing with the past, present, and future irreducible to exactness and norms.

The *Texas Rangers in Action* comic book

and corridos are similar in that they do literacy and rhetorical work. Both can be brought into the classroom as examples of the ways in which public memory works. As we consider their ecological impact on shaping and informing ways of seeing, being, and doing, what I ask is that we learn how to re-listen and re-search in the memory of tragedy and hope so that we can make history matter to ourselves and students. What is at stake is humanity and being complicit in allowing the colonial to traffic in the normative.

No te dejes!

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The Literacy of Facebook:

SNS Literacy Practices and Learning Transfer in FYC

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Ten FYC students were interviewed about their literacy practices on Facebook and their perceptions of them. The interviewees made ample use of multimodal communication, but they had a limited view of connections between literacy practices on Facebook and in their composition classes. Exploring literacy practices on Facebook and other SNSs with students may facilitate learning transfer and help students understand the complex rhetorical choice they make online and offline. Connecting these literacy contexts may allow learning in one context to be used in others.

Keywords: digital literacies, first-year composition (FYC), learning transfer, Facebook, multimodality

“Literacy” is more complex than simply understanding alphabetic text. It is a social act embedded in a specific context (Street, 1984; Gee, 2008) as well as a practice that involves multiple media in addition to words on a page. Digital media and traditional print media are both “a delivery system for language” (Gee and Hayes, 2011, p. 2), but digital media offer additional avenues through which meaning can be delivered (Jewitt, 2008; Kress, 2003; Selber, 2004), such as images, links, videos, and even the simple act of clicking “like” on a post. These modes of meaning are important to the literacy practices of social media (see Figure 1). If images, links, or videos were separated from alphabetic text on Facebook or other social media platforms, the methods for making meaning would be dramatically limited.

This article focuses on literacy practices within the context of Facebook

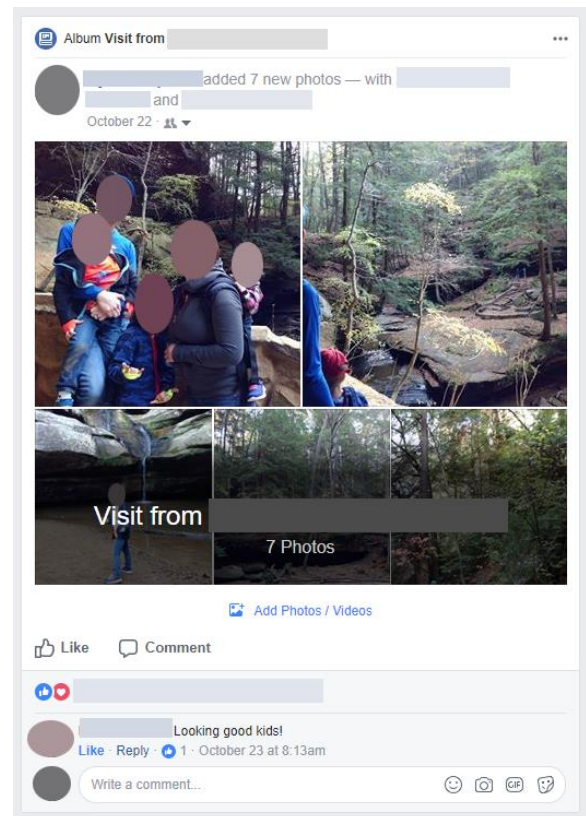


Figure 1: The image above is a representative post from Facebook. Meaning is conveyed through alphabetic text, through images, through likes and other reactions, and through tags to other users.

and how they are perceived by students. The importance of Facebook and other SNSs (social networking sites) has become more evident in composition scholarship over the past decade. Many articles have focused on Facebook in classroom practice (Balzhiser et al., 2011; Fife, 2010), others have focused on more general Facebook literacies (Shepherd, 2015; Shepherd, 2016; Amicucci, 2017), and even a few have focused on Facebook for research purposes (Sheffield and Kimme Hae, 2016). This previous research demonstrates how Facebook and other SNSs serve as a robust resource for scholars of literacy and composition. However, one approach in the research that has been rarely used is to examine specific literacy practices within the context in which they are being practiced. Building on the situated exploration of Facebook literacies from authors such as Amber Buck (2012), Kevin Eric DePew (2011), and Kevin Eric DePew and Susan Miller-Cochran (2010)—all of whom focus on case studies with individual social media users—this article seeks to create a more robust picture of the practices that take place on Facebook by exploring not only literacy practices on Facebook but also how those practices were perceived by the users.

To understand our students' literacy practices and perceptions of them, I interviewed ten first-year composition students about their Facebook use. I found that the literacy practices of FYC students on Facebook have clear connections to practices commonly engaged in as part of composition classes. Students have a deep

understanding of how to make meaning across multiple modes and can see a connection between these literacies and those taking place in their composition classes when asked directly about how these spaces might connect. But because students may not initially perceive Facebook and FYC as being connected, they may face significant obstacles in learning transfer and may struggle to connect these two contexts in meaningful ways. By looking to the growing literature on learning transfer in composition studies (i.e., Yancey, Robertson, and Taczak, 2014; Beaufort, 2007; DePalma, 2015; Wardle, 2007), composition teachers can make these literacy practices more accessible to students beyond the context of Facebook. This may give students a more expansive view of literacy and allow them to use critical literacy knowledge in a variety of literacy contexts both in and out of school.

The Interviewees

Interviews were conducted with 10 FYC students to understand both how they were using Facebook and how they perceived that use. The interviewees were enrolled at a large urban university and were concurrently taking FYC at the time of the interviews. In Table 1, some basic demographic information about the interviewees is presented. Of course, these ten students cannot represent all literacy practices across FYC students in the U.S. Instead, they can serve as a starting point for discussions about composition and Facebook literacy. My hope is that the diversity of the students

Table 1*Interviewee Basic Demographic Information*

Pseudonym	Gender	Age	Race/Ethnicity	First Language	Semesters of Composition
Baozhai	Female	20	Chinese	Mandarin	2 ¹
Carrie	Female	19	Asian-American	English	2
Chelsea	Female	18	Hispanic	Spanish ²	2
Connor	Male	19	Asian-American/Caucasian	English	1 ³
Gabriel	Male	19	Caucasian	English	2
Jason	Male	18	Asian-American	English	1
Matthew	Male	19	Caucasian	English	2
Melanie	Female	19	Hispanic	English	2
Ray	Male	18	Caucasian	English	2
Scott	Male	18	Hispanic	English	2

selected and the large student body from which they were drawn may offer insights into student populations beyond the immediate context.

The 10 participants were asked a series of 22 questions about themselves, their Facebook activity, and connections between Facebook and composition (see Appendix). The questions were designed to examine specific literacy practices and look for connections between practices and other writing contexts, particularly their writing for FYC. Then, participants

were asked to engage in a regular Facebook session, talking aloud about what they were doing as they did it in order to “capture what it is people actually do in the moment of composing the products of literate interaction” (Takayoshi, 2016, p. 16).

Table 2 shows the participants’ basic Facebook usage habits. Usage varied greatly among the 10 participants in terms of how long they had had a profile, how often they logged in, and how long they stayed on during each long in.

¹ Baozhai was the only student who took first-year composition for non-native English speakers.

² Chelsea identified her first language as Spanish but stated that she primarily uses English now, even at home.

³ Connor and Jason were enrolled in a special accelerated honors section of first-year composition.

Table 2*Interviewee Basic Facebook Usage*

Pseudonym	Duration of Facebook Profile	Number of Facebook Logins	Reported Duration of Each Login	Actual Duration of Observed Session
Baozhai	1 year	1 per week	Less than 30 minutes	8:49
Carrie	5 years	4-5 per day	5 minutes	7:23
Chelsea	3 years	20 per day	3 minutes	3:22
Connor	4 years	15-20 per day	10-15 minutes	2:27
Gabriel	3 years	2 per day	5-15 minutes	6:25
Jason	6 years	6 per day	5-10 minutes	2:09
Matthew	1.5 years	1 per day	1-20 minutes	3:04
Melanie	5 years	30 per day	20 seconds	1:21
Ray	3 years	5-6 per day	10 minutes	2:13
Scott	5 years	1 per day	20-30 minutes	6:40

Literacy Practices on Facebook

Based on the interview data from these students, literacy practices on Facebook varied significantly between participants. What they consumed and posted and how they did so was diverse. Below, I will divide the interviewees literacy practices into four main categories: Reading, Posting Images, Writing, and Liking.

READING

“Reading” in the context of Facebook involved a great deal more than decoding alphabetic text. In fact, the primary way that students “read” Facebook was simply scrolling through their feeds, scanning

content, and stopping to view images.

While it was certainly part of their literacy practices, reading of alphabetic text was less common than other types of receptive literacies. Most often, students “read” by viewing photos. This was discussed by 8 of the 10 interviewees and was by far the most common receptive literacy practice.

The interviewees rarely mentioned reading alphabetic text during the interviews. Six of the interviewees did mention text while being observed using Facebook, but only two read a full post. The remaining four interviewees didn’t mention alphabetic text at all as I observed their sessions. They focused on images

primarily or occasionally discussed viewing videos or links. “Reading” and interpreting images seemed to be the primary way that people received meaning when using Facebook.

POSTING IMAGES

Images were the most discussed method of producing content for Facebook. When I asked them to describe their posting processes on Facebook, three of the ten talked specifically about posting photos with no prompting from me. While these three interviewees focused specifically on posting photos, all ten mentioned the importance of photos to their Facebook use at some point during their interviews. Discussion of images, particularly when discussing productive literacies instead of receptive literacies, was far more common than discussion of traditional alphabetic text.

WRITING

Posting public written content was rarely mentioned by the participants. This is not to say that written content on Facebook was not important, but the ways that interviewees were writing on Facebook may be different than what might be expected. The most common type of written content was captioning. Several interview participants noted the importance of adding captions to images, videos, or links when these things were posted to Facebook—a literacy practice that showcases the multimodal nature of composing on Facebook. All ten interviewees mentioned at least one of these kinds of posts at some point during

the interview. Six of the ten mentioned captioning posts as part of their regular Facebook activity. Based on this discussion, it seems that captions may be the most popular type of written public content on Facebook—more so than status updates or comments—for the interviewees.

Text-based status updates and comments were not mentioned as a regular activity of most of the interviewees, but they were mentioned on a few occasions. For example, Carrie mentioned feeling “obligated” to comment on a post when she had been tagged in it. Nearly all of the participants noted that they rarely commented on posts when I asked about this directly. Gabriel was the only participant to detail writing a status update as his main posting process. No other interviewee talked in depth about posting text-based status updates.

Interviewees were far more likely to send private chat messages through Facebook Messenger than they were to post status updates or comments. Chat messages were mentioned by six participants as an activity that they engaged in on Facebook regularly.

LIKING

Most of what interviewees said about their activity was verified when I observed their Facebook sessions at the end of the interviews. However, there was one notable difference in reported behavior and observed behavior. Only two mentioned “liking” content as part of their regular activities on Facebook, but six “liked” at least one thing during their

observed Facebook session—often doing so with no verbal indication that they had done anything.

The interviewees saw “liking” as a complex rhetorical activity. They often felt pressured to like certain content (especially if they were tagged). Gabriel noted that it was “weird” to like content that was not posted by one of his own Facebook friends (but was posted by a friend of a friend) even if he enjoyed what was posted. Ray mentioned a similar practice, stating that his likelihood of liking content “usually depends how close I am with the person” and not on the content of the post. He stated that he won’t like content if he didn’t consider the poster close. In his interview, Connor noted that liking something didn’t necessarily mean that he supported or agreed with it: “I like a lot of things on Facebook, more as a sign of support or appreciation for what they’re doing or whatever effort they’re putting in rather than a sense of agreement. I don’t have to agree with your post to like it.” He stated that he viewed liking as a demonstration that the content was “worth my time” or “meaningful.” This meant that he may “like” something he disagreed with.

“Liking” in the context of Facebook meant something slightly different to all of these participants than that they simply *like* something. The fact that no one mentioned liking as part of activities on Facebook during their interviews may be due to the invisibility of this practice: it is so “normal” and commonplace that interviewees did not even think about it as they did it. Like with the interviewees in

Daniel Keller’s (2014) study, my interviewees “were making complex rhetorical decisions that only seemed simple because they have internalized the discourse rules for the website” (p. 93). Exploring liking with students may allow for a more critical reflection on the meaning of these practices: what does it mean to “like” and when is it appropriate?

Perception of Facebook Literacies

To better understand how participants perceived their literacy practices on Facebook, they were first asked if they connected Facebook to writing and then were asked if they connected it to composition specifically. Regardless of their answers, they were asked to try to make a connection between Facebook and composition to see if connections could be made.

IS FACEBOOK WRITING?

Seven interviewees said their Facebook activity was related to writing, but the connections that they saw between Facebook and writing were limited. Carrie saw the only connection to writing on Facebook was grammatical correctness or posting writing from elsewhere. She mentioned posting poems or raps to “test out” with friends. Matthew only hesitantly stated that Facebook was connected to writing. He stated that it was only connected to writing when he was asking for help with writing for school on his Facebook groups. Scott was also hesitant, stating that Facebook was writing, but it was “not related to the skill of writing.”

When asked to clarify, he said “you are not trying to make poetry in your posts” and went on to identify posts as a simple relaying of facts. This is particularly interesting given that Carrie specifically *was* writing poetry in her posts but also did see this activity as writing. The perception of whether or not Facebook is writing may be partially based simply on what the interviewees primarily used Facebook for: was it for poetry or was it not?

One of the interviewees was more confident in his assertion that Facebook had a connection to writing. Gabriel stated that Facebook was connected to writing because “I’m conveying [...] a good message. I do put some thought into it.” Many of the interviewees often seemed to equate the idea of “thought” or even simply length with the idea of “writing.” If there was more thought put into the post or if the post was simply longer than a few words, it was more likely to qualify as “writing” to the interviewees. This seems to connect specifically with Gabriel’s experience. He was the only interviewee to detail writing status updates as his main posting process on Facebook. These were written text only (and did not include images or links), and he explained a very detailed and thoughtful posting process. Perhaps it is because of this that Gabriel was the most confident in his assert that Facebook was connected to “writing.”

The remaining two interviewees stated Facebook wasn’t writing. Jason stated that Facebook couldn’t be writing because it didn’t have a “formal format.” Ray said that it was related to conversation and was

similar to “small talk” that people engage in when meeting in person.

Connections between Facebook and writing were tenuous. Interviewees focused on lower-level grammatical concerns or correctness in most of their responses. None of them mentioned anything about the process of writing, and none of them mentioned multimodal elements of writing, such as using images, in the answers to these questions.

CONNECTIONS TO COMPOSITION

After asking interviewees what categories Facebook activity might fall into, they were then asked if they saw a relationship between Facebook and composition. Six stated that they thought there was a connection, two said there was not, and one said there might be. The final respondent did not offer an answer either way. The most common connections between Facebook activity and composition were “writing” (3 interviewees) and “thought” (3 interviewees). Additionally, participants saw a connection with “debate,” “audience,” and “expression.” As part of this line of questioning, I asked participants to define the word “composition” in their own words. Two of the three respondents who said that Facebook was not related to composition or were unsure if there was a connection mentioned length as being part of the definition of composition. Scott stated that composition was “a large piece of writing,” and Chelsea said composition had to be “something long, not just three words.” Melanie said that composition was “written work.” None of the others

mentioned length or work in their definitions of composition. This is related to an earlier point: many of the interviewees seemed to believe that an activity can only be writing if it is longer than a status update.

Most of the interviewees who stated that there was a connection between Facebook and composition mentioned some kind of expression when asked why they saw a connection. Baozhai stated that on Facebook she was able to “express my feelings,” and Carrie also noted the importance of “expression.” Connor noted that he could “freely share thoughts” on Facebook. Gabriel said that Facebook was “saying something about” him and was a “reflection of my character.” This connection with expression may also be what Carrie was referring to when she referenced the “raw conversation” of Facebook. Carrie’s later comments support this when she defines composition as “a mix of your own style of writing and conversation.” Carrie’s comments seem to suggest that writing and conversation might not be two separate things to her but instead are parts of the same activity.

The participants’ answers are somewhat surprising. The institution that these students attended does not have a set curriculum for FYC, but teachers are encouraged to focus on critical thinking, rhetoric, and argumentation. The word “express” (in any form) is mentioned very rarely in class descriptions or outcomes and is always in the context of “express ideas” and never in the context of “express” emotions or character. Of course, individual teachers may impart

this definition to students in their individual classes.

Composition Pedagogy, Facebook Literacy, and Learning Transfer

The interviewees were engaging in a variety of literacy practices on Facebook. Some of these practices were engaged in regularly, but few of the practices were engaged in with critical awareness. Because of this, it was difficult for students to connect literacy practices on Facebook with literacy practices in FYC or other college writing. Helping students to make those connections may allow them to make use of knowledge they’ve learned from social media in other contexts as well. By using what we know about learning transfer, composition teachers may be able to help students make stronger connections more quickly.

TRANSFER

When we discuss learning transfer, it is often unclear what specifically is being discussed. At the most basic level, learning has “transferred” when the learner can use knowledge outside of the context in which it was learned. However, it’s helpful to think of this as something other than “transfer” in the sense that people transfer money or credits. It’s more helpful to think of learning transfer as making connections inside the mind (Shepherd, 2018). In fact, when people make connections between contexts—especially contexts that they perceive as dissimilar—they require

what's called "mindful abstraction" (Salomon and Perkins, 1989, p. 2). The learner needs to intentionally try to abstract knowledge beyond the situation in which it was learned—to think of how prior knowledge might be used in a current situation or to think forward to possible uses of current learning. Knowledge only "transfers" when we have connected two learning contexts in our minds.

In the case of the Facebook activity above, the participants have learning knowledge from social media use that would be useful to writing generally and composition specifically—attention to audience, rhetorical context, and multimodality to name a few things they may have learned. However, if the students haven't connected writing and Facebook robustly inside their minds, they're not likely to use Facebook knowledge when they encounter a writing challenge. The Facebook knowledge would have to be mindfully abstracted to fit a situation beyond Facebook.

To demonstrate what I mean, let's imagine that students are given a new writing assignment that calls on them to analyze an image. The participants in the interviews analyzed images regularly on Facebook: they "read" images to get meaning not conveyed through alphabetic text. If the students are conscious that this has happened in their Facebook use and see how the image analysis assignment is similar to their Facebook activity, then they will be able to use what they learned on Facebook to help with the assignment. They have transferred the knowledge. But

if they don't perceive the two situations as similar, they're not likely to call up that same knowledge. The learning is still there—they still know a lot about image analysis from Facebook—but because they have not perceived the situations as similar, they're not likely to call on that knowledge when doing the assignment. Because they don't perceive the two situations as similar, it simply doesn't occur to them to draw from that knowledge to complete the assignment. They have not transferred the knowledge.

As writing teachers, we should help students connect these past experiences to their current writing practices. By helping them make those connections, we can facilitate transfer of learning between the context of social media and other writing contexts. To do this requires that we help students make connections between literacy contexts in their minds and help them broaden their definitions of literacy.

WHY TRANSFER MATTERS

The interviews have shed light on several things about Facebook literacy—and perhaps other social media literacies as well. Students read images quickly and efficiently, they use images and other multimodal texts to create meaning, and they use writing in complicated and nuanced ways. Some literacy practices are invisible to them—such as liking—and some literacy practices are connected to writing and composition for them even if the connection is only superficial. Connecting literacy learning across multiple contexts can help students to create a stronger sense of literacy and may

allow students to draw on multiple literacy contexts when new contexts are encountered.

Helping students make stronger connections between literacy practices on social media and those in the composition classroom may have several benefits. Because the students may perceive these two literacy contexts as especially dissimilar, connecting those contexts may be a strong starting point in broadening students' definitions of literacy beyond school literacies and alphabetic texts. Daniel Keller (2014) found that students tended not to perceive out-of-school literacies as "valid." Keller believes that this may "block the transfer of out-of-school practices to classroom literacy situations" (p. 40). The interviews here seem to suggest the same thing: connections between school literacies and social media literacies were weak. Keller goes on to state that "[f]inding ways to help students draw on the literate, rhetorical resources they possess may bolster not only what they do with reading and writing in college but in other domains as well, allowing them to realize, appreciate, and capitalize on the potential in their everyday literacies" (p. 152). Students who can make these connections might be able to improve their understanding of school literacies by drawing on these out-of-school literacies, but they also be able to extend this into "other domains" as well. Ideally, helping students expand how they view literacy may have the side effect of helping them understand any new literacy context they encounter, both in and out of school.

While not the explicit subject of this article, expanding definitions of literacy may also help students to validate personal literacy practices that may be part of their everyday lives and communities. Students may be able to draw more deeply on learning from their "multimodal home places," which are the "complex of personal ties, cultural and communal values, and linguistic conventions" as well as the modes and technologies used (Cedillo, 2017, p. 3). In particular, Adam J. Banks (2011) calls on students of color to become "digital griots" (p. 24). He encourages people to understand the deep and complex nature of digital literacy to expand their own understandings of the world—and to use that understanding to shape others' perceptions of culture and society. Facilitating transfer may be a critical first step in validating students multimodal home places, which may allow them to draw on these important literacy practices in the classroom.

FACILITATING TRANSFER

Facilitating transfer between digital literacies and school literacies is not as simple as telling students that the spaces are connected. Instead, facilitating transfer is a rhetorical act. It requires active persuasion on the part of the teacher to help convince students that literacy can be defined more broadly, that connections between literacy contexts exist, and that those connections can be helpful to future learning.

A good first step to defining literacy more broadly is to encourage students to explore how meaning is made. Teachers

can ask students to analyze how symbols, such as numbers, punctuation marks, emojis, icons, and images, enhance meaning in alphabetic text. Parallels can be drawn between how students read and write both traditional text and symbols. In my experience, students often are energized by discussing how emojis convey meaning. In a recent class, I asked students to write sentences using only emojis and asked other students to read the sentences. Students read each other's sentences with ease: they already understood the literacy practices involved in reading emojis from text messaging and social media.

The step from reading emojis to reading images, GIFs, and videos is a small one. Students can often see the meaning made in advertisements, pieces of art, and logos easily. As a class, it's helpful to discuss how this is also a part of literacy. Students can even begin to find visual arguments, such as those described by Anthony J. Blair (2004), and look for visuals that help them to construct "a verbal argument that is consistent with the visual presentation" (p. 49). Comparing how arguments are made visually to how they are made textually allows for connections to be built between these literacy practices.

With an expanded view of literacy, students can begin to connect social media and composition literacies. Many students are already experts at the functional literacies (Selber, 2004) of social media spaces such as Facebook: they can read, post, comment, and like without much

difficulty. They may understand the social conventions and basic genres of multiple spaces. However, many of these same students may not have reflected on these practices critically or rhetorically. This may be why the interviewees only connected Facebook and composition literacies in superficial ways. Helping students to consider social media spaces in a critical way can help to facilitate transfer. Doing so involves encouraging students to break down and think critically about how meaning is made on social media. For example, when a picture is posted to Facebook, in what ways are the picture and related caption making meaning? How is meaning made through the image alone? How does the meaning of the image change when the caption is read? Steven Fraiberg (2010) calls this interaction of various modes in making meaning "knotworking" (p. 105) and states that "[r]emixing composition for the twenty-first century requires a shift toward conceptualizing writers as 'knotworkers' negotiating complex arrays of languages, texts, tools, objects, symbols, and tropes" (p. 107). If the interviews are any indication, students are engaging in this process regularly as they scroll through social media feeds. Reflecting on the meaning-making process can allow students to critique whether the meaning is conveyed effectively. Students can analyze multiple social media posts and try to explore how each is making meaning. They can even use this knowledge to build maps of conventions within the space: What are the unstated

rules of literacy within the space? What are the genre conventions of various types of posts?

Fraiberg and others (such as Alexander, 2008; Selfe, 2009; and Yancey, 2004) note the importance of demonstrating these complex rhetorical and literate interactions to composition students. Exploring the complex interaction of modes in students' own literacy practices on social media can lead to broader discussions of available means of persuasion both on social media and in other literacy contexts as well. This can be a critical step in helping them to "expand the scope of what [their] definition of 'available means' can entail" (Davis, Brock, and McElroy, 2012). When they post on social media, they consider images, links, video, audio, and so on when considering what to post. We can encourage them to mindfully make similar choices in other contexts as well by considering both how and why those choices are made on social media. Encouraging mindful connections between these spaces is important to the process of facilitating transfer. Many articles have shown that the perception of connection between learning contexts is vital for learners to use knowledge from one context in another context (for example, James, 2008; DePalma and Poe Alexander, 2015). If we hope to encourage our students to use knowledge they have about literacy outside of the context in which it was learned, it is very important to get students to engage in "mindful abstraction" (Salomon and Perkins, 1989, p. 126), or reflection on

how one context connects to another. This can help to make transfer easier, to keep it from becoming "welded" to classroom practice (Haskell, 2001), and to encourage knowledge to stay connected in students' minds as they move forward.

Drawing from the teaching for transfer model of composition pedagogy (Yancey, Robertson, and Taczak, 2014) can help encourage these connections to remain. Composition teachers can ask students to create new definitions for the words "writing" and "literacy" that will include both the types of literacy they encounter in the classroom and the types of literacy they have been discussing on social media. This new definition of literacy will allow them to connect the two literacy contexts more easily in their minds and will help it to remain connected in the future. The effectiveness of this type of reflection is evident in the interviews. When I asked about the connection between Facebook and composition, six of the students immediately saw the connection, but the other four students did not make this connection easily. However, all of the students were able to make specific connections to composition when asked to consider more deeply what the connections may be.

Conclusion

Social media literacies are complex and meaningful to composition students. They include traditional written content and other modes of communication: photos, videos, links, "liking," and so on. By looking at these specific literacy practices in context, composition teachers can learn

a great deal about the everyday literacy practices that our students are engaged in. For students to make use of the available means that they have learned from digital spaces, it is important to demonstrate to students the importance of their experiences online. As Cynthia Selfe (2009) puts it, "Composition classrooms can provide a context not only for talking about different literacies, but also for practicing different literacies, learning to create texts that combine a range of modalities as communicative resources: exploring their affordances, the special capabilities they offer to authors; identifying what audiences expect of texts that deploy different modalities and how they respond to such texts" (p. 643).

Digital literacies are part of the literacies of everyday life. They are part of our students' multimodal home places, and they are increasingly important to composition studies. As they become more important, researchers must endeavor to understand these literacy practices better and adapt composition classes to include what we have learned. This does not mean simply "grafting" digital literacies onto our assignments (Froehlich & Froehlich, 2013). Researchers must observe and attempt to understand literacy practices as they take place in real writing situations and help students to understand these practices and how they can be used to prepare for other composing contexts. Here, we have looked at the literacy practices of Facebook, which are widespread and especially common among social media users. The interviewees have helped to

showcase what is important about the literacy practices on Facebook: visual literacies, written literacies, and various other literacy practices in which they take part. Many of the participants saw a connection between these literacy practices on Facebook and composition, but this connection was limited.

Composition teachers can take this opportunity to engage students with literacy practices that are important and meaningful to them, but beyond this, we are also introducing students to a shifting definition of literacy in the 21st century (Alexander, 2009).

Moving forward, composition scholars need to do more to both study and validate the everyday literacy practices of our students. As Daniel Keller (2014) puts it, "Finding ways to help students draw on the literate, rhetorical resources they possess may bolster not only what they do with reading and writing in college but in other domains as well, allowing them to realize, appreciate, and capitalize on the potential in their everyday literacies" (p. 152). We need to learn the ways that they read and write outside of school, and we need to help them connect those practices to both school and non-school literacies. Future research may help to explore additional literacy contexts and understand how students practice literacy on spaces such as Twitter, Snapchat, Instagram, Pinterest, and other spaces that may not have even been invented yet. As literacy shifts, so must we. Our job as composition teachers should be to help students understand the literacy contexts they encounter and will encounter.

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Appendix

The following are the 22 initial questions asked to all 10 interview participants.

1. How old are you?
2. How would you describe your gender?
3. How would you describe your race?
4. Which first-year composition class(es) have you attended or are you attending?
5. How many semesters have you been enrolled in ASU?
6. Have you been enrolled in another university before ASU?
7. Do you consider English to be your first or primary language? If not, what do you consider to be your first or primary language?
8. How long have you had your Facebook profile?
9. How active are you on Facebook?
10. Please describe the type of activities you generally engage in on Facebook. Try to be as detailed as possible.
11. Do you see each of these activities as being related to writing, conversation, or something else? Please explain your answer.
12. How would you define “composition”?
13. Do you think that your activity on Facebook is a type of composition? Please explain why or why not.
14. What features might Facebook use and composition have in common?
15. Please explain your posting process on Facebook. Consider how you think about posts before posting, how you make a post, and how you gauge whether it was a good or bad post.
16. How does your posting process differ for different kinds of media: a status update, a comment, posting a link, posting an image, and so on?
17. Who do you think views your Facebook activity most often?
18. Do you consider those people when deciding whether or not to post information?
19. What are your purposes in posting information on Facebook?
20. How do you try to achieve these purposes?
21. What device(s) do you normally use to access Facebook?
22. Why do you prefer this device (these devices)?

Video Evidence and Vital Nonhumans

Megan McIntyre, Sonoma State University

Content warning: This article contains sensitive images of the aftermath of the bombings, including images of severely injured victims.

This article discusses the role of video and photographic evidence in the aftermath of the 2013 Boston Marathon Bombings. Using scholarship from new materialism and rhetorical theory, this article argues that video of the explosions acted as a lively co-participant in the construction of networks that produce rhetorical/material agency. I offer an extended examination of the circulation of lively nonhumans in the network instantiated by the 2013 Boston Marathon bombings; namely, I follow the surveillance videos that came to figure heavily in the identification, discovery, and prosecution of Dzhokhar Tsarnaev. Ultimately, I argue, our dependence upon and interaction with a multitude of nonhuman actors isn't a new development; rather the increasing integration of technology into our rhetorical practice forces us to at last grapple more fully with the ways that seemingly passive objects directly impact and participate in rhetorical work.

Introduction

Every year, on the third Monday of April, the city of Boston shuts down. Banks and businesses close, and the downtown area is cordoned off by barricades and police officers. It's Patriots Day in Boston. Inaugurated as a way to commemorate the American Revolution Battles of Lexington and Concord, the holiday features reenactments and parades, celebrations and sports: the Boston Red Sox have played a home game on Patriots' Day every year since 1959, with a few notable exceptions for inclement weather. The holiday is also home to the Boston Marathon.

The Boston Marathon, managed by the Boston Athletic Association since its

inception in 1897, is the oldest annual marathon in the world. The course follows a grueling twenty-six plus miles through winding, hilly terrain, and culminates as the course reaches Boston College's "Heartbreak Hill." The final five miles of the marathon take runners back into the city, winding through Brighton and Brookline before runners make their way back into downtown. On Patriot's Day 2013, tragedy intervened into this final stretch. Nearly three hours after Rita Jeptoo, the women's winner, crossed the finish line and long after most of the elite runners had completed the course, two bombs, constructed in pressure cookers, filled with BBs and nails, and stashed about 200 feet apart and about 300 yards



Figure 1: The image above shows the aftermath of the bombing.

from the finish line, exploded, killing three and injuring more than 200 runners, spectators, and emergency personnel.

Watching the raw footage of the scene recalls any number of apocalyptic disaster movies. Photos and video taken at the exact moment of the blast show twin flashes of fire followed by billowing smoke, then screams and terrified, blood-and-soot-covered people running. A few seconds after the blasts, police officers converge on the scene, some with guns drawn searching for a hint of the perpetrator; some, with a look of disbelief and terror, tend to victims.

Within minutes, all trace of non-emergency personnel has been evacuated from the immediate scene. Very soon, all that fills the frame are flashing lights and strewn paper and plaster. Police would find no hint of the perpetrators in the physical aftermath of the bombings. But in

the digital traces of the event, in the numerous amateur and professional photos and the scores of celebratory and surveillance videos, law enforcement found answers as to the who, if not the why, of that terrible day. In particular, video from cameras installed by the Port Authority and local businesses provided the now iconic photographs of the Tsarnaev brothers among the Marathon spectators in the moments before the bombing. This same video—plus additional video from spectators and victims—eventually played a significant role in the prosecution and conviction of Dzhokhar Tsarnaev.

The identification, capture, and successful prosecution of the younger Tsarnaev relied heavily on surveillance video and images taken from surveillance videos. These videos and photographs function within and among rhetorically

agentive networks; these networks are groups of humans and nonhumans bound together in common cause or by common experience. Such networks are rhetorical because they act to persuade or create change, even if not all members do so via spoken or written communication. Nonhumans, here meant to identify not just nonhuman animals but also what we might call objects or things, include bullets, bombs, and shoes as well as less physically weighty objects like hashtags, videos, and computer programs. In the case of the prosecution of Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, some of the most effectual nonhuman participants are videos and images, which alongside humans (witnesses, judges, jurors, lawyers, law enforcement officers, and citizen informants) and other nonhumans (courtrooms, screens, shrapnel, chat logs and other exhibits and evidence), resulted in the arrest and conviction of Tsarnaev. The presence of such lively co-participants isn't some new invention of an increasingly networked world; instead, our networked world finally allows us—perhaps even requires us—to recognize their ongoing participation.

The videos and images used during Tsarnaev's trial are particularly agentive, telling the story of the bombing even when human memory failed or became murky; on more than one occasion during the trial, in fact, witnesses deferred to the videos over their own recollections and experiences. From a legal standpoint, the presence of the human witness—who can establish the authenticity of the video and its content—is necessary in establishing



“Video Of Tsarnaev Brothers Around Boylston Street On Day Of Boston Marathon Bombing,” YouTube. (Click [here](#) for video.)

the relevance, admissibility, and evidentiary weight of the video. Federal Evidence Rule 901 (FED. R. EVID. 901, 2011) requires “evidence sufficient to support a finding that the item is what the proponent claims it is,” which would include an expert or non-expert but confirming witness. From a persuasive perspective, though, the video can be cast as a more powerful, more experiential witness to the crime. In this sense, then, the videos used during Tsarnaev's trial had as much (or perhaps more) impact than the human witnesses and victims that represent the bulk of the testimony in the trial.

This deferral to video evidence over human recollection is not surprising given the long history of surveillance technologies and their role in legal proceedings. Surveillance as part of our legal system (as an investigatory, if not prosecutorial, tool) dates back at least to the Civil War, when military and civilian rivals would tap or intercept telegram messages (Solove, 2004). As police forces professionalized in the twentieth century and organized crime rose in volume and

prominence, the means, ubiquity, and uses of surveillance technologies expanded rapidly (Solove, 2004). Though legal scholars, including Jennifer Granholm (1987), predicted “complex evidentiary questions surrounding the indirect use of a tape for the purposes of prosecuting” individuals captured by permanent surveillance cameras (p. 707), like those run by the MBTA in downtown Boston, the reality has been far less contentious: twin Supreme Court rulings in 1986 found surveillance video did not violate suspects’ fourth amendment rights, and those rulings have largely withstood the test of time, though the Supreme Court did rule (in 2001’s *Kyllo v. United States*) that thermal imaging represented an illegal search. With very few exceptions, though, so long as videos meet evidentiary standards (namely that they are admissible, relevant, and authenticated), surveillance video has been found both relevant and powerful in the courtroom.¹

NETWORKED AGENCY IN RHETORICAL THEORY

Though the legal value of video evidence persists, these videos have long been treated as mere objects, without the kind of lively influence afforded to nonhumans within a new materialist framework. New materialism “conceives of matter itself as lively or as exhibiting agency” (Coole and Frost, 2010, p. 7).

This lively matter associates with human actors to create agentive networks. These relationships are not fixed, however; rather the configuration of the network changes based on the motives for and kinds of action needed in a particular situation. The flexible and fluctuating nature of the networks imagined by the new materialists suggests an expanded notion of agency and cause; no longer does the human actor stand alone as the agent of change; they are now joined in the position by a multitude of other actors. Further, they are shaped by these nonhuman actors as much as the human actor shapes them, and it is within their relationships with these other actants (human and nonhuman) that agency is produced.

This view of agency and action heralds a shift for rhetoric. In particular, Nathaniel Rivers (especially his multimodal work in *Enculturation* [2012, 2014]) but also his collection—edited with Paul Lynch—on Latour in rhetoric and composition) and Alex Reid (2012) argue for a prominent place for nonhuman actors within rhetorical theory and agency. Reid sees the move toward an object-oriented or at least an object-interested rhetoric as fundamental for better understanding how rhetoric impacts the world around it: “As I see it, the prospects for a digital rhetoric might begin with an investigation of the rhetorical

¹ It is important here to recognize the extent to which surveillance technologies are bound up in a history of racial violence, as Simone Browne argues in her historical study of surveillance, *Dark Matters*. Further, surveillance represents a primary way that

societies impose power over bodies: “The act of observing, which simultaneously performs the discursive operations of looking and classifying, constructs the observer as subject and the observed as object” (Twigg, 1992, p. 23).

operation of these objects so that we might understand how our democratic, scientific, and cultural discourses develop with these objects as participants.”

Nonhumans, then, are not surrounding, inert matter that constrains our practice but rather, are productive members of networks that produce action and change. This newly recognized networked existence, Rivers (2014) argues, is not one intended to privilege the nonhuman over the human but instead to “account for humans and nonhumans in symmetrical ways: as actors acting but never alone.” For these digital rhetoricians, networked theories of agency and action allow us to decenter human actors so that we can attend to the nonhumans who shape, constrain, and participate in rhetorical practice.

In fact, the field’s attention to social media and multimodal composition provides a perfect opportunity to open ourselves to the nonhumans who already populate our practice. As Rivers (2012) asserts in the conclusion to his series on Latour’s potential for rhetorical theory, “Rhetoric’s investment in new media composition (which is far from universal) has drawn our field’s attention to a range of potentially extra-discursive skills. Rhetoric’s simultaneous material turn ratchets-up this interest in the non-discursive. We are invested in both the rhetoric we can achieve through new media and the rhetorical agency of the media themselves.” For Rivers, as for Reid, new media production—and the technologies and spaces required to compose in new media environments—

reveal our reliance on and engagement with nonhuman actors. This dependence isn’t a new development; rather the increasing integration of technology into our rhetorical practice forces us to at last grapple more fully with the ways that seemingly passive objects directly impact rhetorical work.

How, then, might we understand the agentive power of this video evidence and of nonhuman actors more generally? As Laurie Gries (2015) notes in her discussion of new materialism, digital rhetoric, and the circulation of the Obama Hope image, an image becomes agentive and rhetorical “as it materializes and actually affects change in our daily realities” (p. 4). Gries further argues that this kind of ecological understanding of agency, in which images circulate alongside humans and other nonhumans in networks that have agency via their interactions with one another and with other networks, creates a need for “empirical evidence” and concrete examples of when and how images have this kind of agentive force (p. 58). In what follows, I offer just such a concrete example, though this example materializes differently than the one Gries describes. For Gries, the rhetorical and material power of an image expands via proliferation. In the case of Obama Hope, power and velocity come via conscription into an ever-expanding number of networks. On the other hand, the images in the Tsarnaev case achieve materially agentive power via their articulation to particular institutionalized networks and discourses. As the reach of the image

consolidates into the specific, local space of the courtroom, its power expands until it eclipses even eyewitness testimony.

A MORE ROBUST ROLE FOR NONHUMAN ACTORS

New materialism is a useful frame for this discussion for at least three reasons. First, new materialism offers perhaps the most robust and agentive understanding of nonhuman participants because as I noted above, new materialism “conceives of matter itself as lively or as exhibiting agency” (Coole and Frost 2010, p. 7). Or as Jane Bennett (2010b) puts it, new materialism presupposes “a materiality that is itself vibrant or active” (p. 49). Second, utilizing new materialism to frame this discussion allows me to emphasize the material nature of images and video. There are any number of weightier material objects I might follow when considering the Boston Marathon bombing: the bombs themselves are certainly nonhuman, fiercely material members of the agentive network that produces the tragedy. I might focus instead on shoes or bodies or bullets or police cars. All of these substantial material participants could offer important insight into the events under consideration here. However, none of these objects wield the kind of discursive power offered by the videos, a point emphasized by the case that takes up the second half of this discussion. This case requires an expanded notion of what it means to be material. New materialism’s insistence on lively matter allows me to do just this. It is the liveliness, then, that becomes my object of

study and classification as opposed to the physicality of the nonhuman in question.

Third, and finally, this new materialist analysis allows me to connect material rhetorics to visual rhetorics as an analytical tool and perspective. Since its inception as a subfield, scholars of visual rhetorics have tended to define the field as one of either production, concerned with crafting rhetorically powerful images or text/image hybrids, or as a set of tools to examine how visual elements already participate in rhetorically powerful ways. The latter vision of the field, espoused by Cara Finnegan (2004), who characterizes visual rhetoric as “a mode of inquiry” (p. 198), and Sonja Foss (2004), who defines visual rhetoric as “a critical-analytical tool or a way of approaching and analyzing visual data that highlights the communicative dimensions of images or objects” (p. 306), is most useful to me here. Analyzing the participation of these surveillance videos in the discursive network of Tsarnaev’s trial reveals them to be powerful both materially and discursively. They persuade. They have an impact, perhaps even (as I will outline later) a more significant impact than the human witnesses to the bombings.

Following a Nonhuman

On Monday April 15, 2013, two bombs (one in front of the Forum, a local restaurant, and another in front of Marathon Sports) exploded near the finish line of the Boston Marathon, killing three and injuring more than two hundred others. The site of the blasts—situated in downtown Boston among restaurants,

bars, and shops—was covered by a number of video cameras: in addition to the local CBS affiliate’s finish line camera, most local businesses in the area had at least one camera focused on the area of the blast, and the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority installed cameras throughout the downtown area, including at least six cameras with a view of the finish line or surrounding area. A week after the blast, on Monday, April 22, 2013, the US government filed charges against now-convicted Boston Marathon bomber Dzhokhar “Jahar” Tsarnaev. Tsarnaev (alternately called “white hat guy” or “Suspect #2” in news reports following the bombing) faced numerous charges, including conspiring with his older brother Tamerlan to use a weapon of mass destruction resulting in death, a charge whose punishment can include an indefinite prison sentence or the death penalty. (Tsarnaev was sentenced to the latter.)

Among the most important pieces of evidence against Tsarnaev was surveillance video from these local businesses and the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority. The first day of Tsarnaev’s trial casts this fact into stark relief.² From the beginning of the prosecution’s opening statement, it is clear that the three Assistant U.S. Attorneys plan to rely heavily and return often to the myriad videos that depict the staging, explosion, and aftermath of the Tsarnaev brothers’ bombs: from the initial narrative that

frames their opening statement to the 19 explicit references to surveillance video to the more than 30 oblique references (via phrases like “you’ll see” and “it shows”) to video of the suspects, surveillance video of the scene was the cornerstone of the prosecution’s case.

The defense’s opening remarks rely much less heavily on the videos, but they acknowledge the devastating power of the images to come: “If the only question was whether or not that was Jahar Tsarnaev in the video that you will see walking down Boylston Street... it would be very easy for you: It was him.” The defense acknowledges, right from the start, that the videos offer incontrovertible proof of Tsarnaev’s guilt in a way that even the best eyewitness testimony cannot. And as becomes clear as the first day of testimony unfolds, for jurors, the video evidence is meant to operate experientially. They are not just told what has happened and who is responsible; rather they are able to see for themselves the staging of the bomb, the identity of the bombers, and the devastating aftermath of the explosion. The defense acknowledges that it is this experience of the scene—possible via the video evidence that dominates the first day of testimony—that indicts their client beyond all doubt. And the prosecutors agree:

The surveillance tape shows the defendant walk up to that spot. He's got a backpack slung over his shoulder.

² All quotes from *United States v. Dzhokhar A. Tsarnaev*, case no. 13-cr-10200, were acquired through CNN archives (“Transcripts,” 2015):

<http://www.cnn.com/interactive/2015/03/us/tsarnaev-trial-transcripts/>.

And the moment he gets there, he dips his shoulder, and after that, you never see the backpack on his back again. But photographs show that it's at his feet. It shows him stop right behind Martin Richard and the other children who are lined up on the railing watching the race. It shows him stand there looking at them and looking over their heads at the runners. Then it shows him make the phone call to his brother... That video revealed that the defendant was one of the bombers.

This video, then, becomes the central witness; the lynchpin in the prosecution's case. This nonhuman actor, when combined with the institutional power of the courtroom, prosecutor, judge, and jury, holds power over the human defendant. The video acts discursively, and that action has a significant effect.

LATOUR'S HYBRIDS AND TECHNOLOGICAL NONHUMANS

The work of Bruno Latour might be useful here. Specifically, Latour's work on hybrids (see, for example, his 2011 essay "Love Your Monsters") offers a way of understanding how technological nonhumans—the product of human work but operating at least somewhat independently of their human creators and caretakers—participate alongside humans in producing agency. No longer merely utilitarian, technological hybrids play an integral role in the creation of a common world, as more than tools, as co-inhabitants of the new world (Bennett 2010a; Gries 2015; Haraway 1991; Latour

2011). As Ehren Pflugfelder (2015) notes in his discussion of Latour's nonhuman agency, for Latour, "agency inhabits human/nonhuman hybrids in many and varied forms (and always more than one agent position at a time)" (p. 121-2). Nonhumans—particularly technological and visual nonhumans—are not the passive objects many theories of agency imagine them to be. On the contrary, nonhumans are vibrant, vital, productive members of agentive networks. It follows, then, that the surveillance videos used during this first day of testimony might have a significant and lasting impact on the outcomes of the case: they shape the case, opening and foreclosing prosecutorial approaches, supporting or superseding eyewitness testimony, and providing experiential evidence to the jury.

This final point seems particularly valuable to the prosecution team. Recognizing the experiential power of the videos, they rely heavily on video evidence to supplement survivor and eyewitness testimony. On the trial's first day, the prosecution introduced four videos into evidence. These videos included three surveillance videos as well as personal video from one of the victims/witnesses, Colton Kilgore, a freelance photo-grapher/videographer who attended the Marathon to watch his mother-in-law run the race. On 23 occasions during the first day of testimony, the prosecution played sections of video to support, corroborate, and add detail to witness testimony.

Examining two of these interactions between (human) prosecutor, (human)



“Boston Marathon Bombing Scene From Inside Marathon Sports Store,” YouTube. (Click [here](#) for video.)

witness, and (nonhuman) video evidence offers us insight into the relationships between human and nonhuman members of this agentic network. Each of these interactions follows a similar pattern: after the witness’s introduction to the court, prosecutors introduce complementary video evidence that will support or demonstrate the content of the testimony. As testimony continues, prosecutors pause frequently to show brief sections of video that support or demonstrate the coming questions and answers. Each of these moments allows the judge and jury to experience the events as the witness re-experiences and recounts them.

SHANE O’HARA AND THE VIDEO’S MEMORY

Let’s begin with the prosecution’s second witness of the day: Shane O’Hara, the manager of the Marathon Sports on Boylston Street. O’Hara’s testimony is meant to highlight the immediate chaos and aftermath of the explosions, something the prosecutors focus on early on in his testimony by pairing his verbal recollections with video evidence from the

store’s internal surveillance camera. Details like O’Hara’s position in the aftermath of the explosions, the physical state of the store, and the conditions of bystanders caught outside in the explosion constitute much of O’Hara’s testimony. Each of O’Hara’s exchanges with the prosecutors is punctuated by the intervention of the video, as we can see from this selection from the court transcript:

Q. Is that you standing near the door?

A. That’s me. I just kind of opened up the door there.

Q. What are you doing?

A. Probably at this stage we’re trying to get people into the store. The door usually is opened, so now I’m just kind of holding it up and we’re reaching in and trying to grab people in—into the store. You ask about my memory. I thought originally I was right at that door, and that’s kind of a chaotic moment. This is the woman that—I didn’t necessarily remember that I did the tourniquet. I thought I passed that on to somebody else.

This moment is particularly telling: as O’Hara re-experiences the video alongside the others in the courtroom, his recollection is challenged, and he defers to the video, revising his role to reflect the video evidence. In this way, the video evidence operates as an even more reliable witness than the human participant and changes the human participant’s recollection and experience of his role in the event.

Q. So is that what you're doing there, you're tying something around her leg?

A. Yup. One of my goofinesses of me is I look at people's feet. So the first thing I remember is seeing her feet and seeing blood trickle down her leg. And then I felt for where her—where the blood was coming from, and that's then when I grabbed the shorts.

(Videotape played.)

Q. Now, what are you doing here?

A. We just started now tearing off as much of the apparel as we could possibly find and get—That's one of my other colleagues in the green shirt there. We're just now taking—me as a manager, I feel like I still have to do kind of my job, so we were trying to save hangers.

Each time the video intervenes in O'Hara's testimony, it serves two purposes. First the video supports and/or clarifies O'Hara's recollection of events. The nonhuman participant confirms human experience. Second, the video serves as a powerful way for the jury to not only hear about the aftermath of the bombing but to see it just as the victims and witnesses did the day of the attacks. The videos are powerful witnesses to the events of the day, and they transform the passive jurors into witnesses themselves.

The goal of focusing on the participation of video here, and on nonhumans more generally, is to make them and the work they do visible and efficacious, for as Rivers (2014) notes,

“we humans are not the only ones here, and we are far from being the only beings who matter. All matter matters, and so all matter is rhetorical.” Matter is rhetorical in two senses: first, matter is constituted by both physical and discursive work. I'm thinking here of the messy hybrids that populate Latour's work and of Donna Haraway's material-semiotic actors. Matter is also rhetorical because it is necessary for rhetorical production. We need wifi and word processors, microphones and stages, classrooms, courtrooms, and social media spaces. Enrolling these vibrant nonhumans into our rhetorical practice may also allow us access to conversations and problems from which rhetoric has often been excluded.

COLTON KILGORE AND VIDEO EVIDENCE AS EXPERIENTIAL

Prosecutors use video evidence in similar ways with the witness who follows O'Hara: Colton Kilgore. Kilgore begins by describing the video that the jury is about to see, which shows the scene immediately before and after the explosion:

A. Yeah. So this video is one that I shot just as random runners were coming by...But as I was sitting up my brain kind of was in a haze and I couldn't hear out of my left ear and there was just screaming. And I realized, no, this was something much worse than that, and it must have been a bomb.

[...]

A. In this video you are going to see a

lot of chaos and a lot of people on the ground. There is smoke, there's shrapnel on the sidewalk that's smoking, there are people who are injured. And I believe in this video you will see Rebekah's leg injury. And, yeah, that's—

After describing what jurors and others in the courtroom are about to experience, Kilgore moves on to describe parts of his experience that jurors won't be able to experience: the "deafening sound," the "ringing in [his] ears," and the "smell of smoke," which was, he said "kind of gunpowdery, blood, flesh. Just acrid, disgusting." Just before the video plays for the jury, he moves back to describing what the jury is about to experience in the video:

A. On the ground I remember seeing just chunks of metal, sort of like ball-bearings, BBs. At one point I was sitting—because I was—my sister-in-law, Gina, had—she had had an artery and nerve severed in her right leg, and so she was laying there. And I had her lay back in my lap, and as I sat, I sat on something that burned me, and I realized that everybody laying there was just laying on this burning metal shards of stuff and glass and all kinds of just random stuff. (Video played.)

Q. Mr. Kilgore, do you know who this is?

A. Yes; that's Noah.

Q. And what's happening here?

A. At this moment Noah is screaming

and everyone around us is trying to figure out what happened. And there's yelling, there's crying. Noah had a shrapnel wound in his leg and so he was—you know, as a five-year-old boy, obviously, like the rest of us, was terrified but didn't know where his mom was, didn't know what was happening.

Kilgore's testimony continues in a similar vein: he alternately works to prepare jurors for the content of the video he shot (and that they are about to see) and supplements the video with elements the jury can't experience via video: smells, heat, pain, and fear that cannot be experienced second-hand.

NONHUMAN PARTICIPATION IN THE COURTROOM ASSEMBLAGE

The courtroom testimony on the first day of Tsarnev's trial represents an assemblage of actors working toward a single goal: showing the jury what it was like in the first chaotic minutes after the blasts. Assemblages that include nonhuman technologies and technological artifacts (like digital videos and images) are particularly interesting examples of what Latour (1992) calls the "sui generis object: the collective thing," which are peculiar, he says, precisely because they are "too full of humans to look like the technology of old, but...too full of nonhumans to look like the social theory of the past. The missing masses are in our traditional social theories, not in the supposedly cold, efficient, and inhuman technologies" (p. 175). For these

composite networks/assemblages, strength, durability, and responsiveness come from distribution and an ever-expanding number of weak and strong ties to other networks. Or, as is the case with the example that follows, the strength of the network comes from its articulation to specific institutional networks and discourses.

Change and persuasion require a multitude of actors and artifacts, and their relationships with one another make each of them stronger and better able to resist outside forces and respond to outside problems. Latour's (1996) theory of networks and assemblages begins not with grand theories or universal laws but with "irreducible, incommensurable, unconnected localities, which then, at a great price, sometimes end into provisionally commensurable connections" (p. 3). For the circulating nonhumans under consideration here, these provisional connections and emerging networks are forged by one specific stimulus: the Boston Marathon bombings and the resulting social and legal obligations facing the community at large, and the force of the surveillance videos is directly tied to their connection to the courtroom.

The ongoing use of video evidence in support of survivor testimony highlights another important argument from new materialist theories of nonhuman participation, namely that speech acts cannot replace—though they can seek to re/present—the nonhumans for which they purport to speak. The decision by prosecutors to supplement survivor

testimony—which most trial attendees cast as devastating and moving—with video testimony reinforces the important role of nonhuman participation (in this case the video images) in communicating the events of the day. As David Boeri and Kevin Cullen (2015) argue in their coverage of the trial, the video (which ends with "random...and chaotic shots" of the aftermath of the bombing compiled from a variety of sources) allows the jury—and the wider public the jury represents—to bear witness to Tsarnaev "being confronted with the reality of what he did." The "random and chaotic shots" that characterize the video shown in open court force Tsarnaev and the jury to experience some of the disorienting aftermath that the survivors describe in their testimony.

VIDEO EVIDENCE IN THE SEARCH FOR THE BOSTON MARATHON BOMBERS

To best understand the particular importance of the video evidence, it might be useful to highlight another way in which these videos—particularly stills taken from the videos—impacted the prosecution and conviction of Tsarnaev: by the time prosecutors showed the jury video from the camera above the Forum's front door, the image of the younger Tsarnaev wearing a backwards white baseball cap was already well-known. On April 18, 2013, just over forty-eight hours after the twin blasts rocked the Marathon finish line, the FBI released two now iconic photographs of their primary suspects. Already, we can trace the path of the surveillance video from the Forum to

at least three hybrid collectives or matters of concern: the FBI's hunt for the Marathon bombing suspects, the U.S. government's case against Tsarnaev, and the media coverage of his trial. In each of these cases, some group of humans and nonhumans faces a problem. For the FBI, their network of facts, evidence, investigators, and victims faced an obstacle: in order to move from search and rescue to investigation to indictment, the network needed to identify perpetrators. To identify perpetrators, the network needed the help of as yet unknown actors who could provide names and locations for the suspects. These photographs are the threads that connect the FBI to those with the information they need. Without the photographic and video evidence, as well as the arguments made by the FBI and publicity and context articulated by local and national news organizations, this connection becomes impossible or at least improbable.

The interactivity between discursive/persuasive work and specific digital technologies and their products leads to one final point about the role of video evidence and the question of networked agency: technological nonhumans participate in and shape discourse and are themselves shaped by discourse. To reiterate, nonhumans are not inert matter but productive members of networks that produce action. This is especially true of visual nonhumans, as Gries (2015) reminds us: "As images...enter into divergent associations, they become a material force that generates ripples of collective change" (p.

56-7). Networked theories of agency and action allow us to decenter human actors so that we can attend to the nonhumans who shape, constrain, and participate in rhetorical practice. In fact, rhetorical theory's attention to social media and multimedia provide opportunities to open ourselves to the nonhumans who already populate our practice. This way of thinking requires a shift from a human- and logos-centric notion of agency as it reveals our reliance on and engagement with nonhuman actors. This dependence isn't a new development; rather the increasing integration of technology into our rhetorical practice forces us to at last grapple more fully with the ways that seemingly passive objects directly impact rhetorical work.

Conclusion

Recognizing nonhuman participation in agentive networks marks an important shift in the focus of rhetorical and material investigations of how agency is produced. Coole and Frost (2010) argue that changes proceed from "infinitesimally small causes" which eventually "end up having massive but unanticipated effects" (p. 14) and which "[dislocate] agency as the property of a discrete, self-knowing subject" (p. 20). Without the unified Enlightenment subject at the center of rhetorical/material agency, the actors needed to produce agency multiply, and we may begin to recognize the participation of nonhumans alongside their long-recognized human counterparts. These nonhumans are not the stable, static objects of old; on the contrary, nonhuman participants are

vibrant, vital contributors to rhetorical situations. To quote Jodi Nicotra's (2016) examination of shame in social media, the way that video nonhumans participate in the eventual conviction of Tsarnaev reinforces that "technologies are not separate or supplemental to the rhetorical acts, but are rather co-constitutive" alongside human and other nonhuman actors. In other words, images participate in rhetorical acts and produce agency via circulation; tracing the circulation and noting the specific, temporally grounded consequences allows us to better understand the meaning of nonhuman participants and better account for their role in the networks in which they participate.

The narrative that closes this discussion offers one such example: the videos introduced into evidence at Tsarnaev's trial are enrolled in multiple legal networks, first in the form of stills released to the public as part of the hunt for the suspects and later as an exhibit for the prosecution in first phase of the trial. The videos act within networks, among human and nonhuman participants, in measurably agentive ways: the suspects are identified (with help from the photographs crafted from surveillance video) and the younger Tsarnaev is convicted. We can count the consequences, see the effects, and point to the powerful participation of these nonhuman members of a social-legal-technological network.

The video witnesses also raise other questions: in situations where human and nonhuman actors offer differing accounts

of their action, who or what do we believe? Particularly in deliberative situations, like court cases—who or what do we trust to the exclusion of other accounts of the action of the network? Repeatedly throughout the Tsarnaev trial, the video is taken to be the most credible participant in the courtroom, as witnesses trust the video's depiction of events over even their own experiences. These nonhumans become significant members of a thoroughly agentive network and their impact emphasizes the power and value of nonhuman members of heterogeneous networks.

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The UnSanctioned Surface:

Discovering Daughters' Agency at Play

Scott Lunsford, James Madison University

SONIC ESSAY TRANSCRIPT¹

BLACK. We hear a child's voice.

LEXIE V.O.

Ladies and gentlemen! Welcome to my show!

TITLE: From the voice of an adult, Gunther Kress [(1997)]: "Children, as all will admit, are not competent users of adult systems; and so

we can see what it is they do to make their practiced, finely honed and quite 'natural' competence of adults. We see that they have 'interests'. Too often these appear as a nuisance to the adult."

The SOUND of CRAYON coloring on a wall reveals a younger LEXIE standing along the scribbled wall.

¹ In the spirit of writing about annotated spaces such as interior walls, furniture, and skin, I further reflect here in an annotated transcript as meta-annotation. I have written elsewhere (Forthcoming) about annotating surfaces less domestic than those I discuss in this video—annotations I call “public marginalia”: remarks and re-marks inscribed on sometimes transgressed surfaces—for example, conversational graffiti in public restrooms or Post-It messages advocated by such movements as Subway Therapy or Operation Beautiful. I present this transcript as an attempt to remark on (and re-mark) ideas situated in the video as endnotes in order to maintain the integrity of the transcription itself.

That said, this video is not simply a representation of text or remediated paper, as I heed the cautions of Jonathan Alexander and Jacqueline Rhodes (2014) and of Gesa E. Kirsch (2015). In their exploration of compositionists' sometimes uncritical use of new media in the classroom, Alexander and Rhodes warn specifically that the field's “embrace of digital video often invites students to participate in the production of multimedia texts but, at the same time, often separates those texts from a robust consideration

of the rhetorical affordances of video” (p. 71). I find it, actually, more difficult to discuss and teach such rhetorical affordances to students if I cannot do it myself. Kirsch warns those who produce video scholarship to not simply read an academic “paper” set to the backdrop of visuals and music—that any circulation of academic discourse should consider their rhetorical situations. I further take up Jonathan Alexander's (2015) call to consider richer contexts of multimodality that rely on modes—such as Alexander's own objects of study, sound, and voice—“as part of a process of the invention of identity, or as embodied experiences that produce, complicate, and perhaps even deconstruct identity and its performances” (p. 77). Throughout the video, then, I use modes “not just as purveyors of discursive knowledge, but as components of embodied and material meaning making in their own right” (p. 86). The voice, the hand, the foot, and the sounds of my breath, the fights with the camera—all play roles in the video but are also rhetorical tools with which I have composed, recognizing that “the body is an active location of both knowing and being, of both contact and resistance” (Garrett et al., 2012, l.ii, par. 4).

MONTAGE of children's marks on surfaces, revealing their creators' names: LEXIE and VIVIEN.

AUTHOR

Here's a familiar childhood trope:

LEXIE V.O.

You started it!

VIVIEN V.O.

You started it! . . .

AUTHOR

Admittedly, *I* started it. On a snowy February day in 2010. I began documenting the growth of my first daughter, Lexie, when she was two years old, penciling in her height on one of the walls of her bedroom. And, then, the next year I added her little sister, Vivien, as a baby.

I had documented their growth as someone who helps to shape these little bodies, inadvertently giving them permission to document their own growth as authors of their own little bodies. At some point, the two acts physically merge: their own marks maturing, growing more focused and intentional, overriding by writing over my own authorship of them.

LEXIE and VIVIEN build something in the backyard.

A resurgence of free-play and free-range movements is encouraging parents and caregivers to encourage

their children to gain agency through unstructured experiences with their own and Othered spaces and places. Playing in a vacant lot, walking alone to school or to a friend's, children hone their autonomy, embrace risk, and situate themselves among other guardians of independence, such as—in my case—their parents.

In this episode, I explore ways of making such agency through the lenses of my two daughters' experiences with free play, particularly Lexie's early literacy practices mediated by diverse material surfaces, fixed surfaces such as interior walls and an alleyway blacktop that she transforms through these signifying practices. Fixed surfaces are not simply physically fixed by their infrastructure but also by the ideologies that construct their various purposes. Walls, for example, are inherently static: they are physically put up to theoretically stay up. Their purposes can be to fortify, defend, and confine—keeping their spaces tightly controlled. But defending walls can at times offend. They can exploit the ideological boundaries of their own making by pushing back on the control they have been constructed to uphold. Intimately bound to any public space they can encourage participants to remediate that space, to “loosen” it from its fixed purposes: Urban design theorists Karen Franck and Quentin Stevens

(2007) define loose space as one “that has been appropriated by citizens to pursue activities not set by a predetermined program” (p. 29). “For a site to become loose,” the authors say, “people themselves must recognize the possibilities inherent in it and make use of those possibilities for their own ends, facing the potential risks of doing so” (p. 2).

As other children do, my own girls explore such possibilities by taking creative risks in and on spaces considered tight, or “unsanctioned” by some authority—spaces such as their own bedroom walls, furniture throughout the house, and their own skin. These spatial-rhetorical practices demonstrate my daughters’ tactics of writing on spaces, thus writing themselves into spaces, inscribing their own agencies.

Their work has fostered my own: undermining dominant patriarchal models for raising girls, I encourage these practices and consider them an

evolution of generative literacy skills. My casual observations over the years have revealed a now complicated, layered exploration of more than just how children use unsanctioned physical surfaces for signifying practices; they have encouraged me to consider the liminal and hyphenated surfaces of father-scholar, daughter-subject, daughter-scholar, father-subject. These subjectivities are themselves unsanctioned spaces within traditionally masculinized approaches to research.²

A couple of other literacy father-scholars are helping me return to pre-digital definitions of multimodality³ and their implications for children’s ways of making meaning and agency. Gunther Kress (1997), for example, says that children make meaning “in an absolute plethora of ways, with an absolute plethora of means, in two, three, and four dimensions.” These ways involve “different kinds of bodily engagement with the world—that is,

² I am implicitly arguing for scholars of rhetoric and writing studies to further embrace the rhetorics and voices of children, collaborating with the work of colleagues in early literacy education and the like. I focus in this video on the intersections of embodied genre knowledge and early literacy in particular. I discuss later the work of Carol Berkenkotter (with Amanda Thein, 2005). Russell Hunt (1994) consults his own daughter to discover genre knowledge as socio-linguistic construction, relying on Bakhtinian notions of the utterance within a dialogic chain. Donovan and Smolkin (2006) trace several studies of children’s written genre knowledge through rhetorical, social, and empirical genre traditions.

³ This is not to equate multimodality with digital approaches, however. I use the term “pre-digital” only to denote recent conversations about digital multimodality throughout the growing community of scholars who produce such affective work, composing their own mediascapes through video or other digital modes (e.g., Arroyo & Alaei, 2013; Hidalgo, 2015; Hidalgo, 2016; Hidalgo, 2017; Kyburz, 2010; Leston et al., 2011; Reid, 2010). I situate my own daughters’ more analog forms with the work of scholars and makers who embrace the embodied nature of multimodality (e.g., Alexander, 2015; Garrett et al., 2012; Rhodes & Alexander, 2012; Rhodes & Alexander, 2015; Shipka, 2015).

not just sight as with writing, or hearing as with speech, but touch, smell, taste, feel” (p. xvii).

LEXIE at age two plays with PlayDoh.

LEXIE

I want to make a baby bumblebee.

AUTHOR OFF SCREEN

You’re making a baby bumblebee?

LEXIE

Uh-huh. (*Pause.*) I wanna make a rhyme.

AUTHOR OFF SCREEN

You wanna make a what?

LEXIE

I wanna make a rhyme.

AUTHOR OFF SCREEN

A rhyme?

LEXIE

I’m making a duckie.

AUTHOR OFF SCREEN

A duckie? Boy, you have lots of things that you want to make.

AUTHOR

Looking at his own daughter’s early literacy practices, Stephen Hill (2015) echoes Kress. Multimodal ways of building children’s narrative, he says, “often involve a combination of many different modes [children use] such as gesture, speaking,

singing, drawing, and writing.” Through these ways, “children construe and reconstrue their world weaving together real and imagined events, characters, and feelings [...]” (p. 303).

An older LEXIE introduces a performance beside a drawing she’s made on the blacktop alleyway beside her house. She steps toward the camera, pretending to hold a microphone as she announces

LEXIE

Ladies and gentlemen! Welcome to my show! I made a masterpiece. So I would like to sing a song about my masterpiece. It is called “Lexie’s Masterpiece.” Written by Lexie. Illustrated by Lexie. Wrote by Lexie. Thank you.

She steps back toward her masterpiece and begins singing.

LEXIE

Oh mister, mister, mister, mister, mister

Masterpiece!

Mr. Masterpiece, Masterpiece, Masterpiece

I would like to congratulate my little little masterpiece . . .

AUTHOR

And I would like to add to Kress and Hill’s conversation another mode of making meaning: the surface upon which kids have “different kinds of bodily engagement,” surfaces

through which they reconstrue their world, surfaces that they have yet to factor into their budding genre knowledge. I'm following the definition Carol Berkenkotter (2005) gives with her work with Amanda Thein following her earlier work with Thomas Huckin. It's a definition of genre knowledge that attends to the "tacit understandings of the 'decorum' of the moment in response to the contextual cues of a particular setting" (p. 116). My daughter Lexie has grown to understand this ideological sense of appropriate literacy activities performed through appropriate and sanctioned behavior, on appropriate and sanctioned spaces.

Within such structured spaces, according to Berkenkotter, children "learn to mean' in the context of tools and artifacts, genres, and contextual clues" (p. 122).⁴ But I want to embrace the surfaces in certain contexts where children are still learning by simply playing with tools, artifacts, and genres perhaps without any clue; they are surfaces that children are trying to make appropriate for themselves, to loosen

from their tight construction, regardless of their being assigned "inappropriate" and "unsanctioned" by us big people. These are the surfaces that simply call to us, that simply want to play.

Play is certainly one of the ways that children make meaning, according to psychologist Susan Engel (2005), as they "construe the world and navigate the boundaries that give shape to their experience" (p. 94). These boundaries are of course sometimes quite material, tightened by parents' and others' concerns for kids' safety, well-being, and future. And children eventually gain the genre knowledge of navigating such boundaries, spaces, and concerns just as much as they do traditional literacies and their forms. Knowing where to go when and how and all the other aspects tied up in that knowing grows out of understanding how learning to know is part of an ideological system that adults rely on to navigate their own experiences.

As Kress (1997) notes, one of the problems with trying to understand the ways kids do things is because we're trying to fit them within our

⁴ Berkenkotter discusses how children build embodied genre knowledge in the setting of a Montessori school particularly, as their speech genres "are embedded in physical activities and mediated by the artifacts around them" (123). These artifacts, and associated tools, are those expected in such settings: books, games, paper, writing, coloring, and other art instruments, and

the like, as well as those reflecting, Berkenkotter says, "everyday living: hammers and nails, brooms, dish soap and towels, child-size kitchen sinks, and a number of other domestic tools and artifacts" (124). I note later in the video how Lexie herself uses such repurposed domestic tools—like a screwdriver—to play with.

own ways of seeing—when children at various stages of their lives just don't see things that way yet. Kress says that when children are developing early literacy skills they are “in charge, they choose the materials which best serve their sign-making purposes, they construct the signs as plausible, apt expressions of *their* interest, and act transformatively on them. In this process they also produce their own materials of representations, which often depend only very indirectly or not at all on the adults' systems” (p. 33). As an adult, and as someone who is deeply invested in his own children's literacy skills, I have a challenge ahead of me in trying to make sense of those skills. I want to see that my children know that they know. But Kress cautions me. He says, “The incredulous response to attribution of intention is [...] quite common in relation to things that adults do ‘naturally’, automatically, unreflectingly” (p. 35). He later advises that our adult eyes focused on children's meaning-making have “not permitted an understanding of [children's] actions in their terms. Children's interests have been invisible because of the dominant power of adult interests” (p. 88).

Susan Engel (2005) agrees: This is about children's interests, children's experiences and the ways they see them, the ways they navigate them. They haven't learned the adult ways

of doing things, the mature forms of genres, because they haven't picked up on clearly defined purposes for any one way of doing things, of any one genre. Genres, of course, can take many forms for kids: during play, a screwdriver can become any method of inscription, but we can also imagine how a child can use any tool to inscribe a message on a sign. It is simply what the child has at hand. There is nothing to say, of course, that adults can't or don't do the same—they certainly do. But we are more aware or are more concerned with the consequences of such behavior than are children. Though many of these forms, objects, spaces, and surfaces are certainly fixed by the ideologies of such consequences, children can unfix them by discovering creative uses with what is already around them, what is already at hand, and situate themselves among such things and spaces for their own varied purposes.

Play theorist Simon Nicholson (1972) discusses such things at hand and the creativity children use to manipulate them. Creativity, he says, is “the playing around with the components and variables of the world in order to make experiments and discover new things and form new concepts” (p. 5). Nicholson calls these variables “loose parts”: “In any environment,” he says, “both the degree of inventiveness and

creativity, and the possibility of discovery, are directly proportional to the number and kind of variables in it” (p. 6). Environmental psychologist Leanne Rivlin (2007) adds that “these are elements within a site that are amenable to manipulation and change” as well as having “the potential to lead to creativity and discovery” (p. 40). It is easy then to situate the idea of loose parts within loose spaces, as we revisit the definition provided by Franck and Stevens (2007), whose tightened spaces are made loose by participants who “must recognize the possibilities inherent in [them] and make use of those possibilities for their own ends” (p. 2).

It is not simply then a matter of taking advantage of loose parts that are already there in a space or provided for creative use such as by a teacher in a classroom; it can be a matter of children appropriating elements that have inherent purposes and revising them for different purposes.

But saying all this buys into the idea that play can indeed be purposeful, that it can be intentionally meaning-making beyond simply playing itself. Play theorist Stuart Brown (2009) defines play in part as “apparently purposeless. Play activities,” he says, “don’t seem to have any survival value. They don’t help in getting money or food. They are not done

for their practical value. Play is done for its own sake” (p. 17). But someone’s apparently purposeless playing assumes that the player seeks no practical value — that, however, doesn’t mean there isn’t practical value in the playing. It might emerge unintentionally, Brown says (p. 18), even later in life. Children or anyone playing at a particular moment may not intend for that play activity to offer any future practical value, such as this kid who was put up on a swivel chair to perform in front of others—a space that is otherwise an unsanctioned one: a dangerous rickety chair that if the child had been seen standing upon on his own would certainly have been scolded. But at this point, the chair has been given sanction by someone for the benefit of a now-sanctioned behavior, a little performance by a cute kid. At that moment, this kid is just playing.

But that moment of just playing may later open another moment of so-called real-world purpose encouraging the in-this-case grown child (just as cute with less hair), who has put himself in front of others, his students, to make meaningful connections between that moment of play decades ago and the present moment of practical value. It is inventive without intent. It is retrospectively heuristic. Play activities can perhaps unknowingly create the kairos for an opportu-

nity—and a space—that has yet to be realized. But sometimes children realize that they have been given the opportunity and the space to play even when the giver didn't intend to give it.

AUTHOR rushes up the stairs to the second floor of his house.

My wife is calling to me to come upstairs to see what our daughter has done in her bedroom. Now, as someone who studies forms of rhetorical, tactical underlife⁵, my reaction is not the same as my wife's.

The girls' BEDROOM DOOR opens.

AUTHOR OFF SCREEN

Wow, Lex. Look at what you did!
What is that?

AUTHOR

That is a circus, Lexie says. That is Lexie's first encounter with drawing on a wall—as far as I know. And so it is the first encounter either her mom or I have had with how to handle it. My wife agrees that, yes, this is a circus and it's time to send in the clowns to help clean it up. But first, I have to set up a portrait of the artist as a young graffitist. Her mother, on the other hand, wants it gone. And later in the day, Lexie helps to erase it.

Lexie's drawing on walls became more prolific, as did drawing on other surfaces. These are, according to Kress, merely representational images of a sign-maker that one day may work their way into more communicative modes.

Returning to LEXIE'S performance with her masterpiece.

LEXIE (singing)
Masterpiece . . .

AUTHOR

Drawing and writing on the walls eventually moved to drawing and writing on paper posted to the walls in forms of directionals and maps, announcements of shows she and her sister like to put on, and most recently a welcome to their new little brother, Max. Posted. All. Over. The house. This transition, of course, did not happen overnight, but I did note a couple of years beforehand one of Lexie's first attempts at performing a representational-cum-communicative event, showing evidence of embodied genre knowledge on what eventually became a sanctioned surface.

You'll remember Lexie's height.

JANE THE FISH sits on top Lexie's bedroom dresser.

⁵ See Brooke (1987); Molloy (2013).

Well, this is Jane. And this is Jane's height.

LEXIE'S attempt to mark Jane's height.

Many of the unsanctioned spaces throughout the house contain Lexie's representations, scribbles and drawings and things that may make sense only to Lexie, though I began it with a form of communication. Now, I did not knowingly sanction the surface *per se* but participated in a genre often applied to such a surface: recording height. Lexie may have deemed it appropriate herself because she saw that I had done so. She was also transferring the knowledge of what it means to record a measurement. She had done so with Jane and later on began to add to my own marks of her measurements.

Interestingly, very few communicative gestures ever appeared directly on unsanctioned surfaces themselves; they were mostly representational. Once Lexie started getting the idea of communicative genres, she for the most part abided by their decorum: you do some things on paper and then put the paper on the wall, which means having access to yet another surface: paper. Lots and lots of paper. Paper itself soon became an unsanctioned, tightly controlled surface by the authorities—her mom and me—after Lexie began

“borrowing” sheets of paper from the forbidden printer.

And it is her learning this difference between appropriate and inappropriate uses of certain surfaces, a rich rhetorical understanding, that is starting to have real purpose for Lexie. She is learning how to be an actor within an ecology of surfaces, attempting to negotiate the ideological factors wrapped up in it.

A poster advertises a production of Shrek: The Musical.

My wife teaches high school theatre and had recently directed a production of *Shrek: The Musical*. There's a princess named Little Fiona, who is locked up in a tower at the age of seven. Having waited now a mere 23 days for her prince to come, Little Fiona spends her time reading stories to her dollies and of course putting stuff up on her walls. Guess who else was seven . . .

LEXIE performing Little Fiona.

Even though her mom was the director, Lexie was still going to have to prove her stuff by auditioning for the show just like everybody else. But before her mom would for sure cast her, Lexie would have to practice with a voice coach to strengthen her singing. Weeks went by, forcing Lexie in the meantime to

continually ask, Do I get to play Fiona? Do I get to play Fiona? Do I get to play Fiona? To supplement her plea, Lexie did what she normally does when she really really wants something. She wrote a note to her mom, asking her to please, please cast her.

And this is how she wrote it. On the wall: “Little Fiona,” it says. “Mom please”. To the left of it repeats “Feona”, and what looks like 7 o’clock. This makes sense to us because the shows normally start at 7 p.m. But Lexie meant it as 7 years old, the shared age between Fiona and herself. Now, why on the wall? Why would Lexie try to persuade her mom through an action on a surface that her mom herself has not sanctioned? Wouldn’t Lexie turn to more appropriate methods? Like paper? No, Lexie says. You’re not supposed to take paper from the printer and use it for other things. So she wrote it here. She is making meaning through an unsanctioned surface that calls attention to itself simply because it’s unsanctioned. It’s not supposed to be there. What better way of getting noticed?

Lexie is rhetorically traveling along a liminal surface of being a good daughter who doesn’t write on walls and a communicator who takes risks. One of the risks she takes is helping her father find his own ways of discovering agency. As I’m

documenting her and Vivien’s progress, I find myself in a number of liminal positions: how do I situate myself as a father and as a scholar? It is challenging to shut the scholar down when I need to be only a father. It is just as challenging to shut the father down when I need to be a scholar. It isn’t as much as teaching children to learn the tight adult systems that help us make sense of language and genre and space—that is, to see how adults see. It is as well about our own willingness to unlearn how we see, to create a masterpiece and then dance about it, sing about it, write about it, reflect on it, see the inherent possibilities that can transform a surface into a mode of understanding others a little bit better. It is evident on a bedroom wall—where it isn’t supposed to be—where we have found another place to come together, a surface on which to share our own ways of knowing.

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Music

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Dystopoi of Memory and Invention:

The Rhetorical “Places” of Postmodern Dystopian Film

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In her introduction to *The Left Hand of Darkness*, the renowned American science fiction novelist Ursula K. Le Guin (2010) rallies a series of provocations around one central refrain: “Science fiction is not predictive; it is descriptive” (p. xiv). Through its futuristic confabulations, sci-fi deliberately “lies” in order to get at some “truth” about the present; its concerns, though typically projected into an imagined future, stem from “what the weather is now, today, this moment, the rain, the sunlight, look!” (pp. xiv, xv). Le Guin’s imploring directive, *look!*, voices no transcendent, romantic imperative of the genre. It doesn’t ask readers to lift the veil of mystification or to finally see the capital-T truth for the first time. Rather, sci-fi as Le Guin understands it asks readers to perceive how fabrications, the genre’s “lies,” refract the light of quotidian life into new shapes with new contours of significance. Sci-fi matters, in other words, not for its ability to create an entirely novel alternate universe, but for its ability to *reassemble* our own present in an illuminating way. This art—the purposeful assembly of available cultural

material into a persuasive whole—significantly resembles what rhetoricians since Aristotle have termed invention. Generally regarded as the primary and conceptually richest of the five canons of rhetoric (the others are arrangement, style, delivery, and—finally, an oft-neglected category I take up here—memory), invention describes the artful composition of cultural knowledge and rhetorical appeals to suit a specific argument before a specific audience.¹ Aristotle (1997), for example, devotes two of the three books of his *Rhetoric* to the processes of invention, which he describes through various devices and strategies: appeals to *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos*; deductive enthymemes; inductive examples; and rhetorical *topoi* (literally “places”; topics; loci), which can be classified as discipline-specific “special” premises (*idia*) or “common” procedures (*koinoi topoi*) used to generate arguments across diverse circumstances. Here, I single out this final concept, the *topos*, as particularly useful in investigating not just invention, but the multimodal nexus of memory and invention.

¹ This definition is my own approximation of an amorphous and contested term. For a useful

bibliographic synthesis of rhetorical invention, see Simonson (2014).

In this essay I configure the rhetorical *topos* as useful tool in the study of narrative fiction film—and particularly dystopian sci-fi film—in order to analyze how film rhetoric draws credibility and connotative rhetorical power from its construction of place. Below, I examine the rhetoric of dystopian space, whose “places” constitute both memetic representations of our world gone wrong and rhetorical “places” (*topoi*) rich in persuasive power. These two senses of place, one traditionally poetical and the other traditionally rhetorical, irrevocably overlap, especially through the medium of film, the rich visual texture of which powerfully orients audiences both within poetical, memetic space and within the persuasive, ideological structures of meaning-making more traditionally assigned to rhetoric. Here, I take up this dualistic sense of rhetorical *topoi* to examine the persuasive dimensions of three dystopian sci-fi films from what film scholar Vivian Sobchack (2005) has called the second “Golden Age” of American sci-fi film (p. 267)—*Alien* (Scott, 1979), *Outland* (Hyams, 1981), and *Blade Runner* (Scott, 1982)—each of which exemplifies the complex and difficult patchwork of postmodern spatial composition, and all of which share visual textures that could imply a common narrative universe across the three films. I focus on two particular genres of “place”

that recur in these films: first, what I call the *technological swamp*, or the expansive bricolage of high-tech detail, excess, and waste that implies decay and neglect; and second, the *clinic*, or the overlit surveillance site that implies oppressive, panoptic oversight. Below, I detail how each genre of dystopian place—or *dystopos*—powerfully imbues its narratives with ideological, rhetorical energy, capable of implying and enhancing social arguments. I argue, finally, that the rhetorical coexistence of these *dystopoi* exemplifies the heterogenous complexity of postmodern spatial argument, which one can rarely boil down to a single text posing a single argument.

This essay also notably contributes to an area of study, the rhetoric of film, historically characterized by intermittent interest but general scholarly neglect. While a few rhetoricians, like David Blakesley (in English studies) and Thomas W. Benson (in communication), have repeatedly returned to this topic, film rhetoric has failed to cohere as a consistent subdiscipline of multimodal rhetorical study.² I suspect, though, that mounting interest in multimodal rhetorics as such (without de facto subservience to new media studies or digital rhetorics in particular) could rejuvenate rhetoricians’ interest in film, which—in the era of Netflix and IMAX—remains a potent,

² This is not to say that work on the rhetoric of film is altogether lacking. It is beyond the scope of this essay to supply a thoroughgoing bibliography on the rhetoric of film, but interested scholars might begin with Blakesley’s (2003) wide-ranging edited collection *The Terministic Screen*. Other particularly notable applications of classical

and modern rhetorical theory to film and television include Hendrix & Wood (1973); Behrens (1979); Chatman (1990); Booth (2002); Blakesley (2004); Benson & Snee (2008). See Wetherbee (2015) for another application of the term *topos* to film analysis and Gunn (2005) for a more general examination of visual *topoi*.

influential medium of cultural production. I hope this essay contributes to such a resurgence.

Below, before turning to a specific examination of *Alien*, *Outland*, and *Blade Runner*, I find it necessary to reflect on how the rhetorical study of dystopian space reflects both (1) the intersection between rhetorical (persuasive) and poetical (literary, mimetic) discourses and (2) that between invention and the long-neglected canon of memory. I then turn these critical pairings toward the topic of cinematic dystopian space seen in dystopian film.

Rhetoric, Poetics, and Epideixis

As many historians of rhetoric have noted, the schism between poetics and rhetoric—which mirrors both the disciplinary split between English and communication studies and, within English, the intradisciplinary split between literature and rhetoric/composition—is a fairly new phenomenon. In the words of George A. Kennedy (1999), “poetics can be regarded as parallel to and overlapping with rhetoric” in antiquity; both concern style, generic convention, and appeals to character and emotion (pp. 135-136). In the *Poetics*, Aristotle (2009) prescribes that, in the composition and performance of drama, rhetorical knowledge should dictate how playwrights represent and

emotionally package key social issues (19.1456b). While, as Aristotle explains, poetics dramatizes social events and rhetoric comments on those events through direct speech (19.1456b), both arts require an intimate familiarity with cultural *doxa* and the emotional predispositions of one’s audience toward certain ideas and events (cf. Burke, 1966, p. 296). But, as Kenneth Burke stresses, this distinction between overt argumentation and dramatization rarely yields neat boundaries: the distinction is “forever on the move” (1966, p. 307). Anecdotes and didactic narratives, one might point out, often dramatize events in service of overt argument, while literary genres like the novel integrate numerous rhetorical forms into their discursive fiber.³

Put another way, ancient purveyors of liberal education might have perceived the ostensibly hard-and-fast present-day distinction between rhetorical genres (the political speech, essay, advertisement, etc.) and poetical genres (the novel, poem, film, etc.) as artificially rigid.⁴ Here, the ancient category of epideictic rhetoric merits especial attention. In the *Rhetoric*, Aristotle (2007) offers a tripartite taxonomy of rhetorical orations: *deliberative*, political speech concerning future of the polis; *judicial*, courtroom speech demonstrating a forensic under-

³ Numerous critical discussions of the rhetoric of poetics now exist, but Bakhtin (2004) and Booth (1983) provide two paradigmatic and particularly useful examples. Bakhtin focuses on the novel as the artistic arrangement of rhetorical forms like the letter, speech, and so forth, while Booth (and Chatman [1990], by extension) discusses the

dynamics of textual authority between authors and readers. I believe the rheto-poetical study of space I advocate here could supplement both perspectives.

⁴ For latter-day speculation about reintegrating rhetoric and poetics, see, for example, Crowley (1985-1986); Berlin (2003); Bialostosky (2016).

standing of the past; and *epideictic*, or ceremonial speech concerned largely with, but not properly limited to, the praise and blame of individuals and values in order to firm up a sense of cultural community in the present (1.3.1358a-59a). But the concept of *epideixis*, as Jeffrey Walker (2000) has argued, should be understood not as courtly pomp, subordinate to the more hard-headed genres of deliberation and forensics, but rather expanded wholesale into “the rhetoric of belief and desire,” that which “establishes and mnemonically sustains the culturally authoritative codes of values and the paradigms of eloquence from which... pragmatic discourse . . . derives its ‘precedents,’ its language, and its power” (p. 10). By Walker’s estimation, the pragmatic genres of deliberative and judicial rhetoric are “secondary” and depend upon “primary” epideictic rhetorics of cultural sustenance and reproduction (p. 10). In a courtroom defense of, say, a man who slew his daughter’s murderer, the litigator might draw from the stock archetypes of masculinity and familial bond sustained through diverse rhetorics of epideixis that praise the individual masculine avenger as an agent of justice.

This robust and inclusive version of epideixis, Walker notes, accounts also for everything modernity has categorized as “literature” (p. 7)—to which we can now rightly add quasi-literary narrative media like film, television, and video games. (To

rehash the example above, nothing in present American culture valorizes the rogue masculine hero more effectively than the epideictic rhetoric of video games.) Such “dramatizations” of social values may not argue before a “decider” or an electorate in the tradition of pragmatic rhetoric (Walker, 2000, p. 10), but they do epideictically sustain certain values and archetypes through their narratives, perpetuating a storehouse of rhetorical knowledge vital to the rhetorician. This storehouse is made up of *topoi*, which provide, as I describe below, charged nodes of discourse that orient audiences within the shared vista of cultural memory.

It follows that utopian and dystopian narratives constitute subgenres of epideictic rhetoric, where rhetorical and poetical expression intermingle. Typically, these genres already read as more overtly rhetorical (or political) than most other literature. It takes few intellectual gymnastics, that is, to bracket the frankly political and persuasive dimensions of prototypical utopias⁵ like Sir Thomas More’s *Utopia* and Francis Bacon’s *The New Atlantis*, modernist utopias like Edward Bellamy’s *Looking Backward*, William Morris’s *News from Nowhere*, and Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s *Herland*, or their modernist dystopian counterparts like E.M. Forster’s “The Machine Stops,” Yevgeni Zamyatin’s *We*, Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World*, George Orwell’s *1984*, and Fritz Lang’s landmark

⁵ On the various classifications of utopia and dystopia, see Booker (1994); Moylan (200); Baccolini & Moylan (2003); Jameson (2007).

film *Metropolis*. Such narratives follow a version of what Burke (1968) terms “syllogistic” form, following, or at least mimicking, the progression of “a perfectly conducted argument, advancing step by step” (p. 124). Much like deliberative rhetoric, these narratives fix one eye on the future, demonstrating explicitly (by way of a fictional historical narrative) or half-explicitly (by strongly implying such a narrative) how present social circumstances could be adapted for a more desirable future or warped into a disastrous one.

But the similarity is limited. As Marlana Portolano (2012) writes, more than that of the deliberative, utopia and dystopia are “most pervasively . . . the playground of epideictic persuasion,” that which praises some present circumstances and eschews others (p. 118). (One might say utopias generally deal in praise and dystopias in blame—though praise of one ideal implies the blame of another, and vice versa.) True to Le Guin’s insistence that speculative fiction most centrally concerns “today’s” climate, even the most didactically precise utopias and dystopias probably contribute to the storehouses of rhetorical knowledge that dictate attitudes toward the present more than they provide a literal, deliberative route to the future. And when one shifts focus to the messy, fragmentary dystopias to center

not what these texts methodically “argue” for the future but postmodernity, as I do below, the questions for rhetoricians increasingly take up how they assemble an imaginary but intelligible future from the available places (*topoi*) of the present.

Invention and Memory

To better understand the rhetoric of dystopian space, one can consider rhetorical canons of invention and memory in tandem. The classical art of memory, or mnemonics, describes a disciplined system speakers could use to navigate long orations without external aid, by traversing an imaginary set of places (*loci* in the Latin texts) that associatively guide the speaker’s train of thought.⁶ Variations of this system remain highly effective for those willing to commit to their rigors, but the modern proliferation of print resources—not to mention the Internet—has long reduced mnemonics to more or less a historical curiosity. In ancient Roman treatises on rhetoric, however, the canon of memory receives sustained attention as a requisite feature of rhetorical education. The anonymous author of the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* ([Cicero], 1999) explains how orators should concoct a path of distinct “places” among which are arranged symbolically significant “images” (3.16). The “image” metonymically represents subject of one’s oration—the orator

⁶ My use of memory *loci* extends more-or-less directly from its discussion in Roman handbooks of rhetoric; thus I refer directly to the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* ([Cicero], 1999) and Quintilian’s *Institutio Oratio* (2002) here. It bears note, though, that Yates’s *The Art of Memory* (1999) remains the

definitive twentieth-century historical study of memory places between antiquity and the Enlightenment. See also Jameson’s (1991) brief commentary on Yates in relation to modernism and postmodernism (p. 154).

might, for example, imagine a lion or a crown to evoke the subject of the king, or royalty more generally—while the *loci* organize the images within the structure of the complete speech.

My contention here is the common use of the term *topos/locus* to theorize both Greco-Roman rhetorical invention and rhetorical memory is no mere etymological accident. To most fully appreciate the metaphorical scope of the term, we can return not to Aristotle's *Rhetoric*, but to his *Physics*, which offers Aristotle's fullest articulation of "place" as a concept (see Miller, 2000; Muckelbauer, 2008, pp. 123-41). There, Aristotle (1957) explains,

a "place" may be assigned to an object either primarily because it is its *special* and exclusive place or because it is "*common*" to it and all other things, or is the universal that includes the proper place of *all* things.

I mean, for instance, that you, at this moment, are in the universe because you are in the air, which air is in the universe; and in the air because on the earth; and in a like matter on the earth because on the *special* place which "contains and circumscribes you, and no other body." (4.2.31-36.209a-209b; emphasis to *special* and *common* added)

Two significant points arise: First, as Carolyn R. Miller (2000) has observed, Aristotle describes physical place in the same "common" and "special" terms by which he describes rhetorical *topoi* in the

Rhetoric; a concern with degree and scope characterizes Aristotle's thinking about literal and metaphorical places. Second, this sense of scope implies a basic function of *orientation*. Rather than the "matter" of a body, which takes no definite shape, or a body's "form," which determines the thing itself but not its location in space, "place" demarcates an object's location in relation to other significant locations (the atmosphere, the earth, the universe, etc.—but also the home, the polis, the nation) (Aristotle, 1957, 4.4.5-14.211b). Rhetorical "orientation," as Burke (1984) describes it, provides reference to "a bundle of judgments as to how things were, how they are, and how they will be" (p. 14). One can append this understanding of orientation to Aristotle's notes on "place" to suggest that rhetorical *topoi* are not just rote procedures or stock arguments, but devices that economically orient audiences among broader landscapes of significance within short discursive space.

While the two differ in express purpose, memory *loci* and *topoi* of invention function somewhat similarly along Burke's guidelines. As the *Ad Herennium* suggests, the "places" of memory provide a contextualizing apparatus for the denotative "images" they house, orienting speakers to the narrative arc of the oration, but also, conceivably, orienting them within a matrix of culturally determined imagery. Memory *loci*, the *Ad Herennium* tells us, should be "complete and conspicuous, so that we can grasp and embrace them easily by natural memory" (3.16). My impression is that

this “natural” memory—that which the orator summons without mnemonic practice—should be regarded also as a *cultural* memory insofar imagistic places find coherence only among the connotative totality of cultural knowledge. Though the *Ad Herennium* does not explicitly prescribe as much, one gathers that these “complete and conspicuous” backgrounds ought to thematically complement the denotative images they surround, orienting the speaker to the set of contextual knowledge to which the speech might refer. It is telling, further, that the Roman pedagogue Quintilian (2002) lists “public buildings” and “the ramparts of a city” among possible memory places, suggesting a further thematic link between memory and the iconography of civic life (6.2.20). In the Middle Ages, as Frances Yates (1999) reports, even the strata of Hell as illustrated in Dante’s *Inferno* were sometimes visualized as memory places designed to “hold in memory the scheme of salvation, and the complex network of virtues and vices and their rewards and punishments” (p. 95). The otherwise quite different examples of Quintilian and Dante each exploit the sense of cultural memory that imbues symbolically significant places.

It’s not terribly difficult to extend such thinking to the imaginary and secular, but no less culturally formative, examples of modernist dystopian space—the towering, tiered urban landscape of *Metropolis* (Lang, 1927), for example, or the joyless streets of 1984’s Oceania (Orwell, 1977). Here, as in the classical memory place, space

becomes a logically ordered scaffold designed to symbolize a set of ideas or arguments—those regarding the social architecture of class hierarchy in *Metropolis*, or the oppressive faculties of the surveillance state in 1984. But not all dystopias are so tidy. As Fredric Jameson (1991) contends, the “discontinuous spatial experience” of postmodernism scarcely permits such self-contained spatial logic, instead shuffling fragments of textualized space into a collage of diverse permutations that sum less easily to tight theses (p. 154). I contend here, however, that the effect of such postmodern fragmentation is not to nullify the memory places, but to revitalize the individual *topos* as the nexus of rhetorical invention and memory, a union traceable through films like *Alien*, *Outland*, and *Blade Runner*. That is, the selection and establishment of “place” in these movies constitutes a sort of epideictic invention by way of tapping into and reasserting the currents cultural memory.

Dystopoi in Three Postmodern Sci-Fi Films

There are certainly more recent dystopian sci-fi films I could discuss here—including numerous *Alien*-franchise entries of varying quality and 2017’s impressive *Blade Runner* sequel—but I single out *Alien*, *Outland*, and *Blade Runner* for this essay partly because all three characterize a sort of postmodern turn in sci-fi film, one more or less coincident with the onset of the “cyberpunk” movement and the reshuffling of dystopia into a genre more ambivalent and less didactic than its

modernist antecedents.⁷ As Sobchack (2005) notes, the cinematic era of the late '70s and early '80s—born of post-Vietnam introspection, the rise of second-wave feminism, and the mounting enthusiasm of Reagan-era industrialism—begat a new “Golden Age” of American sci-fi film imaginatively responding to a complex matrix of social tensions. *Alien*, *Outland*, and *Blade Runner* also share a set of aesthetic conventions manifested through spatial representation. Practically speaking, viewers could easily imagine that all three movies inhabit the same narrative universe because the three share a certain “look” and “mood.” Or, returning to Aristotle’s special-common distinction, one could put it this way: *Alien*, *Outland*, and *Blade Runner* each imply a single “common” universe insofar as all three films make use of special places, or *topoi*, that *orient* audiences to that larger universe as a contextual apparatus.

In another sense, these are three very different movies. While they all fit the bill of “science fiction,” their narratives inspire rather different generic classification. Ridley Scott’s *Alien* is the separate paradigmatic stuff of horror cinema, a tense, interstellar slasher flick wherein the titular alien picks off the crew of the starship *Nostromo* one by one until only Sigourney Weaver’s “final girl” remains. Writer-director Peter Hyams’s *Outland*, an underappreciated morality tale aptly describable as “*High Noon* in space,”

unfolds as a sort of futuristic Western, pitting Sean Connery’s lone lawman against a posse of mercenaries serving a sinister interplanetary mining corporation. And *Blade Runner*, also directed by Scott and loosely adapted from Philip K. Dick’s *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?* (2007; originally published 1968), is equal parts detective story and philosophical drama, a complex and visually striking film about the creation and policing of artificial human life (living androids dubbed “replicants”). The respective neo-horror, neo-Western, and neo-noir genre formations of these films, though, do not inhibit their common coherence as sci-fi—and, particularly, dystopian sci-fi. Sobchack (1997) helps to explain why. The essence of the American sci-fi film, for Sobchack, lies largely in its iconography—places, motifs, textures—which comprises set imagistic categories like the spaceship, the robot, or the futuristic city, that “function” similarly from film to film. Sci-fi iconography, she continues, generally establishes a tension between the “alien” and the “familiar”: “Although they may contain many alien images, isolated for wondrous effect, images which evoke the ‘unknown’ in all its scientific, magical, and religious or transcendental permutation, the films must obligatorily descend to Earth, to men, to the known, and to a familiar *mise en scene* if they are to result in *meaning* rather than the abstract inexplicability of

⁷ Despite my focus here on films from circa 1980, the recent *Blade Runner 2049* (Villeneuve, 2017)—which combines the *dystopoi* I here describe as the “swamp” and the “clinic” with other backdrops of

urban poverty and post-apocalyptic abandonment—merits further study in the vein of this essay.

being” (pp. 103-104).

Sobchack’s emphasis on “meaning” returns us to Le Guin’s present-day imperative—to the realm of lived social relations, rhetorical epideixis, and cultural memory. The iconographic tension between the alien and familiar maps approximately onto the image-*locus* distinction of the classical memory place. The alien, like the mnemonic “image,” calls attention to itself, announces its own exceptionalism against a less obtrusive backdrop. The mummified alien ship that the *Nostromo*’s crew in *Alien* discovers qualifies as basically “alien” by this criterion, as do H.R. Giger’s bloodthirsty xenomorph itself and the malevolent android Ashe (Ian Holm), whose inhumanity becomes terrifyingly apparent late in the film. Several occasions in *Outland*, meanwhile, see men burst like fleshy bubbles after stepping into depressurized space; this horrific and unexpected special effect announces our departure from Earth’s embrace and injects an alien element in an otherwise quite familiar narrative. And *Blade Runner*’s reimagination of Los Angeles punctuates a largely familiar portrait of urban decay with alien flourishes like flying cars and plumes of fire that ignite above the skyline—the distinction, here, between the familiar and alien resembling Roland Barthes’s (1981) own categories of

the *studium* and *punctum* in photographic images (pp. 25-28)—but the movie announces its own strangeness most markedly through Rutger Hauer’s intense, animalistic performance as Roy Batty, the ringleader of the renegade group of the “more human than human” replicants.

Such alien “images” are striking and often disturbing, but true to the example of ancient Roman mnemonics, they achieve narrative and ideological coherence only in a familiar context. Fitting this rhetorical function are a certain set of narrative *topoi*—that is, rhetorical “places” of invention and memory—that elicit the connotations necessary to evoke “dystopia.” Let us call them *dystopoi*—literally, *bad places*.⁸ The genres of evocative backgrounds that characterize different dystopian subgenres are many: those composing the vacant bombed-out cities and sparse landscapes of the post-apocalypse, the stratified *Metropolis* (Lang, 1927), the cloyingly hip and homogenous bubble-city of *Logan’s Run* (Anderson, 1976), and so on. The closer such spaces come to logically—or syllogistically, as Burke would say—dramatizing the “arguments” of their narratives, the tighter the connection becomes between the familiar and the alien, and the more the mnemonic “image” comes to appear a simple extension of its *dystopos*.

⁸ For another provocative use of this term, see Boyle and LeMieux’s “A Sustainable Dystopia” (2017), which configures *dystopoi* as technological “sites whose aim is to provide an experience of microruptures as a way to build up greater capacities” (p. 218)—that is, to purposefully encumber and disrupt traditional processes of

invention. Though Boyle and LeMieux also take inspiration from dystopian narrative, their use of *dystopos* as a critical term differs drastically from my own inasmuch as it engages only tangentially with the metaphor of place bound up in classical notions of invention and memory.

The distinction between these postmodern dystopias and their more didactic precursors is not absolute. As Sobchack (1997) notes, the spaces of *Alien*, *Outland*, and *Blade Runner* each represent, to one degree or another, the logic of multinational (or multiplanetary) capitalism, whereby a shadowy elite remotely controls production. Further, these movies represent, in the words of Thomas B. Byers (1987), a “commodity future” dominated by “high-tech corporate capitalism” and a consequent disregard for the humanity of the lower classes (p. 326). And the “commodity future” surely constitutes a dystopian subgenre. In *Alien*, the corporation that owns the *Nostromo* clearly values profitable discoveries over the safety of its crew, while the mining company in *Outland* supplies its workers on Jupiter’s moon Io with dangerous narcotics to increase productivity. *Blade Runner*, meanwhile, sees the very synthesis of human life for reasons of profit-driven exploitation. All three movies inhabit spaces that enable such politically charged subject matter, yet the narratives arcs themselves—the horror, Western, and detective plots—have nothing intrinsically to do with dystopia. These are not “syllogistically” dystopian narratives designed to lay out a point-by-point critique of industrial capitalism in the sense that something like Huxley’s *Brave New World* (1981; originally published in 1932) arguably is. Rather, postmodern dystopia represents more a matter of spatial connotation. I offer two genres of connotatively rich *dystopoi* seen in *Alien*, *Outland*, and *Blade Runner*.

The first I call the *technological swamp*. This *dystopos* entails a façade of intricate and unexplained technological detail coupled with dim lighting, confined spaces, and, usually, the implication of disrepair and neglect. The specific details themselves are familiar enough—pipes, ducts, smoke, leaking fluids, buttons and dials, computer screens, dirt, and clutter—but the sheer profusion of detail overwhelms viewers’ perception. As in the corridors of *Alien*’s *Nostromo* and *Outland*’s mining structure, the technological bricolage swells into an almost organic structure of metal bones and flesh that encircle the structures’ human occupants (see Figures 1 & 2). The low, shadowy lighting that marks the technological swamp *dystopos* also permits an aesthetic link to more characteristically neo-noir settings—the grimy, ribald bar and prostitution hall in *Outland*, or Rick Deckard’s (Harrison Ford) dusty, eerily lit flat in *Blade Runner*—that all feel part-and-parcel of the same dark, swollen monster.

Moreover, *Blade Runner*’s Los Angeles represents an explosion of the technological swamp across an entire urban vista. This city of perpetual night and drizzle appears, like the ceaseless urban sprawl of William Gibson’s *Neuromancer* (1984), patched together from surfaces at once high-tech and cheap, its corners littered with garbage and scraps of expendable technology—the sort of insidious, self-multiplying junk that Dick (2007), in *Androids*, terms “kipple” (see Bukatman, 2009, pp. 42-63). It is telling that one of the replicants, Pris (Daryl Hannah), begins her plan to infiltrate the



Figure 1: The “technological swamp” as seen in the interior of *Alien*’s starship *Nostromo*.



Figure 2: The “swamp” displayed in *Outland*’s Io mining colony.

Tyrell Corporation and gain more life (these replicants live only four years) by hiding outside a Tyrell employee’s building in a pile of garbage (see Figure 3). Amid this swamp, humans—and certainly replicants—blend in as just another type of kipple (see Barr, 1997).

⁹ In *The Birth of the Clinic* (1975), Foucault advances the concept of the “medical gaze,” which transforms human patients into a discursive record of abnormality, effectively erasing their

Following Michel Foucault (1975), I call the second genre of *dystopos* the *clinic*.⁹ Clinical places are spacious (almost cavernous), immaculate, and bathed in oppressive white light. The clinical exemplar among science fiction remains George Lucas’s experimental 1971 film

human interiority. In this book and *Discipline and Punish* (1995) Foucault also comments extensively on the kinds of spaces by which this discursive rendering of the human can take place.



Figure 3: Pris (Daryl Hannah) emerges from a pile of “kipple” in *Blade Runner*.



Figure 4: The surveillance state of *THX 1138* expands outward like an endless white canvas.

THX 1138, the Orwellian setting of which sprawls outward like one endless, unblemished sheet of white paper (see Figure 4). *THX 1138*'s image of the clinic arguably recurs in *Alien* and *Outland*, albeit excerpted from the syllogistic totality of Lucas's surveillance state. In *Alien* and *Outland* one notices that the medical bays of the *Nostromo* and the Io colony, as well as the former's cryogenic stasis room and

the latter's punitive holding cells, have a different look from their dark, messy surroundings (see Figure 5). Bright and sterile, these places eschew the textured excesses of the swamp for brute functionalism—medical procedures, quarantine, imprisonment, cryogenic sleep. They also recall Foucault's (1995) aphorism, “Visibility is a trap” (p. 200). Like the Foucauldian clinic, that is, these



Figure 5: The “clinic” as seen in the *Nostromo*’s medical bay in *Alien*.

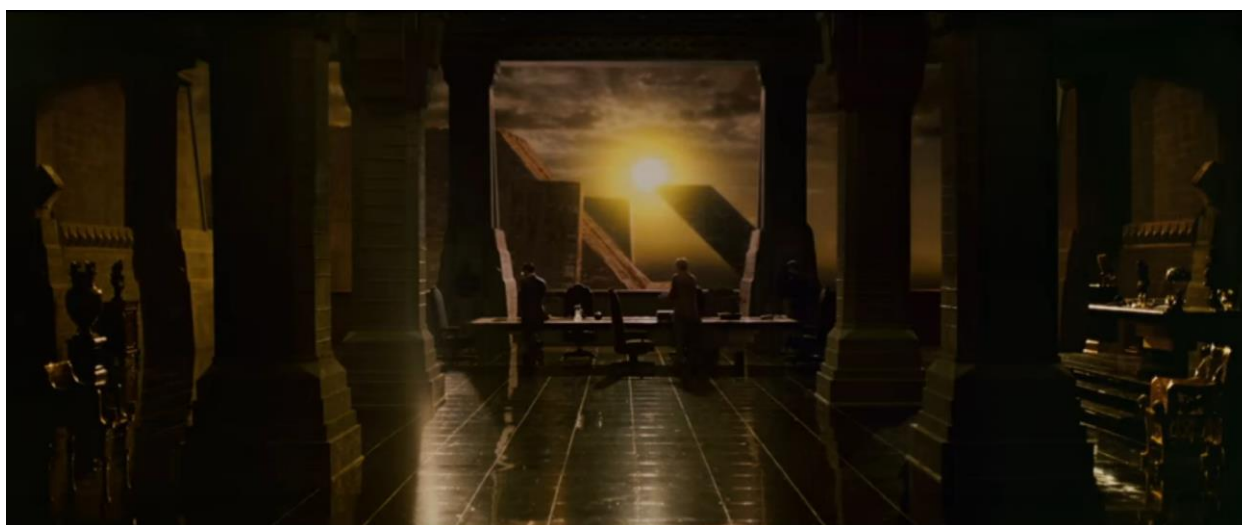


Figure 6: Tyrell’s spacious office in *Blade Runner* offers a different version of the “clinic.”

places transform their contents—humans included—into observable specimens whose individuality translates precisely into abnormality. Pris cannot hide among the kipple in the corner of the clinic because there is none—only milk-white walls providing a backdrop of pure contrast. In *Blade Runner*, the office of robotics guru Eldon Tyrell (Joe Turkel), which, as Sobchack (1997) observes,

looms above the dark, cluttered city like a giant microchip (p. 234), provides a slightly different riff on the clinical *dystopos*, inflecting its occupants with a sense of ceremonial and vaguely malevolent grandeur (see Figure 6). But again, the immaculate, cavernous space within the Tyrell Building notably offers no room for Rachel (Sean Young), the self-ignorant replicant, to hide from



Figure 7: In *Outland*, the “swamp” and “clinic” coexist in the same shot.

Deckard’s diagnostic Voight-Kampff test nor for Tyrell himself to evade Roy Batty’s bloody vengeance for the curse of such short life. The clinical place reliably entails exposure and surveillance.

As Barthes (1978) explains, the rhetoric of the image is largely “connotational,” exploiting “an architecture of signs drawn from a variable depth of lexicons” that constitute the “domain of ideology” (pp. 33, 47, 49). Put another way, the deep-seated connotative “meaning” of the image stems from its intersection with the epideictic storehouses of rhetorically significant imagery—from the stuff of cultural memory. Barthes’s (1978) essay on “The Rhetoric of the Image” takes as example a French ad for Italian food, analyzing how its constituent iconography sums to a sense of “Italianicity” built of cultural stereotypes. The technological swamp and the clinic are no less connotative approximations, visual textures from whose matrices of association audiences orient themselves in ideological space.

The swamp generally connotes a world of technological excess, in which consumerism has ballooned into a self-perpetuating system of production, consumption, and junk, and which values the abundance of stuff (or kipple) over the actual public good that stuff does; it connotes a certain breed of late capitalism and the absorption of humans into that capitalist matrix. It implies decay, excess, and even anarchy. The clinic connotes a world of quasi-militaristic watchful overdetermination that crushes the individual subject under bright light and Foucauldian panopticism (see Foucault, 1995). It implies compulsory conformity, homogeny, and authoritarianism.

Neglect versus overdetermination: These are two quite different dystopian visions, one receding toward Gibson’s vision of laissez-faire techno-anarchy and the other towards the Orwellian police state. Both, though, are terrible and dehumanizing: it is no better to be clinically dissected than absorbed into the dark night of technological sprawl. These

postmodern dystopias, moreover, reveal that the thematically contradictory swamp and clinic can coexist in the same narrative universe. In one of the more visually jarring images from *Outland*, Connery's lawman and his deputy stand among the high-tech guts of an ill-lit, dusty hallway, looking in on a prisoner who floats in isolation, his cell a pristine white cube. A single pane of Plexiglas separates the swamp from the clinic (see Figure 7).

So what? One significant point, at least, is that postmodern audiences have grown less receptive to the syllogistic narrative that assembles its space to neatly illustrate a single thesis about our social undoing. The rhetoric of the postmodern dystopia is less a rhetoric of syllogistic progression than one of branching enthymemes—divergent, if largely complementary, inferences that rarely conjoin upon a single thesis. This is the logic not of *either-or* but *both-and*: we might be neglected and surveilled and—well, who knows what else? My point does not discount the barbed political subtexts that Sobchack and Byers detect in movies like *Alien*, *Outland*, and *Blade Runner*, but it does place any such political claims within a circuitous matrix of rhetorical composition. The *dystopoi* or memory *loci* by which these films work to invent their narratives provide a network of familiar iconography that ground dystopia in the circumstances of the present without, necessarily, determining the exact directions such narratives will take. Postmodernity, thus, seems to recognize that dystopia may exist in many forms, probably many at once, and that those

forms—to once more echo Le Guin—already exist here and now.

Conclusion

Seymour Chatman (1990) delivers an eloquent synopsis of narrative rhetoric: “In my view, there are two narrative rhetorics, one concerned to suade me to accept the form of the work; another, to suade me of a certain view of how things are in the real world” (p. 203). In didactic modernist utopias and dystopias, Chatman's two rhetorics almost completely converge: establishing the good or bad place of the future entails a corresponding vision of the real-world present and its problems. In the postmodern dystopia, these two rhetorics intersect and diverge more fluidly. When Sobchack (1997) notes that, sci-fi film, “[s]pace is now more often a ‘text’ than a context[,] . . . self-contained, convulsive, and discontiguous” (p. 232), I take this point to echo the rhetorical primacy of place in the composite postmodern text. The rich evocation of cultural memory, in other words, constitutes a rhetorical end in itself, one every bit as vital as the abstract forwarding of a “thesis” or “argument.” I hold, moreover, that such attention to place, in turn, yields a richer, more medium-specific understanding of film rhetoric than that advanced by prior, more traditional models of film as argument and/or communication (e.g., Hendrix & Wood, 1973; Behrens, 1979).

To slightly reframe the matter, I believe that the credible establishment of place increasingly corresponds, in classical rhetorical terms, to the category of *ethos*,

or the establishment of character and credibility that—as Burke (1969) especially has demonstrated—matters in rhetorical performance as much as, or often more than, one’s logical propositions (cf. Hendrix & Wood, 1972, p. 109).¹⁰ Deckard and Rachel’s studio-imposed escape into the verdant countryside at the end of *Blade Runner*’s original theatrical release seems “implausible and artificial,” Sobchack (1997) posits, because of “the new sense that everything in our lives is mediated and cultural” (p. 237). I would add that this thematic rupture, which Scott wisely excised from the director’s (1992) and “final” cuts (2007) of the film, more specifically betrays the sense of place the rest of the film had labored to construct, ceding the ambient modality of the visual—and all the rhetorical credibility it affords—in the process. Especially in the postmodern dystopian film, place represents a vital piece of the rhetorical whole, the neglect of which deadens the influence of the composite text by forfeiting the cinematic economy of rhetorical connotation. So it is, I will add, that many of the glossy and plastic CGI vistas enveloping the last fifteen years of Hollywood blockbusters are already showing their age compared to the carefully wrought settings of the films I discuss here. *Alien*, *Outland*, and *Blade*

Runner remain rhetorically potent for their rich connectivity to the annals of cultural memory. All three recognize that dystopia, the *bad place*, is not just *explained* but *felt* through the *dystopos*—through sensory inundation, epideictic affirmation, and a grounding in the experience of the present. Each film’s successful forays into the realms of the philosophical and political begin, in turn, with this essential understanding of place.

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¹⁰ See Burke’s *A Rhetoric of Motives* (1969), which famously configures “identification” as the primary term of rhetorical engagement. Burke’s reformulation of rhetoric foregrounds *ethos*, or demonstration of consubstantiality,” as necessarily prior to arguments from *logos*, or logic. Hendrix &

Wood (1972), not wrongly but a bit literal-mindedly, suggest that “the rhetorical critic can apply the concept of *ethos* to the sponsoring agency and director of the film, to narrators and characters in the film, and to acknowledged sources within the film” (p. 109).

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Using Structure and Form as a Rhetorical Frame for Multimodal Composing

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Introduction

There is a lack of research on pedagogical approaches for teaching students how to rhetorically design multimodal messages. Writing instructors teaching multimodal composition tend to concentrate on analysis more than composing and need more examples, frames, models, and heuristics for teaching multimodal composing that are grounded in design and rhetorical theory, and students need more practice using rhetorical frames and design theory to generate multimodal messages. Rhetorical frames can extend the application of design theory in to multimodal composition. A rhetorical heuristic for multimodal writing that keeps objective, context, and audience at the forefront of the message design may better prepare students for the various rhetorical situations they may encounter in and out of the classroom that are both digital and non-digital, enhancing how they negotiate audiences, objectives, and constraints.

This webtext argues that using the language of rhetorical criticism to teach students how to design multimodal

messages may widen their purview of the multimodal composing process. The terms “structure” and “form” from Roderick Hart and Suzanne Daughton’s (2005) chapter on “Analyzing Form” in *Modern Rhetorical Criticism* provide a rhetorical framework and metalanguage for contemplating how to construct multimodal forms. I argue that using *structure* and *form* as a rhetorical framework to design multimodal messages with semiotic materials may improve how students construct those forms. These terms can challenge the privileging of any one type of mode, form, or medium and reposition a rhetorical design process as a composing process that effectively encompasses both print and digital forms. “Message design, message emphasis, message density, and message pacing” (p. 107) are four elements of structure instructors can use to teach students how to develop composing heuristics for multimodal message design. Instructors can also adapt Hart and Daughton’s chart for “Common Structural Techniques in Persuasion” to develop pedagogies for teaching multimodal composing. Students

can practice employing a structural type for a rhetorical function, examine the advantages and disadvantages of that structural type, and then generate a critical probe for implementing it.

Using rhetorical theory to enhance multimodal composing processes can potentially lead to increased multi- and rhetorical literacies. Structure and form can represent the semiotic activity and rhetorical decision-making processes needed to design effective multimodal messages. Tarez Samra Graban et al. (2013) insist that “we cannot say students are ‘creating’” multimodal forms unless “they have figured out and deliberately applied a methodology that guides the why and how of their choices” (p. 254). Rhetorical methods for composing multimodal forms ask rhetors to account for the ways in which language, modes, and mediums spin around in a semiotic and dialectical kaleidoscope that constantly resituates how modes (re)connect and how audiences make meaning from those reconnections. Rhetorical design strategies also emphasize the synergistic connections that exist between semiotic and rhetorical activity that is so common to multimodal writing. Foss et al. (2014) contend that rhetoric is the act of humans constructing reality through symbols, so using rhetorical theories to generate heuristics for multimodal writing capitalizes on the symbiotic relationship between rhetoric and semiotics. Cordova (2013) reiterates how this relationship between rhetoric and semiotics functions when he professes that “a reengagement with rhetoric can

help us extend our understanding of the multimodal nature of meaning making and strengthen our development of critical pedagogy and multimodal literacy” (p. 146). The next section explores some of the existing scholarly engagement with multimodality and rhetoric.

Literature Review

Writing and rhetoric scholarship on multimodality has convincingly argued that implementing multimodal assignments into curriculums is paramount for teaching students the multiliteracies necessary to communicate in the digital age (Ball, 2004; Shipka, 2005; Selfe, 2009; Yancey, 2004), but we need more methodologies and heuristics for designing and making multimodal messages. Students are familiar with developing multimodal forms that are both digital and non-digital (NCTE, 2005) but not necessarily adept, and many instructors from across disciplines are interjecting multimodal assignments into their courses, asking students to assemble a wide variety of semiotic materials without giving them clear composing methods. Several multimodal and design theorists have experimented with pedagogical approaches for teaching multimodal composing and made a call to implement more design theory into the pedagogies for multimodal writing (Sirc, 2002; Bezemer & Kress, 2005; NCTE, 2005), but there is very little research on how to use rhetorical theories, criticism, and devices to create heuristics for multimodal composing. Most of the existing research

on rhetoric and multimodality tends to focus on improving how students interpret or analyze multimodal forms as opposed to making them.

The New London Group (NLG) affirms that all semiotic activity is broken down into three types of designing: “Available Designs, Designing, [and] Redesigned” (p. 61). They outline and define important metalanguage for multimodal writing, but they do not provide rhetorical heuristics for multimodal writing that draw out design theory or pedagogies for teaching composing strategies. Taking this a step further, Jeff Bezemer and Gunther Kress (2005) argue for the use of design theory as a methodological frame for multimodal composing because “Design is the practice where modes, media, frames, and sites of display, on the one hand, and rhetorical purposes, the designer’s interests, and the characteristics of the audience on the other are brought into coherence with each other” (p. 240). They contend that multimodal writing combines rhetorical approaches with design theory and call for more instructors to teach multimodal composing through design theory, but they do not present any specific methods or heuristics for multimodal composing. George Sirc (2002) also supports design theory for multimodal writing but as a frame for interpreting these forms and not making them. He is more interested in defining what multimodal composition can and cannot be, arguing against the use of heuristics because heuristics treat audiences as constructed instead of lived; however, multimodal design heuristics

built on design theory and rhetorical concepts can teach students to see audiences as fluctuating and multiple and that structure and form are dependent on the characteristics of an audience’s lived experiences. Rhetorical frames can account for the ways rhetors negotiate structural decisions for their audience. One major rhetorical adjustment Ellis (2012) made to her pedagogy for teaching multimodal writing was “paying greater attention to multimodal rhetoric” (p. 65). She invited guest speakers to discuss the rhetoric of film and sound production, allotted more time to student drafting and feedback on multimodal work, and provided more access to the media labs and tools students required to complete multimodal projects—although she admits access to these media tools was problematic and out of her control. The only drawback is that Ellis does not provide any rhetorical guidelines students can use to design multimedia.

Brian Ray (2013) uses “uptake” as a pedagogical lens for teaching how to design new media forms (p. 183). He maintains that uptake is a “rhetorical tool” that can enhance student and teacher “awareness of genre and multimodality” (p. 183). He argues that employing terms like uptake as a multimodal metalanguage is highly beneficial for composing. “Adding uptake to the repertoire of multimodal terminology pushes teachers and students to examine what such remixes say about the larger rules governing the relations between genres” (p. 186). Ray presents uptake as a rhetorical frame for interpreting

multimodal messages and genres, but he does not carve out space to discuss using uptake to compose multimedia or discuss how rhetors can employ uptake to structure modal content. He concentrates on teaching uptake to increase genre awareness and to improve student interpretation of multimodal environments.

Christopher Basiger (2011) relies on Foucault's author-function and Bawarshi's genre-function as a method for analyzing multimodal forms. He declares that using genre theory for interpreting multimodal composing allows for a more rhetorical understanding of multimedia, but he does not offer a method for composing multimodal messages. Carpenter (2009) points out several structural features of electronic texts that a rhetorical heuristic for multimodal writing could implement like "brevity, compression, and abbreviation; interactivity; graphical elements; a potentially global audience; intertextuality; multigeneric elements; structural linking; and multivoicedness" (p. 144). But he does not explain how rhetors can utilize these structural features when designing multimedia. Jody Shipka (2012) calls for an activity-based framework for multimodal composing to help students move beyond simply analyzing multimodal forms. She provides a list of questions for multimodal writing that are built on a rhetorical term from Hart and Burks' work on "rhetorical sensitivity." Her heuristic guides students through a rhetorical analysis and interpretation of multimedia. Rhetors could refashion Shipka's questions to

facilitate multimodal composing, but these questions are more suited for the interpretation and analysis of multimodal forms than composing them.

The Pedagogical Value of Structure and Form

Hart and Daughton (2005) note that structure is "the apportionment and sequencing of message elements. Structural decisions are decisions about which ideas should be given what amount of attention and how ideas should be arranged for maximum impact" (p. 103). Form focuses on "the patterns of meaning audiences generate when they take in a message. Form refers to the 'shape' of meaning, how ideas are linked together by audiences" (p. 104). Rhetors structure semiotic materials, or message elements, in ways [such] that audiences can form meaning with those materials. Structure and form are the mechanisms that shift content and meaning. Each turn, change in size or movement, or (re)combination of the same semiotic materials generates a completely different structure that alters how audiences form meaning. Structure and Form are meta terms for contemplating the (re)arrangement and layering of meaning in messages. These terms emphasize how rhetors and audiences haggle over the meaning of multimodal forms.

Multimodal rhetors can add these two terms to a growing lexis, a metalanguage, for thinking about how to organize semiotic materials in digital or non-digital mediums for specific objectives and

audiences. A comprehensive metalanguage for multimodal composing can improve a student's ability to reflect on [their] composing process. Richard Marback (2009) reminds us that print vocabularies cannot adequately capture the intertextual complexity of multimodal messages. He declares that "[n]ot only do vocabularies of print fail to describe the distinguishing features of multiple, nonlanguage media, they also fail to adequately describe interrelations among different modalities of expression" (p. 265). Traci Fordham and Hillary Oakes (2013) echo this sentiment of "rhetoric as the transmodal frame, the metalanguage, for our approach to multiliteracies" (p. 318). Adopting and applying rhetorical terminology for multimodal writing promotes multiliterate activity. These terms do not prioritize print literacies and conventions or cater to a particular mode or medium.

Thinking about multimodal writing as the structuring of semiotic material can more accurately expose students to what rhetors actually do when they design messages. Students can use these terms to consider how to cater to specific audiences. Hart and Daughton insist that "[s]ince the message structure relates so closely to how people think, it can tell much about a rhetor's mental habits or an audience's operating hierarchy of beliefs" (p. 107). Structural frames deepen the purview of the rhetorical situation and expose how rhetors make design decisions within and for each situation. The structure of a multimodal message

represents a set of epistemological habits, ontological preferences, and "mixed logics" (Lauer, 2009, p. 24) that rhetors must account for when making multimodal texts. Learning how to structure negotiate these mixed logics takes practice well beyond analysis. Altering the structure of the content requires audiences to use an alternative logic to form meaning, and when the content is multimodal, the logics can drastically shift from linear to the complete absence of linearity.

Audiences examine the structure of a given set of semiotic materials to form meaning. When the structure changes, so does the form, even when the new structure uses the exact same semiotic materials as the previous structure. For example, a marriage proposal is a form that a proposer can structure in many unique ways. If someone were to pull out a ring box and fall to one knee, the likely form for that structure is a conventional marriage proposal. If the proposer were to pull out a ring box and fall on one knee at a basketball game and chose to make the marriage proposal on a jumbotron during halftime of the game, that structure creates a new form that may not be received as well as the first example. Both attempts at structuring a marriage proposal generate different experiences, forms, and meanings. Both proposals involve dropping to one knee and a ring box, but they were contextually restructured. Adjusting the structure of any given set of semiotic materials transforms how audiences make meaning

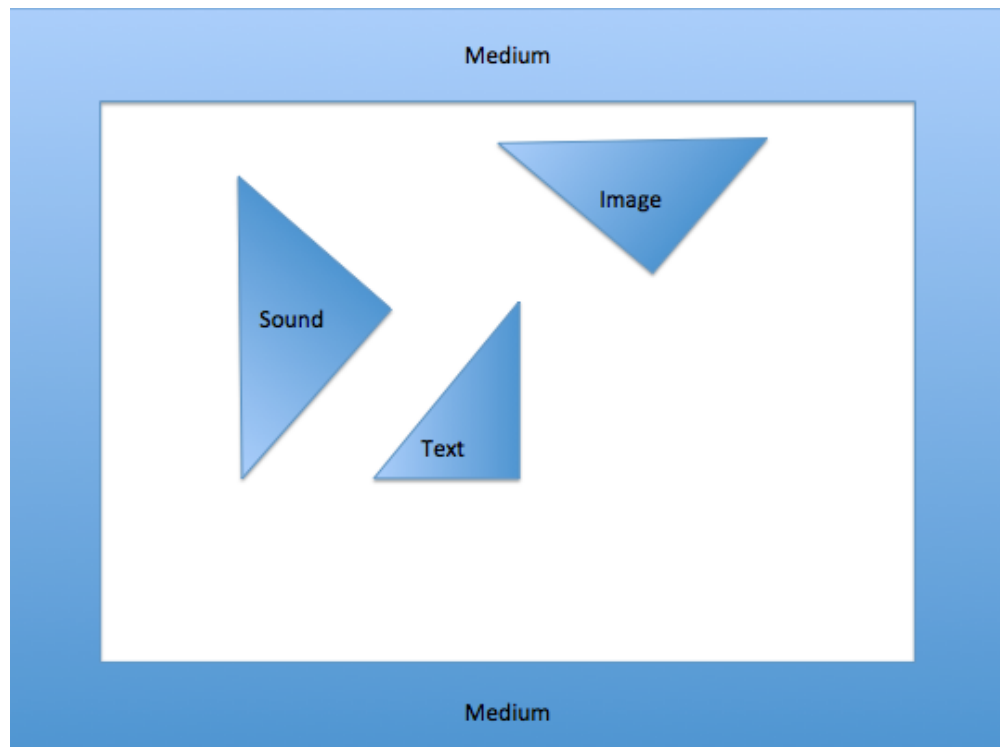


Figure 1: The Structure of Modal Content.

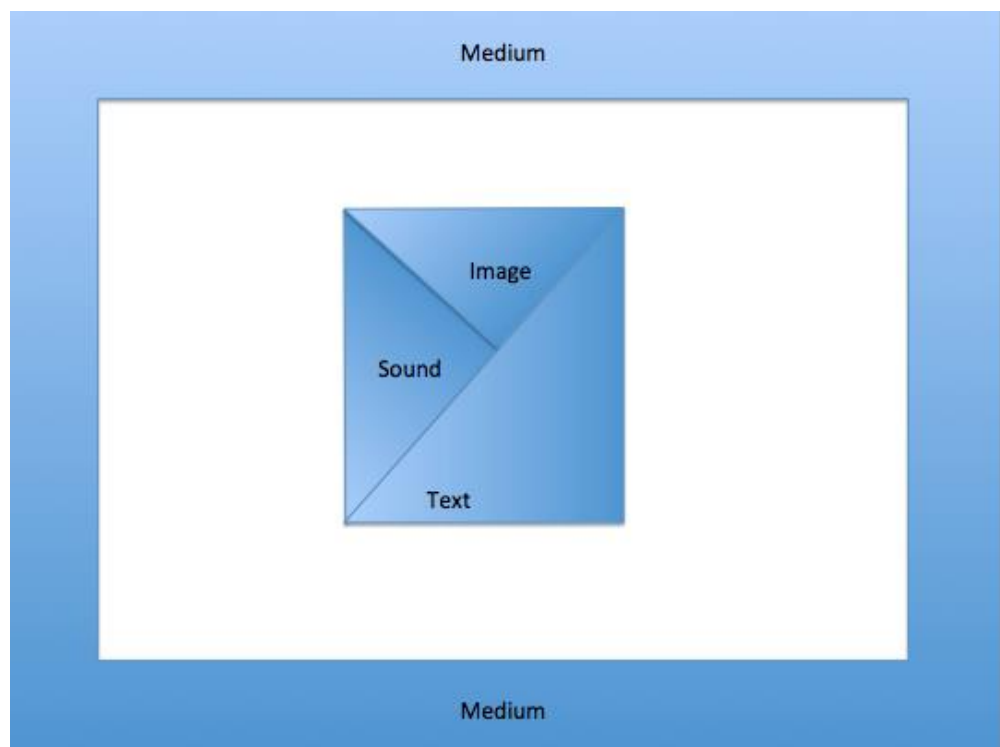


Figure 2: (Re)structuring of Modal Content.

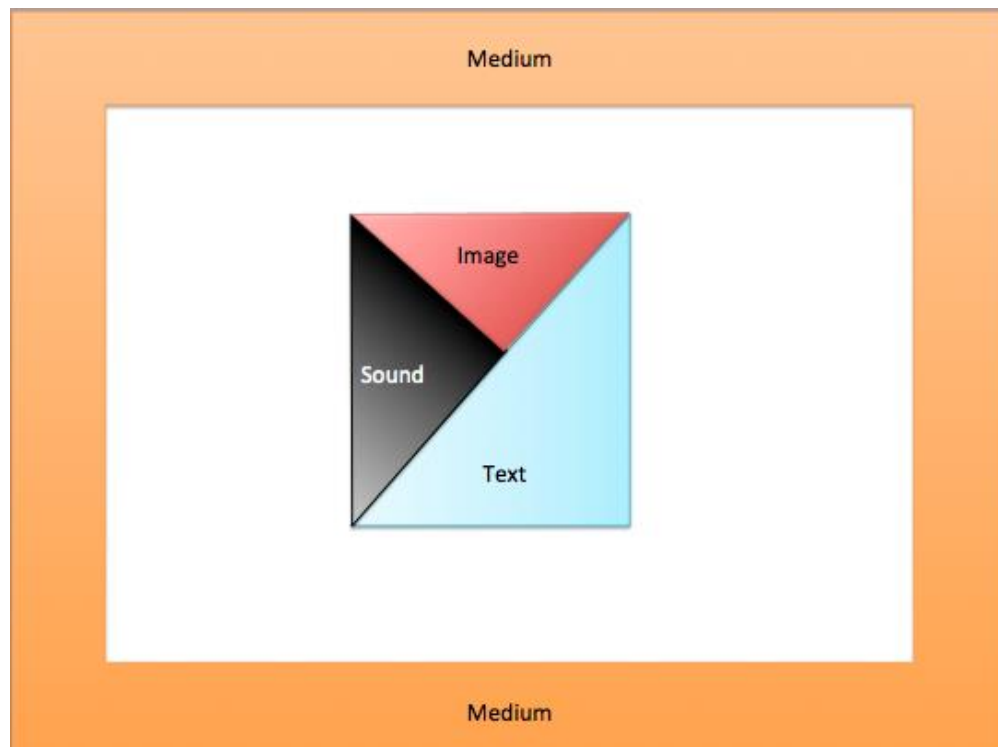


Figure 3: The (Re)structuring of Modal Content

from those materials.

To further explain this visually, I adopted Hart and Daughton's examples for structuring and recontextualizing content to demonstrate how structure and form work as a frame for thinking about multimodal composition. The images below represent the various modes (sound, image, text) that may exist within a given medium. The border represents the medium, and if we change the medium we alter what modes can be structured and how. If we alter, move, or adjust any modal element in Figure 1, the form and meaning changes too. Figure 1 demonstrates how various modes could be structured within a medium to create a form. The size and positioning of each mode within the medium creates a specific

structure and form. Figure 2 takes the same modes from Figure 1 and adjusts their size and positioning to create a new form with the same modes, within the same medium.

Figure 2 is an image of the same modes and medium from Figure 1 except the text has increased and come together with sound and image to create a completely new form. Connecting modes together creates new multimodal forms. Adding, shrinking, trimming, or removing any of these modes generates another form of interpretation. Figure 3 demonstrates how moving the same structure to a new medium also creates a new form.

Using the same structure within a new medium changes that structure even though the structure looks the exact same as it did in Figure 2. Moving this modal

structure from a TV to a computer screen alters its structure in more nuanced ways as represented by the color changes of the modes.

Form draws attention to the ways in which audiences are increasingly called upon to generate meaning from semiotic materials. Audiences actively represent and negotiate meaning in multimodal messages. Cheryl Ball (2004) reminds us that “[m]eaning is made through the reader’s choice and arrangement of multimodal fragments” (p. 420). That is why teaching students how to think about structure and form as a rhetorical design process may improve their ability to envision the various forms and arrangements and audience could make as part of the structuring process. Considering how audiences can and may arrange multimodal fragments to form meaning is a characteristic of multimodal composing. Form is also a frame for rhetors to use to consider how audiences generate various meanings from the implicit and explicit structuring of semiotic materials within varied contexts and rhetorical situations, and how audiences form very different meanings from those same semiotic materials when they are (re)structured in new ways for new contexts and audiences.

Structural Elements and the Multimodal Message

“Message design, message emphasis, message density, and message pacing” (p. 107) are four elements of structure I argue students and instructors can use to develop pedagogies and heuristics for

multimodal composing. Thinking about multimodal composing as the designing of a message provides students with another way to think about genres. Genre as a term tends to confuse students. If students are assigned to produce a specific genre without a clear rhetorical purpose, they often seek to replicate that genre and lose track of the audience and objective of the message, or they fail to see all of their rhetorical options because of a hyper-focus on replicating the form. Students should select genres based on their audience and objective so that their rhetorical purpose is at the forefront of their composing process.

Sheridan et. al (2005) call on students to consider “[w]hat modes and media are best suited to the kinds of change [they] are trying to effect and to [their] intended audience and purpose” (p. 818) when doing social justice work. They call for rhetors to make design decisions based on their rhetorical intentions and then utilize the genres, modes, and mediums that best allow them to achieve those goals. However, this could be difficult to adhere to for many of our students. Rhetors must recognize the cultural and social limitations they face when deciding how to access and compose with multiple modes for multiple audiences. Students working from and within strained socio-economic backgrounds or underprivileged communities will need to consider the unique demographics and constraints that shape their rhetorical moves. Some of our students may not have access to certain mediums or modes, or they may not have access to the

multiliteracies required to use them effectively. They may also face backlash or violence if they publicly call out certain groups of people or individuals with modes and mediums on platforms that can reach deep into communities, placing rhetors in more danger. In the next section, I explain how to use message design, emphasis, density, and pacing as frames for designing multimodal structural types.

DESIGN

Rhetorical theory can bond design theory and multimodal composing together more tightly. Rhetorical theory extends our purview of design theory because rhetorical frames expose how rhetors design messages and make decisions for a specific purpose and audience. Marback (2009) notes that “Designers” find solutions to problems, using questions and concerns that arise from rhetorical situations (p. 261). He contends that “Design is rhetoric because rhetoric is a study of our most wicked of all problems: making responsible use of the persuasive power inherent in all artifacts” (Marback, p. 262). Design theory emphasizes solving problems with messages through composing. George (2002) asserts that “thinking of composition as design shifts attention, if only momentarily, from the product to the act of production” (p. 17). When designing a message, rhetors must consider all available and possible semiotic actions to solve a problem. Pedagogy for multimodal composition must not limit students’ understanding of what

multimodal messages can be and how far they can push the boundaries of message design. Giving students a broader purview of the decision-making processes involved in multimodal composing may enhance how they create multimedia. Developing theoretical multimodal composing methods that coherently synthesize rhetorical awareness and design theory can also provide students with a comprehensive understanding for how audiences and rhetors rhetorically negotiate purpose in multimodal writing. The New London Group (1996) reaffirms this need to connect design theory with a rhetorical purpose when they contend that professional and academic communities are moving towards a design theory for multimedia. Using structure and form to push the boundaries of design theory may give students a more robust rhetorical design process.

Perhaps one of the most important values for using structure and form to think about designing multimodal messages is that “Structure argues” (Hart and Daughton, p. 113). Learning how multimodal forms make arguments through structure is difficult for students. They are conditioned to form meaning of all the forms they encounter with print literacy conventions. Students have internalized and normalized the structure and form of print literacy as a stabilizing feature for content and knowledge-making. They do not initially see how structure in multimodal writing instantiates an argument and that the structuring of semiotic materials is the argument. *Structure argues*. Learning how

to see structure as the argument of a multimodal form is vital for developing rhetorically-minded multimodal writers. Ball (2004) expounds upon this idea when she conveys how a multimodal text “explicitly performs its meaning through the audience’s understanding of its multimodal elements and interface design” (p. 410). The structure of the modal elements initiates a performance of meaning that enacts the argument. Designing structure as argument is an important convention of multimodal literacy.

Instead of revising a paragraph of words and sentences, a multimodal rhetor might adjust the volume of a sound clip, and then add an additional sound clip to increase the efficiency of the message design. These adjustments and additions are in themselves arguments of structure and conventions for multimodal composing. Moving modes and (re)connecting them to other modes and mediums alters how audiences shape meaning from the message; however, the movement and (re)connection of semiotic material is itself an argument and rhetorical representation. Remely (2017) argues that “the message is not just the content but its form relative to how it is presented and the communicators’ relationship to each other and their experiences” (p. 21). Structure and content interact with each other in ways that are not easy to separate. The message’s structural design encompasses how content is sequenced and delivered to audiences and how audiences generate meaning.

EMPHASIS

To consider how the structure of a multimodal message emphasizes certain ideas over others, it is important to identify the modal characteristics and affordances that serve as catalysts for that emphasis. Rhetors use semiotic materials to emphasize particular ideas and to solve specific problems for specific communities. Students can examine how rhetors structure modes to create emphasis and how sound, image, and/or text combinations create levels and layers of emphasis. Then they can practice formulating levels and layers of emphasis through the structuring of content in their work. This can improve their understanding of how sounds, images, and texts emphasize, and how structural combinations instantiate new levels and layers of emphasis. Rhetors weave modes and mediums together to form structural emphasis in multimodal messages, designing emphasis directly in to each message.

Increasing or decreasing the modal representation in a form can generate emphasis. If rhetors adjust, for example, the sound in a multimodal message, the form also changes. Rhetors can use additional structural elements to further consider how to structure sound. Cynthia Selfe (2009) maintains that “[s]peech conveys a great deal of meaning through pace, volume, rhythm, emphasis, and tone of voice” (p. 633). These structural conventions for sound and aurality can serve as units of analysis for identifying how a multimodal message emphasizes specific ideas with the positioning,

movement, and aurality of sound. Students can practice structuring volume, pace, tone, and rhythm to generate emphasis in multimodal forms—to examine how volume, rhythm, and tone shape the emphasis of the message. For example, to make a point about how sound can emphasize a tone or mood for a film, I have students watch the opening scene of *The Shining* without sound and then with sound.

An example of the opening scene is provided here:

The opening scene without sound feels and reads like a family vacation or a car ride through the mountains. Once the scene is played with the music, viewers and listeners quickly come to a much more grim conclusion about the form of the movie. Sound creates emphasis, and the type of music chosen for this opening scene has a particular pace, tone, and rhythm that formulates emphasis.

The spacing, inclusion, and exclusion of semiotic materials also establish emphasis through structure. Altering the types of sounds, images, texts, and mediums, along with the size of these modes, reshapes the emphasis of the content in the message, and students should spend time practicing these alterations. This will help them determine how the inclusion or exclusion of semiotic materials impacts their ability to emphasize. Rhetors alter the density of a message in much the same way as they emphasize.

DENSITY

Multimodal messages accrue thickness from the layering of semiotic materials. This layering process creates a certain type of bond, a compactness, between modes, but the strength of the bond is dependent on the layering and, therefore, always different. Modal layering creates specific and unique bonds between modes that determine the strength of a message. These bonds are never the same because rhetors never layer modes the same way. Even if they try to layer a sound over an image in the exact same way they have done before, there will still be differences in the size, shape, and accuracy of those layers. Modal layers never reline or connect exactly the same way. The strength of a certain message can severely weaken or strengthen over time as the bonds between certain modal layers erode or solidify. As messages increase or decrease in density, their structure and form change.

A message's density can expand or wither depending on how certain modes of content grow or lessen in popularity, regularity, and value. For example, using a popular image for a meme or a GIF may increase the density of a message because the mainstream image produces a set of recognizable representations for audiences, but as that image loses traction and popularity it becomes less known and therefore less dense. One example of message density is the addition of soundtracks in to movies. *The Guardians of the Galaxy* franchise increased its message density when it included a soundtrack of

very specific classic rock tunes from the 1970's that older audiences would recognize and (re)bond with while watching the movie with their friends and/or children. Parents that may not be interested in watching a film made for younger audiences may sit through the film because of the music. The soundtrack for the film caters to older audiences, and the expansion of audiences for the film from the addition of music increases the movie's density. The more dense a multimodal text is the more places audiences can connect to it and personalize its meaning. Students can practice structuring various modal forms to increase or lessen the density of a message. Instructors can create assignments that task students with structuring music or sound into a story or text to increase and/or decrease the density of the story. Rhetors can lessen density as a rhetorical move, too.

Consider how a song is played over a series of images in a short video that gains favor with an audience. The audience strengthens that bond between the song and the video with likes, shares, reposts and comments, but over time the images in the video become controversial and fall out of favor, loosening the bond and density between the song and image that once existed to make that video popular. Perhaps the images were of a famous actor now accused of inappropriate behavior. Seeing those images in a video now decreases the density of the message because the cultural forces altered the power of the image. Rhetors of

multimodal messages establish message density from the strategic layering of modes, but audiences ultimately solidify the bond between modal content and increase the density of the message with their interpretations and sharing habits. Using too many modal combinations to deliver a message can obfuscate density and decrease cognitive retention, distracting audiences from the intended message.

Lisa Bickmore and Ron Christiansen (2010) note how multimedia can be flashy and “shift our attention away from rhetorical knowledge” (p. 153) that is embedded in the design of the message. The density of the message can move our attention away or toward the objective of the message, so it is important to consider where and when those shifts occur and how the density of a message impacts those shifts. Hart and Daughton echo this sentiment when they assert that “[t]he centrality of structure to content is best seen when structure is missing” (p. 106). Shifts in message density can expose where structure is devoid and lacking in a message and how that lack of structure modifies meaning. When messages become too dense or have no density, rhetors must restructure the content to create a balance between structure and form. Without structure the content has no boundary for audiences to form meaning. Students can practice using modes to increase and decrease density in a multimodal form. Rhetors structure pacing in a similar way to both density and emphasis.

PACING

When considering how multimodal messages are paced, it is important to consider which modes impact pacing the most and why. Rhetors use modes to slow or speed up a message, and speeding up and slowing down the message changes the form of the message. Speeding up a multimodal message with sound is different than slowing it down with an image. Instructors can create assignments that ask students to practice speeding up and slowing down messages with different modes to achieve a variety of rhetorical effects. Certain images will slow or increase the pace of the message more than others. For example, pharmaceutical commercials often change the speed of the narrator's voice from a normal speed to a very fast speed when describing the side effects of the advertised drug. Students can learn how to see pacing as a structural convention for multimodal composing. Altering and applying sound, image, or text to control the pace of a multimodal message in a specific rhetorical situation is difficult, and rhetors need to practice pacing when designing multimodal forms for rhetorical situations to improve how they negotiate multimodal composing decisions in relation to various constraints, audiences, and exigences.

Rhetorical frames like structure and form provide rhetors a way to consider how to pace the movement of ideas in a message with various modes, and how pacing generates a structure that is itself

an argument. Pacing structures content in ways that impact meaning. The pace of a multimodal message is impacted by each mode but also by and through the combination of modes. Certain ideas are presented in an order to control when audiences will know something. Another simple example of this is, again, pharmaceutical medication ads. All of these medication ads begin and end the same way. Audiences are first presented with a list of the benefits of the medication and then provided with examples, scenarios, and situations that further demonstrate how the medication will improve their lives. If the medication is for skin rashes, then audiences are presented with ads that have characters feeling comfortable about their skin in public and private situations as a result of the said medication. At the end of the ad, audiences are very quickly provided with the side effects of the medication in small font at the bottom of the page. Consider how audiences would react to an alternative pacing of the same content. What if medication ads began with the side effects in a slow, deliberate voice? Students can practice altering the pacing of their messages with a variety of modes to locate the right rhetorical pace for each message they make. In the next section I use Hart and Daughton's chart for "Common Structural Techniques in Persuasion" to examine how to use structural elements to develop rhetorical heuristics for multimodal composing.

TABLE 6.1 Common Structural Techniques in Persuasion*

Structural Type	Rhetorical Function	Example (State Legislative Debate)	Main Advantages	Main Disadvantages	Critical Probe
Chronological sequence	Places time relationships in the foreground so that narrative becomes clear	"In the 1970s, we tried a sales tax and that proved inadequate. We moved to sin taxes in the '80s. The '90s require something new: a tax on professional services."	Builds suspense as the past unfolds into the present (or future)	Propositions the rhetor is advocating can become subordinated to the telling of the "story"	What appears to be the rhetor's rationale for discussing the particular points in time chosen for discussion?
Spatial sequence	Shows relationships between parts and parts or between parts and wholes	"The opportunities in this state are enormous. The lake area has tourist development. The tri-city area is luring high-tech industry. And the plateau region has the new Space Command Center."	Makes ideas "visual" for audiences	Too much detail may cloud the ideas being advanced	What devices did the rhetor use to demonstrate the "adjacency" of the elements described?
Ascending/descending sequence	Ideas are arranged according to their relative importance, familiarity, or complexity	"I agree with Senator Davenport that cable regulation must be at least considered this session. And I agree with Senator Foley that the open-meeting law is important. But we can't even think about those things until we agree on funding basic state services."	Gives a sense of precision by emphasizing the relationship of one concept to another	Once begun, the sequence must be completed, with all necessary stages being discussed	What specific strategic advantage is the rhetor hoping for by emphasizing climaxes or anticlimaxes?
Causal sequence	Links observable effects to underlying factors allegedly responsible for those effects	"Ladies and gentlemen of the legislature, I ask you to reflect on industrial development in this state. What's responsible for our growth in that area? I'll tell you what: a superior educational system. Let's never forget that."	Western audiences particularly appreciate causal structures	Audiences have been taught to distrust <i>simple</i> cause-effect linkages	What steps did the rhetor take to guard the <i>credibility</i> of the causal attributions made?

Figure 4: Screenshot of Hart and Daughton's set of structural elements and chart for "Common Structural Techniques in Persuasion."

Developing a Rhetorical Heuristic for Multimodal Composing

Hart and Daughton's chart for "Common Structural Techniques in Persuasion" calls for identifying a specific structural type, its rhetorical function, an example of the structural type, its main advantages and disadvantages, and a critical probe (p. 108). I have provided a screenshot of these techniques from Hart and Daughton's text []:

Teachers developing pedagogies for multimodal composing can adopt, apply, and recontextualize this chart for designing and analyzing multimodal

structural types. In this section I explain how to use these structural types as a method to generate critical probes and questions about multimodal composing that can develop a rhetor's design strategies and rhetorical decision-making for multimodal messages. Below is an example of an outline of the chart I adopted from Hart and Daughton for investigating structural types in multimodal messages.

The example below examines *layering* as a "structural type" for multimodal composition and then briefly identifies the rhetorical functionality of that structural type. After deciding on a

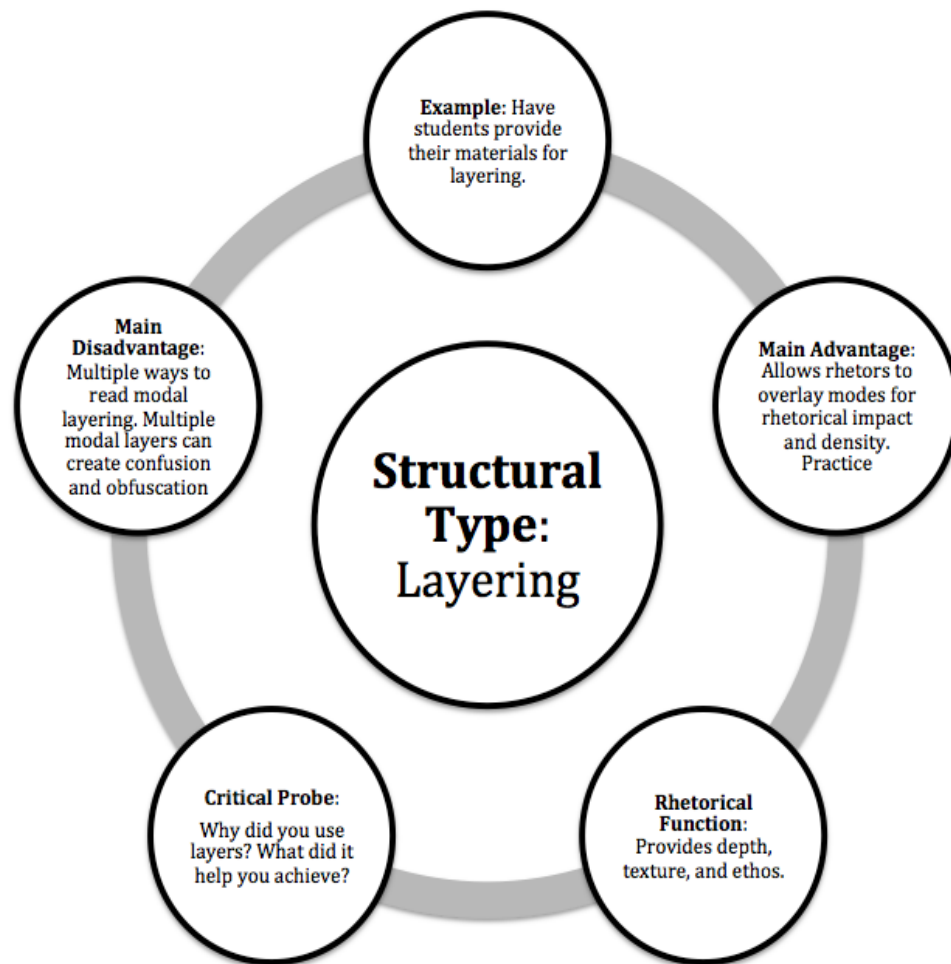


Figure 5: Structural Heuristic

structural type to investigate, students can practice implementing that type in their work so they can examine its advantages and disadvantages. Finally they can draw some conclusions, or “critical probes,” about that structural type in relation to its effect on audiences and its ability to meet rhetorical objectives. Students can then continue to practice layering modes into a message according to a rhetorical functionality that is dependent on the advantages and disadvantages of layering.

Multimodal Composing Heuristic

[PDF Version: Download](#)

1. **Structural Type:** Layering.
2. **Rhetorical Function:** Provides depth, texture, and ethos.
3. **Example:** Provide an example of layering or have students provide one. Teachers can choose examples to teach structural type identification and interpretation in class, but students can locate

examples on their own for an assignment. Have students use their work for an example.

4. **Main Advantage:** Allows rhetors to overlay modes for rhetorical impact and density. This can expose important and invisible tensions in the message for readers, viewers, and listeners.
5. **Main Disadvantage:** Multiple ways to read modal layering. Multiple modal layers can create confusion and obfuscation or hinder the clarity of the message.
6. **Critical Probe:** Why did the rhetor use layers in this example? What did it help him or her achieve? Students can use the critical probe to reflect on the effects of layering in the message. These critical probes are opportunities for students to be metacognitive about their multimodal composing process. These probes can become knowledge sets for multimodal composing students can apply to multiple writing situations.

Conclusion

Structure and form cannot account for every design move rhetors need to consider when composing multimodal improve how rhetors create pedagogies for multimodal composing. Structure and form can help students generate rhetorical heuristics for designing multimodal forms and provide writing instructors an opportunity to teach students multimodal writing strategies grounded in rhetorical

theories and design principles. This can potentially enhance how rhetors design messages with semiotic materials (Bezemer and Kress, 2008; George, 2002). These terms further demonstrate the symbiotic relationship between rhetors and audiences and how those relationships are negotiated through and with different modes. Formulating a rhetorical composing heuristic that can account for both print and electronic message design gives rhetors a more stable method for working with semiotic material.

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“Community College is the Punk Rock of Higher Ed”: Michelle Cruz Gonzales¹

Interview by Gregory Zobel, Western Oregon University

Introduction: Or, Why Interview Instead of Analysis?

Academia, composition in particular, is overwhelmingly white. Plenty of scholarship reviews, discusses, and analyzes the situation--and yet diversifying the field and removing structurally racist hurdles is slow. Analysis, critique, and discourse may appear acceptable, but in terms of intellectual work that fosters action to break down structurally racist walls, we need to more consistently apply diverse tactics in scholarship and publication. European-Americans need to step aside, admit our failure to bring equity, and look to oppressed and radical communities for leadership. One path is learning from educators of color and oppressed communities about their practices and pedagogies. An interview offers an opportunity to understand an educator more on their own terms while making the interviewer's frames or bias explicit. Interviews offer a chance to better understand how other educators work, and they can provide professional

development. Equally important, interviews can fuel anti-racist, anti-authoritarian, and anti-colonialist work and understanding within as well as beyond academia and the classroom. Equity for everyone. Finally, by interviewing in and using accessible language, educators can try to avoid the classist and exclusionary mistake of engaging in elitist, self-referential, and non-applicable academispeak.

Brief Biography

Michelle Cruz Gonzales' public and professional life intersects in, but is not limited to, the realms of being Xicana, punk rock, and an educator. As she makes clear in her interview, her personal and professional identities are largely defined by being a Xicana practitioner of Orwell's anti-authoritarian cultural and writing practices. Author of *The Spitboy Rule*, Gonzales agreed to share her time to talk about teaching and working as an anti-authoritarian and punk rocker in education.

¹ All images used with permission from the interviewee.

How did you get into teaching writing? Was it something you wanted to do, do you really like writing, or...?

As soon as I went back to school full-time in 1998, at the age of 28, I knew that I wanted to teach writing. I had been a preschool teacher all during the 90's while playing drums in a punk band, and I focused a lot on early literacy. Being one of the primary lyricists for Spitboy cemented my view of myself as a writer, and so when I finally was able to go to school full-time, and had transferred to a four-year college, I had a professor, who helped me see that I what I should really be teaching was college English. So, I both love to write and teaching writing, and maybe more importantly critical thinking and argumentation.

What courses are you teaching? From what I could find, you teach composition courses as well as creative writing. Are these the standard college comp courses, basic writing, or...?

At the community college where I teach, we are all generalists. We, when we hire, don't care much at all if people have PhDs or if they've published a bunch of books. What we care about is teaching practice and pedagogy. The standard English courses at CCs are basic skills course (remedial), college comp, and critical thinking. The last two are required to transfer to a four-year and can be taught using literature or nonfiction. I generally teach English 4, which is the lit version, and my course is a dystopian themed



Figure 1: A sketch of Gonzales in her role as a drummer.

course. I have become a specialist, of sorts, in this area, but I also teach basic skills and creative writing courses. I really enjoy teaching all the levels, but if I had to pick a favorite, it would be the critical thinking course, as it's closest to what I did in a punk band.

Which part of teaching writing do you find most politically charged? What's most empowering for your students?

For me, the most politically charged part of teaching is the fact that I am a Xicana English instructor. I have had several students directly and indirectly challenge my authority because I am a short, small-framed, relatively dark-skinned woman. Being a person of color in a power of authority can create all sorts of tricky dynamics, many that I learned quickly to deal with thanks to my training as a preschool teacher. I teach in Livermore, CA, a part of the Bay Area

that is not as liberal as Oakland, where I live; it's a place where people often feel particularly self-conscious choosing to teach works that focus on people of their own or similar background, but I've never let that stop me from doing it. Race and class are academic topics, topics that students need to learn to discuss intelligently and politely, which brings me to the most empowering thing for my students and that is helping them learn to do that, even if that means starting with the basics like race/ethnic nomenclature. When it comes to teaching critical thinking, I don't hide my own views because it seems very disingenuous, and really there's no such thing as being totally unbiased. I work very hard to preface my own beliefs, versus fact, with the phrase "this is my personal opinion."

Is teaching an extension of your politics? How do you see them as being connected?

Yes, totally, but my primary aim is NOT to encourage students to think the way I do—sure it's great when they do, but my primary concern when teaching writing or critical thinking is clarity of ideas and soundness of logic. I have read several essays that I disagreed with, essay that were terribly convincing and that got As. I always tell students who write these essays that their essay didn't change my mind, but that it was convincing and that it did alter the way I see this issue somewhat when it's warranted. Expecting students to think like you, even if you're convinced you're right, is a particular kind

of tyranny and abuse of power that I totally disagree with. I am definitely a disciple of Orwell.

In your experience as a working educator, where do you find authoritarian controls to be the most problematic?

Well, I think I've hinted at some of these types of authoritarian control in the previous question. You always hear students complain about the prof who they believe graded them down for their beliefs. Some teachers do this, though I haven't seen it too much. However, it's also true that some students misunderstand all the areas in which they are being graded and that being graded down for faulty logic is not the same as being graded down for their ideas. A good instructor will do everything they can to make sure that students understand the difference. Another way to answer your question would have me focus on the teacher persona. Many instructors go wrong by adopting a persona that is authoritarian in order to maintain control over their classroom. Some do this because they don't know any other way to teach; some do it because they are actually afraid of young people, and others do it because they can't resist asserting their authority over others. I believe that instructors ought to work on dropping the persona and just be authentic. Students will warm up to you and trust you faster—they will also feel safer, which is, according to brain science, necessary for learning.



Figure 2: Gonzales answers interview questions.

How do your politics impact your pedagogy? Your assignment creation and curriculum?

Maybe my ethnic identity impacts my pedagogy more than my politics though the two are certainly related. I teach in the Puente program, which is a transfer-focused program, open to all students, but that targets Latinx or other students of color, and I am on the council of elders for the Umoja (Black recruiting) learning community. The state of CA allocates Equity and basic skills funding for the purposes of working toward the elimination of disproportionate impact of any group of students, and like many CC campuses, Las Positas College faculty are hard at work creating programs whose pedagogies and curriculum both attract and focus on the development of black and brown students in academia, as the majority of black and brown students with degrees, started at a CC. While I don't teach primarily in these programs, I have

always taught ethnic literature or literature by women in my courses, as I have long realized the importance of not relegating texts by women or people of color to the last week of the semester, like I saw done when I was in college—"alternate" texts as an afterthought.

What do you like most about teaching this age or students?

I just really like young people. I came up in punk, a young person's subculture, filled with angst and questioning authority, and thankfully, I never outgrew it. It also probably helps me heal those places in me where my needs weren't met as young person—being able to be there for others at this wonderfully important stage in their human development. Community college is the punk rock of higher ed too—it's the place where societies "misfits" go to get an education, those who maybe aren't yet ready for college-level math or English and need a

refresher course, those who don't fit the go-to-HS-know-what-you-want-to-be-and-go-straight-to-college mold, those who want to explore. I've actually written a long form essay on this topic for *Maximum RockandRoll*.

How do you reconcile anti-authoritarian beliefs with the authoritarian position of teacher or educator?

I think I sort of covered this above, but there are a few additionally important things that I do that I could list here:

- I literally write in every syllabus that students should question authority, starting with mine.
- I work very hard to be prepared, organized, and engaging. Students know the difference, and they will "behave" better when their instructor has earned their respect, when their instructor is not just phoning it in, or hasn't bothered to prepare because they believe students are not smart enough to notice.
- I facilitate Socratic type discussion, discussions designed for students to discuss with one another their views, ideas, and responses to a text, and not simply answer questions that I know the answer to.
- And I, genuinely, like young people and I know I can learn as much from their ideas as they can learn from my "expertise."

You mentioned that you taught Kindergarten at one point. What did you take away from teaching

kids that age? Did that impact you and your politics in any way?

I actually taught pre-school, which is definitely similar to Kindergarten, though not in the public school system, which I'd never survive or thrive in. I actually wrote the Spitboy song "What Are Little Girls Made of?" while working as a preschool teacher. I combined my feminist views with gender role awareness that is taught in early childhood education courses. In these courses, one learns a lot about the different stages in child development and there are sections in ECD text books dedicated to discussing gender roles, not so unlike what we all learned in my fave kid's album *Free to Be You and Me*.

Here are the lyrics to the Spitboy song—they are simple but loaded with implication:

"What Are Little Girls Made Of?"

*Baby boy, precious baby boy
The world wants you
I am what's left over*

*Baby boy, precious baby boy
Blue signifies your strength
And my weakness*

I am your second-class citizen

*I am pink—I am weak
I am red—I am a whore*

*Swaddled in red like a target
I am your sacrifice*

Many preschool teachers are also aware of different learning style, personality



Figure 3: Gonzales was a drummer, singer, and lyricist for Spitboy; her music centers/ed social justice for marginalized populations.

types, and body positive ideas, so many of these ideas dovetail with socio-political issues; one that comes to mind is the focus of pre-school teachers to help children learn body boundaries. To teach children not to feel they need to accept touch from anyone, even adults, and to help parents unlearn ideas about “manners” when it comes to this issue, as a way to help them protect their children from unwanted touch, personal space intrusions, and worse.

You recently presented on punk rock and Orwell at a conference in LA. How do you differentiate your personal experiences of being and working in punk from discussions about punk as a genre, culture or field? Do you think it’s necessary to

differentiate? Do you feel like you have to depersonalize your experiences and understanding?

I gave this talk at the Curating Resistance: Punk as Archival Method conference and my talk was called “Orwell’s Influence on Punk and How He and Joe Strummer are Almost the Same Guy and Why We Need Them Both Now More than Ever.” My particular academic interests that are rooted in punk rock are usually at, or about, the intersections of the music and literature, usually dystopian literature in which I have come to specialize. Giving this talk was a little bit of a stretch for me to pull off for two reasons, the first being that I never have as much time to prepare as I’d like, being so busy with teaching, writing, and parenting, but also because I wasn’t speaking about myself, which I have been



Figure 4: Gonzales signs a copy of her book, *The Spitboy Rule*, while sitting among friends, including legendary Chicana punk musician, Alice Bag (aka Alicia Armendariz, right).

doing a lot of lately. I rather like being an expert on things outside of my own experience (and not just talking about myself all the time). I like it simply because I value a variety of intellectual ideas, but I will admit that I also like it because I do have a good deal of anxiety about being smart. I want people to know I am smart and/or not just a one-trick pony, and I know this anxiety stems from many of the ways I was treated growing up due to my ethnic and economic background and the stereotypes about Mexicans/Xicanx people that prevent many from seeing us for who really are. I value the personal, and I am aware that many do not, so there's a conundrum there.

What have you learned from mentoring students?

Mentoring students, like teaching is service work, and one thing I've learned from doing that work is that I would not be happy without it. I also just like being

around and learning from young people, always having the opportunity to stay hip to youth culture, slang, ideas, and where we're headed. Whenever I go to an event where I'm punk rock "famous," I am always relieved when headed home to cook dinner for my family and teach the next day—those things, my family and my students are an important grounding force in my life.

That's a great statement, "Community college is the punk rock of higher ed," and I completely agree from my own experiences. Could you elaborate a bit more?

My main thesis for this assertion is the idea that CC is like punk because just like you don't need to know how to play an instrument to be in a punk band, you don't need to be good, yet, at English and Math to go to a CC because, like punk, CCs are open access institutions, and filled with misfits, all the people in society who didn't go the traditional route either because they weren't ready or couldn't afford to.

[...]

And now the questions that have to be asked: What are you reading now? Who do you listen to?

I am reading *The Clash Take on the World: Transnational Perspectives on The Only Band that Matters*, edited by Samuel Cohen and James Peacock, *Swastika Night* by Katharine Burdekin, and *Who Fears Death* by Nnedi Okorafor.

I am always listening to The Clash, but I am currently also listening to Mexican garage punk band, Les Butcherettes, Cholo Goth group Prayers, and a lot of jazz via my son who is a jazz pianist. Recently, we've been listening to a lot of Dexter Gordon.



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“Pynk” and Queer:

Photographing Desert Body/Landscapes as Relational Eco-Visual Rhetorics

Anushka Peres, University of Arizona

#queerology #ecointimacies #bodylandscapes #landscapebody #queernature
#ecorhetoric #visualrhetoric #ecoview #constructedlandscape
#succulentsucculents #beautifuldecay #backyardnature
#inspiredbyjanellemonae #pynklife

I watched Janelle Monáe’s “Pynk” music video as soon as it was released. I was enchanted by the pinkly saturated desert landscape, the vaginal and floral fashion pieces, and the depicted queer love story. The visuals, as potent as the corresponding aural anthem, center Black women and utilize yonic imagery in association with the song lyrics as a mode of potential female empowerment and simultaneous resistance. Mountains, mesas, Joshua trees, and dust become recurring characters in the video that help produce the world of “Pynk” and its associated values. I was a few weeks into a breakup with my first woman-identified partner when I saw this video and it was a wonderful distraction. But Pynk turned out to be much more than that: it has become an aesthetic influence, a model of embodied queer ecological relational practice, and a way of seeing landscape differently.

After I saw the video, I went for a walk with the dog. During that time, long

walks with my dog in the neighborhood helped me mourn the loss of my relationship. A particular Palo Verde tree gave me pause as I remembered when she first pointed out a praying mantis egg casing on one of its lower branches. We had kissed next to that tree and she detailed the insect’s reproductive processes. In between our handhelds and observations, while the dog waited patiently, I had taken out my phone and macro lens attachments for a closer look and, of course, to snap photographs. This tree, like many other desert features, helped construct my queerness as and through ecological relations. My queer identity had grown in the swarm of ladybugs that enveloped us as we reached the top of Mt. Wrightson, in the staccato movements of the lesbian lizards we talked about and watched frequently, in the delicate veins inside of the prickly pear and the ring she gave me that resembled its features, and in the way I differently experienced the landscape on these walks

when we broke up. Our love, and my queerness, had come into being in and of the desert and with her. But to the public, it seemed my femme-presenting queerness had been most legible in relation to her: her queerness easily identifiable through her masculine of center presentation.

But the morning I saw “Pynk,” I began to visually write a new queer ecological story in response to the video. The imagery and song lyrics remained present with me and I made meaning as I am trained to do as scholar and practitioner of visual rhetoric-- through simultaneous analysis and artistic creation. I saw my favorite neighborhood cacti in bloom and, as usual, I took out my phone and macro lens attachment to look closer. Long spines were a geometric maze, a puzzle of pokes and prods. My fingers and phone grazed the plant as I gazed through the lens. The pink flesh of the flower looked remarkably similar to the ruffles of Monáe’s “labial chaps” (Bryant, 2018), both resonant in their yonic resemblance. The blossom also protruded fine black curled threads, like the pubic hairs Monáe makes visible in “Pynk.” I snapped photograph after photograph, composing images of the cactus bloom through the lens of “Pynk.”

This series of desert plant body/landscapes emerged from there. Monáe’s video and associated lyrics inspire my aesthetic choices and help me re-view and re-establish a co-constituted eco-relational queerness built through multimodal meaning-making in photographic praxis. I share these images on Instagram, using hashtags as a necessary

framing device to not only forward my own identity but also call attention to the constructed and constructing nature of nature photographs. As eco-visual rhetoric scholars contend, images of nature not only represent nature, but also, they function to construct it (DeLuca and Demo, 2000, 2001; Dobrin and Morey, 2009). This series brings together eco-visual rhetorics and queer ecologies scholarship, particularly through the links between discourses of sexuality and the environment (Mortimer-Sandilands and Erickson, 2010) that are produced visually. These discourses impact one another and contribute to understandings of who or what is considered natural—a strategy often utilized to position queerness and queer sexuality as unnatural or “against nature” (Hogan, 2010; Seymour, 2013). In photographs that magnify moments of queer eco-relational intimacies, new looking practices and other queer engagements may continue to emerge.

This story is one of many, written and rewritten in the landscape. Mine is a story told, covered over, and erased like so many others, and in its telling, I also participate in processes of erasure. Indeed, place is a palimpsest of constellated and relational becomings and photographs are contributors to the valuations of particular lives and lifeforms. It is my hope that these macro-level depictions of desert landscapes that resemble human bodies queer understandings of nature and considerations of the natural. Magnifying the margins of a gaze might, as Monáe’s video exemplified for me, yield new ways

of seeing and being with landscapes and each other.

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Figure 1: “PYNK: like the inside of your”... cactus blossom?



Figure 2: “PYNK: Where it’s deepest inside”



Figure 3: "PYNK: Getting lost in the dark is my favorite part"



Figure 4: "PYNK: Like the halls of your heart"



Figure 5: "PYNK: Leaving traces of us"

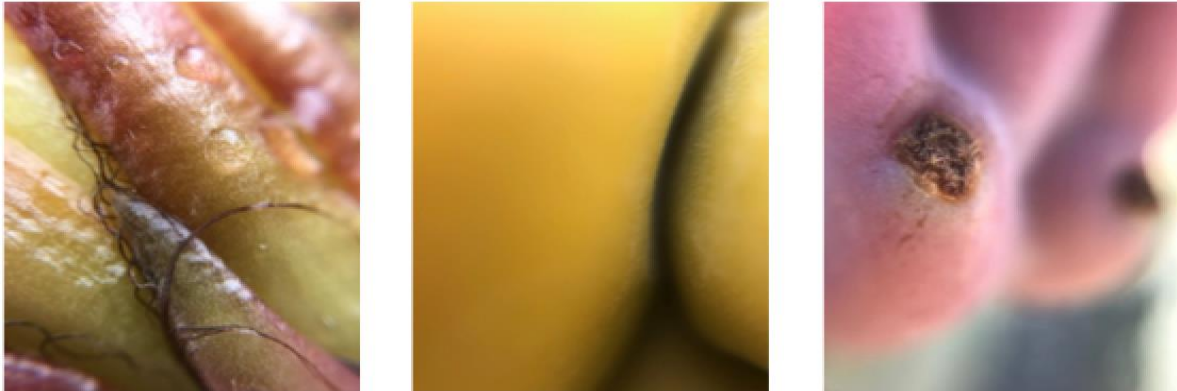


Figure 6: “PYNK: Let’s count the ways we could...”



Figure 7: “PYNK: Like the [birds of] paradise found”

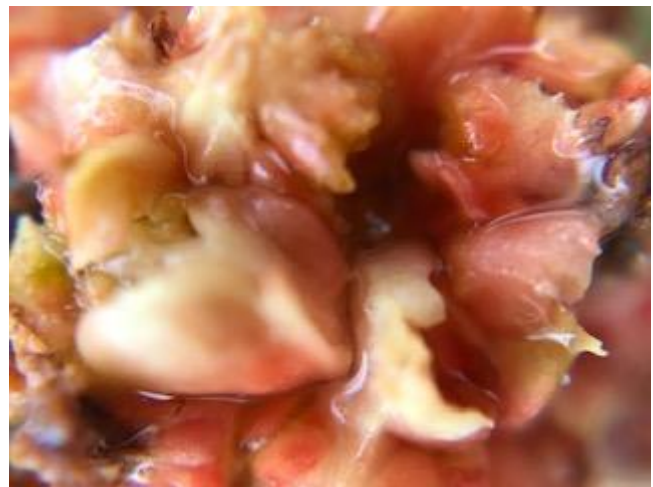


Figure 8: “PYNK: When you’re blushing inside”

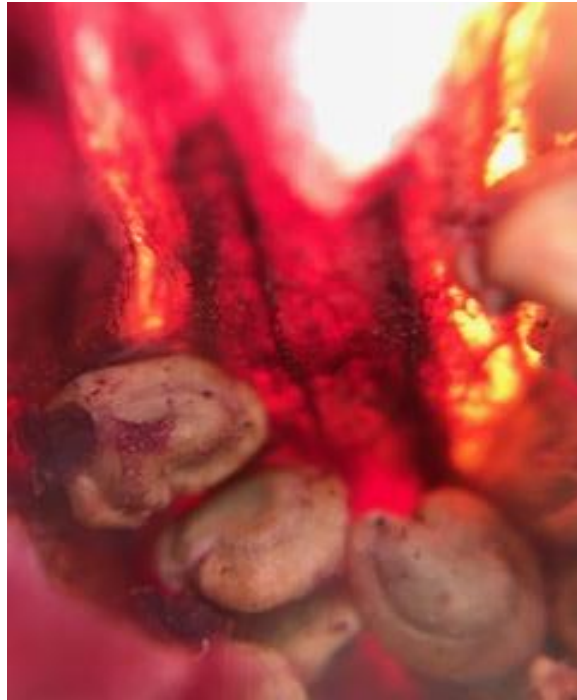


Figure 9: "PYNK: Like the skin that's under"

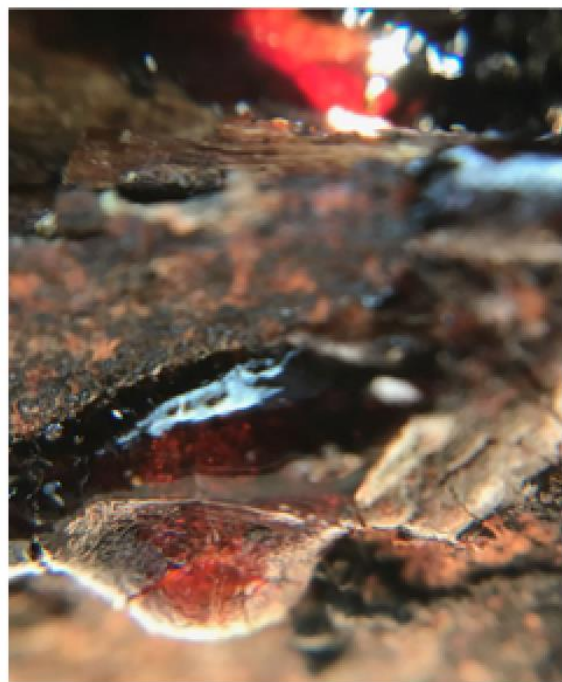


Figure 10: "PYNK: Yeah, some like that!"



Figure 11: “PYNK: Behind all of the doors”

Review

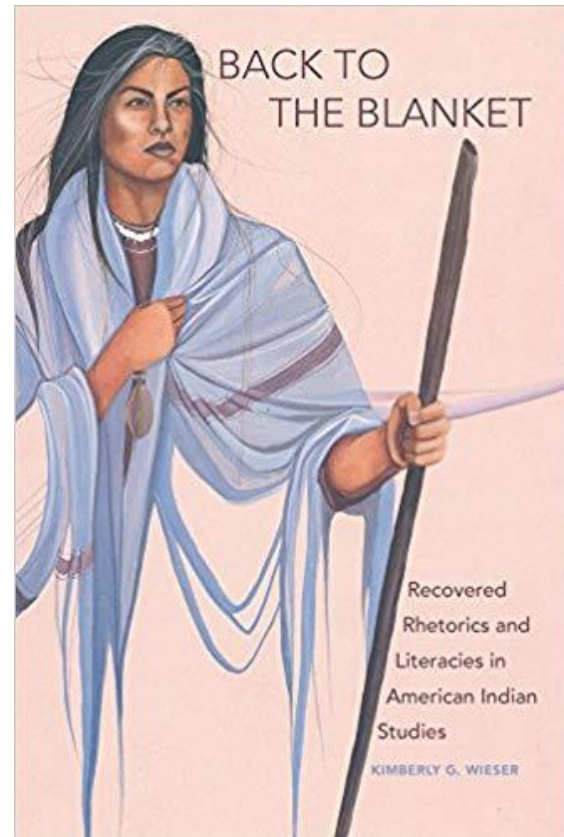
Back to the Blanket: Recovered Rhetorics and Literacies in American Indian Studies

Kimberley G. Wieser

University of Oklahoma Press

Interacting with archival text and stories helps us make meaning of our identities as well as lived experiences as Indigenous people. These understandings help bridge us to others in our communities both culturally and politically. Additionally, they offer those from outside Indigenous communities a way to understand why topics such as sovereignty, tribal enrollment, lands, and many others are central to our conversations. These archival interactions are more than mere readings of documents of the past. They are part of who we are and part of our rememberings. *Back to the Blanket* offers a discussion of the ways in which Indigenous rhetorical practices help us understand our pasts as well as current experiences.

In the preface, Kimberly Wieser discusses the title *Back to the Blanket* in relation to how the term was used historically to refer to Native folk returning to their tribal ways after being “civilized” in a derogatory manner. Yet, she also describes it as her “...own paracolonial refusal of ‘captivity’ by mainstream culture’s tools of empire” (p. x). It is a way to return to deeper



understandings of who we are. Wieser’s double meaning of the phrase refers to Indigenous folk’s journey back to and/or continuation of our ways despite settler colonialism. It is a return to our words, our stories, our rhetorics. While this book uses Indigenous rhetorics to speak to American Indian Studies and Indigenous scholars, it is not limited to this field nor is it limited to Indigenous students.

Back to the Blanket offers what Wieser describes as an intertribal experience. Given the diversity of tribal nations, an intertribal approach helps prevent a homogenous view of what it means to be

Indigenous. Intertribalism is used in a way that is "...seeking commonality that *does not* sacrifice tribal specificity but takes into account relationships that exist across and outside tribal lines" (p. 6). These relationships rely on each other as a way to continue to live as Indigenous people and to be who we are in our own terms. Throughout the text, Wieser offers personal story and experiences to help highlight the nuances of tribal identities as well as cultures. The lens of an unenrolled tribal person is also used throughout to show how experiences and culture are also integral parts of Indigenous identities.

By drawing on the use of Indigenous rhetorical practices of several Indigenous people such as Samson Occom, Leslie Marmon Silko, Ada-gal'kala, and Sylvia Madam, Wieser guides us through speeches, historic texts, and present-day texts, to show the ways in which traditions shaped and shape interactions with Eurocentric societies while still maintaining self-representation. Additionally, the manipulation of these same practices by people such as Johnathan Smith and George W. Bush are shown through their speeches as ways to maintain their political dominance over Indigenous communities. The resulting tension that remains between settler colonial societies and Indigenous societies because of these manipulations help illustrate the ongoing struggles of sovereign nations and other unrecognized Indigenous communities. The richness and depth of material covered alongside Wieser's discussion of it is incredible as is

her humility in building upon the writings and words of other Indigenous rhetorical work.

Kimberly Wieser does an excellent job of pulling together an Indigenous rhetorical analysis with American Indian Studies that offers insight to both fields. *Back to the Blanket* gives readers an opportunity to interact with material in new ways that centers Indigenous voices and representation. Wieser tells us, "Stories, like functional and sturdy baskets, are bearers of our theories and our knowledge" (p. 55). *Back to the Blanket* beautifully shows Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars what exactly this means. This book is recommended for anyone with an interest in Cultural Rhetorics, American Indian Studies, Ethnic Studies, and Women, Gender, & Sexuality Studies, as well as those with an interest in a new approach to interacting with Indigenous based texts and historic documents and/or Indigenous resilience. *Back to the Blanket* shows us how important it is for Indigenous communities to be centered in the academy.

Luhui Whitebear

Oregon State University and
Assistant Director of the OSU Native
American Longhouse Eena Haws



Luhui Whitebear is an enrolled member of the Coastal Band of the Chumash Nation. She is a Ph.D. student in the Women, Gender, & Sexuality program at Oregon State University as well as the Assistant Director of the OSU Native American Longhouse Eena Haws. She received her B.S. in Ethnic Studies, B.S. in Anthropology, and M.A. in Interdisciplinary Studies (Women, Gender, & Sexuality Studies, Ethnic Studies, and Queer Studies focus), all from OSU. Her research focuses on Indigenous rhetorics, Indigeneity and reclaiming of Indigenous identity/gender roles, missing & murdered Indigenous women, Indigenous resistance movements, and natural resource protection. Luhui is a mother, poet, and Indigenous activist. She has publications forthcoming in the *Miami Law Review* and the *American Indian Cultural and Research Journal*.

Review

Racial Shorthand: Coded Discrimination Contested in Social Media

Edited by Cruz Medina and Octavio Pimentel

Computers and Composition Digital Press/University Press of Colorado & Utah State University Press

In *Racial Shorthand: Coded Discrimination Contested in Social Media*, Cruz Medina and Octavio Pimentel give scholars in Rhetoric and Composition our



first edited collection on multimodal composition from the perspectives and practices of people of color. Their

reasoning for this, as they say in the Introduction, is to “set out to unpack the dominant narratives that undermine the media produced by communities of color” that further erase “the rhetorical, oral, and aural traditions of these communities.” Though the discipline has discussed the use of technologies by people of color, the tendency has been to look solely at technological access to argue for the existence of the digital divide. While that conversation has been useful for thinking

about how power has functioned to control or prevent technology use within these communities, Medina and Pimentel expand our disciplinary conversations past the digital divide and to show how people of color compose through a multitude of technologies.

They declare their hope that the collection’s chapters will highlight and uplift multimodal contributions by communities of color that have been overlooked and erased because dominant assumptions about multimodal composing prioritize the digital over other creative composing practices. This prioritization operates through a colonial logic that purposefully ignores non-dominant approaches to technology use. Therefore, Medina and Pimentel strategically adopt a decolonial framework that presents “knowledge from rhetorical traditions that have been denied, dismissed, and ignored in favor of championing the centrality of whiteness in the myth of Western modernity” (Introduction). In turn, the authors explain how people of color use technology in the service of uplifting their own communities and sharing stories neglected by mainstream society.

In “Not the King: Cantando el Himno Nacional de los Estados Unidos,” Octavio Pimentel seeks to redefine the dominant perception of American identity by focusing on Sebastian de la Cruz, a young Mexican-American singer who performed

the National Anthem during the 2013 NBA Finals. Pimentel argues that the dominant belief of whiteness as what defines American-ness fueled racist reactions to de la Cruz's performance. Pimentel calls on the United States to "address racism, cultural difference, and translingualism in its educational system" to curb the further marginalization of students of color that furthers racist beliefs and leads to violence." He encourages writing instructors to consider race as they write in and across modalities with students in their classrooms.

The second chapter, "Miss American Terrorist: A Critical Racial Analysis of the Crowning of Miss America" by Charise Pimentel, furthers the question of what it means to be an American. Using critical media literacy, Pimentel looks closely at the history of the Miss America Pageant and how racism within that institution reflects racist discourses present in other aspects of American society. She, too, supports the integration of critical media literacy as a methodological approach in writing classes to help students critique normative discourses of racism that permeate and normalize perceptions of whiteness.

Alexis McGee then pushes on the normalization of whiteness in America by analyzing the rhetorical history and signification of Barbie. By critiquing both the doll and Mattel's Dolls of the World Collection, McGee argues that Barbie "produces forms of racial shorthand" rhetorically across multiple social media spaces ("Barbie Goes Abroad"). Employing

critical frames, McGee examines how the collective image of Barbies from around the world upholds racist, capitalist conceptions of beauty and bodily identity that particularly center whiteness.

In Chapter Four, "Essence of Mom 2.0: Media, Memory, and Community across an Extended African American Family," Julia Voss and Lillie R. Jenkins seek to amend the gap Medina and Pimentel identify by focusing on the creation of the MJ Project, a digital text that documents the life and legacy of Martha M. Jenkins, an African American woman whose life had an extraordinary impact on many. Voss and Jenkins reflect on the MJ Project's function as a familial multimodal literacy practice; they also discuss the methodological approach for creating this kind of multimodal text to honor the ethical concerns of MJ's family and communities. Their chapter ends with a set of best practices for collecting and writing a family history.

Next, Miriam F. Williams shows in her chapter, "#BlackLivesMatter: Tweeting a Movement in *Chronos* and *Kairos*," how Black social media activists have used Twitter to form the #BlackLivesMatter movement. She shares information gathered by conducting a qualitative rhetorical analysis of the top tweets using the hashtag for one day. Her article illuminates the data she gathered and a methodological approach to interpret this data set that Rhetoric and Composition may find useful. In doing her research, Williams learned that use of the #BlackLivesMatter hashtag has influenced

public conversation around resisting police violence, acknowledging that more work needs to be done.

In the second to last chapter, Laura Gonzales presents data gathered from a case study at a non-profit organization in Western Michigan. Gonzales suggests that we can learn more about how information is designed to fit different audiences by studying the ways multilingual communicators use what she calls “translation moments” to transform and adapt information across languages. She frames “Translation as Technology” that performs constant rhetorical negotiations based on cultural, strategic, and design needs. She concludes by asking scholars to reposition linguistic diversity as a valuable asset within professional, technical communication settings.

Lastly, Cruz Medina shows readers “how personal stories in culturally relevant multimodal storytelling contribute to scholarship that has been excluded from the landscape of academic print literacy” (“Digital Latinx Storytelling”). Medina refers to this form of storytelling as a form of digital testimonio—“a Latinx digital writing practice that makes use of the different semiotic affordances of multimodal communication in online environments, and embodies a resistant ethos in an academic space to engage with issues of race, class, gender, and disability.” The two digital testimonies he shares highlight how these forms enable Latinx composers to speak truth to power. Both videos are powerful, emotional texts that draw viewers in through the camera and into a

world where memory and story bring the past to us. Medina concludes his chapter—and this collection—with an argument for teaching digital testimonio in the classroom for how it promotes multimodal composing and supports social justice-oriented pedagogy.

This collection provides readers/viewers/hearers/writers with a sampling of texts through which to critically engage with how technologies and race intersect to impact everyone. We are all shaped by the racist discourses around us, and our technologies have not escaped that truth. However, just as technologies work in service of oppression and power, people of color have used the technologies we have at hand to act in resistance. This collection gives our discipline some tactics for responding to racism within technological platforms and for adapting the technologies we have at hand. As Medina and Pimentel make clear, people of color have long engaged in multimodal composition; it is past time that scholarly spaces make room for those texts.

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Les Hutchinson is currently a Ph.D. candidate in the Writing, Rhetoric, and American Cultures department at Michigan State University. Her research brings together cultural and digital rhetorics, particularly at the intersection of intellectual property and surveillance, to study how social media platform design impacts user safety and online identity. Some of her work can be found in *Computers & Composition*, *The Routledge Companion to Digital Writing and Rhetoric*, *Social Writing/Social Media: Publics, Presentations, and Pedagogies*; and forthcoming in *Technical Communication Quarterly*. She can easily be reached on Twitter (@techairos) where she curates a frequent presence and enjoys a good gif/meme.



The Journal of Multimodal Rhetorics

About the Journal

The Journal of Multimodal Rhetorics, or JOMR, is a completely online, open-access journal featuring essays and other items that examine multimodality in all of its cultural, material, temporal, and pedagogical manifestations. While we do welcome work that focuses on the digital, we stress that multimodality does not automatically refer to digital tools or the use of specific (new) media. We are especially interested in perspectives that complicate typical views of multimodality and that highlight those traditional multimodal practices and praxes that sustain our cultures and everyday lives. We welcome compositions that draw attention to the political dimensions of under/privileged modes and the ways that media perpetuate or contest dominant attitudes and hegemonic norms.

We encourage authors to take advantage of our online presence to use hyperlinks, images (with permission or Creative Commons), video, podcasts, and other elements. (If you're unsure, just drop us a line.) However, please note that all images should include alt-text, all video should include captions and transcriptions, and podcasts should be accompanied by transcriptions. Additional uses of media are welcome as well.

All essays undergo anonymous peer review by at least two members of our review board. Essays should not be under consideration elsewhere and must not have been published elsewhere. Authors retain all rights to their work and may reprint and circulate as they wish, although we ask that they note its publication in *JOMR*.

Submission Guidelines

Following the lead of other journals like *Kairos* and *Present Tense*, all submissions should follow APA style for in-text citations and references with the sole exception of critics' names that appear in the body of the essay. Full names should be provided the first time they are referenced. All work should be emailed to journalofmultimodalrhetorics@gmail.com.

For alphabetic texts, two versions should be submitted, one that includes your name and institutional affiliation, the second with all identifying information removed. Please use .doc or .docx files. For videos, podcasts, and webtexts, please remove as much identifying information as possible.

Once your work has been accepted for publication, please provide a short author's biography (no more than 100 words) and a picture of the author(s) as a jpeg or gif. If you would prefer to not use a picture of yourself, please send a Creative Commons image or a personally-authored one of your choice.

JOMR is published twice a year, in Spring and Fall.

Discussions (Essays)

Essays should range between 3,000-7,000 words excluding references and endnotes. Essays in graphic novel-style should not exceed 15 pages. Longer works will be considered, but keep in mind that online presentation doesn't lend itself well to overly long works. If you would like to submit an essay as a series over several issues, please contact the editors. Authors should ensure that hyperlinks are current as of submission. Video essays and podcasts should be between 10-20 minutes and include captions (videos) and transcriptions. Webtexts must be hosted by the author.

Dialogues (Interviews)

Interviews can be submitted as podcasts, videos, or verbal transcripts. They may include one-on-one conversations with scholars, teachers, critics, or artists, or they may be roundtable-style discussions.

Demonstrations (Artistic Displays)

Artistic displays can take any number of forms to showcase original compositions that include, but are not limited to, photography, paintings, songs, and slideshows. Composers use these media to tell stories, compose "arguments," or draw attention to issues of vital political and cultural significance in ways that standard essays cannot.

Reviews

We welcome book reviews of books or other texts that are no older than two years. If you are interested in reviewing texts older than that, please see our guidelines for the Re-Views section. Reviews should be between 1,000-1,500 words.

Re-Views

This section is dedicated to revisiting older essays, books, or other media whose influence continues to resonate within current scholarship. These works can focus on multimodal

theory specifically, or they may be works that speak to cultural practices that engage multimodality. Submissions should encourage readers to consider the material in a new light or explain its ongoing significance to rhetorical studies. If you are unsure about submitting to this section, please email the editor at journalofmultimodalrhetorics@gmail.com with any questions or concerns, or directly at cvcedillo@gmail.com.

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