The *Journal of Multimodal Rhetorics*

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Inaugural Issue

A WORD FROM THE EDITORS

When we first took on *JOMR* as a project, neither one of us anticipated the steep learning curve we would undergo. What's more, when we began planning this project with reviewers and editorial team members over a year ago, neither one of us anticipated the world in which we would be launching the first issue.

Thank you for accompanying us on this journey.

Christina V. Cedillo
University of Houston - Clear Lake

What does it mean to speak, to have a voice? For that matter, what does it mean to have or do rhetoric? I don't ask these questions facetiously or to seem deep and philosophical. These are questions I ask of my students. I myself contemplate these issues on a daily basis.

And I mean *daily* as the not-so-mundane stuff of everyday life. Because discourses cannot be dissociated from their situations and contexts and some situations and contexts are more equal than others.

Sometimes the most vital communication occurs in the i n t e r s t i c e s.

M. Melissa Elston
Northwest Missouri State University

Some of you may not be used to seeing an editor's letter in a scholarly journal that begins on such an explicitly political note. That said, our field is inextricably bound to the political sphere. Teaching is an expressly political act, not because we are molding or indoctrinating people (as alarmists on the right frequently charge), but because we are preparing students to navigate a world that is politically constituted and reconstituted. To pretend otherwise — to speak and behave as if the rhetorics our students study and practice within the classroom can be divorced from what is happening outside of it — is disingenuous.

Rhetoric has been viewed with suspicion for much of eurowestern history.

Words cannot be trusted, especially not when they issue from the mouth of a woman.

Words cannot be true, especially not when they issue from the mouth of an ethnic Other.

Words are unstable, because they are queer things.

Words are mere sentiment, particularly when they come from people, bodies to be pitied.

It's difficult to speak when these paradigms of oppression intersect to hit you from all directions.

Or perhaps it's more accurate to say when these systems work together to prevent the favored from having to listen.

When the philosopher-prince Nezahuacoyotl fled the tyranny of his uncle, he composed a poem/song/record/lament/protest. Even now he shows us that some things cannot be separated or placed into binary categories:

Survivance and song.

Space and speech.

Life and meaning.

Words are actions are art are the bodies that compose.

Just because we don't express ideas in ways commonly understood through dominant lenses doesn't mean communication isn't happening.

We speak volumes, us *metics*.

Furthermore, if a rhetorician or compositionist actually tried to stake out such a position within earshot of me, I would have to look them/him/her in the eye, hard. And I'd ask what the point of their research or teaching even *was*, then.

* * *

To be candid, I found myself asking this very question about my own work this fall, in the aftermath of the U.S. election. For me, it's been increasingly hard to sell students on the power of words and ideas. And, while I conscientiously refrain from policing students' specific political stances or commitments, I have often privately wondered since November: **How do I stand in front of my course sections and prattle on about "a good man speaking well" when a man who is less than "good" by Quintilian's standards — a man who spoke intemperately, uncivilly, threateningly — has used those means to successfully seize the reins of power?**

Quintilian, it turns out, was a bit of an idealist.

If anything, 2016 exposed the limitations of Western-style rhetoric — at least, the oversimplified version many of us have been peddling to students in their core classes. Over and over, we insinuate in first-year composition courses that audiences are eminently persuadable if only you find the right blend of ethos, pathos, logos to sway them. The reality is that it's more complicated than that. To move forward, we must disabuse

Our *memoria* manipulates time and space. *Kairos* extends in all directions.

That is why some bodies must be silenced. Our very survival is rhetorical.

We have always been multimodal.

ourselves of the notion that the greater good can be accomplished through masterful argumentation alone. For a number of Americans in 2016, no amount of ethos, pathos or logos would have kept them from rising above their biases, their own short-sightedness and fear at the ballot box.

How do we persuade audience members who are, for example, unabashed bigots or Islamophobes? How do we get them to identify with us in a Burkean sense (and honestly, would we even want to)?

The reality is, rhetoric is not just about words (or images, for that matter). It's about action. It's about creation. More importantly, it's about coalition: respecting your audience and viewing them less as empty vessels to be persuaded and acted upon — and more as your equals, as people with agency and ideas to be acted with.

This isn't my fresh insight or anything. If you look outside the European tradition, other people have been telling Westerners this for years. Centuries. We need to step away from what the Academy tells us is the Center, and listen. And then, we need to get out there and link arms - as Robert Williams Jr. would say.

Because rhetoric isn't a good man speaking well.

It is good *people* speaking and listening and doing, together.

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From the Editors:

The Critique of Everyday Life; Or, Why We Decided to Start a New Multimodal Rhetorics Journal

Christina V. Cedillo | University of Houston – Clear Lake

M. Melissa Elston | Northwest Missouri State University

> "…the dividing line no longer falls between work and leisure. These two areas of activity flow together. They repeat and reinforce each other…. A distinction is required other than the one that distributes behaviors according to their *place* (of work or leisure) and qualifies them thus by the fact that they are located on one or another square of the social checkerboard -in the office, in the workshop, or at the movies. There are differences of another type. They refer to the *modalities* of action, to the *formalities* of practices." (DeCerteau, 2011, p. 29)

We the editors would like to thank you for having a look at the first issue of the *Journal of Multimodal Rhetorics*. Getting here has been a long, edifying journey, but we have had a lot of help from friends, colleagues, contributors, mentors, and associates along the way. We would like to take this opportunity to also say thank you to all of you. The launch of this venue underscores the importance of such academic community. For us, it proves the answer to the different issues that prompted us to undertake this project.

The idea for this journal stems from many a conversation about current problems facing junior and minority scholars and their effects on us personally. These include a general lack of research support (Jaschik, 2014); a need for greater assistance in making our work ready for publication (Conrad & Sinner, 2015; Cavanaugh, 2012); and finding means to address audiences beyond academia (Wai & Miller, 2015; Kristof, 2014). Along with hoping to foster a friendlier atmosphere when it comes to the publishing process, we also seek to create greater transparency into the knowledge-making ways of academia and help to make more of this knowledge public. We believe these aims to be of the utmost importance to women scholars and

scholars from marginalized groups because oftentimes, our research interests reflect our personal identities and those of our respective communities, and yet, writing for those communities is typically regarded as a side note rather than a fundamental goal. As researchers encouraged to always write for, rather than over, those we are writing about, we wished to make some kind of intervention within the field at large.

Thus, we set out two years ago to launch the *Journal of Multimodal Rhetorics* (*JOMR*). From the onset, we decided that what we most wanted to do was promote rhetoric and composition scholarship from a cultural studies perspective since that reflected our own training and because all rhetorical and composition praxes are based in cultural systems even when they are, unfortunately, framed as reliant on universal principles. We wished to address the teaching and learning of these subjects in ways that centered the practices of real people whose rhetorics may not align with academic norms but are no less effective for navigating the world. And, we wanted to publish reader-friendly scholarship for the public as a means to keep ourselves accountable to those for whom we build knowledge but who are usually left out of scholarly discussions. Of course, access to information does not necessarily entail equitable access to learning, but we hope that as this digital space takes on a life of its own that its presence will corroborate an invitational and public-oriented approach to research.

So Why Multimodality?

From the beginning, we decided that a focus on multimodality allowed us to address concerns about inclusivity theoretically and practically, and to critique media's potential to enhance or hinder rhetorical agency. We wish to stress that multimodality is "not to be confused with or limited in advance to a consideration of Web-based or new media texts" (Shipka, 2009, p. 347). However, even as we recognize that all communication is multimodal, the potential for digital media to make academic knowledge more accessible to broad audiences is not lost on us. So while digital multimodality is decentered within our journal's purview, it nevertheless remains an important aspect of our critical endeavor. Hence, by "multimodality," we imagine all those material, spatial, embodied, aesthetic, and procedural strategies that communication engages, but especially those employed by marginalized individuals and groups with limited access to legitimized modes deemed "speech." These include the diverse everyday rhetorics of popular culture as well.

Multimodal practices not only facilitate communication; they also transmit values and traditions. Because they can enable liberatory possibilities or uphold hegemonic norms, attending to their social and cultural attributes demands critical forms of literacy. Extracurricular rhetorics tend to engage such literacies, though they often go uncredited within the academy. Avoiding simplistic definitions of literacy, critics like James

Paul Gee, Jabari Mahiri, and Tony Mirabelli establish literacy's social functions as performance and interrelationship. As Mahiri notes, understanding literacy as defined by events and practices allows educators to honor the "multiple literacies" through which students create identity, share values and beliefs, and even critique dominant discourses (2004, p. 7). These vital literacies are ignored when we center academic language use. Ironically, rhetoricians run the risk of focusing on what communication *says* rather than what it *does* when we overlook homegrown ways of knowing that don't rely on the verbal mode. On a similar note, Mirabelli (2005) speaks to literacy's embodied aspects—the ability to "read" others' body language and respond accordingly. In analyzing the complex interactions that occur in diners, he underscores how attunement to multiliteracies invites us to be ever aware of spatial concerns, to become more conscious how we move and interact with others within certain spaces.

Along those lines, scholarship on popular media such as video games teaches us much about the creation of discursive spaces and how spaces rely on, reinforce, or challenge prevalent ideologies. Video games are not mere diversion but complex rhetorical media (Gee, 2004). These popular forms of rhetoric create immersive environments that demand gaming audiences' collusion in the creation or completion of narratives. They provide spaces where cultural values can be negotiated procedurally, but in the process they require players to subscribe to implicit ideological frameworks. Such rhetorical matrices can standardize injurious impressions within the game space that can reinforce their understated or unquestioned status outside the game. Or, they may encourage interrogation of real-world ideologies in which they are based. They can draw critical attention to ways in which hegemonic views inform a game's logics and how those views compel players to accept their authority and assume the primacy of a particular subjectivity.

However, these insights cannot and should not be confined to games alone. All media require similar stringent critique as they can normalize (in the full dehumanizing sense of the word) racism, sexism, ableism, homophobia/transphobia and other punitive norms. Eduardo Bonilla-Silva and Tyrone A. Forman (2000) use the term *racetalk* to refer to the use of deliberately "non-offensive" language that nonetheless upholds racial privilege. It is crucial that we question how media and other rhetorical technologies enable similar schemes that contribute to the production of normative bodies and practices, and bolster existent power structures.

Furthermore, a focus on multimodality helps us appreciate the phenomenological character of all rhetoric, creating meaning and connection through perceived relationality. Communication is intrinsically intersubjective, and so, too, are the discourses and practices involved. Rhetoric and composition rely on what Bakhtin (1986) terms *interanimation*, the

dialogic interaction of diverse voices and the ideologies they signify. A message is never whole or completed, and it is only once we recognize the positionality permitted by our different voices that we may begin to orient ourselves consciously. Communication doesn't occur in a vacuum but emerges in relation to other communicative events and instances of connection, and in ways that we imagine the world to work.

Likewise, multimodality draws our attention to the diffuse quality of communication, the ways in which modalities compete, complicate, and complement with one another, at times even producing unintended meanings. At all times, we must remain aware that interpersonal technologies allow us "to contextualize messages, to glean essential social information, exchange relational messages, and coordinate conversation" even as their mediation "restrict[s] the modalities through which these communication functions can be achieved" (Burgoon et al., 2002, p. 663). Understanding the influence of these ever-attendant nonverbal processes proves necessary in composing conscientious, invitational rhetorics whether on paper, in performance or material creation practices, or for the web.

We deem it imperative to interrogate these powerful (and power-full) relationships - between modalities, between messages, between parties - since convention permits harmful ideologies to become inured. As J.L. Austin warns, "we must always remember the distinction between producing effects or consequences which are intended or unintended" (1975, p. 106). Positionality is key in communication, and we would all do well to remember that meaning is always relative: "We are the norm, the center, until that center no longer obtains" (Aegerter, 1997, p. 908). One cannot be a good writer, speaker, or composer while oblivious to ethics of relationality. Moreover, practicing critical analysis, the kind that digs deep to uncover the roots of power structures that inform communicative relationships, can hopefully make for more conscious scholarship. As an academic community, we can become true collaborators in social transformation based in mutual respect and love for each other and for our different publics.

Promoting Critical Multimodality

The language of public discourse is multimodal. Ergo, part of loving and respecting the aforementioned publics involves demonstrating a conscious regard for multimodal communication that occurs outside of the academy. As rhetoricians, we know meaning is contextual, discursively constructed through social interactions and situations, but power dynamics work to exclude popular practices. If rhetoric indeed "adheres to power and property," as John Bender and David Wellbery have observed (1990, p. 7), then the historic denial of multimodal genres' inherent rhetoricity - or worthiness of serious study altogether -

is nothing less than an attempt to deny their power as well. When one stops to consider that multimodal rhetorics have often been the conduits through which working-class and minoritized populations have spoken, this denial clearly intersects with broader systemic acts of suppression.

Therefore, cultivating a critical awareness surrounding these issues becomes an ethical as well as an intellectual enterprise. Whether or not exigence is rooted in an external reality that demands our response, rhetors must assume ethical responsibility for the situations they create (Vatz, 1973), including those decisions about the technologies and modalities that they privilege. This is especially crucial if, as Rachel Mattson (2008), and Antonia Darder and Rodolfo D. Torres (2003) suggest, we are to move beyond dealing with individual manifestations of bigotry to confront the broader, underlying systems of denigration which foster them. In other words, pursuing social justice and critical awareness are perpetually intertwined tasks. Furthermore, we contend that they should be a fundamental aspect of all composition pedagogies.

Overlooking media and modality privilege contributes to the foregrounding of privileged subjectivities and the backgrounding of those who must "attempt to live in the shadows of presence" and "insist upon an existence, a voice" (Powell, 2002, p. 12). It promotes uncritical application and assimilation over the development of "a flexible, complexly defined subjectivity" (Fowlkes, 1997, p. 108) that proves a critical survival skill for marginalized people. In everyday life we employ "a fluency of voices" (Rose, 1988, p. 355), each of them rhetorical beyond words, each of them creating spaces that include and exclude. The ability to scrutinize the value systems bolstered by particular discourses, media, and modalities can provide a vital tool of critique and resistance. Not just in terms of adapting language use to social context, but as a means to interrogate covert constitutive perspectives and the norms that they sustain.

An Invitation

Lastly, we hope that attention to the polyvalence of multimodal communication will encourage academia as a whole to become more receptive to what, until now, have been perceived as "alternative" rhetorics. Such work is often perceived as less scholarly, less rigorous, too personal, or too limited. Academia has not been very receptive to work by writers from minoritized groups, framing our research as not scholarly or significant enough to our respective disciplines (Billingslea Brown, 2012, p. 27). Attention to these issues is viewed as auxiliary, at times even as indulgences that detract from the real substance of knowledge. As more scholars from minoritized groups center their own marginalized identities, we must be allowed to affirm our own histories of scholarship and canons of criticism that may not align with those of more so-called

"traditional" or mainstream fields, or queer notions of canon altogether.

By stressing the cultural contexts and constraints that inform all multimodal rhetorics, we wish to challenge the designation of such research into an array of "niche" subfields, and its relegation to special journal issues, to highlight the relevance of - and great need for - theorizing from situated perspectives. This venue invites our fellow critics to enrich current scholarship by modeling those changes they wish to see by drawing on those topics, perspectives, and practices that are too often absent within academia. We welcome scholarship that speaks to diverse audiences.

In this manner, we return to where we started in this essay by revealing one last intention behind our editorial choices. Despite our own respective investments in the academy, we do not imagine our audiences as researchers alone. We have established *JOMR* as an open-access platform so that readers from all walks of life and many different communities have an opportunity to share in what we do, especially when that is work that speaks to communal concerns. We also aim to expand academic conversations to include those publics for whom we as scholars make and archive knowledge.

Ultimately, we hope that *JOMR* will prove an interactive space that showcases the many real-world voices, praxes, and processes that influence the character of composition.

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'Why Are We *Here*?':

Parachronism as Multimodal Rhetorical Strategy in *Grey's Anatomy*

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In its twelfth season, Shonda Rhimes's long-running television drama *Grey's Anatomy* opened its new year without the traditional cast. Main characters Derek (Patrick Dempsey) and Christina (Sandra Oh), the two people most connected to the protagonist Meredith Grey (played by Ellen Pompeo), had exited the show in seasons eleven and ten, leaving most fans to wonder what would happen to the remaining cast in terms of storytelling. *Entertainment Weekly* reported that over 100,000 fans signed a petition to bring Dempsey's Derek back to the show, with many of these fans threatening to boycott future seasons. The season twelve premiere "Sledgehammer" (2016), written by Stacy McKee and directed by Kevin McKidd (who also plays Dr. Owen Hunt), addressed this concern explicitly in the opening scene.

At the start Meredith's voice over accompanies multiple images of her face on flat screen televisions in an empty exam room, looking directly at the camera (us) and explaining why this year is different. Before she speaks, however, voices from the show's inaugural season echo quietly through this space: in 2004, the viewer took her/his first tour of a similar examining room when the original cast gathered as a group of interns under the tutelage of Chief of Surgery Richard Webber (played by James Pickens Jr.). Webber's voice echoes lines from that original pilot as we survey the empty room, in the present: "Each of you comes here today hopeful…." Crossfading over this statement, we hear former resident and now attending physician Miranda Bailey (played by Chandra Wilson) say, "I have five rules. Memorize them." Other voices, more muffled, fade out. The camera then lands on the multiple projections of Meredith's face on large screens, overlooking the classroom, and she says, "You might be thinking…. I've been here before. This is familiar. This is old hat. Maybe you're wondering…why are we here? But I promise…you're about to find out that everything has changed."

In this moment Meredith becomes our teacher rather than just our narrator: her direct address to the camera impels us to change perspective despite lingering doubts about the forthcoming events. However, while Meredith stresses that change is the motif of the new season, this

episode's content suggests a different approach based on celebrating and merging the past with the present. The writers of *Grey*'s often engage in a seamless overlap of past and present events, sometimes placing moments from the past directly inside the present narrative. Unlike a flashback, the past and present act as layers to each other rather than separate linear units in the history of the narrative. I argue that this phenomenon prompts the resurrection of an outdated word to describe how the writers manipulate time in rhetorical ways.

Rarely used today, the term parachronism, originally defined as an "error in chronology," is similar to the anachronism but works retroactively instead of forwardly. This is all to say that if an anachronism is a clock of standardized time in a Shakespeare play, a thing too futuristic to belong in a narrative set in medieval Scotland (see *Macbeth*), parachronism works in the opposite direction, by using a dated reference to amplify the present situation. Science fiction author Samantha Shannon (2013) explains, "The key difference is possibility. It is *impossible* for Marilyn Monroe to realistically turn up in 1984 - she died in 1962. But it is *possible* for a man to be wearing a ruff or using a quill in 2005 - just not very likely, given how silly he'd look."

A parachronism occurs with the "dialing" of a cell phone (language that invokes the use of an earlier landline model or rotary device), the "winding" of a clock that now uses a digital interface, or the "flipping" of a channel on our television. In other words, as Shannon says, a parachronism is "more of an oddity than an error." Furthermore, the winding and flipping suggest that parachronism is most effective when stressing its use of material objects, some of which seem displaced in the present. In other words, parachronism often occurs as a *thing* or as a reference to a *thing* rather than as an abstract phenomenon.

The examples of parachronism that follow serve not as evidence of a close reading (read literary reading) of *Grey's* as much as they are a rhetorical study of how Rhimes effectively managed viewer expectations. Webber's line, "Each of you comes here today, hopeful," has now been repurposed to speak to the present audience. In this sense the past and the present become partners in making the narrative engine run smoothly for a skeptical group of fans.

Conceptions of Narrative and Rhetorical Time

No scholarship at this time exists on parachronism, which creates a quandary in terms of situating this argument. The closest relative to parachronism as a scholarly topic is the language associated with the rhetoric of narratives, both print and on screen. Meredith's voice over echoes Wayne Booth's commentary in *The Rhetoric of Fiction* when he analyzes the "manipulation of mood" and how an author might be "commenting directly on the work itself" in order to influence an audience (1983, pp. 201-09). While

novels may use written language, particularly the manipulation of verb tenses, to suggest time's fluidity or disjoints, visual narrative continues to experiment with this same concept through careful editing, spoken dialogue, and the use of dissolves to indicate flashing back or forward. Seymour Chatman explains that in film the "temporal norm" is "scenic" because both story and discourse operate jointly. However, he stresses that "the more a narrative deviates from this norm, the more it highlights time manipulation as a process or artifice, and the more loudly a narrator's voice sounds in our ears" (1980, p. 223). In this sense, Meredith is both overtly commenting on the show's past, present, and future while also calling directly attention to time's progression and its effect on the audience.

Such overt manipulation of narrative in favor of increasing dramatic effect has become the norm more than the exception. Television has been lauded in recent years as entering a "golden age" of content, one in which directors and writers experiment with more sophisticated structures of narrative, editing, and point of view. Jason Mittell (2012-13), in his study of what he calls "complex television," dates the beginning of experimentation in the 1970s, while Steven Johnson hails *Hill Street Blues*, which aired first in 1981, as the prime ancestor of complexity (2005, p. 65). In his work uniting the fields of Rhetoric and Composition and television studies, Bronwyn T. Williams mentions shows from the 1990s like *ER, NYPD Blue*, and *The X-Files* as examples of shows that "require attentive and sophisticated rhetorical work to interpret" (2002, p. 58). David Lavery uses different terms than complex narrative to describe the cultural scene of television in the past two decades; his article on "Lost and Long-Term Television Narrative" includes words like flexi-narrative, neo-baroque, and hybrid and Dickensian narrative to characterize today's shows and their manipulation of time and structure (2009, pp. 313-14). His focus on the show *Lost* illustrates his belief in complex television being most common in the 2000s. Indeed, *Lost* featured a rare form of time travel in the famous season six "flash sideways," which suggested an alternate reality was at work even as the main plot advanced.

Narrative acts as a frame for experience and helps identify cause and effect relationships in both fiction and in our own lives; therefore, the frame communicates a particular view of how reality is shaped. In an older collection of essays linking argument to narrative, Douglas Hesse (1989) helpfully explains, "The reader's perception of causal sequences is crucial to persuasion through emplotment. To say 'this' happened as a result of 'that' is to supply a relationship between the two, to make a judgement. We perceive a state of affairs and wish to explain how it has come to exist, searching backwards, asking in 'digressive' essays, for example, 'How did the writer get *here*?'" (p. 114). Such processes, he says, are not different from argumentative and rhetorical work. Still, the "why are we here" question, which Meredith states in

explicit terms during the introduction to "Sledgehammer," requires an expanded vocabulary with which to analyze time, one that calls attention to how time may operate in unconventional ways as it frames narrative.

In terms of rhetoric, one way to approach the use of time is to invoke the frequently cited term kairos, which Sharon Crowley and Debra Hawhee characterize as "a situational kind of time," one that acts as "a 'window' of time during which action is most advantageous" (2009, p. 45). While kairos may explain how Webber's words are reinvented to speak to the disgruntled audience of the twelfth season specifically, the term does not tell the full story of how "Sledgehammer" works to envelop the past. If lack of attention to kairos leads to missed opportunities (Sutton, 2001, p. 413-15) or occasions (De Certeau, 1988, p. 85), parachronism is less damning, for it allows us to recreate missed opportunities as if they never passed. Indeed, the first use of kairos was a negative one: the term likely first appeared in *The Iliad* and originally referred to "a vital or lethal part of the body, one that is particularly susceptible to injury" (Sipiora, 2002, p. 2). With Homer kairos was associated with matters of loss, mortality, or failed completion (p. 5), and such ideas certainly characterize Derek Shepherd's death in season eleven, the event that angered most fans.

We might say that emphasizing missed opportunities and occasions is part of what it means to suffer from losing a loved one before the time of their natural death. Therefore, the new season works toward something that heals such matters, something beyond kairos that heals ruptures rather than calling attention to them. As Rhimes told *Hollywood Reporter*, she wanted season twelve to be "lighter" but also to "recapture the early season banter and bring the fun back to the show" (Goldberg, 2015). The idea of recapturing the past had to be done in ways that both reinforced what was successful at the beginning and also helped fans feel comfortable with the present. The use of parachronism makes that possible.

Bakhtin, in his study of the novel, offers one possible precursor to parachronism when he explains that time (during stories of the agricultural age in particular) acts as a perpetual unfolding genesis, where humans and earth move in tandem through specific patterns of growth and regression. In terms of "how did we get here," his explanation of folkloric time reads as follows: "The passage of time does not destroy or diminish but rather multiplies and increases the quantity of valuable things; where there is but one seed sown, many stalks of grain appear. . . . (207). Here the study of time does not pave the way for the parachronism strictly speaking, but it gestures toward a cumulative effect. On the other hand, Paul Ricoeur, in his work on narrative, stresses that metatemporal moments in the hero's quest exist, where time has neither been eliminated or adhered to in linear fashion; rather, the hero descends into a primordial space, or

world of dreams that remains intact until it is ruptured and the world of action (and possible death) is restored (185). Neither of these concepts tells the full story of what happens in Grey's Anatomy.

Instead of focusing on "mutability," as Crowley and Hawhee do in their discussion of kairos (p. 47), parachronism would have us consider the "always"-ness of scenes, people, and events. While kairos appeals to particularity and specialization, parachronism suggests a holism or suspension of epochal divisions. Because para as prefix denotes going "around," "beside," or "beyond," the message is that time is capable of veering away from linear notions of past, present, and future and instead working around constraints of these traditional divisions. Likewise, parachronism works differently than the strategy of repetition, too, although it may begin there. H. Porter Abbot explains that the "temporal structure" of a narrative often returns and revisits certain important moments in the story (2008, p. 242). Parachronism works differently than repetition because its rhetorical power is not based in a desire to hammer home any one image or moment throughout different moments in time. Those differences in time do not exist as separate for parachronism: nothing that "always is" engages in repetition but exists continually.

However, understanding rhetorical devices like parachronism requires a certain kind of work on the viewer's part. Byron Hawk explains that in today's world the audience must consider the importance of rhetorical invention when interacting with a text on screen because "invention becomes something neither unconscious nor conscious. It becomes attentive - a way of being-in-the-world, a way of becoming - and in a world of hypermedia, it becomes hyper-attentive" (2003, p. 88). As Hesse says, "The rhetorical value of stories, then, is participatory, not logical" because the writer makes the audience "complicit" in the meaning making process (p. 114). In Hawk's analysis, elements of the past as discovered through memory become "the place of invention" (p. 88).

The work of memory also holds significance for the *Grey's* characters in the previous year - Meredith actually comments in voice over, "Funny, isn't it? How memory works?" when her husband Derek walks out the door for the last time and later suffers fatal injuries ("How to Save a Life"). Likewise, De Certeau characterizes memory as a condition that "mediates spatial transformations" and then produces a "rupture" or "break" in current action (p. 85). This is significant because while the season eleven "How to Save a Life" episode deals in such ruptures and traumatic moments, with the death of Derek echoing and calling to mind previous deaths the protagonist has suffered through, the parachronism in "Sledgehammer" offers healing as it continues to sync past and present in a way that prevents any disturbance of time's progression. This strategy, as seen particularly through the use of objects like sledgehammers, paper notes, and a *Star Wars* spacecraft, actively repairs the

damage done by the previous year of darkness and death.

Evidence of Parachronism in 'Sledgehammer'

Certain tools (or actor props) in Grey's suggest a seamless blend of past and present and repeatedly echo the work of parachronism as a multimodal rhetorical strategy. To start, we learn that protagonist Meredith Grey has now returned to her childhood home after losing her husband. When she wakes in her mother's house, she seems uncertain of the future, just as she was twelve seasons prior. We do not see her move from her former home with Derek; instead, the season begins and it is as if she has never left her bedroom. Suddenly, she hears a loud crash and realizes that her sister-in-law, Amelia, has punched a hole in one of the living room walls with a sledgehammer. This sound provides a jolt that reminds the viewer of the changes happening in what we would consider a familiar and comfortable setting.

The choice of sledgehammer, a tool formerly used by blacksmiths in earlier eras, could hypothetically serve as one of the first instances of a parachronism since its use was more common in earlier centuries (Fig. 1). Since a sledgehammer exerts force violently, the rupture of the wall and the hole that results frames the conflict between the two characters.

Throughout the episode Amelia and Meredith clash over the use of the sledgehammer: Meredith claims that she never suggested that she wanted to change the structure of her house, while Amelia asserts that Meredith (although inebriated at the time) had stated definitively that she wanted to tear the wall down. The use of this tool sets the tone for the show's new season (It is also important to note that *Grey's Anatomy* features song titles for its episodes - this one features the 1980s pop song "Sledgehammer" by Peter Gabriel). The presence of Amelia in Meredith's house reminds us that while Derek may be gone, his sister remains behind, anchoring the past to the present day. Like the sledgehammer itself, Amelia disrupts tranquility at the Grey home in ways that frustrate Meredith, who is adjusting to life as a widow.

Figure 1: Sledgehammer (Wikimedia Commons)

However, unlike memory, which, as De Certeau suggests, ruptures the present circumstance through emotional upheaval, the sledgehammer becomes a tool through which change is made manifest physically. De Certeau explains that memory causes a "coup," a modification of the local order, but in this season, the coup comes in the comedic form of a blunt instrument. Most viewers relate to the idea of a roommate or sibling encroaching upon their space, and Amelia's literal rupture of the space,

however destructive, feels comfortable compared to the violence and memories associated with the past.

However, parachronism does invoke emotional pain in the *Grey*'s hospital patient narrative, a common trope used in all seasons to reinforce the value of medical help and the development of characters as they progress from residents to attending physicians. In such cases, trauma is difficult to avoid since the characters are all surgeons, but most of these patient narratives, unlike Derek's narrative in year eleven, end happily. In "Sledgehammer" two fifteen-year-old girls, Jess and Aliyah, are admitted to Grey-Sloan Memorial after they suffer extensive injuries when hit by a train. Their motive was to "die together" due to their family's inability to accept them as a same-sex couple. Jess is afraid of being sent to a fundamentalist camp that attempts conversion of gay youth into straight members of society.

Yet, to amplify this kairotic moment, a moment shaped by activism surrounding gay rights and the dangers of such camps, Jess mentions exchanging handwritten letters in secret. The kinds of notes that the two girls describe were most commonly used as 1980s and 1990s communication tools, writings that students passed discreetly among themselves during classes (Fig. 2). The folding as a creative way to "mail" or contain such messages calls attention to the tool in a manner that would be hard to duplicate in current exchanges of digital messages. Jess says, "You know Aliyah and I, we like to pass notes at school. The kind

Figure 2: Parachronism - Shoebox of Folded Notes (author's picture)

that you fold a million different ways. And I kept them. Every single one of them in a box under my bed so I could reread them when I had bad days." Jess then relates that her mother burned all of these notes in the fireplace when Jess was away. The ephemeral quality of the notebook paper, burning, amplifies this act of Jess's mother's betrayal—the contemporary deletion of texts on a cell phone would hardly compete as a similar destructive gesture. The image of a mother burning such handwritten treasures fills the doctors (and also the viewers) with sympathy for the girls, especially since Aliyah must undergo extensive surgery and may not survive.

In this scenario, the idea of the handwritten notes hardly ruptures the fabric of time, yet, as science fiction writer Shannon notes in her explanation of parachronism, it does serve as an "oddity" that might catch our attention differently than a set of texts. The reliance on physical materials to maintain a romance reminds the viewers that loving in itself is a precarious act, subject to erasure. If Derek's death still hangs over the narrative like a dark shroud, we see that

shroud more in the telling of Jess and Aliyah's story since the injuries from the train crash appear dramatic, just as Derek's injuries appear in "How to Save a Life." Still, the notes remind us that the romance is a school-age one, not an adult tragedy, and that Jess and Aliyah still have time to recover. Indeed, by the final scenes of the narrative, both of the girls' fathers recognize the value of being loved by another, even if such love is less conventional than what they would have initially imagined for their children, and Aliyah's surgery is a success. The ruptures and traumas of the previous year are avoided.

Although the parachronism touches on dark themes with the two patients involved in an accident, the use of it still acts as a positive force for the main cast. In this episode Miranda Bailey competes with a visiting surgeon, Tracy McConnell, for the position of Chief of Surgery. While Webber has promised McConnell a hospital tour, Bailey seems put off by her lack of similar treatment, but Webber quickly explains, "You know where everything is." Even Catherine Avery, the chair of the hospital board, explains that this is the very reason she supports McConnell's candidacy for chief: "Bailey knows you too well. You've been together too long. She doesn't push you, Richard.... I'm saying that she's too comfortable here. We need someone who will make us uncomfortable.... We need someone who will surprise us." However, while McConnell gives a standard presentation to the board, Bailey counters by asking the board to report to the operating room, where she continues her general surgery while explaining her qualifications to be chief. Her speech is worth quoting at length:

> I'm sure Dr. McConnell gave you an excellent presentation. Scissor. [She continues to operate and take tools from her assistants as she speaks.] Watch that tissue. She would be excellent for the job.... The point is McConnell and I offer different things. She is new and shiny. And she likes a good challenge.... And that's what this place is to her, her newest challenge. Until she finds her next one. And her next. But that's not me.

Bailey looks up at the board members while closing the patient's wound and continues with these words, which, as I will argue, speak directly to the work of parachronism:

> See I don't care if this place is the shiniest or the fanciest or if it's a beat up hunk of junk. As far as I'm concerned, it'll always be the ship that made the Kessel run in less than twelve parsecs.... I believe in this hospital and what it can do. And I want to push this bucket of bolts to do *the* most impossible things you've ever seen. And then I'll do more—because this *is* my challenge. Clamp. Use the argon beam. Avoid CBD. [she speaks to her surgical team] Slowly. Let me. Good. There. This job was made for me. Staples. This job belongs to me.

> Suction. I've earned first chair. Suture. And every single one of you already knows it. *Ready to close.*

This speech encapsulates the best of what parachronism may do as an element of rhetoric: it reminds the audience that the past and the present together are what fuel innovation and future progress. Bailey effectively sets herself up in contrast with the new candidate who tempts the rest of the cast with her "newness" and promises of future success.

Most notably, Bailey quotes lines from *Star Wars* by referencing "this hunk of junk" and its ability to make "the Kessel run in twelve parsecs": in short, she compares the hospital itself to the *Millennium Falcon*, Han Solo's iconic spaceship known for saving the heroes of *Star Wars* (Fig. 3) Here Bailey puts the Falcon front and center rather than regulating it to an outdated pop culture reference. The hospital *is* the *Falcon*, now and always, and she is the only one to care for it even when its residents see it only as "a bucket of bolts."

Those familiar with the *Star Wars* films may also recognize that the Falcon serves as a parachronism linking the old *Star Wars* trilogy of the 70s and 80s to J. J. Abrams's newest installment in the franchise, *The Force Awakens*, which aired the same year that season twelve began in 2015. In this sense, Bailey speaks to a legacy that is, like parachronism itself, anchored in the merging of past and present narratives. She also asserts that she is worthy of Chief of Surgery now and always has been. In

Figure 3: *Millennium Falcon* with action figures (author's picture)

this sense, she proves Catherine Avery wrong: her ability to invest in the hospital does not make her "too comfortable" but provides her the knowledge to succeed in the position.

Later that night, as Bailey stands on the hospital bridge that overlooks the Seattle landscape, her husband Ben congratulates her for being chosen and then embraces her, gesturing toward the mountains, "Behold - everything the light touches….is yours." This line, from 1994's animated film *The Lion King,* along with the multiple references to *Star Wars* and the reference to Peter Gabriel's music with "Sledgehammer," again suggests the power of past narratives to illumine and color the present action. This appeal also comforts those who felt the *Grey's* narrative had focused on trauma too often in the previous year. In both narratives, *The Lion King* and *Star Wars*, heroes manage to reclaim their legacy despite the presence of darkness and corrupt leadership. The endings to both films are both overwhelmingly positive for the characters.

Conclusion

"Sledgehammer" concludes with the protagonist succumbing to the perverse desire to knock down the wall that Amelia ruined. As the characters hack their way through the plaster and wood, the voice over returns to the topic of change. The camera then cuts between the characters using the sledgehammer and the set of the now filled hospital exam room, the same one that was empty in the opening scene. In the room are new students standing before cadavers. When Meredith walks in, her voice over merges with her physical position, and the message she gives both the new students and the viewers speaks, once again, directly to concerns about season twelve:

> So, why are you here? What's so different? What's changed? My answer is…you. The thing that has changed is you. I want you to throw everything you think you know about anatomy out the window…. And look at this cadaver like you've never seen a human body before. Now pick up your scalpels. Place them below the xiphoid process. Press firmly. No regrets. And let's begin.

In Meredith's monologue, she asserts that the world of her hospital is not what changes from season to season; it is the viewer instead who does the growing. This comment has special meaning for those who have spent twelve years with the program, since most people who watch a show for that length have likely gone through different phases in their own lives. As the hammer finally clears a large enough hole in the wall, Meredith and Amelia peer through the opening and smile into the camera. At the same time, a new group of students picks up their scalpels and begins practicing in the lab.

Most long-running television programs continually reinvent themselves in order to impress audience members. Nevertheless, McKee and other writers of *Grey*'s take a different position by infusing contemporary stories with past allusions and objects. This use of parachronism, a term rarely used today, allows the viewer solace in the old while exploring the present narrative, and such work acts rhetorically to assuage audience fears about a cast existing without its leading man. Parachronism depends on a model of time in which past and present continually envelop each other rather than call attention to their differences. Since *Grey*'s seeks to recalibrate its tone through capturing the humor of early years, it makes sense that certain objects and ideas from the past would be featured prominently in the season twelve premiere.

Still, these objects are not fetishized as vintage tools from past decades but instead seamlessly integrated into 2016 culture. In an age where narratives on screen are continually referred to as remixes, reboots, or remakes, the work of parachronism remains rhetorical because it appeals to a particular cultural occasion (kairos) while also suspending a strictly linear conception of time. Such rhetorical work, undoubtedly, will remain essential to linking multiple generations of viewers

as they consider the cast of a long-running television program to be part of their own history. By giving viewers tangible objects to which they may cling, props such as handwritten notes, spaceships, and sledgehammers anchor the audience in a comforting present while also honoring the tokens of our material past.

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Voices from the Archive:

Family Names, Official Documents, and Unofficial Ideologies in the Gloria Anzaldúa Papers

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> As I see it from here, which is to say, from within an intimate relation to one archive, scholars of persuasive speech have not yet begun robustly to engage the entailments of the archive's irreducible undecidability even though we are uniquely positioned to do so, given that the deconstruction of "fact" or of referential plentitude does not reduce the contents of the archive to "mere" literature or fiction (this is the most common and silliest of mistakes) but delivers that content over to us as the elements of rhetoric. Indeed, from the historicity of the archive, rhetorics; out of the deconstruction of the material presence of the past and, thus, in relation to what the archive cannot authenticate absolutely but can (be made to) authorize nonetheless, issues an invitation to write rhetorical histories of archives, which is to say, critical histories of the situated and strategic uses to which archives have been put. (Biesecker, 2006, p. 130)

In this essay, I examine Gloria Anzaldúa's archive, housed at The University of Texas at Austin in the Nettie Lee Latin American Collection. Specifically, my study considers Anzaldúa's birth certificate and its series of changes, and juxtaposes it with a short then-unpublished story, "Her Name Never Got Called."[1] I show that these documents are not static representations, but

[1] A select portion of the archive had been closed to research until posthumous publication or until release by Anzaldúa's trust. Other parts of her work are closed for researchers for privacy purposes, to be released at a later date (Gloria Evangelina Anzaldúa Papers, 1942-2004). These

generative artifacts, that they work to develop Anzaldúa's theory of social change. To do this, I develop here a rhetorical method from existing theoretical concepts that are flexible enough to analyze her archive, embrace the tensions implicit in her work, and support an inclusive theory "from below." Performance critic Diana Taylor's (2003) call for a "hemispheric" perspective (p. xvii) is ideal for these purposes. Her concepts of the archive (exemplified by official documents) and repertoire (pertaining to embodied performances) allow for a method that clarifies Anzaldúa's theory. The archive is static and unchanging, and the repertoire is open to new interpretations. I argue that Anzaldúa's work oscillates in the liminal space between official texts in her archive and unofficial performative space of the repertoire.

The Borderlands

Anzaldúa's writings on exile, homeland, feminism, and queer theory mark the entrance of Chicanas into the literature of communication studies. Her work offers a connection between culture, everyday acts of resistance, and larger structural change. Hence, Anzaldúa's work has made rhetoricians and social movement scholars more sensitive to the struggles of and implicit theorization by people of color, especially women and queer folks.[2] Critics have already implied the generative nature of Anzaldúa's theories since they can be used to research other geographic regions, texts, and experiences.

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limitations pose an added layer of difficulty in studying her work. As of my most recent return to the Anzaldúa archive, the final draft of "Her Name Never Got Called" is now available for research. However, I find it necessary to maintain that throughout the course of archival research, scholars may not have full access to the records they wish to access.

2 Latina/o cultural critics use Anzaldúa's work as a starting point to critique rhetorical practices and explore social consequences of marginalization. In social psychology, Hurtado (1998) maps Chicanas' "methods for theorizing." In sociology, Martinez (2005) uses standpoint theory to conduct a content analysis of Borderlands/La Frontera. Covering English and sociology, Licona and Maldonado (2014) discuss the social production of visibility and invisibility of Latina/os. Communication scholars explore the rhetoric of crossing borders (Flores, 2003; Cisneros, 2014); rhetorical documents and methods (Palczewski, 1996; Delgado, 1999; LaWare, 1998); and vernacular discourse (Holling & Calafell, 2011). Several researchers situate their work using Anzaldúa's phrase 'theories of the flesh' as a starting point for discussion (Moraga & Anzaldúa, 1983; Calafell & Moreman, 2009; Calafell, 2010; Moreman & Non Grata, 2011). Borderlands can also be difficult spaces to inhabit. In performance studies, Calafell (2005) expresses the difficulties that Chicanas face in negotiating home, and Moreman and McIntosh (2010) provide a critical performance ethnography of Latina drag queens. Chávez (2009) explores the contradictions on the Borderlands; she explains, "Although the borderlands can be a rich source of creativity, they can also be stifling" (p. 166). Other scholars discuss the intersection of Borderlands and writing style (Feedman, 1989; Dolmage, 2009). Beyond Chicana texts, Rodríguez (2005) uses Borderlands to examine the transition of Salvadoran immigrants to the United States. Thus, Anzaldúa's writing style ties her to her status as a border woman and puts her in conversation with an array of cultural and rhetorical concepts, theorists, and methods.

Much attention has focused on her concept of the Borderlands, which serves "as a larger metaphor for biculturalism or the recognition and performance of identities that are informed by both Mexico and the United States" (Calafell, 2004, p. 182). However, at times a rigid emphasis on the Borderlands leaves "'blank spots' that prevent us from grasping the radical nature of her vision for social change and the crucial ways her theories have developed since the 1987 publication of *Borderlands*" (Keating, 2008, p. 4). Therefore, here I do not examine concepts found in Anzaldúa's writing, but instead focus on her writing itself as a generative method that transforms her archive into a space of cultural performance and revolutionary potential. As a result, I argue that we must develop theories of writing that highlight performativity and can fully contend with the interactions between different materials found in her archive. We do not engage all texts in the same way; therefore, a method is needed that can put these various elements into conversation. Here I offer one such method.

Most readers know Anzaldúa's contributions to Chicana feminist rhetoric, but she also brings to the table insights into how different genres can work jointly as a multimodal rhetoric that foregrounds questions about citizenship and belonging. The seemingly unrelated texts in her archive illustrate multimodality, "how multiple modes operate together in a single rhetorical act and how extended chains of modal transformations may be linked in a rhetorical trajectory" (Prior et. al. 2007, p. 23). Research on multimodality demands that we recognize the public nature of composition (Sheridan, Ridolfo, & Michel, 2005), imagine textuality beyond alphabetical texts (Yancey, 2004), and not limit notions of multimodality solely to web or new media texts (Wysocki, 2004; Prior, 2004; Prior, et. al. 2007; Shipka, 2009, p. W347). In this essay, I want to extend research on multimodality by focusing on intertextual interactions between texts from different genres. I believe that the concepts of the archive and repertoire, as theorized by Taylor, can help us build an approach that explains Anzaldúa's multimodality as potent theory-in-praxis. Typically, the archive is viewed as static and unchanging, while the repertoire is open to new interpretations. In my analysis, the archive is exemplified by the "official" archival (or material) documents, while the repertoire pertains to the cultural performances enacted by these texts. I suggest that the archival-repertoire interactions between the examined texts reveal them to be not static and unchanging but dynamic and contestatory acts.

For me, a central purpose of analyzing Anzaldúa's work in this way is to address the absence of voices of women of color in rhetorical archival history. How do Anzaldúa's theories emerge? What do reworkings and circulations of official and unofficial documents explain about the performative practice of coming to theory? Her archive helps answer these questions: it provides a rich body of

work - official documents, writings, correspondence, art, a birth certificate, and fiction - that together unmask ideologies of citizenship and immigration politics in the United States. A reworking of Taylor's concepts exposes the ideologies that led to Anzaldúa's theories.

Archival Communication Studies

Typically, archives conjure images of inaccessible objects behind locked doors, and yet they exhibit certain elements: a public nature, a recordkeeping function, and an ability to maintain power (Taylor, p. 19). Archives house historical documents and texts (Connors, 1992; Taylor, 2003), prompt interaction with and evaluation of objects (Finnegan, 2006), and involve making powerful rhetorical choices (Chang, 2010; Morris, "Forum," 2006). In other words, they are complex ideological entities, as corroborated by studies about presidential libraries (Houck, 2006), queer historical voices (Morris, "Archival queer," 2006), signatures on the Declaration of Independence (Lauer, 2007); Patty Hearst (Hall, 2006), and Hugo Black (Carcasson & Aune, 2003), to name a few. Nonetheless, more archival research is needed about people of color since our lack of representation perpetuates the erasure of our experiences. Archives by, for, and about people of color can help us theorize such gaps. This study highlights ways in which people of color speak back to dominant discourses and create agency within an official narrative and how much of that work is multimodal.

Taylor's (2003) theories about archive and repertoire explain how expressive behavior transmits cultural memory and identity. The archive is synonymous with static official texts such as "documents, maps, literary texts, letters, archaeological remains, bones, videos, films, CDs, all those items supposedly resistant to change" (p. 19). It is an unquestioned site of objectivity and preserves documents that tell an official story. In contrast, the repertoire is experiential.

> The repertoire…enacts embodied memory: performances, gestures, orality, movement, dance, singing—in short, all those acts usually thought of as ephemeral, nonreproducible knowledge. Repertoire, etymologically "a treasury, an inventory," allows for individual agency, referring also to "the finder, discovered," and meaning "to find out." The repertoire requires presence: people participate in the production and reproduction of knowledge by "being there," being a part of the transmission. (p. 20)

The repertoire is irreproducible - every performance is different. Members of marginalized communities, for example, take an object from the archive and perform oppositional experiences. Despite the "clean distinctions" perpetuated between archive and repertoire, the two interact (Gunn, 2004, p. 93). The oscillation between the archive and repertoire create spaces of agency.

The Archive: 'Official Records' in the Anzaldúa Papers

My goal in this project is to develop a rhetorical method that explains how the archive behaves in official and unofficial ways, how we can look for what is missing in official texts, and how a rhetor makes sense of these erasures. Using documents that are official in the everyday sense, I suggest that Anzaldúa employs the methodology of repertoire to work through the impact of the archive on her life by keeping records of changes to her birth certificate. She also does so when she writes about a child's first day of school in an unpublished short story, "Her Name Never Got Called," reworking its meaning by adding concluding paragraphs where she theorizes the experience.[3]

The first item that I examined in Anzaldúa's archive was her official birth certificate (Gloria Evangelina Anzaldúa Papers, Box 1), which is composed of multiple records, one labeled "birth certificate" and another labeled "birth certificate with corrections."[4] Other available materials include Anzaldúa's driver's license, passport, voter registration card, student and faculty identification cards, and library cards from different states. These documents retain a bureaucratic, static dimension, but her interactions with them add layers of movement and meaning.

Anzaldúa's original birth certificate is rife with errors. It gives a different spelling of Anzaldúa's name. Whether this was the name her mother chose or a clerical error is unclear. Instead of Gloria Evangelina Anzaldúa, her name reads as "Eve Angeline Anzaldua."[5] There is no street or number listed in the section designated for the mother's residence; it notes only that her mother resided in Hargill, Hidalgo County, Texas. The response to the question "Legitimate?" is "YES." Her parents' genders are reversed on the document, and their names are misspelled. Instead of Urbano, the certificate reads "URBANA." Likewise, her mother's full maiden name reads "AMALIO ANZALDUA." Not only is her mother's name misspelled—it should be correctly spelled "Amalia"—her maiden name was not Anzaldúa. At Gloria's birth, her father was twenty-three and her mother was sixteen. Anzaldúa was born in Raymondville, Texas, and the Department of Health Bureau of Vital Statistics received the document on November 4, 1942.

Despite the many errors, what most struck me was how Gloria's name had been misspelled on a document that

[3] I examine Anzaldúa's papers, which include official and unofficial elements. Olga Herrera scanned, organized, and observed about Anzaldúa's papers; she wrote a short piece about the texts used in this study. I extend her analysis (2008) to show how Anzaldúa's response to her birth certificate contains an implicit multimodal rhetorical theory. Through Taylor's theoretical concepts, I develop a rhetorical method for examining archives and argue that a multimodal rhetorical theory exists from the oscillation between archive and repertoire.

[4] All mentions of Anzaldúa's birth certificate refer to Gloria Evangelina Anzaldúa Papers, Birth Certificate, Box 1.

[5] As I explain later in the paper, her name was written in all capital letters, leaving out the accent mark on her last name.

would follow her throughout her life. I wondered how many Latina/os have misspelled names on their birth certificates. Olga Herrera (2008) explains that this was common due to language barriers, deeming the confusion "symptomatic of a racist culture where Spanish-speakers were often dismissed" (p. 2). Government workers' inability to collect basic data effectively erases people's communal- and self-definition.

In 1972, Anzaldúa's name was corrected to reflect its proper spelling. The name was changed from "Eve Angeline" to "Gloria Evangelina." However, it includes all capital letters, missing the accent mark in her last name. The reader of the birth certificate lacks cues as for how to say her last name properly. The timing of the correction to Anzaldúa's original birth certificate is relevant; it took place when she was thirty. Thus, for the first thirty years of her life, Anzaldúa's birth certificate misspelled her name. One can imagine the trouble caused by presenting a birth certificate with an incorrect name, not to mention the psychological impact of having this name on a public document. Unsurprisingly, Anzaldúa's name is misspelled repeatedly on her passport and several other documents.

Anzaldúa's grandmother made changes to the official paperwork; she corrected the name, but she also altered the race category from "Mexican" to "white" (Herrera, 2008, p. 2). The change exposes a common difficulty in identification for Mexican-Americans and other Latinas/os in the United States. Even as recently as 2010, the census made it difficult for multiracial people to acknowledge different parts of their ethnicity. Anzaldúa's grandmother may have been trying to protect Gloria from racism in designating her as white; however, she erases the complex identity that Anzaldúa will later articulate in *Borderlands*. "Mexican" is a complicated designation related to citizenship, meaning it might mistakenly imply that a U.S.-born person was born in Mexico.

Also, it might reinforce how Anzaldúa's racialized body equates to "immigrant" and even "foreigner." "White," on the other hand, erases Anzaldúa's relationship with her Mexican and Indigenous ancestors while seemingly granting some degree of protection and privilege. This rhetorical maneuver is nothing new. In the 1890s, European immigrants asserted citizenship by claiming whiteness (Roediger 2005, p. 3) - similar to Anzaldúa's case.[6] The change in the birth certificate explores the internal conflict of life on the border, providing a vivid example of Anzaldúa's theory of the Borderlands. It embodies her

[6] Roediger quotes poet Diane di Prima: "This pseudo 'white' identity…was not something that just fell on us out of the blue, but something that many Italian Americans grabbed at with both hands. Many felt that their culture, language, food, songs, music, identity, was a small price to pay for entering the American mainstream. Or they thought, as my parents probably did, that they could keep these good Italian things in private and become 'white' in public" (2005, p. 3). Even cultures that are considered "white" in today's culture struggled with issues of citizenship and race. By claiming whiteness, they also gained privilege and citizenship.

theory of how categories of identification contend with each other. This is the space of invention that Anzaldúa writes about - the contentious place that is home.

Anzaldúa kept all versions of the birth certificate, creating her own personal archive. Together they create a new text that performs outside the role of official documentation, serving to bring together aspects of her identity across time and space. Love and Kohn (2001) state that sometimes objects can "function as something more: a catalyst, a facilitator, a fetish, a thing with a mind of its own; a piece of an Other, a different time, or a faraway place that, when re-placed in the here and now of today, can ennoble and empower us" (p. 47). While Love and Kohn specifically address souvenirs, the multi-document birth certificate provides an image of life on the Borderlands that is created multimodally through objects, texts, and experience. However, as I examined the documents, I felt that Anzaldúa's voice was "missing." She did not go in and fix the errors; her grandmother made the changes. Although each birth certificate can be analyzed in isolation, I argue that it is necessary to examine the interplay between archive and repertoire to more fully understand the ideologies at play and come closer to understanding Anzaldúa's method-as-theory.

The history of birth certificates is highly ideological. Amaya (2013) explains that Latina/os experience contradictory effects of citizenship (p. 16). In 1848, The Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo, the governing document allowing the United States to annex half of Mexico, resulted in U.S. citizenship for about 120,000 Mexican citizens; however, since slavery was still the law of the land for Black Americans, citizenship was restricted to whites, and Mexicans were classified as white (Amaya, 2013, p. 16 in reference to Carbado, 2005, p. 637). Citizenship, however, did not result in equal rights. Amaya (2013) notes, "the great majority of Mexicans did not enjoy the social and legal benefits of whiteness and instead suffered from the systematic erosion of all rights, including property rights, originally drawn in Mexican law, as well as political and linguistic rights" (p. 16).

Why did these new citizens not gain rights? First, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was drafted by U.S. lawmakers and only included "one provision the Mexican legislature was able to negotiate, the granting of U.S. citizenship to Mexican residents" (p. 18). In addition, states retained the right to disenfranchise Latina/os using their own local laws. These legal and political ramifications regarding citizenship echo throughout my observations in the archive. A formal analysis of Anzaldúa's birth certificate might end here, highlighting the effects of institutional racism and citizenship on people's experiences. However, taking a multimodal rhetorical approach, the critic can dig deeper into the archive to find more personal evidence of how people's experiences are affected by such official documents.

An Exercise in Voice through the Repertoire

The official archive provides insights into Anzaldúa's theory of the Borderlands; however, when studied in relation to her repertoire, it provides a deeper understanding of Anzaldúa's cultural work as theorist. I identify the repertoire as those "unofficial" texts found in her papers, including journal entries, drawings, and fictional stories, such as the short story I examine here, "Her Name Never Got Called." Herrera (2008) comments that she made a similar connection between the issues found in the birth certificate(s) upon finding the short story (p. 2). The story depicts the conflict the protagonist, a little girl nicknamed Prieta, experiences when her teacher calls her by another name, her "real" name. AnaLouise Keating (2009) explains that Anzaldúa worked through her philosophical concepts in her fiction (p. 7). I suggest that drafts of this story reveal this aspect of Anzaldúa's thought process.

A major consideration revealed by the process of my finding "Her Name Never Got Called" is an important feature of the official archive: access. I found the finished draft, but it was unavailable for research at the time. It is difficult to move beyond the archive and locate the repertoire if the interpretive and personal texts are hidden. I did not want to write about Anzaldúa's voice without quoting her work of fiction/autohistoria/autohisteoría.[7] In later boxes, I found drafts of the work, adding to the understanding of official documents. One copy had no writing on it; other drafts had feedback from editors. The selections were mostly identical with very few, although significant, changes, providing intimate insights into Anzaldúa's experience and theory-building process.

"Her Name Never Got Called" explores Anglo teachers' "lack of understanding" and its consequences on students (Herrera, 2008, p. 3). This story of discrimination explains how Anzaldúa and other Chicanx children experienced childhood in South Texas. Other Chicanx authors have also addressed the first day of school as a racialized rite of passage, one that highlights "feelings of inadequacy, manifested in [students'] interaction with [their] teacher" (Flores, 1996, p.142) and leads to theorizing of identity and belonging. Prieta is uncomfortable at school, and she experiences something similar to the protagonist in Sandra Cisneros' *House on Mango Street*, who, as Lisa Flores (1996) states, "experiences an awareness of her differences, in culture and class, from those around her, and a sense of how her displacement is evident in spatial relations" (p.142). Herrera (2008) notes that Anzaldúa's story showcases how shame is internalized and possibly prompts her grandmother's change to the birth certificate "in the

[7] "Autohisteorías" is the "concept that Chicanas and women of color write not only about abstract ideas but also bring their personal history as well as the history of their community" (Keating, *Interviews/Entrevistas*, 2000, p. 242). I find it necessary to use this term because it helps the reader make the connection between fiction and the visual, which I argue, is central to her theory.

hopes of giving her Prietita…an advantage in a white world," (Herrera, 2008, p. 3). However, modifying the ethnicity on the birth certificate does not alter the way people discriminate against Prieta/Anzaldúa.

In "Her Name Never Got Called," the protagonist, Prieta[8], faces a common rite of passage: her first day of school. Prieta's experience is intensified as she finds herself in an English-speaking environment and unable to understand those around her. She notices cues and determines that the teacher is calling roll because, when the students around her catch their name, they respond. Prieta gets in trouble for not hearing - or rather, not *knowing* - her name. Her family's reliance on her nickname, "Prieta" or "Prietita," makes it impossible for her know her official name, "Gloria." She is unable to explain that she goes by "Prieta," and as a result, the teacher punishes Prieta for misbehaving. The story continues with a lapse in time: an older Prieta explains the confusion with her name and the changes made to her birth certificate. The tone of the story shifts; she clarifies that her name is the basis of her awareness and power. This story is relevant for its literary contributions. However, as a rhetorician, I juxtapose the official documents with this unofficial fiction or autohistoria to trace the rhetorical dimensions of the archive and repertoire. Doing so provides insights to how Anzaldúa created theories. It allows us to perceive more directly Anzaldúa's embodied isolation, her everyday acts of resistance, and her sense of awareness through a backward glance.

The short story allows scholars to recognize that the repertoire begins and ends with awareness. The protagonist's lack of understanding correlates with the author's journey towards consciousness - political, cultural, and contextual. Since discussions about family names transcend official documents, the repertoire helps explain discrepancies in the birth certificate, suggesting the story's connection to Anzaldúa's lived experiences. Anzaldúa begins with the protagonist Prieta, which means "dark girl," on her first day of school. Prieta is a common protagonist in Anzaldúa's work, and scholars are aware that Anzaldúa's mother called her "Prietita." Thus, the work of fiction may be understood as autobiographical and theoretical. The protagonist's contextual cognizance is obvious despite the cultural barrier between the English-speaking teacher and her Spanish-speaking students (Box 76, Folder 4, p. 1). Prieta understands that she needs to respond to her name by standing up and saying "Present" while raising one hand, even though she never heard her name; it wasn't until going to school that she, "heard the name Gloria" (Box 76, Folder 4, pp. 1-2).

The archive provides "objective" data that points to the discrepancy in the birth certificate while the repertoire highlights

[8] The character "Prieta" is found in other works of fiction written by Anzaldúa. I focus this paper on "Her Name Never Got Called" exclusively because it discusses Prieta's birth certificate, uniquely drawing a connection to that particular official document.

its embodied effects. Having the wrong name on the birth certificate creates confusion in the child. She understands her environment perhaps even better than her peers, but her confusion and lack of English makes it difficult to respond with agency when she hears a name that is foreign to her. The short story serves as a record that documents the protagonist's rhetorical awareness, which is erased in the classroom context. Not only is Prieta more aware of herself and her surroundings than people give her credit for, but she is also aware of that erasure. Hence, Anzaldúa uses this "fictional" space as a starting point for theory-building through the images conjured up in her autohistoria. Anzaldúa's work explains feelings of isolation, from herself, her family, and other students in her class. Personal experience is silenced in the birth certificate; the repertoire provides additional information that shows how a common rite of passage such as a child's first day of school can illustrate how many people from South Texas live with these seemingly simple errors. The protagonist is self-aware and understands the discrepancy between what she knows and what the rest of the class knows. There is agency in the child's thought process that exists outside the official conventions of the classroom.

However, this agency can only go so far. Although her parents give her strict orders to be obedient - "All year she'd heard Mami and Papi say, 'When you go to school you'll have to obey the teachers, Prieta'" (Box 76, Folder 4, p.1) - due to the language barrier, the protagonist has a hard time following simple instructions and understanding her teacher. Moreover, this problem also connects directly to issue of Anzaldúa's birth certificate. The story depicts actual, material consequences that might result from the mistakes and changes in the document. Scholars are not aware whether the errors were caused by an English-speaking health professional or record keeper unable to correctly record Spanish, or if her parents misspelled her name or could not decide. In the end, the protagonist does not know her name, perhaps cannot know it, leading to a cycle of misrepresentation.

Not hearing the correct name during class is an ongoing problem for Prieta, suggesting that the confusion engendered by the birth certificate is not isolated—it has long lasting consequences. The story goes on to say that the following day, Prieta did not answer when the teacher called "Gloria Anzaldúa," resulting in the teacher speaking unintelligibly in English and pushing her on face onto the chalkboard lest she be paddled (Box 76, Folder 4, p. 1). She does not understand the language her teacher uses, the other "Mexican" kids do not speak Spanish, and she does not recognize her name. The misspelling of her name on the birth certificate reflects material conditions of life for Prieta, who receives daily abuse at school because she neither speaks English nor recognizes the name her parents gave but eschewed. Psychological consequences arise, such as shame and punishment at home (Box 76, Folder 4, pp. 1-2). Early on, Prieta internalizes feelings of shame associated with her name, her race, and

(later on) her sexual orientation. The birth certificate reifies her isolation on paper and shows how racism works on an institutional level and becomes a social message, even as her traumatic experience reifies the effects of official documents on raced bodies.

Scholars are left to speculate why Anzaldúa kept all of the birth certificates and corrected copies since her reactions to the birth certificate are missing. I suggest that the repertoire allows scholars more detailed, intelligible speculation over how this official document becomes the basis for everyday acts of resistance. Performative elements found in the repertoire are not always evident in the archive. Prieta exercises her awareness and converts it into agency. This has a dual function: the protagonist communicates her knowledge of the system that oppresses her and adds complexity to the experience; the author exercises agency in a fictional space that prepares her to do so in her own lived world.

Eventually, Prieta fights back by coming up with a plan, of lying "when the teacher called that name that was not her name" (Box 76, Folder 4, p. 2). There are times when "she would forget to lie and most mornings the teacher would descend on her knuckles with the edge of her ruler. She was going to establish discipline over these wild dirty Mexicans right from the start. And with this little skinny girl she would set the example" (Box 76, Folder 4, p. 2). Nonetheless, Prieta tricks the Anglo teacher by memorizing the name that the teacher assigns to her, a name that sounds foreign. She knows how the system works and how to bend the teacher's rules, based on critical awareness of who she is and who her teachers think she is. Even as she fights back, she occasionally forgets and faces the consequences of being misunderstood. She exemplifies discipline for other students, and one might argue, is used to prevent them from forming bonds with one another. Resistance is important in the narrative. Even though Prieta experiences isolation and racism, she learns to use her position and fight back. Resistance occurs within the confines of the story but also outside of it.

Anzaldúa is known for consciously exercising her agency through writing. She explains that for her writing is not a choice, that it helps her create or "compensate for what the real world does not give" (Anzaldúa, 2015, pp. 166-167). She uses fiction as a laboratory where she constructs and tests her theory performatively and then connects it to the larger structural problems of racism and identity. The autohistoria gains agency on its own, but it also provides what Kenneth Burke (1973) would term "equipment for living" in the Borderlands. Self-awareness as resistance takes her and her readers full-circle through the backward glance, the revisiting of official documents, that is possible via the repertoire.

Anzaldúa's family fought over her name: Evangelina was her name according to her father; Gloria according to her mother; and Gloria Evangelina according to her "mamagrande Locha;" however, as an adult she would discover that the name on her birth certificate was "Eve Angeline"

(Box 76, Folder 4, p. 2). The story names each of the mistakes: misspellings of her parents' names, their placement in incorrect slots for mother and father, and the statement that she was "born dead" (Box 76, Folder 4, p. 2). Anzaldúa even includes how the section labeling Prieta as "Mexican" was the "one bit of information that was correct" and that her grandmother made a point to "see to it that *mijita's* record was set straight" (Box 76, Folder 4, p. 2) by adding "white" to the race section. Although acting "from the heart…to save her from the painful ignominy of being what she was - Mexican," this action caused Prieta distress: "the one true fact falsified now" (Box 76, Folder 4, p. 3). When her ethnicity it listed as Mexican, it explains feelings of otherness; when her ethnicity is white, those feelings do not disappear. Only the racial category is erased.

At school, the students and her teacher never see her as white despite the change. A later draft of the story adds that the "misnaming" would become important once the protagonist assumed the identity of a writer: "The power that came with naming was one she wanted" (Box 76, Folder 4, p. 3). In a subsequent revision, Prieta rereads the work and comes back with an even stronger sense of awareness. During the extensive writing process, Anzaldúa works out emotions that connect to larger structural issues. She refines her theoretical grounding and rereads her experience, adding a new layer of understanding to the piece. Interestingly, this version has a critique next to Anzaldúa's reflective statement that reads, "This seems overstated to me - sudden academic language" (Box 76, Folder 4, p. 3). Perhaps Anzaldúa worked out her story and her theory using academic language because they are inseparable.

Anzaldúa's Archive and Repertoire

This study is an example of the multimodal nature of archival research, exemplified through official and unofficial interactions between materials. The documents I examined here are both official and unofficial, even though they are both technically located in the archive. I believe that delving into the unofficial aspects of rhetorical contexts through the notion of the repertoire can help us unmask the racist ideologies of official archival texts. The official archive may only display "facts" (such as place of birth, names of parents, and so on), but the repertoire offers a complex layering of responses to the official record (such as the material consequences and performances based on the "facts" listed in the archive). It allows us to recognize affect and awareness - crucial components of social change for Anzaldúa. The interaction of texts like the birth certificate(s) and Anzaldúa's fictional-theoretical work help us read her ethos more holistically. A focus on the repertoire allows us to understand how, through her writing as a means of survival, Anzaldúa works out feelings of exclusion and creates bridges between the official and unofficial, speaking to the experiences

of marginalized groups and attendant sense of isolation.

This essay has aimed to show how a common birth certificate proves a symbol of racist ideologies and how these are internalized. Anzaldúa's confusion shows her nascent childhood self-awareness, and how she is later able to name her feelings and derive critical concepts that we now deem vital as rhetoricians. Having language to describe these feelings of isolation becomes a generative theory based on lived experience as cultural work by people of color. This approach is only possible through recognition of knowledge making as multimodal, that is, as the interaction between very different materials and texts in the archive and the embodied performance of the everyday which is too often ignored by academics. As Prior (2004) states, "We must consider the complex, emerging affordances and consequences of semiotic practices, artifacts, and media carefully and precisely to understand and shape change" (p. 29). Via the archive and repertoire, scholars can comprehend how Anzaldúa works through her experiences and creates a theory of social change that is textual, imagistic, and embodied. She supplements the official record with unofficial performances and literature that conjure vivid images - images that help Chicanxs build connections using shared experiences. She uses images to create theories of life on the Borderlands and demonstrates her process - awareness, isolation, resistance, and back to awareness - as a model for others.

Differing reactions to Anzaldúa's birth certificate, including her fictional responses, exemplify this evolution. The archive is not merely "data." It offers a living set of relationships and creates new meaning when set in the larger scheme of the repertoire. Every archival collection contains official and unofficial documents that, when combined by the critic, contribute to the continued evolution of the materials. As the archive evolves, spaces of possibility emerge, corroborating Sheridan, Ridolfo, and Michel's (2005) claim that a healthy "multimodal public sphere…is contingent upon nonspecialist citizens having access to an array of cultural and material resources" (p. 807). Unfortunately, too often the issue of access to the archive, and therefore the repertoire, remains. The repertoire is at least partially located within the archive, which means that a researcher requires special permission to access the work. This work, while publicly available is really only available to a select few, and so, this must change so that the crucial theorizing that authors like Anzaldúa enacted might be more easily accessed by wider audiences.

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Making Music, Enhancing Agency

A Case Study Analysis of Agency-Affording Multimodality in Kehinde Spencer's A Woman's Reprieve

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Author's Note

I recognize that my status as a white woman prohibits me from ever facing the double layering of subjugation that Black women experience. One way I have tried to account for this is by weaving Kehinde's voice and perspectives throughout this discussion. As Friedman points out, white academics too often "write about [B]lack women [while failing] to include real [B]lack women in the discussion or to understand [B]lack women as cultural producers rather than simply as objects of the racial gaze" (4). Thus, it has been my intention throughout this discussion to keep Kehinde's voice and ideas central, to let her speak for herself. Additionally, from the start of this project, Kehinde has graciously read and responded to my analysis and writing, offering her support and suggestions along the way. My hope is that as a result of these rhetorical decisions throughout the composing process, I am able to present A Woman's Reprieve *for what it is: an innovative, multimodal, and effective enactment of feminist agency.*

Unlike white women whose "white skin privileges them" (Collins, 1993, p. 25), women of color experience oppression due to their gender and skin color – a double layering of subjugation that lends legitimacy to Tasha Fierce's claim that "Black women occupy a social status lower than that of white men, Black men, and white women" (2015). However, women of color refuse to be victimized; instead, they develop effective and creative ways of speaking back to this oppression. One such way is through multimodality. As Gunther Kress (2000) points out, "the intentional deployment" of multimodal modes within the creation of a text "gives agency of a real kind to the text maker" (p.340). In this article, I present an example of how one Black woman artist with Nigerian roots harnesses the agency-affording potential of multimodality.[1]

[1] Following the lead of Elaine Richardson, I use the terms African American and Black interchangeably. Throughout this discussion, I also refer to Kehinde as Nigerian American because, although she "consider[s] [her]self Black and part of the African American community because [she] live[s] in the United States and that is the culture [she is] a part of," she self-identifies more

Specifically, I present a case study analysis[2] of *A Woman's Reprieve*, a feminist music album released in 2008 by my friend and colleague, Kehinde Spencer. My claim is that the purposeful combination of visual, linguistic, and aural modes is an act of feminist agency for her, one through which she calls upon her African heritage to present herself as a valued and valuable member of her African culture.

One way of understanding the potential for multimodal self-presentation to offer a source of feminist agency is through a consideration of mainstream representations of Black women. Privileged by neither their gender nor their race, Black women must often see themselves portrayed as hypersexualized beings, skewed representations that have roots deep in our nation's history. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, for instance, "slavery defined African American women as society's Other, [as lesser-than beings] unable to control [their] sexuality" (Littlefield, 2007, pp. 678-9). Otherwise referred to as "the oversexed jezebel" (Patton, 2006, p. 26), this hypersexualized representation marries the woman-as-object framework with the image of "black slave women… put up on the auction block" (Nykol, 2015). The resulting depiction is the African American woman "as promiscuous, erotic, and sexually available" (Bromley 87). She is, in these conceptions, little more than a physical body available for the viewing, purchasing, and sexual pleasure of the men around her.

Today, movies, magazines, and music videos continue to promote this degrading representation, what Marci Bounds Littlefield describes as "sexually insatiable images" (p. 681). Take, for example, rapper David Banner's 2003 hit single "Like a Pimp." The music video features multiple shots of Black women shaking their behinds while men look on, rapping lyrics such as, "F*** yo gul up in the throat / And make her swallow the nut" and "We got all the butts and / All of they sluts and / All of the hoes." In the background are sounds of women moaning, noises representative of an orgasm that we are to assume is the result of the men taking full advantage of the women's sexual availability and eagerness. What is even more troublesome is that the repercussions of such representations extend into the lived experiences of Black women, making "rape and other forms of

specifically as a Nigerian American woman (Spencer, 2016).

[2] Although conducting a case study analysis of *A Woman's Reprieve* has allowed me to develop an in-depth understanding of Kehinde's rhetorical strategies and offer potential implications regarding our understanding of multimodality and feminist agency, the case study design of this analysis also limits the generalizability of my conclusions. This research, similar to all research, is partial, "an interpretation of an already interpreted world" (Welch, Piekkari, Plakoyiannaki, and Paavilainen-Mantymaki, 2011, p. 744). Thus, I recognize that the conclusions and observations I offer are limited to feminist agency as it is practiced by Kehinde. Still, my hope is that that this analysis leads to productive insights, healthy dialogues, and future research through which we continue to explore the dynamic relationship between feminist agency and multimodality for African American women.

violence against [these] women an acceptable norm" (Littlefield, p. 681).

In response to degrading representations, Black women locate ways of speaking back, of engaging in acts of feminist agency that reframe these "twisted images of Black womanhood" (Richardson, 2002, p. 676). Here, I showcase the efforts of one such woman. As the following discussion will show, Spencer's *A Woman's Reprieve* offers a model for the multimodal enactment of feminist agency. My claim is that Spencer enhances her feminist agency by skillfully combining visual, linguistic, and aural modes as a means through which she presents herself as a woman within her African culture. In so doing, she invites a productive shift in the focus upon Black women's bodies from one that is merely sexual to one that is purposefully cultural, and, as the following analysis reveals, multimodality impels this agency-affording shift.

A Woman's Reprieve

A Woman's Reprieve features 17 tracks, each of which contains lyrics and melody composed by Kehinde while featuring various singers and musicians as guest performers.[3] Through the use of spoken word, instruments, photos, and song, this "album chronicles a young woman's journey into womanhood" (Spencer, 2008). The album begins with Kehinde[4] in the midst of heartbreak. She is facing the end to an unhealthy relationship with a man who is married to another woman, and we quickly learn that Kehinde's relationship with this man is based on her physical submission to him. As she contemplates ending this relationship, she faces the fear of being alone, a fear that Kehinde describes as part of the "pain, healing, transformation, and the cycles of growth women need to experience to understand what it means to live as divine human beings." Thus, Kehinde's intended audience is comprised of women struggling through similar heartache and change. In one of the early songs on the album, Kehinde writes, "Freedom is what I deserve / But chains are all that I see / Holding me in a space of fear / So I won't get free" (Spencer, 2008). Each song on the album represents a step in Kehinde's personal journey, and by the end of *A Woman's Reprieve*, Kehinde has progressed from a place of heartache to one of self-love and cultural awareness.

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[3] All photos and quotes from *A Woman's Reprieve* are used with permission from Kehinde Spencer.

[4] The individual woman protagonist on *A Woman's Reprieve* is never explicitly named on the album. However, since Spencer claims this story as her "story of pain and sadness," I understand the woman to be a representation of Spencer. Additionally, in my conversations with her, she acknowledges, "I created this [woman] character for me; I was talking about me. [...] I told my story of the heartbreak through her story of heartbreak. [Although] I didn't have a relationship with a married man, the struggle of heartbreak is the same, [and] I became the character within the text by using my [personal] photos" (Spencer, 2015). Therefore, for the sake of clarity throughout this discussion, when I refer to the album's protagonist, I call her "Kehinde."

Figure 1: A Collage of Spencer's Family

Various visual, linguistic, and aural modes drive Kehinde's progression from a woman defined by her sexual relationships with men to a woman self-defined in relation to her African roots.

Multimodality and Feminist Agency within *A Woman's Reprieve*

Visual mode

One of the main visual modes Kehinde uses in *A Woman's Reprieve* is the inclusion of personal photos. These photos appear on the exterior cover of the album and also within the print insert that accompanies the CD, making visual the connection between Kehinde and her African culture. Two representative examples illustrate this visual mode. Figure 1 features a collage of 11 family photos taken during the first eight years of Kehinde's life when she was living in Nigeria. As such, each photo offers a visual testament to Kehinde's situatedness within a network of her African culture. The collage appears on the second to last page of the print insert, adjacent to the written acknowledgements of those who helped with the production of the album. Accordingly, this collage is not explicitly linked to any particular song on the album. Rather, it functions as a visual conclusion to the album as a whole, a graphic representation of the link between Kehinde's personal story as presented in *A Woman's Reprieve* and her cultural past.

According to Kehinde, the decision to include photos such as these was a purposeful effort to pay homage to her cultural roots and to acknowledge that this history is inseparable from her current identity. She explains, "People are dynamic human beings. There are multiple layers, and in one single moment, you are meeting somebody's past and future. So it was important to put [the collage of photos] in there" (Personal interview). From this perspective, we can recognize the ways in which the collage of photos explicitly links Kehinde to her African heritage. Her childhood in Nigeria is given visual presence as are her parents, grandparents, and siblings. Kehinde does not solely claim her African roots; rather, she uses the visual mode to graphically spotlight these roots, inviting her viewing audience to appreciate this component of her identity on a more intimate and personal level.

Furthermore, the very form of the photos provides a visual representation of the cultural network within which Kehinde situates herself. That is, the actual presentation of the photos – the

ways in which they touch and overlap one another to form a collage – visually communicates interconnectedness. The photos are not presented as separate and individual. Rather, each photo functions as one piece of the larger image that is the collage; if one photo were missing, the collage would be incomplete. The fact that the photos feature both Kehinde and her African family members invites us to adopt a similar view of Kehinde's connectedness to and value within the African culture.

One way of understanding this rhetorical strategy is as a manifestation of what Susan Stanford Friedman calls narratives of relational positionality. According to Friedman (1999), narratives of relational positionality recognize "how the formation of identity, particularly women's identity, unfolds in relation to desire for and separation from others. [These narratives acknowledge that] identities are fluid sites that can be understood differently depending on the vantage point of their formation or function" (p. 17). Thus, by presenting herself within this specific collage of photos, Kehinde invites us to understand her identity within the context of her familial and cultural relationships. We are invited to recognize that just as each photo is a necessary component to the collage, Kehinde herself is an integral component of her community, a recognition that offers a significant departure from mainstream notions that objectify Black women.

A second example of this visual mode is provided in Figure 2. This photo offers a

Figure 2: A picture of Spencer herself.

different visual than the previous example; here, Kehinde does not feature any people other than herself. Additionally, this photo is a single image rather than a collage. However, it still brings Kehinde's African culture to the visual fore. The photo features Kehinde standing in an outdoor field, holding a long, narrow tool above her head. The entire photo is black and white with the exception of her bracelets and the patch on her shirt, both of which feature the specific colors green, black, and red.

Here, Kehinde's cultural connection is made explicit through this specific use of color. The colors emphasized on Kehinde's patch and bracelet are those featured on the Pan-African flag, and the shape and pattern of the patch resembles that of the flag as well (see Fig. 3). Created in 1920 by the Universal Negro Improvement Association, the Pan-African flag is a "nationalist symbol for the worldwide liberation of people of African

Figure 3: The Pan-African Flag

origin" ("Pan-African Flag," 2015). By wearing and drawing visual attention to these colors, Kehinde explicitly uses the visual to connect herself to a Pan-Africanist ideology, a belief in worldwide unity for Africans.

As a result, we are invited to see Kehinde as a member and supporter of this cultural network. She explains, "I believe that the individual is part of the community. The individual is not separate, and that is very much tied to my African upbringing and my African culture. [...] The individual is always part of the community, even if you go out, you're still connected, you're still tied" (Personal interview). In Figure 2, Kehinde uses the colors green, black, and red to give material presence to these community ties.

This observation is illuminated by Maria Martinez Gonzalez's discussion of a feminist collective identity. In "Feminist Praxis Challenges the Identity Question: Toward New Collective Identity Metaphors" (2008), Gonzalez likens a feminist collective identity to an archipelago - a collection of islands - wherein individual islands "have to coexist in their differences" (p. 33). She goes on to explain that "archipelagos are not 'natural' entities [in that] islands do not belong 'naturally' to an archipelago" (p. 33); rather, people set boundaries and make decisions that dictate "if an island is inside or outside the archipelago" (p. 33). Similarly, no single person belongs 'naturally' to any collective identity; that is, we can claim or reject collective identities based upon the choices we make regarding the representations of our bodies. Since these choices are often made *for* Black women, it is an act of agency for Black women to purposefully decide how to represent themselves and which collective identities to claim or reject. Kehinde does just this when she dons the Pan-African patch (see Fig. 2), a purposeful choice through which she claims a collective African identity. Put simply, Kehinde uses the visual mode to claim that despite appearing alone in the photo, she remains connected to her culture.

Not only does this visual choice connect Kehinde to her African roots, but it also offers an effective enactment of Black feminist agency. Specifically, claiming "broader...networks, both kin and nonkin," offers a means through which African and African American women can locate "a site of cultural resistance" (Peterson, 2005, p. 15). Within a white, hegemonic culture that conceptualizes Black women as "promiscuous...and sexually available" (Bromley, 2012, p. 87), this can be an especially salient act. That is, by situating themselves within a

larger cultural network, African American women can reach "beyond the family into the…community" (Peterson. p. 16), claiming their value before those both within and beyond the domestic realm. As evidenced in Kehinde's visual connections to both her family and the larger Pan-African community, this offers an effective way for Black women to present themselves beyond the hypersexualized framework that too often accompanies public representations of their bodies.

Additionally, the fact that Kehinde *visually* challenges this framework is significant for our understanding of the ways in which multimodality can enhance feminist agency. According to Caroline Wang, Mary Ann Burris, and Xiang Yue Ping (1996), "Photographs can communicate the voices of women who ordinarily would not be heard" (p. 1396). While this is certainly a valid observation, Kehinde's use of photos suggests that the visual can do more for Black women.

That is, not only can photographs communicate the seldom-heard voices of women, but they can also reveal seldom seen images of women. Kehinde's purposeful choice of photos illustrates this potential. Each photograph she includes explicitly promotes a cultural view of who she is as a Nigerian American woman, a significant divergence from traditional Westernized conceptions. In short, Kehinde effectively uses the visual mode to shift the public gaze on her body from an outwardly-defined sexual focus to a self-defined cultural focus, promoting what Littlefield calls "alternative, positive images [of] the African American woman" (pp. 680-681). Although Kehinde's visual choices do not erase pre-existing, oppressive conceptions of or perspectives on African American women, they do function as meaningful acts of feminist agency, challenging skewed perspectives through the circulation of alternative images.

Linguistic Mode

Kehinde's rhetorical prowess is not limited to the visual. She skillfully wields the linguistic mode as another means of promoting her African cultural connection and enacting feminist agency. For instance, "My Ancestors," track twelve on the album, includes the following lyrics: "My ancestors did so much for me / My ancestors allow me to be / I give thanks for standing on their shoulders / Protected so now I am much bolder." In writing these words, Kehinde linguistically acknowledges her ancestral connection, recognizing that her identity as a Nigerian American woman benefits from the sacrifices made by her ancestors. As the song continues, Kehinde continues to explore these familial connections, eventually stating that she is inseparable from her ancestors. She writes: "They are me, me are they / I'm so glad I know the way." Here, the linguistic connection that Kehinde presents to her ancestors is such that she becomes indistinguishable from them: "They are me, me are they." In short, she uses the linguistic mode to establish a direct connection between who

she is and her ancestors, to emphasize her intimate relationship with and inseparability from her African roots.

A similar use of this mode appears on the inside back cover of the album where the following words are written: "All of my mothers gave me a power. I have walked in their footsteps. Now I have come to this hour. Must step out the shadow. Must step in the light. Stand as a soldier. Stand ready to fight. I am a Warrior Woman!" Similar to the lyrics of "My Ancestors," these words linguistically evoke an ancestral perspective within which Kehinde situates herself. In so doing, Kehinde promotes and draws attention to her cultural connections. Additionally, it is significant that Kehinde concludes this excerpt with the claim, "I am a Warrior Woman!" The phrase "Warrior Woman" is also printed above the photo of Kehinde presented in Figure 2.

Similar to Kehinde's linguistic connection to her ancestors and mothers, these written words situate Kehinde among a long tradition of other African and African American women. According to Jacqueline Jones Royster, "The metaphor of African American women writers as warriors for social justice" is commonly invoked within discussions by and about African American women (p. 51). For instance, Audre Lorde (1984) uses this metaphor to describe herself: "Because I am woman, because I am Black, because I am lesbian, because I am myself - a Black woman warrior poet doing my work - [I] come to ask you, are you doing yours?" (p. 42). And, Diedre Bádéjo (1998) acknowledges the warrior imagery that frequently accompanies "African American poetic images of 'women [and] mothers'" (p. 108). As these references suggest, it is common for African American women to conceptualize themselves as warrior women, "passionate thinkers and activists who use the pen as a mighty sword" (Royster, 2006, p. 51). Kehinde takes advantage of this metaphorical construction by using the linguistic mode to enact this very identity. In other words, not only does Kehinde discursively connect herself to her African roots, but she also uses the linguistic mode to function as a warrior woman.

Additionally, Kehinde's decision to evoke the Warrior Woman metaphor offers a powerful and impactful act of Black feminist agency. Similar to the aforementioned acknowledgement of her ancestral mothers, this connection to the warrior woman communicates the message that Kehinde is not simply a "[B]lack receptacle of male desire" (Lhooq, 2014); rather, she is an intellectual member of a larger African community - and, more specifically, a community defined by other active, engaged Black women. This is a significant act of feminist agency for Kehinde because it offers a means through which she presents herself as an active woman engaged in her African culture rather than a passive body on display.

Thus, in purposefully using the linguistic mode to connect herself to her ancestors and mothers, Kehinde shows herself to be a woman capable of using

"the performative power of the *word*" (Peterson, p. 3, emphasis added) - rather than the performative power of only a hypersexualized body - to interact with the world around her.

Aural Mode

Finally, Kehinde engages the aural as a means of both presenting herself in relation to her African culture and enhancing her feminist agency. This is evidenced in the spoken conversations between Kehinde and her grandmother. These conversations occur regularly on *A Woman's Reprieve*, each conversation immediately preceding a song. Additionally, the dialogues are only presented aurally, never appearing in writing alongside the lyrics. As a result, the spoken conversations take full advantage of the aural mode by privileging a strictly listening audience.

For instance, "The Sun is Leaving" is the third track on the album. At this point in *A Woman's Reprieve*, Kehinde is still reeling from the pain of an unhealthy relationship with, and dependence on, a married man. In the conversation that immediately precedes this song, we hear the following:

> **Grandma:** "What'd you say, baby?"
> **Kehinde:** "I'm ready to listen Grandma, please! Please! I'm ready to listen."
> **Grandma:** "Just breathe, baby. I know it ain't easy, but you have to go through this."
> **Kehinde:** "I'll do whatever you say, Grandma. Please, I can't do this anymore. Just tell me something, Grandma, I can't do this anymore."
> **Grandma:** "Okay, baby…"

As Grandma's voice fades away, the song "The Sun Is Leaving" begins. Since this conversation is not printed within *A Woman's Reprieve*, it privileges the listening audience. Thus, we must attend to the aural expression of these words in order to gain a full understanding of their meaning. To facilitate this understanding, I draw upon Heidi McKee's six elements of vocal delivery.[5]

At the start of Kehinde's dialogue with her grandma, her grandma's voice has a breathy quality, communicating an intimate closeness. Her voice is low and smooth as she asks Kehinde, "What'd you say, baby?" Kehinde's response, however, is full of tension, tight and rushed. She sounds as if she is in the midst of crying. The pitch of her voice is much higher than that of her grandma. Her breath is short and heavy; she draws out the words "please! Please!" in a trembling tone. Her grandma, however, maintains a relaxed, low manner, her voice barely above a whisper as she reminds Kehinde to "just breathe." There is an audible contrast between Kehinde's voice and that of her grandma - one is loud, tense, and high; the

[5] In "Sound Matters: Notes Toward the Analysis and Design of Sound in Multimodal Webtexts" (2006), Heidi McKee offers six elements of vocal delivery: tension (how tight or strained), roughness (how raspy or throaty), breathiness (how airy or intimate), loudness (how booming or soft), pitch (how high or low), and vibrato (how trembling it sounds).

other is soft, calm, and fluid. As a result, we are invited to recognize the grandma as a calming, wise presence in Kehinde's life, an understanding facilitated by our ability to *hear* the conversation rather than read it. That is, through Kehinde's staccato breathing and strained, trembling words, we hear the pain and anxiety in her voice. Through the soft, gentle volume of the grandma's voice, the low pitch and the ways in which one word melodiously blends into the next, we hear the calmness and composure that she brings to the conversation. The aurality of this dialogue - the ability to hear the volume, pace, and tension - is integral to grasping its complete meaning.

A similar observation can be made regarding the spoken conversation that precedes "My Mother's Daughter," track four on the album. This conversation occurs after Kehinde's decision to end the relationship:

> **Grandma:** "You have to figure out what's missin' in you. That's what you want him to fill up. Baby, get up! The sun is shinin'. So you must too. God gave you another chance at life. What you gonna do with it? You hear me? What you gonna do?"
> **Kehinde:** "It still hurts."
> **Grandma:** "It's gonna hurt. Nothing will ever stop the pain. But one day you'll learn that you can live with it. Pain can't stop you from movin' forward."
> **Kehinde:** "I still miss him!"
> **Grandma:** "That's fine. But the sun is shinin'. So what are you going to do?"

Similar to the previous example, the aural expression of this dialogue is central to grasping its full meaning. Here, the grandma's voice is not quite as airy as in the previous conversation. Rather, there is a slight tension and faster pace to her spoken words, aspects that communicate a sense of urgency as she asks Kehinde, "What you gonna do with it? You hear me? What you gonna do?" Kehinde does not respond immediately; rather, there is a several second silent pause before she finally makes audible, in a slow, soft voice, "It still hurts." Here, Kehinde's voice does not communicate the same stress and strain as it did previously. Instead, a sense of exhaustion characterizes her expression, and we hear Kehinde's tiredness in the slow pace and quiet volume with which she responds to her grandma. When her grandma reacts to Kehinde's admission of her hurt, she does so with softness and intimacy. The breathiness and fluidity of her voice has returned, and she assumes a more soothing approach. However, this is not mirrored in Kehinde's response. Instead, Kehinde's exclamation, "I still miss him!" sounds forced out of her throat. The words are spoken quick, coupled with a sob that gives audible presence to Kehinde's pain.

In both of these dialogues, Kehinde takes full advantage of the aural mode as a way of situating herself within her culture. Specifically, in aurally rendering these conversations and privileging a listening audience, Kehinde engages in a practice common within Black discursive traditions. As Valerie Chepp (2012) points

out, "the centrality of oral tradition and an appreciation for verbal dexterity in African American culture" appears in many forms (p. 224). Modern day examples include "the call and response that takes place during the [African American] sermon" (Banks, 2011, p. 48), "poetry slams" (Chepp, p. 233), and "hip-hop culture and rap" (Grace, 2004, p. 484). From this perspective, we can appreciate the ways in which Kehinde's decision to incorporate spoken dialogues throughout *A Woman's Reprieve* allows her to call upon the oral tradition that characterizes African American discursive practices. In so doing, she underscores not only her connection to these oral traditions, but also her willingness to carry them on in her own work.

This aural mode offers more than a means of cultural connection for Kehinde. It is also offers an avenue through which she acts as a feminist agent. African American women, in inserting their voices into a white, hegemonic public sphere, must negotiate "a paradox of visibility and agency" (Carey, 2012, p. 131). That is, because the Western public sphere privileges "a European rhetorical" perspective (p. 131), non-white rhetors and their work are often re-presented in Eurocentric terms. Thus, African American women often find that they are represented as raced rhetors by the dominant culture's "raceless" rhetorics. However, as Elaine Richardson points out, we exist "in a racialized, genderized, sexualized, and classed world" (p. 680), and ignoring the ways in which these identities shape discourse is a marker of the privileged white man. As long as this inaccurate and harmful process persists, Black women too often find that their "words are remembered, but [their] struggle is forgotten" (Carey, p. 131). In essence, their words get stripped from their bodies, entering public discourse seemingly unattached to the body from which they originated. Or, as previously discussed, if mainstream culture *does* acknowledge the Black woman's body, it is often only as a hypercorporeal body detached from words and intellect.

Yet, as Richardson points out and this analysis suggests, "the Black female [has] develop[ed] creative strategies to overcome [this] situation" (p. 680). That is, Black women are not silent nor are they passive; rather, they take advantage of specific strategies through which they enhance their feminist agency. My analysis of the aural dialogue on *A Woman's Reprieve* suggests that vocal delivery is one such strategy. That is, by engaging the aural through diverse vocal enactments, Kehinde brings the physicality of the Nigerian American woman's body to the fore, ensuring that her words do not, in fact cannot, circulate separate from her body. She purposefully uses the aural mode to emphasize the relationship between her physical body and her words. As a result, we cannot experience the words without also experiencing the body that communicates these words. Put another way, through the aural mode, the physicality of Kehinde's body, rather than being ignored or overlooked, is made central - and made central in such a way

that Kehinde's body is presented as an active, purposeful purveyor of the spoken word rather than a hypersexualized body put on display by and for the benefit of others.

Implications

In her discussion of the use of multimodality among South Africans, Liesel Hibbert (2009) identifies what she calls "multimodal self-representation" (p. 212), an act that can lead individuals to see themselves as "agents of change in their own lives" (p. 203). My analysis builds upon Hibbert's observation, suggesting that Kehinde engages in what we might consider Black feminist, multimodal self-representation: the act of using multiple modes to move from a woman defined by her sexual relationships with men to a woman self-defined in relation to her cultural roots.

Kehinde echoes this sentiment as she reflects on the personal impact of creating *A Woman's Reprieve*:

> I would say the main benefit [of making *A Woman's Reprieve*] was realizing what I could do if I put my mind to it - as simple as that sounds… I felt [I] was enacting [feminist] agency because [*A Woman's Reprieve*] allowed me to be proactive. It allowed me to use my energy in a positive direction. It allowed me to do something that could teach me things and give me skills, as opposed to sitting at home and crying and feeling sorry for myself because my relationship didn't work out the way that I wanted it to (Personal interview).

Undergirding Kehinde's reflection is an acknowledgement of herself as an agent of change - as a woman with the potential to create and take action in her own life, to re-present herself as a woman defined by her cultural connections rather than her sexual relationships.

Additionally, although Kehinde does not name the specific "skills" she gained while working on *A Woman's Reprieve*, I suggest that one such skill is the ability to strategically employ multimodality. My suggestion can be understood in light of Richardson's discussion of the multiple "literacies [Black women have] developed to fulfill a quest for a better world" (p. 678). Richardson identifies several literacies, including "storytelling, performative silence, [and the] strategic use of polite and assertive language" (p. 687). Each of these literacies, Richardson asserts, provides a means through which Black women use "verbal and nonverbal communication strategies" to challenge racial and sexual oppressions (689). My analysis adds an additional literacy practice to this repertoire - that of multimodality. That is, as *A Woman's Reprieve* illustrates, the ability to strategically employ multiple modes in a single text is a literacy skill that bolsters African American women's enactments of feminist agency.

One specific benefit multimodality affords is multiplicity. Specifically, the multiplicity inherent within multimodality - the combination of *multiple* modes within a single text - offers a valuable source of

agency for African American women. As previously noted, Black women are challenged on multiple fronts. By non-Black women, they are often looked down upon as a result of their race; by white and Black men, they are often denigrated due to their gender. However, as Kehinde reveals, multimodality can be an apt means for Black women to clap back at the multiple discourses that seek to limit their agency. By simultaneously employing various modes - such as the visual, linguistic, and aural ones present within *A Woman's Reprieve* - Black women engage in more than one act of self-representation at a time. They can, to borrow Richardson's terms, navigate their "multiple consciousness" (p. 686) through multiple modes. For instance, they can *visually* reject sexualized representations of their bodies - as Kehinde does - while at the same time *linguistically* situating themselves among other African and African American Warrior Women and *aurally* claiming African American discursive traditions. Put simply, the combination of multiple modes offers an avenue through which Black women can respond to multiple forms of simultaneous oppression.

The potential for the multiplicity inherent within multimodality to enhance agency is further highlighted if we turn to the concept of synesthesia - the process whereby one mode stimulates a sensation typically associated with another mode. Specifically, if we consider Kehinde's use of photographs alongside the auditory components of the album, we can recognize the potential for the visual to amplify the voices of Black women and complicate hegemonic understandings of their experiences. Robin Small-McCarthy (1999) describes synesthesia as a "transmodal" experience that can "evoke auditory images" (p. 176), and I find this description especially applicable to *A Woman's Reprieve*. More specifically, the photographs in the print insert exist alongside the aural sounds that are spoken and sung on the album. Not only can we can see the photo representations of Kehinde's story, but we can also listen to Kehinde's journey throughout the album. As a result, the photos are no longer strictly visual stimuli. Instead, they become aural stimuli, what we might think of as "auditory images" (Small-McCarthy, p. 176). The woman in the photos is not just a visual representation of a Nigerian American woman. Rather, as a result of the multimodality of *A Woman's Reprieve*, the combination of visual and aural modes, we have heard Kehinde's voice, her sobs, and her exclamations; we have seen photos of her and her family. Consequently, we can appreciate Kehinde as more than a photo; she is a living, expressive individual. She is Kehinde Spencer, a Nigerian woman with a particular story of heartbreak and growth that is both seen and heard.

Additionally, the ability to combine multiple modes in a single text is an especially productive means of enhancing agency when we consider the fact that agency "always take[s] place within a field of power relations" (Gardiner, 1995, p. 10). As Foucault makes clear, power is not a fixed entity; it is constantly in flux.

Power is "produced and enacted in and through discourses, relationships, activities, spaces, and times by people as they compete for access to and control of resources, tools, identities" (Moje and Lewis, 2007, p. 17). The fluid nature of power, although it renders oppression systemic and unpredictable, also offers a source of agency. That is, by making purposeful and rhetorical use of discourse in constructions and representations of the self, what Elizabeth Birr Moje and Cynthia Lewis call "the strategic making and remaking of selves [and] identities" (p. 18), marginalized individuals can position themselves in a more empowering "field of power relations," gaining access to "resources, tools, [and] identities" that might otherwise remain unattainable. As I hope this analysis has shown, Kehinde's use of visual, linguistic, and aural modes to construct and present an identity for herself rooted in her African culture offers evidence of what this can look like in practice, of the ways in which the feminist agent can call upon multimodality to secure what Kress calls "agency of a real kind."

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Beyond 'Digital':

What Women's Activism Reveals about Material Multimodal Composition Pedagogy

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In 1990, the Dignity Memorial Vietnam Wall[1] set up one of its first exhibits among the beaches, lighthouses, and seafood eateries of Cape Cod, Massachusetts. No one could have imagined that it would inspire a small group of its women viewers to create a commemorative event of their own, one which would remain active even today, 26 years later. One of these women, a survivor of domestic violence and rape, took the initiative to question, "Where is *our* wall? Where is *our* memorial?…Where is the wall that commemorates the 51,000 women killed in the *war against women*?" (Hipple, 2000, p. 168). At that time, the Maryland Men's Anti-Rape Resources Center (MARS) released information which estimated that "[d]uring the 16 years of U.S. involvement in Vietnam, a war that claimed the lives of 58,000 men in Southeast Asia, more than 51,000 women were murdered in this country by their husbands, male friends, dates, and casual male acquaintances" (p. 168).

The group of women moved by the Vietnam memorial and this startling statistic then created the Clothesline Project (CP), what they thought of as an "in-your-face educational and healing tool" ("History of the Clothesline Project," para. 2). The CP, now an international event, invites survivors (and those remembering victims) of violence against women, primarily sexual in nature, to decorate tee shirts about their experiences. These tee shirts then get hung on a clothesline in a public space, such as university campuses and other community settings (Fig. 1). The spread of the Project to 41 states and 5 countries indicates the continued and pervasive problem of violence against women, as well as organized resistance to that violence. For the past 25 years, many colleges and community organizations have turned to the CP to provide temporary catharsis to survivors of sexual assault and to raise public awareness of the issue.

As a feminist scholar and member of Kent State University's CP planning committee, I set out to understand 1) written and visual literacy as it mediates women's experiences of gender violence and, 2) ways in which textual and

1 A travelling replica of the original Vietnam Wall.

Figure 1: Multiple decorated tees hang from a clothesline. Source: Clothesline Project

visual artifacts help activists make sense of the construction and revision of cultural narratives. My study, through rhetorical and semiotic analysis, involves questioning how written and visual literacy function in relation to understandings of female embodiment and violence against women. The New London Group (2014) suggests any "semiotic activity" as one that involves design (available designs, designing, and the redesigned) (p. 194). In their view, discourse both reproduces and changes social conventions; design decisions and products are always historically interwoven with other texts. Likewise, CP participants' design decisions suggest that the seemingly ubiquitous discourse of digital composition influences understandings and use of composing practices in other modes. More specifically, the CP shows that alphabetic text presides, rhetorically, over opportunities for multimodal art in ways that are contrary to expectation.

Gunther Kress (2003) asserts that a shift in visual culture requires a move from literacy theories of linguistics to those of semiotics. He argues that semiotic change occurs when the change in mode echoes "the values, structures and meanings of the social and cultural world of the meaning-maker and of the socio-cultural group in which they are" (p. 40). The semiotic analysis in my study suggests that the change in people's preferred mode of communication may be from organic multimodal composing to digital multimodal composing. In other words, generally speaking, engaging with the arts at one time involved more interaction with tangible, rather than digital, materials (i.e scrapbooking, architectural designing, and drawing). Engaging with tangible materials may be less common today.

Of course, all representations are limited in their ability to reflect experiences (Kress, 2003). But while

Kress argues that images have supplanted the use of text in communication, my study shows participants relying on text. Therefore, cultural trends related to mode, in some cases, may pertain more to divides between digital and non-digital multimodal composing, rather than to divides between textual and visual composing.

Moreover, Janis Jefferies (2001) refers to the combination of linguistics and image as "scriptovisual" (p. 191) and observes how language and art take their status as subversive only in relation to the dominant. In other words, activists must use the language of the dominant discourse even as they critique it; after all, social critique by those in oppressed positions almost always involves elements of disguise (p. 82). The issue becomes not whether art depicts the truth but how art came to be, what it conveys, and who gets implicated in it (Coogan, 2010, p.161). Explorations of visual rhetoric draw attention to the CP as a rich site for questioning materials used in feminist activism and what those materials suggest about dominant culture (Wysocki, 2005); the live audience of an event which includes previously constructed materials by anonymous creators (Hocks and Balsamo, 2003); and the "active" relationships formed among narrative images (Kress and VanLeeuwen, 2006) on CP tee shirts.

James Clifford (1992) describes the tee shirt as "that blank sheet, mystic writing pad, so close to the body" (p. 114). Teachers use tee shirts as a writing pad in the form of "T-shirt literacy"; that is, teachers have allowed students to consider rhetorical context to design a tee shirt that addresses a community issue (Odell and Katz, 2009). Moreover, similar to the CP, some teachers have asked students to research social issues and create persuasive tee shirts pertaining to their chosen cause (Shankar-Brown, 2014, p. 366). The rationale for such projects is that graphic tee shirts are useful in the teaching of multiliteracies. Rajni Shankar-Brown, for example, discusses her favorite tee shirt, decorated with the *Schoolhouse Rock* logo; the shirt, as a conversation piece, engages people in the literacies of viewing, speaking, and listening (2014, 366). Moreover, "[t]he words textile and text both derive from the Latin *texere*, which means 'to weave,' either through cloth or story" (Hipple, 2000, 164). This weaving together of stories through cloth is evidenced across the tee shirts displayed and collected in the CP.

To engage in a systematic examination of the way written and visual communication rhetorically represent survivors' narratives (or parts of them), I turned to an analysis of a CP shirt collection at a large, public university (Kent State). This CP collection consisted of 74 tee shirts that yielded 897 data points, which explore patterns in linguistic and illustrated content, and how women use the content to position themselves in relation to their experiences of violence. This exploration also informs multimodal composition pedagogy by further addressing Jody Shipka's (2011) concern about the ways in which multimodality has been overly conceptualized as "new

(meaning digital)" media and how such a narrow view of multimodality could constrain students' composition practices (pp. 7-8). Despite pushes toward multimodal and more visual-laden composing in education (New London Group, 1996; Kress, 2003; DeVoss, Cushman, and Grabill, 2005; Takayoshi and Selfe, 2007), only one participant in my study communicated without the use of words. This is in stark contrast to Kress's (2003) notion that words have been subsumed by visual communications. Therefore, I end the article with a discussion of what student activist compositions suggest about students' understanding of multimodality.

Methods

I took photographs of each tee shirt (front and back, when relevant), assigning each tee shirt a unique number and organizing them into one digital image collection. I examined the collection as a whole, using rhetorical analysis (Foss, 2009) and/or semiotic analysis (Silverman, 2011). For the rhetorical analysis, I used Foss's Fantasy-Theme Criticism to identify characters, actions, and settings. Fantasy-Theme "is designed to provide insights into the shared worldview of groups" (2009, p. 97). Here, "'fantasy' is the creative and imaginative interpretation of events and a fantasy theme is the means through which the interpretation is accomplished in communication" (Foss, 2009, pp. 97-98). Therefore, tracking patterns in the interpretations of acts of sexual violence (fantasy) and the ways in which CP participants communicate these interpretations (theme) guides the understanding of the personal and public appeals of the shirts as they engage ethos, pathos, and logos. More specifically, my interest in using data to understand divides between the personal and the public meant that I needed to form a connection between personal disclosure of characters, actions, and settings related to a CP participants' experiences and the rhetorical appeals used to engage the public (viewers of the CP). Logos, ethos, and pathos, though not discussed specifically in the results and analysis, facilitated a finite breakdown of the data, which could then be pieced together to identify larger patterns *in* and significant contributions *to* understandings of feminist activism.

The rhetorical analysis, then, looks at personal and public appeals of messages as they relate to cultural narratives. The semiotic analysis addresses how visuals acquire meaning as elements related in a system, especially a social system. I was looking for patterns in the visuals content rather than features (such as placement); as such, traditional notions of semiotics served my purpose of finding the frequency of use of text and image, and the relationships between text and visuals. Thus, extensive development of a scheme was not necessary.

I use David Silverman's (2011) notion of semiotic analysis, which involves examining signifiers and signified concepts, the autonomous nature of images, the arbitrary/unmotivated nature

of images, and the relationships between images and concepts.[2] Such an analysis enables me to determine how images acquire their meaning in the context of other images, words, and the CP. In this project, then, the semiotic analysis looks at how images and their parts converge and diverge to construct evidence of particular rhetorical approaches within social narratives. In other words, examination of the relationship between signifier and signified shows patterns in participants' conceptualizations of images' symbolic meaning. These patterns implicate cultural narratives such as those related to gender communication (i.e. the frequent use of hearts). Cultural narratives are also implicated in the idea of images gaining their meaning from their placement in a system, rather than from an inherent connection. The semiotic analysis established patterns in visual content within social structures and systems related to violence and activist responses. Furthermore, these two methods enabled me to draw conclusions about the relationship between text and images and to offer implications of such relationships for the field of rhetoric and composition.

Results and Discussion

What Student Activist Compositions Suggest About Students' Understandings of Multimodality

With this data, I argue that women's activist messages align with patriarchal narratives, even as their activist messages attempt to counter narratives about women's identity.[3] This argument is supported by the finding that participants' visual messages rely on socially constructed representations of concepts rather than on original representations of experiences.

I also argue that activists employ textual and visual messages but rely on text to make meaning. This argument is supported by the finding that visuals' content show that participants tend to use

2 Semiotic analysis includes responding to the following criteria: 1) "Signs bring together an image or word (the 'signifier) and a concept (the 'signified')." 2) "Signs are not autonomous entities—they derive their meaning only from the place within a sign system. What constitutes a linguistic sign is only its difference from other sights (so the colour red is only something which is not green, blue, orange, etc.)" 3) "The linguistic sign is *arbitrary* or unmotivated. This, Saussure says, means that the sign 'has no natural connection with the signified'." 4) "Signs can be put together through two main paths. First, there are possibilities of combining signs… Saussure calls these patterns of combinations *syntagmatic relations.* Second, there are contrastive properties… Here the choice of one term necessarily excludes the other. Saussure calls these mutually exclusive relations *paradigmatic oppositions* (Silverman, 2011, p. 330).

3 CP participants receive no instructions for the composing of their shirts other than that they cannot use perpetrators' names if perpetrators were not found guilty by a court of law. From a legal standpoint, disclosure without an official guilty verdict can be considered slander. All other design decisions are determined by CP participants at their own discretion. Moreover, this argument does not discount the agency of participants. One of the findings, which falls outside of the scope of this article, explores in great detail how participants express agency in their messages.

Visual Categories	Examples	Frequency
Depictions of Bodies/Body Parts	Stick figures or drawings of people, handprints, happy and sad faces, mouth/lips, "female" symbol (circle with '+')	19
Depictions of Awareness to Social Causes	Teal ribbons, purple ribbons, blue ribbons, TBTN logo, peace sign	16
Depictions of Emotion	Hearts and tears	15
Depictions of Religion/Spirituality	Angel wings, candle, cross, demons	5
Depictions of Natural Elements	Flowers, stars, ladybug	4
Depictions of Location	"Downtown" buildings, home, and outline of a state, arrow	3
Depictions of Social Guidelines	"Anti" symbol (circle w/ diagonal line through it)	2
Depictions of Food	Banana	1

Table 1: Semiotics Analysis results.

textual and visual components in their work, but that these components do not function rhetorically in relation to one another. (By "rhetorically," I mean that text and images do not support one another in messages' attempt to persuade or influence CP audiences.)

Activists' Visual Messages Rely on Socially Constructed Representations of Concepts

Of 74 tee shirts, 48, or 65% of the collection, include visual components in their messages. These visual components exclude detailed representations of experience and instead rely on "bumper sticker" notions of activist communication. Table 1 provides a categorization of the types of visual representations found in the CP.

Table 1 shows, then, that CP activists tend to gravitate toward common, socially constructed representations of concepts such as happiness, love, awareness, peace, religion, liberation or healing, and faith. Only 2 shirts (24 and 69) depict scenes from activists' experiences with assault (Fig. 2); both of these representations fall into the category of Bodies/Body Parts.

Figure 2: Shirts 24 and 69

Figure 3: Shirts 3 and 1

These two shirts, then, rely on participants' imagination to design their shirts, to envision moments or scenes from their attack, to determine which moments to illustrate on their shirts, and to determine *how* to portray those moments. These shirts may show evidence of preconceived notions about elements such as the symbolism of color, but nothing routinely suggests their meaning based on prior social understandings of their elements. In other words, the images in Figure 2 would likely receive different interpretations, as opposed to an image of a heart, which would likely be described as representing love. Examples of shirts that rely on socially constructed representations can be seen in Figure 3. That participants' visual messages rely on socially constructed representations of concepts all suggest the presence of dominant narratives that influence individual composers' design decisions.[4] In addition, participants' invocations of the body suggest ways of thinking about activism and action as separate from literate practices. Repeatedly, given the opportunity to say anything, and in any way, CP participants "play it safe." They avoid profanity. For the most part, they avoid graphic textual and pictorial representations of their assault. And they rely on images such as androgynous figures, hearts, awareness ribbons, and flowers and ladybugs. This evidence suggests that women have internalized culturally normative narratives about what it means to "speak out," either as survivors of assault, activists, or women in general. This evidence is made stronger by the fact that shirt-making sessions are held in private, often with one or a few people attending a single session—and with the shirts being collected over a number of years. In other words, the possibility for groupthink decreases under these circumstances.[5] Therefore, we are left to look to a larger influence than what the women may have on one another.

4 Dominant narratives, or patriarchal narratives, are those that perpetuate the oppression of women and other marginalized groups.

5 Arguments exist for CP participants' influence on one another in regards to participation (i.e. validating one another and showing the issue of gender violence as more than anomaly). But evidence does not suggest that CP participants influence one another's design decisions.

Activists' Textual and Visual Messages Do Not Function in Relation to One Another

Data suggest that activists see importance in both textual and visual representations. Seventy-three of 74 tee shirts (99%) present some sort of written message, whereas 48 of 74 tee shirts (65%) use some sort of visual (even if it is just the use of a heart to "dot" a linguistic "i"). As mentioned earlier, despite pushes toward multimodal and more visual-laden composing in education (New London Group, 1996; Kress, 2003; DeVoss, Cushman, and Grabill, 2005; Takayoshi and Selfe, 2007), only 1 participant communicated without the use of words. This one participant, moreover, relied on the awareness ribbon and confetti-looking dots, visuals that already offer some standardization of form and meaning.

Of 48 shirts with visual representations, only 8 of them (16% of shirts with visuals) have visuals that render the text no longer sensible or at least less powerful if the visual is removed from the shirt. In this case, the meaning of the activist's message relies on visual composition. For example, shirt 2 presents a rebus; the statement, "One in two women will be in a violent relationship," uses symbols to represent "women" and "relationship." Shirt 19 has the words, "MOMMY Please don't make me go over daddys [sic] anymore. Please! I ❤ you"; this message appears on a child's shirt, used visually to create a more powerful impact for an audience. Shirt 39 is covered by a chaotic presentation of what appear to be random words; viewers can't make sense of any of their combinations. Here, the meaning of the shirt relies less on what the words are and more on the presentation of the words in this chaotic manner, which may represent the fragmentation of identity or sense of confusion after an assault. Though symbiotic to an extent, with these shirts, activists place emphasis on the visual element to convey meaning.

Moreover, 23 shirts (48% of shirts with visuals) have visuals that would no longer make sense if the text were removed from the shirts. Though these shirts contain visuals, they rely on text to convey their meaning. Removing the text from shirt 3, for instance, would leave us with a shirt with drawings of a heart and a banana. Shirt 22 presents the Take Back the Night (TBTN) logo, along with the phrase "Take Back the Night." Without the words, viewers would be presented with a picture of a half moon and some stars contained in a circle. While people familiar with the issue of sexual assault or TBTN might recognize the symbol, the general population most likely would not; in addition, even if a viewer did not understand the meaning of "take back the night," the text lends itself to a quick internet search far easier than the image itself. To reach a vast audience, then, the shirt relies on the text. Shirt 60 has a purple ribbon with the words, "Stand up [&] speak out against sexual violence." Similar to the teal ribbon, the purple ribbon might symbolize numerous social causes. It is only through the words on the shirt that we connect the purple ribbon to the issue of assault. Though symbiotic to

Figure 4: Shirts 33, 15, and 72.

an extent, with these shirts, activists place emphasis on the textual element to convey meaning.

Overall, then, with only 1 of the 74 shirts eliminating the use of words altogether, and 23 shirts creating a relationship between text and image that depends on the text to make sense (versus 8 shirts that have a relationship between text and image so that if image is removed, the text no longer makes sense), activists seem to rely on text more than on visuals to communicate their ideas. While 65% of tee shirts incorporate a visual element, 48% of these have visuals that depend on text to make any sense, and only 16% use visuals that are necessary to maintain the meaning of text.

Finally, 16 shirts (33%) have neither words nor visuals that make sense without the context of the larger CP. Messages on these shirts include general statements such as "Speak Out Fight Brave" (shirt 15); "I will take back my strength" (shirt 33); and "Not all scars are external" (shirt 72) (Figure 4). These shirts also suggest the influence of cultural narratives on such designs.

Activists' reliance on socially constructed representations of concepts suggests that even in communicating against normative narratives regarding what women should say and how they should say it, activists adapt patriarchal narratives into their messages. Again, activists tend to rely on pre-conceived notions of their representations (happy faces, sad faces, hearts, and awareness ribbons), representations already deemed appropriate by the general public. While these symbols may be easy to draw, especially for novice designers, skill level does not explain the inclusion of these symbols. Hearts, for example, are not inherently or instinctively associated with the issue of sexual assault, and many of the shirts make no direct linguistic reference to the hearts. It is not necessarily easier to dot an "i" with a heart than it is to dot an "i" with a dot. It is not necessarily easier to include a heart or a happy face than it is to forgo the visual component altogether.

Therefore, no evidence directly explains why activists made the choice to include them; hearts could, however, represent emotional healing or a sense of victory. Lives become shattered by sexual assault; experiencing happiness, security, and a sense of wholeness—a reconfiguring of identity—requires engagement in cognitive and affective processes, which the hearts may represent. The hearts, similarly, may represent a sense of victory, a statement that, though survivors have reason to not trust others or to isolate themselves, they choose to interact with others in ways that make themselves vulnerable, and to believe that positive experiences will come from this effort. Hearts may suggest conflicting emotions toward intimate partners or friends who committed acts of violence against them; acts of violence do not necessarily sever emotional ties to some perpetrators. The use of hearts also suggests something about the ways in which women are conditioned to communicate, however. To what extent do the hearts really represent activists' experiences and to what extent were they used because they were an appropriate option among other "feminine" symbols and "feminine" messages?

As for the awareness ribbons, they provide another example of communication that considers what might be appropriate for a public audience. Awareness ribbons are used in activist communication for many causes; a single color represents dozens of medical and social issues. In other words, national and local organizations and individual activists rely on the same symbol for their own causes, thereby making it an acceptable option for survivors of sexual assault. Because viewers are familiar with the symbolism of ribbons, they serve as a reliable and quick "go to" for people looking to broach a subject. In the case of the CP, activists can rely on the context of the CP, and the way that shirts work together, to construct an understanding of the issue, to bring attention to sexual assault or other forms of gender violence. Creating scenes from experiences, linguistically or visually, makes great demands on the CP participants and the viewers; in such cases, activists must revisit their experiences and try to find a way to put those experiences into words and images. This can be difficult, given that traumas are often referred to as indescribable or unspeakable. Participants might figure that viewers who are not survivors will not be able to "understand" the experience, regardless of the detail used. Personal disclosure also puts weight on the viewer; the viewer may be disturbed by such disclosure, given the nature of the trauma and/or the fact that the viewer feels helpless in confronting such an event. With these factors in mind, awareness ribbons address issues in impersonal, appropriate ways for public consumption.

Finally, that activists rely on text to communicate, even when images are included, challenges society's current emphasis on multimodal and digital communication. Perhaps participants recognize the immediacy that can come with images; images can be quickly

recognized in passing and draw a viewer's attention to text, or communicate messages in and of themselves. Tee shirts do suggest that participants look to images to communicate (whether that be because they find images easier to work with, to be a better rhetorical strategy for gaining viewers' attention, or to align with an increased focus on visual communication within the university and global setting). But, almost all shirts used text, and more than half of them used both text and images. Data suggest, however, that participants did not have a developing or developed understanding of how the two modes could be used together to communicate more effectively.

Conclusion: Multimodal Composition Pedagogy

These findings raise questions about the importance of visual communication in our society as it pertains to audiences and communicators, or the receiver versus the sender. Such questions counter Kress's (2003) notion that visual communication has supplanted linguistic communication. Though technology has allowed people to engage in more visual communication, technology may fail to motivate people to create visual forms of communication. For example, Tumblr offers the option to upload video and pictures (though K. Shannon Howard's 2012 findings show a reliance on text to make meaning). Pinterest invites users to choose among photographs to "pin" on their own boards. Facebook allows one to quickly choose a "sticker" that conveys one's emotions. Instagram allows people to "create" to the extent that users can alter photographs and video. But these tools do not engage users in what I conceptualize as "organic" creating—the kind which the CP allows. The CP invites people to use materials (shirts, paint, markers) to think of and carry out creating a representation, as opposed to choosing from a menu of pre-constructed representations. Participants do not provide evidence that they know what to do with this opportunity. Calling this finding into question implicates not only activist communication but also pedagogical practices related to these issues.

With a desire to expand my own students' understanding of multimodality, in addition to explorations of digital multimodality, I incorporate into my freshmen-level composition course a unit on material multimodality. Using the research explored in my study of the CP, I have students in my freshman-level composition course read articles such as Cornwell's "T-Shirts As Wearable Diary: An Examination of Artifact Consumption and Garnering Related to Life Events," Cockrell's "Where T-Shirt Culture Meets the Black Protest Tradition," Hipple's "Clothing their Resistance in Hegemonic Dress: The Clothesline Project's Response to Violence Against Women," and Shankar-Brown's "Wearing Language: Celebrating Multiliteracies through Graphic Tees." I have students write an argumentative essay about social justice issues of their choosing and then design

tee shirts that address that particular issue, tee shirts which can be displayed like the CP.

My work with activist art is one of the few spaces in which I find in-depth discussions about multimodality outside of the concept of "new media." Even recent releases such as Jason Palmeri's *Remixing Composition: A History of Multimodal Writing Pedagogy* focus on digital writing.

While I understand the focus on digital writing in contemporary culture, as Patricia Suzanne Sullivan points out in *Experimental Writing in Composition: Aesthetics and Pedagogies*:

> As with previous arguments about experimental writing and mixed genres, more contemporary arguments suggest that only (or especially) through the use of new technologies and media, students may be allowed to express their unique individualities, articulate marginal or underrepresented social realities, and/or critique the limits of dominant sociopolitical discourses and the institutions that perpetuate these discourses (p. 16).

Similar to Sullivan's argument about aesthetic theory, Knight argues:

> A useful conception of the aesthetic has promise for deepening our understanding and our teaching of multimodal composing practices. Such a conception would push against fixed and limiting definitions in order to accommodate a more inclusive view of multimodal composition practices and speak to a range of potentially audience-based experiences including issues of beauty and pleasure, taste and appreciation, form and content, style and delivery, art and craft, process and product, emotions and affect. This more accommodating notion positions the aesthetic, not as something set apart as a special order, but as a mode of everyday human experience. Accordingly, the act of *reclaiming* aesthetic experience delivers three primary affordances in the context of composition and new media studies (n.p.).

Finally, Shipka, in *Toward a Composition Made Whole*, also argues for an understanding of multimodality that includes "writing on shirts, purses, and shoes, repurposing games, staging live performances, producing complex multipart rhetorical events, or asking students to account for the choices they make while designing linear, thesis-driven, print-based texts" and which allows students more and different ways to "write, read, and perhaps most importantly, respond to a much wider variety of communicative technologies - both new and not so new" (p. 9). Shipka further notes that a focus on digital representation assumes an inability or lack of desire on students' part to communicate their ideas outside of digital spaces.

The CP seems to foster "writing [as] a way of learning, a way of looking for allies who are looking for us, a way of winning recognition and resources vital to changing minds and changing social relations" (Tomlinson, 2010, p. 25). If students are

to have a rich understanding of how writing and multimodal composition achieve such rhetorical goals, they need to have not only the broad understanding and redefining of "composition" that new media has argued for, but also a broader understanding of "multimedia" and its function in relation to audience and purpose. Explorations of aesthetics and material multimodal rhetoric begin to address these pedagogical goals.

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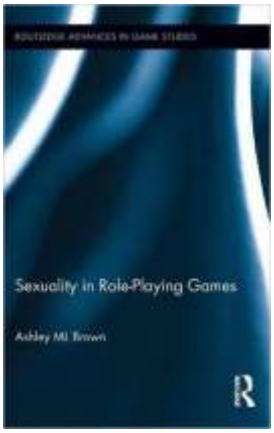
REVIEW

Sexuality in Role-Playing Games
Ashley ML Brown
Routledge (Advances in Game Studies series)

In her introduction, Brown reveals that her research was initially inspired by a chance run-in with a Dwarvish couple engaged in amorous activities on World of Warcraft. Her anecdote detailing the encounter and her subsequent discomfort starts the text off on a humanizing note. "My elf stood only ten metres away, confused and unmoving. If it were possible to control facial expressions, I suspect she would have been as slack-jawed and open-mouthed as I was at my desk" (1). The ensuing text addresses why gamers - both of the video and tabletop variety - choose to engage in sexual role play and pursue fictional relationships, as well as how these relationships affect their day-to-day lives outside of gaming. Brown's study is largely qualitative in nature, employing both a substantial literature review and original data gleaned via interviews with anonymous study participants.



Brown's book is an accessible read for graduate-level students and scholars alike and would make a great supplemental text for a digital rhetoric, digital humanities, or sociology course. The first chapter, "Sex, Games, and Sex Games," acts as a primer for introducing the theories and connections between philosophy, sexuality, and gameplay. Brown then uses Michel Foucault to further define erotic role play, establishing the role play as a means to explore unconventional means of sexuality without supplanting "normative notions of 'austere' sexuality" (8) or ERP, and how it has been evident in other genres of play beyond video and tabletop, via childhood games such as Spin the Bottle and Seven Minutes in Heaven. With role playing games, Brown asserts that participants are able to temporarily challenge power structures but without challenging the sexual norms of hegemonic reality, "After the [BDSM] session is complete, participants return to their existing roles and the existing power structures between participants is also reasserted" (6).

The following chapter, "Erotic Role Players," attempts to define who involve themselves in erotic role play. Trying to define who these players are proves problematic for Brown. As she explains, Western European and American sexualities are relatively prudish, and so, it is difficult to calculate or outline general

characteristics of the ERP population. This is unfortunate, because quantitative research would possibly prove beneficial in backing up Brown's qualitative findings regarding ERP.

The chapter "Multiple Frames" discusses whether or not ERP-ers follow a certain formula when pursuing amorous relationships in their gameplay or if they deviate from societal norms and expectations. After conducting interviews with ERP-ers, Brown finds that some of these players will choose or create characters whose gender and sexuality differ widely from their own in real life. Several interviewees who identify as either bi-, hetero-, or homosexual report creating characters that have a gender or sexuality different from their own in real life. One interviewee, who goes by the name of "Megan," admitted to having a voracious sexual appetite online, compared with her almost non-existent offline sex life with her husband. Interestingly enough, Megan says that her husband knows of the rendezvouses she has had with other players online, but does not seem intrigued or disturbed by it. It is interesting to note that the majority of the interviewees have a keen awareness of the separation between gaming life and real life. From an outside perspective, popular images of Leroy Jenkins and Eric Cartman create a stereotype for erotic role-players: heterosexual white males who are unable to disconnect or differentiate between the lives they have in games and the ones they have in the real world. However, upon reading Brown's interviews with fellow gamers, the reader finds out that, with the exception of one person who goes by the pseudonym of "Dirty Old Troll," most interviewees make clear distinctions between their lives inside and outside of gaming.

The chapter "The Role of Rules" discusses the issue of rules implemented by game environments such as *World of Warcraft,* as well as personal rules implemented by the players themselves, and how they influence gameplay. Brown discusses how players, when confronted with restricted rules involving ERP, such as in *Warcraft*, go around or bend the rules in order to form sexual relationships with other players. Rules implemented by the companies that produce these games are, as Brown explains, often enforced due to players that are under the age of eighteen that play RPGs. While these rules act as a safeguard, some of Brown's interviewees state that the rules are easy enough to get around, and that some have been playing video games such as *Warcraft* since they were the age of six years old. Other ERP-ers implement rules to set up a sense of boundaries, as well as to ensure that relationships outside of the gaming world are not tested or dissolved. (An example is the forbiddance of rape storylines, or preventing characters from participating in rape). A reason one interviewee told Brown that they participate in ERP is that they believe that it can strengthen relationships and friendships between players, as well as enhance storytelling.

Sexuality in Role-Playing Games is a worthy addition to the field of digital rhetoric, simply for tearing apart the

assumptions once and currently held about sexuality and gaming culture. That said, the scope is limited geographically, as it extends only to North American and British gaming culture. Future studies might recreate Brown's interviews, surveys, and research in RPG sexuality to the other side of the globe, especially since Asian countries are known for their RPG video games and large gaming communities. What's more, scholars working on this topic will eventually need the reinforcement of quantitative research to further validate and contextualize Brown's insights. Overall, however, Brown's text challenges a number of popular notions, particularly the assumption that the offline lives of gamers and their online ERP are inextricably intertwined. The study adds emotional depth and understanding to a topic that often seems taboo or strange to those outside gaming communities, and makes an important contribution to the growing body of knowledge surrounding online sexuality, more broadly.

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The *Journal of Multimodal Rhetorics*

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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.

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