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WRITING IN THE AGE OF SPEED

A DISSERTATION APPROVED FOR THE
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

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This is for Mitchell

Micah and Megan

and

my parents, Brian and Penny

also in memory of

Glenn Paul Lewis.

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Abstract

This dissertation argues that speed characterizes the world of technology in the twenty-first century. The ideologies inherent in technologies have always been of enormous interest to historians, philosophers, and political scientists. More recently, due to the penetration of electronic technologies into the human cultural experience and, inevitably, into the composition and rhetoric classroom, English Studies scholars have begun to investigate this relationship as well. Although speed has been identified as one characteristic of the Internet era, I propose that it is instead foundational. As an historical review of the arrival of new technologies reveals, speed is inextricably connected to technology and to narratives of progress. Scholars interrogating speed, such as Virillio, Gurak, and Ericksen, have clustered at one of two ends of a response spectrum: speed is either good or bad. However, I argue for a more nuanced approach to understanding speed– and explore both the characteristics of a culture dominated by speed and the effects upon writing and the teaching of writing.

After an examination of speed as cultural dominant and its inevitable imbrication with globalism, I describe the characteristics of speed culture and its citizens and develop the concept of time zones through which some speed culture citizens move fluently, while others do not. Access to knowledge and access to technology ensure zone fluency and I demonstrate that speed culture's assumptions about access increase the barriers to zone fluidity.

I argue that the effects of speed culture on writing are especially significant for scholars in the field of composition and rhetoric. I explore how writing is

shaped within speed culture by developing the concept of speed-sponsored literacies: literacies dependent upon values of speed culture evident in the testing emphases of American Education and the federal government's cynical promotion of the "No Child Left Behind Act" in contrast to literacies dependent upon the logic of the network. Writing itself, I argue, is being remade because of the demand for speed literacy. As teachers and scholars of composition and rhetoric move towards an understanding of the notion of speed literacy, they will be better able to work with students – and each other – to engender the essential critical literacies necessary in the age of speed.

Chapter 1

Contexts

The experience of a thing
is always and also
a bodily and social engagement
with the thing's world.

(Albert Borgmann, Technology and the Character of Contemporary Life, 41)

Speed characterizes the world of technology in the twenty-first century: it is technology's primary value, its haptic experience, its social nexus. The Internet's global presence— phenomena such as blogging, Google, online games such as *World of Warcraft,* YouTube and viral videos, social networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace, Wikipedia – are made possible through technologies valued for their speed and experienced as speedy .

I argue, then, that the relationship between speed and technology frames the human bodily and social engagement with technology's world. Mark Poster, after a brilliant analysis of the binaries constricting Walter Benjamin's work on technology as reproduction, poses the essential question, "How are we to understand the place of technology in the formation, dissemination, and reception of cultural objects?" (122). Essential to an understanding of this relationship is our uneasy relationship with the concept of speed. Indeed, technology and speed have always been imbricated, although valorized and understood differently at different historical moments.

As new technologies arrive, scholarly debates about their place in society have revealed embedded values which have, in the last twenty-five years, orbited

nostalgia, determinism and technology "hope." For example, in the 1970s and 80s, as the personal computer swept into prominence, scholars such as Neil Postman and Walter J. Ong examined what was happening to writing as a consequence of electronic technologies. Postman proposed a "vast and trembling shift from the magic of writing to the magic of electronics" (13), while Ong noted a transformation in the nature of books due to the prevalence of "electronics" (405). For Postman, the shift leads to an entertainment-crazed world focused on the trivial – he longs for a return to the days of structured and fragment-less text. Not given to nostalgia, Ong sees a return to orality he dubs "secondary orality." In fact, he lauds the sense of immediacy that an oral history will provide historians and argues that as a consequence the nature of books and writing all books will change because once having read the first orally-influenced book, the author "will have the ring of it in his ear" (407). Ong's prescient examination of how writing will change is constricted by his dependence on deterministic assumptions, however. Assuming that technology determines the nature of thought and consciousness elides questions about the stakeholders who create and – most importantly – fund technologies. To the contrary, I argue that a more complex view of the relationship is essential in order to understand the relationship of technology and cultural objects. Moreover, speed has so far been under-theorized especially in relation to writing.

This dissertation argues that speed is not only technology-embedded but also a key value and explores what this means for writing. This chapter gives context for my argument by considering four questions.

1. What have been the significant cultural shifts in views of technology?

2. Why define and interrogate views of technology?

3. What have been the significant cultural views of speed?

4. How are technology and speed important to thinking about writing?

1. What have been the significant cultural shifts in views of technology?

Andrew Feenberg notes that technology has not always been considered worthy of scholarly attention and traces this view to the ancient Greeks who saw the technical field as prosaic and, therefore, insignificant. According to Feenberg, it was not until the 18th and 19th centuries as progress and technology became intertwined in narratives about the history of the social and hard sciences that scholars began to pay closer attention to technology (5-6). That attention grew more critical in the 20th century.

Louis Mumford's 1934 book *Technics and Civilization* proposed a linkage between technology and culture in opposition to extant views of technology; including, as Feenberg explains, technological determinism (6). Mumford argues

> Behind all the great material innovations of the last century and a half was not merely a long internal development of technics; there was also a change of mind. Before the new technological developments could take hold on a great scale, a reorientation of habits, ideas, goals was necessary (3).

Despite Mumford's insight into the permeable membrane between culture and technology, he sees technology as inextricably linked to progress and also defines it as neutral In contrast, thirty years later, Jacques Ellul's critique links technology

inextricably to regression; that is, he suggests that a technological society or technique inevitably comes under the sway of questionable technological values:

> Technique integrates the machine into society. It constructs the kind of world the machine needs and introduces order where the incoherent banging of machinery heaped up ruins. It clarifies, arranges, and rationalizes; it does in the domain of the abstract what the machine did in the domain of labor. It is efficient and brings efficiency to everything (5).

Here Ellul embraces determinism as an obvious consequence of the technological society. On the other hand, adhering to both Marxist and Christian ideals, Ellul argues for the potentials of human agency. For example, he recounts Marx's success at convincing workers that technique may become their tool of liberation rather than the master's tool of oppression (54). However, he warns against technique's elision of God and the divine, cautioning, "Technology worships nothing, respects nothing" (142). Ellul's deeply religious worldview sees technology as ultimately a threat to humankind's purpose. He believes, however, that humans may indeed subvert aspects of the technological society. Like Mumford, Ellul proposes the essential neutrality of technology and its inevitable connection to progress. Unlike Mumford, he is not sanguine about technology's advancement.

Technological determinism – the idea that technology determines culture – has long historical roots. Borgmann identifies three historical approaches to technology: the substantive, instrumentalist and pluralist views (*Technology and*

the Character 9).[1] In the substantive view, technology is represented as determinist, forceful, and inevitable. This contrasts with the instrumentalist view which argues that technology is a "neutral tool," containing no inherent properties. Although the instrumentalist view appears to insist on human agency, its naiveté about the political nature of technology compromises human ability to act freely. The pluralist view sees technology as so complex and problematic that it simply cannot be analyzed effectively (Borgmann 9-10). It is, therefore, an indecipherable code. Borgmann characterizes these views as outmoded; clearly, however, traces remain.

A critical attitude towards technology, also traceable in the work of Postman and Ong, emerged from the age of Romantic thought in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Channel sees the attitude as arising from the view that the organic and technological worlds are in opposition. He cites William Blake as exemplifying this world view, although noting that other Romantics such as Shelley, Wordsworth, and Thoreau valued Science in one form or another without specifically mentioning technology (5-6). At any rate, Back-to-Nature movements or the more recent Slow movement mentioned by Tomlinson in his 2007 book *The Culture of Speed: The Coming of Immediacy*[2] indeed see an essential disagreement between the organic and the mechanical/technological, especially in terms of what Channel calls "the use of the machine as an image of thought and culture" (6).

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[1] Although not a Luddite, in general, Borgmann focuses on the negative aspects of technology, which, he argues, are legion in particular because of technology's close ties to consumer society. He proposes that society ought to emphasize "focal concerns," (family, for example) in order to reform technology.

[2] I examine Tomlinson's argument more thoroughly in Chapter Two of this dissertation.

Channel historicizes the organic and mechanical world views. The mechanical world view or "clockwork universe" (11-29) resonates with Mumford's argument in *Art and Technics*. Here the invention of the clock in the Middle Ages informs a world view, a mechanical one, which sees systems as constructed by parts working together towards particular ends. Within this view, both organic and mechanical objects function according to particular rules. They are instrumental only.[3]

According to Channel, the mechanical view competed with the organic world view which believed in a "vital spirit" animating humans, things, and animals (18). Thus, all things have intrinsic rather than instrumental value. I suggest that, like the mechanical view, the organic view continues to inform the rhetoric surrounding the uses of technology. Metaphysical in nature, the organic view appears to allow for genuine interrogation, but is ultimately tautological: things happen for a reason. The reason is beyond the knowledge of mere humans, yet it inspires everything that happens.[4]

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[3] In Borgmann's taxonomy, human agency seems inconsequential if not entirely absent. The view is teleological and hierarchical. Consider the consequences of invoking those rules: a policymaker may announce that scientific principles reveal the Truth about a particular minority group's inability to succeed within the larger group. Critical interrogation of ends is unlikely within this world view. Rather, the focus is how to get the part to function as it should within the whole. Government initiatives in education, such as the No Child Left Behind Act, exemplify this worldview, as I discuss more completely in Chapter Four.

[4] The view is evident in for example, Thomas Shannon's essay "Post-Human Genome Project World" (in Baillie and Casey 269-316). Shannon lauds Roman Catholic theologians who explain progress though concepts from their traditions, as "I want to bring the best of the past with me" (271). Similarly, Baillie and Casey worry about the growth of "...a culture that has grown up around a group of intellectual elites whose progressive mores, values, and goals go unquestioned, if they are considered at all" (2). The problem with these elites is their lack of religion, their lack of understanding of the "vital spirit" within all things. In other words, the organic world view here lends itself to nostalgia, an invocation

Channel believes that a third view, called "the vital machine" would successfully incorporate both values: "all elements have some intrinsic value but because of the interdependence within the system every element also has some instrumental value for the rest of the system" (154). However, Channel's focus on the clash of these two world views and the need to deploy elements of each, although useful, fails to move beyond the binary or explore very deeply the possibility that technology itself cannot be neutral.

Martin Heidegger's proposal for a technological essence establishes an essential framework. Heidegger argues that "Technology is, therefore, no mere means. Technology is a way of revealing." Thus, instrumentalism has nothing to do with the essence of technology; indeed, Heidegger sees technological neutrality as willful blindness. Feenberg explains that Heidegger's work informed the protests against technology that characterized the political and popular culture discourse of the 1960s and 70s, calling Heidegger a "romantic" seeking spiritual transformation in answer to technology's dominance (2-4). On the other hand, however, Heidegger's notion of technology as a way of revealing usefully suggests the importance of examining the values formed within and among technologies. Feenberg suggests that one reason for the technophobia he identifies in late 20th century culture was the rise of technocracy, and the public's growing awareness of the political in the technological. He links this explicitly to the Vietnam protest movements.

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of religion as the answer. Consider how much more powerful this view becomes when a policymakers link fundamentalist religious beliefs to the proper uses of technology.

Like Channel, Feenberg seeks a third way to understand technology: drawing on Heidegger but also on social constructivist theory in Sociology, Feenburg proposes examining "an account in which social dimensions of technological systems belong to the essence of technology as well" (17). He seeks to engage with the political, suggesting that the stakeholders in such discussions include workers and employers. This approach suggests examining not only the values embedded within technology but also the political impacts of those values. I intend to examine both in this dissertation as the chapter outlines below suggest. However, I first lay some groundwork for understanding why scholarly attention to views of technology matters particularly in this historical-cultural moment.

2. Why define and interrogate views of technology?

Thomas Kuhn's work on the paradigm provides a useful rationale for the interrogation of cultural views of technology. I tread lightly here as Kuhn's purpose in writing his foundational work *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* was to examine the research process itself within the field of science. However, the rhetorical basis of Kuhn's argument, his insistence on the importance of language in defining, understanding, and, indeed, conceiving of paradigms makes his work germane. As Patricia Bizzell points out, Kuhn explains "that a paradigm is established…not because of compelling empirical evidence, but because of a rhetorical process that delimits the shared language of the intellectual community governed by the paradigm" (764). The paradigm itself frames the questions that will be asked about a subject and, consequently, the potential solutions (Kuhn 37).

Within the field of science, Kuhn argues, the paradigm functions to limit the scope of the questions asked and only when the paradigm no longer works to help explain anomalies, does the slow process of discovery and subsequent creation of a new paradigm begin. Thus identifying the delimitations of language itself will make visible the lines drawn by a paradigm. The argument becomes relevant to English Studies for two reasons: first, the argument is rhetorical because, in effect, it examines a means of persuasion. Second, Kuhn's focus on language makes his work particularly interesting for composition and rhetoric scholars.

Kuhn also describes the "pre-paradigm period" which is "…regularly marked by frequent and deep debate over legitimate methods, problem, and standards of solution, though these serve rather to define schools than produce agreement" (47). Since English Studies' definitions of foundational language and concepts are deeply contested, Kuhn's paradigm and pre-paradigm conceptual models have drawn particular attention. As scholars debate the nature of process and post-process, the content of the first-year writing classroom and, most importantly in the context of this dissertation, the possibilities of multi-modal composition, and the existence of multiple and emerging literacies, considering the question of emerging paradigms becomes particularly useful.

Technology's pervasive presence suggests its influence on the paradigm and the language describing technology, which I treat more thoroughly in the next chapter, suggests that speed constitutes a major determinant of this framework. Speed's position as naturalized value – an invisible part of the framework-- means that scholars have not debated its affordances with serious attention. Might serious

attention to speed inspire the "…change in visual gestalt" (85) that Kuhn suggests marks the emergence of a new paradigm?

3. What have been the significant cultural views of speed?

Early in the late nineteenth century as well as in the twentieth century, questions about the remaking of human experience were less frequent: remaking was a natural consequence of technological progress and all technologies were part of the grand and inevitable march of that progress. As Kern suggests, technological advances were, indeed, leading to "distinctive new modes of thinking about and experiencing time and space" (*Introduction*), and the move to universal time and a standardized clock came about through technological advances such as the railway (12) and the telegraph (13). This early network made space less consequential and time itself more consequential. Mumford also emphasizes the invention of the clock as key: "From the moment of waking, the rhythm of the day is punctuated by the clock" (269).

As time became more consequential, so too was speed both vilified and valued. Kern identifies the Futurist movement, under the demagogic leadership of Italian proto-Fascist Marinetti, as a hyperbolic example of the cult of speed. Marinetti saw speed as a new aesthetic, a metaphor for the joys of technology. For Marinetti, all things technological were desirable and speed was a kind of ecstatic intoxicant. This opinion was not widely shared as World War 1 brought technological speed and destruction to the European continent (119). Similarly, Tomlinson identifies the Futurist movement as part of the spectrum of views

connecting speed and progress, arguing, “Speed as an increase in the pace of life has therefore most generally been represented, justified, and experienced as a necessary aspect of the bending of nature (including human nature) to human design in the cause of progress” (44).

From about 1880, Kern suggests the medical profession saw speed as dangerous because it brought physical and emotional damage to the fragile human physique (124-126). Human bodies, physicians argued, would break under the strains of fast-paced lives. Other critiques, imbued in nostalgia, painted halcyon pictures of a relaxed past when time stretched infinitely (see for example, Virilio and Erickson). Early critiques of speed, interestingly, occurred within a cultural context of what Houghton calls Victorian anti-intellectualism. Houghton explains that the Victorian era saw men of technology as empirical and practical with a sensible bottom-line mentality of profit-making, while scientists and scholars built air castles and did nothing useful for progress (296-298). This utilitarian view of technology may have helped ensure that speed stayed normalized. Only whiny intellectuals would complain about the necessities of progress through technology.

In the early twentieth century, however, Taylor’s principles of scientific management became the dominant model for the business world. These principles, based upon “time-and-motion studies” propose that labor be divided into small, easily reproduced tasks ensuring maximum efficiency: less time and a minimum of effort ensure a higher rate of productivity (“Digital Fordism Links”). The term “Fordism," first described by Gramsci describes the system of mass production and assembly lines implemented first by Henry Ford, as well as Ford's astute moves to

entangle worker and consumer identities. Technology allowed speed; the faster the assembly line the better for owner and worker/consumer. Within the Fordist framework, the pleasure of technology and speed had no critics.[5]

The valorization of speed broadened throughout the 20th century. Thus, for example, Vannevar Bush, then Director of the Office of Scientific Research and Development, proposed a way forward in 1945, fusing the value of speed with the inevitable march of progress. In "*As We May Think*," Bush suggests that the end of the war meant that the time had arrived for scientists who had previously focused on the creation of weapons of destruction to continue the real work of advancement of the human condition. The post World War II world can now take advantage of military technologies, turning its attention to progress which will come, inevitably, with increased speed. In effect, whatever can be done, will be done best when done faster. Although Bush's prescient essay has been cited for its prediction of changes in how we compose and read texts, its call for better= faster technology marks the naturalization of the value of speed within the scientific community. [6]

From 1977, Paul Virilio's critiques of technology speed, what he calls dromology, explicitly link speed to machines and particularly to war[7]. He sees speed as violent and argues that its logic insists on appearance rather than reality. The metaphors, analogies, and comparisons he employs consistently make speed the

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[5] The Digital Fordism web site notes that Gramsci called Fordism as "an ultra-modern form of production and of working methods such as is offered by the most advanced American variety, the industry of Henry Ford" and offered it as an ingenious example of coercion through persuasion and consent.

[6] See, for example, John David Bolter in *Writing Space: The Computer, Hypertext, and the History of Writing* as cited in Joseph Janangelo's review, "Theorizing Technology While Courting Credibility: Emerging Rhetorics in CAI Scholarship."

[7] Virilio explains, *"…dromology appears today like a science whose theories take the form of vehicles"* (129). The italics are his.

natural partner of war: violent video games, weapons, the survey techniques of the military, rockets and fighter jets. The argument that, as Virilio puts it, "[s]peed has become the privileged measure of both time and space" (134), is clearly useful to the thrust of this dissertation, yet Virilio's focus on its negative consequences omits essential analysis of the full affordances of speed.

During the Internet explosion of the last twenty years, writers have framed the culture of speed as either devoutly desired or devoutly detested.[8] Within the binary, the characteristics of the age of speed lack nuance. Similarly, writers acknowledge speed's omnipresence on the Internet, yet rarely parse, examine or question it. Laura Gurak, for example, defines speed as one of four important characteristics of the Internet (see *Cyberliteracy: Navigating the Internet with Awareness)*, partnering it with other Internet traits and limiting her discussion to the ways in which speed promotes orality (30-32).[9] Occupying scholars' attention instead has been a consequence of speed: the enormous, ever-growing, and omnipresent volume of information.

The volume of information, infinitely commodified, gave rise to terms such as "information economy," which acknowledge political and economic power tied

[8] Interestingly, non-scholarly books dealing with the concept of speed typically fall into one of two camps: authors extolling the merits of speed in success in the business world (for example, *The Age of Speed: Learning to Thrive in a More-Faster-Now World,* Poscente, 2007; *Speed Lead: Faster, Simpler Ways to Manage People, Projects and Teams in Complex Companies,* Hall, 2007)
and authors promoting slowness as a way towards spiritual fulfillment (for example, *Slowing Down to the Speed of Life* Carson and Bailey , 1998; *In Praise of Slowness: Challenging the Cult of Speed*, Honore, 2005).

[9] The others are anonymity, reach, and interactivity.

to volume of information.[10] But the existence of volume of information is now a truisum. As Richard A. Lanham argues in his book "The Attention Economy" the question is no longer about the volume of information but rather about how we pay attention to information. A concrete way to examine this question is, I propose, through the analysis of databases such as Google, YouTube, Yahoo, Facebook, MySpace, and Pick-A-Prof. How is the volume of information being categorized? Who are the stakeholders and who is left out? What assumptions underlie these databases and to what extent do they reify or interrogate existing ideological hegemony? Who has access to these databases and what are the consequences for those without access? I explore this question more fully in Chapter Two "Time Zones and Speed."

The fragmented character of this volume of information influences the work of scholars, among them Jameson, Poster, and Castells. Jameson's useful proposal for cognitive mapping which will "enable a situational representation on the part of the individual subject to that vaster and properly unrepresentable totality which is the ensemble of society's structures as a whole" (51) provides a strategy foundational to the issue of Althusser's interpellated subject. In other words, this is a response to the notion that identity exists within fixed subject positions. Indeed, composition and rhetoric scholar, James Berlin sees narrative as functioning as a cognitive map in the composition classroom when paired with rhetoric for it then is "part of our narrative frame, providing a critique of their operation" (*Rhetoric and Reality* 58-59).

[10] Peter Drucker is the first to popularize the term in his 1969 book, *The Age of Discontinuity*.

This focus on the subject or identity formation characterizes the information economy. Castells sees it as a response to the volume of information and the fragmented nature of culture and society (3) while Poster argues that the primary ethical question of the age is one of identity: the "question of the nature of the ethical subject" (156). However, the volume of information is fragmented because of its relationship to speed; that is, within the skein of complications making up the nature of the information economy runs speed as the essential thread. Teasing this thread free, then, provides an opportunity for cognitive mapping that promises clearer analytical lenses. In other words, one of this dissertation's objectives is to consider how hegemonic speed affects identity construction.

A clearer analytical lens may, for example, effect change in praxis in the areas of policy as well as in the area of pedagogical practices. Neither the CCCC Position Statement nor the ALA Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education specifically mention the import of speed, focusing instead on volume of information. Moreover, the Council of Writing Program Administrators first-year composition expected outcomes statement fails to acknowledge that strategies must be developed which attend to the ever-shifting, ever-increasing shape and volume of information. I propose such strategies in Chapter Five of this dissertation.

Interrogators of speed cluster at the ends of the responses spectrum: like Paul Virilio and Thomas Hylland Ericksen, they may see speed as invidious, as implicated in the war-economy machine, or as a thief who steals from daily life, so that leisure time no longer exists. The nostalgia evident in this position makes agency seem an impossible task: the halcyon days of slow time cannot possible be

recalled. This critique of speed, while worth attention, forgets the real joys of fast information retrieval, especially in tandem with writing. On the other end, especially evident in publications and websites devoted to computer technology and/or the information economy, speed is undisputed god. The faster one can go the better.

4. How are technology and speed important to thinking about writing?

Writing without computers has become increasingly hard to imagine. In fact, the advent of the computer and the Worldwide Web and their increasing dominance as the mode providing the medium for writing makes the interrogation of speed essential.

The writing classroom is particularly affected through what Hawisher and Selfe describe (in *Passions and Pedagogies*) as the move of the computer from the personal to the impersonal because of network connectivity. That is, every part of the writing process is now affected by the network. Moreover, this move continues further as Web 2.0 technologies begin to dominate our ways of using computers – any computer becomes a node into the web and private longer exists.[11] For example, private diaries, love letters, complaints and fears have become blogs, e-mails, and websites, instantly retrievable and made public. Writing itself, as has been described, has changed as a consequence. Of course, writing has always changed with the arrival of new technologies. The invention of the printing press,

[11] Web 2.0 applications exist on the web and allow users to access their personal accounts from any computer with Internet connectivity. Examples include social networking sites such as Facebook or Flick*r, social bookmarking sites such as Del.iciou.us, and sites to create and store documents such as Google documents.

for example, the focus of Elizabeth L. Eisenstein's 1979 *The Printing Press as an Agent of Change* has provided scholars as diverse as Christine Haas (*Writing Technology: Studies on the Materiality of Literacy,* 1996), J. David Bolter (*Writing Spaces: Computers, Hypertext, and the Remediation of Print*, 2001), and Walter J. Ong (*Orality and Literacy*, 1988) opportunities to discuss the ways in which writing and technology interact.[12]

The writing classroom where questions about pedagogy in the 21st century loom especially large in light of changes in the nature of text provides another site of exploration . Both the analysis or hermeneutics of text and its composition have been (re)evolved because of the technological air that instructors and students breathe today. The network is both essential to speed culture and a vital element of this air.

Faigley sees the network as the key to how computers may change the writing classroom (186). He began working in the networked classroom in the 1980s and his first findings were stimulating. When he experimented with synchronous discussion, Faigley noticed, as have other researchers, a huge increase in the quantity of women speaking. Writing without voice or facial signals, freed of the body, encouraged them to speak.

In addition, he saw that the informality of speech and speed of response reduced his authority as teacher in the classroom and led students to take more responsibility for discussions. He characterized the networked classroom as allowing "disruptions of discourse conventions" (183). The network disrupts a

[12] The online bookstore, Amazon, lists 100 books that cite Eisenstein's work – books not included on my list above.

number of conventions, including unwritten rules of gendered discourse and instructor authority. Words gain meaning and thrust because they are communicating in isolation of familiar cultural markers. Printouts of electronic discussions are postmodern texts in which a multiplicity of voices may speak. However, he also remarks,

> Networked writing replaces the modernist conception of writing as hard work aimed at producing an enduring object. Acts of networked writing are most often quickly produced, quickly consumed, and quickly discarded (191).

Faigley argues that this identification of networked writing as material to be consumed is evidence of the logic of late capitalism as described in Jameson's work. Faigley does not here discuss speed explicitly yet he notes its ubiquitous presence within the computer classroom. Instead, Faigley is interested in the "decentering of the subject" (191), admittedly a project that demands consideration of speed culture.

Thinking about how the detachment of authorial authority from texts occurs has occupied Faigley's attention and rightfully produces important questions. Who is responsible? What is at stake? How does authorial detachment affect writing? How does this affect the teaching of writing? The instructor who evaluates texts created as a result of network collaboration becomes inquisitor in order to discover who deserves a high grade. In fact, the networked classroom may become like Foucault's vision of Bentham's Panopticon in which prisoners can be surveyed at every point. Indeed, new course management systems such as Desire 2 Learn imitate the Panopticon in chilling fashion: instructors may log on, make themselves

invisible, and scrutinize their students' online presence and habits within the course site. As Mayers and Swofford suggest, "Networked writing instruction…is an enterprise shot through with ironies and contradictions" (in Taylor 147).

Particularly worthwhile, then, is attention to how the network impacts various genres of text. The knowledge gained in a careful exploration of the rise of the culture of testing and surveillance and what this means to our democracy is crucial. What has happened to school-based literacies as a consequence of the rise? Analysis of the phenomenon demands assessment of the cultural values informing it: a focus of this dissertation. I explore these consequences in detail in Chapter Four.

In order to read all of the texts composing the world, notions of text and, indeed, notions of reading and composing continue to flex, broaden, and deepen, taking into account lives within and without the university setting. However, this is not the primary question animating digital composition and rhetoric scholarship today, despite its acceptance among many English Studies scholars.

In fact, much of the literature turns on the question of whether or not the Internet has created whole new possibilities of human interactions. How new is Internet culture? Or, as, Richard Lanham asks: "What's new about the digital expressive space and what's not? Yet more narrowly, what happens when words move from printed page to electronic screen? What's next for text?" (*Preface).* This dissertation will follow a similar pathway and, as Lanham further suggests, the question cannot be teased away from the larger issue of the newness, consequences, and reach of the information economy itself. The Worldwide Web itself functions

as avatar for the information economy – and speed is the most highly valued commodity of both spaces. Indeed, in Chapter Four, I examine how speed sponsors twenty-first century literacies. I argue that within speed culture boundaries, literacy has become both an input to be processed through a massive testing system and a network-based collaborative phenomenon.

Bolter, Kress, Gurak, Turkle, Selber, D. Selfe and C. Selfe, Hawisher and Nakamura are among those who propose that the Internet reshapes human experience, while Ong and Welch have defined the phenomenon as a return to the oral tradition in so-called secondary orality. To what extent do technologies determine human culture and thought or does human culture and thought determine the nature of technology? Since neither can be always true, a middle ground has proved most fruitful and recent work by Selber (see *Multiliteracies*) among others suggests that the issue is now irrelevant. Still, it continuously raises its head, always a concern that must be addressed when scholars address the hot-button issue of newness. Jameson notes that attention to the issue of technological determinism, in fact, obfuscates the field. The issue, and, indeed, technology itself, fascinates

> [b]ecause it seems to offer some privileged representational shorthand for grasping a network of power and control ever more difficult for our minds and imaginations to grasp: the whole new decentered global network of the third stage of capital itself (37).

This valuable critique, while pointing to the significant intertwining of questions of technology and questions of institutionalized system, is beyond the scope of the present essay. More modestly, I focus on one fragment whose pervasive presence in

the values driving our culture may directly contravene the most deeply held values of the writing classroom: speed. Chapter Two will focus on speed's pervasive presence explicitly.

Statements about volume of information abound in theorists as diverse as Lyotard, McLuhan, Lanham, and Poster. This dissertation is not, therefore, a paean promoting the joys of older times nor does it propose a Luddite world without technology. Rather, I examine the possibilities of writing within speed culture. I draw from my own experiences as an instructor in the composition classroom and acknowledge a critical pedagogical stance that foregrounds the need for ongoing meta-reflection by writing scholars as well as writers. Speed culture has been naturalized: what is its relationship to writing? What might happen if writers and instructors of writing paid attention to speed?

Chapter 2

Time Zones and Speed

*I'm excited to present our first issue of **Time Zones**.*
This issue will help you plan the perfect
shop-til-you-can't-feel-your-feet-anymore getaway.
You'll find all kinds of exclusive offers so
you can be really, really good to yourself
without the guilt or buyer's remorse.

Happy Shopping.

(Gold Points Plus mass e-mail, April 16, 2008)

Technology's intimate connection with speed and its pervasive presence in twenty-first century culture invite the term *speed culture*. That is, speed culture accurately describes a normalized experience of living. In this chapter, I argue that speed culture is hegemonic: its ubiquity in common cultural artifacts and over-representation in both media and texts are evidence. Moreover, speed culture and capital are deeply imbricated within these artifacts despite the tricky rhetoric frequently associated with them that implies liberties hitherto unknown.[13] Parsing the characteristics of speed culture – and its citizens' identities -- becomes essential, then: this is the principal thrust of this chapter.

The citizens of speed culture do not, however, experience its challenges and opportunities equally. In order to explain the ways in which these experiences must differ, I posit the existence of time zones within speed culture. An individual possesses a particular identity within each time zone and an identity's relationship to

[13] Lisa Nakamura for example, points to Microsoft's ad campaign "Where do you want to go today?" as well as campaigns by MCI and Olympic, that envision a perfect harmonic world through their representations of difference as erased or insignificant (87-99).

time may vary. The value of technology is a constant within time zones, however, and therefore technological access and its concomitant access to speed essential to a position of power. So, for example, the Chairman of the Board zips from local virtual meeting to global virtual meeting and then rushes home, zaps a fast microwave dinner for her three children, all the while dictating a memo on her Bluetooth prosthetic to a secretary in the California office. The image is familiar and well-promulgated by the popular media. Indeed, the image has been normalized so that access issues – also known as the digital divide – have been rendered virtually invisible. In fact, moving easily and freely between zones is only possible for certain speed culture citizens and this is essential to twenty-first century empowerment. I explore the consequences of this phenomenon further in this chapter.[14]

Living in speed culture

Cultural artifacts linking time, speed and the consumer abound: the mass e-mail in the above epigraph typifies the pitch that advertisers use in order to target their audience. Designed for frequent users of the Carlson Group of hotels, the Gold Points Plus program gives bonus points towards free hotel nights. It also encourages group members to think about travel in a particular way: an opportunity to maximize shopping moments as they move quickly through time zones. Speed -- rapid movement through time zones—allows for the pleasures of efficient

[14] I further explore these consequences in Chapter Four, where I interrogate speed-sponsored literacies.

shopping.[15] Here "consumer" delimits the identity of the citizens of speed culture. According to speed culture, the primary power of the citizen is her ability to consume. I examine identity more closely in chapter three, but propose this concept to be essential to understanding speed culture. Artifacts such as the epigraph above also demonstrate a frequent yet nonetheless important critique of the shallowness of speed culture identities.

For example, Benjamin Barber interrogates speed through his description of what he terms infantilism. Barber argues that infantilism describes the most common behavior, values, and world view which "encourage and legitimate childishness" (87). In a passionate critique of consumer society, he demonstrates that a focus on privatization and the individual's right to have what he wants at the moment he wants it infects American culture so that older values like community building and social participation have been lost. Moreover, since immediate gratification is so privileged, the Protestant ideal of hard work has been lost. Barber sees the rise in student plagiarism as a direct result of infantilism: a reductive argument reeking of nostalgia.

For Barber, speed is an essential characteristic of infantilism. He argues that, "[s]peed is something the infantilist ethos demands from both technology and capitalism" (92). His range of examples, fast food, fast news, fast disasters are persuasive in their link to speed yet Barber's assumption that technology and speed are necessarily bad, while not Luddite, certainly reduce speed's import. Speed as

[15] Gold Points Plus (Carlson Group) also urges travelers to, "Join goldpoints plus and get more from the time you spend traveling." Similarly, the Choice Privileges program for Choice Hotels (Comfort Inns, Clarion, etc.), touts its program through which "You'll be on your way to earning nights and flights in no time." Here time is defined as consumer good and speed, therefore, enables the traveler to spend her time efficiently.

symptom of infantilism offers nothing good to culture. I argue, instead, that speed as essential characteristic of twenty-first century values – with infantilism as a possible outcome in some contexts -- offers richer analytical possibilities. Barber unhesitatingly links speed and technology and equally unhesitatingly suggests that speed is what children like and therefore a symptom of infantilism as well as an addictive substance: "[S]peed is a drug like any other that must be taken in ever higher doses just to maintain its hold over the psyche" (98).[16] This tautological argument points to a serious problem with Barber's thesis: infantilism is not a big enough basket to hold all that speed culture portends.

Before I outline further the characteristics of speed culture, I note that critiques of speed and capitalism point to a troubled and problematic relationship. Interrogation of the relationship between time and capital, beginning with Marx, demonstrate capital's dependence on the ownership of time. Agger contrasts Marx's focus on capital's need to structure workers' time in order to maintain power with Henry Ford's understanding that workers who identify themselves as consumers ensure that leisure time and work time belong to capital. Agger notes that television is an example of capital's ownership of both work and leisure time, as it provides hours of carefully scheduled entertainment peppered with injunctions to consume. Agger suggests that Frankfurt scholars Horkheimer and Adorno explained capital's exploitation of time as an issue of domination. That is, capital seeks to dominate

[16] The drug-speed analogy is a familiar trope in scholarly work on speed. Gurak, for example, writes "Speed, one of the action terms of cyberspace, is seductive: the more you have, the more you want" (*Cyberliteracy* 47). Similarly, Virillio proposes speed as the ultimate deterministic force whose consequence is the defeat of the real, "…we sink into the intoxication of subcontinental depths…ever faster, ever higher, but also ever deeper… [italics his] (126). Here speed feels irresistible and all-consuming. It is, moreover, mysterious in its power to enthrall; its consequences measurable but inescapable.

consumer's use of time in order to maintain its power. Agger uses the term "fast capitalism" to describe this phenomenon. His solution to fast capitalism, or time robbery, is a call for time rebels, who will "unplug" through throwing away or turning off or refusing to look at technological appurtenances (in Hassan and Purser 220-233). This argument, like Barber's, treats speed reductively despite a useful critique of capitalism and time.

In contrast, technology's relationship to speed has been frequently described very differently. As Walter Benjamin explains, for example, film technology "extends our comprehension of the necessities which rule our lives; on the other hand, it manages to assure us of an immense and unexpected field of action" (236). Humans are freed from the constraints of time itself and both space and time, formerly invisible effects on the human experience, are now "…a space consciously explored by man" (236-237). He likens the camera to psychoanalysis in its ability to allow make visible what had been unknowable.

Similarly, Oliver Sacks writes that as a child, he was always fascinated by different rates of speed. He explains that he was dimly aware that all things moved at some rate but not until he received a camera did he discover a way to see the movement of the roses across the trellis or the hollyhocks skywards. With his camera, he could use stop motion to measure what his mind could not perceive alone (161-162). That is, technology allowed him to consider fully the ways in which speed changes in different zones of perception. The useful idea that technology itself provides an opportunity to examine speed outside of its effects

remains unexamined; Barber and Aggar, for example, seem to see the two as inextricable.

Sacks, on the other hand, notes the historical presence of technology in our understanding of speed, citing, for example, physiologist Marey's horse photography. Marey snapped a photograph that captured a horse at full gallop, thereby demonstrating that it literally flew across the ground, all four hooves in air (163). In effect, Marey's camera slowed down the speed moment. Human perceptions of time and speed depend upon how we experience them – and technology mediates that perception. The context – how and why technology is being used -- determines speed's presence rather than the reverse.

For Benjamin the movement of images within a film causes a "shock effect" much different from the effect of simply gazing at a painting . While the viewer becomes a critic, she also has little awareness. Films, then, possess persuasive and propagandistic potential much different from still photographs. Therefore, Benjamin suggests, Fascism's tendency to alienate proliferates unless political awareness of art (and certainly of technology's role in art) exists. In other words, technology is immured in rhetorical context: it is political and not neutral. Benjamin's prescient argument complicates the relationship between time and technology yet remains hopeful because he foregrounds the usefulness of technology's mediation of experience.

Not only does technology mediate perception, its ability to do so is naturalized, as I demonstrate below. Indeed, this mediated experience is typically represented as commonplace for the consumer-citizens of speed culture. In fact, its

accessibility remains limited to those who have economic means and the technical knowledge to use it. Both are essential to genuine access: both are deeply problematic for many. Yet, those in power, inexorably, have and assume access. How has technologically-mediated experience come to be so widely accepted?

Cynthia Selfe provides a clear response. In *Technology and Literacy in the Twenty First Century: The Importance of Paying Attention*, she draws a careful picture of the "extensive articulated ideology system" (124) through which technology and literacy have been co-mingled. She notes that Americans believe that economic prosperity is inextricably tied to new technologies and, moreover, our educational system must dedicate itself to technological literacy so that the United States can dominate the global market. From 1996 and the birth of the Technology Literacy Challenge during the Clinton/Gore administration, this constellation of beliefs have been buttressed explicitly through state and federal government programs and policies.[17] They are, as Selfe puts it, now considered to be "a coherent and seamless complex of natural tendencies" (124) or, more simply put, common sense.[18] In a culture in which poverty is rarely acknowledged, and class even more rarely, this hegemonic belief system has easily evolved into hegemonic

[17] As examples, Selfe describes the large educational technology state budget appropriations for California, Delaware, Texas and others in 1999 as well as the 1999 Clinton Education budget (16-18). Unfortunately, all too frequently, the funds for educational technology came from literacy programs and, because of the high costs; a smaller number of schools had access to the newly designated technology funds than schools did to the older literacy program funds.

[18] Porter expands this argument, suggesting that computer access is "in the interests of power – here conceived in Michel Foucault's sense of a facility that is exercised within a noncentralized network of social formations, a "net-like organization" (Power/Knowledge 98) – that computers be as thoroughly integrated into society as possible" (44). For more on this see his essay, "Terror and Emancipation: The Disciplinarity and Mythology of Computers."

reality. Selfe and Moran's 1999 warning about the negative consequences of untroubled acceptance of this belief system continues to ring true. As they suggested then, schools spending money on technology do so at the expense of other literacy projects and in doing so advance the agendas "[o]f those who have their own interests, not our students, at heart" (48).

In effect, the familiar barriers of class continue to reign – their lines thickened rather than thinned.[19] Indeed, class barriers mark technological access barriers with chilling precision.[20] The normalization of speed culture creates particular assumptions about life in the 21st century so that the questions asked elide issues of difference and, certainly, of access. I examine the rhetoric of the Pew Research Center, a well-known non-profit organization which provides and analyzes empirical data used to chart trends, to exemplify this move.

One world, one people: an example

The Pew Research Center 2007 report, "A Typology of Information and Communication Technology Users," surveyed Americans in order to gain a sense of how users might be classified. Their three categories, Assets, Actions, and

[19]In her essay "Reconceptualizing E-Policy," Maier-Rabier argues for a "…rights-based approach to new media politics" (203). She sees the terms "digital divide" and "knowledge gap" as problematic because they obfuscate the real issue of the human right for an equal opportunity to have the access to and capabilities of technology. She attempts to contrast the neoliberal arguments linking technological literacy and economic success with an ethical argument yet explicitly acknowledges that "information-friendly cultures provide a competitive advantage for their members in the global information society" (208). (In *Ideologies of the Internet*, eds. Sarikakis and Thussa).

[20] Compare, for example, the College Board's 2008 Fifth Annual Report to the Nation on their website the Census Bureau's 2007 Poverty Report, and the 2007 Pew Report "A Typology of Information and Communication Technology Users," in order to see these similarities. Each report is easily accessible online.

Attitudes, establish how people use the internet and other communication technologies, what they do, and how they feel about the technologies. Despite clear findings that people having a lower social economic status and/ or fewer years of schooling –demographic characteristics more often linked than not -- use these technologies less and use them at a less developed level, other than quick acknowledgment that the relationship exists, the report fails to consider how the question of access to content knowledge and technologies may skew results. Its picture of technology users is blurred. The report cites ten categories of users, from "omnivores" who love and use technologies frequently to the "off the net" group – 15% of the American population – "mainly older Americans." (Horrigan). The term "off the net" is significant particularly in that the population with less economic means and less knowledge access operates in a time and space alien to those in possession of financial and content knowledge.[21]

Similarly, the Pew Internet & American Life Project set out to determine how teens view the impact of technology on their writing. Their 2008 report, sponsored by the College Board Commission on Writing, notes that 94% of teens

[21] In December, 2006, I visited my in-laws who had purchased a DVD player. The DVD player had sat in a box for three months, while my in-laws waited for someone who could decipher the instruction booklet, hook up the DVD player to their television, and figure out how to operate the button-festooned remote – tasks which struck them as time-consuming, onerous, and best-suited to the young. A few days later, I visited my parents, who had been given a list of fifteen steps to follow in order to switch their home theater system from watching a television show to watching a DVD . They also had a list of twelve steps to follow in order to log on to their Internet Service Provider and navigate to their e-mail account. They had to dedicate long hours to tasks others might find quick and easy because they did not have the knowledge or know how to find out how to streamline what they needed to do. They were, in addition, using a dial-up modem because their condominium complex insisted on using a cable company that, they had been told, only had dial-up access. In both these examples, the potential for the use of technology has been seriously constricted. Moreover, the experience of deploying technology – its seamlessness -- is utterly different for these users than for most college students.

use the Internet as a research tool "at least occasionally," quotes two high school students talking about how they have used it, and then adds, "Using the internet to research school writing assignments is most common among older teens and those from higher income households" (14). The difference between teens in households with an income of less than $30,000 and more than $75,000 is only 11 % and the differences between races are virtually inconsequential (15). A reader may conclude that neither race nor household income have much impact on teen use of the Internet. Access is assumed. Indeed, the frequency of the use of the Internet appears to be a matter of choice.

However, two issues make this conclusion suspect. First, the survey question is framed so any access at all – even infrequent access at a local library reachable by metro bus -- is the same as home access to digital, high speed Internet in a bedroom. Does the library-going teen truly use the Internet as a research tool in the ways the home computer owning teen does? How does the opportunity to take advantage of Internet speed frequently change a teen's interactions on the Internet? What are the effects on research, critical thinking, and writing in each case? How might a chart describing student internet use for research change with these assumptions teased out? Second, because the statistical categories are framed discretely, without consideration of the ways in which they affect and are affected by others, they give an unfocused and one-dimensional picture of the writing habits they purport to describe. It is as if all those who wish to use technology operate within one zone, in which the same rules apply for all.

I propose, however, that the rhetorical contexts have determined these definitions of technology users. The image of the characteristic technology user in these studies is demographically everyman, apparently porous across boundaries, curiously bodiless. Time moves unilinearly without the body: the hands of the clock move at a predictable rate only and the mediation of the body is insignificant.

This bodilessness is curious considering the move towards haptic forms of technology: the Wii for example in which the user swings a small racket in order to play tennis on the television display of a virtual tennis court, iTelephone touch screens, even the ubiquitous computer mouse, are engaged through the body. Bolter and Grusin have argued that the desire for a mediated experience that feels unmediated demonstrates a desire for immediacy (323); now, I propose that speed culture denies the mediation of the body and invites an experience in which the moment of sensation envelops the individual. The body's sense of time is erased within speed culture so that instead of technology mediating perception, technology replaces the body's senses with its own.

It is the body from which first movements of time emerge, the body whose rhythms determine the human perception of time. Kurt Meyer, describing Lefebvre's work on rhythmanalysis, reminds us that examinations of time rhythms begin with the "body in its normal state" (in Goonewardena et al., 150). The assumption that the body's rhythms do not affect perceptions of time underscores Lefebvre's argument that clock rhythms war against "natural" or bodily ones, and, Meyer points to this orientation to "abstract quantitative time" as an essential quality of modern life. These attempts to understand how the experience of time may vary

appear to assume that there exists only natural time and machine time, a binary that neglects the rhetorical nature of time. Access to a variety of (un)mediated experiences of time clearly differs. However, the binary is useful in that it foregrounds speed as culturally dominant.

Importantly, capital sets the body's rhythms within speed culture. Crang points to technology's "blurring of the boundaries between work and leisure" as, for example, cell phones and laptops promote work flexibility in which so-called dead time waiting for a bus can be used instead for essential conference calls or catching up on e-mails. The result is what Crang calls "omnipolitan" time in which the visible boundaries between the virtual and space vanish (73-74). However, as Crang notes, speed is not a uniform rush but rather a "[t]urbulent torrent...There are back eddies, ripples, fast parts, slow pools" (84). Before considering more carefully this turbulent torrent, however, I examine the close relationship between speed culture and capital.

Speed and capital

Tomlinson proposes that clock or machine time is in essence a "[b]ending of nature" (44) whose primary characteristic is speed.[22] From here, Meyer, Lefebvre, and Tomlinson agree to the essential problem: time is no longer natural, is, rather, owned by capital. Thus, as Tomlinson declares, "[i]t is clear that capitalism entails

[22] He sees the body as part of nature, an elision of the mediation of bodily experience. If Tomlinson's line of argument is extended, the perceptions of the body are unnatural then, when technologically-mediated. Since the idea of what is natural is rhetorically-constructed, I argue it is ultimately unproductive to define experience in binary-terms of natural vs. unnatural. Rather, the particular contexts of experience / perception deserve attention.

a perpetual struggle over the resource of time, in which the interests of capital as buyer and labour as seller are in a structured opposition" (28). Time itself, then, is no longer natural but rather a good to be universally desired. The desire for speed, then, the perception of faster time, is a given.

Similarly, Jameson explicitly links speed to consumer society in a critique of postmodern capitalism,

> What has happened is that aesthetic production today has become integrated into commodity production generally: the frantic economic urgency of producing fresh waves of ever-more novel-seeming goods, (from clothing to airplanes) at ever greater rates of turnover now assigns an increasingly essential structural function and position to aesthetic innovation and experimentation (4-5).

Here Jameson points to the ways in which speed enables capitalism to, in effect, overwhelm the potential for resistance.[23] Jameson's notion of franticness is essential to the interrogation of speed culture as is his examination of the commodification of creativity. As I discuss in more detail in Chapter Three, the rapid rise and fall of commodified image serves the needs of the market.[24]

The idea that creativity itself has been locked into a speed culture cycle of creation to commodification is worth further examination. For the purposes of my present project on speed and writing, I consider first the genre of business bestsellers. These books' subject is the glorification of the business world through

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[23] Jameson is not entirely pessimistic, however, and suggests that these cultural conditions, as predicted by Marx, lead to the possibility of the evolution of "an internationalism of a radically new type" (50).

[24] In Chapter Three, I outline the cynical government attempt to brand Private Jessica Lynch a hero and the commodification of her image as little blonde hero.

tips, strategies, and narratives. Do they acknowledge hegemonic speed and if they do, how?

Between 1991 and 2008, according to Books in Print, 401 books on the topic of business and technology were catalogued with the key term speed. As of June 2008, Amazon, the online bookseller, reports speed appears as a key term in 29, 294 books in the field of computers and technology 52,650 in the field of business and investing. Clearly, speed is valued and explored in these books. While these numbers are intriguing, the structure and form of the books themselves reveals their thorough imbrication in speed culture. I identify two page design patterns in particular as evidence of speed culture: lists and text-light.

Typical of technology and business bestsellers – and, indeed, a large proportion of nonfiction bestsellers -- are lists. Tara Calishain's 2003 book *Google Hacks: 100 Industrial Strength Tips and Tools,* Suzie Orman's 1998 *The 9 Steps to Financial Freedom*, and Joel Osteen's 2004 and 2007 nonfiction bestseller *Your Best Life Now: 7 Steps to Living at Your Full Potential* not only use lists , but also employ a title that reflects the form. There is an almost comical sameness to the form and theme. Thus, the New York Times reports the top two hardcover business best sellers in June 2008, *The One-Minute Entrepreneur* by Hanchard, Hutson, and Willis and *The 4-Hour Workweek* by Timothy Ferris. Lists demonstrate an adherence to the sense that time, immensely valuable, demands fast answers to problems. Lists promise the possibility of efficient problem-solving and allow the rapid absorption of the method necessary to do so. The efficiency of lists – their static linearity – means that, for example, living at your full potential, a weighty

philosophical topic indeed, can be reduced to seven simple steps, a breathtaking move some might find problematic, but because the needs of the market, the struggle over the resource of time, are conceded, the book sells -- at least until someone comes up with fewer than seven steps to living to full potential.

A second form pattern is the use of text-light pages: white space dominates these pages, surrounding information chunks that occupy thirty percent of the page at most. These chunks of information, more easily digestible on text-light pages, slide down fast and, like lists, promise readers respite from the time-draining reflective processes necessary to the consumption of denser text.

Why do nonfiction books in particular make use of these forms?[25] Their content provides the best answer: between 1998 and 2007 as Books in Print reports, best selling nonfiction books have circled two consistent themes: diet and making your life better through financial, philosophical, or spiritual plans.[26] These solutions to the complications of modern life function as a speed culture fix; the content lends itself to these forms because the fast fix speed culture demands is more easily delivered. That is, not only is bettering one's life possible but following the steps, a rapid injection of change, will produce instant results.

Examining the historical record for nonfiction books is particularly useful because it demonstrates how Bolter and Grusin's concept of remediation might be here misapplied. Bolter and Grusin suggest that all media are remediated. Television shows imitate web page forms; films imitate television shows, and so on.

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[25] Consequently, the argument that lists and text-light page design are due exclusively to the rise of electronic writing environments fails because these forms have been increasing their dominance since well before widespread availability of the Worldwide Web.

[26] The inspirational how-to book became popular in the mid-1940s and 1950s, according to Books in Print, and its prominence increased rapidly in the ensuing decades.

Plainly, however, the rise of bulleted and numbered lists and the use of text-light pages did not occur through the remediation of hypertextual environments. Instead, I argue that cultural conditions, in particular, the increasing permeability of the boundary between capital and culture and the privileging of speed, correspond with the increasing prominence of particular forms for nonfiction books.

Redolent of speed culture, these characteristic moves represent an ideological framework also demonstrable in popular nonfiction books series. The Dummy series features yellow and black icons, a cartoon male figure with enormous glasses, wild black hair, and a bemused expression. The first Dummy book, *DOS for Dummies*, was published in 1991 and titles now include books on gardening, cooking, money management, foreign languages, health, and, of course, computers. The Dummies company explains they are more than a product, "It's a philosophy and a culture" ("The For Dummies Experience"). These books are designed for people who "know what they want to do but not how to do it." The text below is typical of speed culture advertising rhetoric:

> *For Dummies* products are for folks who want *just enough information* to perform a given task or accomplish a specific goal. You won't find silly details and useless background information about a topic; you just get the information you need to feel comfortable enough to get up and running. If there are nine different ways to find a new job online or paint your bedroom, *For Dummies* gives you the easiest and best way (or two) to get the job done, so that you can move on with more important things — like your life! ("The For Dummies Experience").

The Dummies text above prescribes a response to the fragmentation of modern times; its utilitarian appeal lies in its construction of the reader's identity as too harried to waste the invaluable commodity: time. This identity construction appears not only in the realm of successful texts but also, almost invariably, in the cycled and recycled rhetoric of products meant to appeal to the consumer citizen of speed culture. Television advertisements make a similar move, proclaiming that the product will save time and allow individuals to get on with life.

I suggest then that speed culture affects the process of remediation. James Berlin argued, "In an economy that requires quick cycle time in production to increase profits, markets are as much created as they are discovered particularly by encouraging media-manufactured subject formation through advertising images" (69). Advertising images, certainly, make consistent use of remediation;[27] thus, remediation itself cycles quickly, resulting in the perfusion of multimodal texts.

According to Tomlinson, immediacy is the "erasure" of the gap between arrival and departure. He parses this term: it describes the erasure of spatial boundaries as technologies link places without regard to traditional borders of distance. It also describes the erasure of media apparatus such as screen, camera, or video recorder in the experience of film, or virtual reality, or online discussion. He uses this argument in order to develop his thesis that immediacy should replace speed as the dominant cultural condition. As I earlier argued, immediacy neglects speed desire. Yet, there is a second problem with Tomlinson's immediacy concept. As he admits, the condition of immediacy assumes that the technology is working as

[27] For numerous examples of this process, see John Berger's 1972 book *Ways of Seeing*. The book not only provides numerous examples, but also is itself remediated from the BBC television series from which it originates.

it is supposed to, "[w]e can say that the experience of using these new communication technologies – *when they are working properly that is* – is one of effortlessness and ubiquity" (Italics mine.106). As in the Pew Research survey methodology and results, immediacy assumes access, a deeply problematic supposition, considering the knowledge and socioeconomic status necessary for that access, as I have argued above. In fact, not only must people have the financial means to own the most current technologies, they must also know how to decipher and deploy the most recent technological innovation. In addition, communication technologies age out of date rapidly: for example, my 2003 state-of-the-art Macintosh could no longer run the newest versions of standard programs and could not access most Internet sites a mere four years after purchase.

Immediacy, then, may indeed be a desired state. But the culture of speed is the reality. The restless seeking after more speed typifies twenty-first century culture and the fount of this desire is capitalism.

The Dummy series appeals because of the effectiveness of its remedy to the perils of speed culture, the normalized world experience. Non-fiction books similarly provide an example of Berlin's quick cycle time, as do a vast range of advertising images. These images also complicate the concept of immediacy, as I show below.

Speed desire

The market depends upon advertising that appeals to the desires of the culture of speed. Advertising rhetoric provides apt examples of the normalized

desire for speed. *Nationwide*, an American insurance company, explains that "Life comes at you fast," in a series of comical video advertisements that feature men and women attempting to use machines such as a leaf blower, an automatic door painter, or even a remote control, failing ridiculously, and effecting serious damage to their cars or houses. *Nationwide*, each ad assures us, knows how life comes at you fast and "[i]s on your side." [28]

Here speed makes life uncontrollable, a theme that appears frequently. Fortunately, *Nationwide* understands the problem and will help us cope. Not only does speed make life uncontrollable, but technologies meant to simplify fail to work. The ads acknowledge technology as the root of the problem with speed and, as in the Dummies series, construct an identity based on consumer values. The corporate presence serves as benign savior: despite the inefficiencies of technology and the bumbling behavior of humans, the corporation can and will make survival possible in the whirlwind of "life."

Similarly, the "Life Takes Visa" ad campaign for Visa, Inc., begun in 2006 (Applebaum "A Matter of Timing"), argues that use of the Visa card is essential to full participation in society. Here society is delimited to consumer society and participation, therefore to buying and consuming. In "Rockit," a thirty-second television ad posted to the Visa website, lithe young dancers hip hop their way through the tasks of selecting and purchasing in a colorful, decidedly cool store. The camera slowly focuses on one dancer and follows him as he swerves, twirls, and slinks his way to the cashier. In one version of the ad, the dancer produces a

[28] The Nationwide ad campaign was created by TM Advertising, a Dallas, Texas based corporation.

Visa card, and, without missing a beat, cashier and dancer make the sale. In another version, the dancer tries to pay with cash. The music stops, the dancers freeze: distress appears on everyone's face. Luckily, the dancer sees his error and quickly produces a Visa card. The dance goes on.

Technology itself is consistently marketed to consumers with speed privileged as the highest value. The "just folks rhetoric" of the Dummies website and books, the *Nationwide* "Life Comes at You Fast" ad campaign and the *Visa* "Life Takes Visa" construct the consumer as actively engaged in the important work of making money and consuming. Moreover, they also betray the deep strain of anti-intellectualism prevalent in American society in the twenty-first century.[29] As Gitlin points out, the phenomenon is not new. President Dwight D. Eisenhower's celebrated definition of intellectuals reflects the view in the examples above, "a man who takes more words than are necessary to tell more than he knows" (Hofstadter ctd. in Gitlin). The Dunkin' Donuts ad campaign is explicit in its disdain for intellectuals who it identifies as too effete to understand "real" work. Indeed, the campaign demonstrates the equation of worker+ consumer+ anti-intellectualism = speed culture values. Starbucks' customers have long hours of leisure to write poetry, discuss obscure writers, and order pretentiously titled cups of coffee. Dunkin' Donuts' customers work hard and play hard. They talk about real things like sports. They just want a good cup of coffee, never mind the fancy talk.

Hill Holiday, a "communications agency," according to its website, designed the company's campaign in a specific effort to capture some part of the coffee

[29] See Todd Gitlin, "The Renaissance of Anti-Intellectualism" for a description of how the 2000 Presidential election results demonstrate anti-intellectualism in America.

market ("Ads Give Dunkin' Donuts National Appeal). The flagship advertisement begins with the musical phrase "Doing things is what I like to do," and features a line of bewildered office and construction workers in a coffee bar, attempting to translate the incomprehensible coffee menu. It might be in French, they say, or maybe Italian. Or maybe it's "Fritalian."[30]

The Hill Holiday website describes the company's advertising campaign philosophy in neon green flash, insisting "It must be based on an authentic truth about the company rather than fabricated to fit consumer desires." The website suggests the company's success is due to this philosophy. Bielby, the chief strategist for the firm, explains further:

> We spend a lot of time examining cultural context, which means that we look at some of the major trends in cultural and social shifts that are going on at any given time, because those have an impact on any product or service that we advertise ("Ads Give Dunkin' ").

Authenticity, then, is based on how well the product represents the most dominant trends. Thus, the Dunkin' Donuts ad is literally meant to represent the most authentic vision of significant cultural strands: the strategist says so. The ad campaign's tag line, "America runs on Dunkin' Donuts," pays homage to speed culture in its verb choice.

Bielby goes on to argue explicitly that the Dunkin' Donuts product – coffee – a curious omission of its titular focus – contrasts directly with Starbucks because it is "unpretentious," "really represented all of us," and "valued its customers for who they were." An ad posted to YouTube in July, 2007 features supermodel Naomi

[30] The ads are widely available on the Dunkin' Donuts website and on YouTube.com.

Campbell in a designer gown and stiletto heel attempting to plant a tree. One heel breaks off and Campbell flies into a screaming tantrum. Moments later, Campbell reappears with a Dunkin' Donuts iced tea wearing jeans and a messy ponytail and calmly begins to plant the tree. Playing on Campbell's tabloid reputation for tantrums, the ad successfully personifies the Dunkin' Donuts target audience, not the elite upper classes who have no idea what real work is but the everyday mom (in pink of course) who multitasks her way through the day. The multitasking worker is the assumed identity of the consumer citizens of speed culture.

The term "multitasking," prevalent today to describe a person or machine that can do more than one task at a time, was first coined in 1966 to refer specifically to computer capabilities.[31] Multi-taskers are highly valued: the professor who writes a treatise on cloning on his computer while supervising an experiment by webcam, the doctor who advises a colleague on a surgical procedure while counseling her children on the multiple lines of a cell phone, the talk show host who rushes home to cook for a dinner party, serve her children macaroni and cheese, and scare away the monsters under the bed, all thanks to her state-of-the-art Kenmore kitchen. The desire for speed leads to designing, selling, and consuming technologies whose flexibility increases efficiency: they are the ultimate timesavers.

Lyotard describes technology as serving the causes of efficiency or the

> [p]rinciple of optimal performance: maximizing output…and minimizing input (the energy expended in the process)…Technology

[31] The Oxford English Dictionary cites a 1999 Financial Times article as the first application of the term to humans.

> is therefore a game pertaining not to the "true, the just, or the beautiful, but to efficiency: a technical "move" is "good" when it does better and/or expends less energy than another (44).

In the age of speed, beautiful efficiency is indeed privileged. Visa payWave, a product available as of February, 2008 from the Visa credit card company, increases efficiency because the seller of a product becomes invisible. The Visa payWave card looks like a credit card except for a special symbol on the card indicating the presence of a computer chip. The chip uses radio waves to communicate with the card radio. All the consumer has to do is wave the card in front of the card reader and the transaction is made. The card does not leave the consumer's hand and, as the Visa payWave fact sheet indicates, "By simply holding a Visa payWave-enabled card, Micro Tag or mobile phone close to a contactless card reader, consumers can complete a Visa transaction in seconds. There is no fumbling for cash…"

I note in particular that the Visa payWave product, like the Wii remarked on earlier, becomes a technological prosthetic to the body so that the body and the technology are seamless. The gap between the desire and its fulfillment is perceived as smaller the more mediation disappears. This is the dream of capital.

How does the move towards haptic speed culture refute or extend post-modern concerns about fragmentation? The dominance of technologies and imbrication with speed and capital establishes fragmentation as one consequence of speed culture. Lyotard identifies the loss of the credibility of the grand narrative as an "[e]ffect of the blossoming of techniques and technology since World War II,"

(37) so that the question now is not ""Is it true?" but "What use is it?"" (51). A multitude of narratives result. In a similar vein, Jameson argues that the most common experience of this age is fragmentation not alienation (14). How might the seamless body/technology interface complicate this notion?

The opening scene of the 2002 film, *Minority Report*, is a prescient vision of the potentials of such technology for total control. In the scene, police chief John Anderton, played by Tom Cruise, connects to psychics who produce images related to crimes which are about to be committed through a network of computers. Anderton touches the images on a clear ceiling-to-floor computer display screen, swirling, moving and partnering the images until he can make sense of them and discover who the criminal-to-be is. The display captures human images, agonizing and violent while Anderton calmly touches first one then another and through the medium of the technology, makes sense of the future. He instantly accesses addresses and phone numbers in order to track down the future criminals and he and his team appear at their doorsteps long before a thought might become an action.

Based on a Philip K. Dick short story, the film's foreboding representation of technology suggests a society in which human and machine, intertwined, reduce complexity to a single common experience. There is no fragmentation – there is rather a Fascist state, a Panopticon made reality.

The question of access here takes an urgent turn. As Lyotard puts it, "Increasingly, the central question is becoming who will have access to the information these machines must have in storage to guarantee that the right decisions are made" (14). The question remains central, especially in light of class,

race, and regional differences in access. The resounding silence about these differences is troubling.

Worries about the so-called "digital divide" are less frequently voiced than they were in the late 1980s and early 1990s when personal computers first appeared.[32] The examples above naturalize the computer presence in the lives of consumer citizens even though the 2003 U.S. Census bureau reports that 54.7 percent of American households have internet access while 61.8 percent have computers. Although the 2010 census undoubtedly will demonstrate the presence of more computer and internet access, the gaps between -- races (for example, only 44.6% of Black households have computers); educational attainment (for example, 85.8% of householders with advanced degrees have computers while 51.1 % of householders who are high school graduates and only 27.9% of householders with fewer than a high school degree); income (the wealthiest householders with incomes over $100,000 are at 94.7% while householders making $25,000 a year or less are at 41%) -- persist. There are even regional differences, although the gulf seems less deep. 58.8% of households in the south have computers while 66.7% of households in the west do. Emerging here is the unsurprising truth that the wealthy, highly educated whites have deep access to technologies, far different from what members of other groups have and, therefore, have the most opportunity to keep up with rapidly evolving technologies – and to use them in ways unimaginable to those without.

[32] As early as 2001, Jeffrey Young noted that scholars were troubled by reductive nature of digital divide rhetoric because of its focus on race. Young cites numerous scholars who agree that the digital divide is decreasing quickly. Others, such as Benjamin Compaine, argue the divide is a myth.

The knowledge economy is therefore the playground of a specialized group. The question of whether or not resistance to hegemonic values is possible is better addressed with consideration of who has access to the technologies enabling such resistance and who has the knowledge to use them. The picture is not entirely bleak. The statistics are not static and certainly access to technologies has continued to permeate across many groups. In fact, there are numerous examples of disenfranchised peoples making use of technology for the purposes of resistance. Work by Dyer-Witheford, for example, promotes cyberspace's potential for multiple resistances against capital.[33] Phenomena such as the Zapatista Movement, blogs from soldiers on the Iraqi Front, and Napster and its numerous stepchildren, provide further examples of resistance against hegemonic forces. [34] Speed culture means these resistance movements, when they have access, have global communicative power. The Panopticon has secret corners after all.

Not only does access to technologies vary across barriers of class, but the barriers themselves become more intransigent as a consequence of the ways in which the technological is privileged. The age of speed is technological and only

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[33] See Dyers-Witheford, Nick. *Cyber-Marx: Cycles and Circuits of Struggle in High-Technology Capitalism.* Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999

[34] Such examples range from political movements to blog postings to appropriating illegally. The Zapatista movement, led by Sub-Commadante Marcos, works for the native peoples of Chiapas, Mexico and has successfully employed the Internet to disseminate information and collect funds for its revolutionary aims. See for example, http://flag.blackened.net/revolt/zapatista.html. Blogs also have provided a means of resistance: a Google search of blogs hits example after example of blogs or online diaries posted by soldiers on the Iraqi front. Their blogs reveal their views of the Iraq War without the filters of government, military command, or media. See, for example, http://www.sgtstryker.com/. Note, however, that there is no sure way for the reader to know if the blogs are indeed the work of a soldier. Limewire and Napster are examples of resistance to powerful record companies: they are popular music file sharing program, illegally allowing music lovers to upload and download music.

[34] Please see Chapter Three for more on identity in the age of speed.

some citizens of speed culture have the possibility of economic and social power. Therefore, some are admitted to time zones of access while others are not. Since they are technologically-mediated, the construction of time within these zones invites investigation. In particular, how does speed complicate the boundaries between zones? Who can migrate from identity to identity easily and who cannot?

Speed and access zones

Writing in response to concerns about the inability of theorists to respond easily to political "times," political theorist Sheldon Wolin proposes that

> [t]here is no shared "political time," only culturally constituted different times. Their self conscious nature contributes to a disruption and undermines the possibility of a common identity-– formerly a staple in conceptions of the political. These diverse time zones help to promote what can be called the "instability of political time"….Starkly put, political time is out of synch with the temporalities, rhythms, and pace governing economy and culture…(1).

In a similar vein to Jameson's, Wolin goes on to argue that because the economy is so tightly imbricated with the political that negotiation, once a political staple, is now complicated by the urgency of economic demands for production and consumer speed. In the same way, these culturally constituted time zones complicate the work of composing.[35] The university is similarly imbricated with

[35] "Zone" has been previously applied to Composition and Rhetoric studies. Mary Louise Pratt developed the concept of "contact zone" in her essay "Arts of the Contact Zone." The contact zone describes spaces in which varying voices meet, conflict, and negotiate and the writing classroom is an example. Bizzell enthusiastically saw the concept as a way to

the economy and urgent demands for production and speed dominate. The writing classroom functions as microcosm: such staples of the effective classroom as revision, reflection, and dialogue are both problemitized and evolved as a consequence.

In the simplest sense, these time zones relate to four traditional definitions of common human environments work, school, and leisure. Figure 1 on the following page displays the familiar divisions along two axii.[36] The vertical axis refers to professional identities and moves from school to work. The horizontal axis refers to personal identities and moves from individual to group. Here the term group denotes both social and familial bonds.

The boundaries between zones are porous in order to demonstrate how each environment bleeds into the others.[37] Indeed, in the post-Fordist age of speed, the boundaries become even more porous. Most significantly, individuals move through their many identities, from zone to zone, with varying degrees of fluency. Those who have material and knowledge access to technologies experience boundary-blurring through which their identities as consumer-citizens are more and more deeply reified. At the same time, their fluency in flexing to each zone's rules

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address difference affirmatively ("Contact Zones and English Studies"). Min-Zhan Lu later deployed the term in order to examine the politics of style ("Professing Multiculturalism: The Politics of Style in the Contact Zone" and to suggest a way to move away from a focus on correctness. In each instance of its use, the assumption that the classroom functions as its own zone at any given moment dominates the conversation.

[36] My thanks to Daren Young who helped me rework my first visual attempt at understanding these phenomena.

[37] The term "flexibility," for example, refers to workers who can take on extra work without requiring more compensation or, if the company is lucky, more training.

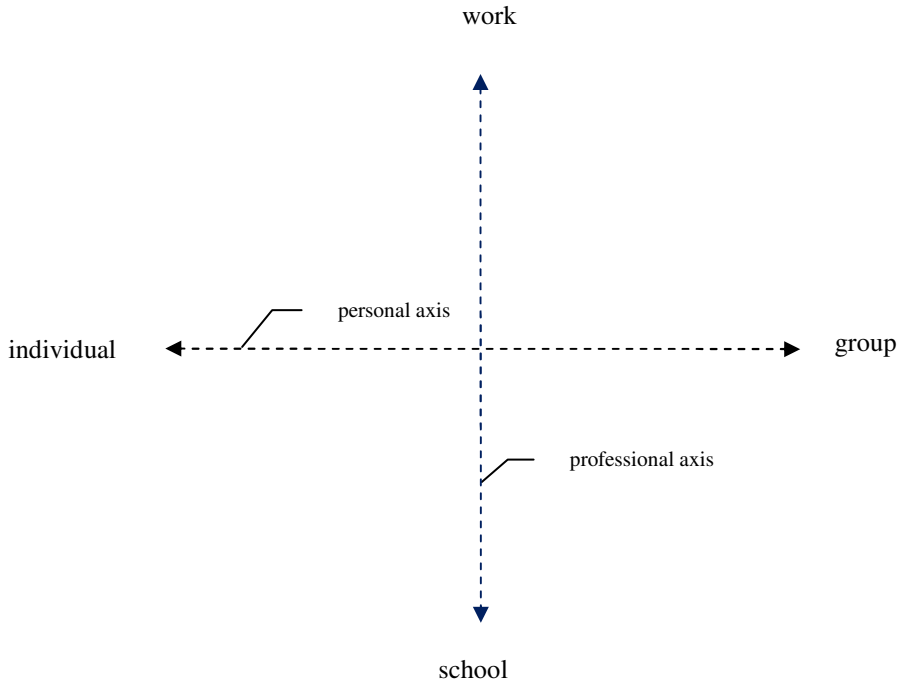


Figure 1: Time Zones

allows them powerful potentials in traversing zones. For example, individuals within the group – work zone who have speed fluency are likely to have fluency within every other zone.

The demands of the age of speed fragment composing work so that the meaning of literacy itself mutates from moment to moment. In order to compose a part of the Visa "Rockit" dance, the consumer must be able to bend, swivel, step, and kick to a fast and urgent rhythm, slide out that credit card, and make those purchases in the space of a quick musical beat. Who are the stakeholders in this dance? And who is left out? What literacies are necessary in order to join the dance? I offer two responses here: first, those who have both material and knowledge access may join. Second, according to the dictates of the age of speed, the brisk cycle times, the rapid appearance and perfusion of new technological

appurtenances, those who know how to find, learn, and employ those appurtenances can join even more easily. They can move across constructed time zones with an ease and ability others cannot. However, I do not make the reductive argument that material and knowledge access are the only necessities. In fact, critical understanding of the rhetoric of technologies is essential. The rhetoric of search engines is an excellent example.

The worldwide Web itself can be understood as a map of the globalization dance and appears to offer powerful access to anyone. Indeed, the Web appears to belie the argument that zones matter anymore. However, the vastness of the amount of information available on the Web makes it difficult to navigate; hence, the rise of search engines. With a few clicks, the user can search or "google" the Web. Is this really so different from zone to zone? I argue that despite the commonly held view that the Web is a freely available space, flush and generous with its information, it is in fact constricted.

I examine Google's search engine below in order to provide a case in point.

The Google map of the universe

At first glance, search engines and databases seem to map the Web universe with the result that the universe becomes knowable.[38] Certainly those with the knowledge of how to sort through and organize the shifting sands of the information economy possess real power because they appear literate in the age of speed. Yet, finding firm ground requires more than knowing how to organize a search.

[38] As of July 25th, 2008, the Google developers blog reports that the Google index hit the one trillion mark. The increase has been exponential: 26 million in 1998 when the first index was developed to one billion as of 2000 ("We Knew the Web Was Big…).

The organization of the worldwide web drew little attention in the early days of the Internet. The metaphor of the Net as "Wild West" emerged in the early 1990s. (Note, however, that this discourse imagines an old television show Wild West, without the systematic extermination of Native peoples.) Thus, for example, a 1994 USA Today newspaper article, "Riding Herd Online: Legal Notions Transformed by the Digital Age," refers to the "Wild West abandon" of surfing and flaming with lawyers cast as the cowboys and surfers and flamers, presumably, cast as the cattle.[39] Inevitably, corporations that figured out ways to map the terrain – and, necessarily, to make money doing so – appeared and grew. Google, one of the most successful, offers a simple white interface, a field to fill in with a search term, and one easy and fast button to click. As has been remarked, the Google Corporation has been so successful that its corporate name has become the verb of choice for "search on the Internet." According to Google's corporate information website, the search engine itself works "democratically." That is, the hierarchy of answers that appear at any given search query depends upon the popularity of the websites. Sites that are visited more frequently appear higher on the list.

The curiously revisionary approach to the meaning of democracy has also inspired so-called "googlebombing," in which loosely organized groups have deliberately visited a particular website repeatedly in order to move that website higher on the Google search results page. For example, in 2004, after a googlebombing attack, searching for the words "miserable failure" brought up George W. Bush's White House biography page. Marissa Mayer, Google's Director

[39] The metaphor is still common in discussions about the Web, especially when issues of ownership of information, hackers, and security take place.

of Consumer Web Products, explained this prank in 2005 by noting that the phenomenon in no way compromised Google's political objectivity. Google, Mayer assured her readers, remains neutral.[40] Framing the issue in terms of objectivity and neutrality, an interesting move, means that, for Google, the problem is not that their search algorithms can be manipulated, but rather that they might be perceived as biased. Someone may believe Google has an opinion, for example, about George W. Bush. The appearance of objectivity is necessary in order for Google to be successful and, indeed, their success would be compromised if they were seen as opinionated. Search engines should respond with the Truth. Truth in this case is equated with popular opinion, a paradoxical move that appears, nonetheless, to be generally accepted.

How objective are search engines and databases? The equation of popularity and objectivity is clearly problematic. Moreover, scholars have begun to investigate the discourse of the inevitable hierarchies and privileging occurring as a consequence of the choices made when organizing the web. Focusing on race, Lisa Nakamura describes the effects of "menu-driven identities" in which the selection of possible identities appears to allow agency but is, in fact, constricted by hegemonic notions of race and gender. Nakamura offers the Excite search engine and a variety of ethnic websites as examples, noting the ways in which the categories themselves are invariably functioning to serve the needs of the market as well as insisting on ordering and classifying groups in ways that serve the ideological agendas of the website owners (101-135). Unfortunately, as Selfe has pointed out, the national

[40] Google runs a blog called Official Google Blog where "insights" such as Mayer's are offered. Other Google blogs such as the Webmaster Central blog invite Google users to post information about googlebombs or similar phenomena.

drive towards technological literacy[41] does not include a call for increased critical literacies. In other words, learning how to use a search engine or database is linked with increased production, with the concomitant assumption of search engine neutrality.

Potter analyzes Google Scholar, a service of Google Corporation that provides access to academic libraries and scholarly databases. Google Scholar allows researchers to connect to academic library resources through the web, a relationship Potter calls "happily symbiotic" (4). Although Potter acknowledges that corporate sponsorship of university entities is not new, she persuasively builds a case for interrogating both the Google Scholar's rhetoric and its interface. Google Scholar uses "data mining" techniques through which the company develops a profile of a particular user so that they can customize content, that is, develop information about a user's preferences and then target advertising towards those preferences. In fact, Google holds on to search records so that the corporation can build its profiles. Google Scholar also offers for sale copies of the articles it finds at public institutions. Since access is fast and easy, and, as Potter points out, many users simply do not know that they can access the same article for free at local libraries; Google Scholar stands to make a nice profit out of its connectivity to academic databases and libraries. Finally, the interface itself insists on a homogenous search path – the every-scholar's-research-approach. Thus, those who know little about searching or access, those who have intermittent access to technology, those in a hurry, will turn more and more frequently to Google Scholar.

[41] For example, see the U.S. Department of Education's 1996 publication "Getting America's Students Ready for the 21st Century and Technological Literacy," located at http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/os/technology/plan/national/index.html.

Its familiar and easy interface appeal within speed culture and its construction of its users as consumers follows the familiar and easy lead of the market.

I have so far argued that these databases, while clearly problematic, have become the familiar method of organizing the Web, the path most chosen when navigating through the unmapped information deeps. However, the obvious question here is what does it take to make sense of these organizers of the Web?

As I have demonstrated, material and knowledge access are essential to being an engaged and literate citizen in speed culture. Equally essential is the ability to adapt and evolve quickly to the rapid change tempo of the Web. It is simple: locating, learning, and using new technological applications that allow for information access specific to the task at hand makes some more powerful than others. To return to Wolin's useful concept of time zones, those most capable of speed within and among time zones have potentials that others do not.

The phenomenon is new and worth investigation. Bazerman describes how the process of researching data has evolved because of technological changes. He explains that in the 1950s, the education apprenticeship involved a relationship with "the relatively stable world of print" (98) but today extremely complex data sets, once reserved for specialists and experts, are accessible even to young children. Formerly, "[i]mmersion in disciplinary databases was something that only the most advanced students would get to, often only in graduate education, and perhaps only in the most advanced years of graduate work" (99). As models of research grow deeper and more complex, the kinds of knowledge necessary to know the interface well enough and understand the ways in which the interface itself may manipulate

the data have become more and more challenging. The issue is not that speed culture is inherently bad nor that a return to the technology-free days of the past is necessary. Rather, what it means to be literate, to be educated, to be an engaged and active citizen must be reinterpreted. In particular, interrogating continuously these new ways of knowing the world is essential to the work of composing in the twenty-first century, because, as Bazerman puts it,

> Historically, the making sense of data has been associated with skills of expression and writing…However, with the easy accessibility of data and the attractiveness of exposing students to more extensive data earlier in their education, the need for students to articulate what they have found and to make sense of it has become greater and greater (in Takayoshi and Sullivan 101).

Google, like so many other databases, provides an answer dependent upon the appearance of context-less question; that is, knowledge or Truth can be summoned though following the right steps in the right order. This is not an unreasonable response to the flood of information now available.[42] However, making sense of the data means going beyond the search engine's fragment of response. As an examination of the Pew surveys demonstrated, the contexts, stakeholders, and elisions of each data representation are essential to articulating their meanings.

[42] In his prescient 1958 essay, "Speed of Cultural Change," Marshall McLuhan suggests that the appearance and frequent use of the headline form is due to the invention of the telegraph and the resultant sudden information flood. Although his argument that technologies determine culture has been variously critiqued, his optimistic interpretation of such language changes is worth noting. For McLuhan, abbreviated language forms give power to individuals. He explains, "The electronic revolution means "do it yourself" – "you are the poet" (17).

Speed culture privileges the fast list, the quick response, the rapid composition and I have so far argued that the logic of the market informs these characteristics as well as the representation of the consumer identity of its citizens. However, speed also promotes the possibilities of multiple identities, which may operate from moment to moment in ways that do not necessarily conform to the logic of the market. Indeed, I do not argue that speed manifests purely as capital's plaything or that the project of identity construction within speed culture submits itself completely to ideological hegemony. In Chapter Two, I turn to a closer examination of the complex question of identity in speed culture.

Chapter 3

Identity/Identification in the Age of Speed

Here, in the Idea Menu, you'll find quick access to information
Relevant to the subjects and issues you encounter each day in class.
Think of it as a takeout menu for your intellect…
If you only have a couple minutes, click on a To-The-Point Article or an Idea To Go.
And if you're a bit hungrier—maybe you have a big paper and the fridge is empty—
check out the In-Depth Articles or the Recommended Books.

From the Intellectual TakeOut Website, December 2008

"It's no fun what happened here,
but that's the problem with the Internet.
Things travel fast."

Jerome Laflamme, speaking about his prank that created the Star Wars Kid.

"Enough is enough!
I've had it with these motherfucking snakes on this motherfucking plane,"

Samuel L. Jackson in Snakes on a Plane.

"She's kind of tiny and she's fragile-looking, but you know what?
Looks are deceiving."

Miriam Duckworth, Jessica Lynch's friend, interviewed on 48 Hours

The epigraphs above represent linked aspects of the question of identity in the age of speed. The *Intellectual TakeOut* website, the Star Wars Kid Internet meme, the *Snakes on a Place* phenomenon, and the Jessica Lynch story are instances of spectacle whose rapid dissemination and evaporation and lingering cultural traces demonstrate important – and new -- identity issues. In effect, they

promote a coherent plotline whose form, as Anthony Giddens suggests offers "models for the construction of narratives of the self" (199). That narrative is an ongoing project informed by cultural phenomena. Speed culture's reification of the consumer citizen can therefore be understood as a dominant model in the construction project. In fact, this model, a product of spectacle I argue, becomes more persuasive as a consequence of speed culture. The conditions of speed culture not only reify consumer identity but because of the frantic sometimes manic call to produce and consume which enable capital's ownership of time itself; these conditions also ensure its own ballooning progress.

The question of identity in the age of the speed turns on the imageword of the Internet. I here borrow Kristie Fleckenstein's term in order to foreground the method of identity construction present within the *Intellectual TakeOut* website, Star Wars Kid Internet meme, *Snakes on a Place* phenomenon, and Jessica Lynch story. Each of these spectacular instances is formed by imageword, image and text bound together. Imageword, explains Fleckenstein,

> [s]erves as a central process by which cultural membership is effected, and it does that by privileging a way of seeing. Every culture is marked by a habitual way of organizing image and word. Our social participation is predicated on mastering this dominant way of seeing (52).

Identifying the "habits of seeing" as Fleckenstein calls them is the necessary first step towards demystifying codes of image and word and the narratives they construct, the work of English Studies. Fleckenstein identifies three dominant habits of seeing in contemporary culture: the habit of spectacle, the habit of

surveillance, and the habit of antinomy (the Burkean concept of breaking up patterns to form new methods of organization and seeing). These cultural habits inform the construction of identities and regulate their boundaries and, as Fleckenstein notes, their interrogation will instigate individual engagement with larger communities. This response to postmodern concerns about loss of agency creates a space for teachers and writers to have agency.

For Fleckenstein, the habit of antinomy in particular offers a way into critical analysis. She suggests that because we live in a constantly shifting, changing culture (and technology is the obvious example shaping students' lives), we are in the habit of making new patterns and changing order. Fleckenstein suggests that the habit of antinomy means that instructors and students can identify, select, and discard ideas within our classrooms despite the habits of spectacle and surveillance (55-61). For example, college students trained to write formalistic essays for the purposes of passing advanced placement examination may learn to recognize the usefulness of the concept of genre in deciphering the appropriate response to writing situations. Pedagogy and learning become possible. In other words, the habit of antinomy provides hope for agency[43].

So far these points of analysis seem relevant to English Studies in general, and rhetoric in particular, but how do they enter into conversations about composition? That is, how is the production of texts, the primary focus of composition concerned with habits of seeing and identity construction? The first and most obvious response is that analysis or reading work and composing or

[43] I provide an example and analysis of this writing exercise in Chapter Five. In Chapter Four, I explore more thoroughly the testing culture's effects on the writing experiences of high school students.

writing work are too deeply imbricated to break apart. That is, each forms a part of the composing subject. Similarly, the project of identity construction occurs in both processes. The writers I read shape the writer I am just as the composing process itself constructs the writer I am. However, more particularly, expanding notions of text – the turn to the visual described by Gunther Kress among others –and the consequent habits of seeing instantiated in imageword, make it impossible for writing teachers and students to ignore new media composing work and its consequent effects on and from identity construction. I agree, then, with Gregory Ulmer's call:

> [T]he emerging predominance of the image as technology and culture is a problem of the society which is stated in disciplinary terms as the "spectacle"…A proper task of English departments in particular…is to develop rhetorical and composition practices for citizens to move from consumers to producers of image discourse…(7).

The notion of the spectacle deserves special attention for it places imageword within the context of each of the phenomena that I analyze later in this chapter. That context, which I call speed spectacle, draws on the work of Guy DeBord in order to examine a notion of spectacle wholly dependent upon speed.

DeBord argues that because production dictates modern life, representation, that is, one spectacle after another, dominates. The spectacle is "a social relation between people that is mediated by images" (12). The concept of spectacle is an important trope, frequently called upon in the literature and connected to the rise of

the image[44]. Where image might previously have been seen as either complementary or supplementary to the text, hypertext, network theory, and the Web clearly demark a culture shot through with visuals whose logic pervasively influences scholarly work, such as Ulmer's and Fleckenstein's In contrast to DeBord, however, Ulmer and Fleckenstein highlight the potentials of image-mediated social relations: in particular through composing work. For DeBord, nothing exists outside of the spectacle.

Speed binds both spectacle and imageword together: it constricts and affords the dominance of the spectacle. For DeBord, the spectacle is "a negation" of real life (14). Its inauthenticity can only be resisted through the shadowy methods of *détournement* or parody. DeBord sees détournement as a "fluid anti-ideology" operating outside of theory and, possibly, a practice that will lead to action (145-146). In fact, *détournement* characterizes most of the cultural phenomena I detail below. With and without *détournement,* speed spectacle constructs identity through identification strategies. It thereby reifies capital at the same time that it offers deeper possibilities for agency. DeBord's "essentially tautological" spectacle (15), then moves beyond the inaccessible, monologic, solipsistic existence once speed's cultural dominance is taken into account. In particular, DeBord's proposed spectacle-countering *détournement* evolves from narrow pathway to broad avenue because of speed culture.

Does this suggest that speed culture citizens also move beyond consumer identity? As those with admittance to content knowledge (the how-to) and material (the hardware, software, and Internet access necessary) produce images, they act as

[44] See for example Teresa DeLaurentis or Henri Lefebvre among others.

agents outside the spectacle, flickering sometimes steadily, sometimes very briefly because of capital's pervasive processes. In fact, the process of commodification in which the spectacle appropriates moments of *détournement* is easy to trace and its speed exponential. Murphy argues that the increasing globalization of the image marks continuously strengthening hold of the spectacle and describes Times Square as its allegorical representation. Advertisements build the cityscape in Times Square, displayed, for example around and across several floors of a city building so that every street can provide a view. However, as Murphy concedes and as the examples below will demonstrate the control mechanisms of the society of the spectacle do not possess complete authority. The process of commodification stutters at moments.

Indeed, the Star Wars kid meme, Snakes on a Plane phenomenon, and the Jessica Lynch story suggest that social constructions of identity themselves become flattened, generalized, and broadened because of the spectacle's need for new stimuli, what Jameson refers to as "…the frantic economic urgency of producing fresh waves of ever more novel-seeming goods" (4).

The two-dimensional identities constructed because of the spectacle's need circulate widely in speed culture. In the same moment, speed creates a composing space in which writer construct identities which may resist the spectacle. In other words, speed also constructs an authentic space of resistance. I explore this complex relationship after a short detour to propose a useful framework for thinking about identity in the age of speed. That is, how might we think about the nature of identity in the age of speed?

Framing identity

Questions about identity, as I have described in chapter one, snapped into sharper and more urgent focus as the post World War II world grew increasingly technological. The creation of virtual spaces through the Internet intensified interest in identity; also contributing were scholarly interest in the appeal of postmodern concerns about fragmentation, and the move from grand to localized narratives. How do the ecologies of the Internet reinforce or inscribe identities? I trace three moves important to understanding this question. First, early optimism has given way to skepticism and in some scholars, cynicism. Second, the apt argument that identity construction is a continuous process rooted in cultural contexts surfaces over and over. Third, the process of identity building or identification provides an interrogatory space for multiple identities.

In the early years, the project of constructing identities appeared to be a happy one when effected through technologies. For example, Sherry Turkle's 1984 book, *The Second Self*, joyfully describes what she calls "a study of a culture in the making" (18). She proposes that the computer will force a change on identity and explains that it is becoming the dominant metaphor for the human mind among the MIT and Harvard students she interviews. The characteristics of this new identity will include a decentered self, hybrid identity, and multiprocessing computational mind. While Turkle's concern is the human spirit, the feeling self in opposition to the calculating self, her vision of technology is neutral. The computer is an exciting tool and she is enthusiastic about the potentials available to those who use it.

Turkle expands her notions of identity construction in her much-cited 1997 book, *Life on the Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet*. There she explains that through switching identities, as for example a woman pretending to be a man on a MOO or MUD, users will learn about gender identity. She remains deeply optimistic about the multiplicity characteristic of the identities possible in life on the screen and fails to consider the problematic aspects of using MIT and Harvard students as her primary sources of information, although, to be fair, she is a trained psychologist interested in exploring metaphors and belief systems rather than empirical research (260). Moreover, her focus on multiple identities foreshadows the work of other identity theorists. For Turkle, multiplicity allows diversity. Fluidity allows expansion. However, she tempers her enthusiasm with some warnings: for example, virtual rape is possible in virtual spaces (251). Still, Turkle locates the Web's construction of identity as places of infinite possibility and potential. Her optimistic vision of students selecting from a multiplicity of possible identities elides the constraints of imposed identities. Lisa Nakamura, for example, describes persuasively the ways in which race remains a reductive category on the Internet in contradiction to the vaunted "Who do you want to be today" invitation of many sites. I examine Nakamura's argument more thoroughly later in this chapter.

Turkle acknowledges that multiple identities are an ongoing process of construction and her examination of student interactions with the Web and Internet presciently foregrounds an important group of Internet dwellers but she does not root her argument in the larger contexts of political and economic movements.

In some contrast, Manuel Castells defines identity as "…the process of construction of meaning on the basis of a cultural attribute, or a related set of cultural attributes, that is given priority over other sources of meaning" (*The Power of Identity* 6). For Castells, social forces are primary and the tension between the Internet and self a productive site of analysis. He sees multiple identities as inherently problematic, however, and proposes that instead individuals organize their subjectivity in terms of a primary identity and multiple roles. Subjectivity, however, arises from the process of *project identity* through which individuals create new identities that "redefine their position in society" (8). It is, in other words, resistance to ideological hegemony. This process may lead to societal change and, as an example, Castells sees feminism as an example of project identity. Within the context of the network society, in particular, the scope and potential of project identity and consequent social change increases. Castells' suggestion, an argument for agency because of network society, is useful. His focus on nationalism issues – the global processes of project identity – demands a wider lens than applicable to my argument here however.

Castells' nuanced optimism is much similar to Giddens' argument, he claims, for "an increasing interconnection between the two extremes of extensionality and internationality…globalizing influences on the one hand and personal dispositions on the other" (qtd. in Castells 11). However, Castells differs from Giddens because Giddens sees neither commodification process (DeBord's society of the spectacle) nor media pervasiveness as urgent problems. He believes that individuals may select from the narratives presented and fails to consider the problem of ideological

hegemony (199-200). Turkle and Giddens represent the more optimistic end of the agency spectrum, then, and do not root their arguments in global contexts of capital. Parsing identity on the Internet becomes problematic at best when wider contexts are elided. What happens, then, when the multiple identities construction project is rooted within social contexts? I turn to Stuart Hall, Zygmunt Bauman, and Kenneth Burke in order to do so. These scholars see identification as rhetorical – a move that widens the analytical space for composition and rhetoric scholars.

Stuart Hall is among the many scholars who note the increasing attention to identity.[45] He sees this attention as located in questions about both agency and politics and suggests that because discourse constructs identities, consideration of their specific contexts is essential. Within speed culture, rapidly evolving technological changes demand fast identity changes so that zipping from zone to zone is possible. Consequently, discourse itself, at a breathless pace, reinvents itself and reconstructs identities. For example, when the not-yet-released movie, *Snakes on a Plane* erupted across the blogosphere in the spring of 2006, the title of the film became first an pop culture expression denoting fatalism, as in "Nothing we can do – it's snakes on a plane," and then an acronym SoaP. The term constructed the identities of the participants in the phenomena as sophisticated cynics, world-weary, but connected to the networked heart of the creation of a movie. I examine the phenomena more closely later in this chapter.

Zygmunt Bauman adds that identity is a "modern invention" rooted in issue and difference. Since the concept of identity emerged due to concerns about its

[45] See for example, Mark Poster, Manuel Castells, Judith Butler, and Lester Faigley among others.

problems, Bauman defines identity as "…a name given to the escape sought from that uncertainty" and in an provocative riff on the metaphor of the pilgrim contrasts modern life and the long pilgrimage of identity building to the postmodern experience of the "fragmentation of time" and consequent desire to avoid identity stasis. Bauman's description of postmodern time evokes speed and the spectacle especially as he evokes the willed merging of appearance and reality and concomitant desire for multiple identities.

Plainly, the potential for differing identities has been super-charged in the age of the Worldwide Web. Also super-charged – and more important to the purposes of my project – are the potentials for identification. I define identification from Hall's argument:

> [I]dentification is constructed on the back of a recognition of some common origin or shared characteristics with another person or group, or with an ideal, and with the natural closure of solidarity and allegiance established on this foundation

Identification is, therefore, rhetorical in nature. Further, Hall suggests that identification is "…as a construction, a process never completed – always in process," a now-familiar formulation but one that leaves room for resistance against hegemonic ideologies. Still, this is an uneasy space. Reconciling the contradiction between hegemony ideologies and agency is no easy task. However, with Hall's reformulation of the process of constructing identities, that is, through acknowledging the rhetoricity of identity construction, Hall bridges the contradiction.

Similarly, Kenneth Burke links persuasion and identification directly: strategies of identification make persuasion stronger. "Persuasion," says Burke, "in turn involves communication by the signs of consubstantiality, the appeal of identification" (62). Although deciphering that appeal, the work of rhetorical analysis, has been incorporated into both scholarly and pedagogical work within the field of composition and rhetoric, speed culture's influence on identification deserves further interrogation.

For Burke, consubstantiality allows individual identities to exist at the same moment in which they identify with others. Thus, for example, a woman may identify with a high fashion magazine's image of women and yet maintain a self apart from that image. However, certainly, the assumptions underlying those images must be teased out and for Burke this is rhetoric's primary task. How can this argument be complicated within speed culture? What happens to processes of identification – indeed, of identity itself -- when the lightning-quick progress of icons demanding identification goes faster and faster again? As Burke acknowledges,

> The extreme heterogeneity of modern life…brings up another kind of possibility: the systematic attempt to *carve out* (italics his) an audience, as the commercial rhetorician looks not merely for persuasive devices in general, but for the topics that will appeal to the particular "income group" most likely to be interested in his product, or able to buy it (64).

Like Murphy, Burke here refers to the robust power of advertisements. However, the Jessica Lynch story – in which a government agency sought to carve out an

audience for a war declared on the basis of lies, turns an examination of identification down a darker alley, as I demonstrate below. Similarly, the *Intellectual TakeOut* website assumes that through adept identification its ideological agenda may be advanced.

For Burke, this emphasis on carving out audience is representative of modern life – and new--although well--within classical ideas about rhetoric. With the flattening of audience, the broad assumption of consumer identity, the process of carving out audience takes on special import in numerous contexts. I examine the *Intellectual TakeOut* website below as a first case in point.

Takeout Bytes

Intellectual TakeOut is a web project by the Center of the American Experiment, a self-described regional conservative think tank based in Minnesota. Its mission is "to help students respond to the ideological imbalance on their campuses" because, it argues, most college professors identify themselves as left or Democrats (the two terms are used interchangeably) (*Intellectual TakeOut* website).

The TakeOut metaphor pervades the site: a small white carton with a wire handle decorates the left corner of each web page. In other words, students are invited to find information fast, throw it into a metaphorical box, and carry it to class or use it in a paper in order to defeat the biases of their professors. Packaging truth into neat little cartons appeals to students constructed as wired but busy individuals. College students' time is a precious commodity not to be spent on inquiry or in-depth research. This is one-stop shopping: the site banks on students'

familiarity with the metaphor. Drop into the take-out place, get what you need, and drop out.

The value of this packaged knowledge is ultimately economic. The metaphor assumes the exchange of money for the small white carton. Within this metaphor, education is a rite of passage through thickets of wild liberal professors into the real world. Knowledge is a commodity with instrumental worth, arming students so that their instructors cannot frame the debate. Further, the packaged information increases students' market value – their only value – because wielding a plethora of cartons is what matters most in the struggle to take a place in the economic system. The more you have, the better off you will be.

Intellectual TakeOut demonstrates allegiance to the values of speed culture. In other words, it appeals precisely because it offers these values. The words "quick" and "fast" occur on each page of the site: this is what students need. For example, under the topic "Ideas to Go," students read: "Maybe you're online and in class right now. Quick access to arguments is at your fingertips." Knowledge is a weapon in this website, Truth is discernible, a static entity, masked only by the bias of the left. For example, clicking on an "Idea to Go" labeled "The Great Depression," provides students with two views of the depression, one labeled "Liberal View" and the other labeled "Free Market View." The Ideas to Go nugget on Climate Change features the Climate Change crisis view with the Climate Change non-crisis view. The titles of these binary viewpoints make clear which viewpoint deserves serious attention.

Each nugget of information has a footnoted reference yet the incongruity and inconsistencies of the references is startling. For example, a nugget of information about whether Herbert Hoover was a passive or active President, contrasts a snippet from the American Poetry Anthology, representing the liberal view, with a snippet from Paul Johnson, author of "A History of the American People" representing the Free Market View. Belying the claim to accuracy and fairness, the "Ideas to Go" sections also provide a convenient spot for students to quickly lift arguments and paste them into their research papers. After all, the need to fight against liberal bias invites the use of prepackaged Knowledge as the perfect weapon.

This website also exemplifies the key features of reach, anonymity, and interactivity identified by Laura Gurak in her 2001 book, *Cyberliteracy: Navigating the Internet with* Awareness[46]. Reach is represented through a laundry list of universities, their newspapers, events such as the grassroots activism conference which "helps conservatives learn to stop liberals in their tracks."[47] The website represents itself as a portal to Truth free of bias and offers connections all over the United States for students. In an earlier iteration of the website, students could "ask the professor" questions and take surveys about what they most want to learn. How to detect bias – presumably liberal bias—in textbooks was the winner for several months in a row. Now the website offers one-on-one responses to urgent questions from students on the defense. In addition, the site provides interactivity through

[46] For Gurak, these "action terms" include speed and she weights them equally, arguing that some websites may not even demonstrate all of these terms. To the contrary, as I have argued, I see speed as ubiquitous.

[47] This interesting metaphor suggests the animalistic nature of liberals – they are not thinkers but rather creatures who prey on the innocence of students.

email connections and numerous links. There is community here, the web site argues implicitly. We are here to help you maintain your identity in the face of those who try to transform you.

When the website was first constructed, there was no chat room or online blog. Instead, a bespectacled white man in a heavy sweater, with mussed hair and brown pipe, awaited students' questions. He was the "Ask the Professor" icon – the stereotypical nerd. As of April 2009, the "Ask the Professor" icon has been retired and replaced with discussion forums and an online blog. Because interactivity is expected and desired – it is there.

The website is beautiful in design and clean in function. It is easy to drop in and drop out. Students can, as a matter of fact, find fast access to ideologically approved sources. They can also easily locate quotations, primary source material, interviews, and tables and graphs for the ideologically correct argument on the website's April 2009 incarnation. For example, in the "Visit to the Library" section, students researching climate change, the non-crisis viewpoint of course can find a quotation from a scientist about the natural process of climate change, a graph purporting to demonstrate the wild swings typical to the natural process, and a six page analysis of the issue all prepared for rapid digestion. Thus, students' identities are constructed as consumers in need of a quick (if not nutritious) fix. The website instantiates the consumer identity typified by speed culture through its adroit representation of students as fast food patrons. It presumes allegiance to this worldview and as Stuart Hall suggested, this act furthers identification. To borrow from Burke, this becomes identification as consubstantiality because through an

adept application of speed culture's consumer identity to its political purpose, the website appeals and persuades. The term "liberal," for example, has been successfully vexed by the American right-wing politicians and fundamentalist religious leaders. Who identifies themselves as liberal in the twenty-first century?

It takes a Google search outside the site to discover who is funding the website and why. This is deliberate since the website poses as an educational site, free of charge to its hungry audience. However, after many clicks, users can discover the names of the board of directors for the American Experiment: five attorneys and nine corporate representatives. This rhetoric of the *Intellectual TakeOut* website reifies the hegemonic values of the economic system. Its founders, hidden behind many clicks, exemplify the successful member of society, at least as presumed by the website's ideology.

Imageword Considered

Since I first began viewing the site in September 2005, it has increased the number of links and topics exponentially although it never strays from its only theme. Students may select the topic about which they need information and click. Until recently, the site had numerous professionally developed images representative of its worldview.

The visuals defined the terms. History was Columbus' ship sailing into a reddened sky, economy was a stack of hundred dollar bills, and the "Foundations of Liberty" were white columns. Political science was a blurred but orderly crowd with red banners and education a close-up of sharpened colored pencils. There were

associations here that were dependent upon the site's particular ideology, values and purposes. Except for the blurred crowd, the images were empty of humans. They stood for Truth, empty of human contexts and purposes. The visual display was effective, efficient, and chilling. It was copious in its repetition of visual themes: the take-out box for example deployed what Kristi Fleckenstein's imageword. As she explains, "Imagery is the means, perhaps even the dominant means, by which a culture second natures its member, and one way it does so is by inculcating a particular way of seeing (52).

The April 2009 version of *Intellectual TakeOut* radically reduces the use of visuals and no longer has any images at all with humans in them. Instead, the take-out carton has been enlarged four-fold so that the metaphor is difficult to miss. The call to see in a particular way rings even clearer.

This genre of persuasive website targets students and constructs them as resistant to transformation. The visuals tell this story: hundred dollar bills, Columbus, and white columns. They privilege maleness: the college professor is the essentialized geek: male, white, and holding a very big book. Indeed, only one image of a woman



Figure 2: Intellectual TakeOut website image

appeared on the website. a photograph of Rosie the Riveter on the Cultural Studies menu (see figure 2). She is masculinized and obviously anachronistic. The texts referring to feminist arguments describe feminists in the same way:

> Women have made great strides towards achieving true equality with men during the past 50 years. Whether it is education, wages, and eradicating discrimination, young women today are free to pursue their dreams without the fears and barriers that once held women back. Yet, some feminists don't believe we've gone far enough. They seek additional remedies to rectify perceived differences between men and women (*Intellectual TakeOut* Website).

Here the term "feminist" is demonized in the same way that "liberal" has been. They are characterized as wildly radical and anti-American. Moreover, this text espouses a theme typical of the website: discrimination, sexism, and racism are history. The present is stable, just, and fair. If these issues of humanity have been solved, then with what should we occupy ourselves? Personal issues are all that remains and these, thanks to speed culture, are framed as issues of consuming and producing. Education is to be consumed with the aim of creating producing citizens. History, as Guy Debord remarks, is replaced with the lie of the moment. As he argues,

> By the time ideology, become absolute because it possess absolute power, has been transformed from a fragmentary knowledge into a totalitarian lie, truly historical thinking has for its part been so utterly annihilated that history itself, even at the level of the most empirical knowledge, can no

longer exist. Totalitarian bureaucratic society lives in a perpetual present (108).

Intellectual TakeOut's revisionist version of history and casual dismissal of women's rights concerns on a site framed as fair and balanced supports DeBord's argument. It not only annihilates historical inquiry but also denies that history acts upon the perpetual present. That is, history is a faraway bubble floating off into an endless sky, unnecessary and irrelevant.

The spectacle of the website constructs students as complete in themselves. Their identities need protection rather than transformation. *Intellectual TakeOut* offers them nuggets that slide down easily. Analysis is unnecessary. The website's images included at one time the small photograph of a light-skinned black man in the lower left corner. He was riding a bike across a typical campus so quickly that everything was blurred, except for his perfectly ironed, bright white shirt. His presence was the only visual acknowledgment of people of color. Revisionary historical texts dispatch histories of colonization, slavery, and virulent discrimination quickly: that was then, they argue, this is now.

The site's appropriation of liberal and left rhetoric is unapologetic. Rosie the Riveter has been an important feminist symbol. Here she is appropriated and reshaped as a symbol of battles that no longer need be fought. Her mannish profile, over-permed hair, pitted skin and serious expression belong to some other time when women had to act as men. Luckily, those days are gone. Words complement and supplement the image: a recommended text on the site by Steven Rhoads declares that studies show women are actually happier staying at home.

The assumption that students resist transformation saturates the *Intellectual TakeOut* website. It constructs a particular student identity and asks students to identify with its stance based upon the notion that students wish to maintain their ideals, a counterforce to systems which invite or demand critical reflection or re-visioning. Resistance to transformation, this site suggests, enables conservatism.

Therefore, this constructed identity is deliberately singular. Students cannot take on new identities; rather, they can strengthen the one they ought to have. A website's credibility depends upon its being frequently up-to-date with continuous postings, the latest photographs, and newest news. However, the audience itself is fixed in time, as subjects rather than agents. Such websites construct students as static beings for whom transformation is undesired. In fact, if transformation were defined as desirable, this website's rhetorical power would be seriously compromised.

Intellectual TakeOut's assumptions are not idiosyncratic. Students' identities are similarly fixed as consumers at other sites. For example, the *Pick-A-Prof* website offers university students the ability to grade professors according to particular criteria, post those criteria anonymously, as well as sift through the names and ratings of other professors. Unlike most instructor rating sites, *Pick-A-Prof* asks reviewers for specific comments which will be truly useful to students and ranks the reviews accordingly. However, the texts of reviews focus on ease of learning, amount of work, and instructor personality rather than depth of learning or quality of scholarship. Tellingly, the logo for *Pick-A-Prof* enlarges the "A" in the title so

that students are in fact selecting an A Prof. That is, a professor from whom they can garner the all-important A.

The site also claims to post accurate summaries of instructor grades. The grade history bar graph is, in fact, the first information offered about an instructor. Students must click at least once more before they can read reviews. The priority placement of the grade bar graphs reveals what values the website assumes in its visitors: instructors who give plenty of high grades. *Pick-A-Prof*'s true purpose is the commodification of students. It does not mask this purpose:

> *Pick-A-Prof* is now seeking marketing partners whose products and services will genuinely benefit our student members. Over 500,000 students login to *Pick-A-Prof* each semester to design their schedules and review their professors (*Pick-A-Prof* website).

This website, like most websites targeting students, identifies them as consumers. They themselves are commodified because their value lies in their ability to purchase and they are easy targets as they log in to the site in order to find easy professors, generous with A's, and, with any luck, physically attractive as well.[48] The language here present – its persuasive rhetoric – like the *Intellectual TakeOut* website emphasizes identification with education consumption and citizen production – the hegemony of capital.[49]

While sites such as *Intellectual TakeOut* and *Pick-A-Prof* target students by constructing their identities as static consumers, their persuasive power depends

[48] As of November 30, 2006, Facebook, the enormously popular social networking website, has teamed with Pick-A-Prof to provide, in Pick-A-Prof's words, "one-stop shopping" to its target audience: students.

[49] For example the website Rate-A-Prof offers visitors the opportunity to grade physically attractive instructors with a red chili pepper.

upon the rapid dissemination of their messages throughout the Worldwide Web. Thus, the identification itself turns upon circulation as does the construction of multiple identities. Quick-fire circulation is easier and has a longer reach when imageword units burst onto the system than when chunks of text do. (We read and are persuaded more rapidly by imageword than by time-consuming volumes of text.) Imageword therefore becomes even more useful to speed culture's empowerment. A useful example arises from twenty-first century fascination with celebrity culture.

Celebrity Culture Identity/Identification

For Debord, celebrities represent the unattainable whose essence is triviality. Rather than offering the possibilities of different identities, their distance from reality and their lack of substance are panaceas for the spectacle's insistence on image consumption (38).[50] Here identification becomes dangerous. Mark Poster sees celebrity culture fascination as particularly American, emotionally-based, and including not only people but television shows, films, and other cultural objects. I argue that as a consequence of speed, this fascination, and indeed, fetishism of celebrity culture intensifies. As Poster suggests, the conditions for "global cultural transmission" have never been better. The Worldwide Web's global reach allows remix and redistribution but speed ensures its robustness.

Poster tells the story of "Bert Bin Laden." In essence, a photograph of Pakistani militant protestors appeared in the New York Times in 2001. The

[50] Debord refers to "…reality's subsequent conquest by the social consumption of images" (140) and clearly argues against media obsessions with the visual.

protestors carried a poster of Osama Bin Laden and, strangely enough, the Sesame Street character Bert, appeared on the poster peering over Bin Laden's shoulder. Poster traced the photograph and established that the graphics design company who had produced the poster for the protestors, had copied and pasted the photograph from a website titled "Evil Bert." This website, active as a mirror site since December 2008, contains photographs of Bert with evildoers, such as Adolph Hitler and Stalin, as well as transcripts of interviews with personalities like Jeffrey Dahmer and Charles Manson. Clearly a spoof website, the site has numerous web imitators in Europe as well as the United States. Poster takes the website more seriously, however, commenting that its author, artist, Dino Ignacio has a "peculiar, fetishistic attachment" to the Bert figure, typical of Americans immersed in celebrity culture (11-15).

Poster describes his efforts to understand the appearance of Bert on the protest poster, ranging from Islamic friends drawing conclusions based on the positions of the nine images of Bin Laden on the poster to online bloggers arguing that the militants were sneakily protesting American pop culture. He concludes, however, that despite the variety of interpretations, in the end, Bert's appearance was probably unintended – and ignored. He explains, "Evil Bert's digital bytes circumnavigated the globe in a series of misrecognitions, perfect transmissions, confusions, and blends of politics and culture that surely speaks much of our current global culture" (21). He suggests that considering effective methods of interpretation thus becomes even more essential.

Although Poster's argument is sensible, his 2001 Evil Bert anecdote serves as opening act to a phenomenon now universal: the viral transmission or Internet meme. As numerous websites and news articles agree, the neologism meme first appeared in Richard Dawkins 1976 book, *The Selfish Gene* to describe the phenomenon of rapidly spreading cultural ideas, slang, and stories.[51] Through e-mail, YouTube, blogs, and social network websites – in short, through every kind of communication site on the Web – memes race. Their presences, while seemingly evanescent, linger in intertextual traces. They circulate through specific "social practices of propagating," as Knobel and Lankshear explain and represent a new literacy practice (189-190). These memes attract their audiences through identification strategies demonstrating the power, potentials, and constrictions of speed as cultural dominant. Moreover, the varying composing strategies that produce memes suggest novel ways of knowing the world and hint at the potential rhetorical power of new media.

I explore one of the first Internet memes, the Star Wars Kid, below.

The Star Wars Kid meme

"It's no fun what happened here,
but that's the problem with the Internet. Things travel fast."

Jerome Laflamme, speaking about his prank that created the Star Wars Kid.

In April, 2003, four classmates of Ghyslain, a fifteen year old French Canadian tenth grader, discovered a video. Ghyslain had recorded himself twirling

[51] See, for example, "Sunday, January 22, 1995; Meme's the Word." *New York Times Magazine* (22 Jan. 1995): *Academic Search Elite*. EBSCO. U of Oklahoma 11 Dec. 2008 <http://search.ebscohost.com >.

a pretend light saber – in fact, a golf ball retriever – and making Star Wars fight noises. The boys digitized the video and uploaded it to Kazaa, a file-sharing network. Within a staggering two weeks, the video had been downloaded millions of times. Internet denizens redigitized the film to make it "funnier," with Benny Hill soundtracks, flatulence noises, and other amusing sound effects and those copies were posted and downloaded worldwide. By mid-May, Ghyslain was everywhere – and he was humiliated. As Harmon reported, "[t]his one, known now as the Star Wars Kid, has traveled farther, faster and commanded more attention than any in recent memory" (3). Harmon's rhetoric depicts the separation of the human being from the Internet meme, a common motif in the numerous articles written about the Star Wars Kid. This motif has evolved into a generic characteristic in Internet meme descriptions: the subject of the meme becomes instrumental to the speed phenomenon itself.

As numerous news articles attest, Ghyslain stopped going to school within a month. In July, his parents filed suit against the boys who had stolen and uploaded the video ("Star Wars Kid Files Lawsuit"), a suit later settled out of court. Ghyslain himself has been reported on numerous websites, including waxy.org, the first website to host the video, to have been either treated for depression or hospitalized. The particular body of Ghyslain, became the object of ruminations, flames, and sympathetic postings because he fit the generalized identity of the nerd. He wore glasses. He was chubby. He wore a long button-down shirt untucked over baggy pants. He moved clumsily, swung and spun his golf ball retriever and made the swishing sounds of a light saber with enormous earnestness. Internet posters

referred to the video in one of two ways. Either, they made fun of his evident dorkiness, as in one user's comment, "Some of you might be forced to admit the same thing. But there is one important difference between you, me, and this dork. He did it on video" (Felperin 13). Or, they admired his sincerity because they recognized its familiarity: "I personally feel like he is like me and all of my friends, said Andy Baio, 26, a Web developer in Los Angeles" (Harmon 3). Clearly, identification motivated the rapidity of the Star Wars Kid meme. Cynthia Lewis closely links performance and identity and argues that memes perform repeatedly and therefore construct identities efficiently. As she explains, "[M]emes themselves both construct and are constructed by group identities through repeated performances. And again, in this case, the performances are dependent on the intertextual chains that exist through the textual history of the meme" (232). Recognition emerges as a key term: identification narrows to recognition because of repeated performance.

Internet memes are not evanescent for two reasons. First, they recur. This seems paradoxical: the rapid cycle and profusion of memes belies my position here. However, within that exclusive community of the Web with deep access, time moves in waves rather than sequentially. This is not so much the loss of history lamented by Jameson and other postmodernist theorists, but rather new time. Web pages rarely go away. They may be rediscovered. YouTube and similar video sites only purge videos under particular circumstances such as privacy or copyright issues and therefore function as historical databases. The Star Wars Kid meme re-

emerged on one website as recently as December 2008, and posters commented in the same vicious language as they had in 2003:

> *DMACx23 (3 minutes ago)*
>
> *Reply*
>
> *hey if this kid loses some weight he could become the subway guys apprentice stick to world of warcraft and viva pinata and dungeons and dragons there is nothing more homo then swingin a stick around on the internet cuz people are watching the only way it wouldnt be homo is if you were a girl or a baseball player but this is straight up gay ur parents must be proud (http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HPPj6viIBmU).*

The homophobic virulence of the comment is marked. However, I also note that the commenter's chief concern appears to be the fact that Ghislain is in a public space where "people are watching." The repeated, performative aspects of the nerd identity give the commenter license to indulge in hate speech. He assumes that Ghislain has chosen to perform to an Internet audience and only girls and basketball players have this viewer's permission to indulge – an odd mix – that suggests the commenter feels performance should be reserved to those meant to be watched in public spaces. Presumably, the gaze is reserved to the athletic and to objects of desire.

Memes also linger in intertextual traces. Television shows such as *The Colbert Report*, *Family Guy*, *Bart Simpson* as well as T-shirts, websites, text messages, and news media reports deploy both catch phrases and images from memes. Knobel and Lanshear refer to this as "idiosyncratic spins and cite the Star

Wars Kid as well as other early memes, All Your Base and Lost Frog as examples.[52] Composing work, then, especially in the web world, keeps memes alive. The Snakes on a Plane phenomenon also demonstrates this meme characteristic, as I demonstrate below. However, the Star Wars Kid meme lingers because of the particular issues it raises as well.

Ethical concerns are prominent in stories about the Star Wars Kid meme. For example, worries about the ethics of Ghyslain's emergence as the Star Wars Kid led to the elision of his last name from news reports. The concern did not extend to the three boys who uploaded the video, however, and their surnames appear in both web and news texts. In particular, the story of the Star Wars Kid meme became an object lesson about privacy in the age of the Internet. As recently as May 2008, th*e* *London Sunday Times* featured a story titled "A Simple Way to Avoid Being the Next Star Wars Kid," in which Oxford University professor Jonathan Zattran argues for instituting certain web codes so that images are disseminated only with permission of the subject. Zattran suggests that each photograph be anchored to its subjects so they have the power to tag it as private. In other words, the photograph is making an argument about its subject's identity that becomes formative.[53]

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[52] All Your Base refers to a meme begun in 2001 when the beginning of a Japanese video game titled Zero Wing was uploaded to the web. The Japanese was translated into absurdly bad English which included the catch phrase "All Your Base Are Belong to Us" and quickly was remixed into Photoshopped versions of the Hollywood sign, advertisements, and all kinds of documents. The phrase continues to be remixed and reappear including during the Snakes on a Plane phenomenon, with the phrase, "All Your Snakes Belong to Us." The Lost Frog meme occurred when a programmer uploaded a copy of a child's note posted on a Seattle street corner asking for help finding his lost frog and stating his determination to find it. The Lost Frog note was remixed onto official banners, posters, and on sky advertisements and was even remixed into an All Your Base Are Belong To Us remix.

[53] The phenomenon of identity theft, too, argues for the formative power of image, or, as Poster calls it, the materialization of identity. Poster traces the history of the

Once reserved to computer programmers and software engineers, the meme zone represents an important site of social bonding for Internet users. Recognizing catch phrases and the intertextual mixing and remixing of imagetext is essential to entry to the meme zone. It is, as Knobel and Lankshear emphasize, a new literacy in which recognizing and indeed producing effects depends upon an ability for fast humor. This is a version of DeBord's *détournement* in which satire emerges because of and when access to technologies is present. It is dependent on recognizably fixed identities, the nerd, for example, in order for the satire to circulate widely. In sum, identification effects the speedy dissemination of Internet memes, yet speed culture itself effects formative power to the images populating Internet memes. Efficiency, then, marks the process – efficiency notable in the example of the Snakes on a Place phenomenon below.

The Snakes on a Plane Phenomenon

"Enough is enough!
I've had it with these motherfucking snakes on this motherfucking plane,"

Samuel L. Jackson in *Snakes on a Plane.*

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phenomenon of identity theft and notes its relatively new appearance in print culture. He notes that databases do not mention the concept before 1995 and that its prevalence in American culture begins in 2000. Further, he argues that identity theft makes concrete a new duality in definitions of identity: it is both an inner self and all of the information, particularly the numbers (bank and credit accounts, for example) that can be stolen because of networked digital spaces (87-115). Poster's call to theorize and interrogate this move is useful; however, speed's role in this duality is also worth examining. The identification of speed culture citizens as consumers sponsors identity theft, the theft not of the self but of what one possesses.

Efficiency appears, at first glance, to be an unlikely adjective to apply to the recent cultural phenomenon of "Snakes on a Plane." This is a B-film which attracted enormous attention on the strength of neither plot nor character nor winning portrayals by talented actors. Rather, its title alone led to catch-phrases, websites, music, ardent blogging, rapturous fans, and, as of December 2008, over 990 hits on Lexis Nexis.[54] Lyotard describes technology as serving the causes of efficiency or the

> [p]rinciple of optimal performance: maximizing output…and minimizing input (the energy expended in the process)…Technology is therefore a game pertaining not to the "true, the just, or the beautiful, but to efficiency: a technical "move" is "good" when it does better and/or expends less energy than another (44).

Here efficiency marks technology in that the *Snakes on a Plane* phenomenon arises with such minimal input that the phenomenon occurred even before the film was finished. A script doctor who turned the film down referred to the title in his blog. Those four words, a title without finished script, on a networked blog sped through the Internet universe, attracting the excited attention of Internet inhabitants at an exponential rate[55]. The technology's shape and reach, in other words, its mode of organizing social relationships in rhizomatic, infinitely connected nodes permitted the shape and reach of the phenomenon. This technology's shape cannot

[54] The phenomenon occurred on the Internet and newspaper and magazines then swarmed to catch up and give attention to what was happening. This sequence is more and more common, as the Internet not only reports or describes events but is itself the genesis and the form of events.

[55] Googling *Snakes on a Place* hits dozens of sites, all of which more or less agree with the bones of the story I summarize here.

be conceptualized in linear form because it is a network. The decentered nature of networked technology ensures its Lyotardian efficiency.

Participants in the phenomenon attribute its success, and success is here measured by the size and speed of the event, to their own action or agency. When New Line Cinema wanted to change the title of the film to *Pacific Airflight 121*, fans (as well as Samuel L. Jackson the film's star) reacted with horror. New Line not only changed the title back to *Snakes on a Plane*, but also reshot and added some film scenes in order to ensure the film an "R" rating. In other words, the Internet community's views of what the film's title denoted shaped the content of the film. Almost giddy with the speed and circulation of the phenomenon, the world news media, too, jumped into the Snakes on a Plane phenomenon, with headlines such as "The shape of fangs to come? Snakes on a what?" the Daily Telegraph, July 2006, or "Is huge hype the hiss of death for Snakes?" from the Toronto Star. The Sunday Star (April 2006) offered up "Scales of the Unexpected" while the New York Daily News, referring to film star Samuel L. Jackson gave readers, "Wham, Bam – Thank You Sam." The news media here imitates the playful language and punning of the blogosphere, remediating the story through the Web's characteristic discourse.

It is not only large output to minimal input which created this phenomenon, but also the necessary speed which characterizes the Internet and upon which this cultural phenomenon's reach depends. With one click, bloggers can post rants, raves, and demands. With one click, they can sign a petition and send it on to everyone they know. And on they did. Inspired by the absurdity of the concept,

Internet insiders set about composing the film – and New Line Cinema immediately paid attention.[56]

In one sense*, Snakes on a Plane* instantiates Debord's society of the spectacle. The spectacle represents appearance rather than substance and yet that appearance has a concrete reality. As Debord puts it, the spectacle insists "Everything that appears is good; what is good will appear" (15). The *Snakes* phenomenon is pure spectacle, occurring because the idea of snakes on a plane amuses without context or history but simply because four words evoke response. The acronym, SoaP appears in order to evoke quickly the snakes' spectacle on blogs, webpages and in emails. There appears to be no content – only a visual moment flickering across the cultural landscape.

The SoaP phenomenon, which occurred before the release of the film was valued because of the imagined visual spectacle: snakes on a plane[57]. In fact, the phrase itself is meant as an acknowledgment of powerlessness in the face of the inexorable along the lines of "bad stuff happens." Instead, "What are you going to do – snakes on a plane." The slogan is faithful to the spirit of the spectacle in its fatalistic shake of the head and the sense that substance is unnecessary when caught in a speed current.

Paradoxically, however, the Wikipedia website, where anyone can write or edit an entry, includes a long, detailed entry on SoaP which includes a list of the two

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[56] New Line Cinema's responsiveness to the Internet hype directly contrasts with Lotus Corporation's lack of interest in the blogosphere's world described by Laura Gurak in 1997 book, *Persuasion and Privacy in Cyberspace*. As Gurak explains, Lotus's failure to take seriously Internet protests about a proposed product, Lotus Marketplace, ultimately contributed to the product's demise.

[57] According to Wikipedia, this includes the straight-to-DVD release of a parody of *Snakes on a Plane*, titled *Snakes on a Train*, three days *before* the actual release of the film.

or three times when a snake has actually gotten on a plane. The Wikipedia writers, fully aware of the unreality of the film's premise, seek to validate it through anecdotes. The SoaP spectacle becomes more valuable if it has a connection to reality. Yet its value remains dependent on its speed.

Valuing speed ensures the spectacle's continuance because the spectacle operates as part of a process of fragmentation in which the faster the spectacle creates and destroys spectacular objects, the more complete the spectacle's dominance. According to Debord, the process began with the separation of the worker from the means of production. He sees the spectacle as valuing commodity only and therefore issues of substance, what Debord calls "quality" are meaningless.

Debord connects the spectacle to the economy directly: "For the spectacle is simply the economic realm developing for itself—at once a faithful mirror held up to the production of things and a distorting objectification of the producers" (16). The SoaP phenomenon's speedy arrival into popular culture appears as if generated from those outside the production process, isolate from the producers of the film. Undeniably, then, the agency of the bloggers and fans occurs only because the economic realm wishes it. That is, the film's real stakeholders, the owners of New Line Cinema, redesigned their film not for the sake of aesthetics, but rather so that the film might generate higher profits.[58]

Jameson has neatly explicated the ties binding speed to the economic system. Jameson particularly draws attention to the breakdown of barriers between

[58] Although the film has not generated enormous profits as hoped by New Line, its marketing products have. These include a book, a comic book, a CD, posters, and a number of different promotional sweepstakes and contests. In addition, the viral videos and song clips posted by bloggers are to be gathered into a DVD available for purchase through Automat pictures.

aesthetic production and capital and at first glance, this important insight contradicts any claims to agency by the bloggers whose posts influenced New Line Cinema. Still, I argue the phenomenon does not only exemplify the hegemony of capital. SoaP's innovation lies not in its aesthetic content but rather in two things. First, the absurdity of its premise functions as a kind of backtalk to the narratives of terror and war prevalent in this historical moment. Second, the visuals used to promote the film deliberately evoke black male sexuality in hyperbolic stereotypical terms, while the catch-phrase, the epigraph to this section, written by bloggers for the film's star Samuel L. Jackson recalls his roles in other films.[59] In other words, representations of Jackson as black and as aggressive, alpha male, in both text and visuals, mirror stereotype, reduce gender and race to their least complicated, most problematic form. It is a form which sells: it is easily identifiable within the rush of speed culture. I consider this argument more fully; however, after I examine the notion of agency within the spectacle.

The question of agency or the power to operate independent of Althusser's ideological state apparatus emerges as I consider the nature of the SoaP phenomenon. Debord's spectacular vision does allow for the possibility of agency – humans can transcend "…ideas that exist about the spectacle" (143) through long-term, persistent action. Speed easily operates in opposition to this, but *détournement* need not. *Détournement* takes up aesthetic or other elements currently in play and puts them together in a new way. It "[f]ounds its cause on

[59] The phrase was written as a parodic line -- one similar to other roles Jackson has played in films.

nothing but its own truth as critique at work in the present" (146). It is a kind of remix.

Debord appears to assume that détournement effects change because of its existence and because of the potential for re-seeing the world which it allows. This strikes me as shaky ground. If, as Debord, argues, the spectacle is entirely systemic, entirely hegemonic, then how can we know that points of *détournement* do any more than tighten the spectacle's grip by creating an illusion of other-potential? Moreover, Internet memes and the SoaP phenomenon also seem to imply that remixes can rely on humor by invoking stereotypes. How does this operate as transcendental?

SoaP's persuasive appeal suggests that a phenomenon may both deploy *détournement* so that the world can be (re)envisioned and yet also objectify. A rich analytic space, SoaP carries to the furthest extreme the fear narratives now prominent. Snakes are the mindless predators we cannot escape, trapped in the small space of the airplane. They cannot be reasoned with nor can we understand or appreciate their motives. They drop unexpectedly from dark spaces and invade our bodies. They are the terrorists, the pedophiles, the kidnappers and snipers whose narratives people our airways nowadays. SoaP's appeal and timeliness lie in its apt manifestation of *détournement*. In this way its unreality steps us back from what is real in our lives and because we see its truth, we can critique what is in front of us all along: imaginary snakes on the imaginary plane.[60]

[60] Similarly, Teresa DeLauretis argues that academic discourse itself – debates about cultural phenomena for example – can produce altered consciousness. Talking matters (10).

Jameson sees speed as resulting in a loss of historicity and points to the rise of nostalgia – an imaginary relationship between past and present -- with the loss of the past as an inevitable consequence. He cites *American Graffiti* and *Body Heat* as examples of this nostalgia (19-21). SoaP's plot, like every other American blockbuster film, follows the usual nostalgic route to success against the evildoers. In this way, SoaP demonstrates the desire to return to an imaginary past when heroes could outsmart, out-banter, and outfight the bad guys. As Jameson puts it,

> The approach to the present by way of the art language of the simulacrum, or of the pastiche of the stereotyped past, endows present reality and the openness of present history with the spell and distance of a glossy mirage (21).

However, the SoaP phenomenon is not about the film's plot. It took on momentum as it evolved from a textual one-liner into visual panoply. In other words, the gaze or look at the image, what feminist film theorist Friedberg calls, "[t]he increased centrality of the mobilized and virtual gaze as a fundamental feature of everyday life," (4) explains how network speed could aggrandize the SoaP phenomenon. Friedberg arrives at her characterization of the look as both mobilized and virtual through examination of the historical moment in which the gaze became preeminent. The look is mobilized through the movement of the spectator and it is virtual in that it is "[a] received perception mediated through representation" (2). Like Jameson, she particularly stresses the continuing commodification of the image, that is, "[t]he increasing cultural centrality of the image-producing and reproducing apparatuses" (170). In fact, Jameson sees computers and television as

machines of reproduction rather than production (37) as he contrasts them with older technologies, factory machines, silos, and even the great weapons championed by Italian futurist Marinetti in the 30s. However, the composing work created by participants in the SoaP phenomenon demonstrates that the Worldwide web makes the computer a machine of production not merely reproduction.

I argue however that the composing work is not only a demonstration of the possibilities for agency. Texts generally tend to reproduce cultural connotations and beliefs, manifesting dominant thought patterns which have been suggested by all the texts that came before. Indeed, the human desire for familiarity in postmodern times exhibits itself in the repetition of easily recognizable images, expected movie and television plots, and repetitious popular song sounds. In fact, the placement of Samuel L. Jackson as SoaP human icon calls upon markers of race and gender acceptable and pleasing to white America.



Figure 3: Samuel L. Jackson in SoaP

The inserted movie still has been widely distributed in newspapers and on the Internet. Jackson's grasp on the snake is casual. The photograph is framed so that the phallic shape of the snake, its position against Jackson's black leather-clad body, evokes stereotypical black male sexuality. He is, however, connected by

phone to an expert who will, presumably, tell him how to handle the problem. The white phone is familiar and makes the image of Jackson less threatening. His power is mitigated; the gleaming light on his head assures his audience that he is on their side.

The Internet community's play with Jackson's image is intertextual, that is, based upon particular well-known roles, such as Mace Windu in the *Star Wars* series.[61] Jackson is typed within a particular context so that the question of race or difference is erased. Lisa Nakamura argues that issues of race on the Internet and in films are recast in order to ensure what she calls "…cosmetic multiculturalism – a false sense of racial equality" (*Cybertypes* 21). She suggests that the kinds of cybertyping prevalent on the Internet work to shore up white America's standards by rendering minorities as irremediably "other." She prefers the term cybertyping because it captures more accurately the "unique rhetorics of Cyberspace" (*Cybertypes* 27). However, although rhetoric about the Internet emphasizes its wide-open spaces – Nakamura notes the Microsoft advertising slogan, "Where do you want to go today?" as an example – and, indeed, the Internet possesses unprecedented capabilities of global communication. However, its rhetorics, visual and textual, are fixed in familiar contexts.

Nakamura suggests that, "This utopian view of cyberspace as a promoter of a radically democratic form of discourse should not be underestimated" (*Cybertypes* 35), but I argue that this particular view is evident throughout representational mediums. On television and in films, minorities are typed as buddies, sidekicks, or

[61] One widely circulated viral video features a comic's imitation of other stereotypical macho actors trying out for the lead role on SoaP. These include Christopher Walken, Robert DeNiro, and Joe Pesci.

villains and the inscribed characteristics and well-known plots continue the comfortable narrative of hand-holding multiculturalism. There are and have always been exceptions to this general rule, but these are cast as "edgy" or "provocative," duly set apart from the familiar stories which, we understand, are the truth. Moreover, as race is represented visually, it becomes flattened and broadened in a manner similar to the geek in the Star Wars kid meme described above. As Nakamura argues,

> The paradox of digital visuality, a "feature" of the type of broadband infrastructure that we have chosen to develop, is that like cinema it can work to reinstate an understanding of race as always visible and available to the naked eye, a quality to be determined and epistemologically locked down by a viewer rather than understood as contested and contingent (*Digitizing* 207).

In other words, Nakamura explains that the visual representation of race is itself inherently problematic. Missing, however, from Nakamura's useful examination of race on the Internet is an examination and interrogation of speed. What is new is not the typing of race, gender, or class. What is new is speed. Speed allows whiteness more easily to maintain its invisible position as standard. Speed makes the "type" an easier way to communicate.

This image of Samuel L. Jackson is quickly and easily packaged into commodity. For example, just before the movie premiered, New Line Cinema created a website where people could enter their cell phone numbers and receive a recorded phone call from Samuel L. Jackson, warning about the dangers of snakes on a plane. By hyping Jackson's presence in the film and by assuming speedy

circulation of their website, New Line Cinema hoped to increase the buzz – and to cash in.

However, the SoaP phenomenon is not only representative of the power of the spectacle and the logic of late capitalism. Speed is both mode and manifestation of the technologies now available: speed made the SoaP phenomenon possible yet also created a space in which anyone with a camera and a computer could make parody or music or script lines. As a manifestation of invention and imagination, SoaP lingers in popular cultural objects. Like the Star Wars Kid meme, the SoaP phenomenon reappears in popular media and each time a snake really does get loose on a plane – apparently a more frequent phenomenon than one might guess – the event appears in the news. The relationship between an unreal and real event grows increasingly friable.

SoaP complicates processes of identification within speed culture because it demonstrates the ways in which visual markers may become what Fleckenstein defines as a way of seeing. The issue is further complicated when those in power deliberately deploy visual markers in order to satisfy their agendas. New Line Cinema paid attention to the blogosphere and made money on a bad film through adroit marketing. However, the manipulated story of Jessica Lynch, the American girl-hero soldier, demonstrates how powerful interests may use the repetition of visual markers as well as particular cultural values in order to pursue their own ends. By calling on the broadest common narratives in texts and visuals, the Bush-Cheney administration attempted to spin Jessica Lynch into myth and thereby win support for an unpopular war.

Little Jessica Lynch

"She's kind of tiny and she's fragile-looking,
but you know what? Looks are deceiving."

Miriam Duckworth, Jessica Lynch's friend, interviewed on 48 Hours

On April 4, 2003, the CBS television show *48 Hours* reported on the "midnight rescue" of Private First Class Jessica Lynch. Hosted by Dan Rather, the segment interviewed Lynch's parents in order to draw a picture of "little 5'4" spunky Jessi Lynch" before her horrendous capture by Iraqi soldiers and subsequent daring rescue by American Special Forces. "She wasn't going to let them big boys show her up," said her father. Her friend, Miriam Duckworth, provided more details to spunky Jessi Lynch: "She's kind of tiny and she's fragile-looking, but you know what? Looks are deceiving."

48 Hours reports the rescue, "They race through the blacked-out hospital to spirit Jessi from her bed." Brigadier General Brooks explains modestly, "It was a classic joint operation done by some of our nation's finest warriors who are dedicated to never leaving a comrade behind." There are night-vision visuals of the rescue and a green tinge to the film. Through happenstance, it seems, a Special Forces photographer was part of the mission so that the rescue can be televised.

48 Hours goes on to report, "But the joy is tempered with fear." A high school portrait of Jessica Lynch flashes on the screen. She is pretty, petite and blonde. However, she is terribly injured and "[T]here are even reports of torture." In voiceover, medic Sean Galvin tells the audience, "I'm not sure I could have gone

through that. I'm 6'2", 200 pounds, and she's just a little thing." At this point in the program, Lynch has been described as "little" five times. One begins to imagine a woman who is seriously height-deprived. Within the space of ten minutes, Lynch has become the vulnerable little blonde girl, instantly familiar and typed. Identified in this way, she appeals to an audience who does not need to know more than she is a little blonde American girl who is in deep trouble.

Lynch, a Private First Class in the American Army, became an American hero when, according to some sectors in the American media and military, she single handedly held off an Iraqi attack on her convoy, spraying gunfire before wounded and carried off to an Iraqi hospital. Later the army staged a rescue from the hospital, complete with military cameras. The footage soon appeared on network television. In fact, Lynch did not receive her wounds as a consequence of the vehicle's ambush, not gunfire, nor did she pick up a gun during the ambush: she was terribly injured when her vehicle crashed. The hospital had no Iraqi soldiers when the American military swarmed it and the Iraqi nurses and doctors were giving Lynch the best possible care. The speedy dissemination of the hero narrative was cynically arranged through government and military efforts: the story's later debunking occurring in the flash of an instance while the image of the little blonde solder-girl hero lingers. Common to both narratives: Lynch as blonde icon in need of our sympathetic gaze. She needs our help.

The story begins on March 23, 2003 when as *48 Hours* reported "an intense firefight" erupted between Iraqi soldiers and a military convoy. Five soldiers were paraded on Al Jazeera television, faces terrified, hands bound. Although three

female soldiers had been part of the convoy, Jessica Lynch received the most media attention. Native American Lori Piestewa, died in the crash and her identity in the prevalent narratives over the next few months was "Jessica's best friend." Indeed, a CNN photograph of Jessica Lynch at training camp was actually cropped from a photograph of Piestewa and Lynch, side by side and grinning together.

Similarly, African American Shoshona Johnson was one of the five POWS yet received minimal attention in the narratives. In fact, photographs of a terrified and beaten Johnson, along with her equally terrified and beaten comrades appeared but neither with the frequency nor on the variety of media and Internet sites that photographs of Jessica Lynch did.

The speed with which the little blond hero was turned into commodity is extraordinary. On April 2, 2003 Jessica was rescued by a combination of Navy Seals, Marines, Special Operations, Army Rangers and Air Force (Sipress A30). On April 4th, *48 Hours* told her story on network prime television. On May 9th, the Iraqi doctor who reported Lynch's hospital location to the American military had a book deal and by June 19th, the New York Times was reporting that CBS through its parent company Viacom was offering Lynch a combined book deal, movie, and interview package. Lynch remained in the hospital for several months but the commodity train continued to speed up even when on June 30th, New York Times reporter Nicholas Kristof, among others, began to report on the numerous falsehoods and distortions of the Lynch story ("Saving Private Ryan"). Finally, Lynch herself came forward that summer, bravely descrying the hero narrative. However, the narrative lingers still.

There are in total 532 news items available through the Lexis Nexis database on the topic of Jessica Lynch. Most were published between April and November. November is when the made-for television film "Saving Private Jessica Lynch" appeared on CBS. The reference to the film "Saving Private Ryan" is purposeful. The film features little blonde Meg Ryan as the troubled and ultimately betrayed hero-leader, arguably the archetype for the creation of Lynch's narrative.

The day after Lynch's purported rescue, Slate magazine columnist Eugene Volock responded negatively to a reader's question about whether or not Lynch "owned" the rights to her life story. This curious moment suggests that agency itself is compromised when an individual's story draws public attention.

The icon of the blonde hero is not unusual in American culture and the fascinated attention of Americans on Lynch is unsurprising. Her body belongs to the public eye; and is the capital with which she pays. She needs saving. But the body of Jessica Lynch was supposed to be political capital for the United States government. It was, as Frank Rich put it, "[a] gauge of the hubris by which those at the top have lost the war in the international and domestic courts of public opinion" (12). However, the speed with which those in power went about manufacturing a heroine and the almost instantaneous penetration of the narrative into American homes suggests, as Debord puts it, "[T]he loss of quality, so evident at every level of the language of the spectacle, from the objects it lauds to the behavior it regulates, merely echoes the basic traits of a real production process that shuns reality" (26).

I argue then that the spectacle waits for heroes, manufactured or not, to commodify as part of a perpetual cycle. Similar to the SoaP phenomenon, girl-hero Jessica Lynch, little and blonde, was typed. Tucker and Walton propose that Lynch was further typed as Appalachian or a kind of coal miner's daughter who succeeds despite all odds. They argue that she represented "the authentic American amid the inauthenticity of invented arguments about weapons of mass destruction" (324). In effect, through repetition of particular tropes and through calling upon widely valued narratives, both media and government placed Lynch as symbol of identification with all things American. This is a call to unit in a common cause, the rescue of an American girl-hero, whose fabricated identity reifies a political agenda.



Figure 4: Lynch's Rescue

The photograph on the left appeared on television, in newspapers, and still features prominently in a Google image search for Jessica Lynch. Taken as Lynch was carried from the hospital, her small blonde head is framed by the uniformed bodies of her rescuers. She is pale, in pain, yet smiling bravely. The American flag in the corner appears larger than her head; it could envelope her easily. The flag is placed on Lynch to give her comfort: the patriotic girl who sprayed gunfire from the hip feels better now. This gentle hero has done everything she could have done and now is borne into the air by the men who have rescued her from a terrible fate. She is the

archetypical female hero, ultimately in need of rescue once her natural fragility kicks in. Jessica Lynch is carried away in a Black Hawk helicopter, as if she were in the movies.

Heroes are useful types: they are the good guys who sacrifice themselves for the sake of the community. The cultural emphasis on heroes is easy to spot: CNN, for example, just completed a yearlong search for heroes that ended with a gala awards banquet featuring the ordinary heroes alongside numerous celebrities. The categories for heroes included "Defending the Planet", "Fighting for Justice", "Community Crusader," "Medical Marvel," "Championing Children" and "Young Wonder." The rhetoric of the categories themselves reassures the audience that heroes *fight* for right in all of these categories. This trope, the hero as lonely antagonist, serves a nation at war very well. Moreover, the idea that one hero per category can effect change is seductive. But what happens to democratic participation when heroes are celebrated as change-makers? Paradoxically, speed spectacle demands the instant identification of heroes and half a minute later, their fall. Therefore, systemic change – inevitably the product of long negotiation and work grinds more and more slowly while heroes burst forth, shine, and die.

Speed spectacle insists upon the triumph of the individual as the primary good – negating the possibilities of community and network action while, paradoxically, dependent upon the speed of community action to exist at all. Moreover, because heroes must ascend and descend so rapidly, stereotypical heroes dominate: flat characters whose representations fit the normalizing gaze in which hegemonic ideologies dominate.

Lynch's body is not her own, but belongs to the media gaze. This woman, a vision from the spectacle, represents a particular pattern within the speed spectacle and her story, then, important to interrogate . The story uses the identification tropes in order that it may be quickly digested and quickly accepted. The attention to the one-dimensional that marks this aspect of speed spectacle can also be remarked in the so-called rise of the image. Community as actor is elided and agency itself, although celebrated each time a new hero is raised up, may be compromised.

An insistence on self-sacrifice and individual loss of innocence benefits the system: communities mourn the drug death of actress Anna Nicole while enraptured by the spectacle of her body as public domain. Those in power are fully aware of the benefits of making heroes, as the story of Jessica Lynch demonstrates. The hero is commodity, necessary to the continuance of speed spectacle.

James Berlin warns: "[i]n this age of spectacle, democracy will rise or fall on our ability to offer a critical response to these daily experiences." (57) Jessica Lynch offered a critical response in a congressional hearing, refusing the narrative that had painted her as girl-hero and offering thanks to her comrades whose deaths had been made invisible because of the girl-hero story. However, the photograph of her rescue continues to circulate and an effective critical response to it depends upon inquiry into the contexts of its production.

Identification and speed culture

The *Intellectual TakeOut* website, Star Wars Kid meme, Snakes on a Plane phenomenon, and Jessica Lynch story suggest ways in which identity and identification are complicated within speed culture. Each represents important sites of analysis. Identifying the threads binding these phenomena together not only reveals how speed culture is constructing identity but also reflects the threads needing interrogation in order to achieve authentic critical responses in the twenty-first century. Because of speed's presence, literacies themselves evolve. How does speed affect literacies? I turn to this question in the next chapter.

Chapter Four

Speed-Sponsored Literacies in the Age of Writing

*AP can change your life…**Why Participate?***
With 37 courses and exams across 22 subject areas,
AP offers something for everyone.
Here are just a few reasons to sign up:
Gain the Edge in College Preparation…
Get a head start on college-level work

("About AP" College Board website on Advanced Placement Testing)

~

Grow a Site. Grow a Community.
At Webs, we provide all the tools you need
to create a professional-looking website in just minutes.
Add a blog, forum, calendar, photo gallery, video gallery and much more.
Want to turn your site into a social network? No problem!
You also have the ability to add members and create personal profiles
so you can turn your site into a community
where friends, colleagues and family can connect and collaborate.

("Explore: Features" Webs website)

The epigraphs above illustrate competing visions of literacy, which inhere to speed culture. In this chapter, I demonstrate their prominence and argue that their differences are best explained through careful examination of their entanglement within speed culture. United States government policies such as the No Child Left Behind Act and dominant institutions like the College Board promote a literacy suffused with the logic of the market, where clock time, the inexorable rush of minutes, hours, days, and years, is commodified. Therefore, sprinting at the continuously increasing speed of the clock sponsors a literacy measured through quantified individual assessments. In this zone, the valence of literacies is always

measured, always individual, and always clock time dictates. But this is not the only zone emerging within speed culture.

In contrast to literacies informed by the logic of the market, emerging with startling frequency, appeal, and reach, are literacies that, as Kathleen Blake Yancey argued in her 2004 CCCC Chair's address, are kairotic and significant, for,

> Never before has the proliferation of writings outside the academy so counterpointed the compositions inside. Never before have the technologies of writing contributed so quickly to the creation of new genres. The consequence of these two factors is the creation of a writing public that, in development and in linkage to technology, parallels the development of a reading public. And these parallels, they raise good questions, suggest ways that literacy is created across spaces, across time (430-431).

Facebook, My Space, Webs, Twitter, Wikipedia and the various blog programs typify these literacies. They are mediated through the Worldwide Web and suffused with the logic of the network. However, I propose that these literacies not only show their emergence across time and place, but also subordinate the clock. Moreover, although I recognize their imbrication within speed culture, I argue that speed within these contexts affords the possibility of the subordination of clock time measurement. Further, a significant effect of the logic of the network is these literacies' dependence upon community and interaction, which de-emphasizes the overall dominance of the individual focus.

Both understandings of literacy deserve interrogation and deciphering their place in the writing classroom is this chapter's final objective. I argue against the

literacy crises so frequently discovered by the popular press and see speed as the common ground between these dual visions of literacy. However, although the work of this chapter is to uncover the differences between the kinds of literacy practices informed by the logic of the market in contrast to those informed by the logic of the network, I do not claim the boundaries between the two to be rigid. Indeed, a literacy practice may resist the market's hegemonic presence in one moment and yield to it in the next. Nevertheless, tracing the broad outlines of key differences provides important insight into twenty-first century composing. Important to this argument is an understanding of how and why literacy practices have been sites of conflict and contestation. I begin, therefore, with a brief discussion of the historical context.

The age of illiteracy

Concerns about "why Johnny can't write" and an apparent age of illiteracy among young people have appeared over and over since the creation of the American university system in the mid-19th century, beginning with Harvard University's development of an entrance examination in 1874.[62] As Robert J. Connors describes, the development of the entrance examination was quickly followed by the creation of freshman composition courses as horror-struck administrators and faculty as well as the public suddenly became convinced that their entering students could not write (″Overwork/Underpay"109).[63] The Harvard entrance examination tested students' ability to analyze literary passages and to

[62] The phrase "Why Johnny Can't Write" comes from a 1975 Newsweek cover story.
[63] For a similar history, see also James Berlin, *Rhetoric and Reality* and Sharon Crowley, *Composition in the University*.

correct poorly written sentences -- skills that do not, in fact, reveal much about writing ability (Goggin 20). Nevertheless, when more than half of the entering students failed, the first literacy crisis arose.

Two beliefs fueled this first outcry over young people's illiteracy. First, educators and soon the public came to believe that high schools ought to prepare students for college-level writing: failure to do so was a mark of poor high school teaching. The study of writing was thereby relegated to the status of secondary skill – something to be mastered before true academic work at the university. The second belief was that good writing consisted of correct style. Therefore, as James Berlin explains,

> The work of the writing teacher is to teach the transcription process, providing instruction in arrangement and style – arrangement so that the order of experience is correctly recorded, and style so that clarity is achieved and class affiliation established (*Rhetoric and Reality* 26-27).

This epistemological argument does not acknowledge inquiry and was meant to engender writing that fit a conservative and static model, one whose rules were determined by stakeholding elites. Then as now, elite institutions privileged the dominant discourses of the day. As Berlin suggests, these beliefs continue to circulate widely – part of the epistemological stance of current-traditional rhetoric. This stance pronounces truth as objective and static and therefore knowable through scientific method. It is free of ideology and language must be selected carefully in order to adhere to accepted standards that derive from the dominant class (*Rhetoric and Reality* 7-9). Because objective Truths are, by definition, measurable, this

epistemological stance favors testing. Moreover, it allows the paradoxes of testing, its ideological contingencies, to be easily elided. Thus, for example, because tests themselves are inviolate, they are less likely to be evaluated for bias even when empirical evidence shows that a particular group fails the test at a surprisingly high rate.

Significantly, the ability to pass an examination was necessary in order for students to be judged as literate at the university – a pattern still prevalent in the 21st century American educational system. Similarly, conclusions drawn on the basis of the examination results reveal startling shortcomings, just as conclusions drawn from twenty-first century testing practices do. In her history of the field of composition, Goggin notes the "paradoxical" nature of the Harvard Assessment Committee's assertions about their examinations. The Committee used data from 450 in-class essays in order to arrive at its conclusions about the nature of secondary school training yet insisted that the essays revealed an illiteracy abyss even though they found those essays to be valuable sources of information about secondary schools. That is, even though the essays communicated very well, they were judged as evidence of illiteracy. The Committee insisted that English composition courses, remedial in purpose, would bridge the abyss, yet considered neither their own lack of experience in composition courses nor the differences in training between first-year students. Moreover, no correlation appeared between students who passed the examination and the kind of writing education they had received (19-22). In other words, the examination itself was privileged with neither analysis of the stakeholders' ideological purposes nor critical reading of the test itself. The

stakeholders at Harvard University, as well as other elite institutions that quickly followed Harvard's lead, consisted of faculty and administrators who saw the analysis of their designated classical texts as representing a higher order of thought. Berlin's definition of current traditional rhetoric as "the rhetoric of the meritocracy" describes equally well the focus on examination -- and testing (35).

The rhetoric of literacy crises has been persuasively described by John Trimbur, who notes,

> However, it is not deteriorating educational standards or the needs of a new high-tech postindustrial economy that have put literacy in crisis but the appropriation of literacy by a stratified educational apparatus and the wider, meritocratic order of a credential society (294).

Trimbur identifies a discourse of crisis which first appeared in 1975 with the Newsweek cover story claiming to explain, "Why Johnny Can't Write," and which has tended to appear historically whenever cultural stakeholders feel at risk. Thus, as Trimbur traces, an influx of immigrants in the 1840s led to crisis (277-295). In the present, the terms "literacy" and "crisis" have been so bound together that it is rare to read a newspaper article on the topic of literacy that does not mention a crisis.

The illiteracy (re)crisis obfuscates an essential question. What is literacy? The best answer is "it depends," for, as Cyrus Knoblauch points out, "Literacy is a mischievous concept" (74).

Literacy's meanings

Knoblauch, as well as numerous other literacy theorists, persuasively demonstrate that literacy is not ideologically neutral since social, political, and economic forces – and those to whom those forces give power – the stakeholders -- influence how it is defined. Berlin's examination of epistemological stances provides focus to the question of the meaning of literacy. Within current-traditional rhetoric, literacy is utilitarian. The ability to read and write is directly connected to individuals' identities as contributors to the economic system. Knoblauch, for example, describes functional literacy in terms of, "its appealingly pragmatic emphasis on readying people for the necessities of daily life – writing checks, reading sets of instructions—as well as for the professional tasks of a complex technological society" (75). Writing within functional literacy follows sets of rules and formulae: first, do this. Next, do that.

Similarly, Berlin argues that emphasis on the modes such as description, narration, or comparison and contrast arises from current-traditional rhetoric. Current-traditional rhetoric's focus on language then emphasizes a positivistic approach in which rhetorical contexts disappear.[64] Within this paradigm, the rules of language and the definition of the literate citizen do not flex -- a peculiar approach to the issue of writing within speed culture. Even though speed functions as a cultural dominant, information bytes and visual rhetorical objects whizzing by, even though language itself is clearly adapting at breakneck pace, literacy, as understood in arenas of policy-making and legislating, seems caught in stasis.

[64] First-year college students who have been trained to avoid the use of "I" in academic discourse have, in fact, been indoctrinated into the current-traditional rhetorical stance and exemplify the continuing foregrounding of scientific method as the most accurate way to deploy language in any situation.

Although careful and important scholarly work on literacy studies has been and continues to be created, the American educational system continues to fail to take it into account. Noted scholars such as Peter McLaren and Harvey Graff have remarked on the gap between scholarly work on literacy and its application in the educational system for the past thirty years (ctd. in Tyner 31-33). To the contrary, empirical research and historical research have plainly demonstrated the changing nature of literacy, not only over the span of decades but also within an individual's lifetime.

For example, Deborah Brandt's carefully researched *Literacy in American Lives* details the rapidly evolving changes in defining the literate citizen through her ethnographic case studies providing strong empirical evidence of her thesis. Brandt surveyed 80 Americans' literacy histories across generations, social classes, races, and genders, noting the ways in which literacy as a resource changed enormously. In particular, she connects rapid technological, social, and economic changes to the ways in which literacy is continuously redefined. Brandt's work along with that of Brian Street empirically demonstrates the contingent nature of literacy, yet it remains curiously sequestered from U.S. education policies and initiatives.

Instead, literacy crises continue to arise. For instance, the 2006 Secretary of Education, Margaret Spellings, produced a widely-circulated report on the state of post secondary school education in the United States which, among other findings, decried the decrease in the literacy rate in American adults based on the 2003 findings of the National Assessment of Adult Literacy (29). According to its website, the National Assessment of Adult Literacy bases its conclusions upon

functional literacy only. It measures three kinds of literacy: prose, document, and quantitative, all forms of functional literacy closely linked to the demands of capital, yet denoted as outside of ideology. [65] The gap between scholarly and government policy makers' understandings of literacy invites further investigation but is beyond the scope of my argument here.

In contrast, Brandt, like Knoblauch, sees literacy as contextual – a resource that cannot be analyzed without consideration of the social, political and economic forces affecting its use. Meeting the accepted standards for literacy gives power to individuals across social, political and economic realms. For example, Brandt cites the numerous studies demonstrating that a correlation between literacy practices in the home and in the workplace/school means an increased ability to negotiate complex tasks demanding literacy; not surprisingly, middle-class families are more likely to show this correlation (26-27). Families whose literacy practices differ tend to be working class, a finding that resonates with my description of technology access gaps in chapter two.

Brandt's definition of literacy as resource underscores the power literacy confers upon the designated literate. Literacy gives the ability to transcend identities and move fluidly between personal and communal spaces. From where does literacy as resource emerge? That is, as Brandt puts it, who or what are the sponsors of literacy? Literacy sponsors

[65] The National Assessment for Literacy gives examples of each of the three forms it deems important that demonstrate the link between capital and literacy: for prose literacy, it includes brochures and instructional materials; for document literacy, it includes payroll forms and transportation schedules; and for quantitative literacy, it includes balancing a checkbook and figuring out a tip. Apparently excluded from attention are researching and synthesizing sources, evaluating a political speech, and critiquing the logical argument of an advertisement.

> [a]re delivery systems for the economies of literacy, the means by which these forces present themselves to – and through – individual learners. They also represent the causes into which people's literacy usually gets recruited. Sponsors are a tangible reminder that literacy learning throughout history has always required permission, sanction, assistance, and coercion or at a minimum, contact with existing trade routes (17).

The technology explosion of the Information Age sponsors digital literacies and, as Brandt argues, the communication revolution in technological society suggests that the speed of change in literacy continues to increase exponentially (24). I argue that the cultural dominance of speed is producing formidable effects on literacy and on the necessary conditions for literacy learning. I propose that parsing the correlations between speed culture and literacy – and considering the implications for composition and rhetoric pedagogy – is a daunting yet essential project whose outlines I trace in the remainder of this chapter.

American culture privileges speed-sponsored literacies, speed literacy, without explicit acknowledgment. The hegemonic yet invisible hand of speed is apparent in government initiatives meant to improve schools, educational agendas meant to improve student success rates, and in the rapid appearance and profusion of new modes of composing. Paradoxically, despite their similar close relationship to speed culture, the first two categories do not notably interact with the third; that is, even though new modes of composing are celebrated and studied in scholarly fields such as composition and rhetoric, communication, and psychology, only the elite institutions, privately funded schools, and wealthy communities actively

engage with these composing modes. In fact, at a moment in time when new literacies are developing, expanding their reach, and when composing work occurs in more and more private and public spaces, we have another literacy crisis. [66] Powerful ideological frameworks explain this paradox: Burkean terministic screens that sift and shape perception. The American educational system values literacies informed by the logic of the market.

I turn first to a government initiative, No Child Left Behind, developed in response to the inequalities of the American educational system. Its most powerful screen: the belief in continual technological progress.

No Child Left Behind: an approach

Westerners believe in technological progress. This belief constitutes an essential strand in the dominant values of the "ideological state apparatuses" identified by Althusser: religious, educational, familial, legal, political, communications, and cultural (1489). [67] Interrogating ideological strands is essential work. For example, Selfe describes how the Clinton administration linked technological literacy to education, economic security, and competitiveness (123). Selfe demonstrated that the administration successfully indoctrinated political, cultural, educational, and familial domains with this ideology specifically because westerners believe in technological progress. As numerous thinkers have pointed

[66] As Kathleen Tyner has pointed out, "[t]he current impetus for changing definitions of literacies is a wide perception of roiling institutional change brought about by technology" (64). See also Stuart Selber's *Multiliteracies for a Digital Age* and Hawisher, LeBlanc, Moran and Selfe's *Computers and the Teaching of Writing in American Higher Education, 1979–1994: A History* for work on rapidly changing understandings of literacy.

[67] Written over thirty years ago, Althusser's seminal work has been critiqued, extended, and problematized variously; however, the ISA / RSA constructs remain foundational.

out, the belief in technological progress clouds interrogations of technologies. It assumes that science and technology are free agents, independent of politics and, indeed, ideology. The assumption, moreover, elides the essential critical questions: who is using the technology, how are they using it, and for what purposes?

This question gains importance when viewed through the speed culture lens. The belief in technological progress inspires the rhetorical marketing strategies of educational testing companies, as the above epigraph demonstrates. Not only does testing become privileged, then, but also because speed culture citizens are consumers first and foremost, tests serve the needs of the market. In fact, I argue that forcible boundary blurring between schools and businesses has evolved testing culture so that instead of the 1874 model in which some elite institutions used tests as gatekeeper, the United States government has enacted a law meant to enforce testing as governmental policy.

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) is a case in point.

On January 8, 2002, President George Bush signed the "No Child Left Behind" Act into law. According to the U.S. Department of Education's website, the Act's purpose is to increase school accountability, reduce the achievement gap, and give parents choices if schools fail to meet specified goals. These measures were to make education possible for every American boy and girl Then U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige supplied a foreward to the overview of the NCLB in which education was explicitly linked to economic prosperity:

> The Founding Fathers were correct: Education is necessary for the growth and prosperity of our country. As education has become more inclusive and of better quality, it has enhanced American economic and political leadership (NCLB website).

Education has no humanistic gravitas in this formulation; it is, rather, defined as good when it grows the economy and supports political leadership. Accountability and reduction of the achievement gap became key terms and since the dominant epistemological stance determines that and how these terms be measured, testing technologies have been privileged. As a result, the NCLB has redefined education through its deployment of testing technology to encode human beings.

The use of the term code is here worth further discussion. Aronowitz remarks that "Modern science demarcates itself, not by reconstituting the object but by defining rationality in a specific way" (8). Only those who know the code – particular elite – can read it.[68] Thus, NCLB codes, manifest in mathematical formulae or images which refer to those formulae, along with language which calls upon scientific findings based on mathematical formulae, define the rational world. The selling of the NCLB depends upon this. I expand my analysis of how NCLB codes educational success through an examination of the U.S. Education Department's persuasive tactics in selling NCLB.

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[68] Carey Jewitt proposes the term "semiotic resources" in lieu of code because it more fully acknowledges the dialectic process of meaning making. I use the term code because in the case of testing technologies, those in power assign meaning based on their ideological goals. Individuals have no say in the process and the process of making meaning is constrained (19-20).

Selling No Child Left Behind

Rocked by scandal, underfunding, and state dissension, the NCLB has been wildly controversial since 2002. Within NCLB's first two years, over thirty states sought to change its rules, and the National Teacher's Union as well as some school districts and the state of Connecticut sued the Department of Education. Alarmingly, in early January 2005, the government's need to sell the Act led the Department of Education to pay a supposedly neutral news commentator $240,000 to write supportive articles. The news broke first in USA Today and appeared the following day in the New York Times, Washington Post, and London Guardian, among other news sources. Armstrong Rogers, a conservative radio host, later admitted his misdeed, was duly pilloried in the press and as of 2008 is back reporting and broadcasting. Villains are quickly forgiven within speed culture.

In its first incarnations, the NCLB website, created by the Department of Education as its primary information source, used a combination of images, including advertising images and graphs, and texts, including polemics and statistics, in order to sell its program.

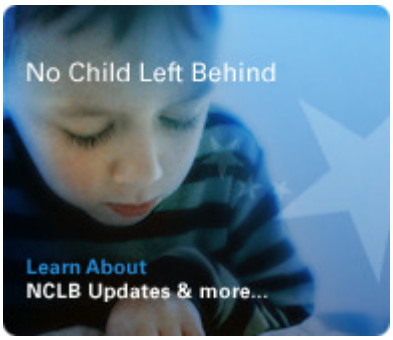


Figure 5: NCLB Website in 2006

The image in Figure 5 appeared in the upper right hand corner of each web page. Its meaning was evident: the child in the foreground, the American flag at his back. The star's tip touches the child, pointing towards the invisible book he reads. The stripes on the child's shirt mimic the unseen stripes of the flag. This boy is studying hard and he will not be left behind. The top of the

website includes an unfurling American flag and the color scheme, red, white and blue, hammers the point home: American excellence in American education. Excellence rhetoric, straight out of the business world, underscores capital's reasons for promoting education. Excellence is an achievement based on competition: it is denoted as both quantitatively measurable and a finite goal. Excellence appears as the objective for every NCLB-sponsored initiative and is unquestionable. It is the consistent theme for NCLB, even when the website itself has been restructured and even with the election of President Obama, whose campaign and presidency have been based on the appeal of change.

As of 2009, except for the inescapable image of the American flag, other images have disappeared from the NCLB website. Instead, the site has been constructed with white backgrounds and text-heavy pages reminiscent of an official and sanctioned document. However, the appropriation of market-friendly language has increased, as have the repetitions of the key terms. For example, in the FAQ section, a response to a question about what is gained through state assessments asserts that "A key principle of quality management is the importance of measuring what is valued (e.g., production rates; costs of materials, etc.)." According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the term "quality management" first appeared in a statistics textbook as a subheading and was used in 1994 in reference to health services organization management. Quality management has become a market mantra: business schools teach courses on the topic and managers may be

certified for it. It follows principles of efficiency.[69] The Free Management Library, an online database for businesses and organizations, defines total quality management or TQM as

> [a] set of management practices throughout the organization, geared to ensure the organization consistently meets or exceeds customer requirements. TQM places strong focus on process measurement and controls as means of continuous improvement.

In the case of current educational policies, students are customers, testing is process measurement, and the unwavering belief in technological progress assures that better test-taking skills are evidence of continuous improvement. NCLB's choice of language exemplifies these (re)definitions. The words "measure" or "measurement" appear on page after page on the site as well as reference after reference to standards and evidence-based teaching practices.

I do not here argue that these terms are meaningless or that they completely lack applicability. However, their ideological framework, their terministic screen, insists that the methodologies of the science and the ideologies of the market provide the best way to understand educational objectives and issues. Traub notes that "The idea that pedagogy ought to aspire to the condition of science or even social science, is quite novel" (24). Since the phrase "scientifically based research" appears over 100 times within the NCLB, clearly those in power consider "science" to be the most persuasive rhetoric possible. Scientific testing determines whether or not students are learning, teachers are teaching, and schools are failing. The

[69] Here "quality" connotes a meaning entirely different from DeBord's sense. For DeBord, quality has been lost because in the spectacle, images mediate relationships between people. For quality managers, efficiency trumps all other concerns.

NCLB will provide report cards on every school "highlighting success and shining a light on failure," ("Facts about Measuring Progress" online poster). This curiously inept metaphor assumes that Americans schools have previously labored in darkness. Moreover, testing – a neutral and infallible tool – will "gather specific, objective data through tests aligned to standards and use that data to identify strengths and weaknesses in the system." Interestingly, the NCLB act invokes testing both to display the failures of students and schools and to save them. Within the culture of speed, the efficiency of testing, where a student cohort can be secured in a room for a specified amount of time, and a machine can score examinations and produce results rapidly, ensures the viability of NCLB and reifies the objective of excellence.

The technology of testing presents itself as without ideology. This is convenient since the NCLB asks each state to determine its own standards and select or design its own test (which must be approved by the Federal Department of Education). The neutrality of the tool ensures that no questions will be asked about ideological assumptions. Kurt Landgraf, President and CEO of the Educational Testing Service, said exactly this as he argued for the NCLB in 2001: "Standardized testing is merely a tool" and a "high quality standardized test" ensures accountability. The State's insistence on an increase in testing and the success of services such as ETS suggests that Landgraf speaks from a position of advocacy. Landgraf was interviewed on NPR's "Talk of the Nation" in 2001 along with the then-President of Achieve, an advocacy organization dedicated to improving school standards. Achieve's major contributors include the Gates

Foundation, Intel, IBM, and a variety of insurance companies. Thus, when Achieve's Board Members speak of "restoring America's competitive edge," they are major stake holders who seek explicitly to commodify education (Achieve.org website).

In its first website incarnation, the NCLB website offered three links to achievement beneath the "Stronger Accountability Link": one on African Americans, one on Hispanics, and one on Native Americans. Each page included a bar graph of reading and mathematics proficiency for fourth graders. A white bar showed the level for whites; a dark bar showed the level for the race under consideration. The phrase "soft bigotry of low expectations" appears over and over. On each page, the same causal leap,

> [T]he president is committed to attacking the achievement gap, not hiding it within school or statewide averages. That's why he wants each school to examine achievement every year in third through eighth grades by race, ethnicity, economic background, and disabilities. That way we won't leave any group or child behind.

The gap between assessment and action is not addressed; the test itself will solve the problem.

Thus, through testing, no one is left behind. Level bars across the proficiency information graphs will demonstrate excellence. Difference, now demonized, will be erased. Achievement tied to testing success insists on uniform ideals. Proficiency measured is defined particularly, but not interrogated. For example, does the test reflect the language and culture of the students? Moreover,

attention to leveling the bar graphs reduces attention to numerous other questions. Why are so few fourth graders proficient? Why is one testing company's proficiency measurement more compelling than another's? Why is achievement measured in terms of this particular test's definition of proficiency?

In the website's 2009 incarnation, the bar graphs demonstrating achievement gaps have disappeared. Instead, bulleted lists explain that due to NCLB, Hispanic, African American, and Indian children are showing gains: that is, they make more points on the tests than they used to. These strategies are meant to ensure excellence, a term astutely interrogated by composition scholars such as Patricia Harkin and Christopher S. Carter. Harkin explains, "[T]he *empty* signifier excellence becomes necessary only in a culture in which somebody wins because somebody else loses" (37). I see excellence in this context to be intimately linked to the capitalist economic system. Ironically, excellence, as appropriated by NCLB, is supposed to guarantee homogeneity of achievement and declares achievement in all contexts by all individuals as empirically measurable.

Carter demonstrates the intimate connection between the rhetoric of excellence and accountability. As I have described, calls for excellence and accountability characterize NCLB's rhetorical strategies, and, as Carter points out, this rhetoric both demands attention to winning and privileges the dominant class. Carter argues that this rhetoric is a feature of "[t]he hegemony of standardization and surveillance [that] interpellates subjects who either endorse their answerability to capital or who cannot build enough collective traction to alter the direction of accountability" (44). The surveillance mechanisms of the NCLB instantiate

Carter's argument. That is, NCLB-sponsored testing culture, feeds the profit lines of educational testing companies, drives teaching work, and measures and defines students, a rapid whirlpool of speed-driven relationships, which nourish capital efficiently.

However, I aim to complicate the issue further. The tests and interventions themselves are suspect. As states have rushed to meet abstract federally-mandated standards, corrupt educational testing corporations have emerged whose products sell because they claim to meet NCLB standards. In other words, the repetition of the NCLB rhetoric, substanceless, is persuasive. Bush called for testing in order to improve the perceived educational gap and achieve accountability and excellence. Companies similarly claim their products help students achieve excellence and persuade schools districts to make the purchase. A Texas-based company called Ignite! is a telling example.

Founded in 1999, Ignite! successfully markets and sells Curriculum on Wheels to school districts across the United States. The Curriculum on Wheels or COWs, Ignite!'s 'selected acronym, consists of multimedia boxes, painted bright purple, which provide whole class instruction for middle school children in math, science, and social studies. Videos, music, and happy animations instruct children with such activities as sing-alongs and games. COWs are miniature televisions on wheels, Sesame Street in a box but without the educational value. A sample lesson available at the website features a modern-day animated African American reporter interviewing an animated bearded Charles Darwin. Jeanine on the Scene asks Darwin about the theory of evolution. Darwin explains the theory in jolly old uncle

tones, exclaiming at one point, “I’m a smart guy.” The clip is three minutes long. Instruction is oral – no need for students to read and an included worksheet allows students to fill in a word balloon over Darwin’s head, explaining what natural selection is. The educational worth of this shallow lesson is obvious.

According to the company’s website, Ignite!’s curriculum is now reaching over 300,000 children in “more than 10,000 classrooms across the United States.” The product, then is selling well and the Austin-Texas based company’s website deliberately calls on NCLB rhetoric in order to do so. The site indicates that Ignite! fits in the "standards-based classroom" and has been approved for federal funding. As of April 2009, the site also explains that school districts will be receiving Title 1, Educational Technology and Special Education funds through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act and that Ignite!'s curriculum meets the standards for each program. There is a handy link to the United States government Committee on Education and Labor so that school representatives can check to see how much money their district will be receiving. Presumably, users can then simply click back so they can quickly order their districts a few COWs. At first glance, the company's efforts appear questionable at best. However, I have used the word "corrupt" deliberately.

First, the company began marketing its COWs in 2002 – the same year that President Bush signed the NCLB into law. Interestingly, the founder of the company is Neil Bush, President Bush’s brother. However, not only did Neil Bush apparently know about the intent to pass NCLB, but his company also solicited and received federal funding. In fact, in November of 2007, the New Times reported

that the Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in America group requested an investigation into Ignite! which had accepted over $1 million dollars in federal funds and yet provided no evidence that its program met NCLB standards (Thompson). Although the Department of Education did agree to investigate, the matter seems to have evaporated. Neil Bush stepped down from executive board member to board member in April 2008; other than this, the company has continued to expand its reach and continues to market its COWs along with new products, the BRICK and the ION.

Although not all education companies demonstrate the level of nepotism and insider knowledge evident in Ignite!, the issue of substance and image remains. Federal government efforts to assess testing products have provided a clear-eyed view of whether or not the products meet their stated objectives. The apparent separation between government NCLB testing rhetoric and the results of test assessment is startling.

The NCLB website provides a link to the *What Works Clearinghouse*, whose goal is "to provide educators, policymaker, researchers, and the public with a central and trusted source of scientific evidence of what works in education." These are products that like Ignite!'s COWs are supposed to meet NCLB standards and help school districts, teachers, and students achieve objectives.

Established in 2002, the site provides study reports on numerous intervention programs. The intervention programs, meant for elementary through high school students, are divided into topic areas including character education, beginning reading, dropout prevention, and middle school math. These particular

topics have been selected because the Clearinghouse believes they are "areas of concern." Under each topic are the dozens of programs that school districts can buy in order to meet NCLB standards. However, finding a program that actually meets the Clearinghouse's own standards is extremely difficult.

I scroll through report after report on programs which do not work. Even the few programs which receive a thumbs-up receive intensive qualifying statements . It appears that the DOE's own accountability system has failed to find programs that meet its own standards. E D. Hirsch, Jr., writes that "Virtually no study…offers a plausible account of why a particular practice does or doesn't raise student achievement, so scholars cannot draw a firm line from specific findings to the reform" (qtd. in Traub).

Moreover, the NCLB website fails to recommend any particular achievement tests. States scramble to find an affordable method of meeting NCLB mandated testing protocols, a lengthy and expensive process particularly in the face of meaningless directives to achieve what, apparently, has nothing to do with the education of children or the support of vastly differing school systems.

The NCLB expanded a vast bureaucracy, notable on the website. This apparatus, a kind of clockwork, sustains itself through the power of the state. For example, the state of Oklahoma receives letter after letter requiring adjustments, deadlines, formulae, and standards for the Department of Education's approval. The NCLB has increased the government's power and ideological agenda enormously.[70]

[70] The NCLB website includes several links to documents about faith-based educational organizations. It invokes law to claim that prayer in school is protected by the Constitution – a revisionist and provocative reading. The site purposefully associates these beliefs within a construct employing the best principles of "scientifically based research."

I have previously argued that technologies complicate the human relationship to time. Testing technologies affect this relationship in both concrete and abstract ways. On a practical level, "accountability" in NCLB means that the State wields power over schools and school districts: they are now accountable to the federal government: evidence of the surveillance mechanisms Carter cites. This also means that school curricula must be designed in such a way that students will have the maximum opportunity to score well on the tests. Further, teachers must devote school hours to train students to perform well on the tests. In other words, the State owns classroom time, like the time pressure phenomenon Ben Agger calls "time fascism" (230). Agger proposes that solving issues of social justice and freedom can only occur with interrogation of time fascism. Since the ownership of time is necessary to capital, the entanglement of educational policies with time fascism underscores the urgency of examining what education is becoming – and how literacy is being redefined. I turn again to the question: what forms of literacy does speed culture sponsor?

The College Board

Founded in 1900, the College Entrance Examination Board was organized by the presidents of several universities and colleges as well as some heads of secondary schools in order to design a uniform college entrance examination ("For Entrances to Colleges"). As a May 1900 announcement in the New York Times reports, questions were to be designed and agreed to by committees and designated readers would score the examinations. The fee for examination was five dollars,

from which the expenses of the examiners were to be paid; the organizers expected about one thousand students to sit for the examination that year, although some were expected to want the certificate of examination only rather than actually attending college. The College Board's website frames the move to a standard examination as democratic in origin: now all students would have the opportunity to attend college regardless of family background or school – as long as they passed the examination. The NCLB website's strategies, then, mirror historical precedent.

In stark contrast today, the College Board's examinations are necessary rites of passage, and a student's score plays an enormous role in where she may attend school and whether or not she will receive funds to help her do so. Parents of means may pay hundreds of dollars so that their children can take test-taking courses and score well. The organization itself has grown and diversified enormously.

In particular, with the creation of the Advanced Placement program, the College Board's examinations now influence school curricula. The College Board's site consists of designated advanced placement courses and examinations. High school students are now urged, as this chapter's epigraph demonstrates, to win back some of the time college requirements may leach from them. Begun in 1952 and institutionalized by the College Board in 1955, the program's original intent was to synthesize and enrich the educational offerings in high school and college curricula. Educators from Andover and Exeter urged an initiative to encourage the two to work together "as two halves of a common enterprise" (qtd. in "A Brief History of the AP Program"). This was meant to be, as Stanley Katz has argued, the crux of liberal education, a seven-year intensive program with examinations used only for

the purpose of placement in college. Now, however, Katz explains, "[W]hat passes for liberal education in the schools is largely cordoned off in Advanced Placement courses, which have lost their vitality by restricting their ambition to an unimaginative testing regime."

In effect, students intending to apply to college take Advanced Placement courses in order to prepare to take Advanced Placement examinations. I do not intend here to make the reductive argument that Advanced Placement courses only prepare students for examinations. Some teachers work towards this goal, some do not although, in general, teachers only teach College-Board approved content. However, understanding the agenda behind the College Board's Advanced Placement program explains the literacies sponsored in first-year college students – and ought to inform the curricula of first-year writing programs.

The number of students taking the examination is staggeringly high. In 2008, approximately 2,168,185 students took at least one Advanced Placement examination.[71] The College Board's 2008 "Fifth Annual AP Report to the Nation" tells a tale of progress, as more and more high schools develop Advanced Placement courses and more and more students take the examination. It also reveals the usual story: students from wealthier states, who are white and economically privileged, take the examination more consistently and are more likely to receive passing scores. For example, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New York, Virginia and California report that 20% or higher of their high school students scored a 3 or better on an AP exam. Only 0 to 4.9% of Louisiana and Mississippi

[71] Examinations are free for those who receive school lunch subsidies, but otherwise cost $86.00 each.

students did as well. The pattern is consistent across states and across the years since the AP Report to the Nation became available in 2005. The gap between the overall high school student population taking the examination and different ethnic groups is similarly revealing. In 2008, 62.8% of the high school population was white, of whom 61% took an AP examination, while 14.4% of the population was African American, of whom 7.8% sat for the exam. Thus, more students from wealthy states take the examination as do a higher percentage of white students across the United States.[72]

As of 2008, the College Board reports that Montana, Vermont, and Wyoming have eliminated the "equity and excellence" gap between African American and European American student achievement. Excellence is the achievement of a 3 on an AP exam, while equity occurs when the number of African American students with a 3 or better matters the proportion of African Americans within the state. Curiously, all three of these states have miniscule African American student populations. I note, in addition, the return of "excellence" rhetoric here, coded as a number so that each student is quickly and easily measured and categorized.

As of 2009, the College Board offered thirty-seven courses and exams. More than one kind of exam is offered in many fields; for example, within English studies, students may take either the English Language or the English Literature examination. Although the scope of offerings I here describe comes from the Advanced Placement website, high schools typically give a selection of AP

[72] Asian, Asian-American or Pacific Island high school students make up 5.3% of the high school population, but they are 10.2% of the AP examinee population.

coursework instead of all the possible AP courses. In my town in Oklahoma, Norman High School, a school of 1,900 students in a mid-size suburban area, offers thirteen different AP courses. Interestingly, when Oklahoma schools release the NCLB-mandated school report card, a separate category for AP test-takers reveals how many students have taken and passed advanced placement examinations. That is, the more students pass the examination, the more highly regarded the school.

Clearly, the powerful speed culture-sponsored Advanced Placement program privileges particular literacies. In order for students to achieve excellence, that is, a score of three or better, they must enact a very specific genre of literacy within a particularly rigid context: the timed examination. The English Language examination deserves particular attention since it measures students' abilities to write at college level and, parents, students, and high schools hope, receive credit for first-year writing so that they need not take the courses. How then is writing ability measured?

As of 2009, the three-hour and fifteen-minute examination has two sections. The first hour, students respond to fifty-five multiple choice questions. These questions, as the Advanced Place program website explains, "[t]est how well students are able to analyze the rhetoric of prose passages." For the remainder of the examination, students write two free response essays. They receive seven sources from a variety of writing genres, and an essay question for the first essay and one four- paragraph excerpt for the second. Time, then, is a student's most precious commodity. She must read quickly, know the approved essay form and be able to apply it. The particular skills she must draw on all depend upon ability to

read, think, synthesize and write fast. While I acknowledge that the College Board does provide alternative testing situations for students with documented disabilities, I also argue that the Advanced Placement examination's methodology mimics the kind of writing situations typical to the essay examination only. Reasoned, researched writing based on inquiry is not deemed essential to first-year writing: a contention that is inarguably anathema to scholars of first-year pedagogy. Indeed, the typical first-year writing course does not include essay examinations but rather asks student to write researched papers in which they locate and synthesize sources in order to draw a conclusion and write a persuasive argument.

My conversations with my son's Advanced Placement high school teachers provide anecdotal evidence. For the most part, they are seasoned and dedicated teachers, many with Master's degrees in education. Many have thoughtful criticisms of the advanced placement course system. Even so, when I have sought help for my son, they have uniformly emphasized the importance of speed in his ability to perform well in the assignments they give. These assignments imitate the sections of the advanced placement examinations: the DBQ or document-based question is typical. In it, students must use seven primary sources in order to answer an essay question. They follow a particular formula to do so, much akin to the five-paragraph theme. For example, the thesis statement must come as the first sentence and contain very specific language while the conclusion must restate the thesis. The response is timed.

The consistent emphasis on timed writing situations rests on two assumptions. First, that time must be carefully measured in order for writing to be

judged effective. Clock measurement dominates: the writer does not choose the amount of time he needs to create the text he thinks meets the assignment criteria. In this sense, the text belongs to the clock and the writer's agency is contingent upon his ability to beat the clock. Good writing, therefore, marches to clock time, its cadences, its sweeps, its textures determined from outside the writer. Clock time, along with the presumption of technological process, is presumed essential.

Second, it must be uniformly measured, that is, all writers must perform to similar standards within the same amount of time. Therefore, the writer's individual identity itself is erased: she must demonstrate designated characteristics and merge her self with a kind of *any writer* in order to be assessed as having achieved mastery over the literacies first-year writing courses teach. She does not invent nor does she construct knowledge. Rather, she must meet decides as quickly as she can how she can put words in the right order in the correct amount of time. Her agency is less important than her ability to meet the demands of the timed writing situation. Her audience is faceless and uniform; they are judges who will assess her ability to follow the formula within the prescribed length of time.

I do not suggest that timed writing examinations lack merit entirely. However, their wide application as evidence for good writing in any context makes them deeply troublesome products of speed culture. Edward M. White, while writing of the benefits of timed writing assessment, also argues, "[B]ut no assessment exists outside of its contexts, its uses, and its effects; no tests or assessment systems have value in themselves" (33). As White explains, the timed writing assessment should never be too widely applied – time constraints do carry

with them both benefits and challenges. Such benefits include the ability to decide whether Basic English or Freshman Composition is best-suited for the entering student. That is to say, the exam may be appropriate under very particular conditions for very specific goals involving placement.

However, the culture of Advanced Placement courses and examinations now dominates. In fact, students in first-year writing courses have come to understand that time is the most precious of commodities and that writing work should be as efficient as possible. What happens when efficiency, Lyotard's minimum input to maximum output, is an essential objective of a writing program? What might a program look like in which assumptions of technological progress, clock time dominance, and uniform contexts are universally accepted and unquestioned? The Texas Tech first-year writing program might demonstrates the natural consequences of such a paradigm.

"Henry Ford built an awful lot of automobiles"

Texas Tech University has a first-year writing program that typically serves 3,000 first-year students each fall. In the fall of 2001, the director of the program, Fred Kemp, picked up two extra classes of composition after firing an incompetent instructor. Because of the consequent grading overload, Kemp, who specialized in computer-assisted instruction, "tinkered with" the school's course management system so that he could share his work load. The program he developed allowed faster grading and he could designate graduate students to grade drafts and reduce the amount of time needed while ensuring all his first-year writing students received

some feedback. The program was a success. Within two years, the Texas Tech first-year writing program adopted the new system, TOPIC, later renamed ICON (Wasley A6).

Like many major research universities, graduate students taught the first-year writing classes and, as Kemp explained, a handful were good teachers, but most were not. Kemp divided the graduate teaching assistants into two groups, Classroom Instructors (CI) and Document Instructors (DI). DIs grade the three drafts and final versions of all papers for each student, on a quota system using ICON, the specialized computer program, while CIs meet with the students once a week to lecture on specified topics such as writing style, grammar, and research strategies. Classroom sizes were raised to 35 and time spent in the classroom reduced by half.

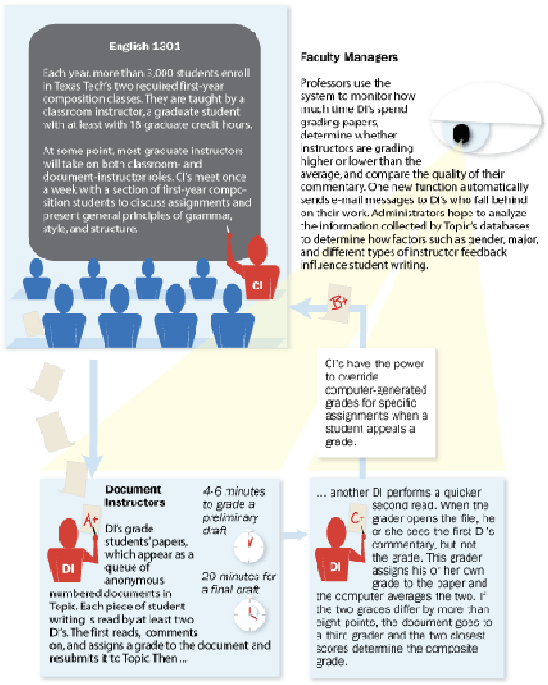


Figure 6: Tech Tech First-Year System

The quota system for the DIs is particularly efficient: DIs are supposed to read drafts in four to six minutes and read final papers and assign grades in twenty. *The Chronicle of Higher Education* created figure two in order to demonstrate graphically the system: the human icons in the chart resemble those found in Microsoft Word and PowerPoint programs. Their anonymity and uniformity denote the Texas Tech system precisely; the large

eyeball representing the "faculty manager" symbolizes the oversight built into the system.

Selfe and Selfe's foundational essay on "The Politics of the Desktop" identified the ideologies inherent to technologies and in particular directed scholarly attention to the reification and privileging of the market's logic, particularly though examination of the icons and language selected for computer desktops. I extend their argument to the Texas Tech system, where the choice of terms such as "manager," and the emphasis on assembly line pedagogy reflect the market's logic. Indeed, Kemp himself invoked Ford when describing the Texas Tech system, arguing,

> [S]imply to call it an assembly line and say, *ipso facto,* it's wrong, sounds like a 19th-century point of view. Henry Ford built an awful lot of automobiles, and he made them cheap so that an awful lot of people could buy cars that couldn't have bought cars without the assembly line. So the idea that efficiencies within a system are inherently bad and dehumanizing, I think, is wrong (Wasley A4).

In the case of the Texas Tech first-year writing program, Kemp appears to suggest that an awful lot of writing and grading can take place that might not otherwise have taken place. Technologically mediated speed grading and the breaking up of pedagogical work into smaller units are inarguably more efficient when the goal is to produce a maximum amount of writing and grading within the semester. Time is infinitely valued and, I suggest, speed is valued without interrogation. Writers are

featureless human-shaped forms, documents to be graded according to uniform criteria.

Kemp does not promote the Texas Tech model as the solution for all first-year writing programs, although he does argue that it meets the particular objectives of his school. Moreover, he has suggested that grading objectivity and efficiency are primary goals. Training graduate instructors and classroom dialogue are not. Grading objectivity and efficiency are not goals that appear to be widely accepted across the United States and certainly they contravene the objectives laid out by the National Conference of Teachers of English (NCTE) and the Writing Program Administrators (WPA). Those objectives focus on reflective practices, hands-on writing in the classroom, and dialogue. Indeed the College Board itself declares that it is in partnership with the National Writing Project, a federally funded organization whose focus is the improvement and enrichment of writing teachers and students in the U.S.. There remains, however, a contradiction between the College Board and National Writing Project which cannot be easily overcome. The National Writing Project seeks to create authors. Its publications and website provide activities, opportunities, and methods that define its audience as potential or current authors. Writing is, says the National Writing Project, intrinsically good and grounded in both local and global spaces. The College Board, on the other hand, identifies its audience as speed culture's consumer citizens. It uses lists, the preferred form for speed culture writers, in order to explain the nature of good writing and approaches writing as an activity whose goal is to meet formal criteria.

The dichotomy between writing within the logic of the market and writing within the logic of the network mirrors this paradoxical understanding.

I have so far described writing within the logic of the market. What does writing within the logic of the network look like?

The logic of network writing

When I walk towards our computer workspace, my thirteen-year old daughter hides the screen from me with her hand. "Mom," she says, "It's private." About twenty minutes later, she finds me and says, "Come look what I wrote. It's awesome." She has been using a website now called Webs (formerly FreeWebs) and created her own webpage a few months ago. She chose her favorite color, pearl blue, for background and writes in a script font. On the website, her name is Silver Star. As it turns out, she is an elfin princess, madly in love with a human boy who has an evil twin brother and magic powers he is just beginning to discover. She blogs her adventures, text along these lines,

> *Today we met in the whispering woods and listened to the wind sobbing. I told him of the painted horses of Nimvahni and he agreed that he would see them with me one day. He drew his short sword and I drew mine. We cut our palms and placed them together and swore that we would never part. Then we said good bye."*[73]

Her website includes a survey with questions about likes and dislikes, pictures she has uploaded, and links. Most of her links connect to her friends' pages

[73] These words capture the style and spirit of her writings which I did not wish to appropriate here. I have similarly approximated her chosen pseudonym.

with names like Lady Birdsong or Rana or something equally other-worldly. Her friends blog their pretend adventures, too, upload sketches and photos, and survey visitors about favorite movies or songs. Most fascinatingly, she and her friends read, critique, and share their critiques of their websites through text-messaging, chatting, and sometimes even phone conversations. This is writing subject to the logic of the network. It is audience-directed, interactive, and the writer herself determines who may read what she writes. It is grounded within the space that the writer chooses – her authorial intent.

Time is experienced differently when the writer not only focuses on audience but assumes quick response. Petranker's notion of "the presence of others" similarly foregrounds the possibility of experiencing others through immediacy. Petranker suggests that real intimacy, rather than its simulacrum as described by Baudrilliard and Virilio, is made possible through speed. However, Petranker's focus on the contrasts between network time and what he calls "Frankentime" or a kind of mechanical slavishness to the clock, overlooks the composing act necessary to these instances of presence (in *24/7: Time and Temporality* 173-191). The instant e-mail reply, the quick comment on the blog entry, the volley of Twitter tweets and replies, and the fast Facebook notification are all examples of composing work. In addition, speed makes dialogic interaction, essential to these genres, possible.

The audience is not passive here. In the Facebook social networking space, the status lines, comments, and notes written by users are meant to provoke response. Blog entries typically include a place for comments, and Twitter, an application in which users communicate their status across Blackberries, cell

phones, Iphones and computers, in 140 characters or less, connects users and their self-designated followers, instantly. Interaction is therefore essential and though the generic characteristics of each kind of composing vary, the quantity and quality of replies determines the value of the composing act. A Facebook status line with ten comments is much more valued than one with no response at all. Moreover, instead of privileging clock time and the ability to compose speedily, these texts and the literacies they demand privilege the network. Indeed, the larger the network, the more effective the composing act within these spaces.

These characteristics emerge despite the fact that the virtual spaces within which these writers work are subject to advertising, and surveillance through cookies deposited on Internet-linked computers. The power of communication through writing defines the worth of these sites for the writers. Facebook, Twitter, My Space – all networked spaces that are redefining writing and sponsored by speed.[74]

Although I have so far demarcated speed-sponsored composing work into two categories, I deploy the binary in order to tease out important characteristics. In addition, I lay out the boundaries between the two in order to foreground the ways in which speed informs composing spaces differently. In effect, the clock dominates in spaces that compose according to the logic of the market. But, although speed may be more privileged on Twitter or Facebook and less so on Webs, the clock does not dominate. This is composing according to the logic of the

[74] Speed of circulation, a constant theme in the media, has increased with stories emerging of how people use these spaces to distribute news and warnings of disasters. New Scientist magazine reported that a U of Colorado study showed that Facebook and Twitter were used to share updates and warning during the spring 2008 California fires as well as the Virginia Tech shootings (Ingram R3).

Composing to the logic of the market: Clock time dominates the writer Epistemological stance: objective truth Quantitative measurement Uniform excellence Circulation inconsequential	**Composing to the logic of the network:** Clock time subordinate to the writer Epistemological stance: socially constructed Dialectical Rhetorical contexts Circulation essential

Table 1: Speed-sponsored literacies

network. The table above demonstrates these characteristics.

When composing to the logic of the marketplace, the writer is subject to clock time because she composed in response to an outside force that sets time limits, as well as criteria and efficiency is a chief objective. The Advanced Placement examinations I have detailed above represent this logic, as do many writing assignments common to the composition classroom. Yet, in this age of writing, when more and more composing spaces are erupting into being, when people are engaged in writing more than ever, the question of speed and of the dominance or subjugation of clock time deserves prominence. The many calls for multimodal composing work can only be enriched through focusing the speed lens and through identifying the logics informing composing work. How does speed enter into current teaching practices? Composition textbooks provide some insight to a response to this question.

As Faigley has suggested, composition textbooks themselves in their drive to "sell" the writing process continuously emphasize good management techniques

resulting in frequently conflicting advice (153-156). Textbooks typically deploy some version of the process movement's mantra: plan, research, draft, revise, polish. Writing according to the process should mean that students take a good amount of time to complete each step. Yet the issue of time is rarely addressed directly, and when considered, as Faigley expects, is contradictory. I look briefly at four composition textbooks for first-year writers below and focus on the books' discussions of the writing process in order to demonstrate typical approaches.

The 2009 edition of *The College Writer* by VanderMey, Meyer, Van Rys, and Sebranek , representing the current-traditional epistemological stance, leads with a chapter on the writing process followed by chapters on the modes, descriptive, narration, analytical, persuasive, and reports. Their six-stage process begins with "Getting Started," followed by "Planning," "Drafting," "Revising," "Editing," and "Submitting." In their overview of process, the writers emphasize the importance of spending time at each step of the process and draw urgent attention to the need to spend plenty of time revising. Next, they provide four to five pages of text explain each step thoroughly as well as planning checklists at the end of each section, so that students may be sure they have followed the prescribed pathway correctly. They do not mention rhetorical context, but rather include a paragraph explaining that "thinking rhetorically" is important. Time is not mentioned again.

In the 2006 edition of *The Prentice Hall Guide for College Writers,* author Stephen Reid sees collecting, shaping, drafting, and revising as the essential steps to the writing process. Reid emphasizes the recursiveness of the process and suggests that individual writers and their particular contexts will determine how much time to

spend on each step of the process. Although Reid usefully foregrounds rhetorical contexts, the constraints of those contexts, including those calling for speed, are invisible.

Similarly, the 2008 edition of *The St. Martin's Guide to Writing* by Axelrod and Cooper delineates the writing process as invention, draft and revision. They add research to invention for the research-based chapters. They narrate the writing process of a student and note several times the amount of time that the student spent on each stage of writing. In later chapters, in overviews of contextual writing processes, Axelrod and Cooper mention neither time nor the exigencies of speed at all.

The 2009 *Norton Field Guide to Writing* foregrounds rhetorical contexts and genre as does *The Prentice Hall Guide for College Writers* but its "Processes" chapter includes a section on "Getting response and revising," in a nod to the practice of peer revision in the first-year writing classroom. Moreover, authors Bullock and Weinberg also suggest students create a deadline schedule at the drafting stage and explicitly acknowledge that considering time matters. However, in an echo of Faigley's warning about contradictory advice, Bullock and Weinberg next follow this with a section on "Starting to Write" that suggests writers should "expect surprises" and "expect to write more than one draft." They do not explain how establishing deadlines and expecting surprises ought to connect with one another, however. Nor do they consider the question of speed-sponsored writing situations, except for the obligatory section on writing essay exams – a section common to all four textbooks – always located at the back of the book.

In essence, then, this quick look at first-year writing textbooks suggests a widening fissure between the dominant literacies students bring to the classroom and the composing work privileged in the writing classroom. The logic of the market which has determined one kind of speed-sponsored literacy does not exist.

I turn now to consider more precisely the nature of composing to the logic of the network. Then I turn to the same question as above: to what extent do writing classrooms consider this logic?

Writers composing to the logic of the network, although dependent upon speed, work in spaces where their purposes determine the place of clock time: their rhetorical contexts and audiences dominate. Hassan notes that "time is social" and argues that people on the Internet construct network time because of their connectedness. Therefore, he sees time as a living entity (38-46). In this sense, network time is more deeply social, more rooted in the writers' purposes, more driven by individual exigency than composing to the logic of the market.

The Amazon Breakthrough Novel Award contest (ABNA) is an interesting example. I participated in the contest in 2008 and 2009 and joined in on the ABNA discussion forums. Threads on the forums range from serious discussions about writing to critiques of each others' work, and virtual parties. Identities on this board do not resist gendered roles. During virtual parties, quips and flirting abound and attendees pour each other fancy, highly alcoholic drinks. Fast and witty wordplay is particularly valued. In point of fact, Amazon created the discussion forum so that writers entered in the contest might review each other's work and create communities. Doubtless, the forum was meant to create interest in the contest as

well. However, despite the fact that this space was set up for corporate purposes, the writers have used this space not only for the purpose of discourse but in order to write a community into being, share writing work, and critique. Several groups of contestants from ABNA 2008 have created their own communities elsewhere on the Web, including two publishing houses, TOTGA and ABNA books, and an online magazine called *Conclave*.

During the conversations, presence is assumed. Participants choose how to construct social time within the space of the forum. Composers in these spaces may respond at lightning-fast speed or may respond two days later as they prefer. I do not suggest those choices function entirely outside of clock time yet clearly there is a fundamental difference between subject agency within spaces such as these and, for example, advanced placement course writing assignments. Here, writing is scrutinized for humor at some times and lyricism at others. The participants frequently comment on one another's writing. "Eloquently put," one participant might say. "How does this relate to your other story?" another might remark. Fascinatingly, participants have also created their own shorthand language based on each other's spelling errors. For example, stupid has become stukid; rocks has become rox. They also play with words in order to subvert the corporate rules about inappropriate language: kcuf instead of fuck. This is composing work according to the logic of the network: dialectical, interactive, contextual, and circulation is essential.

Trimbur argues that “[t]hinking not only about the production of writing at the point of composing but also about the circulation of writing and its relation to

the unfinished business of democratic communication" (217) is important work and scholars such as Ridolfo and DeVoss, among others, have engaged with this task.[75] Consider then how speed-sponsored literacies in network spaces foreground circulation – and the possibilities of privileging student writing in these spaces. Participants composing to the logic of the network uniformly presume that the more one's work circulates, the greater its merit, although some, such as my daughter and her group of friends, want their work to circulate in smaller social networks than others, such as the writers on the Amazon forum. Developing opportunities for students to compose for the purpose of circulation and the study of the contexts of delivery becomes possible within the logic of network composing. Trimbur supports in fact, "the turn to public writing, civic rhetoric, and community service learning" as a response to what he identifies as "[t]he limited circuit of the classroom" (195).

Trimbur appropriates a Marxist framework in order to suggest the importance of the connections between exchange value and use value. Trimbur especially appreciates Marx's focus on dialectic between what Marx called "the unity of two aspects" (qtd. in Trimbur 207). Trimbur argues that Marx used this theory in order to be able to explain how it might be possible for capitalism to be replaced with a new social and economic order. This focus on circulation strikes Trimbur as particular useful because it invites analysis of the actual ways in which a piece of writing circulates, how it came to circulate, and what consequences attend its circulation. How is meaning inscribed and reinscribed as it circulates? How

[75] See for example Ridolfo and DeVoss's essay "Composing for Recomposition: Rhetorical Velocity and Delivery" *Kairos* 13.2, 2009.

might this invite engagement in social change? What might change in student composing work if they wrote for the purpose of deploying technological speed and circulating writing?

Student composing work typically has little use value for students: it become valuable when it can be exchanged for a good grade necessary in order to achieve the diploma that will bring a well-paying job. Creating writing assignments with use value is therefore essential for instructors who believe their primary task is to facilitate students' literacies. In addition, composing work that deliberately calls upon the logic of the network may bridge the composing worlds of classroom and not-classroom in provocative ways. I take up this challenge in the last chapter of this dissertation.

Trimbur argues that Marx's work to interrogate the concept of commodity has been unduly overlooked by composition scholars. That work, "enabled him to imagine how the contradictory workings of capitalist production establish the groundwork for a new way of life in which the circulation of products can be devoted to use value and the satisfaction of human needs" (208). For Trimbur, this provides a way into inquiry into not only the circulation of writing but also the composition of the writing itself. Every composition defines the world anew. Cultural values and belief systems determine what and how things are being named intertwined with the processes of circulation. Jim Ridolfo has proposed the term "rhetorical velocity" to describe writing created for the purpose of circulation and appropriation – or remix – by others. For example, he demonstrates that government press releases are frequently written for this purpose.

In a similar vein, I argue that circulation, sometimes for the purpose of Ridolfo's rhetorical velocity, other times for the sake of performance is an essential feature to composing according to the logic of the network. Culturally dominant speed sponsors literacies peculiar to this moment in the twenty-first century. Writers and teachers of writing who consider the differences in these literacies – and have access to the necessary technologies – are, as James Berlin powerfully elucidates, working towards the real objective: "[T]o prepare young people to be better participants in democratic economic, political and cultural arrangements. Our work is to fathom possibilities for language and living heretofore unimagined" (*Rhetoric and Reality* 188).

Chapter Five

Speed Culture Systemic Changes:

(Re)seeing the Practice of Teaching Writing

Perhaps it is time to think the unthinkable—to posit a notion of text
that is not dematerialized and that does depend
on the substrate in which it is instantiated.

(N. Katherine Hayles,
"Translating Media: Why We Should Rethink Textuality.")

I borrow loosely from Hayles in order to underscore my argument that rethinking textuality concerns the material conditions of writing in the twenty-first century and the concomitant issue of access. Hayles examines the translation of texts from print to digital and concludes that interpreting textual meanings will be richer once their materiality is interrogated. Hayles works from the stance of the reader and literary analyst, and I here apply her useful insight from the stance of the writer/composer and compositionist. I have argued that we might rethink composing texts through consideration of the speed culture lens. How might we rethink the teaching of writing with this lens?

The ability to compose and read texts is dependent upon access, of course, but speed sponsors literacies, which function as their substrate, as I have argued in Chapter Four. Therefore, fashioning teaching ecologies cognizant of the speed substrate requires examination of where, how, and why texts can be composed.

This dissertation has argued that speed is not only privileged in the technologized twenty-first century world but also constructs identity – that is, the way humans experience themselves in the world – and literacies, or the ways humans communicate in the world. My purpose has been neither to rage against hegemonic speed nor to fall into speed rapture but rather to consider what speed affects -- and how --as well as what impacts this has on writing in the twenty-first century. Because of the intimate dialectic between identity and literacy, the interrogation of speed culture calls for examination of writing pedagogy. For composition and rhetoric scholars, this means focusing the speed lens on considering who our students are along with how they can and might write themselves into the world. In order to begin this project, I turn to similar work in Stuart Selber's 2004 *Multiliteracies for a Digital Age.*

Selber rigorously examines the ways in which technology inspired literacies ought to inform the practice of the teaching of writing. He describes what he terms "an imperfect heuristic," a program of change meant to help teachers draw from, develop and synthesize students' multiple literacies (183). In this chapter, I borrow Selber's imperfect heuristic in order to outline a program cognizant of speed culture realities that re-envisions the practice of teaching writing. I also provide pertinent examples from writing instructors and draw on my own experiences as teacher, writing program administrator, parent, and graduate student in order to propose systemic changes sensitive to speed culture.

Selber emphasizes the nested social contexts endemic to technology-informed instructional change, noting that programs whose goal is to enhance and

enrich the many literacies necessary to students need to pay close attention to numerous interrelated spaces. He sees institutional, departmental, curricular, pedagogical, and technical contexts as the essential contexts (185-187). Similarly, I examine each context, and its entanglement within speed culture, and apply this dissertation's arguments to the contexts in order to move from theoretical to practical concerns. I begin with technical contexts.

Technical demands and speed

As chapter two has argued, access is the primary issue undergirding technical contexts. Without access to both the materiality of technology and a knowledge base that includes strategies to learn quickly, to ask the most helpful questions, and to evaluate whether or not new technologies are necessarily better, some groups will fall deeper into the digital divide. Moreover, the ability to move swiftly through identity zones is deeply compromised without that access. As Cindy Selfe has pointed out, since the Clinton-Gore administration, the value of technological literacy has become a widespread assumption in the United States. However, as the need for technological literacy became conventionalized, so did the presumption of student access to and ability with technologies. As a result, particular questions fail to be asked and resources fail to be made available. As Hayles would have it, text is here dematerialized.

When material conditions are rendered invisible, institutions may enact changes with problematic results. For example, the University of Virginia announced on March 9, 2009, that it is phasing out all university computer labs and

"outsourcing" the Technology Help desk. Public computer labs are no longer relevant, as the U.Va. news release explained: "They were first established in the early 1980s to give members of the U.Va. community access to those newfangled PCs, but are less necessary today in an era when 99 percent of undergraduate students arrive with laptops" (UVA Today "Top News"). The ironic reference to "newfangled" underscores the assumption of general access and ability with technology neatly eliding the question of what happens to the one percent who do not arrive on campus with laptops or the large percentage who may not be able to afford a new laptop or repairs in the case of damage or theft. The release does note that some issues remain to be ironed out.

The move is explained as wise in a time of economic downturn, but unquestionably speed culture's characteristic privileging of efficiency makes ignoring access issues easier. Selber calls for teachers to work to develop technical infrastructures as relevant to their campus communities and student needs. However, foregrounding the access issues native to speed culture underscores the importance of careful assessment of the technical skills students bring to school as well as developing strategies for them to evaluate new technologies if they emerge.

As a writing instructor in a computer-mediated classroom, I have grown used to the constancy of continuous change, yet also know the problems that emerge are always different. An upgrade to the operating system means certain programs will no longer work. A change to the university's firewalls means certain websites will no longer load. A new networked printer means some of the lab computers have to be reconfigured so they can find the printer. Many of these issues arise

because the computer-mediated spaces at many universities are under control of the University's IT department. Their chief concern is security. Mine is ease of access. Negotiating the gap between objectives, while possible, entails engaged instructors who recognize, as Selber puts it, "[t]hat neither indifference nor paralysis are acceptable options nowadays" (235).

I argue that technological expertise, a difficult goal, is essential to the education of writing instructors in the twenty-first century. That expertise cannot be developed without attention to the rapidity of technological changes and, equally important, developing methods to approach speed-informed teaching situations.

I have designed and facilitated computer-mediated pedagogy workshops for writing instructors during the last four years and have also worked with elementary and middle school teachers in a similar capacity – a span of fifteen years. In 1997, when Mary Hogan Elementary School in Middlebury, Vermont first got internet access, teachers seemed suspicious at first but many quickly became excited at the possibilities. I remember particularly a teacher who wanted to use an internet site that showed the daily stock prices. She planned for her students to surf to the site and then use a worksheet along with the numbers they found to perform some calculations. She and I met two hours before her planned class and verified that the website she had in mind showed daily stock prices. That afternoon, she brought her class in and demonstrated the site to them and how to apply the worksheet. She was modeling the first problem for her students when she stopped suddenly. "Wait," she said. "The numbers here are different than when we first looked."

"It's the stock market," I said, not entirely understanding her point.

"But the numbers are different from before." We both checked the site and, simultaneously realized what had happened. "The site changes every few minutes – along with the stock market. It's instantaneous."

Neither of us had had any real sense of what happened to time with the arrival of the Worldwide Web, until that moment. Early forms of the Internet, such as Internet boards, functioned more as virtual bulletin boards where information was posted and remained in place. This was entirely different: ephemeral and in constant flux. The project the teacher had in mind had to be recreated and, between the two of us, we were able to figure out a way to work with the ever changing site.

I tell this story in order to highlight not only how strategies of instruction have and will continue to evolve but also to draw attention to how access depends upon expertise. As Selber suggests, technology operates within an institutional context. That is, university IT departments purchase, maintain, and upgrade hardware and software and, frequently, provide how-to classes for faculty and graduate students. Selber, as have many others, argues that humanities instructors ought to be part of the decision-making process. In fact, humanities instructors do not as a rule involve themselves with this decision-making although technical and professional writing instructors often do. However, textbook companies are pursuing what they see as an important opportunity to influence decision-making through company-developed CDs and course management systems. Pearson-Longman is one of many examples.

Pearson-Longman aggressively markets their course management software, *My Comp Lab*, which purports to "[e]mpower student writers and facilitate writing

instruction" (My Comp Lab webpage). The program provides a composing space for students and emphasizes writing process with multiple drafts. The site can be tailored to the Pearson-Longman textbook of choice and can include a wide assortment of pre-written instructions for students to read on topics such as citation, research, thesis statements, and so forth. The idea here is maximizing the amount of time that students spend on the site.

Instructors, on the other hand, can grade uploaded papers within the site, quickly upload assignments, check on students' progress, and monitor the frequency and length of time students spend on the site with fast clicks through brightly colored, snappy tabs and buttons. *My Comp Lab* even includes prewritten comments for instructors to insert into student papers, so that they can grade quickly. In other words, as in the Texas Tech model, efficiency is the highest goal for instructors. In sharp contrast, students' time is much less valuable. Depending on how the instructor customizes her *My Comp Lab* space, the student may be asked to submit three or more drafts. Meanwhile, *My Comp Lab* values instructor time deeply and has been developed so that instructors can speedily assess – and monitor -- their students' work. The contrast is striking.

My Comp Lab and its ilk have been developed with presumptions about teacher and student identities that form its identification strategies. In other words, they represent an epistemological stance worth interrogating. Instructors have power, students do not. Instructors know what is True, students do not. Therefore, the construction of knowledge and dialogic classroom, Freierian naming of the world are irrelevant within these spaces.

Alternatively, programs such as *My Comp* Lab, if developed to the specifications of humanist instructors, cognizant of the potentials and challenges of hegemonic speed, could provide a virtual space in which genuine inquiry, dialogue, and reflection take place. Making instructors' lives easier through efficiency is *My Comp Lab*'s primary selling point. Consequently, it privileges speed-sponsored literacies that are firmly embedded in the logic of the market. (Pre-written comments may appear to ensure uniform assessment practices but they also ensure less attention to rhetorical context.) It is expensive yet its colorful interface and snappy language may appeal especially because fast and apparently cutting-edge technologies sell. However, sometimes cutting-edge and fast may not be the wise choice for institutions – especially when access is at issue.

Within the exigencies of speed culture and as part of the selection process for technologies, the concept of low threshold technologies or LTRs usefully addresses access issues. Steven Gilbert coined the term in 2002 in order to describe applications that are more easily accepted by faculty and students because they are easy to learn, easy to use, inexpensive, and widely available. Most commonly, applications may be designated as low threshold when they are a standard university purchase, inexpensive commercial applications that are so similar to products already in use that learning them is easy, or open-source, like Web 2.0 applications.

PowerPoint, part of the Microsoft Office Suite, becomes low threshold for many students because high school and middle school computer labs tend to purchase Microsoft products and most university computer labs do the same. With the addition of free Web 2.0 music editing software such as Audacity, students and

instructors have the possibility of creating visual arguments and digital stories that are undeniably powerful and rhetorically effective.

I have been particularly struck by my students' dedication to perfecting their digital stories and visual arguments. Although I have usually asked for ten-slide or less in their PowerPoint slideshows, they consistently create texts that are triple that number. Although I invite them to use music and using sound is not a grading criteria, and yet all of them spend long hours selecting, editing, and adding music. They teach each other how, and they teach themselves. One student created a 75-slide multimedia extravaganza on the war in Iraq simply because he wanted to do so. Similarly, in my autobiographical writing course, when I asked students to create digital stories about place, I invited them to use the Web to find photographs to work with their texts. One or two did so, but the majority chose to visit their chosen place, for some a state away, and take pictures, upload them to their computers, and drop them into their PowerPoint slide shows.

The rhetoric of PowerPoint has been interrogated by Edward Tufte among others, and its rhetoric is plainly embedded in its marketing: "Microsoft Office PowerPoint 2007 enables users to quickly create high-impact, dynamic presentations, while integrating workflow and ways to easily share information" ("Office PowerPoint Overview," Microsoft PowerPoint website). [76] Asking students to use PowerPoint for aesthetic purposes may seem paradoxical. Therefore, I ask my students to begin by interrogating the rhetoric of PowerPoint itself. What does PowerPoint assume about identity? How can you complicate notions of the

[76] See "The Cognitive Style of PowerPoint," at http://www.edwardtufte.com/tufte/powerpoint.

business model? These questions ask students to consider carefully the potentials and constrictions of this low-threshold application so that they may use it critically. In this way, I ask my students to consider the rhetoric of every cultural object and the assumptions of identity, as well as call for them to think about themselves as creators rather than as consumers. Similarly, when a student comments on the business motif in PowerPoint clip art choices or the paucity of aesthetically interesting design backgrounds, I ask the class how to explain the choices the software designers have made. For who was the software designed? What assumptions are being made about the identities of those who use PowerPoint and how do you know? Technology choices, then, as well as critical interrogation of those technologies, remain important objectives within speed culture.

The work of this dissertation has clear impacts on a twenty-first century understanding of technical contexts in education. The teaching of writing is closely aligned with technical contexts. They are, as Selber puts it, "coextensive and mutually constitutive" (186). What impacts appear when speed as cultural dominant is made visible?

Pedagogical adaptations

In 2005, Cornell University Press published *My Freshman Year: What a Professor Learned by Becoming a Student* by the pseudonymous Rebekah Nathan.[77] Nathan, an anthropology professor trained in ethnographic studies, decided to study college students and become a student for one year. Nathan enrolled at the

[77] New York Sun reporter Jacob Gershman claims to have discovered Nathan's identity and university: Cathy Smalls, Professor of Anthropology at the University of Northern Arizona ("On the Trail of an Undercover Professor," New York Sun, August 19, 2005).

university, lived in the dorms, took classes and tests, and socialized with first-year students. One of her most significant findings about student culture was the pressures of speed culture. She learned that students socialized less than expected and worked much harder, although not necessarily in school. Entering the economic system as workers and consumers occupied student attention, and not only did students frequently work while attending school, they enrolled in courses on the basis of location and time. Students looked for classroom times adjustable to their work schedules and classroom spaces near each other – and near the parking lot – so that they could attend class, leave quickly, and hurry off to job, familial, and social obligations.

For the students Nathan studied, coursework was the necessary gateway to their true lives as workers and consumers and had no intrinsic value. Their identities and abilities to move from zone to zone were dependent upon selves wholly invested in participation, whether current or future, in the market. Nathan's study, at a large midwestern university, offers insight into the utilitarian speed culture of education. As I have argued in Chapter Four, speed literacies inform students' understanding of writing and may conflict directly with curricular goals. The task, then, is to consider what students bring to the classroom and to scaffold writing tasks so that mastery is neither unimportant nor impossible.

Yagelski notes that attentiveness to students' ways of knowing the world and literacy practices arises from critical pedagogy, particularly Paulo Freire's work. Freire describes a dialectical process in which students name their worlds – and the problems to be addressed. This "transformative pedagogy" as Yagelski suggests

only occurs when students' values, desires, and goals are privileged (32-52). In order to enrich twenty-first century literacy practices, writing instructors need to hear their students' voices, as did Nathan. Creating a space in which students may interrogate the literacies they bring with them and the literacies they are working to develop becomes the logical task of the writing instructor.

The opening day of each writing unit during the a semester can draw on what an instructor knows about her students so far and begin to scaffold tasks in the direction of meeting curricular objectives. Below I offer an example of what such a lesson plan might look like. This plan is drawn from the first day of the scholarly discourse unit. I wrote this unit for the curriculum of the first-semester writing course at the University of Oklahoma; its goal is to give students strategies in order to read and write scholarly work. The performative objectives for this particular day are to be able to compare and contrast the rules of writing which they have learned in high school (most often current-traditional rhetoric) to the rules of writing they observe within the genres of e-mail, blog posting, newspaper editorial, poem, essay exam, magazine article, and scholarly paper, define some generic (although formulaic) features of writing within each of the above-named genres and, finally, to define genre.[78] This unit uses Amy Devitt's reconceptualization of genre, "[a] dynamic response to and construction of recurring situations, one that changes historically and in different social groups, that adapts and grows as the social context changes" (582), because a chief course objective is to provide students with opportunities to compose in several genres, including summary, analysis,

[78] The concept of performative objectives, key to my lesson planning, is drawn from George Hillocks' work, particularly his 1999 book, *Ways of Thinking, Ways of Teaching* and on teaching methodologies developed by David Mair at the University of Oklahoma.

argument, and personal narrative. I am presenting this example in order to demonstrate how a lesson play might be constructed in order to hear student voices but also to engage with speed-sponsored literacies.

I follow each section of the lesson plan with a reflection about the scaffolding moves.

A Sample Lesson Plan

1). Small group work

The day begins with a small group exercise in which I ask students to work in groups of three, select a recorder, and then brainstorm a list of all the rules of writing which they can remember from previous writing courses. If needed, I may suggest that students think about what is considered a good idea to do in writing and what is never permitted.

Reflection

In this exercise, I explicitly acknowledge the rules of literacy that students have brought with them to the college classroom. Further, students are actually working from an epistemological stance of objective Truth familiar to them from their previous experiences with writing. That is, there are particular rules to follow in order for writing to be good and writing uniformly follows those rules. Within this stance, language is static; therefore, inflexible rules make good sense. As I walk around the classroom, I typically hear students arguing about things like how many sentences a paragraph should be or whether it is acceptable to place a thesis statement in the second paragraph rather than the first. I sometimes make a note

about these discussions as they are suggestive of how students imagine their own writing identities must be constructed in order to succeed. That is, their writing does not belong to them, but rather to the form and its rules.

2) Whole class discussion

After about ten minutes, I elicit a list of items from each group and write them on the board or projector screen. Then I invite the class to add or refine to the rules, until there is general agreement that we have listed most of the important rules of writing.

Next, I ask students to categorize the rules, that is, to determine which rules seems to fall into more or less the same pattern or category and I circle or star the rules which students decide belong together. I ask students to name the categories they have established. Typically, they have created categories such as "Rules about sentences," "Rules about thesis statements," and so on. At this point, I ask them to think about which rules they tend to break. Responses are varied, but when I ask them why, the question of time usually arises. "I'm in a rush and I forget," or "I always break the rules when I text because it's faster that way."

Reflection

This is an important step in developing a framework so that students think about how time has an impact on their writing and also, more deeply, begin to notice that the rules of writing have been taught differently – sometimes, according to the teacher's likes or dislikes. As they themselves create the heuristic from which

they will work, they necessarily engage in dialogue with each other. That dialogue also invites them to interrogate aspects of their previous writing experiences. When I have taught this day, I have particularly noticed how easily students engage in naming, categorizing and, finally, interrogating the rules of writing. I am laying groundwork for thinking about genres of writing, but also for thinking about how time and ownership impact their writing identities.

3) *Small group to whole class*

At this point, I ask students to reform their groups and distribute to each group a text sample, including such as genres as e-mail exchange, blog posting, Wikipedia entry, newspaper editorial, poem, essay exam and scholarly paper. I direct the groups to determine whether or not the text is following the "rules" generated today. What rules are not followed? How does that affect or not affect the ability to understand what is being communicated? Are there some categories of rules that never apply to particular genres of writing? Last, I ask them to draw a conclusion about the rules after observing them in action. In the whole class discussion, the students compare and contrast their findings about the rules of writing and draw conclusions together about they are noticing.

Reflection

At this point, students have moved from listing the familiar rules of writing to interrogating those rules. The task is not difficult because students already are familiar with the differences between genres of writing although they most likely

haven't thought very much about the significance of the differences. This is a move towards a social-constructionist epistemology because students notice that language is flexible and, moreover, that far from language being a transparent carrier of meaning, uniform in all situations, an analysis reveals that the rhetorical situation and the purposes of the participants are far more important.[79]

3) Writing exercise

Here I ask students to summarize what they heard about how well the "rules" fit the different texts. I ask them to select two of the texts I have given them as samples and to contrast their characteristics. Specifically, explain what the text's purposes are and how it achieves that purpose. How is the first text similar to or different from the second? I suggest they draw on the "Rules of Writing" which we have developed in order to help them write their responses. When they have finished writing, I ask them to share what they have concluded and to draw on the rules of writing we have developed in order to help them

Reflection

I ask students to write at this moment for two reasons. First, this gives individual students who may not speak easily in whole class or group work, an chance to work out their ideas. Second, the process of writing down ideas is a

[79] See, for example, Mikhail Bakhtin who explains that "[W]e are taking language not as a system of abstract grammatical categories, but rather language conceived as ideologically saturated, language as a world view, even as a concrete opinion, insuring a maximum of mutual understanding in all spheres of ideological life" (343).

useful contrast to the fast pace of oral discussion. Third, this gives me a chance to walk around the room and see what ideas students are beginning to develop.

My students always mention time pressures as we talk about the characteristics of essay exams. We contrast time pressures with the fast pace of texting or e-mailing. They also uniformly love Wikipedia for its easy information but know that its entries can be changed by anyone, which, they may have been told, makes its entries suspect. Here we can talk about composing work that comes through the logic of the network and interrogate the ways in which it appears to contradict the rules of writing derived from school-based literacies.

4) Mini-lecture and homework

I take a few moments to offer a scholarly definition of genre at this juncture and offer the term: rhetorical context for them to think about. I parse rhetorical context using the students' own descriptions of the characteristics of each genre of writing and highlighting in particular: who is writing, audience, and the ways in which time affects the composing process. Finally, for homework, I ask my students to select a genre of text that they know particularly well and to describe the possible rhetorical contexts for this text as well as the genre's conventions or rules and examples of language peculiar to this genre.

Reflection

Students have now moved to a more active stage of interrogation because they have been given concepts to use and now will apply it. They have moved from

passive receivers to more active makers of knowledge, a necessary move in order to become composers as well as readers

I offer this example not as a prescription but rather as one way to ensure students' school and personal identities can be brought into the academic classroom. In essence, this is a move to narrow the gap between school identity and personal identity because both academic texts and the texts with which students feel most comfortable are recognized, represented, and interrogated. In addition – and certainly not incidentally – concepts of composing work have been expanded through consideration of non school-based literacy practices.

In a similar exercise, I ask students to write about a significant writing experience in their lives. I then select, copy and paste key parts of their texts together into one document, and ask students to categorize the kinds of responses they have made to the prompt. Typically, about three-quarters of the students respond with examples of school assignments that have earned them a high grade. A small number include writing from outside of the classroom such as journal writing, poetry, Facebook notes, and letters for example. I ask students to think about what conclusions can be drawn from their responses: does school writing matter most? Does earning an A on a piece of writing make it matter more? Students give a variety of interesting answers to these questions but most passionately argue against the conclusion that school writing matters more.

This exercise recognizes students' lives outside of the classroom, yet acknowledges the force of school-sponsored literacies. In essence, the many zones

which they traverse requires composing work of some kind, yet only scholarly writing for school has been legitimized. Calls for multimodal composing work abound and a complete recounting of the potentials of and requirement for this work is beyond the scope of my present project.[80] However, acknowledging the literacies and, indeed, the world views that students bring to the classroom is a necessary adjunct to this work. In this way, hegemonic speed begins to be made more visible and therefore less powerful.

A chief concern within speed culture is the reification of the identity of students as consumers. In order to complicate these identities, I continue to develop pedagogy in which reflection and student ownership of work is primary. Subject identities are not then wholly interpellated with ideologies: this is a break from some post modern thought because I see the relationship between agency and ideology as infinitely complicated and work from the stance that Freirian naming the world, although risky and occasionally contradictory, effects change. Indeed, as Rebecca Moore Howard suggests this stance makes the teaching of writing possible. If language entirely constructs the subject and choosing words or selecting language communities are out of the question, then English Studies, in which the process must be dialectic, is irrelevant (349).

Last, I see performance as an opportunity for student writing to become more deeply aware of audience and more likely to engage with the task of composing within the classroom. I explore examples of this pedagogy below.

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[80] Scholars such as Gregory Ulmer, Jody Shipka, Johndan Johnson-Eilola, Anne Wysocki, Gregory Sirc, Ann Ruggles Gere, Cynthia Selfe, and Diana George have persuasively demonstrated the importance of opening up understandings of writing to include multimodal compositions.

Ownership, Reflection, and Performance

These three objectives are entwined. Students who feel ownership of their work are more likely to reflect deeply. Typically discussed in the context of collaborative writing, ownership entails composing work that is not merely a response to an assignment demand. That is, the student actively sponsors the composition rather than the instructor because she has made choices based on what she wants from this piece of writing. Admittedly, the culturally-accepted purpose of school-based writing is the grade, and students and instructors know this. As I have shown in Chapter Four of this dissertation, the writing occurring in digital spaces is not only sponsored by the writers themselves but is far afield from the academic writing taught in most first-year writing classes.[81] However, I argue that students can feel ownership of their work, when their own inquiry is the source of the writing assignment and both inquiry and reflection are the methods of the writing classroom. Moreover, this is an important pedagogical objective.

Yancey defines reflection as "[t]he dialectical process by which we develop and achieve; first, specific goals for learning; second, strategies for reaching those goals; and third, means of determining whether or not we have met those goals" (6). Yancey deliberately uses the first person plural when describing reflection because the process is not reserved exclusively for students. She explains that reflection is both generative and an end in itself; as she puts it, "[b]oth processes and products"

[81] See also "Who Owns Writing?" by Douglas Hesse, pp. 1247-1261 in *The Norton Book of Composition Studies,* 2009.

(24). Yancey's work on the kinds of reflections possible and the ends each achieves builds a useful mechanism for creating and deploying reflective practices.

Creating opportunities for reflective practices also works as a precise counterpoint to the forces of speed culture. Since the kind of writing necessary to academic work flourishes best when slowed through drafts and (re)visionings, reflection presses time into service. For example, I ask my students to bring their papers back to a class after I have already graded and distributed them. Typically, students are baffled. Next, I ask them to read through every comment on the paper and to identify three things they would like to master for their next paper. They make a list for themselves and upload it to a virtual locker. As part of the peer revision work we do at the end of the following unit, I ask students to include with a draft of their paper, a copy of their three goals. Peer reviewers can then offer critique based on the goals set by writers themselves. As reflective practice, this exercise functions to open up time. Instead of sprinting to the next writing assignment as soon as an assignment is graded and returned, I propose spinning threads that bind one assignment to the next. I ask students to engage in close observation of their work, draw their own conclusions and apply them and, as a consequence, suggest that their writing is worth their time.

Contesting the ownership of times, as I have argued in this dissertation is essential because, as Agger explains, "[W]e must incorporate time, just as we incorporate space, into the emancipatory project, especially because time, like sexuality, is such an important medium of domination today" (232).

When I first began asking my students to examine their own papers and formulate goals, I assumed that the process itself would be enough. I found it difficult to carve out additional moments for students to return to their goals and reflect on what they had achieved. There were always more units to prepare, quantities of papers to grade, and the impetus to hurry through was very strong. I have observed similar quandaries in the instructors I have trained and evaluated. I hear myself say as I hear other instructors say, "Okay, we have to get through this now because we have a lot to do today," or some variation on the theme. So, I set myself a goal to work towards genuine reflection both in myself and in my students through what Yancey calls "reflection-in-action." This means returning to units completed and papers assessed in order to interrogate writing and pedagogy.

I ask my students to list their goals and to read through their drafts with those goals in mind. I ask them to draw conclusions about what they notice and share those conclusions with their peers and with me. I learn a great deal this way: what was working for them and what was not. For example, I learned how hard it was for them to evaluate each other's work when a female student said, "You're asking me to criticize people, and I don't like to hurt feelings or criticize anyone ever." After several trials, I found an exercise that seems to work better for now. I asked students to summarize their peers' arguments and then discuss the differences between what the writer's intent had been and what they read. This was still critique, of course, but the underlying assumption was different. Now the exercise assumed the importance of the writer's intent and the peer reader's purpose was to help clarify.

I also learned that the assignments students returned to with the most enthusiasm were the ones that began from their inquiries. My ongoing task has been to develop an inquiry topic focused enough to provide common ground for classroom work yet wide enough that each student can choose a particular topic within the broader field. James Berlin argues that "[t]he role of the teacher as problem poser is crucial, providing methods for questioning that locate the points of conflict and contradiction" (111). Berlin further ties the problem-posing teacher to the formation of a democratic and engaged citizenry, and these tenets remain crucial to the writing classroom.

In addition, knowing who my students are and what matters most to them has been an every-changing point of inquiry, in fact. Working from inquiry gives students an opportunity to develop composing skills less dependent upon the logic of the market because their purpose is to answer a question. Over the course of the semester, an instructor may move from posing the question to asking students to develop their own point of inquiry. I offer four assignment examples below.

1. For an eight-to-ten page research paper, the inquiry assignment is: Select an instance of violence, research it and explain why it happened. Sample papers have included: explaining why so many died as a result of Hurricane Katrina, explaining why the cult members at Jonestown drank the poisoned Kool-Aid, explaining why there was such a high incidence of wives being killed by military men at Fort Bragg, and explaining why Andrea Yates murdered her five children.

2. For a five-to-eight page persuasive paper, select a paranormal phenomenon, urban legend, pseudoscientific claim or conspiracy theory and debunk its existence. Sample papers have included: why the Loch Ness Monster is scientifically impossible, why the Holocaust deniers are wrong, why the evidence that Americans walked on the moon is persuasive, and why a particular psychic, for example John Edward, is a scam artists.

3. For a five-to-eight page analytical paper, select a discourse community, investigate it through field research, interviews, and readings, and come to a conclusion about how it functions and its significance to and among the larger society. Sample papers have included: an investigation into Oklahoma hunting camps, an analysis of a group of girls who watch *Grey's Anatomy* each week, and an examination of a virtual fan site for the *Survivor* reality television show.

4. For a five-to-eight page research paper, select a documentary and through observation of the documentary as well reasoned research, determine whether or not the documentary is an ethical representation of its subject. Sample papers have included: an argument about the film *Jesus Camp* as unethical in which the student contacted people presented in the documentary as part of his research and numerous contrasting arguments about the ethics of various Michael Moore films.

Students come to their own conclusions in each of these assignments and, as a consequence, students' essays are individual. In other words, uniformity of

argument and standardized responses are unlikely to emerge because students pose and answer questions. Consequently, inquiry-based assignments enrich students' literacy practices and contravene the logic of the market. Moreover, because network speed widens the scope of research activities, students may be active agents in the process of composing instead of subjects. For example, during one fifty-minute period in a computer-mediated classroom, students could look up the meaning and etymology of the word "discourse," in the Oxford English Dictionary, watch a YouTube clip with an example of teen discourse, read a film review to get background on the video clip, and locate and print three scholarly articles about teen discourse in films using a university's online database system and a networked printer.

As students work through a variety of scaffolded tasks whose intent is to enrich students' ability to come to conclusions, I note that these assignments cannot remain static. For example, one semester I reduced the scope of the discourse community analysis, assignment three above, and asked that students investigate reality show fan communities on the worldwide web. I had misjudged my students, apparently, because they had no interest in fan communities and, they claimed, even less in reality shows. As the unit evolved, I discovered that a number of students were heavily invested in particular reality shows. They just didn't want to talk about them with their peers and certainly not turn them into research fodder. Discovering the most efficacious scope of an assignment, acknowledging speed's effect and the importance of assignment currency and relevancy to students in the classes are continuous processes.

Through inquiry and through reflective work, I learned that students called upon to perform their work are more likely to feel ownership. Here performance is "[t]he act of embodying writing through voice, gesture, and movement" (226 Fishman, Lunsford, McGregor, and Otuteye). The Stanford Study of Writing, a longitudinal study of Stanford student college writing, found, among other important results, that performance "makes delivery interactive" and makes writing into a physical endeavor grounded in the world and dependent upon contextual meaning (228 Fishman et. al.). As Fishman, et al., point out, performance recalls rhetorical practices such as oratory and moves students' attention away from the computer or paper interface and towards seeing rhetorical and contextualized meaning-making as within their agency. I argue that it also helps students focus attention on the efficacy of the composition itself rather than their grades.

For one essay assignment, I asked my students to write about a place that informed their identities. Then, I asked them to select images that complemented the essay's themes and create a PowerPoint slide show, which they were to read or perform for their classmates. They practiced their presentations in small groups and revised based on their classmates' suggestions. I noticed that they asked each other questions like, "how well does that word work in this paragraph?" and "did you get a good sense of the place from what I said?" I was very pleased with their work on presentation day and, intrigued, decided to find out what they had thought about the process.

First, I asked them how their composing process has been affected when they knew they would be performing. They told me they had paid closer attention

to the revision process, and thought very hard about what their peers might like to hear. One student mentioned that he had deliberately chosen a particular image because he knew his peers would really understand what he meant. Others told me they had thought more intensely about the sound, variety, and meaning of the words they chose. Universally, they noticed they had spent more time reading through and tweaking their essays. Performances such as this one underscore the connections between audience and composing, especially when made tangible through reflection exercises.

Performance draws on the fifth canon also known as delivery. Although classically limited to voice, gestures, and physical stance, delivery like performance is shaped by audience. Kathleen Blake Yancey remediated delivery in her 2006 volume *Delivering College Composition: The Fifth Canon* in order to examine the multiple sites and media through which teachers deliver first-year writing courses; in this case, students are the instructor's audience. In performance, however, students deliver their texts to each other, and, since this audience is less mysterious than, for example, their instructor, they have a foundation for revision work. During the unit described above, I placed students in revision groups and asked them to practice their presentations and to seek and give feedback. Because I was teaching in a small computer-mediated classroom, I reserved rooms all over the building and asked each group to work in a different room. I rotated from room to room, up and down stairs, as they worked so that I could listen in and answer questions. Some students ignored me when I appeared in their rooms, but others looked startled, their voices dropped, their shoulders hunched. Finally, one outspoken student said, "You

make me nervous. It's different when it's just us." I realized again that even in a classroom prizing student voices and using student opinions to develop criteria, the instructor has the inviolable power of the grade. My students wanted to focus on their peers' opinions and their own stories as a consequence of having to perform before them.

I argue then that working from students' speed-sponsored literacies, their values, and world views as well as the pedagogical strategies of reflective work, inquiry, and performance operate together to acknowledge the speed culture presence in our lives as instructors and in the lives of our students, as well as open a space for its interrogation. Both the pedagogical and technical contexts so far described nest within the curricular, departmental, and institutional contexts described by Selber. I consider curricular adaptations below.

Time and the curriculum

Selber articulates three chief concerns in his project to develop a curriculum whose objective is to engender students literate in multiple modes of writing. First, he recommends an across-the-curriculum approach in which multi-literacies are inspired from and part of English Studies as well as other fields. Second, he suggests that the design of courses, assignments, and even individual exercises integrate the essential literacies into their work and third, he advocates for particular courses necessary to achieving multi-literacies (210-224).

I applaud Selber's interest in working across the curriculum to develop multi-literacies and propose that in order to understand well how diverse academic

fields define and treat literacies, time – and the issue of hegemonic speed – become foundational. For example, timed essays and multiple-choice examinations may constitute the primary form of assessment in some fields' lower division courses. What objectives do these assessments meet when the amount of time taken to complete an examination is important to assessment? What might be gained or lost if examinations and essays were not timed? These conversations, potentially revelatory, allow faculty across diverse fields to consider the ramifications of privileging time. Similarly, when should speed matter and what should be done in a curriculum to teach students to perform speedily? When is speed unimportant? Certainly, fast recall and quick adaptation to changing scenarios could be applicable within fields such as medicine. To what extent should, for example, the field of physics privilege speed? Because first-year writing instructors work with students who may choose to study any of a large number of fields, both they and writing program administrators will benefit from discussing these issues with their colleagues. Moreover, this dialogue should inform the curriculum of first-year writing programs.

Examining culturally accepted norms about the importance of speed and, indeed, the ways in which the clock may be subordinated or privileged ought to affect individual units, modules, assignments and certainly exercises themselves. These classroom productions are influenced by circulation, medium, and the university ecology all of which are deeply embedded in speed culture.

Within digital contexts, examining how circulation and media affect composing is necessary analytical work. Inquiry into the origin and reach of an

Internet meme may be usefully complicated though analysis of the ways in which it brings intertextuality` into being. But circulation and media concerns also can inform composing assignments. Doug Eyman asks his students to create a digital essay with a selected audience and then to "remediate it" into a different genre for a new audience. For example, students may write a book review meant for an online magazine such as *Salon* with hyperlinks and images and then remediate the book review into a text meant for traditional text magazine (Eyman personal website). The language, organization, style, and length of a composition meant for quick digestion and circulation on the Web will differ markedly from a traditional text meant for circulation among a select group of readers. Such discussions and their attendant focus on the generic conventions usefully enrich composing work. I argue that curriculum designers addressing variable media and circulation demands through their units, assignments, and exercises are more likely to achieve the goal of student-centered critical thinking. How does writing work in the lives of twenty-first century citizens? Who decides whether or not a composition has value – and how does this get decided? These questions ask students to consider issues outside the bubble of the composition classroom, yet deeply important to their composing lives.

Similarly, writing pedagogy courses and workshops for new instructors in which time – and the affordances and constrictions of speed culture – are visible criteria when examining writing assignments and units inspire new instructors to scaffold their courses more effectively. I consider more closely the usefulness of

the speed culture lens for new instructors under the umbrella of department and institutional contexts.

Speed and the institution

Graduate students in English Studies accept teaching assistantships for a variety of reasons, some because they wish to teach, others because they need financial support. However, most universities depend on graduate students' teaching labor. The research university perpetuates itself though this process through guaranteed labor to teach first-year writing courses and a never-ending supply of teachers. I do not here imply that the work of writing program administrators, usually over-stretched faculty and advanced graduate teaching assistants, is inconsequential. Indeed, when the labor conditions are fair, the opportunities and joys of the work are enormous.[82] Still, graduate teaching assistants' time and labor become fodder for many universities and I acknowledge this reality.[83]

Training graduate teaching assistants and, adjunct instructors, therefore, becomes a contradictory endeavor indeed when pedagogy workshops and courses fail to begin from the premise that both teaching and scholarly identities are work identities embedded within speed culture. Moreover, GTA's teaching identities

[82] For discussion of graduate assistant labor issues, see *Rhetoric and Resistance in the Corporate Academy* by Christopher Carter, particularly pp. 135-154.

[83] The Writing Program Administrators Council accepted the Portland Resolution in 1992 which established a framework for WPA work. In 1996, the Council adopted the Statement on Intellectual Work in order to provide a means to assess the intellectual contributions of Writing Program Administrators. Despite these reasonable measures, the Academy continues to undervalue writing program administrative work. Theresa Enos and Shane Borrowman's 2008 edited volume *The Promise and Perils of Writing Program Administration*, replete with empirical and personal narratives, highlights the issue.

ought to be informed by their scholarly identities instead of separated by programmatic boundaries.

The inquiry framework can locate curricula within the interstice of praxis and theory. Its flexibility promotes reflective practices. In order to allow new instructors to inquire into the teaching of writing and to develop a curriculum relevant to their own scholarly interests, I argue that most graduate students' first semester should be free of teaching duties. This is not an unusual model; however, neither is it the standard.

In this model, GTAs will be encouraged to design a first-year writing curriculum through selection of readings or textbooks, as well as close reading of appropriate composition and rhetoric scholarly work, teaching practicums, teacher observations and trained and active faculty mentors. The institution's urgent needs for labor give way before the incremental, scaffolded inquiry model essential to permeating the barriers between scholar and teacher identities. I argue, then, that the utilitarian nature of graduate student labor can be changed with a detour from speed culture's insistent sprint to feeding the market system.

In other words, I propose turning towards a humanization of the university system by recognizing the value of the individual scholar and refusing to privilege the market-driven literacies sponsored by speed. The rhetorical contexts of composing work in the twenty-first century, varied as they are, emerge more and more as entangled with hegemonic speed. Yet, the contexts are varied and should be mirrored in the kinds of writing students are asked to do.

I have interrogated the relationship between technology and speed in order to examine the potentials for twenty-first century composing work in this dissertation and argue that a paradigm that had not been previously demarcated dominates cultural ways of seeing the world. I propose English Studies learn to critique the language and grammar of speed culture.

Composition and rhetoric scholars and teachers now recognize the ways in which the technological lives we lead construct our identities. Students may or may not have deep access to those technologies, yet speed's dominance informs this technological world and therefore informs their understandings of the composing world. Therefore, writing programs must begin to consider where and how to resist the hand of clock time, as well as where and how to relish speed. Time zones cannot be slowed down and a call to do so is naïve at best. However, as Richard Smith argues, "[t]his suggests not the need to operate according to the same regimes of speed as the economy of culture but to rethink the notion of political time, to invent democratic speed" (7). Similarly, I propose that we rethink the notion of classroom time and consider the multiple paces of speed within which we and our students live.

I have traced an outline of the relationship between writing and the age of speed, but the age of speed by nature shifts continuously. The lines will be mapped and mapped again and new potentials arise. This is an age of speed. This is an age of writing.

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