Towards a dialogic theory of new media literacy

S. Scott Graham

Iowa State University

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Towards a dialogic theory of new media literacy

by

Samuel Scott Graham

A thesis submitted to the graduate faculty
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
MASTER OF ARTS

Major: Rhetoric, Composition, and Professional Communication

Program of Study Committee:
Michael Mendelson, Major Professor
Lee Honeycutt
Volker Hegelheimer

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Graduate College
Iowa State University

This is to certify that the master’s thesis of

Samuel Scott Graham

has met the thesis requirements of Iowa State University

Signatures have been redacted for privacy
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Acknowledgements

This thesis represents much more than two years of individual dedication. Bringing these ideas to fruition was never simply a matter of introspective contemplation. Dialogism is not, for me, a convenient rhetorical ploy. It is only through the often lengthy and sometimes painful process of dialogic debate that I have been able to bring these ideas to their current form. I cannot take the time to individually thank everyone who disagreed with me along the way, so I regret that I must thank all of you *en masse*. Without your willingness to participate in these discussions, few of these ideas would have come to fruition.

Specifically, I’d like to thank Lee Honeycutt for all his advice and support during this project. I’d also like to thank Volker Hegelheimer; without his encouragement of my explorations into technology, I may not have been able to pursue this line of research. Irene Faass also deserves my thanks. Her personal and professional support and encouragement have been instrumental to my work so far. She deserves a great deal of credit for steering me in the direction of composition studies. I also need to thank my mother for steering me towards this discipline, and for all her help and guidance along the way.

Most importantly, I’d like to thank Michael Mendelson, without whom none of this would have been possible. He has guided me along through this project from its inception, and I greatly appreciate his willingness to support my goals of bringing classical philosophy and new media studies together. His support, guidance, and critique have been of immeasurable importance in my scholarly development.
Introduction

Video conferencing: it's new; it's flashy; it's cutting edge. It's also becoming more and more prevalent. In many ways, it's the archetype of contemporary communication technologies. There are a variety of video conferencing software providers besides Adobe and ePop (pictured below). Indeed, the proliferation of video conferencing software providers underscores the importance and frequency of the process. The growing ubiquity of video conferencing (and other information/communication technologies) should prompt in communication and literacy instructors a variety of questions that go well beyond the scope of using a specific technology. In the example above (Adobe Breeze), the communicator is simultaneously managing audio, video, written, and visual communication artifacts. He's delivering a presentation, engaging in live chat, and making use of the multimedia presentation to the right. But it's not just the communicator. How are the audience members assimilating all of this information from all of these modes? More and more frequently communicators, not only in corporate America, must navigate and negotiate a variety of communicative modes and media simultaneously. Nor are these interactions limited to lecture/presentation style formats. The ePop conference on the right exhibits multiple participants engaging in collaborative discourse.
The potentialities of video conferencing go well beyond simply taking a meeting from the board room to the web. They go beyond local presentations and collaborative interactions. More and more frequently globalization brings disparate discourse communities into contact with one another. These rhetors must not only negotiate multimodal technology; they must also account for the growing audience diversity in their professional interactions.

As I mentioned above, video conferencing and the corporate business world are not the only areas in which communicators will have to interact with multimodal texts and diverse audiences. As access to high-speed internet increases, many websites are developing more and more interactive multimedia environments. The once text-only print publication of television listings now exists in a variety of photo-rich print forms, and an even broader range of video/ audio enhanced TV stations and websites. The TV Guide channel has become the ultimate exercise in multimodality. Not only is there the written information of the TV listings, the channel regularly deploys audio and video previews simultaneously for different shows. Again communicators and audiences must anticipate a variety of perspectives and negotiate knowledge and meaning in a variety of modes. As these examples need not be corporate, they need not be entertainment based either. Take the example of the Wikipedia—a collaboratively authored encyclopedia of general knowledge wherein all readers are invited to edit and contribute. Anyone on the planet can contribute to the Wikipedia, but that does not make it a frivolous repository of facts and musings. An entire community dedicated to the accuracy of the Wikipedia has come into being crafting the site into something could become no less accurate than the Encyclopedia Britannica.

I could go on with example after example, but I think my point has been made. Through these examples, I envision several questions about how rhetors and readers can navigate and negotiate these communicative artifacts. Furthermore, I ask how rhetors and readers can transition between communicative artifacts. The rhetorical implications of these diverse communicative situations are nothing if not broad. Setting these questions aside for a brief moment, there is one overriding question that must be addressed first: Isn’t it composition instruction’s job to prepare students to negotiate and navigate within and between these communicative situations?
In the foreword to *Literacy Theory in the Age of the Internet*, Gregory Ulmer identifies three traditional goals of literacy instruction: 1) “The ability to write...the ability to transform information into knowledge using the practices of literacy,” 2) “Critical thinking and the ability to recognize the difference between a true and a false argument,” and 3) “Self-knowledge” (x). Ulmer contends that these goals need to be reconceived to account for contemporary epistemology and the broad acceptance of new communication technologies. In order to approach this reconception, I suggest that we, as a discipline, evaluate the underlying motivations for the goal of improving student writing. Do we teach writing because there is intrinsic value in the written word? Do we teach writing because we enjoy the aesthetics of properly constructed prose? In short, do we teach writing because it is an end unto itself? I genuinely hope that all composition instructors can answer ‘yes’ to each of these questions. However, at the same time I also hope that our fundamental goal for writing instruction is to prepare our students for communicative success in academia and beyond. If communicative success is, indeed, our goal, then our literacy theory must meet the demands brought about by the fact that writing is not the only mode our students will be using to communicate.

Certainly Ulmer is not the only person calling for the reconception of composition pedagogy. Indeed, the concept has so effectively permeated the discipline that College Composition and Communication has authored a specific statement of goals on the subject calling for a composition pedagogy that can “provide students with opportunities to [reflectively] apply digital technologies to solve substantial problems common to the academic, professional, civic, and/or personal realm of their lives” (Yancy et al. 786). I think most composition/communication instructors would agree that the “reflective application of digital technologies” will involve fostering in students a critical awareness of the rhetorical ramifications for using these digital technologies—something I call new media literacy.

As we seek to define the role of new media in the composition classroom, a variety of distinct and sometimes irreconcilable strains of literacy theory come into play. The multiplicity of literacy theories available today is entirely a good thing. Literacy studies as a field (or rather an amalgam of fields) may now be embracing the challenge of Patricia Bizzell
to proceed dialogically. Rather than having a body of theory wherein the latest idea supplants and overwrites all prior work, new work is engaging in active dialogue with past work. The goal of this dialogue is not to help produce a lasting synthesis, nor the new final word, but the best theory for the time and situation—i.e., a system wherein “an argument is provisionally correct if it carries the day, but is always subject to dialectical revision” (Bizzell 148).

The dialogic approach to the literacy argument called for by Bizzell is not only applicable to the theoretical argumentative practice but also to literacy theory itself. “I would like to suggest a rhetorical view that offers both a better understanding of how to argue and a better understanding of literacy itself” (Bizzell 148, emphasis added). Grounding our working literacy theories in dialogic principles may be the best way to account for contemporary communication exigencies. It is for this reason that I argue for a dialogic approach to literacy theory that would account for 1) the effect of information and communication technologies (ICTs) on communication practice, and 2) contemporary epistemological practice and its realization through ICTs.

Bizzell grounds her argumentative approach in the Sophistic theory of rhetoric-as-epistemic—a system wherein “knowledge is not a content conveyed by rhetoric; knowledge is what ensues when rhetoric is successful, when rhetorician and audience reach agreement” (149). This description of rhetorical argumentative praxis resonates well with Bakhtinian epistemology, which posits that truth is “born in the point of contact among various consciousnesses” and “requires a plurality of consciousness” (Poetics 65-66, emphasis added). Bakhtin objects to an environment of “philosophical monologism wherein the] genuine interaction of consciousnesses is impossible” (Poetics 66). He is famous for his radical and imaginative synthesis of seemingly disparate and irreconcilable ideology. It is this capacity for imaginative synthesis in dialogic theories of communication that I hope will be fruitful in addressing the goal of student communicative success in new media literacy theory.

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1 Bizzell uses the term “dialectically,” (149) but Michael Mendelson’s more recent work on Protagorean antilogic forces us to consider “dialogism” a more appropriate term for Sophistic theory (62-63).
By taking advantage of this resonance between Sophistic and Bakhtinian dialogic theories, I hope to help composition studies to develop a literacy theory that meets not only Ulmer's goals above, but also addresses other exigencies brought about by the growing ubiquity of ICTs. I should note, however, the limits of what I'm trying to address. Despite my nod to epistemologies of imaginative synthesis, a comprehensive integration of the myriad available literacy theories is beyond the scope of this thesis. In a body of theory that includes work ranging in focus from remedial adult education, children's first literate practices, and cultural literacies to a multiplicity of theories for particular representational systems, it is important for new work to define its scope. In this thesis, I focus explicitly on a conception of literacy as post-secondary communicational skills. My approach and frame of reference is certainly Western and arguably Anglo-Austral-American. In short, I hope to explore what it means to be literate in the Western academic and professional discourse communities given the effects of ICTs. I conduct this exploration via three chapters as described below:

Chapter 1

In Chapter 1: Literacy Theory Meets New Media, I explore the historical relationship between theories of literate practices and rhetorical theories for ICTs and multimodality. Though this chapter takes some time to explore tensions among varied literacy theories, its primary goal is to develop a discrete list of issues that literacy theory needs to address to meet the challenges offered by ICTs. This list is certainly not exhaustive, but it represents some of the most important considerations identified by literacy theorists looking to address the role of new media.

Chapter 2

In Chapter 2: Theoretical Jazz, I will explore how Bakhtinian speech-genre theory and neo-Sophistic epistemology are appropriate for use in this new literacy theory. Though neither of these schemata were explicitly designed to address the role of ICTs and multimodality in communicative praxis, they can be appropriated with minimal adaptation. Chapter 2 discusses both the primary hindrance to this adaptation—the fact that these
theories were developed during times of verbal primacy—and how that hindrance can be overcome.

Chapter 3

Chapter 3: Pedagogical Implementation will begin with a coherent articulation of this new literacy theory’s student learning objectives. After grounding these objectives in a particular pedagogical and institutional context, I will propose a new media literacy protocurriculum consisting of three pedagogical units and eight assignments. From this point I will explore various procedural and evaluative issues surrounding the implementation of these units and assignments, and end with a discussion of how these assignments can help students meet the previously identified literacy goals.

Through these three chapters I hope to explore both a robust theorization of new media literacy and the beginning of an effective new media pedagogy. As I’ve alluded to there is a great deal of both theoretical and pedagogical new media scholarship today. What is needed, as Bizzell advocates, is a dialogic approach to this work—not an approach that merely seeks to synthesize or compare and reject, but an approach of plurality.
Chapter 1: Literacy Meets New Media

Literacy theory is as vast and all encompassing as any single rhetorical discipline—perhaps as expansive as several combined. What began largely as a remedial discipline devoted to combating adult illiteracy has exploded into a broad reaching network of sub-disciplines ranging from post-secondary alphabetic literacy, critical literacy, and multicultural literacy to a whole host of modally specific and technologically orientated literacy theories. While I argue that each of these sub-disciplines—and many others—connect in a variety of locations, several of these approaches are much more relevant to the tasks of this thesis. Though it will take some time for me to tease out a succinct definition of “literacy,” the foci of this thesis revolve around adult communication practices. Literacy theories designed for remedial adult education have a tangential relationship at best. Though I hope to develop a theory that can coordinate well with many of the concepts in multicultural literacy, it too is beyond the scope of this work. This focus on adult communication practices is not intended to be acontextual. Indeed, I am exploring how literacy theory can account for post-secondary communication practices in the very real, very contemporary context of new media and ICTs.

Literacy theorists who discuss new media and ICTs tend to fall along a broad spectrum. Many individual literacy theorists are differentiated only by subtle distinctions and gradations. Rather than be 100% and completely exhaustive—a fool’s errand—in my exploration of these varied theorists, I am taking the standard academic short-cut and creating functional groups. As with most artificially created academic groups, there will be much overlap between the members of one group and the next. However, I believe the project of grouping still serves a useful purpose. In this case in particular, I hope to use these groupings to help identify some of the overarching tendencies in the field, and to make manifest some of the underlying tensions. However, I am also focusing on a spectrum arrangement so as to avoid any undo privileging resultant from more vertical taxonomy. Though I, too, must fall somewhere along this spectrum, and that positioning comes with its own set of preferences.
and biases, I still argue that each of the following groups brings highly valuable propositions to the literacy debates.

These caveats aside, new media literacy theory seems to span a spectrum including three primary camps espousing three primary perspectives: 1) traditional literacy, 2) multiliteracies, and 3) hybrid literacy. The first camp—traditional literacy—is hallmarked by its focus on (and in some cases privileging of) the role alphabetic and linguistic literacy in new media communication. Multiliteracies theorists are in many ways an explicit rejection of the first group’s frame of reference arguing that literacy theory cannot focus on any single representational mode in today’s interculturally connected society. Hybrid literacy theorists are for the most part an extension of the multiliteracies camp. They argue for a system wherein one of the recognized multiliteracies is a combined multimodal literacy. Though some of the multiliteracies theorists I discuss do acknowledge hybrid literacies, they tend to focus on the flexibility required to navigate a whole host of literacies—including hybrid. By contrast the hybrid literacy group focuses explicitly on the role of hybrid practices in new media communication.

**Traditional Literacy**

Before I launch headlong into my exploration of this traditional literacy camp, allow me to take a moment to clarify exactly who I’m talking about. (My use of the term “traditional” brings with it some potential for confusions.) Once again, the focus of this thesis is new media literacy. So by “traditional,” I refer to the more traditional new media literacy theorists. There are, indeed, far more traditional literacy scholars who do not even acknowledge the role of new media communication in literacy education. These theorists lie well beyond the scope of this work. In this context, the traditionalists are those who focus on the role of alphabetic literacy practice in new media communication.

“Traditional” does not always mean first either. Indeed, Anne Francis Wysocki’s traditionalist stance can be seen most clearly in her response to other new media literacy scholarship. In “Opening New Media to Writing,” Wysocki argues simply that “[N]ew media needs to be open to writing...needs to be informed by what writing teachers know, precisely
because writing teachers focus specifically on texts and how situated people (learn how to) use them to make things happen” (“Opening” 5). Wysocki is concerned, and in some cases with good reason, that new media literacy theory is so excited about what’s new in new media, that it neglects and devalues the role of alphabetic literacy. She specifically critiques much of new media literacy theory for not even being willing to admit writing practice into their new literacy discussions (5). Wysocki argues that instead of rejecting writing, literacy theory and composition pedagogy ought to add the tools of new media to its existing repertoire. Rather than replace writing with new media composition, instructors ought to rely on what they already know—a rhetorical appreciation of writing and communication—and use that knowledge to inform their new media theory and pedagogy. In some respects, Wysocki seems to be expressing a concern that new media literacy theory may be—to use a silly metaphor—throwing the baby out with the bath water. Without the valuable rhetorical skills developed from centuries of focus on writing, new media theory may have “little or nothing that encourages some one composing a Web page to think about how and why, in her place and time, her choices of color and typeface and words and photograph and spatial arrangement shape the relationship she is construction with her audience…” (“Opening” 6).

Wysocki’s suggestions on how to open new media to writing involve primarily a redefinition of new media. She seeks to move definitions of new media away from a focus on ICTs and the digital. Wysocki suggests, rather, that new media should be defined through “materialities.” Under this schema, new media texts are “those that have been made by composers who are aware of the range of materialities of texts and who then highlight the materiality” (“Opening” 15). Here new media artifacts are any communicative artifact “designed so that its materiality is not effaced” (“Opening” 15). New media is new media because the medium was explicitly chosen for its rhetorical effect. These texts are designed so the medium is not transparent, so the medium carries epistemological and hermeneutic value. Under this definition, new media need not be deployed via ICTs, rather even chiseled
letters on stone tablet can be new media, if the stone was specifically chosen for rhetorical effect.2

This extension of new media to even more representational forms may cause some of Wysocki’s readers to question my placement of her in the camp of the traditionalists. Perhaps one might ask, “doesn’t the above indicate an enfranchisement of new media communication as equally valid for rhetorical consideration?” In many ways it does, and that is one of the great strengths of Wysocki’s new media theories. However, her pedagogical implementation demonstrates a strong support of verbal representational systems over others. Wysocki suggests six different assignments or activities of varying levels of complexity (“Opening” 24-41). These assignments are designed to accommodate a variety of new media literacy goals. One overarching theme/ goal is to foster in students an appreciation of new media under Wysocki’s new definition of materialities. Table 1 lists the assignments in order of appearance in the chapter and identifies the modes in which students view (analyze and evaluate), produce, and reflect. A quick assessment of the modalities for each assignment reveals the following:

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<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
<th>Students View</th>
<th>Students Produce</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Visual Arguments</td>
<td>Written</td>
<td>Oral/ Written</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Written</td>
<td>Written</td>
<td>Oral/ Written</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Written/ Visual</td>
<td>Written</td>
<td>Oral/ Written</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Electronic</td>
<td>Written/ Visual</td>
<td>Oral/ Written</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Visual</td>
<td>Visual Argument</td>
<td>Oral/ Written</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Visual Argument</td>
<td>Oral</td>
<td>Oral/ Written</td>
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Even though Wysocki is focusing on new media, she is explicitly suggesting a pedagogy heavily grounded in verbal modalities. Student production and reflection are almost entirely verbal, whether oral or written. She suggests asking students to produce two visual documents: One is a visual argument and the other is visual layout of a verbal/textual print document. One of her discussion questions for assignment four, website analysis, sheds

2 Indeed, if someone were to design a stone tablet text today, it would almost assuredly have to be new media. The stone would necessarily have to be chosen with intent, being a rather uncommon medium in contemporary communication.
even more light on her view of the relationship between electronic and traditional print documents, "You might also ask them to think about how what they observed today could be applied in print texts that they produce" (33). Though this and questions like it can be a very important part of preparing students to communicate multimodal, seldom is the question reversed; seldom is the focus on the non-verbal. As will be discussed in more detail later, much of literacy theory’s implementation in pedagogy is superficial. It is frequently used merely as a vehicle to return to the "real work" of composition—writing (see Selfe, "Towards New Media Texts"; Williams, “Part 1”).

At the risk of sounding like a traditionalist apologist, I must note that Wysocki makes some very valuable contributions to new media literacy theory, especially in terms of her call for a rhetorically informed new media (literacy) theory. The disciplines that discuss literacy have developed the bulk of their theory through work with alphabetic representational praxis, and it would be foolish to throw that expertise away simple because non-alphabetic communication gains more importance. The grounding of new media in materialities is also an excellent way to reinforce the rhetoricality of all communication. Each of these concepts will be highly informative for this work, and I don’t want them to be lost or Wysocki’s contribution to be overlooked because of my situating her as a traditionalist, or because I am concerned about her focus on verbal practice in the composition classroom.

The exuberance for the new in new media is not the only traditionalist cautionary note worth exploring. Gunther Kress, in *Literacy in the New Media Age*, expresses great concern over the appropriation of "literacy" for the non-alphabetic. In his initial discussion of the "literacy," Kress states his position quite clearly. "To put it baldly at this point, and before I have presented the arguments, for me literacy is the term to use when we make messages using letters and the means of recording that message" (*Literacy* 23, emphasis original). Kress argues that the extension of the term to non-alphabetic representational systems is to remove the specificity and therefore the utility of the term. He argues that the extension of the term literacy to non-alphabetic practices such as to idiographic writing systems like Chinese is to further the project of western colonialism and domination (*Literacy* 22). Literacy is, in this context, a theory developed from *and* for alphabetic practices.
Kress' rejection of extended definitions of literacy echoes Anne Wysocki and Johndan Johnson-Eilola’s cautionary text, “Blinded by the Letter: Why Are We Using Literacy as a Metaphor for Everything Else?” “Blinded by the Letter” is not in any way a traditional academic text. In fact, it is an excellent example of new media in action. It is a carefully designed constellation of images and text arranged in such a way as to challenge conventional Western reading patterns. Many of the textual elements are contained in side-by-side and offset text boxes making a straightforward linear read impossible, though the text does progress mostly left to right and top down. These “bundles” of stories, quotations and images call into question the extension of literacy to so many areas. Rather than focus on what “literacy” should define, Wysocki and Johnson-Eilola propose the alternative of “articulation.” “No single term—such as “literacy”—can support the weight of the shifting, contingent activities [of contemporary communication]” (“Blinded” 366). The suggestion of “articulation” stems from the term’s multiple meanings—the construction of words and the bringing together of separate pieces, both of which are important aspects of multimodal communication. Ron Burnett also expresses concern at the extension of linguistic metaphors to non-linguistic representation systems. He argues that the use of language as an “overarching metaphor for representation and expression” is grounded in an attempt to find a rigid structure where there perhaps might not be one. For Burnett, “the issue is not only whether language is a useful metaphor (which it can sometimes be) but whether it leads to simplistic notions of visualization and communication (150).

Neither the Wysocki/Johnson-Eilola caution nor the Kress restriction of literacy to alphabetic writing are meant to suggest that literacy theory is locked in place and cannot develop. Kress argues quite the opposite by suggesting that it’s time to reevaluate literacy theory—again the theory of alphabetic practices—in light of new media and multimodality theory. More and more frequently, contemporary communication practice involves the production of texts wherein meaning is “spread across” multiple semiotic modes (Kress, Literacy 35). This role of multimodality in ICTs must force us to consider how each of the multiple representational modes functions within this environment and in relation to one another. So, indeed I do support Kress’, Wysocki’s and Johnson-Eilola’s calls for opening
new media to writing and reevaluating the role of alphabetic praxis in new media. However, the same must be done for all other representational modes.

**Multiliteracies**

Though literacy theory has changed a great deal since Patricia Bizzell’s 1988 article, “Arguing About Literacy,” the article still contains a great deal of valuable information about literacy and literacy theory. We are no longer as embroiled in the debate between “great cognitive divide” theory and the cultural literacy “corrective” that forms the backdrop for Bizzell’s article (144). However, even this earlier article begins to address the idea of “multiple literacies” (Bizzell 146), an idea Bizzell attributes to the work of cultural literacy theorists such as E.D. Hirsch (144). Cultural literacy’s project of situating literacy practices within particular socio-cultural domains necessarily entails a commitment to plurality. Although Bizzell’s ultimate argument is less about what literacy theory is most appropriate and more about how the field should conduct the literacy debate, she embraces rhetorical studies commitment to plurality and multiple perspectives (149).

The New London Group (NLG) is responsible for one of the first broadly recognized implementations of the term “multiliteracies.” The NLG began with ten scholars from various literacy studying disciplines who met for the purpose of “attempt[ing] to broaden this understanding of literacy and literacy teaching and learning to include negotiating a multiplicity of discourses” (60). This approach to multiple literacies contrasts notably with the work of earlier cultural literacy theorists like Hirsch who argued for a canonical approach to literacy in order to ground the members of a particular discourse community within the traditions of that community (Bizzell 146). The NLG, on the other hand, assumes that contemporary communication requires communicators to enter and leave multiple discourse communities on a regular basis, and subsequently those communicators need the skills to negotiate these varied communities. Concomitant with the need for communicators to negotiate multiple communities is the need for communicators to be capable of employing the communication technologies valued by the target community.

[L]iteracy pedagogy now must account for the burgeoning variety of text forms associated with information and multimedia technologies….inclu[ing] understanding and competent
control of representational forms that are becoming increasingly significant in the overall communications environment, such as visual images and their relationship to the written word—for instances, visual design in desktop publishing or the interface of visual and linguistic meaning in multimedia. (NLG 61)

The NLG adopts the term “multiliteracies” for several reasons. They argue that the term divorces a pedagogy of multiliteracies from the necessarily linguistic foundations of “mere literacy” (64). In a sense, the first meaning for “multi-” refers to precisely what would come to be known as “multimodal” (Kress and Van Leuween). The second sense of “multi-” has to do with the NLG’s “focus on the realities of increasing local diversity and global connectedness” (64). This second focus builds on the work of more traditional cultural literacy in the concern for “local diversity.” However, the simultaneous focus on “global connectedness” underscores the need for a multicultural pedagogy of plurality and flexibility. “Local diversity and global connectedness mean not only that there can be no standard; they also mean that the most important skill students need to learn is to negotiate regional, ethnic or class based dialect” (NLG 69).

The NLG are not the only theorists calling for theories of multiple literacies. In “Accumulating Literacy” Deborah Brandt argues that,

The piling up and extending out of literacy and its technologies give a complex flavor even to elementary acts of reading and writing today. Contemporary literacy learners—across positions of age, gender, race, class, and language heritage—find themselves having to piece together reading and writing experiences from more and more spheres, creating new and hybrid forms of literacy where once there might have been fewer circumscribed forms. (651)

Brandt’s focus on the multiple literacies of writing might well place her somewhere between the multiliteracies and the traditionalists camps, though she clearly focuses on the need to navigate and negotiate between multiple communities and recognizes the impact of ICTs on contemporary communication. Barbara Blakely Duffelmeyer’s work in “Critical Computer Literacy” echoes both of the NLG’s “multies.” Duffelmeyer defines critical literacy as “an awareness of the forces that affect the micro- and macro level conditions within which we acquire literacy and of how we view the uses and meanings of literacy” (290). She further argues that the contemporary ubiquity of ICT necessitates “multiple literacy requirements” (290).
Though the works of Kress and Wysocki and Johnson-Eilola prove that the debate between traditional literacy and multiliteracies is not resolved, many in literacy studies have embraced the call for multiple literacies and have gone on to develop particular literacies for particular representational systems. Many scholars first looking into non-alphabetic literacies began their work with the visual. Diana George, Cynthia Selfe, and Margaret Graham et al. have all authored work on visual literacy and pedagogy. In 2002, for example, Cynthia L. Selfe and Gail E. Hawisher offered technical communicators “A Historical Look at Electronic Literacy.” The acceptance of multiple literacies underlying this article is underscored by the article’s need to distinguish “electronic literacy” from “computer literacy” and “technological literacy” at the very outset (Selfe and Hawisher, “Electronic” 232). Literacy studies has seen an explosion of literacy theories beyond visual and electronic during the past decade. Hawisher and Selfe offer global literacies in addition to their electronic literacies (Global Literacies and “Electronic”). Myron C. Tuman edits a multi-author exploration of online literacies (Literacy Online). Ilana Snyder juxtaposes page and screen literacies and explores silicon literacies (Page to Screen; Silicon Literacies). Colin Lankshear and Michele Knobel identify their approach to contemporary literacy simply as “new literacies” (New Literacies).

Ron Burnett, in “Technology, Learning, and Visual Culture,” sums up the extension of the term literacy quite succinctly. He identifies literacy as a term extended to refer to “work with texts both from a learning and teaching perspective” (141). As the definition of a text extends to include communicative materials that are not strictly linguistic, so too must the definition of terms oriented to working with texts. For many literacy theorists, however, the extension of “text” for multiple representational forms includes an extension to multimodal communicative artifacts. This concomitant extension solicits a new literacy theory specific to multimodality.

**Hybrid Literacy**

“Hybrid literacy” is a specific term used by Craig Stroupe in “Visualizing English: Recognizing the Hybrid Literacy of Visual and Verbal Authorship on the Web,” but the
concept of “hybrids” is found in other literacy theories as well. Here I use the term to describe a variety of literacy theories seeking to supplant the dominance of any single representational system—typically visual or verbal. Stroupe describes a tendency in contemporary communication theory wherein, “verbal literacy is not replaced or buried so much as layered into a more diverse amalgamation of literacies” (608). Mary E. Hocks and Michelle R. Kendrick define hybrids as “practices that embody complexity and entangle diverse elements” (3). Though many theorists posit hybrid literacies as alternatives to monomodal privileging, there is a concern that hybrids may be described in the terminology of the Hegelian dialectic as a point where synthesis simply becomes the new thesis—the new privileged literacy (Hocks and Kendrick). Despite this potential, hybrid literacies have the potential to account for communicative situations wherein singularly, monological literacies are inadequate.

Stroupe argues that readers oriented in a logo-centric framework expect and want “words to talk to other words—to paraphrase Elbow—to combine into larger verbal structures, and to resist interruption by images, white space, hypertextual links, typographic effects, and multimedia” (619). In short, the privileging of logo-centric rhetorics inhibits readers from appreciating the knowledge constructing value of alternate modes. Stroupe ultimately argues for an approach to literacy that allows multiple modes, media, and genres to interact dialogically and heteroglossically with one another. “[R]ather than a page made monological by the dominance of either alphabetic or iconographic language, both verbal and visual elements [should be] located within a dialogically animated field of contrasting intentions” (Stroupe 622).

Stroupe grounds his hybrid literacy theory in the work of Mikhail Bakhtin. Stroupe argues for a literacy theory wherein all modes interact dialogically. For Stroupe an important consideration is not just the dialogic interaction that can occur within texts, but the dialogic interactions that occur between author and reader. “[T]he seams and margins between visual and verbal elements can become contact zones between the roles of digital editor and literate writer in which the hybrid composition practices can be perused” (Stroupe 628).

Sean D. Williams also argues for a modally unified literacy and pedagogy in “Part 1: Thinking out of the Pro-verbal Box.” He argues that composition instructors tend to “chain”
their conceptions of literate practices to writing because writing is the discipline's explicit expertise ("Part 1" 22-24). This "pro-verbal bias" is detrimental to the goals of literacy instruction in a number of ways. One primary concern is that a literacy theory of the pro-verbal bias fosters a conception that verbal representational systems are synonymous with thought, and that visual systems are unmediated perception ("Part 1" 26). Williams is concerned that this inappropriate removal of thought from visual representation will cause students to be less critical of the visual than perhaps they ought to be. Williams further argues that "the verbal bias, then, is rhetorically perilous because it does not recognize the symbolic and expressive possibilities of visuals and this encourages students to value only verbal representations when their most effective rhetorical strategy might be visual" ("Part 1" 27).

Williams concludes by arguing for an integrated pedagogy in which both visual and verbal representational systems are equally valued ("Part 1" 29-30). With such a pedagogy, students would be taught communicative practices wherein representational modes were chosen for their rhetorical effectiveness, rather than simply because of privileged status. Williams argues for a system in which students conceive of their literate practices as an amalgam of interrelated representational systems. He suggests "equip[ing] students with the skills necessary to read, write, and critique the 'old forms' of literacy—specifically verbal literacy—and to read, write and critique the 'new forms' of visual representation that exists in new digital media like the World Wide Web" ("Part 1" 29).

**Common Ground**

Whether we call them literacies, communication practices or representational practices, many theorists have embraced the need to refigure these theories to account for the effect of new media on our communicative, cultural, epistemological practices. I think many

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Henceforth, literacy: I accept the argument made by most of the above literacy theorist—i.e., the one that 'literacy' is a useful metaphor for a variety of representational practices, though I will accept it with caution and avoid attributing linguistic behaviors to non-linguistic activities.
would also agree that whatever new approaches come about, they should not supplant the
traditional goals of literacy instructions. This in mind, I have tried to distill the many
disparate goals of literacy theorists into a short list that both embraces the traditional literacy
goals (writing, critical thinking, self-knowledge) identified by Ulmer and attempts to meet
his challenge to refashion the traditional goals for multimodality and ICTs.

The following section explores a variety of approaches to the expansion of new
literacy theory. I have elected to conduct this exploration in a non-traditional way for several
reasons. First and foremost, I believe the following construction to be the most rhetorically
appropriate way to juxtapose aspects from such a wide variety of theories. Secondly, the
following serves as one example of how new media forces a reconsideration of not only
general communicative praxis but also a reconsideration/ remediation of alphabetic literacy
praxis. From this exploration I have identified four key elements of contemporary
communication that need to be addressed in a new media literacy theory:

- The role of multimodality/ ICTs in communication
- The role of provenance/ remediation in communication
- The need for communicative flexibility within and between communities
- The effects of multimodality/ ICTs on epistemic praxis

This list is not meant to be exhaustive. The rapidity of ICTs’ technological and
cultural development renders any fully applicable literacy theory irrelevant at the moment of
its conception. These key elements are identified by myself and the theorists below as those
elements that seem both most relevant and most likely to support an adaptive literacy theory
that can continue to evolve to meet the demands of the ever-changing communicative
environment.

Multimodality/ ICTs

We know that the use of these electronic technologies affects how we read and write, how we teach reading and writing and how we describe literacy practices. (Snyder “Page” xxi).
Even though we know that these effects of Snyder’s are ever present in contemporary communication, we are just beginning to explore the extent, magnitude, and character of these effects. Despite the relative youth of our multimodal communication knowledge, we are not off the hook for exploring how multimodality and ICTs will impact our literacy theory and pedagogy. Even though multimodal communication is finding broader acceptance in the literacy/composition classroom, theorists still questions whether or not that implementation is consistent with what we do know about how multimodal communication functions in the discourse communities that have embraced it.

“I would suggest, many English composition teachers have downplayed the importance of visual literacy and texts that depend primarily on visual elements because they confront us with the prospect of updating our literacies and the expense of considerable work, precious time, and a certain amount of status. Teachers continue to privilege alphabeti

c literacy over visual literacy, in other words, because they have already invested so heavily in writing, writing instruction, and writing programs—and because we have achieved some status as practitioners and specialists of writing.” (Selfe “Towards New Media Texts” 71)

“[T]here is the sense that the use of a film, for example, is just filler and learning that is more serious will only take place when the ‘hard stuff’ is discussed in the classroom.” (Burnett 146)

“[T]hose in English studies would benefit from revisiting the text/media dichotomy—particularly the dialogism between verbal and visual discourse on the single lexia.” (Stroupe 607)

“As George reminds us, when English composition teachers have thought to bring visual forms into their classes—a practice which they have carried on for at least forty years—they have typically
presented them as second-class texts: either as “dumbed down” (32) communications that serve as “stimuli for writing but [...] no substitute for the complexity of language” (22) or as texts related to, but certainly not on equal footing with the “'real' work of the course” (28).” (Selfe “New Media Texts” 71)

“[We need to] move from the assumption—implicitly or explicitly held—that linguistic theory can provide a satisfactory and generally applicable account of representation and communication, to the realisation [sic] that we need a theory which is not specific to, or derived from, one mode but which applies to all modes.” (Kress “Literacy” 41)

“Literacy pedagogy now must account for the burgeoning variety of text forms associated with information and multimedia technologies. This includes understanding and competent control of representational forms that are becoming increasingly significant in the overall communication environment, such as visual images and their relationship to the written word—for instance, visual design in desktop publishing or the interface of visual and linguistic meaning in multimedia.” (NLG 61)

“...The new multimedia environments necessitate a diversity of types of multisemiotic and multimodal interaction, involving interfacing with words and print material and often with images, graphics, and audio and video material.” (Kellner 163)

Despite the varied approaches to multimodal literacy theories, one thing that is broadly common is the suggestion that multimodal literacy is not a set of ICT skills. The focus must not simply be on the ability to produce multimodal communication, but rather on the ability to produce rhetorically effective/appropriate communication—multimodal and monomodal.
"Critical literacy is an awareness of the forces that affect the micro- and macro level conditions within which we acquire literacy and of how we view that uses and meanings of literacy. Today, the presence of computers in our culture and in the educational systems that functions to reproduce that culture creates multiple literacy requirements." (Duffelmeyer 290)

"The move toward visual rhetoric, then, does not so much seek to abandon the prestige of print in favor of a novel technology as much as it seeks to maintain the goal of effective communication by articulating the argumentative and expressive possibilities made available through integrating verbal texts with visual texts." (Williams, "Part 1" 30)

"Only rarely do we encounter a suggestion that students might become producers as well as receivers or victims of mass media, especially visual media." (George 18)

"Communicative practices always involve both representation and interaction. First of all, by communicating we interact, we do something to or for or with people- entertain them with stories, persuade them to do or think something, debate issues with them, tell them what to do, and so on. None of these communicative activations can exist without being linked to some form of representational 'content,' not online in language, but also in other modes." (Kress and Van Leeuwen "Multimodal" 114)

"To be literate in the twenty-first century means possessing the skills necessary to effectively construct and comfortably navigate multiplicity, to manipulate and critique information, representations, knowledge, and arguments in
multiple media from a wide range of sources, and to use multiple expressive technologies included those offered by print, visual, and digital tools.” (Williams, “Part 1” 22)

If a literacy theory is to account for the role of multimodality and ICTs in contemporary communication, then that theory must address the major behaviors common to those new communication practices. Though not new or unique to digital communication technologies the logic of provenance/ remediation becomes all the more prevalent due to the modal flexibility inherent in digital representational systems. Though there are other important communicative ramifications to account for as a result of multimodality, Jay David Bolter and Richard Grusin, among others, argue that the ease of remediation is one of, if perhaps not the most important consequence of broadly available digital technology (50).

Provenance/ Remediation

**Provenance:** This refers to the idea that signs may be ‘imported’ from one context (another era, social group, culture) into another, in order to signify the ideas and values associated with the other context by those who do them importing. (Kress and Van Leeuwen “Multimodal” 23)

“Digital visual media can best be understood through the ways in which they honor, rival, and revise linear-perspective painting, photography, film, television, and print. No medium today, and certainly no single media event, seems to do its cultural work in isolation from other media, any more than it works in isolation from other social and economic forces. What is new about new media comes from the particular ways in which they refashion older media and the ways in which older media refashion themselves to answer the challenges of new media.” (Bolter and Grusin 15)
“So when we argue that e-mail is a new medium, developing its own rhetorics and languages, we mean that although new, it is intimately related to its ancestors. In its gene pool are all the former and current modes and styles of human communication written and spoken.” (Moran and Hawisher “Rhetorics” 80)

“What I am saying is that media as extensions of our senses institute new ratios, not only among our private sense, but among themselves, whey they interact among themselves. Radio changed the form of the news story as much as it altered the film image in the talkies. TV caused drastic changes in radio programming, and in the form of the thing or documentary novel.” (McLuhan 53).

As McLuhan and Bolter and Grusin all note, remediation and multimodality are not new. They are not the features that make new media new. Bolter and Grusin offer a wide variety of examples of remediation that predate ICTs, that predate radio, and that predate McLuhan’s example from Yeats. However, digital media does have a special relationship with remediation.

“Remediation involves both homage and rivalry, for the new medium imitates some features of the older medium, but also makes an implicit or explicit claim to improve the older one.” (Bolter, Writing Space 23)

“The digital medium can be more aggressive in its remediation. It can try to refashion the older medium or media entirely, while still marking the presence of the older media and therefore maintaining a sense of multiplicity or hypermediacy.” (Bolter and Grusin 46)

“Finally, the new medium can remediate by trying to absorb the older medium entirely, so that the discontinuities between the two are
minimized. The very act of remediation, however, ensures that the older medium cannot be entirely effaced; the new medium remains dependent on the older one in acknowledge or unacknowledged ways." (Bolter and Grusin 47)

"Once again, what is new about digital media lies in their particular strategies for remediation television, film, photography, and painting. Repurposing as remediation is both what is “unique to digital worlds” and what denies the possibility of unawareness.” (Bolter and Grusin 50)

This capacity to single communication arguments to behave according to the logics and conventions of multiple modes and media is one of the prime reasons why a literacy theory of flexibility is needed. Most contemporary literacy theorists agree that a persons communicative life will require them to navigate and communicate in a variety of discourse communities in today’s multicultural and globally connected society. Each of these discourse communities will value different representational systems, and effective communicators will have to be flexibly multiliterate.

**Flexibility**

A fully requisite theory will rest on the understanding that the resources of representation are always in a process of change. (Kress *Literacy* 168-169)

Though much of the following focuses on multicultural multiliteracies, the effect on multimodality is quite pertinent. Consistent with the focus thus far on rhetorically aware multimodal communication, multiliterate individuals must gain facility with multiple modes for multiple discourse communities. Rhetorically aware multimodal communication involves much more than a vague awareness of generalities such as the academy’s tendency to
privilege the verbal, or senior citizens’ tendencies to be less facile with ICTs. It involves the skills of flexibility, negotiation and translating between specific communities. It involves the skills of being able to identify the communicative strategies needed for a very particular socio-cultural situation.

"Literacy "piles up" in the twentieth century, among other ways, in the rising levels of formal schooling that begin to accumulate (albeit inequitably) in families. It is useful to consider the impact of rising levels of schooling on the way that new generations of learners encounter and interpret literacy. Literacy also "piles up" in the twentieth century in a residual sense, as materials and practices from earlier times often linger at the scenes of contemporary literacy learning." (Brandt 652)

"[W]riting, like all iterate practices, only exits because it functions, circulates, shifts, and has varying value and weight within complexly articulated social, cultural, political, educational, religious, economic, familial, ecological, political, artistic, affective, and technological webs...we know that, in our places and times, writing is one of many operations by which we compose and understand ourselves and our identities and our abilities to live and work with others." (Wysocki "Opening" 2)

"It is also very clear that literacies, conceived from a sociocultural perspective generally and a multiliteracies perspective specifically,
entail a vast amount of knowledge. Being literate involves much more than simply knowing how to operate the language system. The cultural and critical facets of knowledge integral to being literate are considerable. Indeed, much of what the proponents of multiliteracies have explicated are the new and changing knowledge components of literacies under contemporary social, economic, political and civic conditions. In other words, being literate in any of the myriad forms literacies takes presupposes complex amalgams of propositional, procedural and 'performative' forms of knowledge." (Lankshear and Knobel 13).

"I argue that educators need to cultivate multiple literacies for our multicultural society, that we need to develop new literacies of diverse sorts, including a more fundamental importance for print literacy, to meet the challenge of restructuring education for a high tech, multicultural society, and global culture." (Kellner 154).

"Preparing the current generation of students to become literate is difficult, not only because it is uncertain what the literacies of the future will be, but also because the task falls to educators who are not fully literate themselves in the use of these new technologies." (Snyder “Silicon Literacies” 3-4)

"Literacy involves gaining the skills and knowledge to read and interpret the text of the world and to successfully navigate and negotiate its challenges, conflicts, and crises. Literacy is thus a necessary condition to equip people to participate in the local, national, and global economy, culture, and polity." (Kellner 157)
The goal of flexibility is not solely focused on effective communication. The ability to adapt to a variety of discourse communities can include with it the ability to recognize multiple perspectives. It is this ability to recognize multiple perspectives that is a key facet to our current view of epistemology. In a system where functional truth is negotiated within particular discourse communities, people need to be equipped with the skills to recognize and contrastively evaluate a multiplicity of perspectives.

**Multimodal Epistemology**

The role of pedagogy is to develop an epistemology of pluralism that provides access without people having erase or leave behind different subjectivities. (NLG 72)

The window pane of logical positivism has been thoroughly debunked in most academic discourse communities. This entire thesis is attempting to operate in a mode of dialogic epistemology. Despite the outright support of dialogic and neo-Sophistic epistemologies offered by most of the theorists cited herein, the pejorative connotations for “relativism” necessitate some comment. Though a total defense of relativist epistemology is beyond the scope of this thesis, it is important to note the undercurrent of relativism apparent in much of what follows. Contemporary linguistic and semiotic theory may not necessitate an embrace of relativism, they certainly call into question many of the idealist alternatives.

“Contemporary theory thus makes it difficult to believe in language as a neutral, invisible conveyor of fully present meaning either between speaker/writer and listener/reader or between subjects and objects, people and the world. Instead, language is regarded as an active and visible mediator that fills up the space between signifying subjects and nature. But language is not the only mediator; it operates just as visual media operate in their tasks of remediation. Postmodern theory errs
in trying to isolate language as a cultural force, for it fails to appreciate how language interacts with other media, other technologies, and other cultural artifacts.” (Bolter and Grusin 57)

“[T]he entire epistemological base on which school approaches to knowledge and learning are founded is seriously challenged and, we think, made obsolete by the intense digitization of daily life.” (Lankshear and Knobel 155)

In trying to isolate language as a cultural force, for it fails to appreciate how language interacts with other media, other technologies, and other cultural artifacts.” (Bolter and Grusin 57)

“[T]he standard epistemology that is employed in education constructs knowledge as something that is carried linguistically and expressed in sentences or propositions and theories. As we have seen, however, the multimedia realm of digital ICTs make normal the radical convergence of text, image, and sound in ways that break down the primacy of propositional linguistic forms of ‘truth bearing.’” (Lankshear and Knobel 171)

“[W]hat is lacking in recent attitudes to literacy is the recognition of how technology, in defining the medium of communication creates the very atmosphere in which we function, creates what Greg Ulmer in Teltheory refers to as “the conditions of explanation itself”(xii)—and in so doing hides as background, as give, as universal truths, many of our most basic assumptions about literacy.” (Tuman, “First Thoughts” 5)

“Michael Apple (1991), for example, cautioned that this technology is not “Just an assemblage of machines and their accompanying software...[but] a forming of thinking that orients the person to approach the world in particular way” (p. 75), and that computer use in classrooms must

4 Though the epistemology ultimately suggested by Lankshear and Knobel is clearly not neo-Sophistic, their enjoinders to reevaluate educational epistemology to account for multimodality and ICTs are no less valid.
therefore be accompanied by an examination of what he calls why issues (as opposed to the simple how-to issues) or what Selfe (1999) called simply, "paying attention" to important technology-related issues." (Duffelmeyer 293)

“There is a consequence for notions of meaning: if the meaning of a message is realised, 'spread across', several modes, we need to know on what basis this spreading happens, what principles are at work. Equally, in reading, we need now to gather meaning from all the modes which are co-present in a text, and new principles of reading will be at work. Making meaning in writing and making meaning in reading both have to be newly thought about.” (Kress Literacy 35)

“A central aim of effective literacy education in the electronic age is to provide students with opportunities to learn not only how to communicate more effectively, but also how to respond in critical and informed ways to the disintegration of conventional world views, world orders and social formations, a process mediated and accelerated by the availability of increasingly sophisticated electronic technologies.” (Snyder “Communication" 181)

“By adding a focus on visual literacy to our existing focus on alphabetic literacy, we may not only learn to pay some serious attention to the ways which students are now ordering and making sense of the world through production and consumption of visual images, but we may also extend the usefulness of composition studies in a changing world.” (Selfe “Toward New Media Texts 72)
"[H]uman knowledge, when it is applicable to practices, is primarily situated in sociocultural settings and heavily contextualized in specific knowledge domains and practices. Such knowledge is inextricably tied to the ability to recognize and act on patterns of data and experience, a process that is acquired only through experience, since the requisite patterns are often heavily tied and adjusted to context, and are, very subtle and complex enough that no one can fully and usefully describe or explicate them." (NLG 84)

Dialogue and dialectic are no longer exclusively linguistic or verbal phenomena. As such critical literacy theories need to address the role of multimodal dialogism in communicative and epistemic practice. As knowledge constructing activist occur more and more frequently in multimodal environments, literate individuals will have to become critical aware of the rhetorical and epistemological ramifications of new media and materialities.

The productive conflict brought about by dialogic inquiry presents literacy theorists with a broad array of choices for approaching literacy theory. From alphabetic literacy theories, to multiliteracies and hybrid literacies, there are many available ways to address the new communication exigencies brought about by ICTs. However, a key part of responding to Bizzell’s call for dialogic inquiry into these matters is the very pragmatic requirement of developing functional theories that will facilitate current endeavors while the process of dialogic refinement continues. From the dialogic interaction of current literacy theory addressing new media, I have distilled the four key goals above (multimodality/ ICTs, flexibility, and multimodal epistemology). Though these are, as previously noted, not exhaustive, they can help form the starting point for a functional new media literacy theory.

As I have suggested in the introduction, I believe a particularly promising approach to meeting these literacy goals comes from the resonance between neo-Sophistic and Bakhtinian dialogic theories. Different facets of these theories can help literacy theory
address the contemporary communicative practices. Furthermore, being dialogic theories, they can foster the development of literacy theory that supports continued the continued dialogic refinement advocated by Bizzell. In Chapter 2: Theoretical Background, I will explore exactly how these dialogic theories can be adapted to inform a literacy theory targeted at meeting the four key goals.
Chapter 2: Theoretical Jazz

As I sit here writing this thesis, John Coltrane’s Acknowledgement plays in the background. Taking a brief respite from writing, I focus on the music and find myself struck by the strong resonance between the project of jazz music and what I’m trying to accomplish in this thesis. So grant me some patience for a brief digression into jazz so that I may more completely explicate the project of this chapter. On so many levels, all jazz is provenance in action. From the very beginning, “jazz has roots in the combination of Western and African music traditions, including spirituals, blues and ragtime, stemming ultimately from West Africa, western Sahel, and New England's religious hymns and hillbilly music, as well as in European military band music” (“Jazz”). It fuses and integrates a broad history of music and musical styles into a single musical artifact. One thing that distinguishes jazz from many other musical forms is the inherent dissonance in its appropriations. A constellation of notes and styles which might be considered unharmonious in classical music is quite at home in jazz. That is to say, rather than hide its provenance, jazz highlights and celebrates it. Another distinguishing feature about most jazz is improvisation. Jazz sheet music frequently contains little more than a progression of cords about which the musician will play a broad variety of notes, rhythms, and articulations. This improvisation should in no way be confused with simply “being made up on the spot.” Noteworthy and acclaimed jazz frequently demonstrates a sophisticated awareness of not only the history of jazz, but also the history of the musical forms jazz repurposes. Even the newest and most experimental forms of jazz fusion demonstrate constant awareness of history, tradition, and convention even (especially) when subverting it. Jazz explores a broad range of methods for producing both dissonance and resonance in remediation. (I argue that good jazz is never merely resonance or dissonance but rather an exploration of both at the same time.)

“The idea that signs may be ‘imported’ from one context (another era, social group, culture) into another, in order to signify the ideas and values associated with that other context by those doing the importing” (Kress and Van Leeuwen 23).
I digress into the nature of jazz not only to illustrate an excellent example of provenance in action, but more importantly to contextualize the approach of this chapter. No matter how new, imaginative, or subversive multimodal/ICT communication is, I argue that it—to be effective—should be grounded in a thorough and sophisticated understanding of historical communication theory. What this chapter attempts is very closely related to provenance. Explicitly, this chapter’s goal is to ‘provenate’6 historical dialogic theory for use in contemporary new media literacy theory.

So now we are confronted with the question of how to repurpose traditional dialogic theory to account for the key features of multimodality/ICTs, provenance/remediation, flexibility, and multimodal epistemic practice without hindering the productive conflict that arises from a multiplicity of literacy arguments. As I have already suggested, I think the solution lies in the dialogue among neo-Sophistican and Bakhtinian dialogic theories and contemporary new media theory. But there are inevitable and obvious challenges to this approach. The primary difficulty comes from the fact that both Sophistic and Bakhtinian communicative approaches were developed during eras of verbal primacy. Sophistic antilogic was barely nascent when alphabetic writing was just beginning to challenge the long-standing hegemony of orality. The most recent neo-Sophistic rehabilitation of the 1970s and 1980s occurred largely before it was realized what challenges ICTs would offer the primacy of print. The bulk of Mikhail Bakhtin’s work predates the recent neo-Sophistic rehabilitation by at least a decade. Any challenges to the primacy of print during this time were but small blips on the horizon if noticeable at all.

Nevertheless, in the following chapter, I argue that the core tenants of each of these approaches transcend any historic modal primacy. Repurposing each of these theories for contemporary communication will allow for great strides towards meeting the identified literacy theory goals. In the sections that follow I will explore how the dialogue between these theories can foster the development of a new media literacy theory that addresses the goals identified at the end of the preceding chapter. In so doing I will continue my dialogic

6 Henceforth “repurpose” due to the confusion that might arise from continuing to turn “provenance” into a verb.
approach to this subject. I will not merely seek the resolution in the many resonances between these theories, but will also attempt to highlight any productive dissonance.

**Rhetorical Multimodality**

From the outset, I must acknowledge my agreement with two of Anne Wysocki’s primary points: 1) Multimodal literacy theory must include writing, and 2) it must be rhetorically aware. Though I’ll return to the subject of number one in greater detail later, for the time being suffice it to say that I support a literacy theory of modal plurality in which no single mode holds privileged status over any other. Number two above, however, seems the most pertinent to address at the moment. How can our knowledge of rhetorical awareness come to work in concert with our understanding of how multimodality and ICTs function in communication? As I’ve already alluded to, I believe the solution lies in a repurposing of Bakhtinian genre theory. At this point it seems most appropriate to begin with an explanation of how I arrive at that conclusion, because it is intimately related to the question of the relationship between multimodality and rhetorical theory.

Wysocki and I independently argue for a rhetorically aware application of multimodality and ICTs. But what does that mean? Several approaches to the rhetorical situation have been posited; indeed, there are a variety of rhetorical triangles, a couple of rhetorical squares, and, of course, the well known Burkean Pentad. Though I may have neglected a couple of schemata with angle numbers other than three, four, or five, I think we would find with them many of the same obviously common features. (Though my reader is certainly able to identify them on his/ her own, bear with me as I illustrate my point.) Each of these schemata has some designation referring to audience/ reader, and each has some expression of communicative context. Each contains some expression of message or communicative purpose, and many include the author/ designer/ rhetor. While the bulk of my argument will work from the perspective on one particular rhetorical triangle, they all serve the important heuristic purpose of orienting the rhetor towards the socio-contextual exigencies of particular communicative situations. Since the work of Carolyn R. Miller, rhetorical theorists have come to view genre as conventional response to recurrent socio-
contextual situations. The resonance between socio-context as aspect of rhetorical situation and socio-context as genre-prompt leads me to the conclusion that two very important roles of the rhetorical situation as heuristic are 1) genre identification, i.e.—which genre is appropriate to this situation? and 2) genre adaptation, i.e.—how should one modify generic conventions to meet the needs of this situation? My point—understanding genre is a—if not

the—critical element to rhetorically aware multimodal communication.

**Genre Theory**

Genre theory has a broad, deep, and involved history. It would require a second thesis to fully explicate the subtle details involved in genre theory, only since Miller. Nevertheless, it is important to contextualize the importance of selecting a genre theory appropriate to multimodal communication. There is—to my mind—surprisingly little theory relating genre theory and multimodality. Many new media and new media literacy theorists tend to focus on carving out and illustrating their theories on their own or within different contexts rather than genre theory. (See Bolter and Grusin or McLuhan for prominent examples of new media theory that seldom addresses genre theory.) Another challenge to sorting out the relationship between genre theory and multimodality is the confusion that comes from different uses of terminology. For example we can find in the body of new media theory the inconsistent identification of the web page as genre, medium, and mode (Genre, see Alice L. Troupe; medium, see Bolter and Grusin; mode, see Kress and Van Leeuwen).

I think there are two primary reasons for the relatively scant attention paid to the relationship between multimodality and genre theory. One major reason likely comes from the broad agreement about the role of genre. Many in rhetorical studies have completely accepted genre as a description of typified communicative responses to relatively stable socio-contextual situations. This broad agreement extends into new media (literacy) theory. The NLG defines genre as “an intertextual aspect of a text. It shows how the text links to other texts in the intertextual context, and how it might be similar in some respects to other texts used in comparable social contexts, and its connections with text types in the order(s) of discourse” (78). As I’ll explore in further detail in the following section, Gunther Kress also explicitly embraces a similar perspective on genre theory. Another reason for the lack of
work relating genre, medium, and mode stems from this agreement. Much of contemporary
genre theory no longer takes the form of abstract theoretical discussion—the approach
currently found in new media theory. Genre analysis is taking the place of abstract
theorization in genre research. Scholars are looking more and more into the social functions
of particular genres.

This gap has not, however, gone unnoticed. The *Journal of Business and Technical
Communication* founded the Itext group (Cheryl Geisler, et al.) in 2001 to explore the scope
of ICTs text research and to suggest what areas need to be further addressed. The Itext
Research Group’s call for research argues for more research into electronic genres within the
field of professional communication. The IText group further argues for grounding this
research in either the rhetorical terms of Carolyn R. Miller’s “Genre as Social Action,” or in
the social and hermeneutic terms of Charles Bazerman’s *Shaping Written Knowledge* (277).
In articulating their call for research, the IText Working Group argues for “alliance with
other information disciplines” (270) and specifically suggests that information science’s
work with genre theory may prove useful to professional communication’s studies of digital
texts (293). Indeed, there is much work in information science on web genre classification
and convention identification (see Crowston and Williams; Dillion and Gushrowski; and
Kwanśnick and Crowston). This genre work in information sciences uses, in some cases, the
very same work of Miller and Bazerman alluded to above, but some articles ground their
work in more form-based approaches to genre.

It is not only the broad agreement with Miller-esque genre theory that prompts
IText’s suggestion of her use but also her recentering of genre on social action rather than
form and substance (Miller, “Genre” 151) that makes it so applicable to web and digital
genres. As the IText workgroup notes:

Traditionally, genres have emerged and been modified only slowly. Today, however,
communities are using a changing array of new technologies, from e-mail to groupware to the
Web. In so doing, these communities are structuring their communication over time in ways
that reflect both the capabilities of the technology and the evolving norms for communicative
purposes and forms. (293)

Since web genres emerge and adapt more frequently than traditional genres—in part
due to the speed of technological development, the genre model used must be ready to adapt
to those changes. Miller’s genre theory attends to this need well in that it focuses on the social role of a genre within the community and is, therefore, likely to allow for genre redefinition much more quickly than a form-based approach. While an adaptive and situational genre theory will aid in addressing issues surrounding new media design and composition, theories of medium and mode that can integrate with this genre theory will also be required.

Indeed Miller’s work in extending her groundbreaking “Genre as Social Action” to ICT communication was realized in her recent “Blogging as Social Action: A Genre Analysis of the Weblog.” In this work, Miller analyzes the social exigencies precipitating and brought about by the blogging enterprise. She extends her previous work which focused primarily on linguistic variation in social contexts to include an awareness of the role of visual format (“Blogging” 9). Furthermore, Miller highlights the role of remediation in generic conventions and awareness:

[A]ncestral genres should be considered part of the rhetorical decorum for both the rhetor and the audience. And, within limits, by their incorporation into a response to a novel situation, ancestral genres help define the potentialities of the new genre: the subject-positions of the rhetor and audience(s), the nature of the recurrent exigence, the decorum (or “fittingness” in Bitzer’s term) of response. (“Blogging” 12)

Miller echoes Bolter and Grusin’s identification of remediation-ease as a key feature of new media, but remediation is not the only generic feature with a special relationship to new media. From the outset of her article, Miller describes the blog as “a new rhetorical opportunity made possible by technology that is becoming more available and easier to use, but it was adopted so quickly and widely that it must be serving well established rhetorical needs” (“Blogging” 1, emphasis added). An extremely rapid speed of genre establishment and change constitutes a major phenomenon at play in ICT genres. Though I agree that the blog meets “well established rhetorical needs,” and that that meeting may have contributed to the rapidity of its genre definitions, long standing rhetorical needs are not necessarily related to the comparatively rapid change in ICT genres.

Andrew Dillon and Barbara A. Gushrowski underscore this feature of ICT genres in their article “Genres and the Web: Is the Personal Home Page the First Uniquely Digital Genre.” Dillion and Gusrowski employ some quantitative genre analysis methods from
information sciences to determine that the personal web page is, indeed, functioning as a discrete genre. Furthermore, they note the uniquely digital nature of home pages, arguing that though the home page remediates some preexisting non-digital genres, they "have no obvious paper equivalent" (203). So if the web pages is actually one of the first digital genre, "then genre emergence can be seen as more rapid that previously thought from studies in the paper and verbal discourse domain" (205).

Though, as I've stated before, there is relatively little theoretical treatment of the relationships between modes, media, and genres in new media theory, Guth Kress offers two full chapters from *Literacy Theory in the New Media Age* on the subject. Kress begins his discussion of genre and multimodality by identifying one predominate underlying problem for genre theory's adaptation to multimodality—his concern that much of genre theory has been developed for alphabetic practice (*Literacy* 86). If we accept the foundations of this concern—which I do—then we are left with two primary options. We must either concede that genre theory is a monomodal (alphabetic) descriptor, or we must develop a genre theory for multimodality. Indeed, the latter is Kress' project in these chapters.

Beginning by embracing a foundation of genre as social action, Kress seeks through several cases to explore what a multimodal genre theory would look like. He situates his approach within the grounds of the Australian genre school—a conception that explicitly begins with Miller's genre as social action, but rejects the notion of genre at the textual level (*Literacy* 92-93). Kress views different segments of texts as performing different social actions and, therefore, as being generically distinct. He describes multimodal documents as mixed genre texts containing multiple genres simultaneously. One document he describes exhibits the genres of body text, diagram, and caption—each unit performing different socio-rhetorical functions (113). Though Kress consents to allow readers to use generic terminology for entire texts, it is clearly a concession, in the full sense of the term, and not one with which he is entirely comfortable (119).

Either the Miller or the Kress genre schema could provide literacy theory with an adequate way of approaching the rhetorical considerations for new media communication. However, I think an appropriation of Bakhtinian speech-genres can more completely address the multimedia genre concerns brought about by both Kress and Miller. A brief distillation of
the necessary considerations for multimodal genres may present us with the following areas of concern:

1. A multimodal genre theory must be equipped to address non-linguistic representational systems.
2. A multimodal genre theory must be adaptive enough to account for the rapidity of generic modification in ICT genres.
3. A multimodal genre theory must be equipped to describe the socio-contextual considerations for both the text—as a whole—and its distinct parts.

Bakhtin’s Theory of Speech Genres

Bakhtin’s non-linguistic focus on communication is ideal for reformulation in terms of new media literacy theory. The development of his theories has foundations in non-linguistic semiotics similar to the foundations used by Kress and Van Leeuwen. His suggestion that we view individual communicative acts—utterances—as the basic unit of communication rather than some linguistic or grammatical particle provides an excellent underpinning for rearticulating his theories for use in multimodal literacy instruction.

In the Problem of Speech Genres, Bakhtin develops his concept of the utterance as a basic unit both of communication and of the genre. In keeping with Bakhtin’s imaginative and experimental approach to theory, he never offers a concise definition of “utterances” so much as he slowly narrows in on it. Bakhtin delineates the limits of an utterance as “a change of speaking subjects, that is, a change of speakers” (“Speech” 71). Grounding the limits of utterance—Bakhtin’s primary unit of communication—in discourse/intercourse underscores Bakhtin’s commitment to an understanding of communication as dialogic in nature. Under this schema, communicative acts (utterances) are only approachable and understandable through the lens of dialogue. Each utterance is crafted within the context of someone making meaning out of that utterance. “The speaker ends his utterance in order to relinquish the floor to the other or to make room for the other’s active responsive understanding” (“Speech” 71-72). To simplify, an utterance is anything to which a response can be generated.

From this concept of utterance Bakhtin develops his speech genre—the socio-contextual reality surrounding a given utterance. Much like in the Miller or the Kress
schemata, in varying situations in which communication can occur there are varying degrees of similarity. In these similar situations, a given community develops recurrent communication conventions—typical forms and styles. "Each separate utterance is individual, of course, but each sphere in which language develops its own relatively stable types of these utterances. These we call speech genres" ("Speech" 60). Though Bakhtin uses some of the terminology typically associated with language when discussing the nature of genre, he clarifies that it is a concept built on the foundation of the utterance, which is, as previously mentioned, a non-linguistic unit of communication. Bakhtin states, "A speech genre is not a form of language, but a typical form of utterance; as such the genre also includes a certain typical kind of expression that inheres in it" (87). Bakhtin's theory of utterances is built on Vygotskian semiotics which is a schema to which I will eventually object. However, the grounding of utterance and subsequently genres in a semiotic (and therefore non-linguistic) framework begins to meet the needs of our new multimodal genre theory.

The applicability of Bakhtinian genres to needs two and three (adaptability and text/part accountability) can be readily seen in Bakhtin's discussion of his ideal genre—the novel. In the early part of "Dialogism and the Novel," he identifies the novel as a special type of genre and contrasts it with preexisting genres, which he accuses of being static and unreceptive to change. Traditional genres have been in place so long that they have irrecoverably solidified the limits of their forms. Bakhtin rejects the idealization of traditional genres in favor of the novel and its association "with the eternally living element of unofficial language and unofficial thought" (Dialogism 20). The novel is organic and capable of constant change, and as such its uncanonizability is a distinct feature of the novel. Using these distinctions to lay a foundation for the acceptance of the novel outside traditional genres, Bakhtin proposes his view of what makes the novel truly unique, "Of all the major genres only the novel is younger than writing and the book: it alone is organically receptive to new forms of mute perception" (Dialogism 3). Bakhtin sees the newness of the novel as allowing it to escape from the stasis and solidity of traditional genres. This unique ability not only allows the novel flexibility and adaptability within itself as a genre, but also allows it the capacity to incorporate other genres into itself. The novel can incorporate dialogue,
poetry, tragedy, and comedy evaluating and adapting them along the way. "In the process of becoming the dominant genre, the novel sparks the renovation of all other genres, it infects them with its spirit of process and inconclusiveness" (Bakhtin, Dialogism 7).

The resonance between Bakhtin’s description of the novel and electronic communication is obvious and has been much discussed in new media literature (to name a few: Williams, “Part 2”; Douglas Eyman; Doug Brent, “Rhetorics”). Broadly, heteroglossia can be seen as the integration and incorporation of multiple genres to recreate the dialogic ‘plurality of consciousness’ required for the construction of human knowledge and meaning. To gloss, heteroglossia is critical repurposing in action. It is a dynamic, active, and adaptive process. Furthermore Bakhtin’s theories of heteroglossic communication also provide a foundation for focusing on both the remediated and the remediator—i.e., the part and the whole. Bakhtin defines the novel as “plasticity itself” (Dialogism 39). The incorporation of alternate genres into the free-changing organic novel is the ultimate in communicative innovation. The newness of the novel does not force an adaptation of one genre into another, but is a reinvention in creatively free terms: “[N]ovelization implies [other genres’] liberation from all that serves as a break on their unique development, from all that would change them along with the novel into some sort of stylization of forms that have outlived themselves” (Dialogism 39).

Genres and Multimedia

An adaptive multimodal genre theory such as the one described above is central to the task of developing a new media literacy theory. However, that genre theory cannot function in isolation. The dynamic interactions among modes, media, and genres must also be theorized if we are to develop a system for critically, reflectively, and rhetorically deploying new media communication. Thankfully, however, my discussion of media does not require so complete a treatment as did my discussion of genres. This is the case for two reasons: 1) Recent media theory has been developed specifically with new media and ICTs in mind. 2) I will accept outright the theories provided by predominant contemporary theorists.

Sophisticated theories of new media began as early as 1964 with the highly prophetic work of Marshall McLuhan, in Understanding Media. In this response to substantial technological changes for media in the 1950s and 1960s, he sought to develop a coherent
theory to account for the impact of new (non oral/print) communication technologies in
cultural, sociological, and epistemological spheres. In an attempt to de-marginalize
the role of medium, which is largely transparent in western culture, McLuhan argues for a
conflation of medium and message (18). He grounds his argument that “the medium is the
message” in the assertion that new communication technologies have as much as, if not more
of, a personal and social impact than does the “content” of the message (7-10). He juxtaposes
the history of mechanical technological innovation with the “new” exigencies of
communication technologies. McLuhan argues that the history of mechanical technological
innovation is a history of “explosion,” and that, by contrast, the new communication
technologies constitute a social “implosion...an abolishing of space and time” (3). In a sense,
one might say that the importance of new media in McLuhan sense is connectivity (my term).

In many ways, McLuhan prefigured the work of popular contemporary theorists. McLuhan lays a foundation for the work of Bolter and Grusin with discussions of the
reciprocal nature of remediation (Bolter and Grusin’s term). For example, McLuhan
highlights the interactivity between radio and newspaper in how news articles are structured
(53). He argues that each medium had an important effect on the rendering of news articles in
the other. McLuhan also grounds his theories of communication and mediation in a semiotics
that dovetails well with the work of Kress and Van Leeuwen. McLuhan’s identification of all
media as “active metaphors” (57) suggests some of the same functionality of medium turned
mode described in Kress and Van Leeuwen’s *Multimodal Discourse*. Though it’s highly
unlikely that McLuhan was ever exposed to Bakhtin’s work on speech genres, McLuhan’s
focus on the social ramifications and convention forming nature of media (131-135)
integrates well with Bakhtin’s genre theory.

attempt to establish a cogent theory of media and mediation. They argue that recent
technology forces a closer consideration of issues of mediation because of the rapidly
changing nature of new media. Bolter and Grusin develop their argument within the context
of the suggestion that “what is new about new media comes from the particular ways in
which they refashion older media and the ways in which older media refashion themselves to

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7 Bakhtin’s *Speech Genres* was first published (in Russian) in 1979, and McLuhan died in 1980.
answer the challenges of new media” (15). Bolter and Grusin’s theory of media and mediation centers around three key theoretical concepts: immediacy, hypermediacy, and remediation. Though these three logics avoid a discrete definition of “media,” the second section of *Remediation* provides a list of some media that hints at the boundaries of the term. Some of the media used to illustrate Bolter and Grusin’s theories are computer games, digital photography, photorealistic graphics, digital art, film, virtual reality, television, and the World Wide Web. Ultimately Bolter and Grusin seem more concerned with developing a logic of mediation than a taxonomy of available media.

Bolter and Grusin present the reader with the logic of remediation, which they argue is most prevalent in contemporary communication design (5). In short, remediation is the practice of taking an artifact in one medium and deploying it via another. One common example of this practice is deploying of images of paintings and sculpture via the world wide web. A communication designed for one medium is redeployed in another. Bolter and Grusin argue that this borrowing of one medium and placing within the framework of another is extremely common throughout the history of western communication, but is all the more prevalent in digital communication (45-46). Bolter and Grusin further argue that the logic of remediation allows for the juxtaposition of multiple media within a single communicative artifact, and this juxtaposition allows media like digital media to “function in constant dialectic with earlier media, precisely as each earlier medium functioned when it was introduced” (50).

What is largely common to theories of mediation is the focus on the *materials* of communication. Whether the work of media theorists like Bolter and Grusin, literacy theorists like Wysocki, or multimodality theorists like Kress and Van Leeuwen, the constant concern in mediation theory is the rhetorical effects of the physical manifestations of communication. Despite the fact that the theory of mediation—indeed the term itself—is sometimes couched in the language of transmission theory communication, the focus for these theorists is very clearly a rhetorical appreciation of mediation. Communication resulting from a critical awareness of the role of media demonstrates an appreciation of the effects of the chosen medium on the audience and how the chosen medium responds to the rhetorical context.
Multimodality

In *Multimodal Discourse*, Gunther Kress and Theo Van Leeuwen outline a system to account for the relationship between media and modes. As the title of their book suggests, the approach used in their text focuses on modes and the relationship between modes, especially when multiple modes are deployed simultaneously in the same communicative artifact. In the introduction to *Multimodal Discourse* Kress and Van Leeuwen identify the primary aim of their text as “exploring the common principles behind multimodal communication” (1-2). Kress and Van Leeuwen explore these principles within the framework of what they identify as the rhetorical trend towards breaking down the discrete limits between modes and integrating one mode with another. Kress and Van Leeuwen argue that much of current rhetorical theory is working at the task of developing vocabularies to account for the role of the visual and multimedia in communication. These current visual/ multimedia theorists assume an underlying distinction between various modes that Kress and Van Leeuwen do not support. *Multimodal Discourse* is an attempt to supplant theory that overly delimits the modes and to provide an account of the “common semiotic principles [in operation] across different modes” (2).

One of the major tasks Kress and Van Leeuwen attempt in their effort to provide an account of common semiotic principles is to establish a standard vocabulary for discussing the relationship between mode and medium. They define a mode as the “semiotic resources which allow the simultaneous realization of discourses and types of (inter)action” (21). In many ways this definition is an extension of the traditional use of the term mode. The NLG, adopting this more traditional perspective, identifies some of the available semiotic modes as linguistic, visual, audio, gestural, spatial, and multimodal (65). However, Kress and Van Leeuwen ultimately describe a more elaborate and flexible system of modes. One of the hallmarks of a mode is its ability to be encoded in multiple media. Therefore, in their extension of the definition of mode beyond the traditional limits, they identify ‘narrative’ as a mode because 1) there are particular usage conventions specific to narrative, and 2) it can be deployed in various media (22). If narrative then can be a representational mode, then an individual story can behave as a sign. So in any given multimodal artifact, there can be a vastly layered amalgam of interacting signs.
The key here is that the concept of modality is built upon a foundation of semiotics. As Kress argues, “Meaning is the result of (semiotic) work, whether as articulation in the outwardly made sign, as in writing, or as interpretation in the inwardly made sign, as in reading” (Literacy 37, italics original). Though Kress is focusing, in this excerpt, on meaning, the extension to “articulation” and “interpretation”—reading and writing, demonstrates his view of meaning as the fundamental project of literacy. For my purposes I extend the projects of literacy to meaning and knowledge. From this point Kress argues, and I agree, that another critical facet of new media literacy theory is an appropriate foundational semiotic theory. At this point our agreement begins to fade. Kress begins his discussion of semiotics by acknowledging the two major competing semiotic schools in western thought—one extending from Ferdinand de Saussure, and the other from Charles Sanders Peirce (Literacy 41). Kress attempts to reconcile these two schools though a redefinition of the terms involved (Literacy 42). While I must laud this approach for its dialogism vis-à-vis semiotics, I cannot accept it.

Stephen P. Witte argues in “Context, Text, Intertext: Towards a Constructivist Semiotic of Writing” that the dominant semiotic schemata in rhetorical theory grounded in the work of Lev Vygotsky and Ferdinand de Saussure are inappropriate to account for not only the role of text as sign, but also the psychological, contextual, and epistemological roles of communication (249). Witte argues for a communication theory grounded in the semiotics of Charles Sanders Peirce. He argues that the semiotics of Vygotsky and Saussure that are pervasive in rhetorical studies are inappropriate to his tasks because Vygotsky misconstrues the relationship between language and thought (257-261) and because Saussure’s dyad is incomplete (249). Witte’s critique of Saussure is particularly apropos to new media literacy.
The Peirceian triad employs an interpretent—the interpreting and contextualizing schema that allows a sign user to situate the sign to the context of use. Saussure’s model employs only two, a sign and its object. The Peircian model is irreducibly triadic. The sign, its object, and its interpretation are in constant interaction. Perice offers a semiotic wherein human apprehension of a sign’s objects is necessarily representational and subsequently rhetorical: “Thus, it is said to be a necessary result of the analysis that the objects represented by the sign, and whose characters are independent of such representation, should itself be of the nature of a sign, so that its characters are not independent of all representation” (Peirce “Ideas” 152). The inclusion of an interpretant is especially important in addressing the flexibility required for multiple literacies. Rhetors must recognize the non-static nature of the interpretent. When encountering different discourse communities, the members of each community will interpret the relationship between the sign and its object differently as the interpretive community requires.

Not only does Peirce’s triadic semiotic allow for the maintenance of an interpretive frame of reference, it was originally intended for use in a multimodal conception of communication. Piece’s 1904\(^8\) work, “Ideas, Stray or Stolen, about Scientific Writing,” prefigures current multimodal rhetoric suggesting that “our conception of rhetoric has got to be generalized; and while we are about it, why not remove the restriction of rhetoric to speech?” (“Ideas” 149). Peirce argues for a reconception of rhetoric as the effective “rendering” of signs, and provides a litany of possible signs within numerous modes: “every

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\(^8\) Unpublished until 1978, Philosophy and Rhetoric Vol. 11(3).
picture, diagram, natural cry, pointing finger, wink, knot in one's handkerchief, memory, dream, fancy, concept, indication, token, symptom, letter, numeral, word, sentence, chapter, book, library and in short whatever, be it in the physical universe...” (149). “Ideas, Stray or Stolen” is an explicit argument for a rhetorical view of science communication. Not only does Peirce’s work prefigure contemporary multimodality theory and our current rhetorical appreciation for science communication, he also argues for a conception of rhetoric as knowledge constructing—i.e. rhetoric-as-epistemic.

**Rhetoric-as-epistemic**

Despite Bakhtin’s focus on dialogism and the ensuing “plurality of consciousness,” I don’t think his theory addresses the epistemological ramifications of rhetoric and communication as well as the dialogical theories of the Sophists and contemporary neo-Sophists. The thinkers of this tradition are the ones that provide me with the most compelling argument for a view of rhetoric-as-epistemic. If new media literacy theories are to address the role of epistemology in communication, then they can do so productively with Sophistic rhetoric-as-epistemic in mind. Sophistic and neo-Sophistic theory does not come to this project ready made to serve literacy theory. It requires some adaptation. The history of Sophism is a history of the enfranchisement of linguistic representational systems (written and oral) in epistemological construction. Extending rhetoric-as-epistemic for use in new media literacy theory requires some mutual dialogic modification between traditional rhetoric-as-epistemic and Peircian semiotics. Below I offer a brief discussion of Sophistic dialogic theory and its relationship to λόγος. This discussion will provide the groundwork for the interaction that must occur between rhetoric-as-epistemic and Peirce.

**Sophism, Rhetoric as Epistemic, and Antilogic**

It almost goes without saying that the classical Greek conception of λόγος defines multivocality. Robert L. Scott identifies λόγος as meaning “universal mind,” “man’s mind,” “reason,” and “speech” (14). Michael Mendelson suggests a no less multivocal scope of definitions: “The range of meanings for logos is broad and various, including the following variations: logos is (a) reasoning, thinking, or accounting for; (b) speech, discourse, or even specific statements; and (c) the organizing principles, formulae, or laws of the world itself”
(47). As will be discussed in more detail, Scott suggests that the classical Greek Sophists sought to replace the primacy of λόγος with δισσοι λόγοι (15)—“alternation between/among opposing logoi” (Mendelson 50). The doctrine of δισσοι λόγοι, identified by Mendelson as the doctrine of antilogic attempts to supplant the primacy of any one λόγος (doctrine). Mendelson suggests that the foundational principle of antilogic is it “two-sidedness” (50). However, more contemporary approaches to dialogue (in many cases dialectic) seek to undercut this mutlivocality:

There is, of course, a powerful tendency to resolve the tension of contraries by supplanting it with something solitary. When we say that the goal of argument is the discovery of "truth" or the achievement of consensus, we acknowledge an intention to pass beyond dialogue, to replace the two or more voices in contention with some tertium quid, some new logos that transcends prior divisions or that occupies a middle space between interlocutors.... Antilogic, on the other hand, resists the effort to resolve disagreement by erasing difference too quickly; there are always other antilogoi, other oppositions that follow from the oscillations of dialogue, another side to the same story waiting to be told. (50)

As I will describe in further detail, the history of rhetoric-as-epistemic successfully and wonderfully undercuts the logo-centrism of λόγος as universal mind, law, doctrine, organizing principle, and monologism, but in so doing it reproduces a logo-centrism grounded in λόγος as speech. Though logo-centrism tends to be used as a pejorative, and despite this section’s attempt to steer rhetoric-as-epistemic away from logo-centrism, it is not my goal to castigate historical rhetoric-as-epistemic theorists. The logo-centrism of rhetoric-as-epistemic was an appropriate response to the historical theoretical exigencies. I merely wish to argue that contemporary theoretical exigencies require a departure from a logo-centric rhetoric-as-epistemic.

Rhetoric-as-epistemic and its reinvigoration in the last century grounds itself largely in the work of the classical Sophists Gorgias and Protagoras (Scott; Consigny; Mendelson; Walters; McComiskey). Sophism is very closely allied with the rhetoric-as-epistemic movement, and might even be responsible for it. In fact, in some circles, it is precisely the view of rhetoric-as-epistemic that marks Sophism. My iterative history of rhetoric-as-epistemic begins with the First Sophistic and Gorgias of Leontini, after which I will discuss how the philosophies of the First Sophistic were rehabilitated into contemporary rhetorical theory.
The First Sophistic

Gorgias of Leontini’s “Encomium on Helen” takes a moment to encapsulate the Sophists’ position on the power of λόγος as speech: “Speech is a powerful lord, who with the finest and most invisible body achieves the most divine works: it can stop fear and banish grief and create joy and nurture pity” (77-8). However, the Sophists did not conceive of speech as merely a highly powerful persuader. It was also viewed as the primary instrument of civilization. No more clear enfranchisement of the power of λόγος as discourse can be found than the Isocratean hymn to λόγος in his “Antidosis:”

Because there has been implanted in us the power to persuade each other and to make clear to each other whatever we desire, not only have we escaped the life of wild beasts, but we have come together and founded cities and made laws and invented arts; and generally speaking, there is no institution devised by man which the power of speech has not helped us to establish. (254-256)

But it is not simply the power of λόγος for persuasion and civilization building that brings us to consider it here. The identification of λόγος as the means of human knowledge is responsible for beginning rhetoric-as-epistemic. Gorgias outlined his theory of epistemology in “On Non-Existence” (also known as “On Nature”). Though nothing but isolated fragments of “On Non-Existence” remain, we know much of it through Sextus Empiricus’ Against the Mathematician (AM) and the pseudo-Aritotelian work On Melissus, Xenophanes, Gorgias (MXG). As John Dillon and Tania Louise Gergel note in The Greek Sophists, “It is not clear that either the author of the MXG or Sextus is quoting absolutely verbatim, but it seems likely that they are not altering very much” (67).

In short, Gorgias’ “On Non-Existence” begins as the establishment and defense of three claims: 1) “Nothing exists;” 2) “If anything does exist, it is unknowable;” and 3) “If anything is knowable, it cannot be revealed to others” (MXG 979a12). These suppositions explicitly challenge the previously existing dominance of λόγος as universal mind and doctrine. Sections 83-88 of AM and 980a19 of MXG which represent the same section of “On Non-Existence” describe the relationship between λόγος and reality. Gorgias argued that knowledge of an independent reality is unattainable by humans, that humans are only capable of ‘knowing’ the products of their sense-perceptions. Despite humans’ frequent conflation of their sense-perceptions with knowledge of reality, humans do not even ‘know’ their sense-

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9 An admittedly anachronistic term for the First Sophistic, but not inaccurate.
perceptions. Sense-perception is immediately encoded as and understood through \( \lambda \delta \gamma \omicron \zeta \). “Speech, moreover, as he [Gorgias] asserts, is formed from the impressions caused by external objects, that is to say, objects of sense” (AM 85). However, at the same time Gorgias maintained that “just as one cannot convey colors through sounds, so one cannot convey colors or sounds or any other ‘perceptible’ though logos, which is ontologically different from the objects it purports to communicate” (Consigny 71).

At this point one starts to question what happened to the primacy of \( \lambda \delta \gamma \omicron \zeta \). Those of us still trying to escape the binaries of modernism might ask how sense perception can be both encoded into \( \lambda \delta \gamma \omicron \zeta \) and \( \text{not} \) at the same time. Walters describes Gorgias’ theory in “On Non-Existence” as a process whereby “Logos erases logos, just as judgment erases contradiction. One has no choice but to self-deconstruct one’s own logos to make room for more logos, an endlessly recursive epistemological nightmare” (151). Walters ultimately argues that Gorgias found resolution to this nightmarish dilemma by developing a system of distinct phenomenal realities—one of perceptables and one of speech (153). Dichotomizing reality allows for a reconception of speech as a form of perception in its own right. Reconceiving speech as a form of perception allows for the establishment of the doctrine in other cases known as antilogic. “The deception of logos would thus employ the opposition of theses as an epistemological tool”—a view that provides the foundation of the acceptance of knowledge construction as rhetorical (Walters 154).

**The Fourth Sophistic**

In the opening chapter of “Rhetoric and Philosophy in Conflict,” Samuel Ijsseling discusses the ‘rehabilitation of rhetoric’ that took place during the late 1960s and early 1970s. In order to overcome the pejorative connotations of rhetoric that developed during the nineteenth century, rhetorical and speech theorists had to find ways of describing rhetoric that could not be conflated with eristic, propaganda, and misinformation (Ijsseling 1). One of the many ways in which rhetoric found rehabilitation was the rhetoric-as-epistemic movement which began with Robert L. Scott’s “On Viewing Rhetoric as Epistemic.” In order

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10 Here I use the term “Fourth Sophistic” to refer to the Sophistic rehabilitation that began with Scott’s 1967 article. Though others including Consigny refer to this period as the “Third Sophistic,” I reserve that term for the Sophistic revitalization of Italian Renaissance Humanism.
to rehabilitate rhetorical studies both within speech and English studies, and to academia at large, rhetoric scholars had to lay claim to a project beyond ‘propaganda.’ Social epistemology allowed rhetoric a vehicle to simultaneously rehabilitate the Sophists and themselves. To lay claim to social epistemology, English and speech studies had to ground that claim in their preexisting expertise—language. It is this legitimate response to the academic climate in the 1960s and 1970s which has mired rhetoric-as-epistemic in the realm of the logo-centric *qua* language.

Beginning with Toulmin’s reconception of epistemology as “an inquiry into logic,” Scott argues that rhetors and philosophers can cast aside the notion of knowledge as purely scientific and embrace a human reality (Scott 11). He argues that “there is no possibility in matters relevant to human interaction to determine truth in any a priori way, that truth can arise only from cooperative critical inquiry” (Scott 14). Rehabilitating rhetoric also included rehabilitating the Sophists by reintroducing the doctrine of δισοι λόγοι as a mode of “cooperative critical inquiry” (Scott 15). Scott’s article was truly seminal; it produced a flourishing of work in rhetoric-as-epistemic. By the late 1970s, there were so much work being done in rhetorical studies and rhetoric-as-epistemic that Michael C. Leff was specifically tasked with sorting out the maze of related and conflicting ideas. This assignment spawned the oft cited “In Search of Ariadne’s Thread: A review of the Recent Literature on Rhetorical Theory.” In this article, Leff provides a thorough recounting of late 1970s rhetorical theory and introduces a little challenged taxonomy of rhetoric-as-epistemic. Leff argues that rhetoric-as-epistemic arguments typically take the following forms: 1) Rhetoric can be used to know how objects relate to abstract principles. 2) Rhetoric is a mode of thinking that fosters socially constructed insight into particulars, abstract principles, and practical wisdom. 3) Rhetoric can be used to secure knowledge of theoretical disciplines’ foundational principles. 4) Knowledge is developed through rhetorical discourse (Leff 78).

Work in strengthening the relationship between rhetoric and epistemology continued through the 1980s and into the 1990s. With the rehabilitation in full-force, rhetorical theorists were free to demonstrate other connections to the Sophists. For example, in 1992 Bruce McComisky argues that rhetoric and epistemology were related even in the case of work not explicitly embracing the Sophistic tradition. McComisky argues that despite being derivative
of vastly different frames of reference, the work of both Gorgias and Kenneth Burke are fundamentally epistemic and consequently closely related (2). In 2001, Scott Consigny continues the rhetoric-as-epistemic tradition by publishing a complete book on Gorgias seeking to “articulate a coherent account of this enigmatic thinker and writer” (3). In so doing, Consigny challenges much of the historical interpretations of Gorgias and further solidifies Gorgias’ link to contemporary rhetoric and rhetoric-as-epistemic. Work in rhetoric-as-epistemic continues with Michael Mendelson’s 2002 text, Many Sides. Mendelson’s work offers a rehabilitation of the less discussed Protagoras and appropriates Sophism and rhetoric-as-epistemic theory for the praxis and pedagogy of argument. Despite Sophism and rhetoric-as-epistemic history of logo-centrism, the doctrine of antilogic is highly applicable to multimodal communication. The dialogic and hetergolossic nature of multimodal texts has the potential to create a situation wherein some texts can reproduce the process of antilogic within a single artifact. What is needed is a bridge between rhetoric-as-epistemic and multimodality. As I’ve alluded to previously, I believe that bridge is provided by Peirce.

A Semiotic Antilogic

The adoption of the Percian semiotic for use in rhetoric-as-epistemic theory provides a framework for accepting the use of both linguistic and non-linguistic signs as instrumental in epistemological processes. Furthermore, this conceptions provides the foundation for the recognition of text as sign and multilinearity. This multimodal conception of knowledge construction that supports underprivileged rhetorics is ideal for implementation in a reconceived neo-sophistic rhetoric-as-epistemic. This schema allows contemporary theory to replace the preexisting epistemology of διονοσόν λόγος with one of διονοσόν σημείον. Much like the productive conflict of λόγος that fosters knowledge negotiation under the old system, the same productive conflict can occur between σημείον—signs.

The question remains, however, to what extent can this reconception of rhetoric-as-epistemic in terms of διονοσόν σημείον helps new media literacy beyond the necessary enfranchising of multilinear and multimodal argumentation. Craig Stroupe argues in “Visualizing English: Recognizing the Hybrid Literacy of Visual and Verbal Authorship on

11 From σημείον (seimion), sign, the root word of semiotics.
the Web,” that readers oriented in a logo-centric framework expect and want “words to talk to other words—to paraphrase Elbow—to combine into larger verbal structures, and to resist interruption by images, white space, hypertextual links, typographic effects, and multimedia” (619). In short, the privileging of logo-centric rhetorics inhibits readers from appreciating the knowledge constructing value of alternate modes. Stroupe ultimately argues for an approach to rhetoric that allows multiple modes, media, and genres to interact dialogically and heteroglossically with one another. “[R]ather than a page made monological by the dominance of either alphabetic or iconographic language, both verbal and visual elements [should be] located within a dialogically animated field of contrasting intentions” (Stroupe 622). This dialogic field of contrasting intention could also be known as διόσοι σημείοι.

The resonance between the doctrine διόσοι σημείοι and Bakhtin’s dialogic heteroglossia is clear. The resonance between διόσοι σημείοι and Kress and Van Leeuwen’s modality theory is also clear. However, the fact that these approaches complement one another is not, in an of itself, an argument for the efficacy of these theoretical interactions for new media literacy theory. What is needed, and what I propose in subsequent sections, is an explication of how they interact with one another, and with modal, media, and generic theory to form a new media literacy theory that meets the goals articulated in chapter 1.

**Dialogic New Media Literacy Theory**

The question I present at this point is, “how can διόσοι σημείοι, speech genre theory, heteroglossia, multimodality theory, and theories of mediation all be placed in dialogue with one another in such a why that it doesn’t become instantly useless through its own complexity?” Furthermore, how can they be integrated in such a way as to continue to account for the new media literacy goals of accounting for multimodality, provenance/remediation, flexibility, and epistemology. The answer, in many ways, comes down to a matter of definitions. The key precepts that transcend each of these individual schemata must be conceived of in such a way as to be mostly reconcilable. I say mostly reconcilable, because the loss of all dissonance may render the final product impotent to account for the
broad range of communicative situations. The flexibility aspect is key. This integrated new media theory must be flexible at all levels. Communication is just too complicated and too adaptive an animal to be accounted for by static theory.

What I’m advocating is an approach to communication and new media literacy built on a foundation of multimodality theory in the sense indicated by Kress and Van Leeuwen—a multimodality theory that addresses the interaction between systems of signs—signs, of course, in the Peircian sense. This multimodality theory must work in conjunction with Bolter and Grusin’s theories of mediation, and Bakhtin’s notion of speech genres. All of this interactivity must be, inevitably, situated in a construct that accounts for the socio-contextual and rhetorical exigencies of various communicative situations. Table 2 attempts to distal this broad treatment of new media and genre theory into some working definitions that will help provide a framework for discussing the interrelation between the concepts. None of these definitions is completely completely consonant with the theory from which they derived. Nevertheless, as I hope to demonstrate, they are consonant with one another and can be used to help describe the dynamic interactivity between genres, media, and modes.

Table 2: Operational Definitions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Genre</td>
<td>Relatively stable types of utterance for relatively stable socio-contextual situations. (Bakhtin)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>The material resources of communication. (Bolter and Grusin, Kress and Van Leeuwen)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mode</td>
<td>Categories of semiotic representation. (Kress and Van Leeuwen)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Remediation</td>
<td>The refashioning of an utterance from one medium into another. (Bolter and Grusin)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provenance</td>
<td>The integration of a sign used typically in one context into another. (Kress and Van Leeuwen) Under this definition remediation could be a type of provenance.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I think the most appropriate place to begin my discussion of these interactions is by presenting the visual representation. Figure 2, below, represents the relationships between all of the above concepts. The Mode, Medium, Genre Interrelationship (MMGI) figure is also
intended to serve a two-fold purpose. Not only can it describe communicative decisions, it can also be used as a composition/design heuristic. It will be used explicitly for that purpose in Chapter 3: Pedagogical Implementation.
I have addressed throughout this chapter how heteroglossia accounts for multimodality, how speech genre theory addresses multimodality, provenance/remediation and flexibility, and how δισοσοι σημειοi accounts for multimodal epistemology. But perhaps
addressing the parts is not enough. A demonstration of how the integrated theory accounts for these goals is also in order. I will try to do just that as I describe the functionality of the MMGI. First, let me offer a caveat that the MMGI is not, in any way, intended necessarily to connote directionality. However, the MMGI is intended to connote movement, but movement in many directions simultaneously. In a sense one might say that the MMGI functions as a Bahktinian super-genre.\footnote{I use this term quite differently from Michael Holquist in his introduction to Bakhtin’s Dialogic Imagination.} In stable, recurring communicative situations, there are modal, media, and generic conventions at play. They must, at least, be acknowledged, if not conformed to.

In addition to representing the relationship between mode, medium, and genre, the MMGI seeks to account for the role of constantly negotiating and renegotiating the rhetorical situation. The MMGI is intended to indicate also that each level of design decision—mode, medium, and genre—comes with its own rhetorical considerations, and that these considerations must be constantly renegotiated. Though a particular genre may be appropriate for one audience, its remediation may not be appropriate. For example, Internet bingo designed for senior citizens may not reach as effectively or as broadly the audience for paper bingo. Rhetors need to understand the flexibility of considerations at each level. They need to be ready to adapt their communicative practice to the specific situation, while at the same time being mindful of historical forces at play in that situation. It is this potential clash of conventions at modal, medium, and generic levels that necessitates considerations 1, 2, and 3 in the MMGI (see Figure 2). New media literate rhetors must account for document conventions that occur in related modes, media, and genres. For example, most HTML websites, regardless of genre, tend to have top or left navigation bars. Diverging from this convention must involve the deployment of alternate conventions to orient the reader. That is, the rhetor will have to indicate in some way other than location that the appropriate part of the text is to be used for navigation. Furthermore, literate rhetors need to be equipped with the tools to understand and effectively employ remediation and provenance. Without an awareness of the historical uses of certain types of communication—in other modes or media—rhetors may ineffectively deploy their selected strategies—or worse yet, they may select altogether inappropriate strategies.
The MMGI is also not meant to describe only solely authored work. In many cases communicators are not free to make modal, media, and generic decisions. In the professional world as one example, communicators are frequently tasked by their superiors or clients to engineer communication within an assigned genre. They are assigned to design a corporate website, to write a technical manual, to author a report. Literate communicators must be able to reconstruct the decisions that led to a chosen genre. An effective communicator has to know what facets of the rhetorical situation make the chosen modes, media, and genres appropriate so that the communicator can select the set of conventions most effective for the situation. Ultimately, I argue that conceiving of the relationship between modes, media, and genres in this light is one way to help communicators effectively navigate these decisions.

When it comes to addressing the role of multimodality in epistemology, the MMGI's foundation in διοσοι σημειο is the key. The most important thing in a multimodal rhetoric-as-epistemic is that the knowledge constructing value of any one mode cannot be universally privileged over another. If students of new media literacy education are taught that only verbal modes of communication have value in higher order knowledge construction, then they may neglect communication in other modes. The equal place and importance of mode, medium, and genre and the dynamic flexibility of the MMGI supports the need to look constantly to multiple modes, media, and genres for their contributions to knowledge. On an abstract level, literacy educators know that non-verbal communication from the cave paintings at Lascaux to the canvas paintings of the surrealists have played an important part in constructing knowledge and meaning. But, is that recognition reflected in our pedagogy?

Despite a plethora of work in multimodal and multimedia communication in recent years, digital rhetoric is still a very new discipline compared to traditional rhetorical studies. James P. Zappen's recent review of the subject describes digital rhetoric as "an amalgam of more-or-less discrete components, rather than a complete and integrated theory in its own right" (323). Indeed, linear verbal discourse has held onto its privileged status for the better part of the past twenty-five hundred years. However, the work of countless authors
mentioned above, and others, has given us a great starting point for understanding of the role of digital communication in society and in knowledge creation. Despite this strong start, our understanding of these roles is sure to evolve significantly in years to come. The contemporary rate of advancement in new communication technologies is unparalleled in history. Subsequently, our theories of mediation and modality will have to constantly adapt to meet the challenges brought to bear by new technologies.

With this in mind, the MMGI approach to new media literacy theory, as described here, is but a beginning. I realize there would be much to do to flesh out this hypothesis into a substantive scholarly contribution. Nonetheless, I believe that as hinted at in my admittedly cursory overview of MMGI, it is appropriate to current understandings of new media, in that it begins to account for the role multimodality and repurposing, the need for flexibility, and the nature of multimodal epistemology in ways previous logo-centric theories have not. New communication technologies may now and certainly in the future will have more new features to account for than just multimodal heteroglossia and remediation. Therefore, it is important to retain new media literacy's emphasis on flexibility.

Our understanding of the communication in general and new media communication specifically may never catch up to the pace of technological development. This means that we must constantly reevaluate our theory and adapt it to fit the current situation. The tentativeness of these theories, however, does not mean that we can wait for implementation. In fact, it means just the opposite. There's nothing to wait for. New media literacy educators must take the best theory available and develop complementary pedagogies. Chapter 3: Pedagogical Implementation takes up this challenge. Its specific aim is to begin the process of developing a pedagogy with the MMGI as a foundation.
Chapter 3: Pedagogical Implementation

Video conferencing, the TV Guide Channel, and the Wikipedia: these are the three examples of multimodal communicative situations with which I began this thesis. I attempted to indicate that I think composition instruction in the United States has a responsibility to prepare students not only for critically responding to these three ICTs, but for the whole host of multimodal/multimedia communicative environs of contemporary Western culture. To this point, I have supported this argument through theoretical exploration relating disparate dialogic schemata with new media literacy theory. Through this process, I have identified the four primary literacy goals of multimodality/ICTs, provenance/remediation, flexibility, and epistemology. I have further argued for a theoretical foundation grounded in a unified neo-Sophistic/Bakhtinian dialogism. This combined dialogic theory seeks to take advantage of the neo-Sophistic epistemology of antilogic, and to ground that approach in a Bakhtinian plurality of utterances—conceived semiotically. Furthermore, I have argued that this approach to new media literacy theory may be effectively implemented with the Mode-Medium-Genre Invention Heuristic (MMGI) as an anchor. The key question for this chapter is ‘how?’ Clearly, an appropriate literacy theory and an effective literacy pedagogy are not identical. So, how can we build on the former to develop the latter? I will not suggest that first-year composition (FYC) students need to be taught the intricacies of Protagorean or Bakhtinian thought, though they could profit from exposure to its fundamentals. Nor will I suggest that instructors in the FYC classroom must make time to teach students the minutiae of XHTML coding or video conferencing software, though they might.

In the following sections I offer a suggested FYC curriculum that could help in the implementation of the literacy theory outlined in Chapters One and Two. To lay a proper foundation for this suggested curriculum, I begin by developing some specific student learning objectives—also derived from the new media literacy theory of Chapters One and Two. I then describe the theoretical and institutional context for which this curriculum was designed. Finally, I will propose a series of curricular units that I believe would support the
kind of new media literacy that this thesis addresses, and I will discuss both procedural and
evaluative issues surrounding each of these curricular units. In developing this proto-
curriculum, I hope to provide a foundation for the development of a more complete and
robust new media literacy curriculum—one that can be evaluated through actual classroom
praxis.

**Student Learning Objectives**

Once again, I find myself at a place where repurposing is required. The explorations
of Chapter One have provided me with four key literacy goals developed from a wide
spectrum of new media literacy theorists. It helps to recall at this point, as I argued in
Chapter One, that an appropriate and effective new media literacy theory must account for:

- the role of multimodality/ICTs in communication.
- the role of provenance/remediation in communication.
- the need for communicative flexibility within and between communities.
- the effects of multimodality/ICTs on epistemic praxis.

Chapter Two culminated in the mode-medium-genre interaction heuristic—an attempt to
coordinate the resonance and dissonance of dialogics, semiotics, and new media literacy into
a functional paradigm that could foster literate praxis. The new repurposing required at this
point then is the translation of the literacy theory goals and the logic of the MMGI into
coherent and attainable student learning objectives.

Both the key literacy goals and the logic of the MMGI will repurpose easily into the
form of student learning objectives. The very reason that new media literacy theory needs to
account for the four key goals is because they represent the key elements of multimodal
communication. As such, only some minor grammatical changes are required to shift the
emphasis from the theoretical role of multimodal practices to the pedagogy of such practices.
The MMGI is designed for practice. It is meant to be a significant bridge between the
abstract theoretical discussion of new media dialogism and multimodal communicative
practice. Therefore, I propose the following student learning objectives:

Students will:
- analyze and practice multimodal communication.
- analyze and practice provenance and remediation.
- practice adapting communication to a variety of rhetorical situations.
- practice determining the conventions for a variety of modes, media, and genres.
- practice critical thinking with and in a variety of modes, in order to expand the scope of their epistemic understanding.

Certainly there are some aspects of literate new media practice neglected by this short list of student objectives. Collaborative communicative practice, underprivileged literate practice (such as women's and minority rhetoric), and specific technological literacies are but three of many varieties of new media literacy that are not specifically represented by these learning objectives. However, since a concise group of learning objectives, such as this one, cannot hope to address all literacy issues, I've tried to design these in such a way that additional learning objectives can be incorporated.

**Theoretical Context**

In my attempt to ground this new media literacy theory in our discipline's history of writing instruction, I must begin by acknowledging and explaining my alliance with a body of pedagogical theory that's become known as post-process. My approach to post-process pedagogy begins in a very similar manner to the "methods" described in Lee-Ann M. Kastman Breuch's "Post-Process 'Pedagogy:' A Philosophical Exercise." The applicability of this approach to my new media theory becomes clear very quickly. Kastman Breuch lays claim to several strains of dialogic theory. She specifically grounds her work in Bakhtinian heteroglossia (112) and other dialogic theories such as Thomas Kent's paralogic hermeneutics (99). Kastman Breuch's focus on dialogism reaches all areas of pedagogy. She cites Irene Ward's "functional dialogism" and echoes Ward's call for pedagogical dialogues between

- internal student self and "internal audience"

13 This article includes an excellent argument for reconceiving post-process pedagogy as a pedagogical theory in its own right, and not merely a critique of process pedagogy—a stigma that has held back the development of post-process praxis.
• "teacher and student"
• "students and larger social institutions"
• students and students, via composition and discourse (103)

Kastman Breuch, echoing Ward, also argues that students should engage in the production of dialogic texts (103), and recognize that all texts occur in a dialogic context (110). Kastman Breuch argues that post-process pedagogy needs to be grounded in a recognition of the public nature of writing (110). Most important here is the understanding that communication is a thoroughly integrated social activity, rather than an internal, individual process. She writes:

The assumption that writing is public, therefore, incorporates the idea that meaning is made through our interactions. Terms used to describe this emphasis include language-in-use, communicative interaction, and dialogue, but they all point to the idea that writing is an activity—an interaction with others—rather than content to be mastered. (113)

Kastman Breuch further argues that writing is necessarily interpretive and situated (113-116). Within this context an appropriate post-process pedagogy must recognize that all communicative acts involve interpretation, and are apprehended through interpretive schemata (see Peirce’s interpretant). This parallels echoes the theory and pedagogy of multiliteracies. Rhetors need to be able to recognize the interpretive community in which they are composing so they can fully understand the hermeneutic actions of the text and hermeneutic processes of the audiences.

Kastman Breuch offers no specific suggestions for a pedagogical implementation. Indeed, her article is but a beginning in that it constitutes an initial defense of post-process theories ability to foster pedagogical praxis. However, from her work comes several important elements for my pedagogical approach to new media literacy:

• Literacy teachers must recognize that the composing processes are as rhetorically situated as the texts they produce.14
• Literacy education must constantly reflect and participate in dialogism.
• Students need practice identifying interpretive communities and their conventions.

14 Given this pedagogical imperative and the thrust of the rest of this thesis, one might well describe me as multi-process, rather than post-process.
• Students need the opportunities to practice a variety of composing processes for a variety of modes, media, genres, and rhetorical situations.
• Students need opportunities to critically reflect on the efficacy of their composing processes in various modes, media, genres and rhetorical situations.

The first two of these pedagogical imperatives constitute the theoretical foundation for a post-process new media literacy theory. The last three, which I abbreviated as analysis, praxis, and reflection, are supported in the pedagogical research of many of the new media literacy theorists I have already cited. The NLG describes four key pedagogical approaches for multiliteracies—situated practice, overt instruction, critical framing, and transformed practice (85-88). Table 3—reproduced from the NLG (88) describes each of these key pedagogical approaches:

**Table 3: NLG Pedagogical approaches**

**Situated Practice:** Immersion in experience and the utilization of available discourses, including those from the students' lifeworlds and simulations of the relationships to be found in workplaces and public spaces.

**Overt Instruction:** Systematic, analytic, and conscious understanding. In the case of multiliteracies, this requires the introduction of explicit metalanguages, which describe and interpret the Design elements of different modes of meaning.

**Critical Framing:** Interpreting the social and cultural context of particular Designs of meaning. This involves the students' standing back from what they are studying and viewing it critically in relation to its context.

**Transformed Practice:** Transfer in meaning-making practice, which puts the transformed meaning to work in other contexts or cultural sites.

These four pedagogical activities coordinate well with the cycle of analysis-praxis-reflection, with overt instruction being a much needed precursor to analysis. The process of overt instruction helps facilitate the development of a shared vocabulary for the analytic processes involved in critical framing. Facilitating student development of a shared metalanguage provides a common code for the discussion and practice of communicative analysis. Frequently this process of overt instruction takes the form of short lecture, though I
think shared metalanguage could also be developed, albeit more slowly, through guided
discussion. Through the analytic practices of critical framing (student-)rhetors are able to
situate their practice within particular rhetorical contexts, and then use the skills of critical
framing for self-reflection—that is, they can rhetorically analyze their own work in an effort
to improve their own practice. The results of self-reflection can help inform further situated
practice and transformed practice.

Institutional Context

Attempts to realize specific curricular objectives, such as my new media literacy
student objectives, are always and inevitably situated in particular institutional contexts. The
social, cultural and economic exigencies in particular universities, departments, and
programs have as much as, and sometimes more, of an effect on instructional practice than
does pedagogical theory. Recognizing this, it seems pertinent to address the intuitional
context for which my proposed proto-curriculum was designed. I designed each of the
assignments discussed in the following section to fit into a specific institutional and
curricular context. FYC at Iowa State has recently undergone a significant curricular
transformation now officially titled ISUComm. A landmark university-wide communication­
based curricular initiative, ISUComm is explicitly a “rhetoric-based multimodal program”
(Instructor Guide 6). Much of the impetus for ISUComm is the same as the impetus for this
thesis. “From the outset, the goal of ISUComm has been to prepare our students to
communicate with confidence and expertise in a world transformed by dynamic changes in
information technology” (Instructor Guide 4). This curricular initiative is grounded in a
specific multimodal pedagogy known as WOVE (Written, Oral, Visual, and Electronic).
ISUComm also explicitly supports a pedagogy of analysis-praxis-reflection under the slightly
altered nomenclature of analysis-composition-reflection.

Traditionally, FYC at Iowa State involves a two semester sequence during the first
year. The first semester focuses on writing and analysis in a WOVEn context, and the second
focuses more on fully WOVEn communication practice. The second semester of the
sequence is the focus of and location for my proposed curriculum. As ISUComm becomes
more fully integrated into the Iowa State curriculum, the second semester in the sequence will be moved to the second year, in an effort to help students receive communication instruction during all four years. My assignments anticipate this transition and are designed to work for both freshmen and sophomores in this course.

Assignments

To implement this new media literacy pedagogy, I suggest eight assignments in three units. Each unit is designed to replicate the logic of analysis-praxis-reflection, and each of the assignments specifically targets more than one of the primary learning objectives (restated and numbered below for use with the table). The full descriptions of the assignments are available in the appendix, and would greatly enhance the reader’s comprehension of my commentary on them. As I’ve explained previously, my explicit goal in the development and implementation of these assignments has been the unification of my version of post-process analysis-praxis-reflection pedagogy and the five student learning objectives reproduced below. As you browse the appendix, I think that it should be immediately apparent how each bundle of assignments has been engineered to mirror the logic of analysis-praxis-reflection. Though I could argue that each assignment, in some small way, addresses each of the key literacy goals, I will focus on the primary targets for each assignment. Table 4 identifies the primary literacy goals targeted by each assignment:

\[\text{Appendix: http://grahamss.public.iastate.edu/thesis/appendix.htm}\]


### Student Learning Objectives

Students will:

1. analyze and practice multimodal communication.
2. analyze and practice remediation in communication.
3. practice adapting communication to a variety of rhetorical situations.
4. practice determining the conventions for a variety of modes, media, and genres.
5. practice critical thinking with and in a variety of modes.

#### Table 4: Assignment’s Target Literacy Goals

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>LO #1</th>
<th>LO #2</th>
<th>LO #3</th>
<th>LO #4</th>
<th>LO #5</th>
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<td>A.2 Visual Argument</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<td>A.3 Justification</td>
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<td>B.1 Report</td>
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<tr>
<td>C.1 Remediation</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>C.2 Genealogy</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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</table>

Table 4 indicates that the student learning objectives are spread out among the assignments. Each learning objective is targeted by more than one assignment, and each assignment targets more than one goal. I hope that by thus spreading them out that each objective will receive sufficient coverage throughout the semester. I also hope that spreading them out like this will allow students to focus on only a few learning objectives at a time.
Unit A: Visual Argumentation

A.1 Visual Midrash
Analysis of the design and persuasive strategies used in a magazine advertisement.

A.2 Visual Argument
Argumentative visual reply to assigned written argument.

A.3 Justification
Analysis of how visual argument design and persuasive strategies work in concert to effectively meet the exigencies of the rhetorical situation.

Presentation and Procedures

The first key element in introducing students to the visual argumentation unit is the introduction of students to some necessary tools for the analysis phase of the unit. Since the analysis portion of the assignments entreats students to explore the interaction between persuasive and design elements, they will need to be introduced to some basic vocabulary and the underlying concepts in rhetorical persuasion and visual design.

In this unit, I would focus on the classical persuasive strategies: ethos, logos, and pathos. In presenting these concepts for the first time, I typically show my students a particular episode of The Simpsons, “Marge vs. the Monorail,” written by Conan O’Brien. In this episode, there is one central argument that is repeatedly addressed using each of these strategies in sequences. I’ve found this episode quite helpful in helping my students learn each of these concepts. Even students who have difficulty with the vocabulary are typically able to identify other instantiations of a particular persuasive tool—often identifying it as “the Marge Simpson strategy” rather than logos, for example.

In addition to learning about persuasive strategies, students would also be introduced to visual design components. A number of visual design schemata are available for use in composition instruction. Charles Kostelnick and David Roberts’ visual design textbook offers several rhetorically-based visual design vocabularies that could be easily incorporated into FYC. However, given much of new media literacy theory’s focus on design (See Williams; Kress and Van Leeuween; Selfe; and Graham et al.), I use a modified version of the design terminology from Graham et al.’s “Imagine: Visual Design in First-Year

Though this version is significantly modified, I was first introduced to the idea of a midrash-based assignment in the History of Rhetoric coursework series at Iowa State with Michael Mendelson.
Composition.” Graham et al. surveyed FYC classrooms using an extensive combination of design and aesthetic vocabulary to help students through visual argumentation. In my classroom, I use the shortened set: font, line, form, spacing, focus, balance and color. The introduction of these concepts comes with its own difficulties. Conventional use of font, line, form, spacing, focus, balance, and color vary significantly from context to context and from MMG to MMG. Given this, it becomes important to help students become aware of the situational and contextual influences informing the discussion of these concepts.

From these foundations in persuasive and design concepts, I extend the discussion into the assignment of the visual midrash. I begin the introducing of the visual midrash to the students with examples of traditional and artistic Hebrew midrash (see Figure 3). We can use these examples to discuss the differences between the traditional versions and what is required of the students. I try to facilitate discussion about how the techniques used in the sample midrash can be used in the assigned visual midrash, and what other potentially effective techniques the students can use. I also show students some examples of what previous students have produced. The ever present challenge here is to help the students distinguish between examples and models. I like to help my students make analytic and design decisions for particular reasons, rather than because, “that’s what the example looked like.”

Figure 3: Traditional and Artistic Midrash

The assignment of the visual argument is somewhat more involved. Not only do I facilitate discussion of persuasive and design strategies, but there also has to be some
significant discussion of how those concepts can fit particular rhetorical situations. Some small group invention exercises might be the most effective. If the instructor provides the students with a written argument other than the one they would respond to in their individual work, the small groups can discuss and determine the rhetorical situation, and persuasive strategies of the written work. From there the students can be guided into discussion of what visual strategies might effectively address the same rhetorical situation.

I’ve designed the justification assignment to be presented as inherently part of the visual argument. I hope that knowing from the beginning that defending design decisions is required will prompt the students to be more critically aware of their composition process. The justification assignment can serve as an ever-present reminder that the design and persuasive decisions must meet the demands of a particular rhetorical situation.

Evaluation

At the end of each assignment sheet, I’ve provided the students with some evaluation criteria to guide their work. Each list of evaluation criteria is designed to help students identify the primary learning objectives of the assignments. In the case of each specific evaluative criteria, my goal is to simultaneously give enough guidance to students to know what to focus on, but also to leave the assignment open enough to encourage creativity.

The visual midrash criteria—1) Identifies audience, purpose, and context; 2) Effectively identifies significant design strategies; 3) Effectively identifies significant persuasive strategies; 4) Effectively identifies relationships between design and persuasive strategies—are designed to replicate the procedural process of visual analysis. Effective visual midrash should find some way to call attention to the major design strategies of the text—those design strategies that “carry” the bulk of the communicative load. To effectively complete the assignment, students need to highlight the specific implementations of font or line or shape, etc. within the advertisement. I suspect that many students naturally gravitate towards focusing on the content of the text—its images and words, rather than the design strategies used.

The next evaluative question for the visual midrash is: Does the student effectively identify the persuasive strategies of the advertisement? In much the same fashion as the
identification of the design strategies, effective visual midrash will highlight specific implementations of ethos, logos, and/or pathos. Again the challenge for the student is in identifying how the content renders into persuasive appeals and what those persuasive appeals are. Effective visual midrash highlights the difference between pathos-in-general, and the appeals to specific emotions in particular advertisements.

The most important evaluative concern, however, is whether or not the students can effectively relate the design and persuasive strategies. Students need to identify how particular design strategies work in concert with the advertisement content to create persuasive appeals. There are a number of effective ways to answer this question visually. I imagine most students will draw connecting lines between the call-outs they used to identify the base features, or perhaps draw directional arrows from the base call-outs to a verbal description of the strategies’ synthesis. See Figure 4, below, for a representative example.

**Figure 4: Representative Visual Midrash**

- **Color**: use of black and white makes this half of the ad appear less attractive.
- **Color-Pathos**: black and white vs. color makes one half more “dull” and other half more appealing.
- **Line**: draws ad focus to whiskey bottle
- **Line**: used to create balance and to separate the two halves of the advertisement.
- **Logos**: Line and color work together to show “value” on right side.
- **Color**: use of color distinguishes between two halves of ad
- **Logos**: Price figures suggest aged means more value
Reflecting the goals of analysis-praxis-reflection pedagogy, the visual argument assignment requires students to implement the same tools as were analyzed in the visual midrash. The visual argument evaluation criteria reflect a focus on the relationship among design strategies, persuasive strategies and rhetorical situation:

- Appropriately responds to written argument
- Effectively employs imagery and design as primary carriers of argument
- Effectively implements design strategies
- Appropriately adapts argument to the rhetorical situation
- Appropriately mediates composition for the rhetorical situation

Each of these criteria with the exception of one makes use of the modifiers “appropriate” or “effective.” The propriety and efficacy of the argument are, of course, highly contingent on the audience, purpose, and context. Since the rhetorical situation is not provided with the assignment, it is more difficult to evaluate the visual argument without the aid of the justification. In this case the justification assignment is meant to serve not only as a reflective activity for the student, but also an evaluative aid for the instructor. As can be seen below, the first three assignment criteria for the justification are designed to call attention to the very features of the visual argument that are to be evaluated:

- Identifies rhetorical situation
- Identifies specific design decisions/ elements
- Relates major design decisions clearly to rhetorical situation

The identification of the rhetorical situation is quite important here. A successful student must be able to identify the audience, purpose, and context of the original written argument, and then select an appropriate visual medium for their reply. Given the visual argument evaluation criteria, this identification must set the context for the entire evaluation. Of course, it’s quite possible that a student could improperly identify the rhetorical situation of the written argument, causing a cascading problem for the visual argument and justification. In this case, I would likely give the student poor marks for the visual argument criterion of responding to the written argument and for the justification criterion “identifies
rhetorical situation.” From there I would evaluate the assignment based on the newly identified rhetorical situation.

I suspect that the second justification criterion is somewhat easy for most students to perform adequately, but rather difficult for most students to perform superbly. Most students should be able to effectively identify their content related design decisions. “I placed the picture of X here, and put it opposite this picture of Y because....” However, I suspect that many of the more subtle design decisions—use of line, space, emphasis, etc.—are made rather intuitively. Some of my students who’ve composed the most effective visual arguments did so through a seemingly intuitive understanding of visual design. This lack of conscious decision making leads often to the most difficult part of the justification—identifying how the design decisions meet the rhetorical situation.

This third criterion is the most important. The most sophisticated student presentations will elucidate the relationships among design, persuasion, and rhetorical situation. However, many students I’ve worked with have a tendency to justify design decisions with the criterion, “it just looked good/right.” This is, of course, an issue that writing instructors have been confronting since the discipline began facilitating reflective activates. The challenge of helping students become critically aware of their design decisions and how those decisions relate to a specific rhetorical situation is no less challenging than helping students become critically aware of how grammar and style function effectively in written prose. How tempting the justification—for student and instructor—“it just sounds better that way.”

The challenge of an effective justification is enhanced further by the fact that it’s an oral presentation. Clearly, many students are frequent victims of stage fright. Nevertheless, the importance of oral presentation practice and facilitating students learning from other students makes oral presentations a virtual necessity in my FYC classroom. As such the justification assignment includes some basic oral presentation evaluation criteria:

- Presentation is organized and rehearsed
- Presentation includes hook and clear thesis
- Delivery is clear and audible
Unit B: Genre Conventions

B.1 Report  Short memo/letter report composed according to generic conventions as identified by students, including information derived from multimodal sources.

B.2 Reflection Analysis of how report conventions were modified to fit rhetorical situation, and reflection on how report might have been different in an alternate situation.

B.3 Debate Remediation of report material into brief oral presentations for deployment in dialogic debate.

Presentation and Procedures

The progression of the genre unit is designed to meet three interrelated learning objectives—flexibility, remediation practice, and epistemological (critical thinking) participation. To help demonstrate this application, I will first describe a student’s progression through the assignment and how each facet of the assignment is designed to meet the three overarching goals. The introduction to the genre conventions unit, by virtue of being a themed unit, requires some introduction to the theme. Since the Iowa economy is driven largely by agriculture and agricultural industry, agricultural issues are relevant and pertinent to many of the students—all the more so since Iowa State University hosts a large and well-regarded College of Agriculture. Specifically, this unit revolves around the political and ethical ramifications of genetically modified food products (GMOs). Certainly other themes appropriate to settings away from Iowa State could be used for this unit.

Students are introduced to the genre unit through “reading” several texts on the subject of GMOs. What makes these texts significant, other than their focus on GMOs, is the fact that none of them occurs in the same genre in which the students will ultimately compose. Additionally, they also span a variety of modes and modal combinations. The texts make use of a variety of persuasive techniques from statistically driven presentations to satire. Though there will, inevitably, be some similarities between the written texts the students read and the texts they compose, I’ve done my best to ensure as much variation as possible. Different readings are also assigned to different groups so that the students come to class with different knowledge bases about the subject. This diversification is designed to help replicate dialogic epistemic practice.
From the beginning, the students have the opportunity to select from two slightly different report assignments. Each assignment prompts students to take on a specific role in a predefined rhetorical situation. Students may select from either a business/corporate role or a scientific/research role. Despite quite different rhetorical situations, the subject matters of the reports will be closely aligned. Though each group of students will be composing a report, the specific genre of each report is different according to its specific rhetorical situation. The business-role students are assigned to compose an internal memo report, while the science-role students are assigned to compose an external letter report.

One thing that differentiates this assignment from many others is that the students will not just be given the generic conventions. Instead, the students will read a broad sampling of memo and letter reports and must, with instructor guidance, derive the necessary conventions for themselves. The students will be placed in groups after having read some reports. These groups will be composed of members intending to write in the same genre—business memos with business memos, and science letters with science letters. Once each student has chosen a role, the class will be divided into groups along those lines. In these groups, the students must use a repository of documents to determine the generic conventions of each report style. Each group will be given five or six sample reports from each respective genre. In my continuing attempts to avoid providing a model, none of the reports addresses the subject of GMOs or related subjects. Through an in-class guided activity, each of the groups—further divided into sub-groups of four or five—compare and contrast the various reports and attempt to determine the basic generic requirements of each genre. I also hope the students are also able to begin to determine how some of the reports have been modified to fit the demands of each specific rhetorical situation.

After defining the appropriate genre conventions, students do further research into GMOs and begin drafting their reports. At one point during the composition process, we have a technology day focusing on making charts using Microsoft Excel. Students are required to include a chart in their report if it’s appropriate to their argument. For this students need the technological facility and an awareness of visual and ethical conventions for charts and data displays.
These first three steps—navigating the readings, negotiating genre conventions, and report authoring—meet all three assignment objectives in different ways. Since the readings take a variety of points of view on the food issues, the students are exposed to antilogic in action. Hopefully this more passive participation in antilogic in action helps prepare students to participate more actively in the process during the debate activity. The requirements of the report assignment also foster practice in remediation. Since the information on genetically modified foods comes from documents not in the report genre, students have to remediate these ideas and arguments to fit the conventions of memo and letter reports. Furthermore, this practice in remediation is obviously also practice in rhetorical flexibility.

Once the students have completed their reports, they have an opportunity to give mini-presentations to a small group consisting of both memo and letter writers. The students are asked to share their rhetorical choices and explain how they authored their report to meet the demands of the rhetorical situation. This opportunity also gives the students the additional opportunity to learn from the rhetorical choices of others. Other students may have been just as successful in tailoring their rhetoric to the situation but may have done so in drastically different ways. What students learn in these mini-presentations may also help them start to think about the reflection assignment.

The reflection assignment is designed to give the students a chance to think both about their rhetorical decisions for the report they did write and about how they might have written in the other genre. This reflective assignment is, thus, designed to help foster student rhetorical facility. Reflective activities of this type allow students an opportunity to think critically about their own writing and composing process. Guided meta-reflection can facilitate students’ writing development, in that it can help them become more aware of necessary decisions in the composing process. This reflection assignment is considered the most important part of this progression and will be graded accordingly.

Despite being the most important assignment, the reflection is not the final activity. The debate activity was developed to bring the discussion of genetically modified foods to a close (not that I think the debate will result in any consensus or resolution). Indeed a resulting aporia—thoughtful lack of resolution—is consistent with the doctrine of antilogic. In the debate assignment, the students give short oral presentations on the topic of genetically
modified food. These presentations are given in a debate format and later presentations are expected to include more and more rebuttal. Clearly, the debate assignment is designed to give the students another opportunity to participate in antilogic in action. Oral debate is, after all, the primary mode of traditional antilogic. Hopefully, the students gain some practice in productive argumentation and challenge their beliefs on issues surrounding genetically modified food production and distribution.

Evaluation

Evaluation for the memo and letter reports is much the same since it’s all about fit—fit to the genre conventions and fit to the rhetorical situation. The selected evaluation criteria for either version of the assignment replicate the focus of the broader unit—genre conventions. The evaluative criteria for either assignment are listed below:

- Takes a side and argues it convincingly
- Adapts argument(s) effectively for rhetorical situation
- Makes effective use of genre conventions
- Adapts conventions appropriately to rhetorical situation
- Provides a thesis sentence and a recognizable organizational pattern with transitions
- Uses sources appropriately for the genre
- Includes a Works Cited page

High quality student reports will effectively integrate visual, argumentative, and stylistic conventions into an coherent document. Effective reports will maintain most, if not all, of the generic conventions, and appropriately argue the student’s chosen purpose to the assigned audience. Given the broad range of issues and opinions surrounding the subject of GMOs, it’s likely that students will select a variety of positions to argue. In fact, I hope they do. Broad disagreement on the topic will help foster a more interesting and engaging debate activity.

The reflection assignment sheet specifically instructs the students to divide the essay into three distinct sections. Each section should target specific evaluative criteria. An effective essay begins by establishing and summarizing the rhetorical situation of the
document. Since the basics of the audience and the context are provided by the assignment sheet, an effective reflection will elaborate on those two rhetorical elements and discuss how the author's chosen purpose integrates with the contextual elements the situation. The second section of the justification analyzes how the students design and composition decisions meet the exigencies of the identified rhetorical situation. In effective essays, this section discusses how the report meets and defies genre conventions as appropriate to the situation. An effective reflective essay will specifically justify any deviations from the standard generic conventions. The final section of an effective reflection discusses how the decisions might have been different if the student had selected the other role. Strong responses will include more than simple statements about the basic differences in document design. Critical reflection should involve thorough discussion on how style and argumentation might have been different.

Certainly, I've just described an essay of quality. I don't expect that all students will be able to address each of these issues in thorough detail. Nevertheless, I think most FYC students should be able to address some of these issues effectively, and begin addressing the rest. As the evaluation criteria demonstrate, I'm more concerned with fostering critical reflection than providing students another opportunity to format a document. To summarize, the evaluative criteria are as follows:

- Reviews and summarizes audience, purpose, and genre conventions for your report.
- Identifies strategies used to address the audience, purpose, and genre conventions.
- Identifies and justifies deviations from genre conventions.
- Explains how you would adapt your rhetorical choices to fit the other genre format, audience, purpose, and context.

The final activity in the genre unit progression is the debate activity. Though it's listed as a major assignment, I don't think that it needs to be evaluated. Students have to deal with enough issues of stage fright when they have prepared and rehearsed a presentation. I tend to think that better results may come if students are free to participate in debate without fear that their unprepared—potentially unreflective—comments would be evaluated. The value of this activity comes not from an opportunity to be evaluated but rather from a chance for the students to participate in realistic dialogic activities.
Unit C: Remediation

C.1 Remediation
Remediation and revision of previous assignment.

C.2 Genealogy\textsuperscript{17}
Analysis and presentation of remediation and revision process.

Presentation and Procedures
The remediation and genealogy assignments are designed to be the final assignments in an FYC section. These assignments were specifically engineered to integrate many of the strategies and tools that the students have been developing over the course of the semester. When combined they target all of my student learning objectives. Through the course of completing the other assignments, students have had opportunities to develop their facility with multimodal analysis and communication. The remediation assignment and subsequent genealogy presentation should provide students with an effective opportunity to refine these skills. However, the remediation unit is not meant to be an entirely complete opportunity for refinement. The primary foci of this unit are remediation and flexibility.

Given the status of this unit as the culminating one, there is little new information that students will require. Indeed, much of the initial assignment presentation consists merely of explaining and describing the requirements and limits of the assignments. However, given the scope and complexity of the assignment, I will facilitate some group invention activities. Students can be divided into groups of four or five wherein they can discuss how remediation might be performed in an assigned situation somewhat reflective of what the students would individually produce. In this case, I have the students identify some of the rhetorical exigencies that require accounting in both the original and new rhetorical situations. From there students can sketch out some basic ideas about how to address the identified rhetorical issues.

Once the students have embarked on producing their individual remediations, there are a number of different ways to approach this assignment. It depends largely on what

\textsuperscript{17} I also appropriated the idea of a document “genealogy” from David Roberts’ course, Writing and Analyzing Professional Documents.
assignment the student chooses to remediate and into which medium. I’ve suggested a number of possible remediations in the assignment sheet. Many of the suggestions involve remediating an argumentative essay—the one highly traditional paper I assign to my English 105 students. For the purposes of the evaluation explanation, I will discuss what a remediation from an argumentative paper to webzine article might look like.

After the remediation, the students prepare the remediation genealogy. This reflective document should trace the remediation process explaining the remediation decisions they made and why they were appropriate to the new rhetorical situation. I assigned the genealogy to be in poster form. Students are expected to make efficient use of the visual design techniques discussed in the visual argument unit in order to implement their genealogy. The genealogy document itself should be multimodal. In order to be effective, it should employ both written and visual strategies. Using these posters, I facilitate the students having a “remediation fair.” All of the students set their posters up around the classroom simultaneously, and take the time to share with each other their remediation processes. I’m not naive enough to think that all of my students are so excited at the prospect of this learning opportunity to be intrinsically motivated to explore each genealogy in detail. To facilitate the less motivated students getting something out of the remediation fair, I build in some sort of peer evaluation activity. Each student submits their choices for the best remediation; the winner earning a prize.

Evaluation

As with most of the previous assignments, the key to evaluation is the fit; i.e., s the student effectively transformed the content to meet the demands of the new medium? In my example of argumentative-essay-turned-webzine-article, a great many adjustments have to be made to the document. Not only does the document need to be delivered via hypertext, the style of the prose has to be substantially altered from the discourse conventions of undergraduate academia to the conventions of e-journalism. Webzine articles invariably include links to a variety of other web pages. The student has to select a variety of terms/concepts from the article prose that are appropriate for hyperlinking. Webzine articles also typically include images and/or multimedia content. An effectively remediated webzine
article needs to integrate these types of audio and/or visual features where appropriate. Whether the document is remediated to webzine or another medium, the most important evaluative criterion is that the new document adheres to major conventions of new medium while retaining effectiveness/purpose. Admittedly, this example, as well as many of the others provided on the assignment sheets are more than simple “remediation.” If we understand medium and genre as distinct levels of consideration, as I’ve argued we should, then we must understand this assignment to be both remediation and re-genreation.

One major challenge for the student will be in appropriately addressing the change of audience. Sure, the instructor is the primary audience, and always will be due to the realities of evaluation and grading; however, the audience for an argumentative essay is typically at most the instructor and the other participants in the class. By contrast, the audience for a webzine article can be much more broadly conceived. As the student prepares the new document, it becomes necessary to determine the type of webzine in which the article would appear, and then who would be the new target audience. Of course, the challenge to the student does not end there. To be effective students must also adapt their composition to meet the needs of the new expanded audience. Whether webzine or other remediation project, students will have to address questions about how the prose, style, genre, and mode need to be adapted to the new medium and the new communicative situation.

As with the other assignments, the reflective portion is a key element in the process. Again, I recommend that the reflective portion be combined with the practice assignment. If the goal of the reflection is to help students critically evaluate their own work, then they need to know the evaluative criteria before they begin the process. The primary objective in the design of the genealogy is to create an assignment that helps students focus specifically on their remediation design process. Rather than just the decisions implementation in the final product, the genealogy should address the entire transformative process. Specifically, a genealogy should meet the following evaluative criteria:

- Highlights effectively key features of original communication.
- Highlights effectively key features of remediated communication.
- Highlights key elements of the remediation process.
- Indicates how the rhetorical situation changed
- Indicates why the key features needed adjustment to the new rhetorical situation.
Remediation genealogies can be effectively implemented in a number of ways. One conception I have of an effective genealogy poster is of an annotated timeline including document screen shots at various stages of redrafting. In the example of the argumentative essay to webzine article, an image of the final essay could be juxtaposed with an image of the final webzine article. Then images of the drafts at various stages could be integrated between them. In an effective genealogy poster, each draft image would include annotations about the major adjustments made and how those adjustments help bring the document closer to meeting the rhetorical situation.

The obvious and immediate potential problem with this assignment is the assumption that FYC students actually produce drafts. Some student will invariably invent “drafts” after the fact to meet the requirements of the genealogy assignment. My hope—possibly a naïve one—is that even invented drafts will in someway reflect the internal prewriting processes of the inventing student. That is, if the student has been successful at the remediation assignment, then s/he has likely imagined several possible versions of the remediation before committing one to “paper.” Even if this student did not actually produce the interim drafts, the after-the-fact rendering of them may still offer some insight into the remediation process. And of course, some students may unreflectively remediate the initial assignment in a single sitting. In this case my naïveté is replaced by cynicism: some students just refuse to learn.

Allow me to review some of the highlights of this assignment sequence in the context of the theories outlined in Chapters One and Two. My goal in this coda is to clarify my motives—both theoretical and pedagogical, as well as indicate possible outcomes for the assignments themselves. Each of the following sections discusses the relationship between the assignments and the key literacy goals.

**Multimodality/ ICTs**

The visual midrash, justification, report, remediation, and genealogy each specifically target the goal of increasing students’ facility with multimodal communication. Whether it’s
integrating visual and written elements in traditional report genre or preparing a webzine article, each of these assignments gives students an opportunity to compose multimodal communication. As I, and many of the new media theorists I’ve cited in this thesis, have argued, literacy is not solely an analytic activity. It is my hope that through allowing students these many opportunities to compose multimodality that this curriculum will foster literate practice.

Remediation

Each of the assignments, with the exception of the report, explicitly targets remediation as a goal. The creation of a visual midrash involves the remediation of a magazine advertisement into the midrash. The composition of a visual argument involves the remediation of a variety of images and graphics into a coherent whole. The justification requires that the visual argument be remediated into a justification presentation. The report reflection asks students to reflect on a possible remediation. The remediation assignment hardly needs mentioning here. The genealogy asks students to both continue to practice remediation with their own work (remediation assignment into genealogy assignment) but also to reflect of the decisions and the processes of remediation. Once again, the goal is literate practice. Through ample opportunity to analyze, practice, and reflect on remediation, students will begin to develop facility.

Flexibility

As I’ve noted before, to distinguish between remediation and flexibility is in many cases splitting hairs. As such when I discuss assignments that target flexibility, I mean the assignments that require an active reflection on a change of rhetorical situation. In this category I locate the reflection, the debate, and the remediation. Each of these assignments involve the students reflecting on a change of rhetorical situation, in some cases in their own work, and in others in the progression of an argument. The debate and the remediation explicitly require the students to alter the rhetorical situation for work they’ve done previously and to adapt the work to the new circumstance. This flexibility and rhetorical adaptability is a major component of multiliterate practice.
Multimodal Epistemology

I hope that every assignment I offer has epistemic value, and I believe that they do. However, one role of the FYC classroom is to prepare students to participate in the undergraduate academic discourse community and supply a goal to which I cannot object. However, much of the academic discourse community continues to explicitly privilege linear and verbal epistemic praxis over alternative approaches. With this in mind, I think it important to maintain a balance between linear verbal epistemology and multimodal epistemology. For this reason, this key literacy goal of multimodal epistemology is not targeted in all assignments.

The visual midrash, the visual argument, the debate, and the genealogy all seek to give students experience in dialogic and multimodal epistemic praxis. I offer the visual midrash as an alternative to the traditional analytic essay. Both the visual argument and the debate assignment are intended to reproduce dialogism in action—the visual argument as a dialogic response, and the debate as full blown dialogic discourse. The genealogy is an attempt to do for reflection what the visual midrash does for analysis. These two assignments are explicit attempts to echo Sean William’s caution against the pro-verbal bias. If all classroom analytic and reflective activities are verbal, then it hardly matters how much multimodal praxis there is. There is still great risk in students becoming indoctrinated into the pro-verbal bias.

Matching the logic of the MMGI

Each of the pedagogical units is designed to match the logic of the MMGI. They all call for students to critically reflect on questions of modal, media, and generic conventions. More than any other assignment, however, the GMO unit seeks to affirm this logic. This is why the topics, content, and rhetorical situations are so narrowly defined—supplied by the instructor. With these issues locked in place, I hope that students will be able to focus on identifying and matching MMG conventions and adapting their work to new MMG conventions. From the very beginning, this assignment seeks to help students practice adapting arguments.
Implications

Further research on two primary fronts is indicated for evaluating the efficacy of this new media literacy theory and pedagogy. On the first front, research could help determine whether or not the four identified literacy goals and the MMGI can help foster literate practice. Do rhetors using these models as guides and the MMGI specifically as heuristics, consistently deploy effective communication? The MMGI is designed specifically to account for communication in all modes, media, and genres; however, it is also designed to move rhetoric, composition, and design away from prior monomodal foci. One question arising from this is: will the MMGI foster effective communication in traditional, modes, media, and genres? Will rhetors be able to recognize when the most effective communicative artifact for the context is monomodal and highly traditional?

The second indicated research front is the pedagogical one. Will this proposed curriculum help foster literate practice? Further research and refinement is indicated for my proposed proto-curriculum. It is important to determine whether or not this pedagogy can be used consistently and effectively not only the context of Iowa State and ISUComm, but also in other FYC programs across the country. Furthermore, the applicability of this new media literacy theory and pedagogy to advanced and specialized composition courses should be studied. It is important to determine how my theoretical and pedagogical suggestions should be modified so as to be implemented effectively in a wider variety of composition courses. Another important step in turning this proto-curriculum into a more complete version, involves theorizing evaluation. Though this thesis is replete with dialogism, it does not, in great detail, address the dialogue between teacher and student. It seems clear that evaluative practices developed for print composition are insufficient to evaluate visual and electronic texts. More research into evaluative praxis is needed to determine whether multiple sets of grading criteria are needed or whether a multimodal rubric can be developed.

Finally, a true multiliteracies theory and pedagogy should help prepare rhetors to deploy effective communication strategies in a broad variety of crosscultural rhetorical situations. From the very beginning, this new media literacy theory was developed in an admittedly western context. Further research should explore to what extent the identified new media literacy goals, and subsequent MMGI and accompanying pedagogy can foster
crosscultural multiliterate practices, and how these theories can be modified to account for those crosscultural situations.

Despite these concerns, I think this new media literacy theory is poised to effectively answer many of the challenges brought by new media communication. The integration of dialogic theories and the semiotic turn can help literacy and composition instructors address a wide variety of concerns—especially those brought by Williams, Wysocki, Ulmer, and the CCCs committee. The MMGI can help new media studies to continue to develop theories of modal, media, and generic interrelationships of increasing efficacy. Finally the proto-curriculum can help literacy instructors take another step towards a more robust integration of multimodality and multimedia in composition curricula.
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