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Performance and Disidentification: Towards a Theory of Queer Modalities and Networked Communication

Gerald Jackson[1]

University of South Carolina, Columbia, South Carolina, USA

Abstract
This article situates itself in a discussion of literacy, resistance, and digital media, to argue for a non-instrumental theory of multimodality that sees literacy and multimodality as critical practices that "recycle and rethink" encoded meanings (Munoz, 1999). Through the works of Kathleen Blake Yancey (2004) and Jody Shipka (2011), among others, I describe an "instrumental" type of thought that frames multimodality within a technological discussion of usefulness at the expense of its inner workings. Then, studying queer activist Zach Blas's digital piece "transCoder," I discuss how new modalities emerge from critical, non-instrumental examinations of technology, specifically code and protocol. I trace how literacy constructs relationships between digital media, political and cultural actualization, and an implied, necessary instrumentality of communication technology. I thus present transCoder as a "digital disidentification," a performative practice that recognizes the (sometimes paradoxical) registers of actions and effects in communication media. Thus I intend to raise a question how literacy practices function and emerge within digital media by way of exploring "queer" modalities of networked culture.

Keywords
Multimodality, Disidentification, Pedagogy, Protocol, Queer Studies

Introduction

As scholars of rhetoric and composition, we look back to Kathleen Blake Yancey's (2004) address to the annual Conference of College Communication and Composition as an example of how the call of technology and multimodality entered zeitgeist of contemporary rhetoric and composition studies. Although certainly not the first call of its kind, her keynote and subsequent article frankly and passionately set the stage for what she referred to as our "moment," the moment in which composition studies found itself facing a new digital public

[1] Gerald Jackson is a Ph.D. candidate at the University of South Carolina, Columbia. Email: geraldsjackson@gmail.com

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rooted in the practice of writing, facilitated by digital, networked technology. For Yancey, this was a moment to rethink and redesign curricula and disciplinary definitions of what we do as composition scholars, namely how we teach writing and how we theorize composition as a process. Her implications were practical and pedagogical, and framed the adoption of new digital, multimodal teaching approaches necessary for the continued relevance of rhetoric and composition. Pedagogically, she asked us to think about the transference, modification, and ultimate mutation of traditional print literacies in a networked world of digital composition (including the ways in which teachers find themselves able to comment on, research, and teach writing and rhetorical practices in digital spaces using digital tools). Practically and institutionally, she noted that these publics are writing *without us*, that this writing public already practiced literacies that the field found itself (and still finds itself) adapting to in university classrooms, especially those of first year English. In both cases, the central mediating conversation was a civic rhetorical mission that rooted in public writing as a space of political and social intervention, one that could trace the movements of an already-existing rhetoric through new, digital technology.

Yancey's argument set the stage for the adoption of digital technology as a necessary component of a multimodal composition pedagogy, but its framing of what "multimodality" is opened up space to further discuss the implications of technology for rhetorical scholarship. Even as Yancey noted the increasing complexity and transformation of writing publics through digital technology, her focus fell on the various rhetorical products of that technology, which includes not only texts but also emergent social formations and publics as well. The legacy of this discussion is relevant to the field as it increasingly incorporates different media and methods as potential sites of teaching and inquiry (and these sites include such things as 3-D modeling, geocaching, and sound studies). Yancey's approach, however, demonstrates a particular method of articulating the productive aspects of multimodal rhetorical production through a relationship of abstraction between media and theory, as scholars may approach the study of a given medium with a particular understanding of the rhetoric or rhetoric with a basic set of assumptions about the medium itself. This process of abstraction is productive and necessary for theorizing multimodal rhetoric and composition, but as this essay suggest, it is also an important mechanism of study in its own right.

The argument of this essay proposes an introductory discussion and illustration of this mechanism of research, and it proceeds in three parts. First, it traces the contours of Yancey's call for a multimodal composition, and a response from Jody Shipka (2011) in her book *Towards A Composition Made Whole,* in order to discuss how multimodality can be thought of as a movement of abstraction between theory and media. In particular, I use the term "instrumentalizing" to discuss how media and rhetorical theory are abstracted to produce innovative and relevant multimodal theory. Sidestepping the negative connotation of instrumentality in general, my version of the term draws from Bruno Latour's (1998) concept of "black boxes," in that instrumentalizing functions to productively abstract media logics in order to focus on the effects of those logics and the possibilities for rhetoric that emerge (p. 3). Secondly, this essay examines a theoretical-computational piece – transCoder, a "queer programming anti-language" developed by queer activist and performance artist Zach Blas – to illustrate how a turning inwards to the black box of digital media can open and refashion our thinking about modality. Specifically, the move from multimodality as the intentional capacity of compositionists working through disparate representational media to "modality" as a paradoxical movement and transcoding of information and practices through digital channels of

communication opens the way for what Blas, citing José Esteban Muñoz, calls an act of "disidentification" that engages digital composition as a way to acknowledge and engage cultural norms inherent in technology itself. Finally, the essay offers some general thoughts to how this notion of digital disidentification informs possibilities for future multimodal scholarship.

Multimodal Rhetoric and "Rhetoric in the Making"

Perhaps Yancey's strongest realization, a catalyzing realization, came early in "Composition in a New Key." Her recognition that digital writing publics she refers to worked without instruction, without having been "made to do" the writing that they participate in, seemed almost shocking in that it is contrasted implicitly with the writing that they *are* made to do (that is, academic writing in the writing classroom) (2004 , p.298). She wrote that "[t]oday we are witnessing a parallel creation, that of a writing public made plural, and as in the case of the development of a reading public, it's taking place largely outside of school" (2004, p. 300). A realization of a non-academic writing public led Yancey to proffer that composition studies should reorient itself towards the genres and media that this writing public has adopted as part of its own, unique rhetorical situations, and offer expertise and guidance to a new population of "digital natives" coming up and through the university system. Yancey noticed the disparity between what the field has often taught as "writing" within the context of academic necessity (academic work, paper writing, classroom performance) and the writing that students would recognize in their daily lives (p. 298). In order to bridge these different spaces of writing, Yancey suggested that we expand efforts in writing across the curriculum (WAC) development, create a rhetoric and writing major, and (what I will focus on in this article) create new curricula focused on digital multimodality (p. 308). The next section follows her discussion of modality, how this definition was situated with the official definition given by the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) and the critique of her position from Shipka's *Composition Made Whole* in order to outline the counters of how media plays a role in these conversations.

If the goal is to build a new curricular foundation on a new multimodality, then it becomes important to understand what that modality is. Yancey situated her conversation in the progression from process to post-process theory, noting that the assumptions of writing haven't changed much from the model of the solitary writer coming to class to learn and adapt with a teacher in a veritable tutorship model (2004, p. 310). Her proposed considerations for change included teaching about "intertextual transference"; the role of the author/writer in selecting delivery methods and media for appropriate audiences; meta-compositional practices; and critical engagement as members of a "writing public" (2004, p.311). Yancey's recognition of a writing public outside of the university facilitated by digital media was grounded (and subsequently, further grounded) how English teachers seriously began to think about technology in their classrooms and in their academic work. For example, James Paul Gee (2004) also suggested that many "new" literacies originate from outside of the classroom, including literacies stemming from game play and digital technology usage. Cynthia Selfe and Gail Hawisher have written numerous articles on the ways in which transnational communication is forged through multimodal technologies (Hawisher, Selfe, Kisa, & Ahmed, 2010) and how technology shapes and becomes ubiquitous in our classrooms (and how we ignore it to our own peril) (Selfe 1999). Specifically, with Yancey's recognition that technology outside the university is driven by a kind of "use value" she noted that it is this unknown realm of already-writing that asks for the expertise of the English scholar and pedagogue (2004, p. 301). Selfe wrote that "[a]s

composition teachers, deciding whether or not to use technology in our classes is simply not the point–we have to pay attention to technology" (1999, p. 96). For Yancey, Hawisher, Selfe, and Gee, the question of media and writing was a question literacy, and more importantly what *kind* of literacy, as both Yancey and Selfe argued that an expansion of what it means to be a literate scholar will necessarily include a technological and multimodal literacy. The NCTE statement on multimodal literacies reflects this meaning, where teaching and instruction rely on the ways in which "teachers and students should strive to study and produce 'multiple ways of knowing'" through visual, aural, and print expression (NCTE, 2005). These considerations parallel a number of theories at the juncture of rhetoric and composition studies and digital media, but Yancey's call concisely and publicly recognized the networked construction of a writing public through digital media, and implicitly and explicitly hooked into a variety of contemporary and future theoretical trajectories to include how literacy in a digital age would necessarily include literacies of these new technologies.

"Multimodality" is then not only the construction of texts via various representational media, but also an understanding of how writing publics are formed and the importance of circulation and delivery as concerns for digital literacy. To come to this definition, one could theorize that it is the evident result of how these writing publics and literacies came to be. However, theories of multimodality could also recognize the relationship between the media and theory itself. The NCTE definition (which, as of April 2015, has not been updated for almost seven and one half years) defines multimodal literacies within rhetor-audience situations where authors deploy tools in order to construct arguments or rhetorically effective objects, typically those of a hypertextual nature (2005, NCTE). Yancey theorized how composition scholars and teachers, help:

> create writing publics . . . also foster the development . . . of citizens whose civic literacy is global in its sensibility and its communicative potential, and whose commitment to humanity is characterized by consistency and generosity as well as the ability to write for purposes that are unconstrained and audiences that are nearly unlimited. (2005, p. 321)

That is, multimodality is a practice and literacy meant to facilitate a particular brand of civically-minded, humanist rhetoric. Thus, audiences, texts, and circulation function through this definition of rhetoric and composition, and media enhance, extend, and modify compositional practices within that theoretical dynamic. This is how the theory describes the media: through its ability to transform the theory itself, to modify it for new contexts and new situations.

This exemplifies a form of instrumentality. The relationship between media and rhetorical theory is what Bruno Latour, in *Science in Action,* called "switching rules of method" (1998, p.8). That is, for Latour, inquiry (in his argument, primarily scientific inquiry) works through a movement between deploying existing theories and technologies, and questioning those theories and technologies at the level of their logics and assumptions to form new theories, new technologies. Latour described ready-made theories and technologies as black boxes that mark a sort of inside/outside relationship to the production of knowledge. A black box is a theorem, a concept, or a set of rules or procedures that are, in the moment they are deployed, recognized as established fact—they "just work." That is, their inner workings are not important, so much as their normal and predictable production of output based on their input. Latour equated the inside/outside dynamic of the box as a relationship of knowledge--outside the box involves using it to produce results without worrying about its contents, while inside the box involves questioning its workings with an eye toward productive change (1998, p.7). This is the

two-faced Janus of science and knowledge. One face accepts that the box works, and uses it to move forward and produce knowledge. The other face decides to question the workings of the box and opens it to controversy and change (p. 7). Neither of these modes is necessarily exclusive, and it is often the case that decisions are made based on which mode is required for a given problem or task. Yancey, in her approach to digital media, made assumptions about what works (in her case, the technology) and ran a civically-minded rhetoric through the black box to produce a workable and innovative discussion regarding multimodality.

In *Towards a Composition Made Whole,* Jody Shipka (2011) responded to Yancey (among others) to show how conversations in modality gravitate towards digital media, having written that, "[s]ave for the fact that Yancey's article focuses on the assessment of digitally mediated communications such as e-mail, digital portfolios, PowerPoint, hypertext, MOOs, and MUDs, there is nothing in the definition of composition Yancey offers at the end of her piece to suggest that this 'new composition' should necessarily be limited to a consideration of screen-mediated texts" (2011, p. 9). Shipka's concern was that "the moment" raised by Yancey was not unique to digital technology (multimodality has existed and been in practice since there has been media), but that multimodality still becomes synonymous with digital production. Shipka argued that, while scholars focus on digital technology as a primary object of study for multimodality, non-digital antecedents are often left out of the conversation. She wrote in response to Robert Samuels that multimodal composition would take in to account not only the ways in which new media articulate different styles of writing, but how these multimodal styles of writing have always been in practice, just in different ways (2011, p. 10). The implications here are that in forwarding a vision of composition tied to the digital/multimodal, Shipka argued that we may be instituting one set of limiting media characteristics for another: the limits of print for the limits of the screen (2011, p. 11). This, in turn, imposes a "text-dependent or over determined textual" frame of literacy, that forgoes theorizing the "multimodal, technologically mediates aspects of all communicative practices" (2011, p. 11-12).

Shipka's critique provides a vantage to think about multimodality outside digital media, while at the same time illustrating how a particular approach instrumentalized rhetoric and media in order to do the work that it did. In assuming that a multimodal composition would necessarily be digital, Yancey black-boxed screen logics and digital media as assumed and given states of affairs. That is, she situated multimodality as networked, digital, and ubiquitous, and as Shipka pointed out, this instituted a possible set of limitations on how modality is theorized. I would complicate that argument, however, to say that Yancey's focus on digital technology does not limit possibility so much as function as a productive black box that articulates a set of perceived assumptions that ground and process new information or practices. So Yancey grounds, or instrumentalizes, multimodal rhetoric in an assumption of digital, networked technology. She black-boxes media and technology and runs a particular version of civic, persuasive composition and rhetorical instruction through it in order to produce a recognizable and workable discussion of multimodal rhetoric and composition. Thus a "critique" of Yancey, would be a critique of a very necessary move in multimodal theory: formulating a relationship between theory and media. Yancey could possibly attempt to integrate a generalized form of modality to encompass highly specific media logics, but would lose an important applicability for a specific mode of rhetorical inquiry. That is, Yancey instrumentalizes digital media in certain ways (black-boxes them) because it isn't necessary for her conversation to explicate their inner workings, and in fact could be detrimental to her work as a scholar. We can then see the ways in which Shipka constructs the relationship between theory and media in a different way. Shipka grounds

composition in questions of practice, process, and pedagogical utility. That is, she argued that "altering or expanding the media with which we . . . create texts" is not sufficient for multimodal research, but that we must also "attend . . . to the dynamic, emergent, distributed, historical and technologically mediated dimensions of composing processes" (2011, p. 14). That is, running her understanding of process-focused pedagogy through media opens new ways to think about how media functions in classroom settings invested in activities and individual compositing practices. Both instrumentalize the media, but as fulcrum of invention, instrumentality illustrates how this is a necessary practice of multimodal theory.

transCoder, Technical Documentation, and Protocol

The previous section has shown how theories of multimodality can instrumentalize particulars of rhetorical theory or attendant media in order to continually invent and reinvent theory and application. The examples of Yancey and Shipka describe how media is made ubiquitous, instrumentalized, in order to function as an inventional pivot for theory. The following section, however, asks if we may reverse this situation, or at least think of how a theory of multimodality might instead open the black box of media logics to think about how a multimodal theory of rhetoric and composition might emerge. For this argument, the focus will fall on "transCoder," a theoretical library of code definitions meant to facilitate algorithmic composing through computationally performative logics. The following argument makes some basic assumptions about communication and performance in digital media, articulated through Donna Haraway's description of the cyborg and the encoding work of technology, and an understanding that a rhetoric of representational production based on "screen logic" might prove insufficient for a theory of modality. These assumptions allow for the reading of transCoder not as a text but as a computational performance that enables differing modalities outside of (or in compliment to) theories of representation, process, or institutional pedagogy.

Haraway (1991) argued that the cyborg, rather than just the extension of a "human" through technology, exists as "lived social and bodily realities in which people are not afraid of their joint kinship with animals and machines, not afraid of permanently partial identities and contradictory standpoints" (p.154). We exist in the world of the cyborg, in that we exist in paradoxical and often ironic positions in which multiple identities and potentialities overlap, as do modes of communication and engagement. That is, the separation of representations, their production, and their effects turns into a "logic of the screen" in which evidences for publics, rhetorical affect, and their existence are predicated on representational artifacts (displayed on some sort of reading screen). A powerful lure of the logic of screens (which promulgate particular print notions of rhetoric) is that it complicates but does not upset traditional rhetorical theories: we can *teach it*, that is, so long as we can utilize the new technologies. Learning how to teach circulating texts through social networks or compositional tools is not asking us to learn a new literacy, but rather to modify an already existing one. And because of this, the danger is that multimodality becomes a word synonymous with technology writ large: that technology and multimodality become one and the same, and approaches to multimodality, in this case, become one of instrumentalism, because as Alexander Galloway (2012) argued, thinking of computers as media *objects* or remediations of older technologies, foregoes thinking about them as a potentiality, a logic of relation (p. 23). In discussing a logic of relationships, this approach posits a rhetoric that is primarily performative in nature, following Judith Butler's (1993) assertion that performativity is "thus not a singular 'act', for it is always a reiteration of a norm or a set of

norms," but rather the iteration of power articulated by those norms (xvii). This, I argue, is what Haraway warned us about when she argued that "[c]yborg politics is the struggle for language and the struggle against perfect communication, against the one code that translates all meaning perfectly," in that instrumental tools become so when we understand them as totally intelligible within a single framework (in this case, as tools used to write). If computers are potential logics of relation, it can just as easily be said that they are logics that can be opened and investigated as any rhetorical theory, and those logics engender a performative rhetoric.

Blas, the founder of numerous digital and performative projects, began the "Queer Technologies" (QT) project to produce what he calls "critical applications, tools, and situations for queer technological agency, interventions, and sociality." QT produces hardware and software that jams or disrupts the normal workings of seemingly benign technology. Part of the QT project is "transCoder" project, a theoretical Software Development Kit (SDK) that outlines a set of functions and actions through the genre of a programming language development specification. While this specification is not implemented in any specific programming language, it serves a purpose as a document that outlines the problematic of multiple, overlapping rhetorical and technological genres and how they are deployed. Blas, as I argue, deployed transCoder specifically to highlight aspects of computer-mediated communication: in particular, assumptions of code and how we are worked by it (which informs how we work through it). This question, of utmost concern in a realm of literacy and composition, is how these literacies disappear behind instrumentality and how a genre like an SDK (and Blas' use of it) draws our attention to these literacies again.

Mark C. Marino (2009) describes transCoder as a "theoretical" SDK. As a brief definition, an SDK is a library of code used by developers to more readily develop software on existing, complex systems through a structured interface. For example, programmers wanting to develop applications for an Android phone don't just start hacking away at the phone itself, or construct new programs from scratch. Instead, they install the Android SDK (a Java code library) and use a set of pre-packaged commands that standardize programmatic interaction with an Android system. Thus, everyone developing for Android can start with the same basic interface that safely and reliably interacts with the Android operating system and phone hardware. And while the core definition is the same (the interface exists between the programmer and the underlying system in order to determine how to manage it), a code interface is just more code. It does multiple things: it draws together complex system activities into an easy-to-grasp (and easy to read) set of functions and behaviors that are much easier to manage, and it often does this within an intuitive syntax that fits the task at hand. In many ways, the SDK as an interface both simplifies the work done by the programmer (situating it more relevantly to its desired work) and controls how that programmer engages with system functionality (like visual and audio input and output, memory, network communications, etc.). transCoder is similar to this (and all other SDKs), except that it does not actually constitute a code library to install (hence why Marino refers to it as "theoretical"). Rather, it is a protocol, a design that outlines a normative structure defining an interface for a programmatic logic.

The SDK itself is downloaded from the QT website, and consists of several text files that outline the project, the functionality, and uses of the SDK itself. Blas (2003) wrote that transCoder "interrogates how computer code operates within circulations of performativity, gender, ideology, and queerness" ("transCoder", Blas 2003). It relies on another person to implement the functions, either theoretically or by defining his code within an existing language. As the transCoder library immediately makes apparent, an interface functions as a logic: it is not

only the carrier of meaning, which would mean looking at it as a text, but it is also structural norm for meaning making. transCoder, while not an actual SDK, is presented as one for the purpose of investigating the norms at play in and through digital technology by rooting his intervention not in print (rhetorical) analysis, or even multimodal (screen) analysis, but within the publication of an interface as a productive logical structure. This interface functions within an ironic space of technological determination and categorical indetermination. Many of Blas's functions are defined specifically by the way in which they obfuscate meaning, and invite the user to do so as well. This is often starkly contrasted to the traditional goals of SDKs, which is to fix behaviors of meaning making within software construction contexts. For example, a function called "mutMutate" in transCoder is described as being able to "connect any number of items to generate hybrid functions, operators, variables, etc." ("transCoder," Blas 2003). Another, "finger()," is meant to "stimulate data" (Blas 2003). These functions all straddle a position in which their textual meaning and definitions overlap and compliment/complicate their computational usage. The transCoder SDK, at heart, invites programmers to construct algorithms through a set of function definitions that call for the seemingly rigid logic of a computer system (algorithms usually require clearly defined state assignments and yes/no decision branches) and the resistant logic of posthuman and queer theories ("destabilizationLoop" purportedly "breaks apart any process that acts as a continuously iterating power" and is situated within the library "Butler's Destabilization Loop") (Blas, 2003).

The strength of the SDK, or any SDK, is that it abstracts a system of knowledge so that work can be done through that system through differing, structured syntaxes. Thus Blas's creation of a theoretical SDK not only opens up computational thought, but also opens space for the further production of meaning through programmatic structure. Marino (2012) examined an algorithm written through the syntax of the transCoder SDK, written by Julie Russo. The algorithm, "Slash Goggles," works through a fictional context of human-machine interactions set in the world of the popular TV show *Battlestar Galactica.* She defines the algorithm as one for use by the fictional race of cyborgs, "cylons," who as part of the show disguise themselves as human and, along the way, ultimately confound that man/machine distinction that the human characters of the show stake their identities upon. The algorithm describes a logic for cylons to parse visual data and, through the syntax of transCoder, construct a situated and fluid sexual identity (Russo, 2008). Through his investigation, Marino notes that the adoption of the theoretical SDK to develop a still-theoretical algorithm to work within a fictional context shows how the function of transcoding works: as Blas works meaning through his SDK (having functions that "operate" through various theoretical concepts), anyone who would adopt the SDK as a framework for algorithmic thought would have to work the operations of the SDK within that framework. For example, within the Slash Goggles algorithm, the author deployed functions that call back to Butler, Foucault, and Delueze and Guattari, and in each instance the function both acknowledges the source theoretical material while transcoding it into a programming context, which is then deployed by algorithm authors who work through the given syntax to construct "logical" algorithms utilizing illogical statements. In her published algorithm, Russo showed within her fictional context how reading an algorithm constructed through transCoder works through multiple registers: we "read" it as text, but in order to recognize it as meaningful we must also parse its logic through pseudo-command structures and operations. She also included image captions (characters from the show with thought bubbles stating thoughts such as "I'm having… feelings. Peculiar, confusing feelings!") and explanatory text that show the results of what the theoretical algorithm would do (Russo, 2008). The rhetorical nature of the algorithm

operates through its logic, and production through that logic can only be seen as an after-effect of the operation of the logic itself. That is, the meaning of the algorithm (how it deploys transCoder as its meaning-making structure, how it operates) is different than the "meaning" of what it creates. Or, Wendy Chun (2011) argued, computers are not special because of the problems they pose or solve, but because of their very embodiment of particular logics and thus have their own, distinctly meaningful practices (p. 175).

Digital Disidentification

This is significant because Blas's code does not "enact" a set of computational operations per se. It would be possible, perhaps even simple, to implement the SDK within a given language (for example, I could define the "theCloset" global variable in any language and define its properties and usages within that context). But more immediate to his project is the way in which the definition of the SDK constitutes a literate practice engaging with digital networks and computational thought, which suggests multiple registers of communicative modality. The SDK develops a framework that expresses a structure for rhetorical performance: the functions, variables, and definitions and their attendant descriptions outline what other programmers can do. Being a theoretical SDK, however, highlights a significant point of articulation for Blas: that the SDK addresses locations of indeterminacy in a medium that often demands preciseness and certainty to function. The implications play out when others attempt to actually formulate these definitions in also-theoretical algorithms.

This seemingly becomes a question for critical software and code studies. In *Code/Space,* Kitchen and Dodge (2011) argued that software has often been thought of as the realm of engineering or business interest, and that "social analyses tend to focus on the consequences of computerization, rather than how software emerges and does work in the world" (p. 247). The recognizable effects for composition scholars tend to be networks of discourse, methods of discourse production, and the manner in which these networks and methods translate into a rhetorical *techne*. However, Blas, drawing from critical code and media studies theorists, argued that writing code is to work from paradox that recognizes this impulse towards *techne,* but also recognizes the implicit, structuring code underlying all our supposedly-instrumental tools. Citing Galloway, Blas wrote that code is both mechanic and culturally significant. That is, code executes, it does something, and as such still has roots of intelligibility within political action ("Disidentifying With Capital", Blas 2009). Also, drawing form Lev Manovich, Blas cited the function of code to—like the namesake of his project—"transcode" information from one medium or form to another. This asks that the interrogation of new media, built on code and protocols, is not only an analysis of the manifesting ways in which it develops or remediates existing rhetorical objects (in this case, print and multimedia), but also how it structures new ways of rhetorical invention.

Marino's study of transCode, and subsequent algorithms written through that SDK protocol, illustrated an analytic that works with its medium while recognizing the cultural orientations of that medium. By looking at the Slash Goggles algorithm, Marino showed that an analysis of that algorithm, and the transCoder SDK as a whole, works through the textual production of meaning at the level of "writing" (function names and definitions calling back to gender and queer theorists and poststructural thought) and at the level of "the machine" (that these functions, deployed in a working series of logical steps, have to "do something" in a specific context). But, in this case, something more interesting occurs: Marino's analysis of the

Slash Goggles algorithm not only articulated a Code Studies reading of the algorithm; it also articulated a protocological discussion of the transCoder SDK itself. Thus he was not talking just about the code. He was talking about the organizing logic of the code, and in doing so he worked through an understanding of the parameters of the code and what actions authors of algorithms must perform in order to make meaning within that computational context.

This distinction is critical, precisely because it deals with "transference," of access and of the movement between media, in a way that typical cultural/critical engagement with the products of that media do not. Russo, in developing the "Slash Goggles" algorithm, must organize pre-defined functions within a working knowledge of what she thinks they do, or how they work. The textual naming of variables with non-descript or specifically destabilizing nomenclature refers to, links with, functions with, the understanding that the deployment of any of these functions also must work within a programming logic. Furthermore, the very underpinning of the concept of the transCoder SDK is that its attempts to define actions and functionalities that disrupt or resist cultural norms in information technology must do so at the level of the machine: at the level of that which, to me, seems most instrumental to composition studies because code seemingly requires such high exactitude of specific, unambiguous meaning.

An instrumentality of writing technologies as situated within the products of those technologies may not pick up on these specifics of operation, even if they recognize their effects in other contexts. They may not recognize what Gil-Peterson (2014) referred to as a "technicity of the body" (p. 404). Rather than the "ends and means" mode of technological interaction, technicity of the body recognizes how categories are obfuscated and confused by distributed technologies and relations. That is, the body, the writing subject in this case, is not "extended" by technology, but comes to be only through its relations and potentialities that mutually constitute and produce. There are no initial essences, only technicities (Gil-Peterson, 2014, p. 407). In this case, the case of code and modality, there is, as Shipka warned, no ur-frame for modality (and thus multimodality), as it is continuously constructed through ambiguous practices of persuasion and meaning making at the level of the tool and the user of that tool. Blas's transCoder and Russo's subsequent algorithm display a technicity of the body overtly through a re-working of concepts within logical frameworks of code. That is, they show how the body, the coded identity of the digital tool user, is implicated within "viral capitalism," the process of rapidly disseminating capitalist logics through software (including software used to write and publish online), and how the modality of engaging viral capitalism is through the mechanism of its formation: code ("Disidentifying With Capitalism", Blas, 2009). Blas, drawing from José Esteban Muñoz, called transCoder a form of "disidentification." Disidentification, according to Muñoz:

> is to read oneself and one's own life narrative in a moment, object, or subject that is not culturally coded to 'connect' with the disidentifying subject. It is not to pick and choose what one takes out of an identification. It is not to willfully evacuate the politically dubious or shameful components within an identificatory locus. Rather, it is the reworking of those energies that do not elide either the 'harmful' or contradictory components of any identity. (p. 12)

To disidentify is not to fall within a binary of identification or rejection, but to inject oneself in spaces where one does not necessarily find oneself welcome and to attempt to rework the energies of a given system to make it perform differently. Disidentification means to move through "normative" and "subversive" polarities to trace and manipulate relations between thoughts and actions, subjects and objects. Blas performed his digital disidentification by moving

between the logic of computer programming and the work and struggle of queer and postructural/posthuman theories. His *reworking* of the programmatic norm functions at the level of code logic itself, and because of disidentificatory move, "authors" such as Russo can use the new ways in which rhetoric and expression have been formulated to construct new persuasive artifacts outside the constraints of representational media.

Conclusion

Opening the black box of media, in this case, asks us to think about how we might rethink that media rhetorically. The basic assumption of rhetoric not as representational, but as performative, allowed me to instrumentalize rhetoric rather than media, and as such to delve into the logics of a form of media to expand its own particular forms of rhetorical and compositional practices. As Yancey and Shipka articulated rhetoric through media, I articulated media through rhetoric, but did so in much the same way they did: by defining a particular set of black-boxed assumptions to work from, which gave an anchoring point for an expedition into a code protocol. This argument therefore proposes then that "multimodality" as literate activity can, and should, gravitate towards an understanding of disidentification in digital contexts, so long as we recognize how the inventional capacity of instrumentality facilitates this. If multimodality stays within an instrumental framework without recognizing it, then we are left assessing the after-effects of other, different modalities without also engaging how we might invent within them. But the underlying logics of technology, the logics that overlap, conflict with one another, and in some way finally constitute what we generally take for granted as "the Internet" or the "World Wide Web" or any number of globalizing phrases or terminologies, typically will fall to the wayside, perhaps defined as not within the purview of the field of rhetoric and composition.

But so long as rhetoric and composition as a body of knowledge and as a teaching discipline finds itself examining literacy and meaning-making practices, I contend that it is necessary to also examine the underlying conditions of those practices. A modality of digital disidentification, as exemplified through the work of Zach Blas and transCoder, would work to "rewire" the relational capacities of representational and computational expressions at play in communication technologies, and open the door to study the cultural implications of the processes that organize our world. Politics, subjectivities, and literacies find new purchase in a theory of digital disidentification that recognizes where writing and performance, technology and literacy practices, paradoxically overlap and conjoin seemingly separate modes of expression. This, in turn, can give us new ways to think about teaching "multimodally," and perhaps clear the way for new, interdisciplinary conversations regarding digital technology.

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