MULTIMODALITY AND COMPOSITION STUDIES, 1960 - PRESENT

DISSERTATION

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By

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ABSTRACT

Challenging composition’s tendency to focus exclusively on alphabetic literacy, numerous composition scholars have called for a turn to teaching students to produce texts that explicitly blend words, images, and sounds. In calling for this multimodal turn, compositionists have argued that multimodal texts are becoming increasingly central in workplace and civic realms and that students are increasingly arriving in our classrooms with strong visual / multimodal literacies. In making these persuasive arguments for the need to move beyond alphabetic literacy in composition, scholars have understandably emphasized composition’s historical lack of engagement with visual and multimodal textual production. I contend, however that if we look closely at expressivist, cognitivist, and social composition theories of the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, we can uncover a rich heritage of compositionists engaging issues of multimodality. In looking at the ways in which past composition theories engaged issues of multimodality, I ultimately seek to elucidate the unique disciplinary perspective that compositionists bring to multimodality as well as to articulate ways in which teaching multimodal composing can contribute to the development of students’ alphabetic writing skills.

In the conclusion of the dissertation, I offer five macro-principles (culled from a blend of past expressivist, cognitive, and social approaches) that can productively inform our contemporary attempts to integrate multimodal composing into our courses, our
curricular/institutional structures, and our scholarly work: 1) Alphabetic writing entails a profoundly multimodal process. 2) Some rhetorical and composing process theories can transfer across modalities. 3) Multimodal composing need not necessarily be digital. 4) Disability offers insights into multimodal composing pedagogy. 5) Analysis and production are interconnected activities.
Dedicated to Kitty O. Locker
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Prologue

There once was a time when I knew what it meant to be a compositionist. In calling myself a compositionist, I was identifying as a person who possessed specialized disciplinary knowledge about the teaching of writing—specialized disciplinary knowledge of strategies for teaching students to engage reflectively and critically in the complex, multifaceted process of composing words. Although I tried to design unique assignments and activities for my writing classes, I was also always conscious that my pedagogical practices had been strongly informed by the tradition of composition scholarship. When I emphasized revision and peer response in my writing classes, I knew that I was drawing on the foundational insights of composing process research from the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. When I asked students to experiment with freewriting as an invention technique, I recognized that I was following in the footsteps of Peter Elbow (among others). When I taught students to consider how they were using appeals to ethos, pathos, and logos in their writing, I realized that I was indebted not only to Aristotle’s Rhetoric but also to Corbett’s Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student. When I engaged students in writing critically about social hierarchies of race, class, and gender, I felt confident that I was continuing in the tradition of other compositionists—critical, feminist, and cultural studies pedagogues—who had long been arguing that the teaching of writing is a political act.
There once was a time when I knew what it meant to be compositionist. When I worked as a Writing Across the Curriculum consultant, I drew upon my specialized disciplinary knowledge about writing to offer advice to graduate students and professors throughout the university. When I suggested that writing could be a mode of learning in content-area courses, I pointed to the work of Janet Emig among others. When I discussed the importance of providing students with opportunities for revision, I alluded to the many pieces of composition scholarship that had demonstrated that writing is a recursive process. When I pointed out that standards for ‘good’ writing are highly contextual and thus need to be articulated carefully in disciplinary courses, I referenced the work of numerous composition scholars who had elucidated the powerful impact of social context on the writing process.

There once was a time when I knew what it meant to be a compositionist…and then I met Dr. Scott DeWitt. And everything changed. Scott started to convince me that it was not enough to focus all my attention on teaching students to compose words—that I should begin teaching students to compose sounds and images as well. And, not only that…I needed to think about teaching students to compose **multimodal texts**—texts that layered images, words, and sounds together. Scott conceded that alphabetic writing was still important, but he pointed out that digital technologies were increasingly making it possible for everyday people to compose videos, audio files, and image collages as well. If we were going to prepare students to communicate persuasively in this new digital environment, we needed to move beyond our exclusive focus on alphabetic text…we needed to make a multimodal turn.
Influenced by Scott’s arguments as well as the work of other scholars (Ball; Diogenes and Lunsford; George; Hocks; Johnson-Eilola; Kress; New London Group; Ross; Selfe and Hawisher; Wysocki; Yancey), I decided to start incorporating multimodal production into my composition classes. In particular, I began to teach students to compose Flash movies, Photoshop collages, and audio essays. For the most part, I found that students really enjoyed and appreciated the opportunity to move beyond the alphabetic in their composing. Indeed, some students told me that my multimodal composition class was the first English class they ever liked! I was often quite impressed with the multimodal texts that students produced. I also found that many of the rhetorical concepts I was teaching—audience, ethos, pathos, logos—seemed to transfer easily to the teaching of multimodal composing. I began singing the praises of multimodality to anyone who would listen. I even made a video about how exciting it was to extend composition beyond the alphabetic!

Except there was one problem. *I no longer knew what it meant to be a compositionist.*

Back when I was just teaching students to compose words, I had the confidence that I was drawing my pedagogy from a substantial tradition of composition scholarship—that all of my pedagogical practices were grounded in my specialized disciplinary knowledge about the teaching of alphabetic writing. But when I started teaching students to compose multimodal texts, I felt like I was leaving the composition tradition behind—venturing into uncharted pedagogical waters. What kind of specialized disciplinary knowledge could I *as a compositionist* possibly claim about composing with images and sounds? When colleagues (both in English and outside it) asked what
qualified me to teach multimodal composing, how could I respond? And, furthermore, how could I responsibly integrate multimodal composing into a first-year composition course that was still institutionally mandated to focus on teaching alphabetic writing skills? Was it really possible to teach multimodal composing in a way that actually enhanced (rather than detracted from) the teaching of alphabetic writing?

As I wrestled with these doubts, I found myself revisiting many of the classic texts of composition theory from the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, looking for moments in which past compositionists had attempted to draw connections between alphabetic, aural, and visual modalities of composing. As I did this rereading, I began to realize that multimodality was not a new “fad” in composition studies—that compositionists have attempted, at least since the 1960s, to articulate alphabetic writing as a multimodal process that shares affinities with other kinds of composing processes (aural, visual, spatial etc.). I began to realize that embracing multimodal composing did not necessarily mean turning away from the composition tradition—that in fact the composition tradition had many insights to offer contemporary digital multimodal pedagogues. In other words, I began to realize that it was time for me (and indeed for the field) to develop a new narrative of what it means to be a compositionist—a narrative which would include the many ways in which past compositionists explored the interconnections among multiple modalities of composing. It is this new narrative that I begin telling here…
Challenging composition’s tendency to focus exclusively on the production of alphabetic texts, numerous scholars of composition have called for a turn to teaching students to produce multimodal texts that blend images, words, and sounds (Allen; Anderson; “Prosumer”; Ball; Ball and Hawk; DeVoss, Grabill, and Cushman; Diogenes and Lunsford; Ellerton; George, “From Analysis”; Hocks; Johnson-Eilola; Kress; Lunsford; New London Group; Ross; Selfe, “The Movement”; Selfe and Hawisher; Wysocki; Yancey). In calling for this multimodal turn, compositionists have argued

- that multimodal texts are becoming increasingly central in workplace and civic realms (Diogenes and Lunsford; Johnson-Eilola; Kress; New London Group; Selfe and Hawisher; Wysocki; Yancey)

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1. I borrow the term, multimodal, from the New London Group as well as the work of Gunther Kress and Theo Van Leeuwen. These scholars use the term multimodal to refer to the variety of modalities—linguistic, audio, visual, spatial, gestural—which composers combine when designing texts. Although digital technologies open up new possibilities for combining modalities, it is important to remember that print texts have always already been multimodal to the extent that they combine alphabetic and visual elements such as typography, layout, and in some cases images (Bernhardt; Wysocki).
that students are increasingly arriving in our classrooms with strong visual / multimodal literacies (George, “From Analysis”; Hocks; Selfe and Hawisher, Yancey).

In making these persuasive arguments for the need to move beyond alphabetic literacy in composition, scholars have understandably emphasized composition’s historic lack of involvement with multimodal textual production.

Indeed, even when scholars offer histories of compositionists’ engagement with nonalphabetic modalities of composing, they often tend to focus on the limitations of past composition work (Dunn, Talking, Sketching; George, “From Analysis”; Sirc; Selfe, “The Movement”). For example, in a 2002 CCC article, Diana George explores the contested role of the visual texts in composition studies over the past forty years. Although George finds that compositionists have a long tradition of teaching students to analyze visual texts critically, she notes that compositionists nevertheless have tended to privilege words over images—to link “words to high culture and the visual to low, words to production and images to consumption” (George, “From Analysis,” 31). In critiquing the ways in which compositionists have historically privileged alphabetic over visual production, George argues that compositionists’ past “discussions of visual literacy and the teaching of writing have limited the kinds of assignments we might imagine for composition” (George 14-15)—that we must look beyond our past in order to invent composition pedagogies that attend to visual production.

Although not denying that alphabetic literacy has been and is still dominant in composition theory and practice, I argue that we have not done enough to explore the ways in which compositionists have historically interrogated issues relevant to
multimodal composition. Indeed, I contend that if we look closely at key composition theories of the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, we can uncover a rich heritage of compositionists engaging issues of multimodality. To this end, this dissertation explores how composition theories of self (expressivism), mind (cognitivism), and society (classical and social-epistemic rhetoric) can contribute to the development of digital multimodal composition pedagogy and research.

In separating out my discussion of composition theories into expressivist, cognitive, and social approaches, I am returning to some important maps of the field drawn by James Berlin and Lester Faigley in the 1980s. Although these maps are far from complete or impartial (no map is), the categories of expressivist, cognitive, and social have had an enduring role in shaping how compositionists have imagined the historical landscape of writing pedagogies. Indeed, many of the core practices of writing teachers (multiple drafts, peer response, invention activities, contextual grammar instruction, collaboration, rhetorical analysis) continue to reveal the enduring influence of the expressivist, cognitivist, and social pedagogies developed in the 1960s, 1970s, and early 1980s. Thus, as we begin to redefine the landscape of composition to incorporate multimodal textual production, it makes sense to return to these key theories to see how they might inform this shift. In particular, I contend that looking back at past expressivist, cognitive, and social approaches can help us better

• Articulate the unique disciplinary expertise that compositionists bring to the study and teaching of multimodal composing.
• Elucidate the ways in which teaching multimodal composing can contribute to students’ development of alphabetic writing skills.
Critical Questions

Although numerous scholars have offered arguments in favor of incorporating digital multimodal production into composition classes, many compositionists remain skeptical. After attending numerous 2003 computers and writing conference presentations about incorporating Flash animation and video production into composition classes, Steven Krause wrote a critical commentary expressing strong doubt about whether it was appropriate for compositionists to engage students in composing digital multimodal texts that blend images, words, and sounds. Explaining why he opposed the teaching of digital multimodal production (especially video and animation) in composition courses, Krause asserted that

A class that focuses on intensely graphic projects, one where the teacher would have to devote a good deal of class time to helping students to learn and use the multimodal software and hardware, might help students to be ‘visually sophisticated’ or even critical readers of visual mediums like television or film. But it wouldn’t necessarily help students write decent paragraphs and sentences and ‘essays,’ not matter how you define the difficult to define term ‘essay’….Most composition and rhetoric specialists are all for writing in other disciplines, but we still tend to think we know best when it comes to writing pedagogy. When we hear people in other disciplines making claims like ‘we need to teach our students better grammar’ or doing some other sort of highly formulaic and reductive style of writing instruction, don’t we think they don’t know what they are doing? Why then should we assume that we know what we’re doing when it comes to teaching digital video skills?…. While email, MOOs, newsgroups, and web pages represent forms of writing that were not traditional paper-based essays, they are still recognizable as writing in the most traditional sense of using letters and words to build sentences, paragraphs, and complete ‘texts.’ ‘Writing’ is a broad term obviously, but it isn’t a visual medium in the same sense as a Flash project, for example. There may be writing involved in making an iMovie, and there might even be writing incorporated in the movie, but it is not the same as “writing,” much in the same way that ‘the movie is never the same as the book.’ (Krause)
For Krause, composition is ultimately a discipline dedicated to studying and teaching the composing of alphabetic text. Thus, Krause has no problem with compositionists teaching students to compose alphabetic texts in digital environments (email, newsgroups, blogs), yet he argues that compositionists should be wary of teaching students to engage in forms of digital multimodal composing (such as video) in which images and sounds play a central role. Krause worries that compositionists already struggle to teach students the “fundamental [alphabetic] writing skills they all too frequently do not have when they enter college”—that compositionists cannot afford to take time away from alphabetic writing instruction to help students explore how they might blend images, sounds, and words together. Furthermore, Krause expresses concern that compositionists might be exceeding their disciplinary purview when they seek to teach students to compose images and sounds.

Although it is rare for scholars to publish formal articles opposing digital multimodal composing (as Krause did), I would suggest that Krause’s concerns nevertheless resonate with a large number of compositionists. When I read Krause’s piece, I was struck by how familiar it seemed to me—by how the critical concerns that Krause raises are the same concerns I have often heard from colleagues whenever I discuss multimodal composition pedagogy in conference presentations, workshops, and informal conversations.

Indeed, it is quite common for advocates of multimodal composition to encounter critical questions and doubts from colleagues. For example, Pamela Takayoshi and Cynthia Selfe have noted that teachers have often questioned them about whether or not multimodal composing should fall under the disciplinary purview of compositionists:
“Why should English composition faculty teach multimodal composing? Shouldn’t we stick to teaching writing and let video production faculty teach video? Art and design faculty teach about visual images? Audio production faculty teach about sound?” (Takayoshi and Selfe 8). Furthermore, Takayoshi and Selfe have suggested that many composition teachers echo Krause in worrying that “multimodal composition assignments…may take valuable time away from more fundamental instruction on the written word, instruction that many teachers feel is sorely needed among contemporary students” (Takayoshi and Selfe 9). Similarly, Patricia Dunn has noted that many composition teachers have resisted her efforts to argue for the value of multimodal ways of learning because they feel that it seems “absurd to question an overemphasis on words in a discipline whose raison d’etre is, like no other discipline, for and about writing” (Dunn, Talking, Sketching, 15).

In other words, it is clear that we advocates of multimodal composition still have much work to do to convince the broader composition field as a whole to embrace modalities of composing beyond alphabetic. In particular, I would suggest that we must work to address the following three questions:

- Why is it desirable for compositionists to teach students to compose with images, sounds, and other modalities? (Isn’t alphabetic writing still the most important, most valuable form of composing students need to learn?)
- What unique disciplinary expertise can compositionists bring to composing with images and sounds? (Why shouldn’t we leave the teaching of visual and aural production to other disciplines such as art, design, and music?)
• How can multimodal composing contribute to or detract from the teaching of alphabetic writing skills? (Is it really possible for students to learn to write a better print essay through the process of composing a multimodal video?)

Below, I consider critically how contemporary advocates of multimodal composing have already begun productively addressing these questions, and I also elucidate how a turn to composition history might productively complicate and extend this effort.

**Question One: Why is it desirable for compositionists to teach students to compose with images, sounds, and other modalities?**

In making arguments for the value of multimodal composing, compositionists have been particularly influenced by the multiliteracies theory of the New London Group. Recognizing that “literacy pedagogy now must account for the burgeoning variety of text forms associated with information and multimedia technologies” (9), the New London Group asserts that literacy educators should pay attention to modes of meaning other than Linguistic, including Visual Meanings (images, page layouts, screen formats); Audio Meanings (music, sound effects); Gestural Meanings (body language, sensuality); Spatial Meanings (the meanings of environmental spaces, architectural spaces); and Multimodal Meanings. Of the modes of meaning, the Multimodal is the most significant, as it relates all the other modes in quite remarkably dynamic relationships. For instance, mass media images relate the linguistic to the visual and to the gestural in intricately designed ways. (36)

Ultimately, the New London Group advocates conceptualizing literacy as a design process in which people actively draw upon, combine, and transform the available linguistic, visual, audio, gestural, spatial, and multimodal designs of the culture (36). In teaching students to (re)design texts using multiple modalities, the New London Group ultimately seeks to develop a literacy pedagogy which can prepare students to
communicate critically and effectively in an increasingly digital, increasing globalizing world.

In the years following the publication of the New London Group manifesto, Gunther Kress (one of the group’s members) has published a series of works elucidating the importance of paying attention to multimodal forms of communication. In particular, Kress in partnership with collaborator, Van Leeuwen, has argued that multimodal texts are becoming increasing dominant in Western Culture:

For some time now, there has been in Western culture, a distinct preference for monomodality. The most highly valued genres of writing (literary novels, academic treatises, official documents and reports) came entirely without illustration and had graphically uniform dense pages of print. Paintings nearly all used the same support (canvas) and the same medium (oils), whatever their style or subject…More recently, this dominance of monomodality has begun to reverse. Not only the mass media, the pages of magazines and comic strips for example, but also the documents produced by corporations, universities, government departments etc. have acquired colored illustrations and sophisticated layout and typography. And not only the cinema and semiotically exuberant performances and videos of popular music, but also the avant-gardes of the ‘high-culture’ arts have begun to use an increasing variety of materials and to cross boundaries between the various art, design, and performance disciplines. (Kress and Van Leeuwen 1)

To be fully literate in the contemporary world, such authors contend that students and teachers need to be able to choose actively among and combine visual, alphabetic, and audio modes of representation to suit their particular communicative purposes and contexts.

Further exploring ways in which digital technologies are encouraging composers to consider nonalphabetic modalities, Anne Wysocki has argued that the proliferation of digital composing technologies has encouraged composers to pay more attention to the visual aspects of texts than they have before:
Computer technologies have ended up being designed to give writers more control over the appearance of their texts. The technologies of the printing press, on the other hand, help to shape and are shaped by a division of labor: Someone writes a text, and someone else decides which typefaces in what sizes, what column and page sizes, and what paper to use for making the text presentable in reproduction. (Wysocki, *On Visual 185*)

Although the printing press encouraged writers to think of the visual aspects of texts as beyond their control, digital composing technologies (desktop publishing, web editors, animation programs etc) enable writers to make choices about typography, visual arrangement, and illustration as well as to consider blending words with images, videos, animation and so forth. If we are to prepare students to compose persuasively in a world in which digital technologies are proliferating, we need to teach students to make critical rhetorical and ethical choices about the visual appearance of their texts—to move beyond simply following standard print-based conventions (8 1/2 by 11 white paper, 12 pt font, one inch margins, no illustrations).

Although print-based conventions may continue to rule in most college composition classrooms, many contemporary students engage in self-sponsored digital multimodal composing outside of school. As Kathleen Blake Yancey argues, many contemporary students:

compose words and images and create audio files on web logs (blogs), in word processors, with video editors and Web editors and in e-mail and on presentation software and in instant messaging and on listservs and on bulletin boards—and no doubt in whatever genre will emerge in the next ten minutes. Note that no one is making anyone do any of this writing. Don’t you wish that the energy and motivation that students bring to some of the other genres they bring to our assignments? How is it that what we teach can be so different from what our students know as writing? (298)

Ultimately, Yancey suggests that if compositionists persist in refusing to recognize and value the diverse forms of multimodal composing students are doing outside the
classroom, we risk becoming irrelevant to the literacy needs of the students we teach. Andrea Lunsford and Marvin Diogenes echo this point when they argue that “for contemporary college students…writing is no longer a stable, black-and-white affair: writing is Technicolor, oral and thoroughly integrated with visual and audio displays” (142). Indeed, as Kathleen Welch has suggested, “the polis of our time exists on the screens of televisions and computers” (195). If we are to prepare students to be “literate, activist citizens” (BETHA), we must prepare them to persuade using the multimodal digital technologies which are increasingly playing a central role in civic life.

Although most proponents of multimodal composing base their claims largely on anecdotal observation, Cynthia Selfe and Gail Hawisher have gathered compelling qualitative data which reveals the increasing importance of multimodal literacies in the lives of young people. Drawing on life-history case studies of young people developing literacy in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, Selfe and Hawisher argue that we currently inhabit “a contested situation in which print-based and alphabetic literacies continue to compete at many levels with computer-based and nonalphabetic literacies.” (215). Although many of the young people in Selfe and Hawisher’s study practiced digital multimodal literacies outside of school, their English composition instructors did not address their new media literacies on a systematic basis. Raised and educated in a print culture, these educators remain unsure of how to value these new-media literacies or even how to practice these new literacies themselves. Thus, they fail to take advantage of, to build on, and even to recognize, in some cases, the literacy strengths these students bring to the classroom and miss important opportunities to link their own instructional goals to the developing literacy strengths of these talented young people. (215-216)
As Hawisher and Selfe show, students often come to composition classes with many strengths in multimodal digital literacies; if teachers limit students to only composing print alphabetic texts, they risk marginalizing the contributions of (and hindering the success of) students whose literacy strengths lie in other areas.

In highlighting the increasing prevalence of digital multimodal literacy practices among young people, compositionists and literacy scholars provide a very compelling rationale for including multimodal textual production in composition classes as way to ensure that those classes remain relevant to the literate lives of students. Yet, if we focus too much on articulating multimodal composing as a response to contemporary social and technological shifts in literate practices, we risk ignoring the ways in which composition studies has always already been a multimodal field—the ways in which the teaching of multimodal production in composition long predates the rise of such new technologies as digital video editors and digital animation programs.

Indeed, it is important to remember that we are not the first generation of compositionists to have sought to develop multimodal pedagogies in response to shifts in communication technologies. For example, in the 1960s and 1970s, numerous compositionists sought to draw connections between alphabetic writing and such new(er) technologies as photography, film, and audiotape recording, attempting to adapt the teaching of writing to a televisual age in which images and sounds increasingly appeared to be challenging the hegemony of the printed word (Williamson; Kligerman; Winchester; Corbett). As we once again seek to make a multimodal turn (at least in part) in response to shifts in digital communication technologies, we might productively draw
upon the experiences of past compositionists who sought to make a multimodal turn in response to shifts in *analog* technologies.

**Question Two: What unique disciplinary expertise can compositionists bring to composing with images and sounds?**

Even if people accept that it is important for students to learn to compose multimodally, they still might question if the English composition class is the best place for this learning to take place. If composition has historically been a field dedicated to studying and teaching alphabetic composing processes, what expertise can we bring to composing with images and sounds? Shouldn’t we leave this work to other disciplines such as art, design, or music?

In answering these questions, advocates of digital multimodal composition have often emphasized our expertise in studying and teaching rhetoric, arguing that some of the core principles of rhetorical theories can apply across modalities. For example, Kathleen Welch has explored how Isocrates’ sophistic rhetoric can provide insights into the study and teaching of multimodal digital texts (*Electronic Rhetoric*). In turning back to Isocrates’ primarily oral-inflected version of rhetoric, Welch ultimately points out that we can draw on past oral rhetoric theories in order to understand the persuasive role of sound in contemporary digital texts.

Similarly turning to classical rhetoric, Anne Wysocki invokes Aristotle in her discussion of the importance of teaching visual rhetoric in composition classes: “If rhetoric, to turn our eyes all the way back to Aristotle, is the use of the available means of persuasion to achieve particular ends, then whenever the means of persuasion include visual strategies, there is visual rhetoric at work” (183). In this way, Wysocki suggests
that rhetorical theorists have long been concerned with analyzing all available means of persuasion; thus, it makes sense that rhetoricians would have a stake in studying and teaching the persuasive effects of the visual aspects of texts. Furthermore, Wysocki asserts that the classical rhetorical canon of delivery can be remediated and extended to address contemporary digital visual design:

Traditionally, when rhetoric was concerned primarily with the particularities of a speaker and an audience looking at each other through the particularities of time and place, rhetorical studies addressed the speaker’s choices of bodily gestures and facial expressions as persuasive strategies. Now, when texts on paper—and on different kinds of screens—are objects of rhetorical study, the range of rhetor’s strategic choices can include every aspect of the text that is visual. (183)

In this way, Wysocki argues that rhetoricians’ historical concern with oral delivery (with gesture, vocal tone, facial expression) can be extended to analyze the visual delivery of print and digital texts (typography, layout etc.).

Although Wysocki tends to position visual rhetoric as a modern extension of classical rhetoric, Kevin LaGrandeur suggests that visual rhetoric has always already been a part of the rhetorical tradition. In particular, LaGrandeur argues that classical rhetoricians such as Aristotle, Gorgias, and Horace offer useful theoretical perspectives on the “use of images and imagery to instill emotion or credibility” (119). In pointing out that classical rhetoric contains useful theoretical precepts for understanding the persuasive power of images, LaGrandeur argues that scholars and teachers of rhetoric have an important role to play in teaching students to analyze and produce images—that rhetoricians are well positioned to help students critically consider both the ethical implications and the persuasive effects of digital visual texts.
Indeed, as Mary Hocks points out, many students already come to composition classes with the technical knowledge necessary to blend modalities in their digital work; however, they may not always have the rhetorical tools necessary to accomplish this blending in ways that are effective for audiences:

Students today are often steeped in the visual and electronic culture in which they have grown up, and they will think visually and beyond mere text when they work on documents in computer classrooms—they are likely to include different colors, font styles, or backgrounds on webpages, animated graphics, background music, or video clips. What students don’t always realize is that anything presented on screen is rhetorical. (205)

The challenge for compositionists is not necessarily just to teach students how to compose multimodally (or teach them to value multimodal work); rather, the challenge is to teach students to think *rhetorically* about how they combine modalities in order to persuade particular audiences in particular contexts.

Of course, compositionists do not simply have expertise in teaching students to create persuasive texts for particular audiences; we also have expertise in teaching students how to consider critically the social, ethical, and material implications of the composing choices they make. As Anne Wysocki reminds us,

writing teachers are already practiced with helping others understand how writing—as a print-based practice—is embedded among the relations of agency and extensive material practices and structures that are our lives. Writing teachers can help others consider how the choices we make in producing a text necessarily situate us (or can try to avoid situating us) in the midst of an ongoing, concrete and continually up for grabs decisions about the shapes of our lives. Writing teachers can thus fill a large gap in the current scholarship about [multimodal] new media; they can bring to new media texts a humane and thoughtful attention to materiality, production, and consumption, which is currently missing. (“Openings” 7)
In this way, Wysocki suggests that writing teachers have much disciplinary expertise in studying and teaching composing as a social/material act—in exploring the ethical implications of the ways in which the act of composing both structures and is structured by social/material contexts. Although compositionists have conventionally focused their attention on composing print alphabetic texts, many of our social-material theories of composing could potentially be applied to the composing of multimodal, digital texts as well.

Although scholars such as Wysocki, Welch, Yancey, Lunsford, and Hocks provide useful discussions of how composition and rhetoric theories might guide the study and teaching of digital multimodal composing, they still tend to accede to the narrative that compositionists have historically been focused on the alphabetic. In this way, they unwittingly reinforce the notion that the consideration of multimodal composing exceeds the proper disciplinary purview of compositionists. In order to contest this idea, it is important that we begin to recover the ways in which past compositionists have explored issues of multimodality—that we begin to (re)construct a historical narrative that emphasizes the important role of multimodality in composition theory and practice.

A few scholars have already begun this work of recovering/revaluing composition’s multimodal heritage. In *Composition as a Happening*, Geoff Sirc analyzes the ways in which 1960s and 1970s expressivist compositionists (Deemer; Lutz) developed multimodal composing pedagogies inspired by avant-garde art traditions. In *Talking, Sketching, Moving*, Patricia Dunn seeks to excavate the “lost threads in composition theory” (30) which privileged multiple visual, alphabetic, auditory, and
kinesthetic ways of knowing the world. In particular, Dunn briefly articulates ways in which such foundational theorists as Emig, Britton, and Elbow explored multimodal strategies for teaching alphabetic writing (30-32), and she also suggests that compositionists pay attention to the multimodal teaching strategies embedded in Paulo Freire’s critical pedagogy (37-57). In a 2002 CCC article, Diana George offers a fascinating history of the contested role of visual production in composition pedagogy over the past forty years. Although George focuses mostly on articulating how compositionists have marginalized visual production, she also points to a few interesting moments in composition history in which visual production played a more central role (e.g. expressivist textbooks, William Costanzo’s work on film and composition).

In the wake of Sirc, Dunn and George’s work, it is clear that past composition theories can provide valuable insights for contemporary digital multimodal pedagogy; yet, Sirc, George, and Dunn have understandably elucidated the multimodal implications of only small swathes of composition history. In this dissertation, I wish to extend their work by placing additional facets of composition’s multimodal heritage on our disciplinary maps.

**Question Three: How can multimodal composing contribute to or detract from teaching alphabetic writing skills?**

Even if we accept that alphabetic literacy no longer enjoys the dominance it once did, this does not necessarily mean that alphabetic literacy is going away (Kress; New London Group; Selfe and Hawisher). After, all even those who strongly advocate a turn to multimodality in composition still tend to emphasize that they “recognize the power
and advantages of alphabetic literacy and remain committed to teaching it as one important modality” (BETHA). In a one or two semester composition sequence, instructors have very limited time and may worry that adding in multimodal composing might ultimately have a negative effect on students’ development of alphabetic writing skills. To address these concerns, it is necessary to show that multimodal composing can actually contribute to (not detract from) the teaching of alphabetic writing.

To this end, numerous contemporary compositionists (Dunn; Hobson; Fleckenstein) have explored ways in which multimodal composing activities can help students invent and revise alphabetic texts. In *Talking, Sketching, Moving*, Patricia Dunn outlines numerous “aural, visual, kinesthetic, and spatial” activities that can help people gain “metacognitive distance” on their alphabetic writing (11). Recognizing that people all have diverse strengths and limitations in their ability to learn through alphabetic, aural, visual, and kinesthetic means (Gardner), Dunn argues that it is important to provide students with multiple sensory pathways—sketching, audio journals, walking a draft—for inventing and revising alphabetic texts. Challenging the notion that multimodal composing necessarily detracts from students’ learning of alphabetic writing, Dunn suggests instead that multimodal composing can in fact help many students come to compose stronger alphabetic products.

Similarly, Kristie Fleckenstein has argued for a pedagogy of “imageword” which recognizes that imagery and alphabetic literacy are deeply intertwined—that “imagery, the incarnation of meaning in various modes and modalities, is inextricable from the linguistic manifestation of meaning and thus inextricable from the ways in which linguistic meaning is taught” (Fleckenstein 2). Seeking to draw connections between
visual production and alphabetic reading and writing, Fleckenstein outlines various ways that visual sketching activities can help students respond to reading and invent ideas for writing.

Although scholars such as Dunn and Fleckenstein usefully point out how multimodal activities can enhance the teaching of alphabetic invention and revision, most of their suggested activities are nondigital (pen and paper sketching, movement). Seeking to extend the work of Dunn and Fleckenstein, I will focus in this dissertation on articulating the specific ways that we might employ digital multimodal composing to help students invent and revise alphabetic text. Furthermore, I will attempt to show that compositionists have a substantial tradition of exploring multimodal composing as a way to help students learn alphabetic writing skills—a tradition that we can productively adapt and extend as we confront the digital age. For example, I will pay close attention to the ways in which 1970s expressivists (Murray; Kligerman) sought to engage students in analog photography as way to help them invent and revise alphabetic texts, arguing that past expressivist experiments with analog photography can productively inform contemporary attempts to integrate digital photography into the composition class. In this way, I ultimately seek to argue that incorporating digital multimodal composing activities into composition classes does not necessarily have to entail a turn away from teaching students to produce alphabetic text—that it is possible to imagine digital multimodal composing pedagogies that can enhance students’ development of alphabetic writing skills.
Interpretive Assumptions

In composing this tale of expressivist, cognitive, and social approaches to multimodal composing in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, I do not seek to write a definitive, comprehensive history. Indeed, I would contend (along with other postmodern composition historians) that it is impossible for any history to be either definitive or comprehensive—that “histories are, of course, always constructions based on the writer’s choices—ideological, epistemological, aesthetic—about what constitutes significance” (Rosner, Boehm, and Journet xiv). Recognizing that no historian can ever be truly objective, “it is incumbent upon the historian to be aware of the nature of her point of view and its interpretive strategies, and to be candid about them with the reader” (Berlin, Rhetoric and Reality, 17). With this goal in mind, I would like to highlight three interpretive assumptions that inform the history I tell here:

First Assumption: A belief in the relevance of multimodality to all compositionists

Over the past four years at Ohio State and in national forums, I have spent a lot of time trying to convince composition teachers to explore multiple modalities of composing—to resist the notion that the composition class should focus on alphabetic text alone. Although I (along with colleagues) have had some success in convincing teachers to move beyond the alphabetic in their pedagogies, I still have found that many teachers see multimodal composing as a special concern of the “computers and writing” people—a concern located far outside of the alphabetic-centric mainstream of the composition discipline. By threading multimodality into the center of our disciplinary
history, I ultimately seek to argue that multimodal production can become key to the entire field of composition, rather than being marginalized as a subspecialty of computers and writing.²

Clearly, my personal investment in multimodal composition pedagogy has influenced how I have constructed this history. In rerereading the texts of 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s compositionists, I have consciously focused my attention on the relatively fleeting moments in which composition scholars appeared to embrace a multimodal vision of composition pedagogy—on recovering the “lost threads” (Dunn) of multimodality in otherwise quite alphabetic-centric composition traditions. Rather than critiquing the limitations of past compositionists’ engagements with multimodality, I have chosen instead to highlight the ways in which past composition scholarship can contribute productively to the development of contemporary digital multimodal composition pedagogies.

Second Assumption: A commitment to a pluralist understanding of pedagogy

In analyzing expressivist, cognitive, and social approaches to composition studies, I seek not to advocate one over the other but instead to offer a pluralist vision of how we can engage multimodal composition. I offer this pluralist model because I believe that we must draw upon all the available modes of composition practice and theory in order to

² Although I would like to argue that multimodal composing should not be relegated solely to the subfield of “computers and writing,” I still recognize the specialists in computers and writing have a long and useful tradition of studying and teaching digital multimodal composing. Indeed, even before the rise of the graphical web, computers and writing scholars were involved in critically considering ways to combine words and images in desktop-published documents and hypermedia. CD-ROMs. For a useful discussion of the history of the “computers and writing” field, see Hawisher LeBlanc, Moran, and Selfe.
productively teach students to compose in all the available modes of media. Although scholars such as Berlin have argued that an acceptance of a social epistemic rhetoric necessarily entails a rejection of expressivist and cognitive approaches, I assert that it is possible to accept a critical social constructionist view of knowledge while still valuing and employing cognitive and expressivist theories and practices. In particular, I argue (pace Burke) that all composition pedagogies, including the social epistemic, offer a “terministic screen” which highlights and obscures aspects of the “scene” of multimodal composing. Thus, our goal should not be to choose one pedagogy over the other, but rather to consider how we can recombine them in ways which can enable us to develop a more nuanced and complex view of what it means to teach composition in a digital multimodal age.

**Third Assumption: A self-reflective understanding of my choices of composing modalities**

Although this dissertation argues for the importance of incorporating multiple modalities into composition courses, it remains a largely alphabetic text. As much I personally wish to challenge the academic institutional structures that privilege alphabetic text over other modalities, I also am conscious that I must work within current university structures. For example, even though Ohio State has moved to electronic PDF dissertations, it still requires dissertators to adhere to very restrictive—and very outdated—conventions of print text formatting such as placing chapter titles in all caps and using a 1.5 inch left margin (for binding). Indeed, the graduate school still requires that dissertators present a printed copy for format review as well as for the defense—even
though the dissertation will ultimately be published as an electronic PDF. In other words, although technically I would have been allowed to include many video and audio clips in this dissertation, the institutional culture of the university still strongly pushed me to conceive of the dissertation as primarily a print alphabetic text.

Moreover, the institutional pressures of the academic job market also influenced my choice to compose this dissertation primarily with words. While on the job market, over 30 institutions requested a sample of my alphabetic writing, and most of them insisted that I send this sample via hard copy in U.S. mail. Yet, only one institution specifically asked to see an example of my digital multimodal composing\(^3\). When I went to give job talks, several of the departments I visited subtly encouraged me to read a paper and to avoid using a digital projector. In other words, it was abundantly clear to me that large facets of the English studies field were unprepared to recognize the value of a richly multimodal dissertation. Thus, although I remain committed to pursuing digital multimodal publications, I consciously decided to compose the dissertation as a primarily alphabetic text.

I would also like to point out that this dissertation has in many ways been invented through my experiences both engaging in multimodal composing myself and teaching multimodal composing to others. For example, when I first began to compose digital multimodal texts such as Flash movies, I became fascinated with exploring the

\(^3\) Although I only specifically sent examples of my digital multimodal composing to one institution, I did include samples of my digital multimodal composing on the “teaching” and “design” pages of my professional website: http://jasonpalmeri.com. Thus, it is possible that numerous search committees viewed my digital multimodal materials even if they did not specifically ask for them. Nevertheless, I think it significant that only one institution specifically required candidates to provide sample multimodal texts, while almost all asked for sample alphabetic texts.
similarities and differences between alphabetic and digital multimodal composing processes. It was this curiosity that first lead me to look back to foundational cognitive process research to see how it might help me draw connections among diverse modalities of composing. Furthermore, as I discussed in the prologue, it was my experience as a teacher of multimodal composition that ultimately inspired me to tell a new narrative of what it means to be a compositionist. Moreover, I have (over the past few years) individually and collaboratively composed numerous videos, Flash movies, and web interfaces about the importance of making a multimodal turn in composition studies; in many ways, I consider this alphabetic dissertation to be a revision and extension of the arguments I made in those multimodal texts. Finally, I regularly have employed digital audio journals as a means of inventing ideas for (and considering revisions of) the alphabetic text of this dissertation. Quite simply, the process of composing this dissertation has been profoundly multimodal (even though the final product is primarily alphabetic).

Not only do I recognize the ways in which this alphabetic dissertation has been invented via multimodal means, I also see this alphabetic dissertation as itself a kind of invention activity for the digital multimodal composing work I will do in the future. Indeed, as I look back over the words I have written, I have become conscious of the

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4 For example, in 2005, I collaborated with Ben McCorkle and Scott Dewitt to create a Flash based web interface (blending still, images, sounds, words, and animation) for a CCC presentation entitled “Writing Teachers Writing New Media.” In 2006, I worked with Aaron McKain, Scott DeWitt, and Cormac Slevin to develop a series of videos and Flash animations to support our CCCC presentation entitled “New Media, New Curricula.” I have also (over the past few years) crafted numerous digital multimodal teaching materials (websites, videos, podcasts).
arguments I was not able to make using words alone, and I have begun to consider ways I might extend this project in the future by composing digital multimodal texts.

**Overview of Chapters**

In chapter two (“Self”), I assert that expressivists provide a powerful vision of writing as a multisensory, embodied, technological art. Listening closely to expressivist discussions of voice, cameras, disability, research, and cooking (Elbow; Macrorie; Murray; Stewart), I demonstrate that expressivists developed and enacted a multimodal composition pedagogy for the analog age—a pedagogy that we can build upon and revise as we turn to digital modes of composition. Placing expressivism in dialogue with feminist and disability studies theories of the body (Haraway; Linton; Davis), I illustrate that the expressivist understanding of writing as an embodied multisensory art can be productively extended to address social and ideological concerns.

In chapter three (“Mind”), I demonstrate that cognitive composition theorists productively defined writing as a multimodal thinking process that shares affinities with other creative thinking processes. Looking closely at the foundational cognitive composing research (Emig; Perl; Flower and Hayes), I argue that compositionists have a long heritage of contributing to interdisciplinary research conversations about composing and learning across modalities—a heritage that we should reclaim and extend as we turn to studying and teaching multimodal composition/design. I conclude by considering how contemporary compositionists and literacy scholars (Dunn; Mullin; Smagorinsky) have drawn on cognitive learning theories to develop multimodal pedagogies that productively address issues of disability.
In chapter four ("Society"), I turn my attention to classical and social-epistemic rhetoric pedagogies. Looking closely at the work of Edward Corbett and Ira Shor in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, I argue that social composition theorists have a long tradition of articulating the symbiotic relationship between media criticism and media production. I also explore ways in which classical and social-epistemic rhetorical theories might help us develop composition pedagogies that productively unite the teaching of spoken, alphabetic, and multimedia discourses.

In Chapter Five ("Weaving"), I delineate the implications of my historical study for the research and pedagogy of digital multimodal composition. In particular, I elucidate five principles (drawn from my rereading of past expressivist, cognitive, and social scholarship) that can help us consider critically ways to integrate multimodality into our courses, our curricular/institutional structures, and our research practices.
Looking at expressivist pedagogies through an epistemological lens, James Berlin asserts that expressivists share "the conviction that reality is a personal and private construct. For the expressivist, truth is always discovered within, through an internal glimpse, an examination of the private inner world. In this view, the material world is only lifeless matter" (Berlin, *Rhetoric and Reality* 145). At first glance, I believe Berlin; his voice resonates with me. I think of Macrorie exhorting his students to tell their own truths. I think of Peter Elbow, Donald Stewart, and Donald Murray encouraging writers to find their own authentic voices. I think of freewriting as a tool of self-discovery. And, like the good postmodernist that I am, I cannot help but giggle nervously at anyone who can still throw around words like “truth” and “authenticity” without a twinge of irony.

And yet...I doubt.

I doubt that Berlin's story captures the complexity of—embraces the contraries of—expressivist pedagogy. When Berlin listens to expressivist voices, he hears only selves constructing private inner worlds. When I listen to expressivists, I hear not only awakening selves but awakening *senses*. I hear the first stirrings of a multimodal
composition pedagogy that explores how invention and revision are intensely tied to embodied visual and auditory perception.

In the first edition of the expressivist textbook *Write to Learn* for instance, Donald Murray clearly grounds invention in embodied sensation:

> As writers, it is important that we move out from that which is within us to what we see, feel, hear, smell, and taste of the world around us. A writer is always making use of experience and extending experience. This is one of the most exciting things about writing: it increases your awareness of the world around you. To put it a different way, writers are receptive to the life they are living, prepared to receive what life brings so that material may lead to writing or be stored away in inventory, ready to be used when a writing project needs it. (Murray 30)

For Murray, the writer's inner world (personal inventory) arises at least in part from heightened sensory experience of the outer (material) world. Invention in Murray’s scheme is a complex multisensory process. Words do not just arise in response to other words; words can be inspired by sounds, images, tastes, and smells. Thus, the teaching of writing cannot be confined to the teaching of alphabetic composition alone; to teach a student to write is ultimately to teach him or her to become more aware of—to build a personal inventory of—sensory impressions.

Although Murray’s multisensory theory of invention is largely implicit in his pedagogical advice, D. Gordon Rohman and Albert Wlecke (whose research on prewriting inspired many expressivists) provide a more explicitly theoretical rationale for the importance of sensory experience in the writing process. Drawing on Rollo May’s theories of creativity, Rohman and Wlecke assert that invention is “a continual process between the world and self, ‘a process interrelating the person and his world’” (May, qtd in Rohman and Wlecke, 21). Arguing that the classic dictum “show don’t tell” is as true
in invention as in drafting, Rohman and Wlecke demonstrate that “a writer in order to engage himself effectively with a subject has to find some way of making it real along his five senses (showing) and not simply grope his way toward and around it through the prefabricated fog of second-hand abstractions (telling)” (Rohman and Wlecke 48). To construct a unique voice that moves beyond the second-hand abstractions of the culture, the writer must attend more closely to his or her sensory experience of the world—must come to notice those sensory details that do not easily fit common cultural tropes.

Rohman and Wlecke recognize that our words and our perceptions are largely “echoes of the culture” (6) but they point to the sensing body as a site from which it may be possible to exceed cultural commonplaces and invent more original subjects for writing. To this end, Rohman and Wlecke encourage teachers to assign activities that ask students to record as many sensory perceptions of a place as they can—to move beyond the obvious clichés they might first notice. Although I question the notion that sensory experience can ever be entirely divorced from social construction, I still argue that there is value in imagining writing as a process rooted in multisensory embodied experience rather than just in the ongoing social construction—the prefabricated fog—of language. A writer who begins by attending closely to sensory experience will write differently and will think differently than one who begins wholly by attending to the words of others. Although heightening sensory perception may not enable people to escape cultural construction, it may open up new possibilities for engaging in the ultimately social process of composing.

In seeking to teach writers to heighten their sensory experiences, expressivists often draw connections between the art of writing and other visual and performing arts.
In particular, expressivists suggest that writers can heighten their sensory awareness by studying and participating in the arts of photography (Kligerman; Murray; Stewart), filmmaking (Williamson), happenings (Lutz; Deemer), and music (Mahoney and Schmittroth; Frank; Elbow). As digital multimodal compositionists increasingly engage students in producing images and sounds, it is vital that we explore the historic connections between composition studies and other artistic fields. By revisiting the expressivist construction of composition as an embodied, multisensory art, I hope to begin to reimagine composition studies as an artistic discipline—a discipline that has much in common with, much to learn from, and much to teach other artistic disciplines.

Although I will argue that the expressivist construction of writing as an embodied multisensory art has much to offer contemporary digital compositionists, I will most pointedly not ask readers to accept expressivist tenets uncritically. As scholars such as Susan Jarratt, Lester Faigley, James Berlin and Susan Miller argue, the expressivist focus on individual artistic vision tends to efface the ways in which writing practices both construct and are constructed by social hierarchies of class, race, and gender. Although I am in agreement with these scholars that the expressivist focus on the individual is ideologically problematic, I believe that expressivism can be critically revised and extended rather than abandoned wholesale (Gradin; Paley; Newkirk; Ronald and Roskelley; Jasken). Placing expressivism in dialogue with feminist and disability studies theories of the body (Haraway; Ratcliffe; Garland-Thomason; Linton), I seek to

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5 For a discussion of the intersection of feminist and disability studies approaches to the body, see Rosemarie Garland Thomson (19-30).
demonstrate that the expressivist understanding of writing as an embodied multisensory art can be productively extended to address social and ideological concerns.

In arguing that expressivism offers useful openings for contemporary multimodal composition pedagogy, I am indebted to Julia Jasken’s exploration of how expressivist textbooks expand the concept of voice “beyond the linguistic into the visual, aural, spatial, and temporal” (Jasken 62). I also have been inspired by Geoff Sirc’s discussion of expressivism in *English Composition as a Happening*. Like Sirc, I look to expressivism to demonstrate that “the parallels between writing instruction and the visual arts, both seen as composition, are compelling” (19). Although Sirc focuses mostly on how expressivists have been influenced by artists associated with the happenings movement, I focus more broadly on how expressivists articulate a complex multimodal writing pedagogy in which the concept of the happening plays only a small though certainly compelling role. I also differ from Sirc in that I do not seek to place expressivism in opposition to social and cognitive approaches, but rather to explore how these diverse pedagogical perspectives may be productively combined.

**Overture**

My historical story of expressivist composition will unfold in five movements (and a reprise).

In movement one (camera), I look closely at Donald Murray and Jack Kligerman’s metaphoric discussions of writers as cameras. Using Donna Haraway’s cyborg epistemology as a frame, I explore ways in which Murray’s, Stewart’s, and
Kligerman’s camera metaphors become literalized (and more politically salient) in our current digital environment. After considering the dominant expressivist tradition that constructed cameras as metaphors for or supplements to alphabetic writing, I then turn to Richard Williamson’s more radical argument that the composition course be reimagined as a course in filmmaking. In rereading Williamson, I demonstrate the importance of situating current experiments with digital video composition in terms of the larger history of cameras and writing—a history that predates the development of the personal computer.

In movement two (voice), I listen closely to Peter Elbow and Otis Winchester’s discussions of voice, focusing particularly on the moments when they attend to voice as audible, embodied sound rather than as a metaphor of authenticity. In particular, I argue that Elbow and Winchester offer multimodal pedagogies that productively integrate writing, speaking, listening, and reading. Drawing on my own composing experiences as well as upon Krista Ratcliffe’s feminist articulation of rhetorical listening, I then consider how expressivist voice pedagogy gains renewed technological and political relevance in a digital age. I conclude by exploring how expressivist voice pedagogies (Elbow; Mahoney and Schmittroth; Frank) productively draw connections between alphabetic writing and music.

In movement three (disability), I elucidate the complex role of disability in expressivist constructions of composing as embodied sensory experience. In particular, I analyze Donald Stewart’s pedagogical strategy of having students simulate blindness and deafness in order to heighten their sensory awareness. Although I critique some of the implicit ableist assumptions of Stewart’s simulation exercises, I also consider how we
might technologically and politically remediate the notion of “disability simulation” in ways that both resist ableist hierarchies and extend composing possibilities for all students.

In movement four (research), I revisit expressivist articulations of research as a personal, embodied, multimodal process. Arguing that the recent turn to documentary production in composition studies is not entirely new, I explore how Ken Macrorie’s I-Search paper can be viewed as a kind of documentary composition. I then turn to Esther Burnett and Sandra Thomason’s discussion of the “cassette slide show” research project. In revisiting Burnett and Thomason’s (1974) work, I seek to demonstrate that layering, timing, and remixing have long played a role in the teaching of research-based composition.

In movement five (cooking), I look at how Peter Elbow’s metaphor of cooking offers a theoretical rationale for reimagining composing as a process of placing conflicting or contradictory sensory materials in dialogue. Drawing on my own pedagogical experiences, I explore how the cooking metaphor usefully encourages us to implement multimodal composition in ways that value play, experimentation, and contradiction.

Camera (movement one)

Vision plays a central role in expressivist theory and practice. For the expressivists, writing pedagogy ultimately entails teaching students to perceive and represent the visual world. In this way, expressivists open up possibilities for articulating
the similarities between photography (writing with light) and alphabetic composition (writing with words).

In one particularly striking articulation of the relationship between alphabetic and photographic composition, Donald Murray instructs the writing student to become a camera:

> go to one spot and sit for an hour and just write down the details that you see. . . Make yourself a camera that is recording what it sees. Later you can edit the film to find out what it means. . . It is easy to collect a hundred, two hundred, sometimes many more specifics than that in an hour. You will see what you haven't seen before and make connections that you haven't made before. (Murray 30-31).

In this quote, Murray evinces a fundamentally visual understanding of invention. Invention is not just a process of looking within the individual’s psyche; invention is literally a process of looking outside the self. By heightening visual awareness, the student can become inspired to write engaging prose that makes his or her reader see the world anew.

Yet, Murray not only suggests that seeing can inspire writing; he argues that writing can inspire seeing. Through the act of writing down visual perceptions (recording the visual in alphabetic words), students can come to see “what they have never seen before.” In asserting that writing down visual impressions can enable the student to “become a camera,” Murray demonstrates that writing is ultimately a technology of seeing. The pen is the lens; the paper is the film; the writer is the camera.

Murray’s metaphorical instruction to “become a camera” establishes an important foundation for a multimodal composition pedagogy: it suggests that composition teachers are ultimately in the business of teaching students how to manipulate—how to make use
of—technologies of vision. Yet, by keeping the “camera” in the realm of metaphor, Murray ultimately privileges the alphabetic over other modalities. He puts writing teachers in the business of teaching students to use visioning technologies, but stops short of actually suggesting that writing teachers literally ask their students to “become cameras” or even to “use cameras.”

In our current moment, however, the notion of students “becoming cameras” is quickly moving from the realm of fanciful metaphor to the realm of embodied reality. As Donna Haraway argues, we increasingly live in an age in which we are all “hybrids of machine and organism; in short, we are all cyborgs” (151). The distinctions between the eye and the lens, the paper and digital memory card, the letter and the pixel are increasingly breaking down as digital photographic technologies begin to permeate many of our lives. Many students have already literally “become cameras”; they see the world and remember what they see (at least in part) by taking, circulating, and editing digital images. Yet, even though some students have “become cameras” (have blurred the distinction between lens and eye, human memory and digital pixel), they have not necessarily become the kinds of cameras Murray asks them to be in the above exercise. Indeed, many students quickly shoot a still image or a video clip of what most stands out to them and then rapidly circulate the still image or video clip to others. In contrast, Murray’s metaphoric “camera” exercise aims to encourage composers to look carefully and extensively—to come to notice what they often overlook. Murray asks composers to prolong the invention process (to record without editing) so that they can enhance their

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6 A 2006 survey by the Consumer Electronics Association found that 58% of U.S. households owned a digital camera (“MP3 Players, Digital Cameras Lead Household CE Growth”).
options for inventing strikingly original and compelling compositions out of the myriad visual details they collect.

In other words, Murray’s camera exercise—his attempt to influence how students use visual technologies for invention—is still highly relevant to an age in which students have always already been cameras. Instead of asking students to “pretend” to be a camera, a cyborg remediation of Murray’s exercise asks students to reimage how they see with/as cameras:

Go to one spot and record everything you see with/as a still or video camera. Later you can review the images to find out what they mean. . . It is easy to collect a hundred, two hundred, sometimes many more specifics than that in an hour. You will see what you haven't seen before and make connections that you haven't made before. (Murray and Palmeri)

Once students have collected these hundreds of visual specifics, they would have many options for making meaning of them. They could review their footage or image collection and look for interesting connections and details that could prompt an alphabetic essay. Students could also digitally edit their images to create visual compositions that highlight unusual connections or overlooked details. The camera exercise could even result in the production of a multimodal text that blends the alphabetic and the visual.

When Murray first composed the “become a camera” exercise, photography was largely an analog process. Although a good number of students would have had access to analog cameras, the cost of purchasing and developing film would make taking 200 pictures in an hour an expensive investment. Furthermore, students and writing instructors would be unlikely to have had access to a darkroom in which they could edit pictures. With limited ability to edit and limited recording capacity, an analog photographer would be well advised to carefully compose each shot rather than to record
copious details and edit later. Although handwriting and analog photography are both technologies of vision, handwriting is a more accessible technology than analog photography for revision—for enabling composers to inexpensively record a plethora of visual details and then edit and order them later.

In a digital world, however, it becomes much more possible to use a camera as a tool of free writing—as a tool for recording myriad possibilities for composing. Although digital cameras do have memory limitations (and battery life limitations), there is no great cost differential between taking 20 and taking 200 pictures in an hour. If a composition classroom comes equipped with computers for editing words, these computers can also easily be equipped with a range of software (free or proprietary) for editing digital pictures. When both words and images exist as pixels on screen and as data on storage devices, they become editable in similar ways; it starts to make sense to talk about editing words and images in the same space—in the same class.

Although Murray’s most extensive discussion of cameras occurs in his chapter on collecting sensory details for invention, the metaphor of the camera also reappears when he discusses the necessity of focusing on a particular aspect of a subject. In introducing the idea that writers adopt a particular point of view, Murray asks students to:

Think of a photographer at a wedding, continually circling the subject, catching the bride with her father, the couple before the clergyman, the shot down the aisle, the cutting of the cake, the bride’s mother, the car with the Just Married sign pulling away. Almost every story can be told from a dozen points of view. (Murray 69)

Although Murray points out that finding a point of view can be a wholly mental process, he also suggests that it can be especially helpful to physically go to a place and literally look at it from different angles and distances (70). Just as a photo is framed by the
embodied location from which the photographer took it, the page too is framed by the embodied location from which the author wrote it. By connecting alphabetic writing to photography, Murray ultimately suggests that alphabetic writing is a visual-kinesthetic art—an art that requires its practitioners to constantly shift the embodied positions from which they see.

Similar to Murray, Jack Kligerman offers activities in which students explore point of view from a photographic perspective. Addressing the material reality that many of his students did not have access to cameras, Kligerman developed an exercise in which he asked students to construct and use a “viewfinder” made from a notecard:

I ask my students take a small notecard and cut a rectangle out of the center, roughly about the size of a viewfinder of a 35mm camera. Through this little aperture, they must simultaneously choose a scene to write about and locate themselves in space. The rectangle frames experience, minimally composes its elements, and sets up a subject for discussion. But one must look at oneself as well as the objects in the “viewfinder” and consider why one is there and nowhere else and what one is feeling and what one is thinking. Why has this place been chosen and no other? Thus one learns the meaning of point of view experientially. (174-175)

Once students have experientially understood the embodied nature of point of view in photographic composition, they can come to realize that an alphabetic writer’s point of view is also always constrained by his or her embodied location.7

Even before the student cuts a hole in the notecard and looks through it, the notecard has always already been a technology of framing experience. When the research-paper writer records quotes from secondary sources on a notecard, he or she is using the notecard as a way of selecting—of framing—elements of the source text. Just

7 Joseph Frank’s You offers a similar assignment in which he asks students to create a makeshift movie camera by cutting a hole in a piece of paper and quickly moving that hole closer and farther from their eyes (33).
as the limited frame of the viewfinder compels the photographer to consciously select some visual details over others, the small size of the notecard encourages the researcher to consciously select what details he or she is going to write down. Although visual framing as a concept is more conventionally associated with photographic technologies, the notecard viewfinder reminds us that the conventional tools of alphabetic composition (8 x 1/2 by 11 paper, notecards) are also technologies of visual framing—technologies that constrain the visual symbols that can be placed within them.

By repurposing a conventional alphabetic technology (the notecard) to function as a tool of photographic production (a viewfinder), Kligerman implicitly argues for a vision of composing in which alphabetic and photographic composing tools are symbiotically related rather than diametrically opposed. Indeed, even when Kligerman discusses assignments in which students would use actual cameras to compose photographic essays, he argues “that any exercise in photography should be accompanied by having students write descriptions of what the photographs represent and what they contain” (Kligerman 77). Rather than suggesting that photography is a wholly different way of composing than alphabetic writing, Kligerman emphasizes that the photograph (like the notecard) can be a tool of alphabetic invention. Furthermore, the process of photography can help students gain insight into elements of the alphabetic writing process—such as point of view—that are often abstract and difficult to grasp.

Murray and Kligerman’s discussions of point of view as embodied vision bear a striking resemblance to the theories of feminist standpoint epistemologists. In particular, Donna Haraway argues that feminists should:
insist on the embodied nature of all vision, and so reclaim the sensory system that has been used to signify a leap out of the marked body and into the conquering gaze from nowhere. This is the gaze that mythically inscribes all the marked bodies, that makes the unmarked category [white men] claim the power to see and not be seen, to represent while escaping representation. (Haraway 188)

For Haraway, the reclaiming of the embodied nature of vision is a way to reject patriarchal, Eurocentric notions of objectivity (the conquering gaze from nowhere) and to highlight the ways in which all knowledge is partial and situated; to view vision as embodied (rather than as transcendent and objective) ultimately entails recognizing that we all see the world from particular embodied locations influenced by race, class, gender and other social categories.

Although expressivists share with Haraway a commitment to recognizing vision and knowledge-making as embodied, they largely cast the knowledge-making body as an individual person “unmarked” by race, class, and gender (Miller; Jarratt; Berlin). Murray, Kligerman, and other expressivists fail to consider how hierarchical social structures (racism, classism, sexism, heteronormativity, ableism) constrain which embodied knowledges are privileged and which are marginalized. In my view, Murray and Stewart’s embodied camera exercises need a good dose of Haraway’s socialist-feminist politics. Yet, at the same time, I think Haraway’s rather abstract, theoretical discussion of embodied vision requires a dose of Murray and Kligerman’s practical pedagogical vision. In their camera exercises, Murray and Kligerman provide kinesthetic ways for us

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8 In addition to a dose of Haraway’s socialist feminism, expressivist camera pedagogies could also use a good dose of contemporary computers and writing scholarship. Indeed, numerous computers and writing scholars have paid close attention to the influence of race, class, and gender on the design and use of composing technologies in diverse environments (Banks; Blackmon; Blair and Takayoshi; DeVoss and Selfe; Hawisher and Selfe; Hawisher and Sullivan; Hocks; Grabill; Mckee; Sullivan; Selfe; Selfe and Hawisher; Selfe and Selfe; Taylor).
to ask students to consciously engage in acts of embodied vision—to resist adopting the gaze from nowhere. Once students begin to understand how their physical location influences how they see and represent reality, it becomes possible to challenge them to consider how their social location also influences their visioning and knowledge-making practices.

Although expressivists such as Murray and Kligerman largely viewed photography as a metaphor for (or supplement to) alphabetic composition, Richard Williamson more radically called for reimagining composition as a course in visual production. In his 1971 CCC article, “The Case for Filmmaking as English Composition,” Williamson argued that:

Filmmaking has an advantage over written composition…in that it does not seem esoteric to the student who has been watching television and movies all of his life. He may fear writing…but he is not afraid to pick up a camera and aim it at his friends in his own environment, which, after all is what he really has to talk about. (134)

In addition to supporting the expressivist notion that students should be able to write about subject matter relevant to their lives, Williamson suggests that students should also be free to choose the media they use to compose their experiences.

Yet, even as Williamson displaces alphabetic writing from the center of the composition curriculum, he also asserts that filmmaking can be a way to teach students compositional principles that are transferable across media and that the filmmaking process can provoke students to produce pieces of alphabetic text:

In a filmmaking class, the processes of composition are still dealt with. Only their names have been changed, and this simple act of word magic takes composition out of the mysterious realm of the experts and brings it into the students’ own experience. Outlining becomes scriptwriting. Research become shooting. Images and concrete details become shots and takes. Distance and points of view become
camera-angles and close-ups. And revising becomes cutting. What is important is that the processes become realer and less esoteric to the student; and even the finished products become significant, something not often said about traditional classroom compositions. Of course, writing need not be abandoned altogether in the filmmaking class; what writing is done—and it may be extensive—will grow out of the work at hand. For instance, critical papers would be almost mandatory, and certainly scripts and rationales for films. (136)

When I first read the above passage, I could not believe it was from 1971. In arguing for the value of digital video production in composition, I and the members of the Digital Media Project Collaborative9 (of which I am a part) have made very similar arguments. Claiming that students have grown up in a visual world, we have suggested that students are often better able to understand and apply rhetorical concepts (audience, purpose, appeals, arrangement, transition, editing) when they compose video than when they compose alphabetic text. And, like Williamson, we have noted that students often see themselves as producing videos for a real audience of their peers rather than just for a grade from the teacher—that students often find their video production to be more significant than their composing of alphabetic text.

Just as Williamson argues that teaching filmmaking in composition will productively remove the teacher from the powerful expert role, we at the digital media project collaborative have often remarked that teaching digital video has a productive tendency to decenter the teacher’s authority and to value student knowledges. And, like Williamson, we have all been at pains to show that video production can also spur alphabetic writing such as proposals and reflective essays. Finally, just as Williamson is

9 The Digital Media Project Collaborative is an informal group of students and faculty at Ohio State who share an interest in incorporating digital technologies into English Studies teaching and research. Many of the members of the collaborative (such as myself) have worked as staff in the Digital Media Project and/or taught in the Digital Media Project’s computer-based classrooms. For more information about the Digital Media Project at Ohio State, see http://dmp.osu.edu.
inspired by the rise of underground counterculture filmmaking and the waning of the Hollywood studio system (Williamson 136), we have often been inspired by the numerous websites where young people are sharing their digital video creations—sometimes with activist intent (YouTube; Our Media; Video Activist Network).

Of course, differences do exist between Williamson’s time and ours. Williamson frames his pedagogy as a response to student unrest. (Indeed, he opens his article with an anecdote about a traditionalist English professor who gets hit in the head with a rock thrown by a protesting student.) In contrast, our pedagogy responds more to student apathy than violent student protest. And, of course, there are substantial differences in the technical aspects of film production and digital video production. Consumer film cameras (in the 1970s) tended to shoot for relatively short durations. Editing had to be done manually by cutting the film. It would be very difficult for the amateur filmmaker to do complex transition effects (such as dissolves) that are easily accomplished in digital video editors such as iMovie. Even though the social and technological landscape of 2005 is obviously quite different than 1971, we at the Digital Media Project collaborative share with Williamson the fundamental assumption that students who have grown up in a visual culture of television and film will gain a better understanding of compositional principles if they apply them to composing moving images.

Because digital video production takes place on computers and has only relatively recently become widely available on “consumer” machines, it is often tempting to view digital video as the cutting edge—some might say the bleeding edge—of computers and writing. Yet, Williamson encourages us to situate digital video production as part of a
much longer history of compositionists’ engagement with the moving image. The proliferation of digital video editing tools may be new, but the notion that there are similarities in composing moving images and composing words turns out to be quite old. We need to begin articulating the current wave of digital video composition not only in terms of relatively brief history of “computers and writing” but also in terms of the longer history of cameras and writing.\textsuperscript{10}

Despite their technological and political limitations, the visual theories of Murray, Kligerman, and Williamson are essential to an understanding of what it means to teach multimodal composition in the contemporary digital age. Challenging the notion that alphabetic writing and visual production are entirely separate modes of communication, the expressivists remind us that pens, keyboards and cameras are all embodied technologies of vision that enable us to notice and record visual sensory details. Rejecting the tendency to see visual production as a new fad in composition, Murray, Kligerman, and Williamson demonstrate that the field of composition has a long history of articulating how photography, cinematography, and alphabetic writing can work together to stimulate invention and revision. Indeed, expressivist theories remind us that revision (a hallowed term in composition studies if there ever was one) ultimately means to re-see. Compositionists have long been encouraging students to expand the perspectives from which they visually see the world; thus, the current move towards incorporating digital

\textsuperscript{10} Gail Hawisher, Paul LeBlanc, Charles Moran, and Cynthia Selfe begin their history of computers and the teaching of writing in the period from 1979-1982 “when the first personal computers came on the open market and English teachers first began to use these machines systematically to support composition studies” (15). Williamson’ exploration of filmmaking and composition was published in 1971, substantially before the personal computer came on the scene.
photography and videography into composition is really an extension of a long-standing tradition rather than a radical shift in professional mission.

**Voice (movement two)**

In contrast to the camera exercises which focus attention on the visual aspects of the composing process, expressivist discussions of voice foreground the importance of sound. Although Elbow often uses voice as a metaphor to describe authenticity and power in words, he also emphatically notes that we must never forget that voice ultimately denotes material, embodied sounds—that “voice is produced by the body” (“What Do We Mean” 3). Elbow argues that although alphabetic texts are literally silent most readers experience some text as giving off more sense of sound—more of the illusion as we read that we are *hearing* the words….when most people encounter a text—a set of words that just sit there silently on the page with no intonation, rhythm, accent, and so forth—they automatically *project aurally* some speech sounds into the text (“What Do We Mean” 4-5).

Although I question the implicit assumption that speech is somehow more natural than writing, I have to admit that Elbow’s voice resonates. For me, reading has always been a profoundly aural activity. (Even when reading “silently,” I really do hear the words on the page—so much so that I sometimes hear what sounds right and not what is actually visually there). Ultimately, Elbow’s audible voice theory helps us understand that words are richly multimodal; they are both sounds and alphabetic signs. How we speak intertwines with how we write; how we listen intertwines with how we read. Writing is at least in part an auditory technology—a way of recording and transmitting sounds (Kress, *Literacy in the New Media Age*, 25).
In developing a pedagogy which integrates the alphabetic and the auditory, Elbow encourages writers to read aloud to each other:

When you read your writing out loud, you often see things you don’t see any other way. Hearing your words out loud gives you the vicarious experience of being someone else. Reading your words out loud, stresses what is most important: writing is really a voice spread out in time, not marks spread out in space. The audience can’t experience them all at once as they can a picture; they can only hear one instant at a time as with music. (*Writing Without Teachers* 82)

For Elbow, reading aloud to a group highlights the role of audible voice in writing. It attunes the writer to how her writing sounds to others; it attunes readers to how linearity and timing play a role in writing just as they do in speech.

In the reading aloud exercise, Elbow ultimately aims to create a liminal space between writing and speaking, reading and hearing. In our current cyborg era, I would argue that digital sound editing emerges as the new technologically mediated liminal space between the alphabetic and the auditory. To explore this, I will demonstrate how Elbow’s reading aloud exercise can be enhanced and transformed through digital sound recording and editing. With a free software program (Audacity) and a computer microphone (already built into the computer or available for as little as $5), a student can easily read aloud and record something that he or she has written. In the moment of reading aloud, this exercise is really not much different from Elbow’s exercise except the composer speaks to a microphone rather than to a live audience. By reading aloud to a microphone, the writer becomes conscious of how his or her writing “is really a voice spread out in time, not marks spread out in space” (Elbow, *Writing Without Teachers* 82). Yet when the writer stops reading, her voice no longer vanishes into the air. Rather, the writer’s voice remains as marks (sound waves) spread out in space on a visual timeline.
As the writer plays back her voice, she cannot only hear the texture of her voice (pace, accent, volume, rhythm); she can actually see her voice. When her volume rises, the sound waves visually rise. When she pauses, the sound waves become flat; the visual length of flat space represents the time of pause. Although Elbow metaphorically suggests that reading writing aloud “can allow you to see things in it, that you don’t see any other way” (*Writing Without Teachers* 82), the digital sound editing process literally enables the writer to see aspects of her voice, such as silence, that are traditionally invisible.\(^\text{11}\) Furthermore, since the writer’s recorded/played-back voice is produced by a machine and not by her body, the writer can “gain the vicarious experience of being someone else” (Elbow, *Writing Without Teachers* 82)—of hearing how her words must sound to an audience.

With digital audio tools, the writer can even actively begin to edit her voice. She can generate or eliminate silences; she can change pitch and volume; she can delete words, add words, and move words around. And then she can play back her words to see how they changed. In the end, the writer could use the digital sound-editing experience as way to revise—to resee—the voice of her alphabetic text.

In contrast to Elbow’s focus on the importance of transforming printed texts into spoken words, Otis Winchester’s lesser-known expressivist textbook, *The Sound of Your Voice* (1972), highlights the ways in which printed texts may be invented by recording speech. Winchester opens *The Sound of Your Voice* by establishing that listening closely to spoken voices is one of the first steps in developing “voice” in writing:

\(^{11}\) For a discussion of the importance of attending to silence as a rhetorical art, see Glenn.
Begin listening to the sound of your conversational voice. Write down what you hear. Don’t be put off by any seeming inarticulateness you hear. It may not be the most eloquent or efficient verbal communication, but it has served you well enough. So begin here. And as you listen to your voice and to the voices of others—both in live conversations and dialogues and in the following literary examples—begin to consider ways in which you might retain the fluency and immediacy of talk, yet increase the expressiveness of your written idiom. (Winchester 3).

For Winchester, the development of voice in writing is about listening as much as it is about speaking; before students can manipulate voice effectively in their writing, they must first become conscious of how they and how others employ voice in speech. Ultimately, Winchester suggests that students’ conversational skills can be a powerful resource for their development as writers—that composition classes must help students explicitly draw connections between reading and hearing, speaking and writing. Although Winchester concedes that we should not just write as we talk, he suggests that speaking and listening can be powerful tools for inventing writing. To this end, the first exercises in Winchester’s book ask students to transcribe conversations in which they are participants or spectators—to “write as best you can from memory, or take down on the spot, or transcribe from a tape recording” (25). For Winchester, alphabetic writing is a technology of audio recording—a technology that enables people to listen to and remember the words they hear. The pen is a microphone; the paper is audiotape.

Although Winchester suggests that a tape recorder could help in recording conversations, he still asks students to transcribe from the audiotape so that they may more carefully consider what they recorded. By asking students to transcribe talk into alphabetic words, Winchester hopes that they will be able “to retain the fluency and immediacy of talk, yet increase the expressiveness of their written idiom” (3); in other
words, Winchester hopes that students will edit their transcripts of talk in ways that make these texts more forceful and more powerful.

In an analog world, Winchester’s emphasis on alphabetic transcription of audio was quite practical because very few people would have had access to the ability to edit audiotape. Yet, we now live in an age in which digital recording technologies are proliferating. Many computers and portable mp3 players either come equipped with microphones or can be inexpensively equipped with microphones. Computers can easily be equipped with free downloadable sound editors such as Audacity. In other words, it is increasingly possible that students could record their talk and then digitally edit it to enhance expressiveness.

Remediating Winchester for the cyborg age (for the age in which distinctions between the ear and the microphone, the speaker and the lung, the word and sound wave are breaking down), I suggest the following exercise:

Record a conversation in which you are a participant. Listen to it multiple times. Cut and rearrange elements to make the conversation more concise and to highlight a particular aspect of it. Turn in the edited audio file, with an accompanying written reflection in which you discuss what the editing process taught you about the unique qualities of your voice and of the voices of others. (Palmeri and Winchester)

Sound editing is a particularly powerful way to get people to listen carefully to their own voices and to the voices of others. Faced with the goal of substantially cutting the length of a conversation, the composer has to listen carefully—listen repeatedly—to the words that were spoken.
To illustrate the potential power of editing conversation, I am going to tell the story of my own experiences editing conversations I have had. As I tell my sound-editing story, my alphabetic words will drift closer to speech…

When I’ve recorded and digitally edited conversations I’ve had, I’ve become hyper-aware of my speech patterns. I notice when I’m using unnecessary filler words. I notice when I’m pausing to think. I notice when I start making a point one way and then circle around and make it another way. I notice when I come to a moment of discovery—when I’m saying something I just realized through the process of conversing. I notice when I’m reflecting—when I’m rephrasing what the my interlocutor said to make sure I’m hearing him or her correctly. I become conscious of when I’m talking too much and when I’m choosing not to talk. I notice some aspects of my verbal delivery (such as my pitch and inflection) that I would like to change. I notice when I hit the nail on the head—when I finally say what I mean in a pithy, engaging turn of phrase. I notice when I’m constructing ideas collaboratively—when my conversation turns into a real dialogue.

And, as I listen repeatedly to my conversation, I start to make choices about what to keep, what to cut, and how to arrange it all. I make choices about what aspects of the conversation are worth sharing with others—what snippets of that conversation could stand alone without all the local context surrounding them. I make choices about which aspects of the conversation probably shouldn’t be shared since they wouldn’t really make sense or wouldn’t really be compelling to someone who wasn’t there. I make choices about how much I can cut while still retaining the immediacy and fluency of my talk.

And, as I get close to the final “edited product,” I begin thinking of my conversation not as a time-bound, place-bound interaction, but as a carefully composed
text that may be circulated to people I don’t know in places I’ve never been. Quite simply, I start thinking of my conversation as a piece of writing which contains the sound of my voice.

In the above story, I demonstrate how recording and editing conversation can be a great way to enable composers to become more conscious of their own conversational voices and to use their spontaneous conversations as a way to invent more formal audio compositions. Although a pedagogy of digital conversation entails a focus on the composer’s own voice, it also necessitates a focus on listening to the voices of others. Indeed, Winchester explicitly tells students that in order to develop their own voices they “must develop an ear for the voices of other writers. For in even the most original styles there are echoes of many voices” (ix).

Although Winchester’s text does call for listening, he still focuses most of his attention on the development of the speaking and writing self—on the sound of the individual student’s voice. To turn down the volume of the speaking self and turn up the volume on the practice of listening, we can place Winchester’s conversational pedagogy in dialogue with Krista Ratcliffe’s feminist articulation of rhetorical listening. Ratcliffe demonstrates that rhetoric and composition theorists have traditionally emphasized speaking as “masterly expression, writing, a means of masterly expression, and reading a means of mastering-the-masterly expression. All three quickly subsume listening” (25). Ratcliffe critiques this emphasis on masterly expression because it reinforces patriarchal, Eurocentric structures in which those with gendered and raced privilege remove themselves from the necessity of listening to others. Seeking to counter the tradition of speaking, reading, and writing as mastery, Ratcliffe offers the practice of rhetorical
listening as a way of naming “a person’s conscious choice to assume an open stance in relation to any person, text, or culture” (26). Ultimately, Ratcliffe suggests that this kind of listening with openness can be a type of “interpretive invention” (Ratcliffe 17)—a way of developing politically responsible modes of language and action that are attentive to raced and gendered power dynamics.

Although Ratcliffe does not address digital audio recording in her discussion of rhetorical listening, her elucidation of the transformative political power of listening can help extend Winchester’s conversational pedagogy in a feminist direction. In asking students to record and edit conversation, we can ask them not only to pay attention to the sound of their voice but also to pay attention the political practice of their listening:

What do you notice listening to the recorded conversation now that you did not hear before? When in this conversation do you feel you are listening or being listened to? How can you tell? What would this conversation sound like if you edited your own voice out of it? How do you think the person you conversed with might edit this conversation differently? How do power differentials of gender, race, and other categories of difference influence the practice of listening in this conversation? (Winchester, Ratcliffe, and Palmeri)

Traditionally, listening has been a very ephemeral act. We might be able to go back and carefully reread a text, but we traditionally have not been able to relisten to a conversation. Yet, the process of digital audio recording and editing enables—and even encourages—close repeated listening. By asking students to record and edit conversation in composition classes, we may be able to help them listen more attentively and more openly to the voices of others.

In addition to emphasizing the importance of attending to conversation and listening as compositional acts, expressivist voice pedagogies also productively draw connections between alphabetic writing and music. For example, Peter Elbow suggests
that voice is the ability to “sing with ringing power” (*Writing with Power* 282) and he likens the process of developing voice in writing to the process of increasing the resonance of a violin:

No matter how good a violin is, it needs to be “played in”—played long and vigorously—before it resonates well in all its frequencies. It takes weeks or months. And the clunkiest violin can in fact be played in and made to expand its repertoire of resonances (*Writing With Power* 281)

For Elbow, writing and music making are interrelated activities in that both require extensive practice and both have the potential to resonate emotionally with listeners. The pen and the violin are both instruments that can be used to sing with power over many frequencies—if they are played often enough.

Elbow continues his use of music as a metaphor for writing when he discusses the teaching of poetry:

I remember Jeremy, a little English boy whose mother had to tell him his music lessons were ending. His music teacher had decided he wasn’t musical. He looked crestfallen and said to his mother, ‘But I *feel* musical.’ Many people *feel* poetic. Capable of poetry. . . It is a feeling that inhabits the midparts of the body anywhere between the gut and the breast. Most of us sadly learn to put those feelings away. (*Writing With Power*, 101).

For Elbow, poetry and music are similar activities. They are both embodied emotional arts—arts that all people are capable of pursuing even though they are often discouraged from doing so by the social discourse of ‘natural’ genius.

The interconnection of poetry and music is a persistent theme in expressivist textbooks. In the introduction to *The Insistent Present* (an expressivist reader from 1970), John Mahoney and John Schmittroth assert that poetry “long divorced from the

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12 Although some expressivists were known for abandoning reading in the composition class, there were still some “readers” that could be called expressivist. For a discussion of expressivist readers as multimodal texts, see Jasken.
music to which it was married in the early days of English literature has been reunited with it” (x). With this in mind, Mahoney and Schmittroth’s reader overflows with song lyrics and experimental musical scores. One particularly notable selection is John Barth’s “Help: A Stereophonic Narrative for Authorial Voice”—a hybrid of alphabetic and musical notation. Although the occasional musical note appears in the score, words appear much more frequently. Rather than indicating timing through notes and bars, Barth indicates timing by writing out the amount of seconds one should pause or make a sound. Rejecting classic Italian musical terms (e.g. pianissimo, fortissimo), Barth instead delineates volume by contrasting the size and weight of the typography. Instead of delineating differing instruments, Barth indicates different vocal sounds to be recorded on left, right, and center audio channels. In presenting students with a pseudo-musical score written by an established literary writer (Barth), Mahoney and Schmittroth ultimately suggest that the boundaries between alphabetic and musical notation are breaking down in an age of stereophonic or electronic sound production.

Because Mahoney and Schmittroth’s text does not include an apparatus of writing assignments, it is unclear how they asked students to compose in response to Barth’s blurring of the alphabetic and the musical. In contrast, Joseph Frank’s You (a combined expressivist reader and rhetoric) does explicitly include activities which ask students both to read and to compose experimental musical scores. As part of a unit on the sense of “hearing,” Frank includes the text from John Cage’s 1962 speech at Julliard. Cage wrote the text “in four columns to facilitate a rhythmic reading and to measure the silences” (Cage, qtd in Frank 47). The speech was accompanied by music performed and arranged
by another musician, David Tudor. In preparing students to engage Cage’s score, Frank asks them to:

read part of the lecture aloud. Then suggest what kind of music and noises and silences you would have accompany that part. All types of sound effects, in any kind of volume or combination, are allowable—from a noisy riveting gun to a soft violin, from a roaring racecar to a subdued electronic guitar. You can specify as many instruments, tapes, amplifiers, and other equipment as you find appropriate. (46)

In this exercise, Frank asks students to add their voice to Cage’s by composing a score of sounds to accompany Cage’s words. In this way, Frank suggests that the student’s voice need not necessarily be created through the lungs and larynx; students can come to voice by strategically manipulating instruments, tape-recorded sounds, and other noisemakers. Frank’s exercise is also significant in that he asks student to use alphabetic words (rather than traditional notes) to indicate the arrangement, layering, and timing of the sounds. In this way, Frank asks students not only to read experimental musical scores (like Cage’s) but also to try their own hand at creating compositions that reveal the interconnectedness of the musical and the alphabetic.

In addition to asserting that alphabetic writing may be a way to compose a score for musical and ambient sounds, Frank also suggests that musical and ambient sounds can inspire alphabetic composition. Immediately following the Cage exercise, Frank instructs students to “ask a friend to make a series of noises, using his vocal chords and any available noisemakers. Write the story you hear in those noises” (49). In this way, Frank suggests that musical and ambient sounds can be a way to inspire alphabetic writing—that students may develop ideas for alphabetic composition through the process of composing and listening to sound.
Frank, Mahoney, and Schmittroth were all responding to a moment of cultural and technological change in which the boundaries between music composition and alphabetic composition appeared to be breaking down. Recognizing the blurring boundaries between alphabetic and musical composition, Frank, Mahoney, and Schmittroth demonstrated how music composition can play a role in the English class—both as way to inspire alphabetic words (invention) and as a way to amplify the meaning of alphabetic words (layering).

The current rise of digital audio technologies also presents a new moment for reconsidering the relationship between composing words and composing music. In a digital sound editor, spoken words, music, and ambient sounds are all represented in the same way: as sound waves on a timeline that can be amplified, cut, rearranged, sped up, slowed down, or otherwise filtered. The sound wave is neither letters nor musical notes; it is a wholly different kind of notation that does not discriminate among types of sounds. When music and words are notated in the same way, it becomes much more possible to imagine that they can be composed in the same class.

Even if alphabetic compositionists do not feel capable of composing original music (as I must admit I do not), they can still digitally sample music and ambient sounds created by others. Although many sounds are protected by copyright, there also many sound effects and pieces of music that are freely available (under creative commons) on the web for composers to use.\textsuperscript{13} Although the composers of word-driven sound essays

\textsuperscript{13} In order to use a copyrighted piece of music in a published audio essay, a student would technically be required to seek permission from the copyright holder (and possibly to pay a fee). In order to avoid the need to secure permission for using conventionally copyrighted materials, students could limit themselves to using musical clips that have been released under Creative Commons License. For an explanation of the philosophy of creative commons and the various kinds of creative commons licenses available, see “A Spectrum of Rights.” For a critical discussion of the importance challenging restrictive copyright laws, see Lessig. For a website
might not compose original music (or ambient sounds), they would still be able to extend the resonance of their audible voices by sampling, arranging, and layering musical sounds.

Listening to the voices of Elbow, Winchester, Frank, Mahoney, and Smittroth, it becomes apparent that compositionists have a long tradition of drawing connections among writing, musical composing, speaking, listening, and reading. Although expressivist voice pedagogies are often dismissed as focusing excessively on the authentic self (Berlin; Faigley), we must remember that expressivist pedagogies of voice were about sound as much as they were about self. At this moment when digital technologies are once again pushing compositionists to attend to sound in our classes, it makes sense that we reclaim the expressivist understanding of “voice” as a concept that encompasses both the alphabetic and the auditory.

**Disability (movement three)**

Attempting to heighten sensory awareness (to spur students to notice details they often miss), expressivist textbooks often ask students to simulate the experience of having a disability. Numerous textbooks advocate the simulation of blindness in particular (Gibson; Rackham; Stewart), however, Donald Stewart’s *The Authentic Voice* offers the most in-depth treatment of simulated disabilities. Stewart tells students that “most of us have all the tools for perceiving: sight, hearing, touch, taste and smell. As you know, however, loss of one of the senses causes compensation by the others.” (27).

which contains numerous examples of creative-commons-licensed music that students can use for projects, see Freeplay Music.
Seeking to simulate this “compensation” effect, Stewart encourages students to temporarily deprive themselves of a sense and then record what they perceive. To simulate blindness, he asks students to close their eyes (or blindfold themselves) and record what they hear, smell, and touch in their classroom. To simulate deafness, he suggests that students watch TV with the sound off and focus on the visual aspects of the program.

In considering Stewart’s discussion of disability simulation, teachers may find much to doubt and much to believe. Although numerous people have doubted the race, class, and gender politics of expressivist epistemology (Jarratt; Berlin; Miller) and thus freed me to focus my attention on how expressivism can be productively remediated, scholars have largely ignored the disability politics of expressivist theories of writing as embodied sensory experience. Thus, in talking about disability in expressivism, I must weigh both sides of the believing and doubting game equally.

First, the doubt.

Although Stewart’s disability simulation exercises productively construct disability as a source of insight, they also construct the disability experience as exotic or other. By assuming that “most of us have all the tools for perceiving” (Stewart 27), these exercises implicitly suggest that all college students and instructors are able-bodied people whose only way of accessing disability experience is to simulate it; the lived experiences of students and teachers with sensory disabilities are marginalized or forgotten. Furthermore, the language of compensating for a disability problematically constructs disability as an individual problem to be overcome, failing to highlight ways in which the experience of disability is socially constructed by an ableist society which
establishes some forms of sensory perception as normal and others as deviant. For example, Stewart discusses how a deaf person would need to compensate for not being able to hear (by developing a heightened sense of vision and touch), but he does not imagine how a hearing person might have to compensate for not knowing American Sign Language. In other words, Stewart’s simulation exercises fail to ask students to consider how the world might be different if it was designed for people with varying sensory abilities—to consider the myriad ways in which the texts and built environments work to valorize certain modes of sensory perception while marginalizing others.

Stewart’s disability simulations also inordinately simplify the experiences of blindness and deafness. For Stewart, blindness is the absence of sight and deafness is the absence of hearing. Yet, the embodied experiences of blindness and deafness are much more complex. For example, many people who identify as blind (or who are legally identified as such) do see visual images. Questioning the reductive understanding of blindness as the absence of sight, Stephen Kuusisto opens his memoir, *Planet of the Blind*, by asserting that

blindness is often perceived by the sighted as an either/or condition: one either sees or does not see. But often a blind person experiences a series of veils: I stare at the world through smeared and broken windowpanes. Ahead of me the shapes and colors suggest the sails of Tristan’s ship or an elephant’s ear floating in the air, though in reality it is a middle-aged man in a London Fog raincoat that billows behind him in the April wind. He is like the great dead Greeks in Homer’s descriptions of the underworld. In the heliographic distortions of sunlight or dusk, everyone I meet is crossing Charon’s river. People shimmer like beehives. (Kuusisto 5)

14 For a good, accessible introduction to ableism, the social view of disability, and the problems with the rhetoric of overcoming a disability, see Linton.
In this vivid visual description, Kuusisto clearly articulates blindness as a way of seeing the world differently; blindness is a source of visual 
*insight*—a series of veils that open up myriad possibilities for interpreting the world. There is no way a student could simulate seeing like Kuusisto by simply closing his or her eyes. And, even if there were some way for students to simulate the embodied experience of Kuusisto’s particular form of blindness, they still would not see like Kuusisto because they would not be looking through the veils of his life experience (such as his affinity for Homer). In other words, to ask students to pretend to be blind is ultimately to ask them to simplify the complex and various experiences of blind people and to close them off to the ways in which blindness can be a form of insight into vision.

Complementing Kuusisto’s critique of reductive understandings of blindness, Carol Padden and Tom Humphries challenge the misconception that Deafness can be defined as the absence of sound:

> When hearing people identify deaf people as silent, they are mistakenly assuming that Deaf people have no concept of sound, that sound plays no part in their world. . . . The truth is that many Deaf people know a great deal about sound and that sound itself—not just its absence—plays a central role in their lives. (93)

In addition to noting that people who identify as Deaf are not necessarily incapable of hearing all acoustic sounds, Padden and Humphrey also more radically question why ableist “hearing people” assume that the only way to understand sound is through the ear. Padden and Humphrey argue that sound is just as much a social phenomenon as it is an acoustic one—that “the perception of sound is not automatic or straightforward, but is shaped through learned culturally defined practices” (93). Even when Deaf people do not directly acoustically perceive sounds through the ear, they are often highly aware of the
ways in which hearing people attach meanings to sound. Padden and Humphrey recount numerous stories told by Deaf people in which they astutely (and sometimes bemusedly) discuss how hearing people react to the sounds of loud noises (horns, yells), movie soundtracks, and bodily functions (eating, drinking, urinating, defecating). From these stories, it becomes clear that Deafness can be a location that reveals the socially constructed nature of auditory perception—the culturally bound rules that determine what sounds are pleasant / unpleasant, appropriate / inappropriate. Deafness marks not the absence of sound but a different perspective on it. This understanding of sound is developed over a lifetime and differs from person to person; it cannot easily be simulated by watching TV with the sound off or by wearing earplugs.

And yet…And yet…

Even though I think that Stewart’s exercises reinforce ableism and reductively simplify the diverse embodied experiences and knowledges of blindness and deafness, I also find much of value—much to believe—in his evocation of disability as a central aspect of understanding writing as an embodied sensory experience. Although I may question whether or not able-bodied students can truly simulate the experience of disability (and even whether they should), I do not deny that students’ sensory experiences will be different if they artificially attempt to close off some kinds of perception. In addition, the notion that disability enables sensory insights can function as important grounding for a critique of ableism even if Stewart and other expressivists do not explicitly make this move. Indeed, Stewart’s simulation exercise implicitly foregrounds disability as epistemic—as a way of seeing and knowing that provokes unique insights into the material and social world. By implicitly constructing disability as
an epistemic location rather than as a medical impairment to be pitied, Stewart provides
an opportunity for teachers and students to begin to interrogate the social hierarchies and
material inequalities which marginalize the experiences and knowledges of people with
disabilities. Furthermore, by asserting that disability is a central source of insight into the
sensory experience of composing, Stewart’s theory has the potential to disrupt ableism by
placing disability at the center of what it means to teach writing.

What to do? Stewart’s “pretend to be blind” or “pretend to be deaf” exercises are
not really tenable; they rely on ableist assumptions about the necessity of compensating
for disability and on simplistic understandings of the diversity of sensory experiences and
insights of blindness and deafness. Yet, if we forget expressivist disability simulation
exercises entirely, we close down possibilities for enabling students to gain new sensory
awareness of the world and we miss the opportunity to place disability at the center of the
composition curriculum. Thus, I suggest a blended approach in which students both read
texts by people with disabilities and participate in activities in which they use assistive
technologies to focus attention on particular kinds of sensory impressions.

In order to encourage students to consider how disability offers sensory insights, I
suggest incorporating the reading/viewing of works (memoir, fiction, documentary,
poetry, academic studies) composed by people with disabilities into the composition
class. By reading/viewing these kinds of texts, students could not only explore the
politics of disability but could also consider how the work of writers, scholars and artists
with disabilities can enable them to notice sensory details they had overlooked in the
past.
Certainly, reading the texts of people with disabilities is also a kind of simulation—a kind of vicarious experience. Yet, there is a crucial difference between engaging a text composed by a person with a disability and pretending to be disabled. In Stewart’s simulation exercises, students are asked to construct the blind or deaf experience based almost solely on the ableist constructions of the culture in which they live. In contrast, students who read/view texts by diverse writers and artists with a range of (dis)abilities are asked to engage with particular (non-generalizable) representations of embodied sensory disability experiences. Indeed, reading numerous alphabetic, visual, and auditory texts by composers with varying abilities may turn out to be a richer simulation of disability experience—and certainly a more politically relevant one—than closing one’s eyes for an hour.

Even though I think closing one’s eyes for an hour is a bad simulation of blindness, I do not deny that there is value in attempting to close they eyes or close the ears—in seeking to focus on some sensory impressions by minimizing others. Yet, in our current cyborg age, I think that we can achieve this act of sensory focusing through technological mediation rather than through disability simulation. Cyborg students and teachers could use numerous recording technologies to focus on and eliminate particular kinds of sensory impressions. Taking and editing pictures with a still camera (or a video camera without a mic) is a great way to focus attention on the visual details of a subject to the exclusion of all else. Going to a place, recording an hour of sound, and then editing it into a soundscape would certainly provoke students to pay more attention to the sounds in their worlds. Recording a conversation via instant messenger chat (minus audio or video) would be a great way to focus students’ attentions on words (rather than auditory
tone). Using a digital audio recorder to capture a conversation would heighten attention to vocal delivery while recording the conversation with a camera (sans mic) would push students to considering bodily delivery and scene.

As we ask students to use technologies to focus sensory experiences, we should be careful not to set up binaries between mainstream technologies (graphical web browsers, cameras, microphones) and assistive technologies (screen readers, voice-to-text programs, zoom readers) used by many people with disabilities. We should demonstrate to students that all technologies are assistive in that they enable us to have particular kinds of sensory experiences. So-called assistive technologies should not be segregated to “special accessible stations” in computer classrooms; they should be available on all machines for all students to use. For example, students who are capable of using a graphical web browser could still benefit from using a screen reader as this technology could enable them to notice different aspects of web design and construction they might otherwise ignore.

When viewing the web graphically, it is easy to forget that the underlying document is a piece of linear code in which various elements (of images and text) are marked up structurally (as headers, as paragraphs, as links). When listening to a screen reader (such a JAWS) read a site, the underlying linear structure becomes more apparent as it is much harder to jump from section to section (from a left navigation bar to the body text for example). Furthermore, listening to a website would help students gain a different sense of the role of images on the web. By listening to alt-tag text describing an image rather than viewing the image, students could gain a heightened sense of how the content of the image did or did not fit into the larger textual content of the page (since
both images and words would literally *sound the same*). Similarly, viewing a website with zoom software (which would force students to look at only small parts of the screen at a time) could likely highlight small graphical details and spatial relationships.

Although it may seem radical or utopian to suggest that people without vision “impairments” should use screen readers and zooming software, there is actually a long history of technologies initially designed to assist people with disabilities that ended up improving the lives of all people. For example, one of the first typewriters was developed as an assistive technology for the blind (Adler) and one of the earliest forms of synchronous electronic conferencing, Electronic Networks for Interaction (ENFI), was developed for Deaf and hard of hearing students at Gallaudet University (Barclay). By challenging the binary between assistive and dominant sensory technologies, we can begin to create pedagogical spaces in which all students (including those with disabilities) are able to use technology to assist them in proliferating the ways in which they can understand and compose about their sensory experiences.

Too often in discussions of composing technologies, issues of disability get reduced to accessibility (if they are considered at all). Disability is seen as a special need to be accommodated by purchasing additional software/hardware or by following accessible coding standards. By relegating issues of disability to the realm of technical accommodations, scholars fail to consider the myriad ways the issues of disability can deepen our understanding of composing processes. By looking at how disability figures prominently in expressivist theories of writing as a technologically-mediated sensory experience, we can remember that compositionists have a substantial history of exploring disability as source of insight into technology and composing and can begin to find ways...
to revise—to resee—this history to make it more technologically and politically salient for our contemporary moment.

**Research (Movement Four)**

For expressivists, research should be grounded in embodied sensory experience. Challenging the primacy of secondary print sources, expressivists encourage students to draw upon numerous non-print sources (e.g. interviews, observations, images, music) in developing and answering their research questions. Similarly, many of us who teach digital multimodal composition today are also reimagining research beyond the realm of the alphabetic. In particular, numerous contemporary composition scholars have argued for reimagining research as digital multimodal documentary production (DeWitt; Selfe; Goodman). At this moment in which we are (re)composing research as a documentary practice, it is important that we begin to offer a genealogy of multimodal documentary in composition studies. To this end, I will critically re-read two moments in expressivist composition history: the I-search paper (Macrorie) and the cassette-slide show (Burnett and Thomason).

Challenging the emphasis on objectivity and secondary sources that characterizes the conventional research paper, Macrorie offers a theory of “I-Search” which argues that the student’s discovery and representation of knowledge is a profoundly embodied, personal process:

In the last four years other teachers around the country and I have been challenging students to do what we call *I-Searches*—not Re-searches, in which the job is to search again what someone else has already searched—but original searches in which persons scratch an itch they feel. (14)
Macrorie’s discussion of I-search as “scratching an itch” reveals his belief that students’ ‘research’ questions should emerge from their embodied sensory experience. In the I-Search, the student should seek answers that she or he really wants and needs to know. The final result is not a dispassionate collection of facts but rather a narrative in which the student tells the story of her searches, weaving her own personal voice together with quotes from interviews, vivid descriptions of observations, and more conventional library sources.

In many ways, Macrorie’s I-Search adopts a similar epistemological stance to the participatory documentary film (Nichols). Like I-Search writers, participatory documentarians offer a “sense of bodily presence, rather than absence, [that] locates the filmmaker ‘on the scene.’ We expect that what we learn will hinge on the nature and quality of the encounter between filmmaker and subject” (Nichols 116). In other words, participatory documentarians and I-Search writers share a commitment to telling a story in which the interactive search for knowledge is as important as the knowledge found. Participatory documentarians and I-Search writers also share a preference for the interview as a research technique in which the interviewer and subject visibly create knowledge together (Nichols 121; Macrorie 133-150).

Articulating the centrality of interviewing for I-Search methodology, Macrorie asserts that “the worst place you can begin your search is at the card catalog. Go to people. They’re alive, this year, up to date” (89). Macrorie makes substantial time in class for students to share their research questions and to help each other find human “sources” to interview (91). Once students have located people to interview, Macrorie then spends
substantial time teaching them how to prepare for, conduct, and edit interview material. In teaching students to prepare for interviews, Macrorie emphasizes the importance of crafting open-ended questions that prompt interviewees to tell stories: “questions that can be answered yes or no should be used sparingly because they close off the flow of experience you want from your subject” (Macrorie 138). For Macrorie, interviewing is not just a way of gathering facts; the interview is fundamentally about gathering stories from people—placing “facts” within the lived embodied narratives of people’s lives.

By conceiving of research as gathering and (re)composing stories, Macrorie also implicitly suggests a multimodal model for documentary composition. When students compose and record interviews, Macrorie urges them to capture “the individual flavor of people’s language” (123) as well as the “physical moment surrounding the [interviewees’] words” (125). Like the participatory documentary filmmaker, the I-search writer strives to convey the sound of her interviewee’s voice as well as the mise-en-scene (the physical moment) in which the interview takes place. Whereas the I-Search writer conveys voice and mise-en-scene in alphabetic words, the participatory documentary filmmaker uses images and sounds in order to highlight the embodied location of the interview.

Even though Macrorie instructs students to pay attention to visual and aural aspects of interview, he still suggests that they should record and present their interviews using primarily alphabetic means. Although Macrorie does admit that a cassette tape recorder can help students remember interviewees’ words and vocal inflections (124; 142), he worries that tape recorders will encourage students to “transcribe every word in the conversation” (124) and create an interview record in which “readers may not be able
to hear the airplanes because of the wind” (124). For Macrorie, a good interview is “usually not a word-for-word report of what people said to each other, but rather a composing in which the interviewer studies his notes, chooses the best pieces, and puts them together” (124).

In the contemporary age of digital editing software, however, it is increasingly possible that students could make visual and audio recordings of an interview and then go back and “choose the best pieces” and “put them together.” Indeed, Macrorie’s theory that interview composition is a process of selection (choosing pieces) and arrangement (putting them together) is as applicable to the digital editing of sound and images as it is to construction of alphabetic texts. In my experience, the complex recursive processes of selection and arrangement are central to the digital editing of video interviews. On my first couple passes through video interview footage, I start by making the most obvious choices: What sections of the footage can be cut because they are clearly irrelevant to my project? What are the natural stopping places in the conversation where I can break clips us easily? How can I group clips into categories?

Once I have the clips grouped into categories, I start looking for repetitive material that I can cut: Do two clips basically say the same thing? Are all the words in each clip necessary to make the point? Once I have cut down to the desired number of minutes, I start thinking about arrangement: With so many missing pieces, how can I arrange the remaining clips so that they flow together? What should come first and last? Do I need title slides or visual transitions to get me from one point to the next?

Clearly, selection and arrangement are composing concepts common to both alphabetic and video composition. Yet, although alphabetic composition usually involves
arranging words linearly in space, video editing entails *synchronously* layering images, words, and sounds on a timeline. In composing their work, video documentarians might layer a musical soundtrack underneath interview footage. They might place title text on top of footage. They might layer audio of an interview over footage taken in a different time and place. The ability to synchronously layer modalities adds a level of complexity to video documentary composition not present in Macrorie’s I-Search theory.

Although Macrorie’s I-Search does not address the synchronous logic of digital video production, Esther Burnett and Sandra Thomason’s cassette slide show project (1974) does explore multimodal layering as a way of composing research.\(^{15}\) In an expressivist-inflected course on life writing, Burnett and Thomason gave students the opportunity to compose a cassette slide show biography which included “a written story of about 1,350 words, a 10-15 minute audio track, and 50-70 slides.” (427). For slides, students would take pictures of images from books, periodicals, and post cards, create their own sketches and title slides, and sometimes capture photographs of relevant scenes. (427-428) For audio, students might include voiceover, background music, or historical audio clips (428). Students with access to audio mixing equipment might layer sounds on tape, while others might play a tape of music while reading their “voice over” script live (429).

\(^{15}\) Burnett and Thomason’s sense of research admittedly differs quite extensively from Macrorie’s I-Search. Burnett and Thomason limit students to biographies (as opposed to Macrorie’s open-ended prompt) and they emphasize secondary sources (found images and sound recording) more than direct interviewing and observation. Yet, Burnett and Thomason share Macrorie’s concern with making research more relevant to the embodied sensory experiences of students. Burnett and Thomason note that asking students to locate and rearrange visual and audio materials makes the research process “more relevant to their [the students] world of movies and TV” (426).
In teaching students to gather and create audio, visual, and alphabetic materials, Burnett and Thomason emphasize the importance of considering how to layer synchronously the various media elements so that they complement one another:

Text, sound effects, and pictures must complement one another. His [the student’s] text is partly determined by the pictures he can find. He must plan pictures to accompany sound effects. (427)

In this way, Burnett and Thomason offer a model of composing research in which the activities of selection and arrangement are profoundly influenced by the demands of layering and timing. Students need to select materials that complement one another; they need to be careful not to have too much of one modality and not enough of another. In arranging materials, students need not just think about how to arrange them linearly in space (as in a paper) but they must think about how to arrange them synchronously in time (e.g. how to choose the right music to accompany a slide; how to change slides in a way that follows the rhythm of the audio track).

In addition to prefiguring the contemporary importance of layering and timing in digital documentary composition, Burnett and Thomason also anticipate the rising importance of remix as a composing technique (Miller a/k/a Spooky; Johnson-Eilola). The cassette slide show is ultimately an exercise in remix—recombining existing words, sounds, and images in order to create a new text. Whereas today’s students might download an image, video, or audio clip found on the web, Burnett and Thomason’s students took pictures of printed images and made copies of audiotapes. Although the ease of digital remix opens up exciting composing possibilities, it also opens up new legal and ethical concerns. Although Burnett and Thomason asked students to cite the sources of their images and sounds, they did not ask student to get permission to use
copyrighted visual and audio materials. Yet, as the technology of duplicating, remixing, and distributing media has become easier in the digital age, the issue of intellectual property has become more vexing. Whereas media companies may not have felt threatened by the relatively difficult, time-consuming, and place-bound remix process of the cassette slide show project, a contemporary teacher who asked students to create digital remixed slideshows and publish them to the web could end up on the receiving end of a “cease and desist” letter from a large media conglomerate. Indeed, contemporary documentary filmmakers are often forced to get permission to use (and sometime pay for) very tiny samples of copyrighted music, television shows, or films in their work (Lessig 95-99).

Reclaiming the heritage of Burnett and Thomason, we can demonstrate that the “citation” and “remixing” of images and sounds has long played a role in the teaching of academic research-based composition. In addition to pointing to contemporary remix artists (such as DJ Spooky) to support our defense of applying fair use to images and sounds, we can point to the history of composition as one location for articulating remix as a central part of the scholarly and pedagogical endeavor of composing research.

Although Burnett and Thomason’s model of layering, remixing, and timing is more clearly applicable to digital documentary work than Macrorie’s more flat alphabetic I-Searches, I would argue that Macrorie’s epistemological framework is ultimately more politically salient. Whereas Macrorie’s I-Searchers engage in a participatory mode (Nichols) of documentary composition in which the author/filmmaker reveals how her knowledge is embodied and localized, Burnett and Thomason’s cassette slide shows fall

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much closer to the disembodied epistemological stance of the expository documentarian who relies heavily on an informing logic carried by the spoken word… The commentary is typically presented as distinct from the images of the historical world that accompany it…. It comes from some place that remains unspecified but associated with objectivity or omniscience. The commentary, in fact, represents the perspective or argument of the film. (Nichols 107)

By emphasizing the voice-over narrative as giving order to the multimedia secondary sources, Burnett and Thomason’s slide shows ask students to assume disembodied practices of knowledge making which are not marked by physical and social location.

As we teach students to consider layering and timing in their digital documentary compositions, we should be careful to also ask them to consider how they are representing the process of knowledge making. Although there may be some occasions in which the expository mode may be preferable to the participatory, we should be careful that we are not privileging the coordinating power of the disembodied voice-over in ways that might deaden students’ critical reflection on the knowledge-making process.

**Cooking (Movement Five)**

As this expressivist sensory symphony is winding down, I have a lot of ingredients but I have yet to combine them all into a dish. In movement one, I articulated writing as a technology of vision while in movement two, I articulated writing as a technology of sound. In movement three, I showed how a critical understanding of disability and technology could open up more possibilities for considering the role of sight and sound in the composing process. And, in movement four, I explored how
expressivists can help us reimagine the teaching of research-based composition. But, what I have yet to do is outline a metaphor (or a story) which explains how we put all of our embodied senses together—how composing is a process of dynamic sensory interaction. To accomplish this, I turn to Elbow’s metaphor of cooking.

In *Writing Without Teachers*, Peter Elbow defines cooking as a way to talk about how a writer can make a piece of writing grow and change:

> It is because of cooking that a piece of writing can start out X and end up Y, that a writer can start out after supper seeing, feeling, and knowing one set of things and end up at midnight seeing, feeling, and knowing things he (sic) hadn’t thought of before. (48)

Cooking, both metaphorically and literally, is a process of sensory transformation—a process of changing how things look and feel and sound and smell and taste. Whereas the camera and voice metaphors highlight one sense to the exclusion of others, cooking truly involves all senses.

Cooking as a multisensory process is something I know in my bones. When I make pasta, I keep altering the amount of flour and water and keep kneading until it feels like the dough my Grandma makes. When I make popcorn on the stove, I know when to stop shaking and when to pull the pan off the heat solely by listening to the rhythm of the popping. I sometimes add ingredients (such as red peppers or blue potatoes) to dishes just for visual impact—to make the food stand out on the plate. My recipes never include specific amounts for spices because I just keep adding until they taste right. To equate writing/revising with cooking is truly to highlight the ways in which writing is an embodied material practice that relies on all the senses.
The cooking metaphor also suggests the importance of combining different (contrasting or contradictory) sensory elements in order to transform a piece of writing. As Elbow argues,

Cooking is the interaction of conflicting or contrasting material. . . . Cooking consists of the process of one piece of material (or one process) being transformed by interacting with another: one piece of material being seen through the lens of another, being dragged through the guts of another, being reoriented or reorganized in terms of the other, being mapped on to the other. (49)

By gathering and recombining conflicting sensory materials (lenses, guts, maps), a writer can open up perspectives on her topic—can move from seeing, feeling, and knowing X to seeing, feeling, and knowing Y. This notion of dynamic interaction of sensory materials is crucial for a truly multimodal pedagogy. We should not do a unit on writing with cameras, then a unit on digital audio editing, then a unit on disability autobiography, then a unit on documentary video. We need to imagine pedagogical spaces in which people freely move back and forth among modalities while working on the same composition.

Before whipping up my own revised version of multimodal cooking pedagogy, though, I first want to attend to the multimodal ways that Elbow’s suggests we can cook our writing. Elbow places special emphasis on “interacting with people” as a cooking method which allows a writer to see her words “refracted through the consciousness” of another person (Elbow 49). To this end, Elbow recommends teacherless writing groups in which participants give each other “movies of their minds” that describe what they experienced when they read or listened to their fellows’ work. To some extent, this notion of a “movie of the mind” is metaphorical—just a way to encourage people to record their reactions rather than to offer summative evaluative judgments. But, the metaphor of the “movie of the mind” also reveals Elbow’s insistence that readers are sometimes not able
to express their reactions to a piece of writing solely in words—that our unconscious reactions are often best expressed multimodally through images, movement, and sounds.

In view of the limitations of responding to writing in words alone, Elbow suggests a series of multimodal activities to enable people to show (rather than tell) their reactions to a piece of writing:

- Talk about writing as though you were talking about motion or locomotion…what color is the whole [of the writing]? The parts…Quickly make the picture or the doodle the writing inspires in you; pretend the writing was only received by your arm with its pencil: now let them move…. The writing is a lump of workable clay, tell what you would do with that clay…Make the sound the writing inspires. Or imitate the sound of the writing. Different sounds for different parts…Let your whole body make the movements inspired by the writing or different parts of it. Perhaps combine sounds and movements. (90-92)

Before responding to the substance of these activities, I feel compelled to offer a disclaimer. Despite the fact that I grew up among hippie Unitarians (and went an undergrad institution in which grades were prohibited and shoes were optional), even I could not help but feel silly asking students to do an interpretive dance to express their reactions to a piece of writing. Hell, even Elbow (writing closely in the wake of encounter groups and creative yippie protest) recognizes that some of his suggested activities may feel “strange or uncomfortable” (Elbow 93). Despite the fact that some of Elbow’s showing activities might not be tenable in the contemporary classroom, the broader theory of showing multimodal movies of mind remains quite salient.

Because readers experience complex multisensory embodied reactions to pieces of writing, it makes sense that responses to writing should move beyond the alphabetic. In addition to speaking about writing metaphorically as being similar to clay, color,
motion, film, and pictures, we should also find ways to respond writing that do not rely on words alone.

In the current cyborg age, however, we need not necessarily just use our bodies (making movements and sounds) to represent our multisensory experience of reading. We can also employ digital technologies to respond to writing in multimodal ways. To this end, I offer a couple of my own cyborg remediations of Elbow’s showing exercise:

- **How do these words move?** Using PowerPoint or Flash, remediate a paragraph of text as an animated sequence. How fast or slow is each phrase? What kind of rhythm does this piece have? Do some phrases fly in over others?
- **What images do these words bring to mind?** Use google image search (or flickr image search) to find 6 images that remind you of this piece of writing. Put the images together in a PowerPoint or iMovie.
- **What do these words look like?** Using MS Word (or Publisher, inDesign, Photoshop), create a typographic portrait of a page of the text. What fonts show the voice of the text? Where does the size and weight of the words get big and small? Where do the words seem close together or far apart?
- **Record your peer reading his or her work aloud.** Using Audacity (or another sound editor), edit their words. What words would you cut? What would you repeat or loop? What kind of soundtrack would this piece of writing have?
- **Use PowerPoint, Flash, or iMovie to blend the images, typographic styles, movements, and sounds that came to mind as you read or listened to the piece of writing.**
The computer is a powerful multisensory tool for cooking writing. Respondents can easily take the original words (as pixeled letters or as sound waves) and make them interact with other conflicting sensory elements (music, images, typography, animation/motion).

Although Elbow’s “Movies of the Mind” activities clearly foreground the importance of the dynamic interaction of words, images, sounds, and motion, some of Elbow’s other suggestions for cooking initially seem more tied to the primacy of the alphabetic. For example, Elbow asserts that cooking can be achieved by the interaction of modes, but he describes this interaction almost wholly in terms of the interaction of alphabetic genres:

Allow your writing to fall into poetry and then back into prose; from informal to formal; from personal to impersonal: first-person to third-person; fiction, nonfiction, empirical, a \textit{priori}. When it starts to change modes on you, don’t shrink back and stop it. Let it go and develop itself in that mode. Even if it seems crazy. It will show you things about your material and help it to cook, develop, and grow. (54)

Because Elbow understandably constructs writing as a process of manipulating “symbols on paper” (55), he does not imagine that composers could switch as easily among modes (alphabetic, visual, auditory) as they could among textual modes (fiction, nonfiction).

Yet, when we reimagine writing as manipulating \textit{symbols on screen}, it seems more possible to jump from sound editors, to image editors, to word processors, and back again. If the ultimate goal of cooking is to help change what we “see, feel, and know” about a topic, there is no reason not to cook with visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and alphabetic ingredients.
In my experimental class “Multimodal Composition: English 110 Remixed” (Autumn 2005), I made a first attempt at giving students the chance to cook a topic in multiple modalities. Back at that time, I had not really thought consciously about Elbow’s cooking as a model for what I was doing, but now I can see how Elbow’s cooking metaphor can help me begin to explain some of the successes and the failures of my multimodal experiment.

In my remixed composition class, I assigned students to work individually or collaboratively in self-selected groups on a media translations project. For this assignment, I asked students to choose to develop a persuasive campaign or to describe and analyze a place. Once students narrowed down to the place they were going to analyze or to the persuasive point they were going to make, I then asked them to create three compositions about their topic:

1. an alphabetic composition (word-processed document)
2. an audio composition (layered mp3 file)
3. a visual composition (Photoshop collage, photo slideshow, video).

In addition, the students individually wrote reflective alphabetic essays in which they explained the rhetorical choices they made, talked about the unique strengths and limitations of each mode they used, and discussed what they learned from the project.

As this media translations project unfolded, I became fascinated by the ways in which composing in different modalities simultaneously—cooking with different sensory materials—provoked students to discover new insights about their topic. Students would make a claim in alphabetic writing and then decide that they needed photographic or audio interview evidence to support it. When taking pictures of a place, students would
notice the contrast between old and new buildings and the end up researching and reporting the history of that place in a paper. In sharing a collage during peer response, students would come away with feedback that gave them ideas for writing a paper. In taking video of people using a place, students would notice people doing particular actions and then later create audio interview questions to explore these actions.

My conversations with students were percolating with connections between the visual, the auditory, and the alphabetic. We were cooking! And, then I artificially reined in the cooking process—turned down the heat, kicked down the spice. I started focusing our peer-critique sessions (and my own feedback) on helping students to carefully revise distinct products in visual, audio, and alphabetic modalities. I started pushing students to evaluate the strengths and limitations of each modality they were using (to consider what they could accomplish with words but not images, with images but not sounds, with sounds but not alphabetic words…).

Even with my restriction of three separate alphabetic, visual, and audio compositions, students still created compelling work that the whole class (including me) learned from and enjoyed. But, I was left with the sense that I had unnecessarily constrained my students’ cooking. I should have let them dump some dishes from the menu or let them combine some together. They had many great ingredients on their plates but my recipe (assignment) had not quite enabled them to make a wholly satisfying meal.

If I had been listening to Elbow’s story of cooking, I would have been asking students to focus more on how each media composition experience had changed what they saw, felt, and knew about their topics. From these reflections, I would have encouraged students to step back and decide which modality or combination of
modalities would really enable them to express the ideas they had discovered. Elbow’s cooking theory also would have made me pay more attention to the value of composing freely—without the pressure of a final product and grade. Indeed, I often found that some of my students most compelling media work happened when it did not count—when we were just playing around with an activity class in order to learn a piece of software. I should have been doing more to encourage students to build on these informal exercises rather than hurrying them along to get the real work of the course: the big graded project.

As we turn to asking students to create texts in multiple modalities, it becomes easy to be seduced by production values and focus on creating final products that look and sound professional and polished. Yet, in the drive to increase production values, we should not forget the primary purpose of cooking with multiple modalities is to gain insight. Sometimes combining sensory elements (mixing flavors) will lead to incoherent contradictory product, but the process will still be instructive. When we look back about the incoherent mess of flavors, we will finally know what dish we should have made (and we will be more prepared to make it).

Reprise

In the five movements of this symphony, I have riffed on various aspects of expressivism: cooking, documentary, voice, disability, sensation, film, listening, technology, arrangement music, research, photography, editing, sensation, layering, embodiment…
Turning down the volume on expressivist theories of the authentic self, I have turned up the volume on expressivist theories of writing as a multisensory, embodied, technologically-mediated art. Quite simply, I have suggested that expressivists developed and enacted a multimodal composition pedagogy for the analog age—a pedagogy that we can revise and extend as we turn to digital modes of composition. In reaching back to expressivism (back before the birth of the personal computer), I aim to demonstrate that compositionists have long been theorizing the concept of multimodality even if they have not necessarily used that term specifically.

As we listen to expressivist theories of multimodal composition, I suggest that we especially pay attention to the following seven refrains…

**Refrain #1: Alphabetic writing is a multisensory, embodied process**

By emphasizing the importance of embodied sensory experience in inventing, drafting, and revising alphabetic writing, expressivists remind us that teaching has always already been a multimodal act. Alphabetic writing both arises from and influences the senses of sight, hearing, touch, smell, and taste. In this way, the teaching of writing can never really be solely about the decoding and encoding of words; it must necessarily entail attention to images, sounds, and movements.

**Refrain #2: Alphabetic writing is a technology of audio-visual composing**

Expressivists perceive alphabetic writing as an auditory and visual technology—a way of recording, editing, and remixing images and sounds. Thus, expressivists suggest that students can learn about manipulating alphabetic writing technologies by making
analogies to and in some cases actually using other visual and audio composing technologies (cameras, film-editing machines, tape recorders, audio mixers). Although the convergence of visual, auditory, and alphabetic composing technologies in digital environments is relatively new, the notion that the teaching of writing entails the teaching of audio-visual composing technologies turns out to be quite old.

Refrain #3: Alphabetic writing, photography, film, and music are all interrelated arts

Contemporary composition theories have tended to downplay the notion that writing is an art. Yet in minimizing the role of art in writing instruction we close down possible connections we could make with teachers of other arts such as filmmaking, photography, and music. At a moment in which digital technologies are blurring the boundaries between arts, it is important that we reclaim the heritage of composition as an art so that we can articulate the role we as compositionists have to play in teaching digital artistic production. By reclaiming the notion of composition as an art, we can also productively challenge elitist (natural genius) notions of art which prevent many people from using the arts to foment democratic social change.

Refrain #4: Expressivist and Feminist Epistemologies Are Potentially Complementary

Expressivists resist objective notions of knowledge, insisting that knowledge is always limited and partial because it reflects the embodied, localized position of the knower. Although expressivists often ignore the ways race, class, gender and other categories of difference impact the process of knowing, their privileging of embodied
over objective epistemology can potentially be compatible with a feminist pedagogy that asks students to interrogate the politics of knowledge construction.

**Refrain #5: Disability is key to understanding multimodal composition**

Challenging the notion that disability is a marginal concern, expressivists demonstrate that disability can offer central insights into the sensory experience of composing. Although we might not adopt the expressivists’ problematic practice of asking students to simulate disability, we can still ask students consider the sensory insights that disability offers by having students use assistive technologies and read/view/listen to texts composed by people with diverse abilities.

**Refrain #6: Expressivists provide useful models for multimodal documentary storytelling**

In developing notions of research as multimodal embodied storytelling (rather than as exposition of facts from secondary sources), expressivists can help us articulate the role of documentary production in the research-based writing class. Macrorie’s I-Search offers useful pedagogical strategies for teaching students to compose interviews in the participatory documentary mode. Burnett and Thomason’s cassette slide show project prefigures contemporary attempts to construct multimodal remixing and layering as a kind of documentary research practice.

**Final Refrain: Multimodal composition should embrace play and contradiction**

Expressivist theory reminds us that multimodal composition is not just about producing polished synchronized texts—texts in which images, words, and sounds work
seamlessly together. It can be just as valuable to play with composing in differing modalities—to juxtapose sensory material and just see what happens. Sometimes we will create amazing things, sometimes we will fail, but we will always learn something.

Similarly, when contemporary digital compositionists turn back to expressivism for inspiration, we need not go looking for polished, synchronized pedagogical texts that we can just pick up and use. Rather, I suggest that we should play with expressivism—that we should take the risk of combining it with other contrasting or conflicting ingredients such as digitality, feminism, disability studies, and social activism. By placing these contradictory materials in dialogue, we might make a bit of a mess, but we also might come to see, hear, and feel the contemporary moment of composition in a new way.
CHAPTER THREE

MIND

In histories and theoretical maps of composition (Berlin; Faigley; Harris; Ede), the adjective, “cognitive,” is most often used to describe 1970s and 1980s composition scholarship that explored the writing process using research methods and theories borrowed from the discipline of psychology. Recognizing the central role of cognitive research in the professional development of composition studies, Joseph Harris has asserted that the cognitive composing research of Emig, Perl, and Flower and Hayes “helped establish composition as a research field” (55). Composition historians have also recognized the important ways in which cognitive research influenced writing pedagogy. For example, in a discussion of cognitive rhetoric in the 1970s, James Berlin notes that Janet Emig's research on composing processes “resulted in more teachers calling upon the process model of composing—prewriting, writing, and rewriting recursively—as it suggested ways teachers could assist students in all stages of the process” (Berlin 160). Similarly, Lisa Ede has argued that “cognitive research on the composing process—as typified by studies by Linda Flower and John Hayes, Nancy Sommers, Sondra Perl, and Janet Emig—enabled researchers and writing program administrators to draw on the language and methods of science” (67) to argue for the necessity of small composition
classes in which students could receive intensive instruction and feedback on all aspects of the writing process. In this way, composition scholars present cognitivism as one part of our fields' ongoing development of theories of writing process and writing pedagogy—one part of the story of how we compositionists came to be the specialists on writing pedagogy in the university; however, in telling this disciplinary story of composition theory, scholars often downplay the ways in which cognitive composition theory was (and still is) an inherently interdisciplinary enterprise.

Cognitivists were not merely importing psychological theories to the study of writing. Rather, in researching the cognitive process of writing, cognitivists were also explicitly contributing to a much broader interdisciplinary conversation about composing processes across communicative modalities (alphabetic, visual, kinesthetic, auditory). In particular, cognitive composition theorists were asking

- Are there similarities in the creative composing processes of writers, artists, designers and other types of composers? Can we learn about one form of composing by studying and participating in another? (Flower and Hayes; Emig)
- How do multiple symbol systems intersect in the mind? What role do nonverbal modes of thinking play in the invention and revision of alphabetic texts? (Flower and Hayes; Perl; Sommers)?
- How can we articulate writing as a multirepresentational (verbal, visual, kinesthetic) mode of learning? (Emig)

Rather than seeking to understand writing solely in terms of alphabetic products, cognitivists instead explored the act of writing as a profoundly multimodal thinking process with affinities to other creative composing processes (in art, design, music etc.).
At the contemporary moment when we compositionists are increasingly redefining ourselves as scholars and teachers of multimodal composing and designing processes, it makes sense to reclaim our heritage as a field dedicated to contributing to—and learning from—interdisciplinary conversations about composing across modalities.

Although I will argue for the importance of reclaiming and extending composition's cognitive heritage, I will not ask readers to accept cognitive tenets uncritically (or to the exclusion of other perspectives). Rather, I will suggest that cognitivism offers a series of terministic screens (Burke) that both mask and reveal important questions about composing. In seeking to develop a generalizable theory of writing as a creative thinking process, cognitivists tend to deflect our attention away from considering the ways in which individual writing processes both influence and are influenced by social, ideological, and material contexts (Bizzell; Faigley; Berlin). Yet, the cognitive emphasis on generalizable creative thinking processes also can productively direct our attention to investigating the potential similarities in the mental processes of composing words, images, and sounds—to exploring how we might collaborate with colleagues throughout the university in developing theories and pedagogies of composing which cross modalities. Furthermore, in focusing attention on writers’ internal mental processes, cognitivists tend to present language as a mere container for thought, deflecting our attention from the ways in which thought and language are dialogically interrelated (Bizzell; Berlin). Yet, the cognitivists' container model of language also

Although Flower and Hayes early work tended to efface social concerns, Flower later came to embrace a blend of social and cognitive perspectives. Indeed, in the 1990s and the present century, it is increasingly common for composition and literacy scholars to blend cognitive and social theories in their work (Dunn; DeWitt; Gee; Haas).
productively reminds us that people don't just think in words alone—that visual images, auditory images (sounds), and kinesthetic feelings all play an important role in how people think about the act of composing. When we begin to recognize the ways in which alphabetic writing results from a multimodal thinking process, we can expand our possibilities for teaching students to engage deeply in the recursive processes of invention and revision.

Although I will argue for the importance of listening to cognitivist scholarship of the 1970s and 1980s, I do not wish to suggest that multimodal cognitive theories are entirely a thing of the past in composition studies (and allied fields). When we listen to composition and English Education scholarship of the last 10 years, we can locate a new wave of scholars who have been developing multimodal writing pedagogies informed at least in part by cognitive research on learning differences. Drawing on diverse cognitive research on multiple intelligences, learning styles, and learning disabilities, scholars such as Patricia Dunn, Peter Smagorinsky, Linda Hecker, and Karen Klein have argued that we all have differing ways of knowing—diverse strengths and limitations in our abilities to think through written words, spoken words, music, images, 3-D objects, and kinesthetic activities. Although these scholars tend to construct alphabetic writing as the ultimate telos of the composition class, they also usefully suggest numerous visual, aural, and kinesthetic activities that can help cognitively diverse students invent and revise alphabetic writing.

17 Although these scholars work is informed by cognitive learning theories, they also tend to embrace social perspectives as well. In this chapter, however, I focus exclusively on the cognitive implications of their work.
Program

My revue of multimodal cognitive composing theories unfolds in three acts (and a reprise).

In Act One (“Creativity”), I look closely at how Janet Emig’s *Composing Process of Twelfth Graders* both draws upon and contributes to global theories of creative process. In particular, I demonstrate that Emig productively defines composition as an interdisciplinary field dedicated to exploring similarities in composing processes across modalities. I then turn to Flower and Hayes’ interdisciplinary investigation of writing and visual art as related creative problem-solving processes, considering how Flower and Hayes’ research findings can inform contemporary digital multimodal composition pedagogy. I conclude by revisiting Charles Kostelnick’s (1998) call for writing and design scholars to join together in the cross-disciplinary study of creative problem-solving—a call that gains renewed relevance at the contemporary moment in which the borders between alphabetic text and visual design are increasingly blurring.

In Act Two (“Translation”), I look closely at cognitivists’ investigation of the role of nonverbal mental imagery in the invention and revision of alphabetic writing. In particular, I focus attention on Flower and Hayes’ provocative definition of writing as an act of translation from the multimodal mind to the alphabetic page. I argue that Flower and Hayes' translation theory can provoke us to consider including multimodal invention activities in writing classes, and it can also propel us to question the limitations of alphabetic writing as a modality. I conclude by considering how Sondra Perl’s
exploration of felt sense and Nancy Sommers' discussion of revision can contribute to the study and teaching of composing as a multimodal thinking process.

In Act Three (“Learning”), I revisit Janet Emig’s classic articulation of “Writing as a Mode of Learning.” Although I recognize that Emig problematically valorizes writing over speech, I note that she also productively defines learning as a multimodal process and leaves open the possibility that other forms of composing (such as filmmaking) might also be powerful learning tools. Although I argue that Emig’s discussion of multimodal learning is productive, I also find her 1978 work limiting because it (understandably) does not consider differences among learners and it does not offer practical suggestions for multimodal pedagogy. Seeking to address these gaps, I turn to the work of more contemporary composition and English education scholars (Dunn; Hecker and Klein; Childers, Hobson, and Mullin) who have drawn on cognitive scholarship on learning differences in order to develop multimodal pedagogies that attend to students’ diverse ways of knowing. Although these scholars tend to emphasize nondigital multimodal activities as a supplement to alphabetic writing, I consider how their work might be adapted to digital composition courses in which multimodal composing plays a more central role.

**Creativity (Act One)**

**Emig (Scene One)**

In her classic study of twelfth graders’ processes of composing, Janet Emig defines composing very broadly as “the selection and ordering of elements” (66). When people are “composing in writing” (Emig 1), they are selecting and ordering words; when
people are composing a painting or composing a symphony, they are selecting and ordering auditory or imagistic elements. Because Emig views composing as a concept that travels across modalities, she does not limit her literature review to research that focuses on alphabetic writing specifically. Rather, Emig seeks to position her study in relation to “research dealing with the whole or some part of what has been called, globally, the creative process” (“Composing” 7). In discussing past global research on the creative process (in visual art, writing, music, and science), Emig notes that “many students of creativity and creators across modes” (“Composing” 17) have proffered a view of the creative process as a sequence of stages. On the one hand, Emig argues that stage models of creativity (Wallas; Cowley; Wilson) are useful because they demonstrate that “there are elements, moments, and stages within the composing process which can be distinguished and characterized in some detail” (“Composing” 33). On the other hand, she questions the tendency of stage models to portray the creative process as a linear sequence—arguing instead that the various elements or stages of the composing process occur recursively. In this way, Emig proposes a revision of stage models of creativity (from linear to recursive) that could potentially apply well beyond the walls of the writing classroom or even of the English department.

Ultimately, Emig suggests that English teachers should not limit themselves to studying and teaching the composing of alphabetic texts alone—that English teachers have much to gain by studying and teaching other forms of composing. Indeed, Emig notes regretfully that very few teacher-training programs in the United States offer experiences in allied arts through creative arts workshops. When, if ever, have our secondary school teachers painted, sung, or sculpted under any academic auspices? Partially because they have no direct experience of composing, teachers
of English err in important ways. They underconceptualize the process of composing. Planning degenerates into outlining; reformulating becomes the correction of minor infelicities. (“Composing” 98)

In addition to the proffering the now common assertion that teachers of writing should themselves be writers (“Composing” 98), Emig also suggests more radically that teachers of writing should gain experience with a wide range of composing experiences in differing modalities. In particular, Emig argues that experience in composing across modalities (alphabetic, aural, visual, or spatial) can help teachers understand invention (planning) and revision (reformulating) as complex recursive processes, moving beyond teaching formulaic, product-centered models such as the “five paragraph theme” (“Composing” 97).

In this way, Emig outlines a truly radical vision of what it means to study and teach composition. Challenging the notion that English compositionists should focus on alphabetic writing exclusively, Emig suggests that English compositionists should join with “allied arts” fields in the interdisciplinary study and practice of creative composing—in exploring the recursive, generative process of “selecting and ordering elements” (“Composing” 66) that is common across modalities. Compositionists seeking to gain insight into revision need not necessarily restrict their investigation to the processes of alphabetic writers; rather, compositionists might study how painters and sculptors revise ideas during the process of composing, considering how their visual revising strategies might be adapted to alphabetic writing.

Although Emig's monograph suggests the importance of studying composing across modalities, she never really offers a clear research agenda—a clear set of questions—that could guide this inquiry. Recognizing the (unavoidable) incompleteness
of her monograph, Emig notes that “almost every sentence contains or implies hypotheses upon which one could spend a lifetime in empirical research. Perhaps investigators other than the writer will find here materials for provocative questions and generative hypotheses about the composing process” (“Composing” 44). In this spirit, I offer three provocative questions that I think Emig propels us to ask:

- Can students and teachers transfer an understanding of composing in one modality to another modality?
- Is it possible to develop a model of the elements of the creative composing process that is generalizable across modalities?
- What kinds of self-sponsored composing (alphabetic, visual, aural, spatial) do students do outside of school? How might English teachers learn from and draw upon students' non-alphabetic self-sponsored composing activities?

These questions are perhaps even more pressing now than they were in 1971 when Emig published her study. Although Emig could assume that visual, aural, and alphabetic composing were separate though related activities, digital technologies increasingly enable students to compose texts that blend images, sounds, and alphabetic text. In an environment in which distinctions between alphabetic writing, art, design, and music are breaking down (New London Group; Manovich), it is important that we help students gain a global understanding of creative processes that is not tied to any specific modality—an understanding that they can use to help guide their composing using diverse alphabetic, audio, and visual materials.
Flower and Hayes (Scene Two)

Although Emig called for interdisciplinary collaboration in the study and teaching of composing across modalities, her *Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders* remains, after all, single-authored text. In contrast, Linda Flower (a compositionist) and John Hayes (a cognitive psychologist) actually enacted interdisciplinary collaboration in their research on writing as a creative problem-solving process. When Flower and Hayes discuss problem solving, they are generally referring to a goal-directed activity: “people engage in problem solving when they want to achieve a goal but don't know as yet what steps will achieve it” (“Cognition of Discovery” 22). Rejecting the notion that all problem-solving is simplistic or rote, Flower and Hayes argue in a 1980 article that the writer's problem “is never merely a given: it is an elaborate construction which the writer creates in the act of composing. . . . Even though a teacher gives 20 students the same assignment, the writers themselves create the problem they solve” (“Cognition of Discovery” 22-23). During the recursive creative process of defining or finding the problem, the writer may spend extensive time analyzing the rhetorical situation (audience, exigency) as well as formulating goals (for effecting readers, for creating a persona, for conveying meanings).

Arguing that research on writer's problem-finding can contribute to the development of a generalizable theory of creativity, Flower and Hayes state that “if we can describe how a person represents his own problem in the act of writing, we will be describing a part of what makes a writer creative” (“Cognition of Discovery” 30). In particular, Flower and Hayes seek to demonstrate that problem finding is a creative cognitive activity common to both alphabetic writing and fine art:
A recent long-range study of development of creative skill in fine art [Getzel and Csikszentmihalyi] showed some striking parallels between successful artists and our expert writers...In this experiment, the artists were given a studio equipped with materials and a collection of objects they might draw. The successful artists, like our expert writers, explored more of the materials before them and explored them in more depth, fingering, moving, touching, rearranging, and playing with alternatives, versus moving quickly to a rather conventional arrangement and sketch. Once drawing was begun, the artists' willingness to explore and reformulate the problem continued, often until the drawing was nearly completed. Similarly our successful writers continued to develop and alter their representation of the problem throughout the writing process. This important study of creativity in fine art suggested that problem-finding is a talent, a cognitive skill which can lead to creativity. The parallels between these two studies suggest that problem finding in both literature and art is related not only to success, but in some less well-defined way to 'creativity' itself. (“Cognition of Discovery” 30-31)

In this way, Flower and Hayes demonstrate that creativity in both alphabetic writing and visual art entails a willingness to intensively explore materials—to “rearrange” and “play with alternatives” (30-31).

An artist drawing a still life (like the ones in the above experiment) will create a more creative product if she takes the time to explore many possible ways she might represent and rearrange a series of objects. Similarly, a writer composing a research-based essay would be well advised to consider a wide variety of sources on a topic, exploring ways he might creatively transform and combine those sources in order to develop a more creative argument. As writers and artists engage in the composing process (as they transform and rearrange materials on paper, on screen on canvas), they may often find themselves redefining their problems, generating new ideas and imagining new goals (Flower and Hayes, “Cognition of Discovery,” 30-31).

By suggesting that problem finding is a generic process common to alphabetic writing and visual artistic production, Flower and Hayes implicitly challenge the common
notion that alphabetic writing and visual art are entirely separate fields. Although English composition instructors and visual studio art instructors teach students to compose very different kinds of products, they share a concern with teaching students to engage in composing as a recursive process of discovery—a process in which composers continuously redefine their “problem” as they intensively explore, transform, and rearrange materials (words, images, objects). If students could be taught a common vocabulary for understanding the creative processes of composing words and composing images, they might better be able to transfer their skills in problem finding from one modality to another.

**Kostelnick (Scene Three)**

Although Flower and Hayes positioned their work on the “Cognition of Discovery” in relation to creative problem-solving research in visual fine arts, they might also have positioned their research in relation to the creative problem-solving literature in design studies (Broadbent; Lawson; Cross). In a 1998 article on “Process Paradigms in Design and Composition,” Charles Kostelnick offers a detailed discussion of the affinities between cognitive research on writing processes and cognitive research on design processes (especially in the fields of architecture, industrial design, and design education). In comparing cognitive research in design studies and composition studies, Charles Kostelnick (like Flower and Hayes) aims to “lay the foundation for a cross-disciplinary theory of the creative act” (268). Synthesizing a wide variety of composition

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18 Indeed, John Hayes has more recently sought to draw connections between writing and design research. For an example, see Hayes and Nash.
and design research, Kostelnick proposes four shared principles that define the cognitive processes of writers and designers:

1) During the creative act writers and designers discover solutions to problems; the process itself enables them to find out what they want to communicate, visually or verbally. 2) The more consciously the writer/designer monitors the process, the greater the likelihood of a successful outcome. 3) Writing and designing are cyclic and dynamic rather than linear, with problem-defining and problem-solving recurring throughout the process. 4) Audience analysis figures prominently in problem definition, providing a springboard for creating reader or user-oriented texts and forms. (269)

In this way, Kostelnick confirms Flower and Hayes supposition that recursive problem finding is a central part of creativity in both alphabetic and visual-spatial composition. Moving beyond issues of recursivity and problem finding, Kostelnick also demonstrates that audience analysis and metacognitive awareness are central to the creative act of composing (words, images, objects, buildings).

Although Kostelnick’s 1988 article compellingly suggested that composition and design scholars shared interests “an array of cross-disciplinary issues central to the creative act” (268), his article did not inspire widespread collaboration between the fields.19 Yet, in the intervening years, composition and literacy educators have shown increasing interest in incorporating the teaching and study of design into their work. In 1996, the New London Group produced an influential manifesto reimagining literacy

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19 Although Kostelnick does explicitly call for writers and designers to work together to study creativity, he dedicates much of his article to outlining the limitations of cognitive approaches in both writing and design studies. In particular, Kostelnick notes that many design practitioners had come to question the usefulness of generalizable cognitive composing models for the diverse tasks and contexts that they faced. Ultimately, Kostelnick argues that the quest of cognitive design researchers “to define the process model proved to be self-defeating—a mistake that writing theorists should be wary of repeating” (276). Although I largely agree with Kostelnick’s critique of unitary process models in writing and design, I worry that his emphasis on learning from the failures of cognitive design process research might inadvertently deaden possibilities for collaboration between the fields.
(conventionally defined as alphabetic reading and writing) as a design process in which people actively remake the available linguistic, audio, visual, spatial, gestural, and multimodal designs provided by the culture. In the wake of the New London Group's articulation of literacy as design, numerous compositionists have suggested that we reimagine composition (at least in part) as the teaching of a design process (George; Kress; Wysocki). Nevertheless, if we in composition were to try to claim to be the primary experts on teaching design in the university, we would understandably experience strong resistance from scholar-teachers in design fields. Similarly, if designers were to suggest that they should take primary responsibility for studying and teaching the process of producing alphabetic text, we compositionists would likely protest. It is clear that no single field can (or should) take ownership of pedagogy and scholarship of multimodal composing. Rather, we need to find a common vocabulary—and indeed a common history—that can unite composition and design scholars in collaboratively investigating and teaching digital multimodal composing.

Although composition and design scholars have historically studied widely disparate kinds of texts (alphabetic, visual, spatial, tactile), we have shared an interest in articulating creative problem-solving processes that travel across modalities. In particular, both writing process and design process scholars have sought to answer the following questions about the creative process of composing:

- How do composers develop an understanding of audiences/users and create goals for affecting their audiences/users? How might we teach composers to consider issues of audience?
• What generalizable recursive processes (invention, planning, problem-finding, revision, drafting) are common across modalities of composing?
• How does the process of composing lead to creative discovery?
• What strategies can composers use to invent/generate and evaluate/revise their ideas?
• How do composers develop a metacognitive awareness of their own processes? How might teachers promote this metacognitive awareness?

By articulating a common set of questions/concerns across writing and design process research, I do not mean to suggest that there are not differences within and among writing and design process approaches. Although we share a heritage of common areas of inquiry, we do not necessarily share common answers. And this is a good thing! After all, the point of interdisciplinary collaboration is to expand perspectives—to develop new knowledge in the gaps between disciplines. Yet, for interdisciplinary collaboration to be successful, we have to start from a position of openness and shared concerns.\(^2\)

\[\text{Translation (Act Two)}\]

\[\text{Flower and Hayes (Scene One)}\]

In addition to demonstrating that alphabetic writing shares similarities to other forms of composing, Flower Hayes also productively articulate how the act of alphabetic

\(^2\) Although I think that the developing a set of shared concerns can be an important starting point for developing interdisciplinary collaborations, I certainly do not mean to suggest that interdisciplinary collaboration is an easy process. In addition to recognizing shared concerns, interdisciplinary collaborators may also need to work to transform the social and material structures of the modern university—a monumental task indeed.
writing entails *multimodal thinking*—how writers do not think in words alone. In particular, Flower and Hayes focus attention on the powerful role of mental imagery in writer's thinking processes.

Describing the process of planning in which writers generate ideas, create rhetorical goals, and develop organizational schemes, Flower and Hayes assert in a 1981 article that “the information generated in planning may be represented in a variety of symbol systems, such as imagery or kinetic sensations” ("Cognitive Process," 373). If writing about a remembered place, the writer might perceive sensory (auditory, visual, olfactory) images of that place. Instead of setting a rhetorical goal in words, the writer might picture an audience member and imagine how he or she would react to the writing. The writer might imagine the organization of the piece in terms of a visual shape rather than in terms of a verbal outline. Even when writers are planning verbally, they are not necessarily thinking in prose-like sentences; “a whole network of ideas might be represented by a single word” ("Cognitive Process" 373).

Seeking to emphasize the fact that writers do not think in words alone, Flower and Hayes define the drafting of alphabetic text as an act of translation. In the Flower and Hayes model, translating refers to

> the process of putting ideas into visible language. We have chosen the term translate for this process over other terms such as transcribe or write in order to emphasize the peculiar qualities of this task....Trying to capture the

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21 In cognitive terms, a mental image is a nonverbal sensory perception “represented and processed in the absence of external perceptual stimulus” (Anderson 106). Although mental images are often visual, it is also possible to have auditory, tactile, gustatory or olfactory images as well (Anderson; Paivio; Kosslyn). When we remember what a place looks like, when we imagine what something we are cooking will taste like, when we remember the sound of the ocean, when we imagine a circle, we are experiencing mental imagery. Mental images are often more abstract and less vivid than immediate sensory perceptions; nevertheless, they are powerful tools for thinking.
movement of a deer on ice in language is clearly a kind of translation. Even when the planning process represents one’s thoughts in words, that representation is unlikely to be in the elaborate syntax of written English. So the writer’s task is to translate a meaning. (“Cognitive Process” 373)

Although Flower and Hayes recognize that translating from multimodal internal representations to alphabetic external representations is a challenging activity, they also tend to assume that it is a given of the writing process—an unavoidable constraint. Responding to an alphabetic writing prompt in a time-limited laboratory setting, Flower and Hayes' research subjects were given neither the time nor the means to create external representations of knowledge in any medium but alphabetic text (or simple visual symbols such as arrows and circles).

Yet, when we move from the research lab of 1980s to the contemporary composition class of today, writers need not necessarily be constrained to producing only alphabetic external representations of knowledge. Many contemporary composition teachers (though certainly not all) can offer students both the time and the means to create external representations of knowledge in a variety of modalities. Rather than seeing translation as a reductive process of moving from multimodal mind to alphabetic page, we can instead reimagine translation as a dynamic process of moving between internal multimodal representations of knowledge (in the mind) and external multimodal representation (on the computer or the page).

At the very least, Flower and Hayes' theory suggests the value in having students complete multimodal activities as part of the process of planning alphabetic writing. If we restrict students to alphabetic planning activities (for generating ideas, for defining rhetorical purpose, for analyzing audience), we may be unduly limiting their ability to
think deeply about their rhetorical tasks. For example, students might think about their audience in richly complex mental imagery, but have trouble defining their audience in words. If we give students the opportunity to create a visual representation of their audiences (using found images or created images), we may be able to gain a much richer sense of their rhetorical thinking than if we limited them to verbal audience analysis alone. Similarly, we might be able to enable students to think beyond the five-paragraph-essay if we let them imagine the organization of their writing in visual terms, creating a storyboard instead of a conventional outline. With Flower and Hayes' translation theory in mind, it is possible to imagine teaching writing as a multimodal thinking process not just an alphabetic product.

Even more radically, Flower and Hayes' work can lead us to question the limitations of alphabetic writing as a modality of communication. In a lesser-known 1984 article on “Images, Plans and Prose,” Flower and Hayes assert that “as writers compose they create multiple representations of meaning. Some of these representations, such as an imagistic one, will be better at expressing certain kinds of meaning than prose would be, and some will be more difficult to translate into prose than others” (122). Questioning the notion that alphabetic text is always the best way to express ideas, Flower and Hayes demonstrate that “writers must often struggle to capture, in words, information that would better be expressed in other ways” (“Images” 132).

Providing an example of a rhetorical purpose that cannot be met with words alone, Flower and Hayes offer a detailed discussion of field guides for bird identification in which:
the text is clearly secondary to the pictures. And even then the major guides—such as the Audobon, Golden, and Putnam Guides—are divided regarding which is better: a photograph that supplies a context or an artist's rendering that more clearly identifies details and color....The limitations of prose become obvious, however, when these writers try to capture another critical feature of the bird—its song. You know you are in trouble when the text tells you that the 'distinctive call, 4 to 9 high pitched boos slowing at the end, is the best means of identification'...Robbins et al., in fact, try to supplement words with the visual representation of a sonogram: an inch-long graph with squiggles, dots and smudged bars. Any port in a storm. (“Images” 132)

In sharing this tale of the incredible challenge of representing bird song in print, Flower and Hayes ultimately aim to point out that alphabetic text is not necessarily the best modality for representing all kinds of knowledge. Although in 1984 (when Flower and Hayes published their article), there was no clear alternative to print-based field guides, bird-watchers today can purchase a portable “birdPod” which provides ready access to images and sound samples of huge quantities of birds (birdPod). In this way, we can see that contemporary portable digital technologies increasingly offer composers more ways of expressing knowledge when alphabetic text falters.22

Although it may not be very common for composition students to struggle to represent bird songs in their writing, it is much more common for students to struggle to write analytically about pieces of music. Certainly, students can easily translate lyrics to alphabetic text, but it is much harder to translate pitch, rhythm, tone, and so forth. In order to help an audience follow their analysis of a musical piece, students might compose a digital audio file instead of an alphabetic paper—interspersing audio samples from the piece of music with their own spoken commentary. By providing students with

22 I should note for the record that I am not a birdwatcher myself nor have I extensively reviewed the scholarly literature on the use of bird field guides. I recognize that there may be important reasons why some birdwatchers would prefer the conventional print field guide over (or in addition to) the digital “birdPod.”
the option to compose using media other than print, we may greatly proliferate the kinds of ideas they can express in their analytical work.

Ultimately, if some information might “better be expressed in other ways” than words (Flower and Hayes, “Images,” 132), it makes sense to reimagine composition as a course that teaches students to discover—to choose—the modality that best helps them express what they want to say. Instead of requiring students to move directly from multimodal mind to alphabetic page, we could instead teach students to translate ideas about a topic in multiple ways: gathering or creating visual images, drafting words, recording speech, gathering or creating music and atmospheric sounds. Once students had created a variety of external representations of knowledge in a variety of modalities, we could then ask them to consider which modalities would best help them achieve their rhetorical goals: Could they easily translate their images and sounds into alphabetic text or would too much be lost? Could their images stand alone without words to explain them? Should they consider combining words, images, and sounds using multimedia software (PowerPoint, Flash, iMovie)? Which modalities would be most persuasive to their particular audience? Which modalities would enable them create the persona they are attempting to achieve? Rather than requiring that students pursue the act of translation with the ultimate goal of producing an alphabetic text, we could instead teach students to engage in multimodal translation with the ultimate goal of being able to make an informed rhetorical choice about which modalities best enable them to persuasively present their thoughts to a specific audience.23

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23 In discussing the need to teach students to consider the unique affordances of the various modalities they use to compose, I am indebted to the work of Kress and Van Leeuwen.
Perl and Sommers (Scene Two)

Although Flower and Hayes offer the most extended analysis of the role of multimodal thinking in the writing process, other cognitive compositionists (Perl; Sommers) also highlight the ways in which writers draw on nonverbal mental imagery in inventing and revising their work. For instance, Sondra Perl argues in her article, “Understanding Composing,” that writing researchers must pay attention to those aspects of the composing process that are “not so easy to document” because they “cannot immediately be identified with words” (364). Seeking to explain “what happens when writers pause and seem to listen to or otherwise react to what is inside of them” (365), Perl turns to theory of felt sense outlined by Eugene Gendlin—a psychologist and philosopher at the University of Chicago. Explaining the central role of multimodal felt sense in writer’s invention, Perl notes that “when writers are given a topic, the topic itself evokes a felt sense in them. The topic calls forth images, words, ideas, and vague fuzzy feelings. . . When writers pause, they are looking to felt experience, and waiting for an image, a word, or a phrase to emerge that captures the sense they embody” (365). In this way, Perl (like Flower and Hayes) suggests that writing is a kind of translation—a movement from the multimodal world of the mind (where images, words, and kinesthetic sensation mingle) to the alphabetic space of the page (in which conventionally only words appear).

In contrast to Perl’s emphasis on the role of multimodal thinking in invention, Nancy Sommers focuses on the role of multimodal thinking in revision. In a classic study of Revision Strategies of Student Writers and Experienced Writers, Sommers notes that
students tend to “understand the revision process as a rewording activity” (381). In focusing on deleting unnecessary words or choosing better words, students ultimately think of revision as an attempt to clean up the redundancy and imprecision of speech (381-383). In contrast, experienced writers move beyond an understanding of revision as rewording to a broader understanding of revision as process of reordering, adding to, and transforming ideas. In outlining this more global version of revision, experienced writers often talk in visual-spatial terms:

the experienced writers describe their primary objective when revising as finding the form or shape of their argument. Although the metaphors vary, the experienced writers often use structural expressions such as 'finding a framework,' 'a pattern,' or 'a design' for their argument. (Sommers 384).

In this way, Sommers suggests that visual-spatial thinking (conceiving of writing as a shape or structure) can be a useful way of moving beyond rewording to considering more global changes of organization and argument. Although Sommers asserts that experienced writers' visual-spatial thinking is a largely internal mental process, it is possible to imagine course activities that might literalize the notion of conceptualizing writing as a shape or pattern. In order to get students past their habit of reading over their text looking for words to delete or change, we could ask students to translate their text into a spatial image—to create an external representation of their text which is not tied to words alone. By translating their texts into images, students might better be able to radically revise—radically *resee*—their alphabetic writing.

In many ways, the cognitivist exploration of writing as a multimodal thinking process shares affinities to the expressivist discussion of writing as multisensory embodied art. Yet, in contrast to the expressivist focus on how writers draw on individual
multisensory experience in inventing and revising personal essays, the cognitivists emphasize that even when writers are not writing about their personal experiences they are still thinking in multimodal ways. When writing a persuasive essay, a writer may create a mental image of the audience and how he or she wants to affect them. When writing an academic analytical essay, the writer may imagine the structure of that essay in terms of a series of visual shapes. When writing technical descriptions or instructions, a writer may struggle to translate internal imagistic knowledge into externalized alphabetic text. Rejecting the notion that multimodal thinking is restricted to writing about embodied individual experience, the cognitivists remind us that all writing entails multimodal thinking processes—that the teaching and study of writing can never truly be limited to words alone.

Learning (Act Three)

Emig (Scene One)

At first glance, Janet Emig's essay on “Writing as Mode of Learning” would seem an odd place to go looking for fodder for multimodal theories of learning and composing. After all, Emig's central claim in this essay is that writing is a better mode of learning than speech—a claim that many multimodal compositionists (including myself) would challenge. Yet, when we look closely at Emig's work, we can see that the valorization of writing over speech is not the only story she has to tell. She also productively defines writing as a multimodal learning process and leaves open the possibility that other forms of composing (such as filmmaking) might be equally valuable learning tools.
Although Emig spends much time distinguishing between writing and speaking (122-124), she declines to articulate the differences between “writing and all other forms of composing, such as composing a painting, a symphony, or a dance, a film, a building” (122). Indeed, when we look closely at the reasons why Emig asserts that writing is a unique mode of learning, we can see that most of her claims could potentially apply to other forms of composing as well. For example, Emig emphasizes that writing (unlike unrecorded speech) results in the creation of a product that can be reviewed and revised:

A unique form of feedback, as well as reinforcement, exists with writing, because information from the process is immediately and visibly available as that portion of the product already written. The importance for learning of a product in a familiar and available medium for immediate, literal (that is, visual) re-scanning and review cannot perhaps be overstated. (125)

Although alphabetic writing may have been the most “familiar and available” way of creating a visible (immediately reviewable) product of thinking in 1978, students in the contemporary digital age have many more options for creating visible products. As Patricia Dunn argues, “twenty years after Emig's celebration of writing for its ease of being accessed and analyzed, speech-to-text technology makes 'speaking' look more like 'writing’” (Talking, Sketching 32). Furthermore, I would add that digital audio recording and editing can also make spoken words available for immediate review and revision—a point I discussed extensively in the last chapter's analysis of voice. And of course, digital cameras and digital image composing software also make it much easier for students to create imagistic products that are available for immediate rescanning.

In addition to arguing that writing is valuable because it results in the creation of a reviewable product, Emig draws on the work of Jerome Bruner to assert that writing is a
profundely “multirepresenational” (125) mode of learning because it simultaneously engages verbal, visual, and kinesthetic ways of knowing:

Jerome Bruner...posits three major ways we represent and deal with actuality: (1) enactive—we learn “by doing”; (2) iconic—we learn “by depiction in an image”; and (3) representational or symbolic—we learn “by restatement in words.” To overstate the matter, in enactive learning, the hand predominates; in iconic, the eye; and in symbolic, the brain. What is striking about writing as a process is that, by its very nature, all three ways of dealing with actuality are simultaneously or almost simultaneously deployed. That is, the symbolic transformation of experience through the specific symbol system of verbal language is shaped into an icon (the graphic product) by the enactive hand. (124)

Ultimately, Emig suggests that people learn best when they represent and transform their knowledge using multiple ways of knowing (verbal, imagistic, kinesthetic). She then claims that writing is multirepresenational because it involves the transformation of words in the mind to visual letters on the page through the kinesthetic activity of handwriting.

At this point, it becomes clear why Emig avoided drawing distinctions between writing-to-learn and other forms of composing-to-learn. Indeed, it would be all too easy to argue that the act of making a film (or in the contemporary moment, making a video) is in fact a more profoundly multirepresentational activity than alphabetic writing. After all, alphabetic writing only nominally involves the creation of images (26 conventional letter forms in English). In making a film, a student would still draw on verbal languaging processes (writing a script, writing title slides, speaking narration, interviewing people). Yet, the student filmmaker would also (of course) be able to represent his or her knowledge by capturing and editing a wide array of images. Finally, the student
filmmaker could engage kinesthetic ways of knowing by shooting footage and/or performing in front of the camera.

Although compositionists usually invoke Emig to suggest the importance of alphabetic writing to learn, it is clear that we could just as easily cite her to support the usefulness of video-to-learn. Instead of attempting to argue for the superiority of one mode of composing over another, we should instead engage colleagues throughout the university in conversation about the available modalities of composing they might use to help students learn—presenting alphabetic writing as one option among many.

**Dunn and Company (Scene Two)**

As we seek to engage in cross disciplinary conversations about multimodal composing to learn, we can also turn to the work of more contemporary composition and English education scholars who have been critically engaging with cognitive scholarship on learning differences. In particular, several compositionists and English educators (Dunn; Smagorinsky; Hecker and Klein) have investigated the implications of Howard Gardner's theory of multiple intelligences for the multimodal teaching of writing. Rejecting conventional notions of intelligence as a single score based largely on mathematical-logical and linguistic problem-solving, Gardner proposes that people have multiple intelligences (linguistic, logical-mathematical, visual-spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, musical, intrapersonal, interpersonal, naturalist)—that each person has a unique profile of strengths and limitations that extend well beyond the linguistic. In the wake of these findings, compositionists and English educators have sought to find ways to teach writing
and reading that enable students to draw upon their visual-spatial, bodily kinesthetic, linguistic, and musical intelligences.

In addition to drawing on Gardner, compositionists and English educators have also been influenced by cognitive scholarship on learning styles that demonstrates that students have varying preferences and strengths for learning through particular modalities (Dunn and Dunn). Some students may learn best through viewing and composing images; some students may learn best through speaking and listening; some may learn best through reading and writing; some may learn best through watching and participating in kinesthetic activities; some may learn best through a combination of these approaches. Because students have differing strengths in modalities for learning, it makes sense to teach the linguistic acts of reading and writing in ways that allow students to make at least some use of visual/imagistic, aural, and kinesthetic ways of knowing. The use of visual, aural, and kinesthetic strategies for reading and writing may be especially helpful for students who have been diagnosed with reading and writing-based learning disabilities (Dunn “Learning”; Bertin and Perlman; Bachor and Crealock). Although there are great differences among research on multiple intelligences, learning styles, and learning disabilities, these approaches are united in suggesting that we can better teach reading and writing to a cognitively diverse student body if we teach students to deploy multimodal strategies to help them invent and organize ideas for writing, to consider options for revising writing, and to respond to alphabetic texts that they read.

Before offering a close reading of multimodal composition pedagogies that attend to cognitive difference, I want to take a moment to acknowledge that research on cognitive differences has a troubling history both within composition and outside it.
When we start talking about cognitive differences, it is easy to fall into pernicious cultural and ableist stereotyping. After all, the very notion of mapping intelligence on a bell curve played an integral role in reinforcing racist, classist, sexist, and ableist practices of eugenics (Davis).

In a penetrating critique of cognitive reductionism in composition studies, Mike Rose has argued that much early research on basic writing tended to discuss cognitive differences in highly simplistic ways that reinforced race and class biases, “asserting that student writers from particular communities can't reason logically or analytically, that the perceptual processes of these students are more dependent on context than the processes of white middle class students” (Rose 295). Yet, in calling for an end to cognitive reductionism, Rose does not argue that compositionists abandon research on cognitive difference but rather that they avoid discussing cognitive difference in overly simplistic ways. For Rose, cognitive reductionism is problematic because it

ends up leveling rather than elaborating individual differences in cognition. At best, people are placed along slots on a single continuum; at words they are split into mutually exclusive camps—with one camp clearly having cognitive and social privilege over the other. The complexity of cognition—its astounding glides and its blunderous missteps as well—is narrowed, and the rich variability that exists in any social setting is ignored or reduced. (Rose 294).

Drawing on the work of Gardner and other cognitive and educational psychologists, Rose ultimately suggests that compositionists can find ways to attend to the rich diversity in individuals’ cognitive processes without resorting to reductionist labeling of social groups as being part of one cognitive camp or another. Indeed, if we ignore issues of cognitive difference entirely, we risk marginalizing a wide variety of students whose strengths lie in nonverbal (visual-spatial, musical, kinesthetic) ways of knowing.
In considering multimodal composition pedagogies that respond to research on cognitive differences, I will focus especially on Patricia Dunn's *Talking, Sketching, Moving* (2001) as it offers perhaps the most comprehensive treatment of the subject. Drawing on diverse cognitive research on multiple intelligences (Gardner), learning styles (Dunn and Dunn), and learning disabilities (Bertin and Perlman), Dunn argues that we all have differing ways of knowing—diverse strengths and limitations in our ability to think through written words, spoken words, music, images, 3-D objects, and kinesthetic activities. Although Dunn believes that composition ultimately should be focused on teaching students to produce alphabetic writing, she nevertheless suggests that aural, visual, kinesthetic, and spatial approaches can challenge teachers and students alike to think beyond text-based theory and practice and help writers generate and reconceptualize ideas. It can help them gain a metacognitive distance on their work so far, or see it from a different perspective. If those with talents other than linguistic ones can take advantage of what they do well, if they can find a way to use their spatial or physical or musical or artistic interests in their writing habits, they may like writing more and be better at it. If already-good writers are expected to work outside their linguistic comfort zone, to reconceive their project in alternate representations, the challenge of doing so may give them insights, approaches, or metaphors that will inform their work on more sophisticated levels.

On the one hand, Dunn maintains that multimodal (visual-spatial, kinesthetic and aural) invention and revision activities can help students who struggle with the written language to tap into other modalities of thinking in which they are stronger. On the other hand, Dunn also suggests that students who are more comfortable using written language for invention and revision may still benefit from multimodal activities which ask them to think about writing in new ways—which push them beyond the formulas for “good writing” they have already mastered. Ultimately, Dunn productively argues that a multimodal pedagogy initially designed to accommodate learning differences (including
but not limited to learning disabilities) may ultimately end up improving writing instruction for all students.

Arguing that global revision often entails visual-spatial thinking, Dunn advocates that students can gain perspective on their drafts by sketching “the shape of their ideas, using no words or as few words as possible” (65). Drawing on her own teaching experiences (as well as on Eric Hobson's work), Dunn suggests numerous ways students might sketch their ideas: drawing a metaphoric representation of a key concept they are trying to define in their paper; representing the structure of their paper as a storyboard with a number of frames that can be rearranged; creating a diagram or graph representing relationships among sections of their paper; drawing an image that represents the challenges they feel they are facing (such as being overloaded by information). Through the process of drawing these sketches and discussing them with peers and the teachers, Dunn’s students are able to move beyond issues of rewording to consider more global revisions such as including new ideas, narrowing a topic, or reorganizing structure. Refusing to accede to the notion that image creation is necessarily a supplement to or replacement for alphabetic writing, Dunn productively demonstrates that visual sketching (on pen and paper) can be a powerful way of helping students learn to make global revisions to their alphabetic texts.

Although I agree with Dunn that pen-and-paper sketching can be a powerful technique for inventing and revising alphabetic text, I also see that it has some limitations. If we ask students to draw a metaphoric representation of a concept in their paper or to draw a storyboard of the organization of the paper, they could easily become blocked because they could not think of appropriate visual images or because they could
not figure out how to draw the images they saw in their minds. Digital photography could be a way of ameliorating both of these potential problems. Students who are highly verbal learners—accustomed to thinking in words—might generate visual representations by searching for and modifying images on the web. If students were having trouble thinking of images to represent their papers, they could type keywords from their papers into an image search engine and comb through the results until they found images that inspired them (that made them see their work in a new way). Similarly, if students already had a clear mental image in mind but could not figure out how to draw it, they could search for images on the web that represented their visual thoughts. Once students had found images on the web, they could then download these images into an image editor or into presentation software and manipulate them (putting images in sequence, adding words, adding filters, cropping out sections, combining images). Although image searching would likely appeal to linguistic learners (because it would allow them to use words to generate images), physically taking photographs would likely resonate with more kinesthetic learners for whom movement is a powerful way of knowing. Rather than having students find images on the web, we could give students a camera and tell them they had 15 minutes to go out and take a picture that metaphorically represented the structure of their paper (or an idea in their paper); students would then have to come back and explain why they shot the images they did.

Although I think digital photography offers affordances that drawing does not, I also recognize that it introduces new constraints and difficulties. In some cases, students might find that a bare-bones, abstract sketch is actually more conceptually helpful for thinking about structure than a detailed photograph. Rather than seeking to make a case
for either drawing or digital photography, I would instead suggest that we should give students the opportunity to use a wide variety of technologies to create visual representations of their alphabetic drafts—to help students discover the visual tools that best help them think globally about revision. Expanding Dunn's call for multiple ways of knowing (visual, aural, kinesthetic), I suggest that we should also provide students with options to use multiple *technologies of knowing*.

In addition to discussing visual strategies for inventing and organizing ideas, Dunn also asserts the value of having students talk about their work in progress, “verbalizing their plans for or problems with, an upcoming writing project” (Dunn 20). In particular, Dunn suggests that students use voice mail or tape recorders to create out-of-class journals to respond to reading and to discuss their plans for writing. Relating the case of a student who discovered ideas for a paper in the process of speaking a voicemail message, Dunn suggests that oral journals offer a form of speaking to learn akin to more conventional writing to learn pedagogies: “the act of writing can trigger thoughts or connections we didn't have, or didn't know we had, before we started our written journal entry. This shaping at the point of utterance triggering can happen in oral journals” (Dunn 86). Although voicemail and tape recorders may have been among the best technologies for oral journals in late 1990s, we can now present students with other more flexible options. Instead of calling a teacher's voicemail machine, a student can record an audio journal on a computer (using an inexpensive internal or external microphone) and then upload the oral journal to a course website. This way, the students would have easy access to their own oral journals and they would be able to share their oral journal with their peers. Although Dunn’s suggestion of using voicemail for audio journals may
Although Dunn largely emphasizes the use of visual and aural composing activities as a way of engaging students in producing and responding to alphabetic text, I think the implications of her argument are actually more radical. After all, if we accept the premise that people have diverse strengths in ways of knowing (alphabetic, aural, visual), then we should be teaching students to create multimodal texts that can be accessible and persuasive to cognitively diverse audiences. Rather than teaching students to create the singular alphabetic text, we might instead teach them to create flexible collections of texts that enable audience members to choose the modalities that would best help them learn. In seeking to convey an argument or a piece of information, students might create a print text, an audio text, a video text (with captions), and a kinesthetic activity. Rather than limiting students to being the recipients of multimodal pedagogies, we might also engage students in actively creating accessible multimodal texts themselves.

Reprise

Rather than looking at cognitive composition solely as a movement that solidified composition’s disciplinary expertise in alphabetic writing processes, we also can reclaim cognitive composition studies as a movement that engaged in the interdisciplinary

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24 Although I focus here on Dunn’s suggestions for visual and aural strategies for inventing and revising alphabetic writing, I should note that Dunn also outline numerous kinesthetic learning activities which could be useful for students.
25 In teaching students to compose flexible, accessible texts, we might consider drawing upon theories of universal design. For a useful discussion of the application of universal design to composition pedagogy, see Dolmage.
investigation of multimodal creative thinking processes in multiple domains (writing, art, design). Although digital multimodal composing provides new exigency for collaboration across disciplinary boundaries, we must remember that compositionists have long been exploring interdisciplinary connections between alphabetic, audio, and visual composing (even before the rise of the digital computer).

As we look back at cognitive composition scholarship (as well as at more recent cognitive-inflected work), I suggest that we especially pay attention to the following five refrains:

Refrain #1: Alphabetic writing entails a multimodal thinking process

It is a common truism among compositionists that the teaching of writing entails the teaching of thinking. Yet, we often have a tendency of emphasize thinking as a wholly linguistic process—to view thinking as solely a kind of inner speech (Bruffee; Bizzell). When we look back at our field’s foundational research on writing and cognition, however, we can be reminded that alphabetic writing entails a profoundly multimodal thinking process—that writers often conceptualize their work through nonalphabetic means (visual imagery, audio imagery, kinesthetic feelings). If we limit students to solely alphabetic means of invention and revision, we will unnecessarily constrain their ability to think intensively and complexly about their work.

Refrain #2: We can analyze composing using terminology that is not modality-specific.

In describing the composing process, cognitivists offer numerous broad analytical terms that can potentially apply to multiple forms of composing: selecting, ordering,
transforming, problem-finding, exploring, planning, translating, and revising. In the contemporary moment in which people are increasingly composing in modalities beyond the alphabetic, it is important that we teach students general heuristics for composing that can help them gain metacognitive awareness of the similarities involved in composing words, images, sounds, and movement.

**Refrain #3: Multimodal writing activities need not necessarily be digital.**

Although digital technologies offer particularly strong affordances for multimodal composing, we should remember that digital technologies are not always necessary (or even always preferable) for multimodal composing pedagogy. Such activities as sketching on paper and making embodied movements can have great heuristic value for invention and revision. We should be careful to define multimodal composing pedagogy in broad terms that can apply across computer-based and traditional classrooms.

**Refrain #4: We should recognize the limitations of alphabetic text as a modality of communication**

Although alphabetic text is a powerful modality of communication, it cannot adequately convey all of the ideas composers might wish to express; at times, a writer may struggle to express in alphabetic words an idea that might better be expressed in another modality or combination of modalities (Flower and Hayes, “Images”; Kress and Van Leeuwen). Thus, rather than giving assignments that specifically require students to compose with only one modality (alphabetic text or otherwise), we might instead design assignments that help students make reflective, critical choices about which modalities of communication will best help them achieve their rhetorical goals.
Refrain #5: We should embrace multiple forms of composing to learn.

Learning is a profoundly multimodal process, involving a combination of verbal, visual, and kinesthetic ways of knowing (among others). Although alphabetic writing can be a powerful mode of learning, we should be careful to consider how other forms of composing (video, audio, etc.) might also help students learn in multimodal ways. Indeed, we should remember that each individual person has unique strengths and limitations for learning through differing modalities. Thus, we should design flexible multimodal pedagogies that allow students to exercise some choice in the modalities they use to compose, recognizing that what works for one student might not work for another.
In the last two chapters (Self and Mind), I focused on elucidating the ways in which expressivists and cognitivists productively articulated writing as a multimodal composing process that shares affinities with other kinds of composing (visual, aural, spatial etc.). Although I have argued for the value of revisiting expressivist and cognitivist approaches (from the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s), I also am conscious that both expressivists and cognitivists evidenced a problematic tendency to focus almost exclusively on the individual, rather than the social, aspects of composing. For example in the 1960s, 1970s, and early 1980s, expressivists tended to place so much emphasis on the discovery of personal authentic voice that they elided the role of social context in shaping composing (Berlin; Bowden; Faigley; Miller). Similarly, cognitivists in the 1970s and early 1980s tended to focus so strongly on elucidating composing as an individual mental process that they largely ignored the ways in which knowledge was socially constructed at least in part through language (Berlin; Bizzell). Focusing almost wholly on how students might use composing to pursue individual personal goals, expressivists and cognitivists often neglected to explore how compositionists might teach students to argue persuasively for social change in public forums—to consider how we
might engage students in practicing the rhetorical arts in support of democratic political participation.

Although expressivism and cognitivism played an important role in defining the pedagogical and scholarly agenda of composition studies in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, this period in composition history also witnessed the development of social (or transactional) approaches to composing. For example, in seeking to revive classical rhetoric as a model of composition pedagogy, scholars such as Edward Corbett, Richard Hughes, Albert Duhamel, and Margaret McDowell argued that composing was a social act in which writers and audiences collaboratively worked to arrive at probable truths about “the basic ethical and political decisions that affect the safety of us all” (Berlin, *Rhetoric and Reality*, 15).

Although 1960s and 1970s proponents of classical rhetoric did usefully define composing as a social interactive process of constructing probable truths about social/political questions, they still tended to elide issues of power and ideology—to ignore, for example, the way in which “democracy” in Ancient Athens was a system that depended upon the marginalization of women, slaves, and people with disabilities (Glenn; Welch; Brueggemann). In contrast, many proponents of social-epistemic rhetoric in the 1970s and 1980s (Bizzell; Berlin; Berthoff; Shor) emphasized “the ways in which rhetoric can privilege some at the expense of others, according the chosen few an unequal share of power, perquisites, and material benefits” (Berlin, *Rhetoric and Ideology*, 490).

Whereas proponents of classical rhetoric tended to see their work as teaching students rhetorical skills to enable them to participate in an existing egalitarian democratic system, social-epistemic rhetoricians tended to emphasize the importance of teaching students...
how to analyze critically and transform the unjust power relations which hindered the ability of all people to participate equally in the democratic process.

Although composition historians and theoretical mapmakers have explored the ways in which proponents of classical rhetoric and social-epistemic rhetoric transformed the study and teaching of writing (Berlin; Connors, Ede, and Lunsford), they have not articulated the ways in which classical rhetoric revivalists and social-epistemic rhetoricians also sought to develop multimodal approaches to composition pedagogy that united the teaching of spoken, alphabetic, and multimedia discourse (Berthoff; Corbett; Corder; Mahony; Shor).

In seeking to connect composition pedagogy and democratic political participation, proponents of classical rhetoric and social-epistemic rhetoric have long been concerned with the ways in which new media forms (particularly television) appeared to be challenging the hegemony of print as the central form of public political discourse. Although classical rhetoric revivalists and social-epistemic rhetoricians were quite critical of the ways in which new media (such as television) were influencing political discourse, they also recognized that compositionists would need to take new media seriously if they were to fulfill their goal of preparing students to participate in and/or transform the democratic process (Shor; Corbett; Corder). For example, Edward Corbett frequently argued that classical rhetorical principles could help students learn both how to analyze and how to produce electronic forms of discourse. Similarly, Ira Shor advocated (in his 1980 Critical Teaching and Everyday Life) that students compose multimodal texts (such as video plays) as a way of analyzing and transforming the oppressive power structures operant in their lives. In looking back at the work of Corbett
and Shor (among others), we can be reminded that social approaches to composition were never solely about words alone—that compositionists have long sought to prepare students to participate critically in democracy by both analyzing and producing multimedia texts.

In addition to arguing for the importance of attending to multimedia texts in composition courses, proponents of classical and social-epistemic rhetoric also sought to (re)integrate the teaching of speech into the composition classroom. For example, in applying classical rhetorical theories of oratory to 1960s composition pedagogy, Corbett ultimately aimed to challenge the divide that separated the teaching of writing from the teaching of speaking—to argue that a revival of classical rhetoric could form the basis for a pedagogy that united the teaching of persuasive spoken and alphabetic discourse. Similarly, in seeking to apply the work of Paulo Freire to the U.S composition classroom, Ira Shor was conscious that he was drawing on a critical pedagogical tradition that emphasized *spoken dialogue* as one of the primary ways that people could come to name and collaboratively seek to transform the world. Seeking to destabilize the academic binary that privileged linear print over collaborative spoken dialogue, Shor advocated that students and teachers engage in hybrid forms of composing (collaborative dictation, talking books) which productively blurred the boundaries between speaking and writing. Although both Corbett and Shor emphasized different forms of speaking in their pedagogy (oratory vs. dialogue), they shared a commitment to articulating speaking and writing as deeply intertwined social/political activities.
Liner Notes

I offer here a selective, two disc compilation of social approaches to multimodal composition pedagogy (along with a concluding reprise).

On Disc One (“Classical”), I listen closely to Edward Corbett’s attempts to revive classical rhetoric pedagogy in the televisual age, arguing that Corbett productively defines classical rhetoric as a living tradition that must be adapted to account for shifts in communication technologies. In particular, I suggest that Corbett’s work can help us consider how classical theories of audience, ethos, and pathos might usefully form the basis of a composition pedagogy that intertwines the teaching of speaking, alphabetic writing, and multimedia production.

On Disc Two (“Critical”), I riff on the early work of Ira Shor and Paulo Freire, elucidating ways that critical teachers can engage students in multimodal composing in order to enable them to come to critically analyze and attempt to transform oppressive social structures. I pay particular attention to Shor’s provocative assertion that students can best learn to critique the ideological implications of media texts if they have experience producing multimodal media texts themselves. I conclude by considering how Shor’s 1970s experiments in critical media production pedagogy might be usefully adapted to contemporary digital classrooms.
In discussing the history of composition in the 1960s and 1970s, composition historians frequently cite the “revival of classical rhetoric” (Berlin; Connors, Ede, and Lunsford) as a pivotal development. For example, Bob Connors, Lisa Ede, and Andrea Lunsford argue that the revival of classical rhetoric in the 1960s worked to “transform the teaching of writing” (10) by encouraging teachers to move beyond a focus on surface-level correctness to consider broader rhetorical issues of invention, arrangement, and audience. In particular, Connors, Ede, and Lunsford assert that “every scholar working composition today owes a debt” (11) to Edward Corbett’s “rediscovery of classical rhetoric in its application to writing pedagogy” (10). Similarly, James Berlin credits Corbett’s monumental textbook, *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student*, (1965) with offering composition teachers a powerful “model of a comprehensive rhetoric, a reminder of its rich possibilities.” (*Writing* 87). In telling the story of Corbett’s revival of classical rhetoric, scholars have tended to focus exclusively on how Corbett (and his contemporaries) adapted classical rhetorical theories to the teaching of alphabetic writing.

Yet, if we look closely at Corbett’s writings about the relevance of classical rhetoric to composition pedagogy, we can see that Corbett’s vision of a revived classical rhetoric pedagogy extends far beyond the printed word. In particular, I contend that Corbett’s work (both in his textbook and his scholarly articles) productively suggests that:

- Classical rhetoric is a living tradition that must adapt to changes in communication technologies.
• Classical theories of audience, ethos, and pathos are potentially transferable across media (spoken, alphabetic, multimodal electronic)

**A Living Tradition (Track One)**

In seeking to revive classical rhetoric as a model for composition pedagogy, Corbett was acutely conscious of the fact that he was reviving a tradition that was initially designed to teach oral discourse. In a 1972 article on “Rhetoric, the Enabling Discipline,” Corbett asserted that at a time when there is so much exposure to the multimedia and when we are beginning to make more use of audio-visual equipment in our English classrooms, I want to emphasize that [classical] rhetoric is applicable also to media of communication other than the printed or written word. Rhetoric, after all, had its beginnings as the art of oral discourse. It would be a gain for everyone concerned if the split that developed back in 1915 between teachers of English and teachers of Speech was repaired…There is a rhetoric, in some cases a new and special rhetoric, of the film, of music, of the cartoon, of the magazine ad, and the television commercial, and there is no reason, except for lack of interest on our part, for not studying those in our classroom along with the printed book and the written page…In all of those media, there is a fundamental triad of a speaker, a message, and an audience, and our business as teachers of English is to investigate how those three elements interact when presented in the electronic media. (*Rhetoric, the Enabling* 9)

If English teachers were truly to embrace a revival of classical rhetoric, they would need to reconsider the exclusion of public speaking from their classrooms. Even more radically, Corbett suggested that classical rhetorical principles (such as audience adaptation) could apply to new forms of multimodal electronic media—that classical

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26 I use the past tense throughout this subsection because I am focusing here on historically situating Corbett’s revival of classical rhetoric as a response to the shifting social and technological landscape of the 1960s and 1970s. In the following subsections when I explore how Corbett’s discussions of audience, ethos, and pathos can apply to contemporary digital pedagogy, I switch back to the historical present tense (which I have used throughout this project).
rhetoric might form the basis for a composition pedagogy that taught students both to analyze and to produce multimodal electronic texts.

Rather than defining rhetoric narrowly as the study of particular forms of speaking and/or writing, Corbett followed Aristotle in defining rhetoric very broadly as the “art dealing with the discovery and use of all the available means of persuasion in any given case” (Classical Rhetoric viii). Arguing that classical rhetoric was a living tradition that must be adapted to account for cultural and technological shifts in the available means of persuasion, Corbett boldly claimed that if “Aristotle were alive today, he would be turning to the advertising industry instead of to speeches in Homer’s Iliad for many of his examples of persuasive discourse” (Selected Essays 194). In seeking to revive the classical tradition of rhetoric pedagogy, Corbett was ultimately seeking to revive the notion that rhetorical study should prepare citizens to analyze and produce all forms of persuasive discourse employed within their society.

In exploring the history of classical rhetoric as a living, adaptable tradition, Corbett placed a special emphasis on how shifts in communication technologies have historically led to (or at least encouraged) extensions of the classical rhetorical tradition. For example, in his survey of rhetorical history in Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student, Corbett asserted that the invention of the printing press played a central role in spurring Renaissance rhetoricians to adapt classical rhetorical principles to the teaching of alphabetic composition:

From its origin in fifth century Greece through its flourishing period in Rome and its reign in the medieval trivium, rhetoric was associated primarily with the art of oratory. During the middle ages, the precepts of classical rhetoric began to be applied to letter writing, but it was not until the Renaissance, after the invention of
printing in the fifteenth century, that the precepts governing the spoken art began
to be applied on any large scale, to written discourse. (31)

As a result of the rise of the printing press and concomitant shifts in social organization,
rhetors increasingly found themselves turning to alphabetic text as a means of persuading
public, geographically-dispersed audiences. Although oratory certainly did not disappear
in the Renaissance, it could no longer claim hegemony as the primary available means of
persuasion. If Renaissance schoolmasters were to demonstrate the continued relevance of
classical rhetoric to their students, they had to show how classical rhetoric could guide
the production and analysis of printed texts.

In seeking to adapt classical rhetoric for the modern students of the 1960s, Corbett
was aware that he too (like the Renaissance rhetoricians before him) was living in a time
of profound change in communication technologies--a time in which it appeared that
electronic media such as television were challenging “typographical media as the
principal means of informing, persuading, and entertaining the citizenry” (“A New Look”
19). Just as Renaissance schoolmasters had to adapt classical rhetorical principles to
make them relevant to print, Corbett came to realize that 1960s compositionists would
need to adapt classical rhetorical principles to make them relevant to the new electronic
media (particularly television).

In many ways, Corbett’s famous essay, “The Rhetoric of Open Hand and the
Rhetoric of Closed Fist,” represented his attempt to come to terms with his ambivalence
over how shifts in communication technologies were influencing rhetorical practices. In
this essay, Corbett contrasted the rhetoric of the Renaissance (the Gutenberg era) with the
rhetoric of the 1960s (the electronic era). In contrast to the Renaissance focus on the
printed word as the central form of persuasion, Corbett noted that 1960s youth privileged nonverbal means of persuasion in their attempts to argue persuasively for social change: “The accoutrements of the demonstrators are often such non-verbal symbols as flags, armbands, bizarre costumes, and occult insignia worn as pins buttons or neck-chains. It is remarkable too how much a part music plays in this nonverbal rhetoric…Words, of course, do play some part in these demonstrations, but words clearly play a subsidiary role” (291). In seeking to explain this shift from alphabetic to nonverbal modes of persuasion, Corbett turned to Marshall McLuhan’s work on the history of media:

The heavy reliance on nonverbal means of communication serves to confirm Marshall Mcluhan’s claim that the electronic media have expanded and intensified the human sensoria. Aural, visual, and tactual images have an immediacy, an intensity, a simultaneity about them that words strung out one after the other on a page can hardly achieve. Recently I visited the Electric Circus in Greenwich Village, and after an hour in that atmosphere of high decibel music, blinking strobe lights, and throbbing floor, I understood for the first time what young people mean when they speak of a complete immersion in an experience that involves the senses of sight, hearing, touch and even smell simultaneously. …Any new rhetoric that develops will certainly have to give attention to the non-verbal means of communication. (292)

In this way, Corbett suggested that young people no longer saw the alphabetic text as the central model of persuasive discourse. Having grown up in a world saturated by multimodal television (blending images, words, and sounds), young people no longer felt that words alone would be sufficient for persuasion; rather, 1960s protestors sought to persuade by creating experiences (demonstrations) which combined images, words, sounds, smells, and tactile sensations.

Although Corbett at times critiqued the youth’s abandonment of the sequential logic of print, he also cautioned composition teachers that they should not dismiss young people’s multimodal rhetoric entirely. Indeed, he implored his fellow composition
teachers to keep in mind that “it is notable that this newer style of rhetoric has been developed mainly by young people. Perhaps the generation under thirty realizes more than the rest of us just how much the world has changed, senses, if it does not realize, that we exist in a world dominated by electronic media” ("The Rhetoric of" 295). If composition teachers were to reject multimodal, electronic rhetoric entirely, they would risk becoming irrelevant to the civic lives of young people.

As a rhetorician, Corbett knew that he had to adapt his message about classical rhetoric to the concerns of contemporary students, taking into account their “emotional disposition, aspirations and prejudices” ("A New Look" 18). He knew that he would fail to persuade students to adopt classical rhetoric if he positioned it in opposition to the electronic media they so strongly valued. Thus, Corbett set out to demonstrate to students that classical rhetoric was in fact uniquely relevant to the electronic generation—that there were striking similarities between the world of Aristotle and the world of the 1960s youth. Drawing on McLuhan, Corbett asserted that the electronic media were increasingly returning U.S. society to the “the audio-visual world in which rhetoric had its beginning. Technology, of course, has made it a different audio-visual world from what the Greeks knew, but it is still fundamentally the time-world of sound and icon that the Greeks knew rather than the space-world of graphic symbols that we have become accustomed to ever since Gutenberg invented the printing press” ("Rhetoric in Search" 174-175). In other words, classical rhetoric presented a viable model for the electronic age precisely because it was not initially designed for print—because it paid attention to the ways in which embodied sounds and (to some extent) images worked to persuade audiences.
Although Corbett frequently called for compositionists to apply classical rhetoric to teaching electronic media, I should note for the record that his textbook, *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student*, largely failed to address non-alphabetic modes of composition in any substantive way. Although Corbett included transcripts of speeches in the textbook, he largely excluded the canon of delivery (voice and gesture) from consideration. Similarly, although Corbett’s textbook analyzed the stylistic rhetoric of advertising copy, it did not discuss the visual aspects of advertisements in any detail. (In fact, the first two editions of Corbett’s textbook include no illustrations at all). In seeking to introduce a generation of composition students and teachers to a largely neglected classical tradition, Corbett took on a Herculean task. Even without paying attention to visual and oral discourse, Corbett’s *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student* weighed in at over 650 densely packed pages. It is understandable that Corbett would focus his pedagogical attention first on demonstrating how classical rhetoric might transform the teaching of alphabetic writing, largely bracketing for later work the broader issue of classical rhetoric might expand composition beyond the alphabetic.

We also must remember that Corbett confronted a very different communication environment from the one we confront today. Although television viewing was ubiquitous in lives of the 1960s and 1970s composition students, television production remained a largely specialist skill, requiring access to expensive equipment and tightly controlled channels of distribution. In our contemporary digital moment, however, students can produce video with relatively inexpensive equipment and then share that video widely with an international audience (on such free sites as *YouTube*). Indeed, *YouTube* has recently been emerging as an important space for civic discourse---a space
in which people post and respond to videos about political candidates and issues. For example, many 2008 presidential candidates have posted videos to *YouTube*, and they are beginning to receive video responses from young people critiquing them and/or offering support (“*YouTube Campaign*”; “What Do You Believe?”). *YouTube* has also become a site for an international debate about the War in Iraq—a place where people from diverse countries make arguments about U.S foreign policy by posting video responses to one another (“The *YouTube Get Out*”). In the age of *YouTube* (and other digital video-sharing sites), television production is ceasing to be a specialist skill and beginning to emerge as a practical art of citizenry—a primary way in which young people seek to persuade an international audience of their peers. Whereas Corbett had to adapt his pedagogy to a generation that had grown up watching television, we increasingly find ourselves having to adapt our pedagogy to a generation who have grown up (in a limited sense) *producing* television.\(^2\)

Nevertheless, I contend that if we closely at Corbett’s writings (both in the textbook and his other scholarship), we can catch glimpses of his vision of how classical rhetorical principles could transfer across media—glimpses that can be useful to us as we seek to adapt classical rhetorical principles to the contemporary digital age. In particular, Corbett productively suggests that classical rhetorical theories of audience, ethos, and pathos can form the basis for a composition pedagogy that unifies the teaching of speaking, writing, and electronic media production.

\(^{27}\) Of course, there are significant differences—in genre expectations, means of distribution, production values—between broadcast television and on-line video. Rather than claiming that young people posting video to *YouTube* are producing television, it might be more accurate to say that they are reinventing television.
Audience (Track Two)

In reviving classical rhetoric, Corbett ultimately aims to recenter the composition class on issues of audience. Challenging the current traditional emphasis on teaching students immutable rules for composition, Corbett seeks to reclaim the ancient rhetorical belief that “the audience was the consideration which gave form to discourse, which dictated the means the speaker would employ to effect his end. It is this awareness of audience that we must bring back to the composing process” (“The Usefulness” 162). In seeking to explain why classical rhetoric offers such a rich understanding of the forming power of audience, Corbett emphasizes that classical rhetoricians focused their attention on teaching students to speak publicly before live audiences. In the world of the Athenian forum, the audience literally could not be ignored:

Classical rhetoric had its beginning as a practical course designed to train the citizen in the most effective way of composing a discourse that would be delivered via voice before a live audience. The speaker had to be aware of his audience, had to know it, had to know its attitudes, its emotional disposition, its aspirations and prejudices. It was the audience mainly that determined what a speaker would choose to say and how an in what order he would say it. The discourse of the Athenian forum was conceived as a communication art more intensely perhaps than at any time since. (“A New Look” 18)

In this way, Corbett suggests that compositionists should be wary of defining their work in terms of teaching students to produce particular kinds of written products; rather, compositionists should define their field as teaching students the process of analyzing and adapting to audiences—a process which is common to both spoken and written discourse. Indeed, Corbett seeks to remind composition teachers that spoken embodied performance (hearkening back to the Athenian forum) can be one of the best ways to teach the
transferable skill of audience analysis—one of the best ways to make audience visible to students.

In addition to arguing that classical audience analysis is a rhetorical skill that can transfer across oral and alphabetic modes of discourse, Corbett also seeks to demonstrate that classical theories of audience can be applied to electronic media production. Although Corbett concedes that new media might require a somewhat new version of rhetoric such as that proposed by McLuhan (“A New Look”, 19; “What is,” 172), he also claims emphatically that “a rhetoric of hot and cool electronic media has some valuable lessons to learn from Aristotelian rhetoric. And the most valuable lesson it can learn is Aristotle’s insistence that the audience is the chief informing principle in any kind of discourse” (“A New Look” 19). In Corbett’s view, theorists of new media such as McLuhan focus so much on how communication technologies shape society (on how the medium is the message) that they neglect to consider the important role of audience in shaping electronic discourse. A student reading McLuhan might gain a heightened understanding of how communication technologies are reshaping her social world, but she would not gain an understanding of how she might shape communication technologies to persuade particular audiences for particular purposes. In this way, Corbett implicitly asserts that the classical rhetorical techniques for analyzing an audience of a speech are not necessarily substantially different than the techniques required for analyzing the audience of a print or electronic composition. If students can become sensitive to the need to adapt to audience in one form of media, they will likely transfer that understanding of audience adaptation to their composing of other forms of media.
In elucidating methods for teaching the transferable skill of audience adaptation, Corbett focuses especially on the use of peer-response groups which can enable students to “get the kind of feedback, from a live audience, that can point up dramatically for them where and why something went wrong or something succeeded.” (“Rhetoric, the Enabling” 5). For Corbett, the peer-response group offers a way to give students the experience of adapting discourse to a live, critical audience of their peers—to give students an experience similar to that of the Athenian orator speaking to the forum. Of course, for the peer-response group to actually function as a kind of Athenian forum, it would be necessary for the students to perceive themselves as the “real audience” for their peer’s work—to see their peer’s work as a kind of discourse they might voluntarily engage outside of the classroom. If students were most invested in forms of electronic media, it would make sense (according to Corbett’s theory) to begin by teaching students to analyze audiences for electronic media compositions and then transfer this audience analysis to their work with print.

**Ethos (Track Three)**

Challenging the expressivist focus on teaching students to discover and express their authentic selves, Corbett seeks to revive the classical understanding of ethos (the character/credibility of speaker) as a conscious rhetorical performance of an identity. Instead of asking students to look inward to find who they really are, Corbett asks students to look outward to ask “what kind of person must I be, or at least must I seem to be, in order to get people to listen to me and accept what I say?” (“Rhetoric, the Enabling” 8).
In addition to recommending that students be taught to analyze ethos in the texts that they read and write, Corbett also suggests that students can learn about ethos through engaging in embodied performance. Hearkening back to the classical tradition of *progymnasmata*, Corbett notes that ancient rhetoricians taught students to manipulate ethos by having them craft and deliver speeches in which they impersonated other people (living, dead, or fictional). Corbett sees these impersonation exercises as valuable because they “forced the pupils to assume a new personality, a different mind-set, and to adopt words and sentiments that would be appropriate to the person being impersonated” (*Selected Essays* 206). Extrapolating from the classical tradition of having students impersonate famous orators, Corbett recommends that experience in acting can be beneficial for helping students develop an understanding of the use of ethos in speaking and writing: “I have often preached that acting is one of the best preparations for a speaker or writer. An actor must literally become another character, and during the two-hour traffic on the stage, he must think like, talk like, act and react like that other character” (“Rhetoric, the Enabling” 9). By learning how to consciously craft an ethos on the stage, students may also gain a richer understanding of possibilities for manipulating ethos on the page. Challenging the notion that the teaching of writing and the teaching of performance are two entirely separate realms, Corbett reminds compositionists that both actors and writers must make conscious choices about how to perform an identity (construct an ethos) for a particular audience and a particular purpose.

Although Corbett suggested that experience in embodied performance (acting) could help students learn about ethos construction in writing, I did not find any evidence that he taught acting in his classes; for Corbett, writing and acting were ultimately related...
though distinct curricular pursuits. In our contemporary digital classrooms, however, the lines between writing and acting are increasingly blurring. For example, in developing a digital audio essay or video essay, students often write and then perform a script; the success of the final video or audio product hinges as much on the delivery of the words (the voice and gesture) as it does on the words themselves. When we consider assessing these newer digital audio and video forms of composition, we often worry about what it is we are judging: the writing or the acting? Are we being seduced by an essay that is not very well written because it is well-performed? Are we being overly critical of an essay that is well-written because it is not well-delivered? Of course, all of the above questions rest upon the assumption that writing and acting are wholly unrelated activities—that experience in “acting” is irrelevant to the work of the writing class. Yet, if we listen to Corbett, we can remind ourselves that experience in acting can help students gain an understanding of ethos that they can transfer to more conventional print composition—that writing and acting are dynamically interrelated rhetorical pursuits.

In addition to suggesting that students can learn about ethos construction through engaging in acting, Corbett also argues that students can gain an understanding of ethos by analyzing the process of image-making in print and electronic media (magazines, radio, television). Seeking to demonstrate the relevance of classical discussions of ethos to the media-saturated lives of 1960s and 1970s students, Corbett asserts in his textbook that “the ethical appeal [ethos] is the ‘hidden persuader.’ In our world, such enterprises as public relations, motivational psychology, market research, and advertising, are engaged in searching for effective stimuli and in creating the proper ‘image.’ The groundwork for all this activity was laid by Aristotle two thousand years ago” (Classical Rhetoric 99). In
this way, Corbett argues that the study of the ethical appeal (ethos) can extend well beyond the spoken or even the alphabetic word. To study ethos construction in the classical tradition ultimately entails exploring all the means (imagistic, alphabetic, oral) that rhetors can use to construct an identity for themselves.

Corbett’s expansive understanding of the classical concept of ethos gains additional relevance in the contemporary age in which students are increasingly constructing their identities on-line in multimodal digital spaces. On social network sites such as myspace and facebook, students project their ethos as much through the pictures and songs they upload as through the words that they write. On vlogs and digital video sharing sites, many students are reclaiming the act of embodied performance, constructing their identities by posting as series of monologues in which they talk directly to the camera. In virtual environments such as Second Life, many students create identities by visually customizing characters and spaces (as well as by engaging in alphabetic interaction). If we are going to make the classical concept of ethos relevant and comprehensible to the contemporary digital generation, we need to demonstrate that it can help them think critically about the rhetorical choices they are in many cases already making in performing their digital identities (alphabetically, visually, orally, kinesthetically).

**Pathos (Track Four)**

In addition to gesturing to ways that ethos can be constructed through embodied performance and multimedia production, Corbett also seeks to demonstrate that pathos (emotional appeal) is a rhetorical concept that can transfer across media. Indeed, Corbett
argues that the classical rhetorical concept of pathos is profoundly visual—profoundly imagistic. In seeking to arouse an emotion in an audience, a speaker must work to paint an emotionally arresting picture in the audience’s mind:

We must get at the emotions indirectly. We cannot arouse and emotion, either in ourselves or in others, by thinking about it. We arouse emotion by contemplating the object that stirs the emotion. So if we seek to arouse the anger of an audience, we must describe a person or a situation of a sort that will make the audience angry...This kind of description calculated to stir emotion in the audience must appeal to the imagination, and the imagination can be seized in this kind of word-painting by the use of sensory specific detail. (Classical Rhetoric 103)

In Corbett’s view (shared, of course, by Aristotle), we cannot easily appeal to an audience’s emotions by using hyperbolic provocative words or by explicitly telling them how to feel (Classical Rhetoric, 103). Rather, skilled rhetors manipulate and audience’s emotions through “word-painting”(103)—through conjuring a vivid sensory image of a scene in the audience’s mind. By defining the pathetic appeal as kind of word-painting, Corbett implicitly points to the ways in which the classical theory of pathos can be adapted to guide the analysis and production of visual forms of media (painting, photography, film etc). If the construction of pathos ultimately depends upon the conscious manipulation of visual imagery, then it stands to reason that rhetorical theories of pathos can be particularly applicable to enabling photographers, filmmakers and other visual artists to consider the persuasive emotional effects of the images they create and arrange.

In addition to exploring how the ancient concept of pathos can guide the production of visual media, Corbett also suggests that the theory of pathos can be used to elucidate the persuasive effects of music:
there is no question that music, the most non-verbal of arts, is the medium that speaks most eloquently to young people today... When in the entire history of the world did over 400,000 people gather in one place at the same time to listen to a verbal discourse as they did in the summer of 1969 in a pasture in Bethel, New York, to hear three days of folk music? We have always known that music has the power to stir and soothe the emotions. The great attention the Latin rhetoricians paid to verbal rhythms was an attempt to exploit the emotional effects of sound. (“Rhetoric in Search” 173)

Although Corbett recognizes that the Woodstock music festival represents a new kind of political rhetoric at work, he also suggests that classical theories of pathos can help students (and their teachers) understand the ways in which rhythmic sounds can be manipulated to produce emotional effect—the ways in which music can be used to move the will to action. Ultimately, in seeking to make the notion of pathos relevant to the electronic Woodstock generation, Corbett realizes that he needs to demonstrate how the concept of pathos can apply not only to the manipulation of words, but also to the manipulation of music as well.

In seeking to teach students how to craft pathetic appeals with words, images, and sounds, Corbett recognizes that he is encountering new kinds of ethical concerns. Indeed, he admits that “a good many teachers I am sure, regard the suggestion that they should train their students to be skillful manipulators of the emotions as nothing short of criminal.... Should we be swelling the ranks of the demagogues, the politicians, the ad men, of those who exploit the emotions, either blatantly or subliminally, for their nefarious purposes?” (“A New Look” 19). Although Corbett concedes that many media figures (politicians, ad men) use the emotional appeal in detrimental ways, he ultimately argues that it is folly for compositionists to ignore the pathetic appeal. If students are never taught about the power of the emotional appeal, they may in fact be more likely to
fall victim to emotional manipulations of the demagogues and the ad designers. In contrast, if students learn how to manipulate pathetic appeals themselves, they may be more likely to recognize and critically interrogate the pathetic appeals of others.

With Corbett’s discussion of pathos in mind, we can begin to imagine how we might design multimodal composing assignments which engage students in critically interrogating the persuasive emotional effects of images and sounds. In my experience as a twenty-first century teacher, I have found that students often resist the idea that they can be emotionally manipulated by multimodal media texts, insisting that all their choices are wholly rational. Yet, when I engage them in producing digital multimodal texts, I have noticed that they often gain a heightened sense of the ways in which images and sounds can be consciously manipulated to produce emotional effects. For example, it is common for students (and indeed teachers too) to ignore the emotional power of the soundtrack when they are watching a movie or an advertisement; they know the soundtrack is there, but it seems largely superfluous to the main content (the words and the images). Yet, when students are engaged in choosing a musical soundtrack for their own movie, they may find themselves paying close attention persuasive emotional effects of music. When students try out different soundtracks (and try screening their movies without music altogether), they often become aware that their choices of music can strongly effect how their audience experiences their movie—can make an audience feel sadness, fear, anger, joy. Once students have had the experience of consciously making pathetic appeals through music (and seeing the results in the embodied reactions of their peers), they may be more likely to pay attention to the soundtracks in the movies and commercials that
they encounter in the future—to consider the ways in which the soundtrack may be manipulated to evoke certain emotions.

In discussing teaching students to analyze and produce movie soundtracks, it may seem as if I have strayed very far indeed from Corbett’s vision of the classical rhetoric revival. And, in a certain sense, I have. After all, Corbett was writing in a time before the development of the digital video technologies that make it possible for my students to add and delete soundtracks from a movie with a mere click of a mouse. But, in another sense, I would argue that I and other digital multimodal composition teachers are very much following in Corbett’s footsteps. After all, Corbett called for compositionists to pay attention to the persuasive emotional effects of music; Corbett called for compositionists to demonstrate to students how classical rhetorical principles could travel across media; Corbett called for compositionists to treat classical rhetoric as a living tradition that must adapt to shifts in communication technologies. In seeking to adapt classical rhetorical principles to the digital environment in which we find ourselves, we are not rejecting Corbett’s vision: we are in fact extending it in ways, it would appear at least, that he asked us to do.

**Critical (Disc Two)**

In exploring the development of critical approaches to composition studies, composition historians and theorists have emphasized the foundational importance of Ira Shor’s 1980 *Critical Teaching and Everyday Life*. In particular, Shor’s monograph has been credited with being one of the first pieces of composition scholarship which sought to adapt Paulo Freire’s theories of critical pedagogy to the U.S. composition classroom.
James Berlin has also asserted that Shor’s *Critical Teaching and Everyday Life* offered the “most complete realization” of social-epistemic rhetoric for the classroom (Berlin, “Rhetoric and Ideology, 694). Although Shor’s contributions to critical pedagogy and social epistemic rhetoric have been widely recognized in composition studies, scholars have largely focused on how Shor’s theories have informed the teaching of alphabetic writing. Composition historians and theorists have yet to consider the specifically *multimodal* aspects of Shor’s work. In particular, I contend that Shor’s *Critical Teaching and Everyday Life* productively asserts

- that ideological critique must be grounded in the embodied multisensory experiences of students.
- that we should conceptualize alphabetic writing and spoken dialogue as deeply intertwined activities (developing hybrid modes of composing which blur the boundaries between alphabetic writing and spoken conversation).
- that students can best learn to critique and resist the “false consciousness” of mass media if they are engaged in both analyzing and *producing* media texts.

**Multimodal Problem Posing (Track One)**

In developing his theory of critical composition pedagogy in *Critical Teaching in Everyday Life*, Shor was strongly influenced by Paulo Freire’s critical pedagogical theories. Thus, in order to gain a nuanced understanding of the multimodal implications of Shor’s pedagogy, it makes sense to look first at the Freirian roots from which Shor’s work arose. In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire argues against a banking model of
education which positions students as empty vessels to be filled with the teacher’s knowledge, proffering instead a problem-posing theory of education in which teachers and students collaborate together to analyze and attempt to transform oppressive aspects of the students’ reality. Rather than centering literacy education on prefabricated textbooks removed from the embodied experiences of students, Freire asserts that teachers should organize their instruction around “the students’ view of the world, where there own generative themes are found” (101). To this end, Freire suggests that teachers spend time talking with and observing students before they begin formal instruction.

Once this observation period is complete, teachers can then prepare a series of codifications (photographs, slides, filmstrips, posters, readings, dramatizations) which represent aspects of the reality of the students. In presenting these codifications of reality to students, Freire ultimately hopes to open up a conversation in which students work together to decode aspects of their reality—to name and seek to transform the oppressive power relations permeating their lives.

In developing codifications, Freire urges teachers to take care to choose “the best channel of communication for each theme and its representation. A codification may be simple or compound. The former utilizes either the visual (pictoral or graphic), the tactile, or the auditive channel; the latter utilizes various channels. The selection of the pictorial or graphic channel depends not only on the material to be codified, but also on whether or not the individuals with whom one wishes to communicate are literate” (115). Although Freire suggests that the use of the pictorial (imagistic) channel of communication is particularly appropriate in working with students who are not print literate, he also insists that the “material to be codified” (115) should exert a strong influence on what channel
of communication or combination of channels teachers employ. In other words, some aspects of everyday life can be best expressed via print text alone, while other aspects of daily life necessitate or at least encourage the use of other channels of communication (auditory, pictorial/imagistic, tactile). If teachers were to present students with alphabetic codifications alone, they would unduly limit students’ ability to engage in the dialogical process of critically decoding the world.²⁸

Although Shor does not necessarily adopt all of Freire’s specific procedures for creating codifications to spur dialogue in his 1980 *Critical Teaching and Everyday Life*, he does follow Freire in arguing that ideological critique must be grounded in the students’ embodied multisensory experiences of the world. In Shor’s view, critical teaching (in the Freirian tradition) entails a process “extraordinarily re-experiencing the ordinary” (93)—a process of learning to notice the unequal power relations embedded in everyday life. Although Shor argues that alphabetic writing is one tool that students can use to analyze and begin to reconstruct aspects of their ordinary life (their embodied sensory experience of the world), he also emphasizes that “the act of separation from routine reality can be aided by creating your own media and art” (108). In other words, students may improve their ability to analyze and to reconstruct aspects of their reality if they have the opportunity to compose with multiple forms of media—to “extraordinarily re-experience the ordinary” (93) through alphabetic text, images, embodied performance and other modalities. For example, Shor tells the story of one class that collaboratively

²⁸ I am indebted here to Patricia Dunn’s analysis of the multimodal aspects of Freire’s work in *Talking, Sketching, Moving: Multiple Literacies for Composition* (37-57).
developed a project in which they created video plays, which sought to critique and
reconstruct the traditional practices of schooling:

A freshman composition class began a long study of traditional and experimental
education, based in its own experience of school and its ideas for reconstruction. They wrote criticisms of their prior education, and then broke into work-teams to
prepare video scripts that would dramatize their written analysis. They first
dramatized the negative old way they were taught and then offered a model of the
new classroom relations they wanted, based on egalitarianism and critical modes
of study. Blended into the longer segments on old and new education were shorter
pieces in mime and dialogue that satirized their authoritarian schooling. (198)

For students, the experience of school is one of embodied interaction between teacher and
student; school is not just an idea students think about, it is a reality they see, feel, and
hear everyday. In order to gain a more holistic sense of how school can be transformed, it
makes sense for students to move from the page to the stage—for students to actually
enact (through a videotaped performance) the ways in which the embodied experience of
school needs to be changed.

In addition to pointing to embodied performance as one way that students can re-
experience and reconstruct ordinary life, Shor also discusses how students might create
visual images as a way of analyzing and seeking to change the built environment. For
example, Shor relays the experience of a group of students in a remedial writing class
who sought to

re-model the physical plant of the campus...We did a component breakdown of
the layout of the campus and then drafted proposals for a new campus. The final
document included a written text and a number of sketches. At the same time, the
school administration was promoting its own plan for the college, so this project
was a timely chance to merge literacy development with the assertion of some
grassroots social policymaking. We read the official plan as one “text” for the
class, while we designed our own. (199)
If the students were going to successfully intervene in the public discussion about transforming the physical plant of the school, they would need to develop the literacy of architects—a literacy that depends as much on sketching as it does on alphabetic writing. In this way, Shor implicitly argues for an expansive vision of critical literacy development in the composition class. If the goal of the critical composition class is ultimately to empower students to argue persuasively for social change, then it does not make sense to limit the composition class to teaching alphabetic writing alone; rather, Shor suggests that teachers should help students strategically choose and employ whatever forms of media (alphabetic, visual, audio) can best enable them to argue for social change in a particular context.

Ultimately, in exploring multimodal composing as a way to enable students to “extraordinary re-experience the ordinary” (93), Shor evidences a strong affinity with expressivist pedagogy. Indeed, like the expressivists (discussed in chapter 2), Shor argues that through composing in multiple forms of media—alphabetic, auditory, imagistic—students can come to notice aspects of the world that they usually overlook. Shor also echoes the expressivists (especially Williamson) in arguing that multimodal composing activities can potentially help destabilize the authority of the teacher, reorienting the class around the interests and goals of students (Shor 196-198). Yet, whereas expressivists tend to value multimodal composing for the ways in which it can help students gain personal insights into their lives, Shor emphasizes the ways in which multimodal composing activities (sketching, performance) can help students collectively re-invent and revise the social structures in which they are embedded. Although Shor’s emphasis on collective social change differs substantially from the individualist politics
of most expressivists, he nevertheless shares with expressivists a commitment to
grounding composition pedagogy in the embodied multisensory experiences of
students—a commitment that necessitates moving beyond an exclusive focus on the
production of alphabetic text. When we reread Shor’s early work alongside the
expressivist movement, we can remember that compositionists have a long history of
exploring the transformative potential (both individual and social) of multimodal
composing—a long history of engaging students in multimodal composing as a way to
enable them to re-experience (re-see, re-hear, re-feel) the world.

**Dialogue (Track Two)**

Spoken dialogue plays a central role in the critical pedagogies of Shor and Freire.
For example, in seeking to distinguish between banking and dialogical modes of
education in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire focuses especially on articulating the
differences in the *spoken* dynamics of the banking and dialogical classrooms. In contrast
to the banking classroom in which the “teacher talks and the students listen” (57), the
dialogical classroom is a space in which all students feel empowered to speak:

> Dialogue is the encounter between men [sic], mediated by the world, in order to
name the world. Hence, dialogue cannot occur between those who want to name
the world and those who do not wish this naming—between those who deny other
men the right to speak their word and those whose right to speak has been denied
them. (76)

Challenging the academic tradition of viewing print texts as the most authoritative
sources of knowledge, Freire ultimately argues for a vision of pedagogy grounded in
spoken dialogue—a vision in which students and teachers collaboratively come to name
and transform the world (at least in part) through the process of *speaking* and *listening* to
one another. Although Freire does seek to teach peasants how to read and write print
texts, he is very careful not to set up a hierarchy which privileges print forms of
knowledge over oral, dialogic forms of knowing—a hierarchy which would reinforce the
notion that “illiterate” peasants are mere empty vessels to be filled with knowledge from
their print-literate teachers. For Freire, spoken dialogue is not just a means to the end of
alphabetic literacy (a tool that literate teachers could employ to help develop reading and
writing skills); spoken dialogue is a key component of the critical process of
reconstructing education as the practice of freedom.

Echoing Freire, Shor also strongly emphasizes the value of spoken dialogue as an
end in and of itself. In surveying the lives of working class students in the 1970s, Shor
notes that students rarely have the ability to engage in dialogue in the antidemocratic
institutional environments of the workplace and school:

In the important institutional settings of mass culture, there is little dialogue and
many commands. Thus, the official side of life includes an enforced silence which
dishabituates people from gaining the experience of group discussion of
policy….Because a power struggle surrounds the use of words in every institution
of life, there are tense rules and high prices to pay for talking. At the very least,
supervisors discourage people from talking to each other because it interferes with
productivity; in school, teachers dissuade students from talking to each other, or
out of turn, not only to maintain order but also to maintain the teacher as the sole
regulator of the talking. (72)

In order to enable students to come to recognize and challenge oppressive social
structures, critical teachers need to help students develop abilities in (and comfort with)
the process of engaging in spoken dialogue in institutional settings—need to teach
students strategies to resist the “enforced silence” (72) of the workplace, the school, and
indeed the broader *polis*. For Shor, it is not enough just to engage students in writing
critically about the world; compositionists also need to engage students in talking critically (dialoging) about the world.

Rather than positioning the teaching of speaking (dialogue) and the teaching of writing as wholly separate activities, Shor seeks to teach students to draw connections “between their speaking language and the act of writing language on paper” (131). In particular, Shor suggests that teachers engage students in composing alphabetic text through a collaborative oral process of dictation:

The dictation sequence begins by asking students to break into groups of two. One member of the team will be dictating his or her verbal thoughts on the theme for composition, while the second member of the unit will record, on paper, verbatim, what the person speaks. Then, the two change places, the recorder becoming the speaker, and the speaker becoming the composer (131).

In addition to emphasizing how dictation can help students draw on the resources of speech to produce alphabetic text (131), Shor also argues that dictation activities can help lay the groundwork for spoken classroom dialogues. In particular, Shor notes that dictation is “a style of writing which encourages peer relations. The students have to cooperate to get the work done; the teacher does not monitor them. They need to listen carefully to each other, something that they are conditioned against through the teacher-centered schooling of their pasts” (131). In order to develop a classroom in which students can engage collaboratively in dialogue, Shor suggests that teachers need to get students in the habit of listening deeply to one another—need to get students to value the embodied spoken knowledges their peers bring to the classroom. Thus, rather than exclusively asking students to compose alphabetic texts silently and individually (to listen to their inner voices), critical teachers can ask students to compose alphabetic texts
through collaborative oral dictation—to reimagine alphabetic writing as a collaborative process which depends as much on listening to peers as it does on listening to the self.

In addition to exploring collaborative dictation as a classroom activity, Shor (along with Freire) also experimented with recorded conversation as a way of composing scholarly books. In the mid 1980s, Shor and Freire audio-recorded numerous conversations about liberatory pedagogy. Shor then (in consultation with Freire) transcribed the audiotapes and edited the transcripts in order to create a “talking book” (Shor and Freire, xi). In the opening of their talking book (Pedagogy of Liberation), Shor and Freire take turns discussing their reasons for choosing to compose a book through recording an oral dialogue (1-4). Shor points out that the idea for the book arose from questions he and Freire had often been asked in conversations with teachers about dialogic pedagogy—that their “talking book” is ultimately an attempt to continue an ongoing spoken dialogue (Shor and Freire 2).

Extending Shor’s justification for the talking book, Freire asserts that composing through spoken dialogue is a powerful way to provoke complex thought. Challenging the common notion that a recorded conversation is a less rigorous scholarly form than a solo-authored monograph, Freire argues that

In the last analysis you are re-creating yourself in [spoken] dialogue to a greater extent than when you are solitary writing, seated in your office, or in a small library. And from the human perspective, the need for dialogue is so great, that when the writer is alone in the library, facing the blank sheets in front of him or her, the writer needs at least to mentally to reach the possible readers of the book even if there is no chance that he or she will ever meet them….Here in our case, we are facing uncountable, unknown readers, facing them symbolically, but we are one in front of another, you [Shor] and I. In a sense, I am already your [Shor’s] reader and in a sense you are already my reader….The mutual possibility to read ourselves before writing can make our writings better, because in this interaction we can change ourselves in the very moment of the
dialogue….Dialogue seals the act of knowing, which is never individual, even though it has an individual dimension (3).

For Freire, all knowledge (even the knowledge expressed in books) is profoundly social—the result of a dialogue between writer and reader, composer and audience. Yet, when writers work silently alone, it is easy for them to forget the dialogic aspects of the process, ignoring the ways in which their words are ultimately shaped by their social interactions with others. In contrast, the process of composing a book through recorded conversation foregrounds the ways in which composing is a dialogic social act—the ways in which our words are always uttered in response to (in dialogue with) others. In exploring how the talking book genre highlights the social dynamics of writing, Freire implicitly suggests that recording and editing conversation (creating talking books or talking essays) can be a powerful way to engage students in exploring composing as a social, dialogic act.

Working in the early 1980s, Shor and Freire had limited access to equipment for editing and distributing audio; thus, it made sense for them to transcribe their dialogues into alphabetic text and then publish them in printed form. In the contemporary digital environment, however, the technologies of audio editing are much more available. Using a free sound editor such as Audacity, composers could digitally edit their recorded dialogues (adding, deleting, and rearranging words) without the need for transcription (see chapter 2). Rather than publishing the dialogue as a print text, composers could publish the final dialogue on the web as a single digital audio file or series of audio chapters. By releasing their digital dialogue under a creative commons license (“A
spectrum”), composers could even invite audience members to remix the dialogues, literally adding their own voices to the conversation.

If we want to teach students to listen carefully to one another and to value spoken dialogue as a form of making knowledge (as Shor and Freire ask us to do), it makes sense to engage students in the process of collaboratively composing digital spoken dialogues. Working in small groups, students could digitally record themselves having a conversation about a “problem” they all encounter in their everyday lives. After importing the digital recording into a computer-based audio editor, students could then work individually (or collaboratively) to edit the conversations. In the process of editing, students might:

- add in additional spoken words (what they didn’t get a chance to say originally or ideas they had only after engaging in and re-listening to the dialogue);
- highlight moments in which they were learning from one another (moments in which their ideas were transformed through dialogue);
- emphasize key areas of commonality and difference in the experiences of the group;
- create a concise summation of the dialogue that would be comprehensible and engaging for the rest of the class (the two-minute version of a twenty-minute conversation)

As students edited their spoken dialogues (deciding what to add, rearrange, and delete), they would of necessity have to listen repeatedly—and carefully—to their spoken interactions with their peers. If this repeated listening were to cause students to change their minds or develop new insights, they would have the opportunity to revise and
extend their earlier spoken thoughts. In relistening to their spoken interactions, students could also come to reflect on the process of spoken dialogue itself. For example, students could try to pinpoint those speaking strategies that tend to invite participation in contrast to those speaking strategies that tend to silence others, considering ways in which they might endeavor to make future spoken dialogues more inclusive.

Of course, students are not the only ones who could benefit from recording and editing digital dialogues; this activity could also be very useful for teachers. We teachers might be able to learn much more from students if we had the opportunity to re-listen to the comments they make in class. In addition, we might be able to learn more from our colleagues if we had the chance to relisten to their spoken words as well as to reread their writings.

Although composition teachers spend much time engaging in spoken dialogues with students and colleagues, we often tend to marginalize spoken dialogue as an ephemeral activity ancillary to our real work: the analysis and production of alphabetic texts. In evaluating students in composition classes, we usually base our grades almost entirely on evaluation of written products (with perhaps only a small percentage given to oral participation). In evaluating our colleagues for hiring, tenure, and promotion, we tend to weight print publications much more heavily than spoken presentations or discussions. When we look back at the work of Shor and Freire, however, we can begin to imagine ways to make a space for talking books/talking essays in our pedagogical and scholarly lives. Rather than conceptualizing spoken dialogue as solely a tool for inventing and revising alphabetic texts (student papers, scholarly essays), we might come to reimagine the digital spoken dialogue as a valuable scholarly product in and of itself.
Although I think that Shor and Freire have much to teach us about the importance of valuing spoken dialogue, I would also argue that we should be wary of their tendency to position speech as an essential facet of human consciousness, human reason. For example, we must question Freire’s assertion that “if it is in speaking their word that men [sic], by naming their world, transform it, dialogue imposes itself as the way by which men achieve significance as men” (Freire 77). We also must question Shor’s tendency to position speech as a natural resource that all students can employ for engaging in critical thought (Shor 131). By asserting that speech is a natural, universal faculty of human consciousness, Shor and Freire unwittingly reinforce the cultural equation of speech and human reason that has long served to marginalize the embodied knowledges and signed languages of deaf people (Brueggemann 11). In addition to marginalizing deaf people, the emphasis of spoken dialogue as the essence of humanity also marginalizes people who learn in different ways—people who might best learn through writing, moving, and/or creating images (Dunn).

Rather than grounding critical pedagogy in a supposedly universal form of communication such as spoken dialogue, we should instead seek to develop models of critical pedagogy that understand “bodies and minds as inherently and wonderfully divergent” (Lewiecki-Wilson, Brueggemann, and Dolmage, 1). In order to create a dialogical pedagogical spaces in which students and teachers can productively learn from one another, we must ultimately work to provide students and teachers with multiple pathways (alphabetic, audio, visual, kinesthetic) for sharing their knowledge.
Focusing attention on the ideological effects of mass media, Shor argues in *Critical Teaching and Everyday Life* that mass media is one of the primary cultural formations “at work to produce false consciousness, that is, manipulated action and reflection which leads people to support their own oppression…The great power of dominated thought is that people deny the means of their own liberation while taking responsibility for acting in ways which reproduce their powerlessness” (55). In other words, mass media encourages people to view the problems in their lives as wholly individual rather than social—to ignore the ways in which they can act collectively to challenge social hierarchies of class, race, and gender. In addition to emphasizing the ways in which the content of mass media reifies individualist narratives of success, Shor also asserts that mass media produces false consciousness by fostering a culture of “spectatorism”—a culture in which people merely consume but never produce the texts of mass media that so pervade their lives. In observing the prevalence of mass media spectatorship in the lives of 1970s students, Shor notes that students:

> watch television, go to movies, and receive information from corporations and politicians through dramatized advertisements. As an enormous audience for video, radio, magazine, and billboard commercials, they have been socialized into spectating theatrical persuasions. The information flow goes one way, from the medium to the person. Each student is not trained to analyze critically the message thrown at her or him or to *be a creator of the media filling everyday life*. (241-242)

Although politicians and corporations (the ruling elite in the class system) have the ability to shape the messages of mass media, Shor notes that working-class people (and

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29 In outlining the Marxist theoretical basis for his discussion of “false consciousness,” Shor specifically acknowledge his debt to the work of Gerge Lukacs.
other marginalized groups) are positioned solely as media spectators. When people are
denied the ability to shape the media that pervade their lives, they lack the tools they need
to articulate their interests and collectively organize to challenge social inequalities.

Even though Shor is critical of mass media, he realizes that banishing media
production from composition would ultimately be counterproductive to his goal of
liberatory teaching—that when compositionists ignore media production they reinforce
the dominant ideology of spectatorism. Thus, Shor seeks to engage composition students
in producing media texts, such as television and radio programs (197-199; 241-265). In
particular, Shor notes that engaging students in video production can help “dissolve the
alienation of producers from receivers. For the first time, they experience themselves as
artists and as an audience which has shaped the language and images of the medium [of
television]” (242). Rather than seeing television as an immutable, unchangeable part of
everyday life (a transparent representation of reality), students who have the experience
of producing video are able to begin to conceptualize television as a medium that has
been shaped by particular people for particular ideological ends.

Recognizing that video media production would likely be a new experience for
most students, Shor cautions teachers that they should “expect amateurism as well as
mimicry of the forms found in everyday life. The class [media] projects need to be
evaluated from the bottom up and from inside the process, rather than in comparison to
commercial or high art” (108). Rather than evaluating students final videos for the quality
of their production values or the cogency of the ideological critique, Shor argues that
teachers should instead focus on engaging students in dialogue about what they have
learned from the process—about how the experience of producing video has enabled them to extraordinarily re-experience life in a mass media culture.

In teaching students to produce audio and video media in the 1970s, Shor usually asked students to write a script, rehearse it, and then perform it (presumably in one or two takes) in front of a camera or tape recorder. Although Shor’s students in the 1970s had the means of recording pieces of media (video cameras and tape recorders), they did not have ready access to the means of editing video or audio footage. In contrast, students in the contemporary digital age increasingly have access to free digital software for editing video and audio on their computers. Whereas students in Shor’s classes had to write scripts and perform them in one take in the style of TV drama or comedy, contemporary students could record footage in their communities (interviews, events) and then edit the footage to tell a persuasive story in the style of a news program or documentary. When students gain the experience of editing footage, they can develop a much more critical sense that television or radio news is not a transparent representation of reality—that the process of editing (cutting, rearranging) is ultimately ideological.

For example, in my classes, I have asked students to edit digital audio recordings of political speeches in order to make them express a different point of view than the rhetor likely intended. In the process of consciously cutting and rearranging speeches in order to make a particular ideological point, I hope to encourage them to become more conscious of the politics of the sound bite—of the ways in which the speeches of politicians can be manipulated (through media editing) in order to express a particular point of view.
Video documentary production can also be a powerful way of heightening students’ consciousness about the ways in which media texts manipulate reality. In making a documentary, students must make choices about what to shoot, whom to interview, what kinds of questions to ask. Once students have selectively gathered all their footage, they then need to figure out how to edit it (cut, rearrange, layer) in order to tell a particular kind of story—to construct a particular version of the reality. Once students have made these kinds of conscious decisions about how they are going to represent reality in a video documentary, they may be more likely to be critical of any kind of news special or reality program” they watch—to look for ways in which the editing of the program (and even the selection of subjects) ultimately reveals an ideological point of view.

In teaching students to create video and audio texts in the 1970s, Shor ultimately sought to empower students to create representations of reality that contested those offered by mainstream media outlets. Shor noted that students often became so strongly invested in their video production projects that they sought to have their work “broadcast outside the college”—to make their voices heard in the broader public sphere (197). Of course, students in the 1970s faced great hurdles in distributing their video work to a broader public audience; they either had to arrange screenings or convince a television producer to air their work. In contrast, contemporary digital students have the option to publish their work on free digital video sharing sites, potentially reaching a wide audience beyond their local region. Although the rise of digital culture opens up new opportunities for critical media production in composition, it is important that we remember that critical media production has a long history in composition studies—a
history that predates the rise of the Internet and indeed even the personal computer. In seeking to harness video production as a tool of social change, we are in many ways extending a critical pedagogical tradition that Shor (and others) began in the 1970s.

Reprise

When we look back at Corbett, Shor, and Freire’s social approaches to multimodal composing, I suggest that we pay attention to the following six refrains:

Refrain #1: We must adapt rhetorical pedagogy to shifts in communication technologies.

To teach composition in the tradition of classical rhetoric ultimately means to attempt to teach students to discover and employ all the available means they can use to argue persuasively within their societies. If we are going to demonstrate the relevance of rhetorical study to contemporary young people, we must be able to demonstrate that rhetorical principles can help them both analyze and produce the forms of media that they find most compelling and relevant to their lives as citizens. Furthermore, if we are going to prepare students to argue persuasively for social change (Shor), we must teach them to employ all of the differing modalities they will encounter in the diverse civic spaces they will inhabit throughout their lives.

Refrain #2: Developing critical consciousness is a multisensory, embodied process.

In order to engage students in transformative critical dialogue, we must ground our pedagogy in students’ multisensory embodied experiences of the world. The
development of critical consciousness is not just a process of renaming the world; it is a process of re-seeing, re-hearing, and re-feeling the world as well. If we limit students to only reading and writing alphabetic texts, we will ultimately be unduly constraining their ability to analyze and attempt to transform oppressive social structures.

**Refrain #3: Audience analysis can form the center of a rhetorical multimodal pedagogy.**

Rather than centering our courses on teaching students proscribed genres of alphabetic writing (or other kinds of composing), we might instead center our courses on teaching students to develop transferable skills in audience analysis and adaptation. Instead of teaching students to see classical audience analysis as an activity that can apply to alphabetic composing alone, we need to help students understand how they might apply theories of audience to all the diverse composing challenges (audio, visual, alphabetic, multimodal) they will face in their lives. Whether students are composing audio, alphabetic, visual, or multimodal texts, they can benefit from such activities as writing reflectively about audience and engaging in peer response workshops.

**Refrain #4: We can draw connections between acting and alphabetic writing.**

By engaging in acting (embodied performance) students can learn much about ways to consciously construct an identity (an ethos) for a particular audience and purpose. Rather than seeing instruction in acting as a distraction from the teaching of writing, we might instead follow Corbett in exploring how experience in acting (embodied performance) might help students develop transferable rhetorical skills that they could apply to the production of alphabetic texts. In particular, we might consider
how students could learn transferable skills in ethos construction by consciously
manipulating their voices and bodily movements to construct identities in digital video
and audio compositions.

**Refrain #5: Speaking and writing are interconnected social/political
activities**

If we want to prepare students to participate critically and persuasively in public
forums, we should integrate the teaching of speaking—both oratory and dialogue—into
our teaching. Rather than constructing the teaching of speaking and the teaching of
writing as wholly separate activities, we might instead teach students to engage hybrid
forms of composing (scripted and digitally recorded oratory, dictation, digital dialogue)
which blur the boundaries between speaking and writing. Although digital audio
technologies provide us with new exigency for seeking to bridge the divide between the
alphabetic text and the spoken word, we should not forget that we can also look to pre-
digital theories—classical rhetoric, Freirian critical pedagogy—for insights into ways to
reunite the teaching of speaking and the teaching of writing. (Yet, at the same time, we
should critique the tendency of classical rhetoric and critical pedagogy to conflate speech
and human reason, seeking instead to value the widely divergent ways in which people of
diverse abilities share their knowledge about the world.)

**Refrain #6: Analysis and production are symbiotic activities.**

Within the past 15 years, it has been increasingly common for compositionists to
engage students in writing critical alphabetic essays about visual and/or multimodal texts.
Although we have paid much attention to the importance of teaching students to analyze
critically visual and multimodal texts (employing the theories of classical rhetoric, social-
epistemic rhetoric, and cultural studies), we have been much slower to consider how we
might teach students to *produce* the kinds of visual and multimodal texts they have been
analyzing. Indeed, I often hear composition teachers worry that taking time to engage
students in digital multimodal production will ultimately detract from their goal of
empowering students to critically analyze the rhetorical manipulations and ideological
implications of visual and multimodal texts. Yet, if we look back at the work of Shor and
Corbett, we can be reminded that textual analysis and textual production are
symbiotically related. When students gain experience composing multimodal texts, they
are likely to gain a deeper critical understanding of the ways in which these texts are
manipulated to construct reality. And, at the same time, when students gain experience
writing critical analyses of the multimodal texts of others, they may be more likely to ask
critical ethical questions about the choices they make in producing multimodal texts.
CHAPTER FIVE
WEAVING

In the past three chapters (Self, Mind and Society), I focused my attention on recovering elements of composition’s multimodal heritage. Looking closely at expressivist, cognitivist, and social composition scholarship from the 1960s through the 1980s, I have sought to demonstrate that compositionists have a substantial tradition of engaging issues of multimodality—that compositionists were exploring the interconnections among words, images, and sounds long before the rise of internet or the personal computer. By threading multimodality into the center of our disciplinary history, I have ultimately attempted to show that multimodal composing can be relevant to all compositionists.

Of course, recognizing the relevance of multimodality is only the beginning. In addition to addressing why multimodal composing is (and has been) relevant to the discipline of composition, we also need to address questions about how we might best engage multimodality in our contemporary work as teachers, administrators, and scholars: How can we successfully integrate multimodality into our composition courses (activities, assignments, syllabi)? How can we integrate multimodal composing into broader departmental and university-wide curricula (and what kinds of material/institutional changes might be necessary to support these curricular shifts)?
What research questions remain unanswered about multimodal composing and how might we begin to go about answering them?

At first glance, it might seem that the work of past compositionists would be of little use to us in answering these contemporary, pragmatic questions. After all, much has changed since the 1960s, the 1970s, and the 1980s: the technologies we use to compose, the ways we theorize and research composing, the university structures in which we work. In light of these ongoing technological, theoretical, and institutional shifts, it certainly is unlikely that we could find a past multimodal composition assignment or curricular structure or research method that we could adopt without modification to suit our contemporary needs. Nevertheless, I contend that the work of past multimodal compositionists can offer us macro-theoretical principles that can productively inform contemporary multimodal pedagogy and research—principles that can help us think critically about ways to integrate multimodal composing successfully into our courses, our curricular/institutional structures, and our scholarly work. In particular, I focus in this chapter on five principles (culled from a blend of past expressivist, cognitivist, and social approaches) that I think are particularly relevant to our contemporary moment:

• Alphabetic writing entails a profoundly multimodal process.

• (Some) rhetorical and composing process theories can transfer across modalities.

• Multimodal composing need not necessarily be digital.

• Disability offers insights into multimodal composing pedagogy.

• Analysis and production are interconnected activities.
Principle #1:  
Alphabetic writing entails a profoundly *multimodal process*

When we look back to the work of expressivists (Murray; Elbow; Macrorie), we can be reminded that alphabetic writing is a multisensory embodied experience—that alphabetic writing both arises from and transforms the ways that the we see, hear, and feel the world in which we live. Similarly, a turn back to the cognitivists can highlight the reality that we do not think in words alone (Flower and Hayes; Perl; Sommers; Emig)—that visual imagery, sounds, and movement can all play an important role in the invention and revision of alphabetic texts. Finally, when we listen to the critical pedagogical work of Ira Shor and Paulo Freire, we can be reminded that the development of critical literacy is a profoundly multimodal process—that students can use speaking, visual production, and movement to invent critical alphabetic texts which challenge oppressive social structures. Rather than viewing composition as a discipline focused on *alphabetic products*, we can instead come to reclaim an understanding of composition as a discipline dedicated (at least in part) to studying and teaching the *multimodal process* of composing alphabetic texts.

*Composition Class Implications.* When contemporary composition teachers attempt to make a multimodal turn in our classes, we tend to think of multimodal composing activities as discrete projects to be dropped into (not integrated with) alphabetic writing instruction (e.g. a class in which students write three papers and then complete one final video, audio, or animation project). By positioning alphabetic writing and multimodal composing as wholly separate concerns, we neglect to help students and
colleagues see how multimodal composing activities can contribute to the development
of alphabetic writing skills.

Yet, if we come to recognize that alphabetic writing is itself a profoundly
multimodal process, we can begin to imagine composition course designs in which
multimodal composing and alphabetic writing instruction are woven tightly together.
Even when we are focusing attention on teaching students to produce alphabetic
products, we can still engage students in exploring how they might employ multiple
modalities to invent ideas for the alphabetic texts they write (e.g. capturing and editing
digital photographs or video; making a digital storyboard of found and created images;
digitally recording oral monologues or dialogues). Furthermore, we can teach students to
draw upon multiple modalities to consider revisions of their alphabetic texts. For
example, we might engage students in translating their alphabetic texts into digital
images or sounds, exploring how this act of translation can enable them to gain the
“metacognitive distance” (Dunn) they need in order to consider global changes in
structure and argument. Moreover, in order to help students attend closely to the stylistic
choices they are making in writing, we might ask them to record and digitally edit audio
versions of their essays, considering carefully the voice (or ethos) they are constructing.

The above activities are just a few examples of multimodal composing activities
that could help students invent and revise alphabetic texts; individual teachers will need
to come up with their own activities based upon their particular pedagogical goals and
unique social-material contexts. I would recommend, however, that composition teachers
consider designing at least one small-scale multimodal activity to accompany each major
alphabetic writing assignment in their courses.
Of course, I do not mean to suggest that we should necessarily limit our engagement with multimodal composing to small-scale activities that help students invent and revise alphabetic texts; there certainly is much value in engaging students in formal assignments which move beyond the alphabetic (videos, animations, audio essays, etc.)—assignments which can help students learn how to persuasively manipulate the many diverse modalities they will be called upon to employ throughout their lives. What I do mean to suggest, however, is that we should also take the time to help students draw connections between their alphabetic writing and their multimodal composing—to help students understand that multimodal composing can be a powerful resource for developing alphabetic texts (as well as powerful way of composing in its own right).

Although I have focused much of this dissertation on elucidating how multimodal composing can contribute to the development of alphabetic texts, I would like to point out that the relationship between alphabetic writing and multimodal composing need not necessarily be one-sided. Indeed, alphabetic writing can be a means of inventing and revising multimodal texts (just as multimodal composing can be a means of inventing and revising alphabetic texts). For example, I have often asked students to invent ideas for multimodal projects (animations, collages, etc.) by engaging in freewriting and by writing formal alphabetic proposals; I also always ask students to write reflective alphabetic texts about their multimodal projects—to employ alphabetic writing as a strategy for exploring possibilities for revising their multimodal compositions. In other words, rather than teaching students to conceptualize multimodal composing and alphabetic writing as separate activities (or to focus wholly on how multimodal composing supports alphabetic writing), we might instead teach students to understand multimodal composing and
alphabetic writing as symbiotic—to consider the ways in which multimodal composing and alphabetic writing ultimately interanimate one another.

Curricular / Institutional Implications. When we attempt to integrate multimodal composing into English studies, we should be careful not to segregate multimodal composing exclusively into one or two new courses taught by specialists in computers and writing or digital media studies—be careful not to position multimodal composing as an activity that is wholly separate from the alphabetic-centric work of most of our colleagues. Rather, we should attempt to demonstrate to colleagues that multimodal composing can ultimately serve their primary mission of teaching students to critically analyze and to write alphabetic texts. For example, a teacher of poetry might ask students to create a visual/imagistic translation of a poem as a way to help students attend closely to the imagery of the poem and ultimately to invent alphabetic analytical alphabetic arguments about the poem. Certainly, it is valuable for us to craft some special English studies courses in which multimodal composing is at the center, but we should also consider ways to infuse multimodal composing throughout the English studies—even in those courses in which alphabetic texts remain the primary focus.

Research Implications. Although past expressivist, cognitivist, and critical pedagogical scholarship has productively articulated writing as a profoundly multimodal process (Elbow; Macrorie; Flower and Hayes; Shor), there is very little recent research that demonstrates how contemporary composers can employ multimodal means to invent and revise alphabetic texts (Dyson; Dunn). Continuing in the tradition of the expressivists, we might compose more reflective narratives about how we ourselves employ multimodal practices (visual storyboarding, audio recording) in inventing and
revising the alphabetic texts we write. Extending the work of the cognitivists, we might conduct case studies of how students utilize multimodal strategies of invention and revision—case studies that would elucidate instances when multimodal composing activities did or did not contribute to students’ development as alphabetic writers. Of course, in arguing for a return to the cognitive methodology of the case study, I do not necessarily mean that we should return to the early cognitivist idea that it is possible to separate the mental act of composing from the social context in which it occurs; rather, we might consider hybrid research methodologies that blend cognitive and social perspectives (Haas; Gee).

**Principle #2:**

**(Some) rhetorical and process theories are transferable across modalities**

As we begin teaching students to compose multimodal digital texts which move beyond the alphabetic (audio essays, videos, animations, image collage, etc.), we should be alert to the fact that some of the rhetorical and composing theories that we have historically drawn on to teach alphabetic writing may also help us teach other modalities of composing as well. For example, if we listen closely to Edward Corbett and other proponents of revived classical rhetoric, we can consider ways in which classical rhetorical concepts of audience, ethos, and pathos might be usefully employed to help students critically consider the choices they make in composing spoken, alphabetic, visual, and multimodal texts. Furthermore, when we turn back to the expressivists (Williamson; Elbow; Murray; Kligerman), we can recognize that compositionists have long sought to teach alphabetic writing as an art that shares affinities with other visual
and performing arts—to explore what we might learn about the process of writing by studying and participating in other kinds of artistic production (photography, music, film, sculpture). Similarly, when we turn back to the cognitivists (Emig; Flower and Hayes), we can recognize that compositionists have a long heritage of contributing to interdisciplinary scholarship about creativity—a long heritage of exploring how the creative process of alphabetic writing shares affinities with other creative processes (especially in the fields of art and design). Rather than viewing composition as a discipline dedicated solely to studying and teaching rhetorical principles and composing processes unique to alphabetic writing, we can instead come to reclaim an understanding of composition as an interdisciplinary field dedicated to the study of generalizable composing processes and rhetorical principles that can travel across modalities.

Composition Class Implications. As much as it is important to help students use multimodal composing to invent and revise alphabetic texts, we of course must remember that alphabetic texts are not the only products contemporary students need to learn to compose. In order to communicate persuasively in the contemporary communication environment, students need to be able to compose texts that employ a range of modalities. Yet, even as we engage students in formal multimodal composing assignments (in which an alphabetic text is not the end result), we still need to find ways to help students draw connections between alphabetic writing and multimodal composing—to help students learn fundamental rhetorical and composing process concepts that can potentially apply across all the diverse forms of composing (visual, audio, alphabetic, multimodal) that they will employ throughout their lives.
Whether we are asking students to compose an alphabetic text, a visual text, an audio text, or a text that combines modalities, we can engage them in reflective writing and oral discussion about such potentially transferable questions of process and rhetoric as:

- What is my goal or purpose for this text? How do I want people to think or act differently after they encounter it?
- Who is my audience for this text and how will I compose it with this audience in mind?
- How might I strategically craft this text to appeal to ethos, pathos, and logos?
- What strategies can I use to invent ideas for composing this text? What invention strategies seem to work best for me as a composer?
- How can I select and arrange the elements of this text (words, images, and sounds) in order to make them clear and persuasive to my audience?
- What strategies can I use to help me revise this text (to imagine ways it could be different)? What revision strategies seem to work best for me as a composer?

By organizing our courses around concerns of rhetoric and process that can potentially cross modalities, we may be able to help students develop transferable composing skills. For example, a student who comes to understand the importance of audience when composing a video text may be able to transfer this understanding of audience to her composing of alphabetic texts; or, conversely, a student who develops an understanding of the importance of revision for alphabetic writing may then also come to recognize the power of revision in digital audio composing.
Although it is important to help students understand how rhetorical and process concepts can travel across modalities, we also should be careful not to efface the differences among modalities of composing. For example, although video composing and alphabetic composing may both require attention to issues of arrangement, the possibilities for arranging a video text (simultaneously layering images, words, and sounds in time) are different than the possibilities for arranging a print alphabetic text (sequentially ordering words in space). Although it may be possible to transfer some alphabetic writing concepts to the composing of multimodal texts, it is clear that multimodal composing will also push students and teachers to attend to concerns not adequately covered by existing alphabetic-based theories. With this in mind, it makes sense for us to engage students in reflective writing and discussion about the similarities and the differences in their experiences composing with diverse modalities—to consider critically ways in which learning a new form of composing can entail both drawing on generalizable rhetorical and process concepts and attending to new modality-specific (or media-specific) concerns.

Curricular/Institutional Implications. As we compositionists begin to engage students in drawing connections (and considering differences) among diverse forms of visual, audio, alphabetic, and multimodal composing, we must of course remember that we are not the only people in the university who have a stake in this project. Scholars of art and design have long been interested in teaching students to compose visual texts as well as to consider how words can function as images. Scholars of film and video have a great deal of knowledge about ways to teach students to engage critically in the process of blending words, images, and sounds. Scholars of music have a rich heritage of
teaching students to consider the emotional effects of sounds (and to consider how words and music function together). If it is possible that our alphabetic-based rhetorical and process concepts can travel across modalities (visual, audio, multimodal), it is also possible that the theories of art, design, film and music scholars (among others) might be transferable to the composing of alphabetic texts. We clearly have much to learn from allied arts fields (art, music, design, film, etc.) about the teaching composing processes across modalities.

In many ways, the current disciplinary structure of the university prevents both teachers and students from drawing connections among diverse modalities of composing. Currently, when a student moves from a design class, to a film class, to a music class, to a writing class, the student is likely to find that the teachers of those courses employ very distinct vocabularies to describe the process of composing—vocabularies which appear only to be relevant to the particular modalities of composing on which the class centers. In order to counter this trend, we might consider working with colleagues in allied arts fields to develop interdisciplinary courses and programs which engage students in exploring the similarities and differences in various modalities of composing, helping students to draw connections among the disciplines of composition/writing, art, music, and film among others. Of course, I recognize that such interdisciplinary course and program development is devilishly difficult and may not be possible in all institutional contexts. Yet, even if we are unable to craft formalized interdisciplinary ventures, I would suggest that it is still worth making the effort to talk with (and read the scholarship of) our colleagues in allied arts fields—to consider ways in which we might redesign our
pedagogies to help students draw connections between the disparate fields of composition, music, art, and design.

*Research Implications.* Although scholars such as Elbow, Williamson, Flower and Hayes, Murray, and Emig laid the groundwork for exploring similarities between alphabetic writing and other modalities of composing, there is still room for much more research in this area. In particular, I think it would be useful to conduct case studies in which researchers would closely observe and digitally record the actions of particular writers composing a range of texts (visual, audio, alphabetic). In conducting these studies, researchers could attempt to answer questions such as:

- What composing strategies and rhetorical assumptions do students employ consistently across diverse modalities?
- What composing strategies and rhetorical assumptions do students employ only for particular modalities of composing?
- What kinds of terminology do students use to describe their experiences composing in differing modalities? What kinds of terminology help students draw connections among diverse modalities of composing? What kinds of terminology help students consider the unique aspects of each composing modality?

As we seek to answer these types of research questions, we should not only turn to the tradition of composition scholarship but also to the work of scholars in other allied fields. Indeed, although compositionists since the mid 1980s have largely moved away from attempting to develop generalizable theories of creativity, scholars in the fields of design studies (Cross; Lawson) and “cognitive science in the humanities” (Hogan) have continued to explore how cognitive research on creativity might elucidate similarities in
the creative processes of writers, artists, designers and musicians. At this current moment
in which compositionists are increasingly seeking to help students draw connections
among multiple modalities of composing, it is important that we reclaim our heritage as a
field dedicated to the interdisciplinary study of composing across modalities—that we
rejoin some of the interdisciplinary conversations (about creativity, for example) that we
too hastily left behind.

**Principle #3:**

**Multimodal composing activities need not necessarily be digital**

Often, when we advocates of digital multimodal composing present our work to
colleagues, we tend to focus on how we are teaching students to compose multimodal
texts using such relatively new and relatively expensive technologies as iMovie, Flash,
digital video cameras, high-end digital audio recorders, and Photoshop. Although it is
useful to explore how these emergent digital technologies enable new possibilities for
composing texts that blend words, images, and sounds, we must keep in mind that
multimodal composing activities need not necessarily be digital. Indeed, in the 1970s
before the rise of the personal computer, numerous compositionists experimented with
teaching students to compose audio, visual, and multimodal texts using such nondigital
technologies as tape recorders, slide projectors, film-based cameras, pens, paper, and
embodied gestures (Winchester; Williamson; Shor; Kligerman; Burnett and Thomason).

**Composition Class Implications.** In many contemporary institutional contexts,
composition teachers have little or no access to up-to-date computer labs, little or no
access to high-end digital recording equipment (cameras, audio recorders). And, even
when composition teachers are lucky enough to have the latest technologies available to them, they still may not have the time and the human support they need to learn how to utilize these technologies in their teaching. Although lack of technology resources and support can certainly limit teachers’ options for integrating multimodal composing into their classes, there are still many ways that teachers can make a multimodal turn without the latest technological tools. Outside the computer classroom, teachers can engage students in such multimodal activities as drawing sketches, collaging printed images, collaboratively dictating texts, and making embodied movements. In a low-tech computer environment without access to specialty software or expensive recording equipment, teachers can engage students in digital multimodal composing using commonly available proprietary software (PowerPoint) or free open source alternatives (Audicity; Jahshaka). Students can take images using disposable digital cameras, or they can remix Creative-Commons images found on the internet; students can record sounds using inexpensive or built-in computer microphones, or they can even create an audio essay composed entirely of remixed audio clips (speeches, music) harvested from the web.

Indeed, we should remember that lower-tech and/or nondigital possibilities for multimodal composing are valuable in their own right: the latest technology is not always preferable to the older versions; the digital is not always preferable to the nondigital. Even if we have access to the latest technologies for digital video and photography, we still might also want to give students the opportunity to sketch out ideas on paper—to explore, for example, the potentially unique affordances of pen and paper sketching as a method of invention. Even if we have access to expensive proprietary composing software and expensive recording equipment, we might still want to teach students to
compose using the kinds of inexpensive or free recording equipment and software that will be most available to them in their lives beyond our high-tech classes.

Curricular/Institutional Implications. As we seek to integrate multimodal production into composition courses (and English studies courses more broadly), we should be careful not to unwittingly define multimodal composing in exclusively digital terms. Although it certainly can be useful to provide workshops for colleagues on multimodal composing with new technologies, we should be careful to frame these new technologies as only one of the many options available for integrating multimodality into composition classes. For example, rather than presenting a workshop on the use of Photoshop or iMovie for composition (as I have done in the past), we might instead present more broadly-framed workshops on visual production in the composition classroom, engaging participants in employing both nondigital and digital means for producing visual texts. As we seek to develop and nurture multimodal teaching communities, we should work to make sure that the voices of all teachers—both those who teach in computer classrooms and those who do not—are included in our conversations.30

Research Implications. As scholars such as Gunther Kress, Theo Van Leeuwen, and Anne Wysocki have argued, differing forms of media offer unique affordances for communication. For example, an image drawn in crayon on paper will convey a different message than a similar image drawn digitally and displayed on screen. Extending this

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30 Although I think it important that we value nondigital forms of multimodal composing, I nevertheless would like to argue that it is important for all teachers to also integrate digital forms of composing into their classes as well. After all, if English teachers reject digital multimodal composing entirely, we will risk becoming increasingly irrelevant to the civic lives of many young people.
research on the affordances of diverse media, we might explore whether or not diverse media technologies have unique strengths and limitations for supporting the invention and revision of alphabetic texts. In particular, we might ask questions such as: Does sketching on paper tend to encourage composers to consider different possibilities for revision than creating a digital visual collage? Does digitally recording and editing a conversation offer differing affordances for inventing alphabetic writing than talking aloud into a tape recorder (or talking aloud without recording at all)?

In investigating these kinds of questions, we might conduct exploratory case studies of a single student (or group of students) employing diverse media for invention over a period of time, gathering insights from observations and interviews about the specific affordances of each of the digital and nondigital technologies of invention that the student(s) used. Or, we might also consider comparing a group of students completing a digital revision activity with a group of students completing a nondigital revision activity, attempting to uncover similarities and differences in the types of revisions the two groups made. Although these exploratory case studies would not be able to demonstrate definitively the unique affordances of various forms of media for inventing and revising alphabetic texts, they could nevertheless help us gain a more nuanced understanding of the issues we should take into account when we make choices about what types of media production to integrate into our pedagogies.
Principle #4: Disability offers insights for multimodal composition pedagogy

Challenging the notion that disability is a marginal concern relevant to only a few students, expressivists productively posited that the exploration of sensory disabilities could help all students gain new sensory insights into the world and invent more creative ideas for composing (Gibson; Stewart). Although some of the expressivists’ methods for teaching about disability were problematic (see Chapter 2), they still were on the right track in implicitly suggesting that disability offers profound insights into the process of multimodal composing—that the consideration of disability entails more than providing accommodations for the occasional student.31

Extending the expressivist exploration of the intersections of disability and multimodality, more recent composition scholars (Dunn; Smagorinsky; Childers, Mullin, and Hobson) have drawn on cognitive research on multiple intelligences, learning disabilities, and learning styles to argue that all people—both those who identity as disabled and those who do not—have diverse strengths and limitations in their abilities to learn through visual, aural, alphabetic, and kinesthetic means. By providing students with choices about the modalities they use to compose, these cognitive-inflected scholars have suggested that we can ultimately enhance learning for all students including those with disabilities.

31 Although I am arguing that expressivists implicitly pointed to the ways in which disability can enable insight, I should of course note that expressivists did not explicitly use this phrase (nor did they discuss the limitations of marginalizing medical models of disability). As I pointed out in Chapter 2, my (re)reading of expressivist approaches is heavily indebted to the theoretical work of contemporary disability studies scholars such as Lennard Davis and Brenda Brueggemann.
Composition Classroom Implications. Although students who have been diagnosed with learning disabilities are often highly conscious of the modalities that best help them learn (Dunn, *Learning*), many other students have never had the occasion to consider their strengths and limitations in working with various composing modalities. Thus, in addition to providing students with choices about the modalities they can use to invent and revise alphabetic texts, we should also provide students with the opportunity to reflect critically on the strategies they use to compose—the opportunity to consider what kinds of multimodal activities will be most useful to them in their development as writers. Moreover, we should engage all students (not just those who identify as disabled) in considering the wide range of assistive technologies that they can employ for reading and writing alphabetic texts: word processors, books, screenreaders, pencils, speech to text software, picture boards to name but a few. Ultimately, rather than drawing a hierarchical distinction between “normalized” technologies (word processors, books) and “assistive” technologies (speech-to-text, screenreaders etc), we might instead teach *all* students to consider how diverse composing technologies can both assist and inhibit them in engaging in reading and writing.32

In addition to helping students explore their unique learning strengths and limitations, we also can teach students to consider the diverse abilities of the audiences for whom they are composing. At the very least, we should be asking students to follow basic accessibility guidelines for designing multimodal texts—to add captions and audio descriptors to videos, to provide transcripts or captions for audio essays, to choose color

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32 For more detailed discussions of ways to teach assistive technologies critically for a disability studies, see Lindgren (“Body Language”) and Palmeri (“Disability Studies”).
combinations that are comprehensible to people with colorblindness among many other concerns (“Guide”; Slatin and Rush; W3C). Although these technical accessibility standards are a useful baseline, they still do not fully account for the wide variety of ways in which people learn. Rather than attempting to produce a one-size-fits-all text (with limited disability accommodation), we might instead attempt to compose flexible, accessible texts which enable audience members to exercise some choice about the modalities or combination of modalities in which the content is presented.

Curricular/Institutional Implications. In order to develop multimodal pedagogies which attend to disability as a key source of insight, it may be necessary to transform the technological spaces in which we teach. Too often, we segregate assistive technologies used by students with disabilities (screen readers, speech to text programs etc) on a single accessible station—if we pay attention to assistive technologies at all. When we accede to the institutional hierarchy which privileges normalized technologies over assistive technologies, we unwittingly position disability as a concern marginal to the teaching of multimodal composing, failing to explore the ways in which a greater variety of options for composing technologies might enhance learning for all students.

In seeking to reshape our computer classrooms to be truly flexible, accessible pedagogical environments, we should consider aligning ourselves closely with scholars and teachers in the interdisciplinary field of disability studies. Indeed, as a recent collection on Disability and the Teaching of Writing suggests, many disability studies pedagogues share with advocates of digital multimodal composing a commitment to developing pedagogies that make “use of multiple literacies and embodied learning” (Lewiecki-Wilson, Brueggemann, and Dolmage v). Yet, whereas many advocates of
digital multimodal composing tend to implicitly assume that all people have the ability to access all modalities equally well (evidenced, for example, by the numerous uncaptioned videos on the *Kairos* web journal), disability studies pedagogues urge us to develop theories and practices of multimodal composing that “foreground bodily difference, rather than demand bodily and creative conformity” (Lewiecki-Wilson, Brueggemann, and Dolmage vi). Yet, of course, just as disability studies scholars have much to teach advocates of digital multimodal composing, advocates of digital multimodal composing can also play a productive role in helping disability studies teachers consider critical ways to integrate digital multimodal composing technologies into their classes.

Ultimately, digital multimodal pedagogues and disability studies teachers share an interest in valuing multiple modalities of knowing and in disrupting the disciplinary structures of the modern university. Thus, it makes sense for us to find ways to join together in the process of developing interdisciplinary multimodal pedagogical environments that enhance learning for *all* students including (but not limited to) those with disabilities.

*Research Implications.* In addition to aligning digital multimodal composition with disability studies in the realm of curricular development, we can also consider ways in which we might incorporate disability into our scholarly research. For example, we might conduct case studies of the effects of providing assistive technologies (such as screenreaders) on all stations in a computer classroom, exploring how teachers can integrate these assistive technologies into their pedagogies in ways which do and/or do not improve learning for all students. We might attempt to redesign our instructional materials in order to allow students choices of the modalities they will use for accessing
content, exploring how diverse students’ learning was and/or was not enhanced through the use of these flexible, accessible texts. We might interview and observe a range of composers with disabilities, highlighting ways in which their diverse embodied experiences can provide insights into multimodal composition pedagogy. Rather than viewing disability as a concern marginal to research on multimodal composing, we might ultimately come to see the consideration of disability as key to understanding multimodality.

**Principle #5:**

**Analysis and production are interconnected activities**

As cultural studies pedagogies have come to prominence in the past 15 years (Berlin, *Rhetorics, Poetics*; George and Trimbur; Fitz and France), it has become increasingly common for compositionists to engage students in writing critical alphabetic essays about popular visual and multimodal texts; nevertheless, it remains quite rare for compositionists to teach students to produce visual and multimodal texts themselves. Yet, if we turn back to the social pedagogies of Corbett and Shor, we can be reminded that the teaching of analysis and the teaching of production are deeply interconnected activities. For example, Corbett’s work suggests that we can help students critically interrogate the pathetic and ethical appeals of multimedia texts if we engage them in crafting those kinds of appeals themselves. Similarly, Shor’s work suggests that experience in multimedia production can ultimately help students to become more critical of the ways in which multimedia texts construct particular versions of reality that support particular ideological points of view.
Composition Classroom Implications. As we work to integrate multimodal composing activities into composition classes, we should consider ways that multimodal composing assignments can be designed to support students’ development of critical analytic skills. If teachers want to help students analyze how multimedia texts manipulate emotions, they might design a multimodal assignment that specifically asks students to make choices about how to select and arrange images, sounds, and words in order to produce a particular emotional effect. In order to teach students to analyze the ways in which photographs are always ideologically-loaded selections of reality, teachers might ask students to go out and take pictures of an event on campus and then edit (crop, filter) those pictures in multiple ways to construct differing versions of the reality of that event. In order to help students invent ideas for writing critically about advertisements, teachers might ask students to create subvertisements, or paraodies, of multimodal advertising texts (in the style of Adbusters). In the process of considering ways to create a successful parody of a multimodal advertising text, students might think in increasingly careful ways about how advertising achieves its effects as well as about some of the broader material concerns (e.g. unjust labor practices, sexist imagery, unhealthy ingredients) that advertising tends to efface or gloss over. These are but a few examples of how multimodal production assignments can be designed to help students develop critical analytical insights. Ultimately, in attempting to connect media analysis and media production, teachers will need to consider carefully what technologies they have available and what critical analytic skills they want students to develop.

Curricular/Institutional Implications. Of course, compositionists are not the only scholars in English studies who have an interest in teaching students to analyze visual and
multimodal texts. For example, scholars of medieval manuscripts have a strong interest in teaching students to consider the relationship between words and images as do scholars in the burgeoning field of periodical studies. Similarly, scholars of film, folklore, and popular culture have a rather obvious stake in teaching students to analyze critically texts that blend words, images, and (in some cases) sounds. In this way, we can see that multimodal production can play a central role in English studies pedagogy as a whole—that it is possible to design multimodal composing assignments which work to enable students to become more astute critical analysts of the diverse visual, audio, and multimodal texts they encounter in English Studies classes.

*Research Implications.* In addition to considering ways that multimodal production might help students become more critical readers of multimodal texts, we should similarly seek to demonstrate the interconnection of multimodal analysis and production in our own scholarly work. I would contend that we will be much better able to analyze critically the multimodal texts our students produce if we ourselves have experience producing these kinds of texts.\(^3\) Furthermore, we might be able to offer a more nuanced understanding of the rhetorical and ethical challenges of remixing audio and visual texts if we both analyzed and *produced* remixed artifacts. Just as we have long

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\(^3\) Of course, as I discussed in the opening chapter, there still are many institutional constraints (graduate school requirements, job market pressures, promotion and tenure requirements) which work to privilege alphabetic writing over other modalities of scholarly composing. We still have much work to do to convince our colleagues in our departments and universities that multimodal composing can be as rigorous of a form of analytical scholarship as the more conventional alphabetic text. Even if we might not wish to risk including a heavily multimodal component in such high stakes documents as a dissertation (as obviously I did not), it is still highly valuable to craft multimodal pieces of analytic scholarship for conference presentations and on-line journal publications. Indeed, some compositionists have already begun to compose digital multimodal scholarly texts. For some particularly compelling examples, see Anderson, Ellertson, Ross, and Wysocki (“Bookling”).
recognized that teachers of writing should themselves be active writers (Emig), so too must we come to recognize that teachers of multimodal composing should themselves be active multimodal composers. Indeed, by engaging in multimodal composing ourselves, we might be able to productively extend composition’s multimodal heritage—to invent some new principles which can help us radically reimagine what it means to be a compositionist in the digital multimodal age.
EPILOGUE:

STORIES LEFT UNTOLD

One the one hand, the composition history I have offered here is profoundly revisionist. Whereas most composition historians have defined composition as a discipline focused on alphabetic text, I have sought to explore the ways in which compositionists have historically engaged multiple modalities of composing. Yet, on the other hand, the history I have offered here is distressingly traditional, uncomfortably conservative. In attempting to place multimodality at the center of composition studies in 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, I have focused my attention particularly on rereading the work of those scholars that Berlin found to be central to the development of the discipline. Of course, as subsequent historians have noted, Berlin’s selection of canonical composition scholars was disproportionately white and disproportionately male (Royster and Williams). So too, unfortunately, is mine. It is worth noting that both Berlin and I share the limitation of seeing the world from the perspective of a privileged white male—a perspective from which it is all too easy to ignore the raced and gender implications of scholarly choices.

In seeking to recover the multimodal heritage of composition studies, it is important that we look beyond the predominantly white, male canonical figures of
Berlin’s disciplinary narrative (and that we also elucidate elements of composition’s multimodal heritage that predate the 1960s). For example, we might explore the ways in which teachers at the Bryn Mawr Summer School For Women Workers developed and enacted a pedagogy that united the teaching of speaking, writing, dramatics, and drawing (Hollis). We might consider what we could learn about the politics of digital audio production by revisiting the pedagogical practices of African-American elocutionists such as Hallie Quinn Brown (Kates). We might analyze ways in which Geneva Smitherman sought to develop composition pedagogies that drew connections between the spoken discourse and alphabetic writing of African-American students. We might consider ways in which Ann Berthoff outlined a profoundly multimodal vision of composition pedagogy which implicitly synthesized expressivist, cognitivist and social approaches.

In other words, in this dissertation I have barely begun to scratch the surface of the contributions that women, people of color, and other marginalized groups have made to theorizing multimodal composing; much research remains to be done if we are to develop a truly inclusive, truly diverse narrative of what it means to be a multimodal compositionist…
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