HOW SIGHT BECOMES SUBJECT: CULTURAL IMAGE DESIGN IN THE AGE OF DIGITAL RHETORIC

By

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To the Faculty of Washington State University:

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HOW SIGHT BECOMES SUBJECT: CULTURAL IMAGE DESIGN IN THE AGE OF DIGITAL RHETORIC

Abstract

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This dissertation challenges machine-based understandings of digital rhetoric and literacy. Rather than focus on the tools themselves as integral to the process of multimodal composition, this dissertation turns the emphasis to the body in online communication as an active agent in doing digital rhetoric. In online cross-cultural communication, the body takes on either the role of perceiving or perceived in the relationship of sender to receiver. For online cross-cultural communication to be successful between bodies that reside within different discourse communities, affective identification can be gained through the hybridity of image and word. To demonstrate, ancient and contemporary examples of visual rhetoric are analyzed, transcending both space and time and on-and-offline hegemonic blocks. In analyzing the tension between image and word as rhetorical symbol systems, the ways in which image design becomes hegemonized to reflect the dominant discourse is critiqued by analyzing the power structures that gate keep their manifestations into the public sphere. To conclude, this dissertation offers two avenues for further research in the areas of critical digital literacy as a way to enact ethical image design: coding and cross-cultural collaborations.
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Dedication

To Kevin, for holding my hand and carrying my heart.

To Charlie, for never leaving my side, ever.

To Kristin, for mentoring and friendship.
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

This dissertation begins with a story. This story begins during the 6th or 7th century CE and is closely tied to both Buddhism and Chinese mythology—though its relevance has grown to apply to most East-Asian cultures over time, most prominently preserved and maintained within Japanese culture (Wakabayashi). It is the story of the tengu. The tengu are described as mountain and tree goblins with supernatural powers. These powers include shape shifting, apparition, and the ability to appear within the dreams of the living uninvited (Schumacher).

The mythology of tengu is tied to both war and religion. Known primarily for mischief and trickery, the tengu are traditionally seen as the enemies of Buddhism, setting fires to temples and meddling with monks that exhibit vanity or malice as opposed to serving the collective. Tied to this myth is the belief that upon engaging in malice or corruption, Buddhist monks themselves transition into the identity of tengu in death, serving as a warning to monks that are still alive of the consequences of mischief (Wakabayashi). The tengu are the creatures that disrupt and meddle the human subconscious and are traditionally not seen as a friend or tolerated entity to humans. Not only are they feared, but also, they are resented for the destruction they cause to humanity. While the mythology of the tengu originated within Korean and Chinese culture, with the introduction of Buddhism into Japan in the late 7th century CE, its narrative has most widely been practiced and celebrated as a part of Japanese culture (Schumacher). As cultural myth within Japanese discourse, the tengu can be understood under two particular manifestations: the Karasu Tengu and the Yamabushi (or Konoha) Tengu (Fig. 1.1). The Karasu Tengu portrays the figure with the head of a bird and beak and is more animal like than human, often closely resembling the characteristics of a crow. The Yamabushi Tengu also maintains the aviation
characteristics of birds by prominently showcasing wings, however these characteristics are combined with human attributes in emphasizing these

Figure 1.1: *Karasu* and *Yamabushi* Lanterns on Festival Float, Donotsuku Festival, Inatori City. Image rights Mark Schumacher. http://www.onmarkproductions.com/html/tengu.shtml

animal-like features on a human face, with a long nose replacing the beak. While the *Karasu Tengu* have been closely linked to the initial representation, the *Yamabushi* are meant to signify the transition in death of Buddhist monks to *tengu* (Schumacher).

Regardless of the manifestation, the *tengu* have been widely recognized as containing a few dominant characteristics as it pertains to their visualization and design. These characteristics are not only consistent across different material representations such as paintings, sculptures, masks, and other cultural heritage items within Japanese culture, but they also maintain a visual design that situates the perspective of the symbol in order to preserve a history and cultural knowledge surrounding the myth. Without these visual markers, not only would the two manifestations of the *tengu* be conflated as one, but also, the meaning surrounding the myth runs the risk of being misunderstood or lost altogether.
Stories like the *tengu* are understood as cultural heritage. This cultural heritage is rhetorical as well as material. The material manifestations of the *tengu* are cultural heritage texts representing the myth within a Japanese discourse. This community that is created as a result of a particular belief system or rhetoric is a discourse community. In order to understand these texts, individuals within a particular discourse community need to understand the ideology of the discourse in addition to the visual rhetoric used by the community in order to communicate.

Susan Kesler Rumsey describes the literacy for cultural rhetorics as heritage literacy, she defines as the ability to demonstrate “an explanation of how people transfer literacy knowledge from generation to generation and how certain practices, tools, and concepts are adapted, adopted, or alienated from use, depending on the context” (Rumsey 575). However, as discourse continues to be fluid within a community of people, so too are the tools with which to enact rhetoric. Over time the heritage literacy of the *tengu* has been modified alongside digital tools for communication that have not only altered the form of the *tengu* in its visual and material design, but also as rhetorical texts in how they are meant to be understood and used as cultural knowledge as they enter communication networks outside of the discourse they originated within.

In thinking through the representations of the *tengu* that operate as figures of speech, these visualizations are complex multimodal texts. In her discussion of heritage literacy, Kesler Rumsey argues that heritage literacy practices transcend alphabetic literacy, arguing that it “emphasizes ‘codified sign systems,’ such as cuneiform, hieroglyph, or even quilts and manner of dress, as much as it emphasizes more traditional literacies” (576). Rather than maintain the visual manifestation of an animal-like demon most often represented in its *Karasu* form, in the design of the *tengu* using technological tools, they have been more prominently depicted as *Yamabushi*,
shifting the myth from dangerous creature to protective human-like war heroes over time (Schumacher). Does medium change the message? This question is one of many that I look to in this dissertation as I explore how visual manifestations of cultural knowledge shift alongside changing tools and cross-cultural communication.

As contemporary electronic platforms continue encompass ways of composing beyond the written word, communities are adapting and communicating on a cross-cultural level to enact what Marshall McLuhan has referred to as the “global village”. In her definition of heritage literacy, Kesler Rumsey also discusses the ways in which knowledge can be alienated from a community and repurposed for another. This practice has often been referred to as cultural appropriation. As this I demonstrate in the chapters to follow, this alienation of symbol from origin can significantly influence how cultural knowledge is represented in its symbolic form. As Kesler Rumsey notes, “[h]eritage literacy is also multimodal. It accounts for the passage of all sorts of literate practices, not necessarily or exclusively print of alphabetic literacies…they ascribe to a pattern, a set of signifying symbols” (576). In its contemporary form, the *tengu* is most widely represented globally in the Japanese Unicode system of emojis. While I explore and discusses the history of the emojis at length, it is important to highlight the ways in which the material manifestations of the *tengu* have differed across electronic communication platforms, which causes me to question who the primary audience is in relation to how these symbols are designed. Hosted and maintained by the non-profit organization of the Unicode Consortium, emojis are represented by a 16-bit universal binary code, which ensures that each 16-bit code is maintained no matter which electronic platform emojis are used within.

Here’s where it gets complicated. Because the Unicode Consortium is responsible for maintaining the binary code, the designs of emojis are outsourced by the platforms that host their
keyboard. As such, the design choices and consistency of those choices differ significantly across platforms and designer. Depending on the symbol and platform, these design choices don’t always impact the interpretation of the symbol or the cultural knowledge surrounding the text, as is the case with characters such as the smiley face. However, the *tengu* is an example where subtle design choices can impact the ways in which the symbol represents a larger myth or rhetoric for a particular discourse community. As an emoji character, the *tengu* is consistently represented in its *Yamabushi* form across platforms, with the red war paint of the samuri and the overtly human characteristics with the bird-like attributes in features like the long “beak-like nose (see Fig.2).

![Figure 1.2: “Goblin Face” emoji design across four platforms. Emojipedia.](https://emojipedia.org/japanese-goblin/)

While these visual elements were initially maintained across platforms in the very first Apple iOS 5 release, as emojis continued to be updated and picked up by different electronic platforms like LG and Microsoft, the design of this symbol is no longer consistent. Despite design guidelines laid out by the Unicode Consortium, designers still deviate from particular
elements that remain central to the cultural origin of the keyboard. For example, Emojipedia—which is a repository for archiving all of the different visualizations of emoji characters across platforms—displays various platform designs of the tengu within the same page (see Fig. 1.2). When looking at these designs alongside one another it is evident that the angle in which the tengu is represented significantly impacts the interpretation. By choosing to showcase the tengu in a front-facing perspective, as the platforms LG and HTC have chosen to do, the symbol loses its long nose and aviation characteristics. In its decidedly Yamabushi form across platforms, some representations choose to emphasize the overtly human characteristics, while others preserve the long nose and maintain the heritage literacy surrounding the myth and origin of the symbol.

Why this change in perspective for a character that, in Western culture, does not hold any particular relevance? The story of the tengu matters in thinking about the ways that the preservation of cultural knowledge is altered based on who wields the decisions surrounding image design and subsequent use. In thinking through the ways in which power is negotiated within globalized cross-cultural communication, understanding how the visual becomes repurposed or redesigned necessarily requires an understanding of hegemony. In what follows, I analyze the ways in which hegemony manifests in the visual. I argue that representations of bodies must be a collaborative endeavor that allows for agency in how the Other is represented. Designing visual representations for the Other is unethical. In this dissertation I investigate the digital as an avenue to showcase why.

To do this work, I play with the concept of perspective, situating my positionality as someone looking into a culture to which I do not belong in order to practice what I refer to as “ethical image design”. In order to frame why I believe ethical image design needs to be a
concept we weave into contemporary visual communication practices, I offer two examples of what happens when an the image becomes commodified. To demonstrate, I analyze ancient and contemporary visual rhetoric of two distinct cultures to showcase the ways in which cross-cultural communication is both affective and fluid between non-discursive and discursive rhetoric.

To frame this analysis, I chronicle discussions in digital rhetoric in order to situate the ways in which visual rhetoric is impacted by both the media that encompasses it as well as the audience of who the image is designed for. Relying primarily on the ways in which decolonial rhetoricians such as Dylan Miner and Rico-Qusipe Agnoli have situated the visual as language, I analyze how these conversations can have intersections in thinking about the relationship of form to content in cross-cultural communication. I also seek to expand our understanding of critical digital literacy, referring to the work of Angela Haas to argue that any making, assemblage, or composing is always a cultural and multimodal process.

My first analysis focuses visual rhetoric during contact-era in the Southern Western Hemisphere. As a Latinx woman, it is important for me to situate how I am looking at the visual within my own ancestry in order to articulate what I am seeing as I analyze visual rhetoric historically. Using affect as a way to move between discursive and non-discursive rhetoric, I discuss failure, negotiation, and success in cross-cultural communication between the Incans and the Spaniards, noting the ways in which hybridity is used to embody the role of visual subject.

My second analysis returns to the Japanese Unicode system of emojis, focusing the ways in which their contemporary use online is both discursive and non-discursive. Discussing their history, I question the ways in which ideologies are coded into the form of the symbols
themselves, critiquing their default despite their Eastern origin. Building off of a discussion concerning their history, I also discuss the nuances between kaomoji, emoticons, and emojis.

In chapter four, I look explicitly at the Unicode Consortium and how the process of proposing, accepting, and designing emojis is a form of cultural gatekeeping that is informed by hegemonic blocks. In analyzing this practice, this chapter looks at the ways in which current design practices that strip myth from symbol in order to make the keyboard more accessible for a wide variety of audiences. Focusing on gun and Chinese take out box emojis, I push back against the claims that the image is neutral by demonstrating their deeply political ramifications and Western-coded ideologies.

My final chapter looks to the work of digital preservation and curation practices in digital rhetoric to consider the ways in which cultural knowledge could be reimagined as metadata. In looking to the work of the Center for Digital Scholarship and Curation at Washington State University, I look to the content management software, Mukurtu, and the Plateau Peoples Web Portal as a way to preserve and maintain cultural knowledge during the design process. To conclude, this dissertation offers some final considerations for reimaging critical digital literacy as both collaborative and preservation. What might it mean to curate during the invention stage of the visual texts we produce? How does working with cultural partners enact ethical design? As a beginning to this conversation, I argue that reseeding digital rhetoric as action helps to make visible the bodies that design, interpret, and question the rhetoric used to communicate in an ever-changing world.
CHAPTER TWO: THE BODIES THAT MAKE AND THE BODIES THAT INTERPRET

Techno-caution: Conflating Tool for Action

This is about connecting bodies to tools used. It’s about making identities more visible as writing technologies continue to render a community in which the gap between sender and receiver continues to widen. Contrary to the ways in which the computer has been traditionally seen in popular imagination as a way to facilitate cross-cultural communication, conceptions of literacy and tool have been conflated to emphasize the product they assemble, rather than the people they connect.

I want to bring the bodies back to the forefront of how people think about communicating in a global society. With the distance computer interfaces create, and the disembodied dialectic their platforms encourage, I want to turn our attention to the role of design in online communication. When I refer to bodies in this dissertation, I’m working from Anne Wysocki’s argument that we enact two bodies when we communicate: a perceiving body and a perceived one (“Introduction,” Composing (Media) = Composing (Embodiment)). Wysocki’s duality vision as it pertains to bodies allows me to work from the perspective of both sender and receiver as I approach the role of design in communication. At times I will work from the understanding of a body as corporeal, one in which we view, feel, and use to create. In other instances, I will work from the role of the body as receiver, an identity that is constructed as a result of discourse communities and literacy practices within those communities, which works from various assumptions that are culturally situated. While computers and composition scholars have done extensive work in analyzing the ways in which the structure of the spaces themselves invite or
ignore particular communities or bodies\textsuperscript{1}, for this dissertation I will look at the literacy practices and rhetoric that connect sender and receiver. In other words, I will explore the relationship perceived and perceiving have to one another when we consider the literacy and tools in question. To do this work, I expand upon the role of design as it pertains to digital literacy in order to facilitate affective communication among bodies. As I examine this relationship in the chapters to follow, I refer to \textit{design} as the cohesive unity of modes, elements, and discourse to invent, arrange, and interpret texts.

In my application of design, I will argue that design, as a verb, cannot exist independent of discourse and subsequent cultural norms and material resources made available within settings. Insofar as there is a relationship between design and literacy, I will endeavor to complicate computers and composition’s current engagement with the term “digital” as both a rhetoric and a literacy rooted in electronic machine-based communication. I will do so by reorienting the term as an embodied practice, arguing that design is always dependent on the agents or bodies that are integral to any multimodal text. I will challenge current definitions and assertions that are based on the tendency to remain grounded in canonical Western-based understandings of rhetoric and literacy. This grounding in hegemony as it pertains to a Western-based history further perpetuates the idea that there is one “rhetoric” as opposed a discourse-specific practice in which we know there are many. The field\textsuperscript{2} has understood digital rhetoric as a singular application rather than pluralistic approach, and I will argue that the same focus extends to its bodies whereby it is presumed those doing the work of digital literacy and rhetoric come from, and enact, specific literacy practices and user identities.

\textsuperscript{1} See Selfe and Selfe (1994); Arola and Wysocki (2012); Yergeau et al. (2013)
\textsuperscript{2} When I refer to the “field” I am referring to the subfield of computers and composition within writing studies.
To address this issue of presumed homogenous users, in this chapter I seek to fuse identity and design to identify the ways in which current conceptions of digital literacy and rhetoric privilege hegemony. I believe that an understanding of who we think of when we use terms like “digital,” “literacy,” and even “rhetoric” helps us understand the value in the role bodies play as both a corporeal and a socially constructed identity in the texts we create with the material resources available. Such understandings not only return the focus to the purpose of any given rhetorical situation, which is to connect people through communication, but also does so through an understanding of digital literacy and rhetoric that is rooted in human-centered design as opposed to tool-oriented competence.

**Laying the Foundation**

Before I proceed with a critique of the field’s current enactments of digital literacy and rhetoric, I establish definitions of not only the types of authoring practices that occur within online communication platforms, but also the different components that make up how I understand and apply the concept of design in later chapters. I believe that the material resources necessary in order to design communication fall within one of two categories: multimodal or multimedia. I then lay down the foundation of these terms with an analysis into current conversations that take up their application in both digital literacy and rhetoric. From there, I unpack why I believe we should refigure the term “digital” as an embodied practice as opposed to electronic-machine based competency by considering the materiality of both multimodal and multimedia authoring.
Multimodal vs. Multimedia

When discussing the ways in which we come to create and assemble texts in order to communicate with one another, computers and composition has widely recognized that given the rhetorical situation surrounding a text, sometimes-alphabetic writing alone is not the most effective way to reach an audience. For example, if I wanted to create a text to inform college students about the number of animals returned to a shelter at the end of an academic year, using alphabetic text alone might not be the most successful way to do it. If I were communicating with a group of veterinarians who were already familiar with the problem, then relying on alphabetic text and statistics to guide my argument would be effective. On the other hand, if I combine images with alphabetic-text to not only depict a representation of an animal itself but also accompany this image with statistics, the author may be more successful in reaching college students because the visuals create more of a potential for an emotional connection with the content, one which might not be as successful with just alphabetic text. This type of text, in which image and alphabetic are both used, is known as a multimodal composition. While all writing can be seen as multimodal in some sense—such as the visual arrangement of blank white space to text—multimodal composition is a purposeful integration of different modes to create a text in order to communicate.

While the term multimodality has risen in prevalence in writing classrooms and scholarship, it is not a practice that is entirely dependent on electronic tools in order to be enacted (Shipka). Despite this, it would seem as though many writing teachers assume a multimodal approach constitutes asking students to work with technology in some capacity.
Modes, however, are not a technology-specific resource and instead can be traced back to the body and how we retain, convey, and process information.

Though the word mode has been traditionally used in composition studies as a way to frame particular genres of writing such as expository or narrative, Gunther Kress and Theo Van Leeuwen define mode as representations of information or “semiotic resources which allow the simultaneous realization of discourses” (22). Put into action as a way of conceiving different learning styles, Neil Fleming’s VARK inventory classifies the different sensory modes as visual, auditory, read/write, and kinesthetic. Modes are not only channels for retaining information, such as seeing or hearing a text, but also refer to the representations of information. In this sense, multimodality is an embodied practice that requires the perceiving body—one which sees, or hears a text—and also the perceived body, which recognizes that image and word together create a more successful message for a given audience rather than alphabetic text alone. In fact, the process of creating a multimodal text is a design process, one that recognizes the role elements, resources, and discourse have to one another in order to represent and process information.

While multimodality requires the sensory channels for processing information as well as an understanding of how representations of information work together within a given rhetorical situation to create successful texts, there is an authoring practice that is instead focused on tools and their relevance for the texts we produce and distribute. Whereas multimodality is concerned with an attention to the unity of modes, the practice of multimedia authoring encompasses the utilization of the tools and materials necessary to produce or distribute a text. As Lauer argues it is a matter of context and audience as to whether multimodal or multimedia is the appropriate authoring term given a specific rhetorical situation:
Each term is associated with certain stages of the continuum along which a text evolves from design/process to production/distribution. There is a greater emphasis on design and process in the classroom, which makes the term multimodal more suitable in that context, and a greater emphasis on production and distribution in non-academic or industry contexts which explains the use of the term multimedia in that context. (“Contending with Terms” 23)

Within each concept, both multimodal and multimedia contain particular components necessary to embody that practice. In essence, while multimodal may in fact be the correct term used by many writing teachers that ask students to compose in sensory modalities linked to a focus on the rhetorical nature of design, thinking explicitly about technology and its incorporation as a tool is really a multimedia authoring practice (see Fig. 2.1). Whereas multimodality considers the role of design, multimedia authoring considers the ways in which a text gets assembled and dispersed to an audience. In doing this work, media as explained by W.J.T. Mitchell are characterized by two distinct categories: transmitter and habitat (Mitchell 208). Regardless of whether media play the role of the transmitter in which a message is being sent, or the place in which the content resides, media are middles (208). As it pertains to communication, media act as either the repository or the channel. Media do not necessarily need to be digital either, though they often end up being so when it comes to the role of media as a distribution network within the 21st century. In returning to my example concerning the multimodal composition of animal shelter statistics at the end of an academic year, media could be seen as either a poster board to which the composition I created was tacked on to in a dorm room, or it could be the Facebook newsfeed my text is circulated within.

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3 Some understand Mitchell’s explanation of media as hyperbolic.
I refer to the concept of multimodality as the authoring term that connects itself most explicitly to design. I make these connections because modes are sensory and discursive—dependent upon the discourse surrounding the author, text, and receiver, which evokes Wysocki’s assertion, that embodiment is both a formulation of identity and also a corporeal manifestation as it pertains to the texts we design. If media are middles, they are simply the production and distribution of the text we’ve already created. That is, unless we are designing the media themselves, they instead serve as networks to host or disseminate text. Text, in this sense, is simply the “phenomenon which is the result of the articulation in one or more semiotic modes of a discourse” (Kress and Van Leeuwen 40). The way the text moves is a multimedia concern. The way the text is invented and the process by which it is made is multimodal. In addition, the way in which we experience the text as an embodied practice where we see, hear, or feel it as the receiver is also multimodal.

Like Kress and Van Leeuwen, I believe this understanding of texts and modes makes room for the role of design. In their definition, design refers to the style, arrangement, and
delivery of a text and is enacted under the process of two considerations. The first component of design refers to the formulation of a discourse, meaning, an envisioned audience that informs the choices made and media used in order to create and circulate a successful text. The other considers the unity of elements, or the modes that encompass the text and the resources necessary for it to come together (21). I share the same considerations as Kress and Van Leeuwen and argue that an attention to discourse, material resources, and modes are all integral to effective design for communication. However, in my own definition, I also add the notion of interpretation, which calls upon the role of the receiver in order for design to be effective. Interpretation makes room for analysis, which calls the body to action as a perceiving body. In order for the perceiving body to interpret a text in a way the author intended, I believe design is key. Therefore, I expand upon Kress and Van Leeuwen’s definition to argue that interpretation makes room for design—and multimodality—in both the role of sender and receiver.

Current Conversations of Multimedia and Multimodal Composition in both Digital Rhetoric and Digital Literacy

To date, much of the focus in the field of computers and composition is on the media that create multimedia texts (Welch; Barnett and Boyle). For example, the idea the recent focus on studying the post human and the agency machines and technology have outside of human influence. Under this focus, media exist independently of the people that create and use these tools, and much of the emphasis ends up being on the affordances of the tool for authoring as opposed to its role as either a transmitter or habitat for content. If we consider Aristotle’s

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4 Much of the attention on the machines themselves stems from the philosophy branch of Object Oriented Ontology (OOO) as its been taken up by both computers and writing and digital humanities scholars in the early 2000’s.
definition of rhetoric, “the art of discovering the available means of persuasion in any given
situation” then the role of media become part of the means, not the entire focus as the situation is
not only discursive but also kairotic. While exploring new technologies and the ways these
technologies inform the types of text we can create are important, I would like to further unpack
Aristotle’s definition to consider the role the body plays in its relationship to media as a tool for
production distribution, and also interpretation. I turn to multimodality as an overarching term
because bodies are integral to multimodal texts. I will first analyze the analysis/production binary
of digital rhetoric and will then move toward how understanding digital rhetoric as an ecology of
practice helps us to consider the ways in which discourse and identity shape our relationship to
media and mode. Doing so will help to unravel the role of design in literacy and rhetoric and
how the term digital can be refigured as an embodied practice that moves from media-centric to
mode-specific.

**Digital Rhetoric**

According to Dennis Barron, “the first writing technology was writing itself” (“From
Pencils to pixels: The stages of literacy technology”). While the term “technology” may always
be in flux, and calls for an expansion in composing platforms and communication channels
continue to be focused on new media contexts, conversations surrounding how to approach and
utilize digital tools are not necessarily new. Richard Lanham, one of the first scholars
acknowledged within the humanities to directly address ‘digital rhetoric’ in *The Electronic*
Word: Democracy, Technology, and the Arts asserted the following in regards to electronic media⁵,

Electronic media are essentially dynamic rather than static. This dynamism implies a new future for criticism, one where experimental measurement will figure as largely as critical fiat, and a new history of it as well. For the bi-stable decorum that supplies the premise of electronic text has been the fundamental premise of rhetorical education from the Greeks onward…Rhetoric becomes, through the digital equivalences such a matrix can plot, a general theory for all the arts and letters. (Lanham 16)

For Lanham, digital rhetoric is situated in the arts as a way of understanding and reading the fusion of visual and alphabetic modes with the introduction of the computer into literacy practices. In his approach, Lanham developed the binary of looking at and through texts. Though overly reductive, I find this binary a useful starting point for thinking about the role of design alongside digital rhetoric. For example, Lanham’s attention to looking at texts calls into question the relationship different elements have in relation to one another on the page. This attention is multimodal—to which Lanham acknowledges the relationship spatial, visual, and textual elements have to one another in order to create an effective message.

On the other end of his definition, Lanham also discusses digital rhetoric as a method for looking through texts, where the focus is instead on the argument that’s being presented in its textual form. While I agree with Lanham that an important component of digital rhetoric understands the multimodal choices that go into a text, I argue that it is impossible to take an approach where we’re asked to look beyond these multimodal components. Whether or not we’re

⁵ Lanham is not the “first” scholar in the humanities to use the term “digital rhetoric”, though he is often credit as so (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Digital_rhetoric#Definition). For other humanities scholars who define or explain digital rhetoric in the early 1990’s see Kathleen Welch and Elizabeth Losh. For scholars before Lanham, see Lester Faigley.
conscious of our capacity to be persuaded by the type of font, or the layout of text on a page, these material components that factor into our interpretation of a text cannot exist independently of the content it delivers.

Since Lanham’s definition in the early 1990’s, many computers and composition scholars have sought to define digital rhetoric. In an approach similar to Lanham that creates a binary for understanding the term, Douglas Eyman asserts digital rhetoric is “the application of rhetorical theory (as an analytic method or heuristic for production) to digital texts and performances” (*Digital Rhetoric: Theory, Method, Practice* 44). Working from a vantage point of analysis (looking at) and production (looking toward or through texts as products to be distributed) shares similarities in Lanham’s looking at and through dichotomy. However, unlike Lanham who sees digital rhetoric as a term more concerned with an ability to interpret rather than author, Eyman begins to work from the role of sender, discussing the ways in which digital rhetoric informs the invention and production of a text. For Eyman, much of this definition stems from Zappen’s engagement with the term digital rhetoric in “Digital Rhetoric: Toward an Integrated Theory.” Zappen’s use of the term, digital rhetoric, necessarily concerns itself with an analysis and production model, but also looks at the digital as a platform, offering particular affordances, constraints, and distinct characteristics for the formation of digital identities and communities (29). Unlike Lanham, Eyman’s understanding of the term beings to consider the discourse surrounding communication, and how the media play a role in how the message gets both crafted and received by its audience.

Within the computers and composition community, the concept that media perpetuates particular ideologies and conceptions of community and default user are also not new. As Selfe and Selfe argue, designs like that of the Microsoft Windows desktop interface often reinforce
conceptions of a user that may exclude communities of people that deviate outside of a default-user (“The Politics of the Interface”). What’s important to consider in these ideological conceptions of who might come to use, analyze, or understand media as resources for doing digital rhetoric are the ways in which designing for identities that extend outside of a default user are perhaps retrofitted or redesigned rather than initially coded into the invention of electronic platforms (Yerageau et al.). This is where design becomes an important component of digital rhetoric because it makes room for an ability to invent texts that encompass this wider audience while also attending to a purpose for creating the text. Design becomes crucial not only in inventing and arranging resources and modes that encompass a text, but also in designing the networks and paths for which a text moves to reach an audience.

While digital rhetoric definitions largely concern themselves with a way of understanding the media that encompass analysis and production of computer-mediated work, circulation of content in order to reach a wider audience in the texts distribution is also a central component. In her definition, Elizabeth Losh in Virtualpolitik: An Electronic History of Government Media-Making in a time of War, Scandal, Disaster, Miscommunication, and Mistakes addresses the public component of digital rhetoric, arguing that digital media give us the capability of disseminating and distributing content to wider audiences (Losh 47). Likening the public sphere to Western-based classical rhetoric conceptions of audience, Losh essentially transplants an ancient rhetoric for a contemporary audience. However, with a wider audience comes an attention to the concept of what Marshall McLuhan referred to as a “global society” in The Medium is the Message.

A larger audience requires a more thoughtful consideration of interpretation and the cultural norms and identities at play in how a text is read and interpreted. I argue that as a result
of this attention to classical rhetoric, identity becomes hegemonized and designing for a default user or target audience makes this wider distribution largely ineffective based it is based largely on a particular community. I will discuss this paradox later on in the examples to follow, however, I argue that through design, we can better produce and interpret online communication for wider audiences when we not only expand our definitions of “digital,” but also set the terms for how discourse plays a role in for the texts we produce and distribute with media.

In order to understand digital tools as media for composing and reading texts, Colin Brooke’s *Lingua Fracta: Towards a Rhetoric of New Media* envisions the interface as a dialectical interplay. Drawing from canonical Western-based classical rhetoric like Losh, Brooke argues that the interface is located between technology and rhetoric as a space to understand the ways in which the canons might be revisited and refigured for new media contexts (Brooke xii). Whereas Mitchell thought of this third space as the media itself, Brooke argues that it joins humans to the tools.

Like Eyman’s attention to the ways in which the media invite or ignore particular communities of people, I also am intrigued by Brooke’s argument that media are spaces to join humans to their resources, and as a result, how rhetoric might in turn shape media. Insofar as how this is enacted, Brooke argues for a focus on ecology, one that considers the environment that shapes the technology and its subsequent use. In order to ground and justify his ecology approach, Brooke turns to N. Katherine Hayles use of the term in *Writing Machines*, stating, “the phrase suggests that the relationships between different media are as diverse and complex as those between different organisms coexisting within the same ecotome” (Hayles qtd. in Brooke 39). In proposing to reframe the canons as ecologies of practice for doing digital rhetoric, Brooke argues,
Ecologies of practice focus instead on the strategies and tactics that we bring to bear on new media at the same time our technologies constrain and empower us. The canons serve this project less as an exhaustive set of terms than they do as analytic and productive starting points from which we might begin a sustained engagement with discursive technologies. (41)

Thinking about digital rhetoric from the perspective of ecologies of practice helps to connect the bodies to the tools it uses. In addition, this focus also does important work in recognizing the ways in which discourse informs or constrains the media itself, calling attention to how identity is shaped by, and in turn shapes media.

While Brooke does not directly engage with the term ‘digital rhetoric’, *Lingua Fracta* unpacks the dynamic relationship between rhetoric and technology through dialectical interplay, one in which recognizes the need to rework and revise traditional Western-based approaches to how we understand rhetorical theory in more contemporary contexts. By situating the canons from an ecological perspective, Brooke draws on the work of Trimbur, Fuller, and Syverson, working particularly from Syverson’s model of ecological systems of environmental structures of distribution, emergence, embodiment, and enaction as a way to understand the canons within the framework of new media landscapes (39). Like Brooke, Anne Wysocki also stresses the need for recognizing the discourse surrounding a text and the ways in which the materiality of that text is influenced by its environment, arguing that when we refer to digital, “new media” is often the term used, but it doesn’t have to be, stating

“New media texts” those that have been made by composers who are aware of the range of materiality’s of texts and who then highlight the materiality: such composers design texts that help readers/consumers/viewers stay alert to how any text—like its composers
and readers—doesn’t function independently of how it is made and in what contexts.
Such composers design texts that make as overtly visible as possible the values they
embody…new media texts do not have to be digital; instead any text that has been
designed so that its materiality is not effaced can count as new media. (Wysocki 15)
This attention to the materiality of media and the ways in which these components are
utilized and made visible to its audience brings me back to an attention to design and the types of
composing that are enacted through digital rhetoric. As Lanham argues, interpretation plays a
pivotal role in our ability to recognize the role modes have in relation to one another through
online texts. However, Wysocki’s assertions that the materiality surrounding the text, much like
Brooke’s attention to ecology, contrast heavily with this looking through model where he argues
one should see a text for its mere argument. In addition, Eyman also discusses the potentials for
production with digital tools, making note of how these tools may invite or limit communities
based on how we design, distribute, or interpret them. Expanding on this notion of discourse
most explicitly, Brooke approaches digital rhetoric from the understanding that regardless of the
role we play as sender or receiver, we shape and are shaped by the tools we use in order to
deliver a message.

With those tools come particular values or ideologies that are communicated. Wysocki
argues that in our understanding of new media authoring—be that multimodal or multimedia—we
need to make those values visible. To those ends, I turn to conversations surrounding literacy
to examine the values that are communicated through the proficiencies and competencies that
have been advocated to-date by those in the field. Such understandings of the ways that ideology
and literacy shape our understandings of media help to illuminate the concept of design as a
deeply discursive and material practice.
Digital Literacy

With new tools come new literacy practices for not only reading, but also what it means to compose. As a discipline, composition studies have published or revised position statements on literacy to recognize the role these new tools play in our ability to teach writing. For example, the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) developed a position statement on 21st century literacies, which includes the ability to “create, critique, analyze, and evaluate multimedia texts” (“NCTE Definition of 21st Century Literacies”). This emphasis on the ability to not only produce texts but also to analyze them is important. However, the explicit focus on the term multimedia as opposed to multimodal communicates certain values about materiality surrounding new media texts. In returning to Mitchell’s definition of media as both habitats for content as well as transmitters for content to be distributed, does this literacy definition really make sense? I argue that literacy conceptions rooted in the tool as opposed to the human-centered emphasis in the purpose of communication risks putting the tool at the forefront of how we think about communication, rather than a focus on what we choose to communicate and why.

While the NCTE takes an approach rooted in the tool to ground how we should understand literacy in 21st century contexts, the New London Group urges for a focus on the role design plays in connecting people to the structures they write within. Another example of the discipline that set the terms for how writing teachers are to understand digital literacy is the New London Group’s position statement on multiliteracies titled, “From a Pedagogy of Multiliteracies: Designing Social Futures.” This position statement breaks down the need to rethink literacy under two principles: the what and the how. In addressing this, the New London
Group focuses extensively on design to do this work, arguing that design, “connects to the idea that learning and productivity are the results of the designs (the structures) of complex systems of people, environments, technology, beliefs, and texts” (193). In executing this argument, the New London Group does not refer to technology explicitly, but instead chooses to recognize how available tools change based on the socio-economic conditions surrounding our learning environments.

Christina Cedillo refers to this focus on how bodies and culture shape literacy as an erasure of multimodal home places, and how a particular conception of technology use shapes the design of those spaces. In her definition, Cedillo asserts a home place is “more than a physical space. It is a complex of personal ties, cultural and communal values, and linguistic conventions that make existence a life—plus the established technologies needed to express and maintain those relations” (3). Like the New London Group’s position on design as being integral to literacy in how social constructs shape our resources, Cedillo argues that multimodal home places return a focus to identity, and how particular communities literacy practices shape their utilization and engagement with a tool.

Perhaps the most frequently recognized understanding of digital literacy to-date is Stuart Selber’s *Multiliteracies for a Digital Age*. Like the position statements of the NCTE and the New London Group, Selber refers to computer-mediated literacies as “multiliteracies.” According to Selber, these literacies are scaffolded, with functional literacy as an understanding of computers as machines. This functional literacy situates the computer as a tool, developing an understanding of the ways it operates, and the usability of its interface. In other words, knowing how to turn a computer on or off and knowing how to open an Internet browser in order to visit website constitutes the foundations for a functional literacy. From there, Selber discusses the
transition to critical literacy, where computers as now seen as artifacts within a larger ecology or social application, much like Brooke’s understanding of digital rhetoric. Lastly, the highest form of multiliteracies according to Selber is rhetorical literacy, where the understanding of computers as authoring and hypertextual media occurs, teasing out important distinctions between composing offline and online. To me this seems like a circular motion rather than hierarchical, as examining the potentials of a tool for a given authoring purpose also align with Selber’s concept of functional literacy. In other words, to know its potential requires an understanding of its function. What this contradiction reveals are the ways in which Selber creates a progression that not all users who develop a “digital literacy” may come to embody. We may begin as critical literacy users, and end at functional. Assuming an “order” to machine-based literacy assumes a homogenous user.

In returning to Wysocki’s assertion that materiality cannot be separated from new media, Selber’s hierarchy of literacy flattens all users engagement and experiences of technology under the assumption of a default user. For example, by positioning these literacies as hierarchal, Selber assumes that we all began our discovery of the computer as functional, learning first about the hardware that encompasses the machine. This view also makes dangerous assumptions about bodies that come to use a tool and assume all people operate technology in the same way. For example, for many, critical literacy is a starting point that allows users to understand the cultural relevance of the computer to the discourse communities they occupy. For some as it relates to access, the lack of owning a computer still evokes a critical literacy in understanding the role the computer plays culturally. Without possessing a functional literacy of the machine, its still possible to develop a literacy that understands the ways in which the computer informs or relates to a dominant discourse as it pertains to writing technologies and literacy, and how design of
these spaces for communication and assumptions about identity play into our ability to question, or understand a default user.

Insofar as Selber’s conceptions of rhetorical literacy as it relates to the computer, multimedia production and the understanding of authoring with computers as hypertextual media necessarily leads to thinking about the computer as a transmitter, or network to deliver and circulate texts. What this attention is really conveying, is a complex understanding of the affordances of media, with little attention toward the literacy practices that actually go in to creating text in ways that push beyond print-based academic composing.

Nowhere in Selber’s conception of multiliteracies is an attention to the bodies that come to use, work with, or work against computer-mediated technology. If the discipline recognizes the need to incorporate and further expand our understandings of what computer-mediated tools do to shape literacy practices, then an attention to the bodies that the literacy practices connects insofar as what ends up being interpreted, and what design considerations end up informing the text that’s created with new media tools. As these three examples of digital literacy definitions illustrate, there is a tendency to view literacy as machine-centric as opposed to mode or human-centered. When I say mode in this setting I am referring to the sensory channels for processing information as articulated by Fleming as well as the modes for representing information as illustrated by Kress and Van Leeuwen. Both are integral to a focus on the role the body plays as both a body that is perceiving and a perceived body as it pertains to digital literacy. As a result of these three approaches to digital literacy, I question who the field thinks of when it constructs such position statements or outlines hierarchal proficiency on how one should come to operate, understand, and use technology. In considering this issue of identity, the conclusion of this
chapter will question an understanding of the word “digital” as a means for describing 21st century machine based competencies.

**Redefining “Digital”**

Traditional views in computers and writing frame the word digital around the conception of information processing. In this sense, digital refers to the encoding of information in binary digits (bits), which may occupy only two distinct states (on or off, 1 or 0)” (Eyman 19). Electronic technology doesn’t necessarily have to be labeled as digital. Analog technology, like digital, is another form of information processing. However, instead of binary digits of either 0 or 1, analog systems focus on “a continuous range of values…based on principles of similarity, proportion, and resemblance” (18). Analog signals for processing information are original pieces of information that are represented in electronic pulses, whereas digital is information that’s been coded into numbers. To help illustrate this difference, think of a sound recording. The analog representation of that information would be the sound wave. The digital would be the wave represented in a unique binary code. In this sense digital can encompass analog information, whereas analog cannot do the same for digital. It is because of this absorption that digital is the term most widely used to refer to 21st century technology.

In addition, we also know that technology exists outside of electronic contexts. Dennis Baron’s quote in the beginning of my discussion on digital rhetoric illustrates this point quite eloquently in arguing that writing is a technology because it is something we’ve created. A pencil is technically a form of technology in this sense. However, when we think about the term digital, there is a problematic consensus among many both within and outside of the field of computers and composition that the term needs to be rooted in electronic technology in order to
be understood. In my conclusion of this chapter I offer another approach to digital to challenge current machine-based approaches for multimodal and multimedia authoring. Changing the way we view the term digital not only impacts understandings of authoring practices, but also calls into question the definitions and position statements of both digital rhetoric and literacy.

The definition of digital that I propose comes from Angela Haas. In her understanding of the term, Haas argues the following:

Digital also refers to our fingers, our digits, one of the primary ways…through which we make sense of the world and with which we write into the world. All writing is digital: digitals in Latin, means “of or relating to the fingers or toes” or “a coding of information.” (Haas 84)

It would seem that Haas understands the term digital as an identification of any writing practice, multimodal or multimedia. Though such a viewpoint is useful in thinking about the term broadly, it is also important to juxtapose the term alongside the electronic to define what that means within specific technological platforms and how the body is either magnified or disappears within that context. Haas’s understanding of digital rhetoric pushes against a conception of multimedia and instead asks us to think of the term digital as multimodal, calling upon the digits as a kinesthetic approach to making and composing.

From a linguistics perspective, Haas’s definition of digital also changes the connotation of the word when paired with nouns like literacy and rhetoric. Whereas digital as a term took on the role of a determiner in its more widely recognized definition, which provides context for the noun, Haas’s definition of digital turns the determiner into a verb—an action that requires the body in order to be completed. An understanding of digital rhetoric or literacy as something we make or do puts the body at the forefront of the conversation as it pertains to multimodal and
multimedia authoring, one in which brings the bodies to the forefront of how we communicate in a global society.

In this chapter I examined the role of communication technologies and the definitions we come to privilege in understanding their role in rhetoric and literacy. In unpacking these technologies, I argued for the relevance of design as a means for better-connecting sender and receiver through the consideration of modes, resources, discourse, and interpretation. I believe that approaching communication with an emphasis on the role of design leads us to implementing multimodal authoring more robustly than multimedia authoring, as multimedia authoring tends to value the tool more than the practice. In recognizing this shortcoming, I have traced the ways in which as a field, computers and writing has continued to emphasize a tool-based approach to thinking about technologies role in rhetoric and literacy. To add to this conversation and reorient the focus, I ended with offering an embodied approach to the term digital, which moves from determiner to verb in how we are to understand the term in relation to the analysis and production model the field favors in looking at what it means to communicate in a technologically-saturated world.

In the chapters that move forward, I proceed with the understanding that the term digital is an embodied practice that puts the human central to the design considerations that are necessary to produce a successful text. I use this understanding of digital in order to call into question the ways in which bodies are used with or against communities of people under the enactment of Western-based understandings of literacy and rhetoric. In doing this work, I look explicitly to the visual as a mechanism for both perceiving bodies as well as being a perceived body within a communication setting. To begin, I look back to the ancient visual design and literacy practices of the Southern Western Hemisphere to showcase the ways in which totalizing
CHAPTER THREE: SEEING POWER, READING IMAGE

Every image embodies a way of seeing...images were first made to conjure up the appearance of something that was absent. Gradually, it became evident that an image could outlast what it represented; it then showed how something or somebody had once looked—and thus by implication how the subject had once been seen by other people. Later still the specific vision of the image-maker was also recognized as part of the record. An image becomes a record of how X had seen Y.

- John Berger, *Ways of Seeing*

Para que la letra la tenga en los ojos
So that the letters will be in the eyes.

-Guaman Poma de Ayala

Introduction: Non-discursive Affective Identification

In the last chapter, I redefined *digital* as an embodied practice, one which cannot exist independent of the bodies that invent, assemble, and enact the rhetoric and literacy practices we use to communicate. I challenged conceptions of digital rhetoric and literacy to reorient the focus on the bodies that make possible digital rhetoric and literacy as opposed to the current machine-based emphasis embedded within Writing Program Administration literacy outcome statements. This focus on bodies and the relationship they have to one another as sender and receiver, I argued, can be best understood through multimodality and the practice of design.

Multimodality as a practice calls upon the role of design in order to invent, interpret, and arrange texts for successful communication. With an attention to bodies, design must also consider the discourse communities that sender and receiver inhabit as integral to how a text gets both shaped and interpreted. If design is about creating affective communication between bodies, then incorporating resources and modes that are rhetorically significant to a discourse community that both sender and receiver identify with as essential. When there is
communication between bodies from different discourse communities, design becomes especially integral and also becomes a question of ethics as it pertains to hegemony with which values and discursive norms end up being communicated in the text that gets produced and distributed. While it is possible to inhabit many different discourse communities at a time, I focus on the distinct differences in rhetoric and its literacy as they pertain to placed-based cross-cultural communication. In other words, I seek to examine the relationships different communities have to rhetoric and its literacy as understood through cultural norms within a society or other heritage that ontologically associates a person with a collective.

In order for cross-cultural communication to be successful, there needs to be identification between sender and receiver. *Affect*, as defined by Joddy Murray, is both emotional as well as corporeal in how we feel and perceive the world around us (84). Affect is a type of non-discursive rhetoric. Both discursive and non-discursive rhetoric are concerned with how we define language, or broadly, how we understand symbols and their relations within communication. That is, discursive rhetoric, is concerned with logic and the conceptions of language as written discourse (11). Within composition studies, different theories of writing have translated into discursive and non-discursive practices, with expressivist writing often being attributed as non-discursive for its attention to the body and feelings of a writer (see Lester Faigley, *Fragments of Rationality*). Rather than see non-discursive rhetoric as the content focus within written discourse, Murray argues non-discursive rhetoric “necessitates and values all that our symbols—though especially image—can do” (12).

In his association with image and non-discursive rhetoric, Murray turns to Ann Berthoff’s assertion that images are relational, meaning they depict “connections from one symbol to

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6 For more on affect in composition studies, see Susan McLeod (1996); Lynn Bloom (1980a, 1980b).
another...[L]ike the connective tissue of a bone, they help us understand function, action, and affect” (Berthoff qtd. in Murray 49). Images, then serve as an identification practice of non-discursive rhetoric because they are not just “what they symbolize, but how and why they are symbolizing within an embedded context of relationships” (Murray 49, emphasis in original). As the examples to follow in the chapter will illustrate, images become powerful as identification in cross-cultural communication, as a representation of bodies and with a purpose as a response to colonization and hegemony.

The concept of identification, according to Kenneth Burke, exists because there is commonality among humanity, or collectively within discourse communities (A Rhetoric of Motives 22). When there is division, or only partial identification, rhetoric becomes the means with which to gain identification. Through visual rhetoric as affective non-discursive identification, successful cross-cultural communication can be successfully designed. To illustrate, a closer look at failed identification helps to emphasize the relevance the role of design when hegemony presides over language and literacy.

In what follows, I look back to the ancient visual composing practices of the Southern Western Hemisphere. I focus on the role of the visual in a discourse community, arguing that in recognizing the visual as both a mode and resource for representing information, it is also sensory channel for interpreting it. In this sense the visual functions not only as a rhetorical text, but also as non-discursive symbols in the same ways that alphabetic literacy does within hegemonic Western-based understandings of language. I look to this region based on my own ancestry and heritage-literacy practices as a way to ground how looking constitutes a body that is both perceiving and perceived.
While images are both sensory and semiotic, they are also metaphorical. In this way images are not only reliant on perception through sight, but also through our cognition in how we make associations. In their metaphorical interpretation, alphabetic text can evoke images within our imaginations in the same ways that numbers can lead us to imagine a story or understand an experience. Reading the numbers 1492 or hearing the name Christopher Columbus necessarily evokes a particular image or narrative within our minds based on our own interpretations of how we’ve come to learn that history. When these numbers and letters are used in conjunction within modern Western society, we are able to construct the image of a Spanish conquistador stepping foot on new land based on what we were taught in school as children. But what we aren’t able to really conceptualize is anything about the people Columbus encountered when he came to the New World because of the prevailing ideological conception concerning conquest and colonization in Western culture. With the focus on the conquering, there is little room left to know the conquered.

Like any story, the perceptions of how we come to view or understand history based on the information we’re given necessarily distorts our gaze and subsequently our conclusions. As Kristie Fleckenstein argues “an image exists by means of the relationships it creates: yet those relationships are at the same time a product of its existence” (Embodied Literacies: Imageword and a Poetics of Teaching, 24). As a result, we must come to recognize how we look if we are really to understand what we see. In what remains of this chapter, I will look to those that have chosen to ground their perceptions of history on trying to know the visual rhetoric and discourse of the conquered. Through the concept of perception, I will discuss how although it is impossible to truly know the history, we can better understand how our subjectivities around our identifications. In doing so, looking at both failure and success in cross-cultural communication
paints illuminating revelations that still carry prevalence today as we design for a contemporary world.

**Non-discursive failure: The quipus**

In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the Incan people along the Andean region in the Southern Western Hemisphere had sophisticated ways of preserving information and communicating. Quispe-Agnoli writes that their rhetoric was primarily visual, composing texts such as *quipus* and *tocapu* to communicate and preserve history (“Spanish Scripts Colonize the Image: Inca Visual Rhetorics” 41). According to Quispe-Agnoli, the *quipus* were used primarily for record keeping and accounting purposes, to which he describes them as a series of colored, knotted strings that were “usually made of wool, cotton, animal fiber (camelids), and in rare occasions, human hair” (45). The type of knot indicated a number, and the knot’s placement signified units of 1, 10, 100, or more (45). Though the *quipus* also required a tactile literacy in knowing how many knots to tie, the end result of the composition was visual—involving a literacy of how to read the *quipus* in order to understand the meaning behind the number of knots, placement, and the colors of the string in relation to one another and how those representations were coded with discourse-specific information relevant to the community.

In this sense the *quipus* were quite complex, enacting both visual and tactile literacy in constructing both the tactile process of arrangement and final visualized product. The *quipus* are also an example of digital rhetoric as it pertains to both Eyman and Haas’s definitions. While the *quipus* are made with the digits of the fingers as Haas would argue constitutes digital rhetoric, they’re also an information processing system, which is what Eyman claims distinguishes digital rhetoric from analog. While the media used to create these texts are vastly different from
contemporary digital tools, the Incan community used this text in order to communicate important information for one another. The material resources of the quipus such as the strings and their color and number of knots were rhetorical and served a particular purpose in conveying information. These texts were multimodal and require a discourse-specific literacy in order to be understood.

In terms of how the Spaniards received the quipus, Quispe-Agnoli writes that they were unable to read or interpret them, thereby limiting the Spaniards’ access to Andean records and information. The Spaniards were a perceiving body that existed outside of the discourse for whom the texts were intended. Working from the idea of perception as more than sight, Dylan Miner discusses the concept of visuality as also recognizing “the complexities of different ways of looking” (“When They Awaken” 177). Miner distinguishes between the act of vision and visuality in the subjective and political elements that visuality presents, arguing, “Unlike vision, which presupposes an apolitical and common mode of seeing, visuality recognizes the complexities and different ways of looking” (177). From the perspective of someone outside of a discourse community, Laurie Gries quotes Lu Ming Mao’s discussion of perception:

While we can certainly try to situate ourselves in the context of the “Other” and study their rhetorical practices on their own terms all the time, we cannot literally do so because present location always impacts how knowledge is both produced and consumed.

Moreover, we are far removed from some rhetorical practices in terms of time that we cannot possibly know 100% how to accurately represent the Other’s point of view. (“Practicing Methods in Ancient Cultural Rhetorics: Uncovering Rhetorical Action in Moche Burial Rituals” 90)
Whereas Miner uses visuality as a way to ground colonial ways of looking as deeply rooted in hegemony, Mao would argue that while a colonial perspective may be one way of looking, we can never really know for sure as a gaze that looks toward a history in which we’re separated from by both time and space⁷.

In coming to interact with the *quipus* in today’s modern age, few remain, in that all but 600 *quipus* were burned and destroyed by the Spaniards during conquest. Today, the remaining *quipus* are preserved within museums or private collections (45). Studying visual texts from this period, as offered by Mao, is already a challenge due to the distance that time creates for perception. However, as Gries builds upon Mao’s concept of perception from the viewpoint of one outside of the discourse community, “such exploration is made easier when we have access to an ancient culture’s verbal records that include their own terms to describe their communicative practices as they occurred in particular moments of time” (“Practicing Methods” 91). What is important to note about the *quipus* is that under Spanish colonization, these visual texts were destroyed because the Spanish could not understand them. Quispe-Agnoli states that, “once the Spaniards realized that they could not have full control of and access to the information recorded and transmitted by means of [the] *quipus*, these devices were burnt” (45).

While I do not support the inherent purpose of domination for gaining access to the *quipus*, the failed cross-cultural communication of the visual texts serves as an example of the ways of how language is hegemonized which creates division as opposed to identification. Why did the *quipus* fail under the gaze of the Spaniards? I believe that much of this failure begins with

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⁷ I insert Mao’s discussion of perception to ground my analysis in both ancient and contemporary visual rhetoric as informed speculation. While I am building my theory of affective non-discursive identification based on definitions I’ve offered for design and cross-cultural communication, it is impossible for me to enact a way of looking at these visual texts from a gaze that is not steeped within a hegemonic Eurocentric view.
José de Acosta’s positioning of the visual as inferior to alphabetic writing. In recounting the Spanish missionaries’ records of the visual rhetorics of the Incan’s, Quispe-Agnoli writes that Acosta concluded, “a lack of letters implied a lack of history” (Acosta qtd. in Quispe-Agnoli 43). Viewing literacy as only alphabetic creates a hierarchy of symbols. In returning to Murray’s discussion of discursive and non-discursive rhetoric, the *quipus*, under this perception of language, would be defined as non-discursive rhetoric. A central component to non-discursive rhetoric for Murray is “link[ing] image to emotion, emotion to language, and language to mentality” (57). In other words, affect is a way to embody language so as to gain identification between different discourse communities.

While the goal of the Incan’s may not have been identification with the Spaniards, perhaps affective identification could have preserved more of the *quipus* over time. As conquest in the Southern Western Hemisphere demonstrates, cross-cultural communication was inevitable. How does design play a role in visual rhetoric in situations like the example of the *quipus*? As this next section demonstrates, the role of the rhetorical canon of arrangement, which is concerned with the order of symbols, is a step toward non-discursive affective identification design.

**Arrangement: Embodying the *tocapus***

Despite the inability to learn the *quipus*, there were visual compositions that were able to survive: the *tocapus*. The *tocapus* are described as “rectangles decorated with geometric designs and highlighted by contrasting colors” (45). *Tocapus* were worn or found in ceramics used in ceremonial practices. Because these visual compositions were either worn or used in ceremony,
the Spaniards allowed them to survive, not understanding the ways in which they were used as a
means of communication or a means for preserving history, not knowing that within their
resurrection by historians who were “literate” in such texts, the *tocapus* were thought to
encompass abstract language components within each rectangle (45). Because these texts were
worn by, and made by, bodies, they were not only visual but also tactile and truly an embodied
literacy, with the body serving as the medium that hosts the text for the perceiving body to
interpret. In this sense, the *tocapus* were truly an embodied visual rhetoric, as it was possible for
someone to both design the text as sender, host the text as media, and then interpret the text as
receiver within a discourse community as audience.

Much of this inability to recognize the *tocapus* as a legitimate communication or
knowledge preservation systems stems from how the Spaniards understood the texts themselves.
The concept of visual culture, as defined by Iris Rogoff, “provides the articulation for the move
and displacement of meanings in visual texts” (Rogoff qtd. in Quispe-Agnoli 45). Viewing the
*tocapus* as ornamental and decorative, the Spaniards, under the hegemonic enactment of
language through colonization, stripped them of their rhetorical value as it pertained to the
dominant discourse as the conversion to Christianity was implemented through conquest. While
the *tocapus* were still relevant to the Incan’s as a rhetoric for communicating information within
their discourse community, their value insofar as their relationship to language and literacy was
not understood or regarded by the Spaniards. In their failure to see the *tocapus* as a legitimate
rhetoric, the Spaniards remained unaware of the information each geometric unit contained in its
arrangement. It is through this ignorance that the *tocapus* was able to survive and the Incans
were able to maintain this visual rhetoric throughout conquest by the Spaniards.
What separates the quipus from the tocapus and why did one survive while the other was destroyed? I believe the answer lies in the role of affect in design. While both the tocapus and quipus are seen as multimodal non-discursive texts, I believe the incorporation of the body as integral to how the tocapus gets both designed and understood leads to an attention to the rhetorical canon of arrangement. In terms of its ceremonial context for interpretation, Greco-Roman rhetoric would classify as the tocapus as epideictic, where pathos or emotions and embodiment play a more prominent role in the arrangement of the text. In being able to understand the role of ceremony, or design for clothing, design of the tocapus was in fact an identification between the Incans and Spaniards, however, cross-cultural communication was largely ineffective because of the inability for the non-discursive rhetoric to translate to the hegemonic interpretations of language.

The quipus and tocapus were complex rhetorical texts that held value to the communities they were designed for. While the body was used to create a text like the quipus, the role of the body remained largely invisible in its end product. On the other hand, the tocapus was inherently designed as a text that incorporates the body as a performative element that enacts the rhetoric. If the perception of alphabetic literacy as dominant prevailed as a result of colonization, then creating rhetorical texts that operate within both the realm of discursive and non-discursive may lead toward a development of truly successful cross-cultural affective identification.

Hybridity as Affective Identification

Whereas the Spanish may have been unable to negotiate a common understanding of the Andean epistemologies through rhetoric, the Andeans on the other hand, worked to blend image
and word, enacting assimilation and mimicry to preserve and maintain their visual composing practices under the watchful eye of the Spaniards. Quispe-Agnoli writes:

Andean designs and images were integrated in the colonial Spanish-Andean society and these visual texts experienced transformations throughout the centuries. Likewise, the alphabetic script that was used to initiate those transformations was regarded by Andeans as a visual system of signs that could be equivalent to their visual systems of communication. (42)

What’s interesting to consider in this duality of perception concerning the symbols is the ways in which each discourse community utilized language of the other. Whereas the Spanish did not become “literate” in how to read or compose the Andean visual compositions such as the tocapus or quipus, the Andean people, on the other hand saw alphabetic text as inherently visual in much the same way that Lanham discusses the early manifestations of contemporary “digital rhetoric.”

As I discussed in chapter one, Lanham argues that “looking at” texts for their aesthetic and visual rhetoric rather than for the argument values the complexity of design. Through the instruction of the Spanish missionaries, the Andean people were taught how to read and write as part of their conversion to Christianity. Quispe-Agnoli writes, “Spaniards put Quechua in alphabetic writing and contributed to the transformation of abstract designs into figurative ones, and Andeans learnt to read and write not only to communicate with Europeans and their descendants, but also to use elements of the alphabetic script in their ways of communication” (42). Such negotiations of how to utilize the language of the other and contextualize it under a particular notion of literacy can be seen, in some sense, as appropriation on both ends. However, while the Spanish may have used the visuals of the Andean people, they did not learn or view
the visual compositions as *texts* in the ways that the Andean people did with alphabetic literacy and rhetoric.

Working with Rogoff’s concept of visual culture, Quispe-Agnoli discusses moving toward a visual subject within the culture. To illustrate this concept, Quispe-Agnoli looks to the indigenous figure of Guaman Poma de Ayala, arguing that as an Andean living within the Spanish empire he “sees and acknowledges that he is seen” (46). As a result of this role of both perceiving and perceived body, Guaman Poma creates a fluid identity, allowing him to operate much like Gloria Anzaldúa\textsuperscript{9} will—navigating a borderland of both noble and indigenous, describing himself as “an Andean prince who, thanks to the authority and power symbolically displayed in his coat of arms, holds the holy kingdoms of Spain and Rome” (46). In learning the language of the Spaniards, the Andean people saw alphabetic script as a visual symbol system similar to their own visual rhetoric. In the hybrid texts the Andean people began to produce, Quispe-Agnoli turns to Mary Louise Pratt’s concept of the contact zone\textsuperscript{10}, stating:

In the early colonial Andean-Spanish contact zone, hybrid texts are produced to transmit messages of authority based on knowledge and/or political power. These texts are usually but not exclusively, produced by indigenous or mestizo authors…such texts include visual events among which we may find representations of *quipus*, *tocapu*, iconic images—both Western and Andean—and alphabetic script. (50)

As Andean and Spanish culture began to blend together more cohesively under the identity of *mestizo*, the hybridity of image-word composing became inherently part of Andean-Spanish discourse. Christa Olson and Rubén Casas tell the story of Guaman Poma and hybridity

\textsuperscript{10}See Pratt, Mary Louise. “Arts of the Contact Zone.” *Profession*. 1991. 31-44
as a way to occupy both discourse communities. Guaman Poma creates both discursive and non-discursive rhetoric using image and word in complex and interdependent ways. In their discussion of Guaman Poma’s text, *Primer Nueva Corónica y Buen Gobierno*, Olson and Casas state that it “covered some 800 carefully numbered pages and was supplemented by nearly 400 line drawings that illustrated, extended and complicated his written claims” (Olson and Casas 459). Written to the Spanish King Phillip III as an attempt to enact a detailed history of indigenous life before colonization as well as the experiences of life during colonization, Guaman Poma attempted to “write a reality that challenges authority, values indigenous discursive modes, and opens up space for new communicative emphases in a difficult writing situation” (460). Using his identification as both noble indigenous and literate Spanish citizen within alphabetic literacy and Spanish culture, his rhetorical practice allowed him to live in both worlds—blending both Andean imagery and Spanish word. As a result, Quispe-Agnoli notes that within his images,

> He appears in the center…surrounded by “old Indians” who are sharing with him their Andean knowledge. He is then an Andean-Spanish subject who is able to collect information from the legitimate Andean sources. The information transmitted by these old Indians is legit because of their garments and headdresses speak of their noble ancestry. (Quispe-Agnoli 47)

In juxtaposition, his alphabetic text “refers to all of them as old Indians who serve him as informants and provide him with the data that will inform his book” (47). This stark contrast provides an interesting analysis of the ways in which image is enacted in both modes. While the visual seeks to display a collective non-discursive identification with indigenous culture as a perceived body, the alphabetic discursive rhetoric does so through creating a distance as a
perceiving body. Though Guaman Poma still tries to sanction some type of ethos with the “old Indians” he is also doing so under the gaze of the Spanish, necessarily positioning himself as a visual subject that is aware of how he is looked upon and in turn looking back at his audience. In her discussion of this awareness, Quispe-Agnoli turns to Homi Bhabha’s “colonial mimicry”:

Colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other…mimicry emerges as the representation of a difference that is itself a process of disavowal. Mimicry is, thus the sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation, and discipline, which “appropriates” the Other as it visualizes power. (Bhabha qtd. in Quispe-Agnoli 51)

Because Guaman Poma knows his audience has constructed a visual subject rooted in particular conceptions of Andean subject, he addresses such conceptions within his visual compositions by including visual elements that reinforce that conception. In other words, he “designs” his Andean identity in a way that communicates the politically-steeped visuality that Mirzeoff argues separates sensory vision from subjective gaze while using alphabetic text to appease the other. Using the identification of his Andean indigenous identity to push against that colonial mimicry of alphabetic discourse, Guaman Poma also displays an ethos rooted in a subject that is able to live within both worlds. As both indigenous and “noble,” Guaman Poma both plays into the trope of the indigenous subject as constructed by the Spaniards and yet is able to still occupy an identity that embodies Andean with the discourse community that recognizes its rhetorical moves in non-discursive rhetoric.

While Guaman Poma’s efforts to evoke change within colonial power were ultimately unsuccessful in his attempted communication efforts with King Phillip III, Olson and Casas note that he “opens up the possibility that his ultimate audience was not King Phillip or the Spanish colonial bureaucracy but rather a future public concerned with the vicissitudes of Andean
culture—its histories, its power structures, and its modes of communication” (477). Though there were efforts made by the Andeans to communicate cross-culturally as it pertained to colonial mimicry and the visual subject, the efforts made by the Spanish to depict the Andean bodies, as a sign of illiteracy as it pertains to hegemony over language has been far more successful.

**Representing “Other” Bodies in Visual Rhetoric**

According to Christa Olson, the perception of literacy as a power device is enacted in how the “authentic” Ecuadorian subject is portrayed through visual propaganda within the 18th century as the nation of Ecuador begins to form. The Spaniards “made citizenship possible in theory but used literacy requirements and extra-Constitutional regulations to deny access to all but the most elite Ecuadorians” (Olson 31). For the Spaniards, concepts of literacy were enacted in visual ways using the perceived body as text, depicting the conditions of literate Indians as those having good hygiene, clean clothes, and engaged and eager to learn against the vivid imagery of the illiterate Indian: “dirty and poncho-clad, clumsily premodern in the shape of their hands and the set of their bodies” (xii). In these rhetorical moves by the Spaniards to repurpose the visual of Andean indigenous bodies as a representation of literacy, Olson argues that such imagery enacts Kenneth Burke’s concept of a “constitutions-behind-the-Constitution,” arguing that:

Such constitutions can be approached as a range of symbolic actions, not merely non-symbolic motion that lies beneath symbolic action. Natural resources and economic trends set scenes and enact constitutions. But so do paintings, prints, and poems. Such widely constructed constitutions-behind-the-Constitution help authorize the Constitution, making space, for example, for the particular ways that successive Ecuadorian Constitutions imagine citizenship and national identity. They foster a resilient common
sense about the national body, one whose circulation and repetition help bring into being the national public that each textual Constitution addresses and convenes. (30)

Such claims to alphabetic literacy as an enactment of national identity and citizenship helps to construct the ways in which the written word of the Constitution is legitimatized through the visual propaganda of indigenous bodies. In this way, the image of the Indian is repurposed to propel a notion of citizenship as aligning within the hegemony of literacy as defined by the Spaniards. Returning to Rogoff, this repurposing of the visual indigenous subject is an enactment of the definition of visual culture as displacing the meaning of the visual subject within a dominant discourse. Whereas the identity of the Incan dressed in traditional clothing may rhetorically represent significance to the Incan people insofar as their culture and discourse, the Spaniards have displaced that meaning through their propaganda texts, asserting the Incan body in traditional attire as resisting the colonization of citizenship as tied to the practice of alphabetic literacy. In doing so, the visual propaganda created by the Spaniards helped to contribute to their constitutions-behind-the-Constitution.

Working with the rhetorical concept of topoi, Olson argues that visual images are “frequent and natural carriers of the commonplace” (9). Whereas the classical definition of topoi can be traced to Aristotle as a common place as a means of arrangement, Olson uses the term “topos” as “ideological carriers of invention” (8). Using the images of the indigenous constructed by the Spaniards as a topos for understanding national identity and citizenship, Olson works to uncover the how paintings during the 1800’s portray an appropriation of the Indian through the coding of literacy. This visual inscription of literacy is then used as propaganda to further the Spaniards quest for a legitimate sanction of a “natural citizen.” In this sense, the Spaniards

11 See Aristotle’s On Rhetoric Books 1 & 2 for a discussion of topoi.
designed parameters for literacy using the identification of the body as what constitutes “literate,” using visual rhetoric as a means to set the terms for what we can classify as a “natural citizen.” From the blending of the embodiment of indigenous identity coupled with alphabetic literacy, a hybrid visual propaganda text creates successful cross-cultural communication as it is designed to reach both discourse communities through the blending of image and word.

During the 18th century, other subsequent moves are made by the Spaniards in contending with positioning the Indian as Other through the use of image that extend beyond propaganda. One of the most fruitful threats the Indians posed toward the Spaniards was their claim to national citizenship through native rights to land. To combat such threats, the Spanish artists painted pictures that depicted natives as lazy, positioning them far in the background of agricultural landscape images, so as to blend them in with the scenery as an empty vessel failing to hold an identity alongside the land they rightfully owned and claimed.

In addition, Olson also argues that while the Spaniards made efforts to position natives as passive recipients of their land rights, they also made efforts to portray the natives as justifying their right to the land through labor—contributing to the Spanish culture through the cultivation of the land for modern industrialization, which aimed to severe indigenous culture claims to land and custom. Olson describes these images as having “provided a place of return in changing circumstances that accounted for the nation-state’s dependence on its indigenous population for modern progress without necessarily incorporating the population as indigenous into the modern era” (95). When indigenous subjects were portrayed outside of an active contribution to society through labor, the Spaniards positioned them in traditional native clothing alongside modern cities, making their inclusion awkward and illegitimate, which seems to suggest a being “left behind” trope in choosing to identify as indigenous in culture and identity. While these paintings
were exclusively visual as opposed to hybrid, they are still a portrayal of bodies that exist outside of the sender’s own discourse community. How we choose to design the bodies of Others in cross-cultural communication is rhetorical. It communicates particular values, ideologies, and conceptions of how we view the self in relation to the other within hegemony.

Such efforts to position the image of the Incan people as illiterate and anachronistic offer glimpses into the ways in which image was not only used as a rhetorical propaganda, but also a implementation of hegemonic conceptions language. These inherent contradictions speak to the ways in which the indigenous had to navigate a borderland of both survival and resistance in maintaining their cultural identity. While claiming rights to their own land while still trying to claim citizenship, the Andean people found themselves trapped between two worlds. Though we know that alphabetic literacy continued to thrive as the dominant symbol system for language, in the conclusion to this chapter I explores blending ancient indigenous identities alongside more modern visual composing practices with contemporary media—recognizing the ways in which visual rhetoric and design harnesses both hybridity and a recognition of the self in relation to the other in order for successful cross-cultural communication to ensue.

**Conclusion: Media’s Role in Designing Affective Non-Discursive Identification**

While the *quipus* and *tocapus* may have represented visual texts that were both destroyed or ignored, hybridity of image and word as illustrated by those such as Guaman Poma and also the Spaniards during 18th century Ecuador showcase the ways in which cross-cultural communication can be successful despite conflicting perceptions of language. As it pertains to design, non-discursive rhetoric makes room for affect to preserve an identity for a discourse community, showcasing a visual subject that both is perceived and at the same time is a
perceiving body. As was the case with Guaman Poma, while hegemony presides within the conceptions of language as both alphabetic and discursive allows the Other to enact mimicry in order to survive colonization.

However, what’s interesting to note is that in the 18th century paintings by the Spaniards of indigenous people alongside their land, Spaniards were the ones designing native bodies. Whereas Guaman Poma was able to set the terms for how he was seen, the paintings representing ties to land were a design of the Other. Through these choices to dress the native people in traditional clothing alongside modern industrialization, there is a prevailing ideology that gets designed onto the visual subject. It is in these ideological choices that I transition into a contemporary discussion of design and the role of perception in affective identification.

While much of the appropriation of the Andean visual subject and visual composing practices were done to legitimize the Spanish rule and rights to citizenship, understanding ancient indigenous composing through contemporary perspectives helps to draw connections between the media used and the rhetoric enacted. Damián Baca’s discussion of the Mestiz@ seeks to understand past, present, and future ways of studying visual texts both within the public sphere and in the writing classroom.

In Baca’s use of the term, Mestiz@ is meant to refer to “cultures that emerged across the Western Hemisphere in the late fifteenth century as a consequence of “mestizaje,” the fusion of the bloodlines between American Indians and Spanish Iberian conquerors under colonial situations” (Mestiz@ Scripts, Digital Migrations, and the Territories of Writing 2). In his discussion of Mestiz@ rhetorics, Baca argues “Mestiz@ rhetorics have continually worked to create “new” literacies: new ways of speaking, writing, and reading that promote anticolonial translations and revisions of colonial narratives” (3). In doing this work, Baca recognizes the
shifting literacy practices to extend beyond alphabetic and the media we use in order to enact those composing practices, stating, “I believe we need to learn how to read in ‘new’ ways” (3). For Baca, this does not mean we do not need to just reevaluate our writing tools for new media contexts like those in rhetoric and composition studies have argued previously\(^\text{12}\), but that we also must come to value different modes and cultural approaches in order to do so. Looking back to the colonization of the Southern Western Hemisphere showcases unsuccessful cross-cultural communication when hegemonic conceptions of language prevail over visual rhetoric. Taken together, hybridity opens up the means with which to gain identification between cultures.

Whereas our resources and tools for composing have shifted with the rise of the digital platform as a space to enact cross-cultural communication, I turn to Marshall McLuhan’s conception of the “global village” as drawing similarities to the path to “the authentic” citizen in 18\(^{th}\) century Ecuador. For McLuhan, the global village is a place in which,

‘[T]ime’ has ceased, ‘space’ has vanished. We now live in a global village…a simultaneous happening. We are back in acoustic space. We have begun again to structure the primordial feeling, the tribal emotions from which a few centuries of literacy divorced us. (The Medium is the Massage 63)

I’m curious as to what prevailing hegemony McLuhan had in mind as he advocated for a global village made possible through the advancement of the digital sphere. As illustrated by the visual propaganda and paintings by the Spaniards in the 18\(^{th}\) century, deviating outside of what sets the terms as occupying an identity “within” the village necessarily excludes one from its communication practices.

\(^{12}\) See Lanham (1993); Selfe (1999); George (2002); Yancey (2004)
In an attempt to bridge ancient visual rhetoric to contemporary tools, Baca argues that “if we understand the quipus codes as related to those of computer technologies, we open doors to new ways of thinking about how information is recorded as well as how our computers work and what they do” (35). In this sense, it is both media and message that require focus in how we design affective communication. In designing visual communication, it is these important connections between past and present, as well as old and new that David Bolter and Richard Grusin discuss:

Media technologies are agents in our culture without falling into the trap of technological determinism. New digital media are not external agents that come to disrupt an unsuspecting culture. They emerge from within cultural contexts, and they refashion other media, which are embedded in the same or similar contexts. (Remediation: Understanding New Media 19)

Bolter and Grusin’s concept of remediation is useful to consider as we contend with what types of advancements ancient communication systems have enacted over time with an eye toward seeing how such moves reinsert themselves into modern or digitized approaches to symbol use, and how each system evolves as we look toward both media used and subsequent message of the composition.

As I move forward, I will look to the contemporary visual communication practice Japanese emoji symbol system as a way to analyze hybrid affective identification in the face of a “global village” in online communication. More specifically, I will reconsider the question I raised in the illustrations of the 18th century Spaniard paintings of the native subject. When we design representations of others that exist outside of our own discourse communities, how does ideology get inscribed in these representation? Moreover, how might affect play a role in
embodying online communication so as to create successful cross-cultural communication? As I work to address these questions, I remain grounded in recognizing these visual texts as multimodal compositions that require human-based digital literacies as opposed to machine or tool based.
CHAPTER FOUR: CONTEMPORARY HYBRIDITY: BLENDING DISCURSIVE AND NON-DISCURSIVE RHETORIC

Introduction: From “Old” to “New”

As visual communication in online spaces began to gain popularity during the mid-1990’s, the concept of perception and more specifically, the role of sender, becomes especially important as representations of Othered bodies are displayed as cross-cultural visual rhetoric. In the same ways that the Spaniards designed the bodies of the Incans in paintings and propaganda posters, I believe that the Japanese emojis offer characteristics leading to similar questions about the role perception plays in embodiment and design. I intentionally draw comparisons between two distinct cultures in West and East in my analyses to showcase the ways in which these issues of design and representation extend beyond geographical borders as its concerned with the digital globalization and the hegemony of language and rhetoric in visual communication.

Contemporary Study of the Visual

As a site of inquiry and research in the contemporary Western world, the visual is relatively new to the academy in the sense that it is recognized as a rhetorical or cultural phenomenon that shapes writing studies. In tracing its early manifestations within higher education, James Elkins argues that the visual as a site for analysis originated within three threads of study within the 20th century: cultural studies, visual culture, and visual studies. While cultural studies engages with the visual from an interdisciplinary lens that looks at the political manifestations of the visual within disciplines such as anthropology and sociology,

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13 I make this assertion in positioning an analysis of the visual rhetoric and writing studies, recognizing that Art as a discipline has been quite prominent throughout history.
visual culture is a much newer discipline (2). As opposed to looking at the visual as a social phenomenon, visual culture deals with the subjectivity of perception and how ones gaze constitutes what is seen. As a result there is much overlap with cultural studies in the significance of the social context, however, the visual subject, like that of Guaman Poma in the previous chapter, is the focus within the discipline of visual culture.

Whereas visual culture is known for theorists like Nicholas Mirzeoff and W.J.T. Mitchell and theories such as how an object or representation is seen and subsequently studied, visual studies, which is the youngest of the three disciplines, begins in the early 1990’s and is most closely tied to English departments. Elkins refers to visual studies as “the study of visual practices across all boundaries” because of its interdisciplinary approaches to studying the visual under different theoretical and empirical frameworks. While all three approaches to the visual deal with perception and gaze, visual studies applies larger theories to visual subjects and rhetorical situations as opposed to the observational work of looking at a visual subject and studying both its form and content.

Looking at the visual as a form of communication, I position my analyses as research that falls within all three categorizations. Due to the inherent social construct that language resides within, it is impossible to study the visual as a communication practice without considering the social construct that shapes language norms and network channels. In addition, because my analyses also transcends time and geographical borders that fuses history, computers and writing, and rhetoric to analyze the visual, the work of my dissertation is also a project classified within the field of visual studies. Last, because I focus on targeted analyses of ancient and contemporary examples of visual texts it is also a visual culture approach because I am zooming in on distinct examples.
Regardless of its categorization, my inquiry into the visual as an affective identification practice continues the conversation about visual rhetoric in writing studies. Building on the work of computers and writing scholars that have argued for the value of visual communication in college classrooms\textsuperscript{14}, the visual as a mode and subsequent semiotic resource for representing information offers ways of composing beyond alphabetic text alone. As argued in Chapter One, the relevance for the visual alongside other modes such as aurality for creating both multimodal and multimedia texts has transformed platforms for composing. As a result, as composing landscapes have continued to shift based on multimodal and multimedia composing, our digital writing structures have changed as well to support these types of hybrid and multimodal texts.

The History of the Smiley

The term emoji originates from the Japanese phrase “picture characters.” Designed initially for commercial use to suppress information and combat limitations on the number of characters within mobile devices, emojis\textsuperscript{15} are a way to use pictographs to convey larger ideas and representations of information in a condensed way. Developed in 1999 by Shigetaka Kurita with the Japanese mobile device company, NTT DoCoMo, emojis serve as a standardized way to expand communication within the character limits of mobile technologies (Stark and Crawford 2). Not only do emoji offer a condensed representation of information, they also attempt to further humanize digital communication practices with insertions into spaces like Facebook, Twitter, and other social media platforms.

\textsuperscript{14} See George (2002); Fleckenstein (2002, 2003); Hocks and Kendrick (2003); Handa (2004); Murray (2009)

\textsuperscript{15} While many Western publications concerning emojis use “emoji” as plural, they’re doing so under the construction of the term as a Latin derivative. Because these symbols are of Eastern origin, I intentionally use “emojis” so as to avoid further colonizing the cultural origin of this symbol system.
Despite the rise of these symbols within the digital sphere, the “history” of emojis actually dates back much further than the early 1990’s as a way to represent affect through visual communication. Though early emoticons in Western culture are often correlated with electronic tools, Microsoft discusses the materiality of these emoticons in its 2015 Windows blog, arguing that their history actually predates electronic interfaces and binary code, referring to the satirical Puck magazine from 1881 as a showcase of what was referred to as “typographical art” to “convey joy, melancholy, indifference, and astonishment” (“Microsoft Devices Team”). Being a predominantly cheeky magazine of political satire, the typographical art helped to contextualize the illustrations and written text that was meant to be understood as humor. For example, if a new reader was unaware of the magazine's tone, typographical art helped to ensure that the material was understood as humorous as opposed to offensive.

In another historical account, Stark and Crawford trace the origins of the smiley face in Western culture in 1969 with Vladimir Nabokov suggesting to The New York Times that there should be a way of “expressing feelings via typographical shorthand” (3). From there, they argue the yellow smiley face icon gained momentum as a way to humanize business through The State Mutual Life Assurance Company in 1963 by commercial designer Harvey Ball (2). As a result, this icon began to become even more embodied, with pins, buttons, and t-shirts showcasing the icon.

Transitioning into the 1970s, Stark and Crawford’s historical account starts to chronicle Europe’s engagement with the smiley face, which is where Marcel Danesi argues emojis originates. In both Stark and Crawford and Danesi’s historical tracings, Franklin Loufrani, a journalist for France Soir, attempts to copyright the smiley face icon in 1972 (Stark and Crawford 2). However, Danesi notes that Loufrani’s reasoning for such copyright was in order to
“put a positive spin or tone to news reportage rather than the typical pessimistic one found in print media” (2). Loufrani’s son, Nicholas, continued working with the smiley face icon and in 1997 sued the Wal-Mart Corporation over ownership of the symbol (Stark and Crawford 2). While Nicholas Loufrani settled the suit with Wal-Mart, he’s also well known for creating “portrait emoticon forms” which are the early icons that replaced emoticons before the world ever knew emojis (Danesi 2). This move from historical material representations of affect in t-shirts, buttons, and print-based media to representing affect in communication online demonstrates that although the tools for communication may have changed, the need to embody communication is not new. Whether it is ancient visual rhetoric or contemporary 19th and 20th century Western popular culture, the desire to identify through representations of the self remains to be an integral part of successful cross-cultural communication.

Emoticon and Emoji

Before understanding the scope of emojis as visual rhetoric, it is important to distinguish the term from emoticon when talking about their origin and use within digital contexts. Though both used in digital spaces, emoticons, as defined by John Gallagher in “The Emotion for Opening the Text Message” are “visuals that use alphabetic text; they are complex multimodal compositions because they cannot be separated into their visual and alphabetic-text components” (Gallagher 38-39). As a timeline, emoticons can be thought of as the typographical art that was displayed in the 19th century from Puck magazine. As a result, emoticons predate the late-1990’s portrait emoticon forms developed by Nicholas Loufrani (see Fig. 4.1).
Considering this, emoticons then serve as a literal enactment of image-word hybrid symbols, often used in ways so as to fulfill embodied representations of the writer. Emoticons are classified as part of the American Standard Code for Information Interchange (ASCII) which are a “a standard set of digital codes representing letters and symbols used in the transfer of text between computers” (2). Emoticons, then, can be thought of as digital rhetoric under Eyman’s definition whereas even the earliest 19th century incorporation of affect symbols into Puck magazine can be considered digital rhetoric within Haas’s conception of the term as something made by our digits.

Whereas emoticons are understood as the early versions of “portrait emoticon forms,” Japanese emojis originated from kaomoji. As Stark and Crawford discuss the differences between emoticons and kaomoji, they note the difference in perspective of the two arguing that kaomoji tended to be represented in “horizontal profile views (□ • □) instead of :-)” (3). However, because kaomoji often required more characters, they were more expensive to create which discouraged users from incorporating them into their text messages. As a result of the economic dilemma, emojis were developed to cut cost but maintain affect and effect.
Returning to Murray’s articulation of discursive and non-discursive rhetoric, it is interesting to consider the classifications of emoticon and emoji as either discursive or non-discursive. In his articulation of the nuances between the two, Murray pulls from Susanne Langer’s definitions in *A Study in the Symbolism of Reason, Rite and Art*, arguing discursive texts are “the forms of symbolization most common to composition classrooms and associated with verbal and written or printed text…in which symbols are bound by semantic forms because it assumes that the “word” is the only means to articulate thought” (Langer qtd. in Murray 4). Conversely, non-discursive texts are primarily reliant on images and that “it most often becomes employed to symbolize what cannot be said or written directly by the word” (Langer qtd. in Murray 4). While emoticons work to primarily accompany the written word to provide affect within a digital context, emoji can operate on both the level of discursive and non-discursive.

That is, emojis are a standardized set of pictographs that encompass both object-oriented symbols such as the bathtub emoji in addition to embodied representations of the self that are exclusively visual like the smiley face. Whereas emoticons allow the user to create symbolic hybrid representations, emojis are a predetermined pictographic keyboard that allows user to select symbols. Perhaps the greatest distinction between the two is that, unlike emoticons, emojis only become hybrid compositions when paired with the alphabetic; their construction and representations are exclusively visual. This loss of agency of the user to construct a self-representation that is conducive to their own material bodies is concerning. Whereas ancient visual composing and rhetoric were implemented within a particular discourse community where individuals to designed their own representations aside from the visual propaganda of the Spaniards, today emojis have come to embody a predominantly Western user despite their Eastern origin.
Despite a lack of agency in design for users, emojis can be considered language because they allocate for a particular discourse-specific literacy in order to successfully communicate meaning. In spite of this argument and their fairly new introduction into mainstream communication networks, linguists have largely dismissed emoji as language. As a linguist, Danesi argues emojis are “not ‘words’ in any traditional sense” (15). While emojis are not words, the comparison of emoji to alphabetic text is in and of itself problematic. Does language have to be alphabetic in order to be rhetorical? In one of the only peer-reviewed articles on emoji to date, Lisa Lebduska advocates that emoji are,

[A]ttempting to link us across time and cultures to all others who would communicate. A monolingual speaker of English is more likely to understand a Finnish friend’s 😞 than "kolkkous." Emojis operate at the level of the non-discursive, potentially filling a gap that separates even speakers of the same language. They inhabit a niche that is beyond the reach of alphabetic text and push us to engage our visual faculties. (Lebduska)

While Lebduska argues that emoji are distinctively non-discursive, we can also begin to think of them as discursive symbols as well in addition to an attempt with which to gain identification between cross-cultural users. Langer argues that such composing needs to be “ordered, sequential, and adherent to the laws of reasoning, often assumed to be synonymous with the laws of discursive thought” (Langer qtd. in Murray 4). Like words, emojis can also be strung together in order to create meaning as well as replace words entirely. In the iOS 10 update for Apple technology, words that can be replaced with image will become highlighted, suggesting a particular emoji in place of a word or concept. Therefore, as Danesi argues, they do function much like “words” and do not just “annotate the meaning of written communication”(Danesi 15). However, such interpretations of emojis to alphabetic language lend themselves toward
understanding a particular gaze and discourse, as many of the “suggested” emojis operate on the sense of the literal, or otherwise “dominant discourse” in how meaning is constructed and communicated within a public sphere despite their cultural origin.

To expand upon the visual rhetoric of emojis within the public sphere, different companies and politicians have utilized the implementation of emojis as language. In August 2015, for example, Hillary Clinton asked students to tweet about their experiences with student debt only in emoji (see Fig. 4.2). Not only did Clinton consider the rhetorical situation in who she was addressing and why such a medium would be appropriate for that age demographic based on both platform and prompt, but also Clinton’s successful engagements with that audience recognized and validated emojis as a “passing” form of language.

Figure 4.2: “Student debt tweet” Hillary Clinton Tweet. 12 August 2015

Figure 4.3: “Twitter response 1.” Response Tweet. 12 August 2015 (1 of 3)

Figure 4.4: “Twitter response 2.” Response Tweet. 12 August 2015 (2 of 3)

Figure 4.5: “Twitter response 3.” Response Tweet. 12 August 2015 (3 of 3)
While some students offered a more discursive response where emojis needed to be read in a sentence-like structure in order to successfully communicate meaning (see Fig. 4.3), others used emojis in ways that were not quite as literal, leading one to believe that some cultural or discourse-specific context was needed in order to understand the intention, allowing them to operate as non-discursive (see Fig. 4.4). Last, others utilized emojis as truly hybrid compositions, infusing them with text in order to provide an embodied response to the text proceeding the emojis, which was often repetitive in nature (see Fig. 4.5). Despite the responses archived of students experiencing student debt, there are particular patterns enacted within the visual composing practices of emojis that require attention in analyzing how perception and hegemony influence design. In addition, like Guaman Poma, Hillary Clinton knew her position as visual subject—utilizing a composing strategy for a particular audience for a particular purpose. In this way, emojis are an important affective hybrid identification practice between they operate on the levels of both discursive and non-discursive.

**Conflating Globalization for Hegemony**

In an attempt to understand different variations in the use of emojis, the iPhone and Android app SwiftKey released a study in April 2015 detailing recorded cultural trends. Pulling from a keyboard of 60 characters of emojis, the study determined that not only did the rhetorical situation influence the ways in which emojis were used, but also the symbols chosen to represent
meaning differed significantly based on culture.

What is interesting to note in these findings is not that one can merely determine that there are cultural variances in which emojis are favored and in what context, but that within particular cultures, tropes emerge in how emojis are used rhetorically. According to the study by Swiftkey, Canadians are twice as likely to repurpose literal symbols such as a peach or eggplant into a raunchy representation of the body (“SwiftKey Emoji Report” 12). Re-inscriptions of symbols and connotations of such symbols falls under what Cara Finnegan refers to as image circulation. Using circulation as a way to study image, Finnegan notes that studying the circulation of images “helps us discover their fluidity” (257). In doing so, circulation looks at the ways in which the meaning of an image shifts based on context. Under this view, Finnegan argues “while the critic may activate an interpretation of an image in one context, it is not necessarily the case that all elements of that interpretation will make sense when the image circulates in other contexts” (259). While the interpretation of a symbol can carry within an individual culture based on rhetorical situation, the Swiftkey study also demonstrates that it
varies based on different cultures on a global scale. As a result, the claims that emojis are the foundation for a “universal language” (Evans), is simply not true. For linguist Vyvyan Evans, emojis are not quite language yet representative of the beginnings of a “new universal language” because “English is often said to be the world’s global language, to make the point clear, a comparison with English is a highly instructive point of departure” (20). Despite documented vast cultural variance, the design of emojis still subscribes to a predominantly Western interpretation of alphabetic as they are coded into mobile platforms like the iPhone iOS. If there is evidence to support that difference symbols are culturally chosen to support similar concepts, why then are our technologies routing them to a specific symbol to represent a word in iOS as well as arguing that their comparison for a universal language should be rooted in English?

In reviewing the findings presented by the SwiftKey study, it is important to also discuss the design and the ways in which some of these cultural variances play into perceived Westernized stereotypes of the “Other.” Similar to the Spaniard’s representations of the Incans in the literacy propaganda posters, certain values and ideologies are communicated in these visual symbols. Regarding how bodies are constructed, only fairly recent updates in the emoji keyboard have come to recognize multiple racial identities beyond the five racist tropes of the “Other.” Stark and Crawford link this representation of skin tone as a color palette that shades darker from left to right as the Fitzpatrick scale used by dermatologists. However, in tracing the skin tone addition to emojis, Stark and Crawford note the scale was used to classify white skin patients, only adding darker skin tones to the spectrum after the initial scale was developed, much like the emojis themselves (7). It is when we begin to design affective symbols from the construction of a default user or representative corporeal body that hegemony begins to be coded into design.
In addition to embodied representations of skin tone, early Apple iOS emojis also evoked particular conceptions of gender, with women in tutus and men in business suits as well as families with male and female parents. These representations of bodies communicate particular ideologies about the role of gender and place within a society that is rooted within hegemony. It was not until users critiqued the Apple iOS keyboard for its lack of diversity and representation that Apple added variations to gender and family. In his discussion of hegemony, Victor Villanueva emphasizes the role of consent in dominant ideology as an integral part to how hegemony is maintained. Working from Gramsci’s discussion of hegemony, Villanueva argues:

As Gramsci sees it, every culture contains particular worldviews, ideologies; some of these are common to the cultures within a society and are common to the cultures that compromise the dominant groups. We accept commonly held worldviews as truths. The dominant does more than accept; it capitalizes on the general accepted truths. (20)

This idea of the dominant group as capitalizing on common truths is what media theorists like McLuhan envisions as globalization. In contrast, globalization is instead, as David Harvey argues is “a profound geographical reorganization of capitalism” (6). In other words, globalization propels hegemony. Cultures or dominant groups capitalize on accepted “truths” or common ideologies prosper. Globalization is world-systemic capitalism. It is not global in the sense that is unifies all cultures and communities, but rather it is a way in which hegemony functions outside of geographical borders. In returning to McLuhan, the “global village” is not global at all, but rather an enactment of hegemony through machine-based networks as it pertains to language and representation within the dominant discourse.

Emojis not only propel hegemony in their form, but also in how they are used as content. Aside from apparent conceptions of a default user embedded within the design of the symbols
themselves, many Westernized interpretations of the emojis are not used as they were intended. An example of a misinterpretation lies in the prayer hands emoji, which is meant to signify gratitude within Japanese culture. Despite its intended use, many Western users instead understand the symbol to signify two high-fiving hands. While such use could be constituted as circulation, there is an ethical element that lies in misusing a cultural trope that is the origin of the symbol itself (see Fig. 4.7).

![Figure 4.7 Apple iOS 11.2.6 Folded Hands Emoji](image)

When this misuse or these problematic representations are made apparent to the corporation that hosts them, there is always still a default user that is rooted within the dominant discourse that influences both design and use. As a result the default user deviates from the symbols origin, which influences these affective representations in both form and content. Consider that within the Apple iOS 11.2.6 keyboard of emojis, the first representations of clothing to appear chronologically are a pink blouse, a collard men’s shirt, blue jeans, and then a white-collar professional men’s dress shirt. Out of the seven representations of clothing, the traditional Japanese *kimono* appears last and is the only significant representation of Japanese fashion. Moreover, all of the emojis that display full bodies are clothed in the Western conceptions of style, with many in blue jeans. These ideologies of a default user are coded into the design of the symbols themselves, which further perpetuate into their use as symbols within a given discourse community, with symbols for food such as the hot dog, cheeseburger, and McDonalds fries.
Not a Rise, But a Return.

While visual scholars of the 21st century such as WJT Mitchell, Mitchell Stephens, and Diana George assert that we are seeing a “pictorial turn” in both composing as a result of digital platforms, gazing backward tells us otherwise. Rather than refer to visual culture in electronic contexts as a “rise of the visual” in analyzing emoticons, kaomoji, and emojis, I instead would like to think of it as a return in how emojis are beginning to gain prominence in the digital sphere. This return to the visual as a cross-cultural communication practice offers dynamic possibilities for enacting ways of composing within and outside of alphabetic composing. While composing in digital contexts with symbols such as emojis offer new ways of representing embodiment and language, it is important the perception plays an integral role to how we understand these symbols as both sender and receiver.

Moreover, in considering affective identification as a cross-cultural communication practice, design and representation become matters of agency in how we design Others as well as ourselves for different discourse communities. As I will discuss in chapter four, thinking about design and hegemony demands a closer look into the power structures that decide which designs get to pass, and which fail and why. As Vyvyan Evans argues, “English serves as the global lingua franca” (21). In tracing the rise of ubiquitous technology alongside the rise of emojis, I will link affect to capitalism through the commercialization of mobile technologies. I argue that this connection presents Mirzeoff’s concept of visuality as a way for hegemony to be coded into design through the gatekeeping practices of the non-profit organization that hosts emoji symbols: The Unicode Consortium.
CHAPTER FIVE: THE POLITICS OF IMAGE DESIGN

From Analysis to Critique of Visual Communication

In this chapter I return to the matter of ethics and design as it pertains to perspective, examining the production and distribution of emojis as a site of hegemony within visual communication design. I begin with an analysis into the manifestation of emojis as a phenomenon within Japanese culture, linking its invention to a rise in cellular technology. I layer this analysis with a critique that examines the non-profit company that currently regulates the production of emojis, the Unicode Consortium. I critique the outsourcing of design in the proposal structure for creating new emojis as a gatekeeping practice that hegemonizes these Eastern origin symbols, moving toward relevance for considering digital literacy not just as an understanding of how to use digital tools, but also as a framework that also questions them within a socioeconomic context of globalization and hegemony.

Ubiquitous Technology and the Rise of Emojis

Though visual communication has been around long before the mobile phone, the rise in popularity of image and word as hybrid form of composing in contemporary communication can be largely attributed to mobile phone use. In his discussion of the history of mobile technology, Richard Ling notes that in the early 1950s the Chief Engineer for the company now known today as AT&T predicted that “mobile technology would eventually allow us ubiquitous access via small portable devices” (4). While the first mobile phone was anything but small in 197316, it did

open up new ways of communicating, no longer restricting users to the confines of a building or stationary device in order to communicate with other bodies in non face-to-face communication settings. Though innovative in their wireless technology, the option to communicate beyond aurality was not a feature of cellphones until 1992. In 1992 Neil Papworth was able to successfully deliver the message “Merry Christmas” through his computer to his colleague, Richard Jarvis’s mobile phone through the UK based Vodafone network (Goodwin). This effort was known as the first communication in short message service (SMS), otherwise known today as texting. While United States based companies like Nokia began offering SMS service in 1993, it wasn’t until 1999 that users could send SMS messages across different cell phone carriers (Goodwin).

In Japan, Ling notes that the first mobile SMS efforts come from the same company that created emojis, NTT DoCoMo. DoCoMo is also the parent company of i-mode, which “provides access to a variety of services and allows one to send and receive short messages as well as email” (10). Unique to DoCoMo is also the version of HTML that accompanied i-mode, which Ling argues is a “type of extended intranet where one has access to a large but cosseted set of services” (10). These extended services, like the addition of ringtones and other broadband or multimedia services, appear in the late 1990s is when mobile technology begins to capitalize on wireless technologies economic enterprise beyond wireless calling. In essence, the intranet features offered through i-mode were the origins of what is now known today as the smartphone, offering access to email, SMS, and Internet.

With these additions to cellular technology, mobile companies began to see an enormous profit in the features beyond mere wireless communication. Providing a discussion on the

economic endeavors of affect and capital, Stark and Crawford argue, “representations of feeling in general, and happiness in particular, are often painted across the exterior of money-making ventures” (8). As chronicled by Stark and Crawford in tracing the Western origins of the smiley face, affect and the representation of happiness or pleasure are rhetorical. Whether to identify users with a particular ethos of a business like that of State Mutual Life Assurance and its merge with Ohio’s Guarantee Mutual Company, the smiley face is a means with which to gain identification. However, this identification is also tied to economics and the cost of communication itself, as symbols required fewer characters than the Japanese version of emoticons, kaomoji. With the decrease in characters that emojis provided, it became cheaper for users to consolidate their messages in image as opposed to written word. In an interview, Kurita also argues that Japanese culture is deeply embedded within a rhetoric of respect within communication, and linguistic register and contour tone is one of the ways in which respect is communicated, stating “If someone says Wakarimashita you don’t know whether it’s a kind of warm, soft ‘I understand’ or a ‘yeah, I get it’ kind of cool, negative feeling” (Kurita qtd. in Blagdon). The original intentions of the emojis were to primarily display embodied representations to convey tone to gain identification within people of the same culture.

As the Internet began to grow and expand to mobile devices in platforms beyond i-mode, however, communication efforts and the need to identify with others cross-culturally grew as well. Due to this need symbols extended beyond affective representation that signified bodies and tone and began to encompass objects and other cultural phenomena as well. With the smartphone’s ability to connect to the Internet and host multimedia message content (MMS),

17 Wakarimashita is a polite way of saying “I understand” and is different from Naru Hodo, which is a more casual way of saying “that makes sense to me.” https://japanese.stackexchange.com/questions/36724/when-do-i-have-to-use-naru-hodo-and-when-to-use-wakarimashita
Vyvyan Evans argues “Today nearly one quarter of the global population owns a smartphone” (21). Within this population of smartphone users, Evans notes that within 2015 “41.5 billion text messages were being sent globally every day” (22). Within this population of smartphone users, Evans references a 2016 study by eMarketer, which provides current country rank of smartphone use in addition to future use estimates through 2020. According to these data, from 2015 to 2020 China will hold the number one rank of smartphone use as a country, with India in second, and the United States in third (23). What’s interesting to note is that despite a spot as third, the next Western country to hold a spot is Germany at number nine, with the United Kingdom following at number ten (23). Countries such as Brazil and Russia hold spots within ranks three through nine. In another study by Nikola Lijubešić and Darja Fišer that linked country to the use of emojis within the platform, Twitter, the United States came in 152nd with Indonesia coming in 1st (84-85).

If national smartphone data reveal that Eastern origin countries are surpassing Western ones as users of mobile technology and emojis, why do Western companies such as Apple, Microsoft, and Google largely dominate the mobile industry? Moreover, in analyzing the use of emojis from 2010 to 2015, Evans notes that within a five-year timespan, use of emojis rose from 10% of users in 2010 to over 40% in 2015 (24). Connecting the rise of emojis to capitalism, Stark and Crawford argue “these graphic forms are exemplary of the tension between affect as liberating human potential, and as a productive force that the market continually seeks to harness through the commoditization of emotional sociality” (2). While affect is a means with which to gain identification between and within cultures, the question remains as to who benefits through the commoditization of its use? Initially designed for the purpose of consolidating characters and
cost for users, their representation and ownership has evolved over time to profit those who now hold ownership over the symbols.

This commoditization of affect—meaning how embodied representations of affect are seen as capital—juxtaposed alongside the data concerning smartphone use globally leads to an analysis of perspective and hegemony in the design and coding of emojis. In this next section I will discuss the move from NTT DoCoMo to the Unicode Consortium as it pertains to the ownership of emojis and why these questions of rights and power are important as hegemony influences cross-cultural identification design.

Culturally Inspired Origin, Standardized User

As I discussed in chapter three, the evolution from kaomoji to emojis was a move from hybridity in the composition of a symbol as opposed to an image that existed alongside the written word. Whereas emoticons or kaomoji require assembly by the author, emojis are a predetermined keyboard where the design is regulated and outsourced by the platforms that host the keyboard. Despite their representation, emojis can operate as both discursive and non-discursive rhetoric depending on the context of their use. In their functionality as objects or representations of meaning, Stark and Crawford discuss the distinctions stating:

Ideograms are symbolic representations of a particular concept or idea; pictograms are ideograms that show a pictorial image of the object being represented. To a greater degree than the emoticon, the utility of an emoji lies in the indeterminacy of its pictographic versus iconographic legibility as a signifier of affect, emotion, or sociality.

(5)
In their move to pictographic as opposed to ideographic, the visualization of how a concept gets represented in the design of these symbols requires a closer look. Like alphabetic language, the design of these pictograms evolves over time and is socially constructed. However, this construction is largely rooted in a user that deviates from the cultural origin of the scripts.

Originally developed by Kurita for NTT DoCoMo, the design of emojis was largely influenced by the visual rhetoric within Japanese *manga* and *kanji* comics as well as other cultural symbols such as locations, customs, and gestures (5). Many of these influences can be seen in culturally specific symbols such as the *kadomatsu* (see Table 4.1). Other more embodied pictographs directly influenced from *manga* comes from the accentuated facial features, such as the large sweat bead coming off of a symbol’s forehead to depict nervousness or anxiety (see Table 5.1). *Kanji*, according to Kurita was an inspiration for symbols that could “express abstract ideas like ‘secret’ and ‘love’ in a single character” (Kurita qtd. in Blagdon).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inspiration</th>
<th>Cultural Myth</th>
<th>Magna</th>
<th>Kanji</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Emoji</strong></td>
<td><img src="kadomatsu.png" alt="Kadomatsu" /></td>
<td>😖</td>
<td>😍</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Representation</strong></td>
<td><em>Kadomatsu</em></td>
<td>Downcast Face With Sweat</td>
<td>Smiling Face With Heart-Eyes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Classification</strong></td>
<td>Pictogram</td>
<td>Pictogram</td>
<td>Ideogram</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 5.1: Classification of Visual Inspiration For Emojis

Over time, Western users have come to misuse many of these culturally specific symbols. However, before their introduction into mainstream Western technology, Kurita attempted to secure a copyright for the symbols, failing to do so because of their simplicity (5). Despite the inability to obtain ownership of the symbols, emojis were never intended to operate outside of the DoCoMo platform. Because of their popularity within the DoCoMo platform, demand for their use began to rise. Kurita notes that “everyone’s emoji were identical…if each manufacturer had added its own originality to the characters, the emoji would have been all mixed up and inconsistent even inside Docomo” (Kurita qtd. in Blagdon).

However, as they grew in popularity other companies in Japan began to introduce their own version of emojis. Companies like SoftBank and DDI Cellular began to create their own emojis available only on their own platforms, which turned the symbols into a market-driven asset (5). Despite their variance in look across platforms, Stark and Crawford note that the coding of these symbols were adherent to Japanese standards, called Shift Japanese Industrial Standards (JIS) (5). Similar to American Standard Code for Information Interchange (ASCII), these regulations are what represent text within electronic platforms. The binary digits that represent information within digital technology are also the information encoding for how text is encoded into the devices themselves. In this sense, emojis are not only discursive and non-discursive in their use, but they’re also digital rhetoric in the ways that Eyman and Brooke both define the concept of digital rhetoric.

18 The emojis identified in Table 4.1 come from Emojipedia, which archives all variations of symbol design and categorization across platforms as well as changes in design due to platform updates. https://emojipedia.org/
Whereas emojis were initially developed as part of the Shift JIS standard, starting in 2010 they were implemented as, and are still currently sustained through, the Unicode Consortium. The Unicode Consortium is a non-profit corporation devoted to developing, maintaining, and promoting software internationalization standards and data. Like Shift JIS or ASCII, this standardization specifies the representation of text in all modern software products, regardless of language or electronic platform. The Unicode Consortium actively develops standards in the area of internationalization including defining the behavior and relationships between Unicode characters. According to Unicode, its origins stem from the following needs:

The Unicode character encoding derives its name from three main goals: universal (addressing the needs of world languages), uniform (fixed-width codes for efficient access), and unique (bit sequence has only one interpretation into character codes).

(“History of Unicode”)

Comparing ASCII or Shift JIS to Unicode, ASCII and Shift JIS operate within a language that is conducive to country origin. Unicode, on the other hand, transcends languages and instead developed a standardization that applies to both alphabetic text and glyphs. Whereas ASCII was incorporated into Unicode in 1991, Unicode not only supports code points, known as natural numbers, but also encoding.

Encoding refers to the binary format, which is called a Unicode Transformation Format (UTF). UTF’s can come in 8, 16, or 32 sequences. When first introduced into the Unicode standardization as Shift JIS, emojis were encoded in 7 digits. The Unicode Consortium added a 0 in front to make them conducive to the 8 UTF that is regulates through its system. As Rob Reed explains, “the coded character sets is the information that is stored, and the encoding is the manner in which it is stored” (“Everything You Need to Know About Emoji”).
With the introduction of the iPhone to Japan through the company SoftBank, iOS 2.2 hosted the Softbank symbols (Blagdon). In their international debut in 2011 within the iOS 5 update, emojis were standardized into the Apple keyboard (Blagdon). Because emojis are known as “supplementary characters” that are not alphabetic symbols or language, they require two-bit encoding, bringing their number to 16. This is important to consider because what this means is that the 16-bit universal code is a unique code that needs to work across various programs and hardware (“Unicode FAQ”). In other words, the simple smiley-face emoji 16-bit code needs to be the same code for an Apple iOS messaging system as it does for a Google or Android messaging platform. In its early stages, emoji were not standardized in their 16-bit character codes, and often were inconsistent when sent across various platforms.

Now that they are standardized within the level of encoding and information processing, not only is consistency in symbol regulated, but also the Unicode Standard Consortium becomes a hegemonic gatekeeping organization, dictating what kinds of emoji can be supported, maintaining a consistency in which all hardware and software need to adhere to in order to support its code.

**Design, Power, and Perspective**

Originally, Kurita created emoji with little experience in design, drawing inspiration from Japanese culture. In his interview with Kurita, Blagdon notes the symbols had to be represented within a 12-by-12 grid, requiring him to be “economical with the use of space in his designs.” However, within the symbols he crafted, certain design elements had to be implemented in order for them to function alongside the written word. For example, the grinning face encompasses harder edged shapes like an upside down “V” for eyes and a rectangle for a mouth (Blagdon). In
stark contrast to the softer and more developed emojis in the iOS keyboard, Blagdon notes that Kurita viewed his characters as symbols as opposed to images, stating, “while AU and others tried to make their characters more like images, Kurita always envisioned emoji as symbols—something closer to letters, that wouldn’t feel out of place if you slipped them into a sentence” (Blagdon). This idea of emojis as symbols as opposed to images contrasts greatly with their current manifestations as it relates to design. Whereas Stark and Crawford argue emojis are pictographic as opposed to iconographic, Kurita originally created them to be iconographic and to operate as discursive, a rhetoric. With an expansion and variance in use as it pertains to culture and interpretation of the symbols, emojis are both discursive and non-discursive despite their origin.

As emojis currently stand within the Unicode Consortium, the relationship between power and consistency is a dynamic one. Because the Unicode Consortium is a universal non-profit, this means one needs to be a member in order to have agency in the decisions concerning code updates, decisions, and intricate understandings (“Unicode Emoji”). This membership, however, does not create all members as equal, as membership does not ensure access to voting or board membership where the real decisions get made concerning emoji. In reference to access as it pertains to decisions, information, and agency, Mashable reported that:

A full member, a company like Apple, pays $18,000 per year, while an institutional member (a school or government body) pays $12,000. Individual members have it easier, paying $75, while students with a valid ID pay $35. Full members get to be "active participants" in future Unicode projects and standards; they secure a vote in all technical committees and help select board members. The opportunities shrink with each level, but still offer Unicode inclusion. (Desta)
Desta argues that according to Unicode’s emoji FAQ page on its website, the proposal process that goes into creating the code for emoji is long and intricate. The Unicode site says people can request to have an emoji added to the standard, but the timespan of proposal to release can take years (Desta). Technically, the only design of emoji that the Unicode is responsible for is the glyph. In parsing out the relationship glyphs have to fonts and typefaces within Unicode, Reed states the following:

The relationship between the terms glyph, font, and typeface is that a glyph is a component of a font that is composed of many such glyphs with a shared style, weight slant, and other characteristics. Fonts, in turn, are components of a typeface, which is a collection of fonts that share common design features but each of which is distinctly different (Reed).

In coding all of these attributes into a standardization that’s represented across platforms, Reed argues, “essentially, we need a font that includes a representation for the code point of the emoji we want to display. If we don’t have that symbol we’ll get a blank space, an empty box or some other generic character as an indication that the symbol we’re after isn’t available” (“Everything You Need to Know About Emoji”). In essence, the platform, which attributes a particular font, or typeface to emojis, decides how they’re coded in glyphs, which is why emojis look different across platforms despite coding standardization.

Moreover, because emojis are actually outsourced by the platforms that host their design, they can look different based on the device or platform you’re utilizing them within. Due to the power of choice in how characters are represented being attached to a particular company, different ideologies and values are subsequently coded into the design. Because the Unicode Consortium subcommittee that votes on the design makes the ultimate decision, and often, those
on the committee represent the companies proposing new emojis themselves, the voting procedure is substantially influenced by hegemony.

The Unicode Consortium subcommittee for emojis is comprised of CEOs from larger Western-based technology companies like Google, IBM, and Apple. The subcommittee is chaired by Mark Davis of Google, with vice-chairs Jeremy Burge of Emojipedia and Jennifer 8. Lee of Emojination (“Unicode Emoji”). Within the eleven members of the subcommittee, Evan notes that eight are American representing “Oracle, IBM, Microsoft, Adobe, Apple, Google, Facebook, and Yahoo” (29). This representation is overwhelmingly Western despite what current data reveals regarding global use of emojis and leading demographics in countries who predominantly use the technology that hosts its software to communicate. Evans also notes that “the committee reps of these tech companies are overwhelmingly white, male, and computer engineers—hardly representative of the diversity exhibited by the global users of emojis” (29). This representation bleeds into which emojis get to pass and subsequently what they look like, as Evan notes, “as of 2015, the majority of food emojis were associated with North American culture” (29).

One such example of a recent emoji that demonstrates this visualization of American conceptions of Eastern culture comes from the new Chinese food emojis in the most recent update of emojis. With the release of these emojis, The Atlantic interviewed their designer, Yiying Lu, a San Francisco-based artist who was born in Shanghai, stating “the irony, is that two of the four new Chinese-themed emoji—the fortune cookie and the takeout box—are not Chinese Chinese, but instead reflect Westernized elements of Chinese culture” (LaFrance). In Lu’s interpretations of the symbols she was asked to design, she told LaFrance the following:
It’s kind of like Häagen-Dazs…people think it’s Scandinavian just because of the two dots in the name, but it’s American. It’s the same thing with the takeout box. The Chinese takeout box is completely invented in the West. And the fortune cookie was invented by a Japanese person, but it was popularized in America. (Lu qtd. in LaFrance)

Not only does the interpretation of a character get represented visually through the dominant discourse of Western capitalism, but also values and hegemony are reinforced through the power of those making decisions. In terms of how emojis differ across platforms based on how corporations choose to represent them, Evans notes the stark differences in the gun emoji within platforms, stating:

Microsoft represents it as a revolver, while it’s a pistol for LG, and for iOS 10.0 it’s a water pistol. But the consequence of these different visual depictions is that the emoji represents a slightly different concept on each platform; and this leads to a variation in what emoji users actually perceive when receiving or sending the gun emoji. (46)

Rhetorically, the use of these symbols in their visual interpretation can differ drastically. Whereas a pistol may be seen as more violent in its use, a water gun could be seen as more playful. For different cultures these symbols can mean many different things, which makes it difficult to gain identification with different cultures, let alone the same culture, that may be communicating across different platforms. Moreover, the companies that choose to represent their characters in specific ways have an immense influence over how the design of that symbol is maintained. Evans notes that while the Unicode committee makes decisions regarding the inclusion of new emoji, the software developers that sit on that committee are far more powerful in being able to constitute how successful emojis get designed, and subsequently what that product ends up communicating insofar as a use and interpretation (63). With this, Evan argues
that “by changing the representation for the gun emoji, Apple is, effectively, constraining what its users can use Emoji to express” (64). Because users consent to using whatever symbols are available to them through the technology they possess, this is a form of consent, which allows the hegemony to continue in the gatekeeping practices of how these symbols continue to be represented through Western ideology despite the argument that their manifestation is global. Like Evans, I agree that these ideologies that are coded into the design within specific platforms raise concern.

Despite the gatekeeping and influence Western software engineers have over the manifestation of which emojis appear on a platform and how they end up looking, their creation is marketed as an inclusive practice that welcomes proposals from anyone. According to Unicode’s “Design Guidelines,” emoji characters can have two main kinds of presentation, an *emoji presentation*, with colorful and perhaps whimsical shapes, even animated [and] a *text presentation*, such as black & white” (“Unicode Emoji”).

While the shape of the character can vary significantly, as seen in the different manifestations of the gun emojis, the guidelines note, “designers should maintain the same ‘core’ shape, based on the shapes used mostly commonly in industry practice” (“Unicode Emoji”). Moreover, despite their origin as symbols meant to represent tone and embodied affective representations of the self, the guidelines for designing bodies encourages ambiguity and a removed representation from individuality, stating “general-purpose emoji for people and body parts should also not be given overly specific images: the general recommendation is to be as neutral as possible regarding race, ethnicity, and gender” (“Unicode Emoji”). However, Colette Shade notes that in regards to their design:
Each new vote and following induction, emoji are becoming increasingly politically charged. The presence or absence of emoji both hints at and contributes to cultural visibility and erasure. The emoji selection process must contend with delicate geopolitical issues, like nationhood, ethnicity, religion, and war. (Wired)

While much of the characters found on the keyboard still do encompass cultural traditions within Japanese culture, there are other removals and additions that are especially problematic to consider as software developers constitute which emojis are allowed within platforms and technologies while designers are also pushing a particular perspective to which we view emoji from.

Within the proposal itself, not only does a need for the symbol have to exist, but also research constituting that the emoji will be popular. Evans summarizes the details needed in the proposal for a new emoji as justifying “compatibility, expected usage level, image distinctiveness, and completeness” (221). However, despite these components for an emoji proposal, one must consider the perspective to which the justification is occurring. Consider that for the Chinese take out emoji, a justification for need existed within American culture, as the designer Lu noted that this representation of Chinese food is not relevant to the Chinese themselves. As a result, these considerations are deeply rooted in the dominant discourse, making their rhetoric for identification rooted in a particular conception of visuality.

Ethical Perception

When reflecting on the changes made to the visual design of these symbols based on platform, it's important to understand who’s making these decisions and how far we’ve deviated from their cultural origin in their visual aesthetic. Consider that though the Unicode has added
skin tone, there is always still a “white” default user. Even within the conception of a yellow embodied representation, there are still connections to Western discourse in popular culture representations such as The Simpsons. Understanding the power structures at play and the ways in which these symbols are designed and coded for a particular use, representation, and platform are ethical concerns for cross-cultural communication.

Design is a political act. Choosing which symbols get to pass and which fail is a political act. Ignoring the hegemonic implications present within visual culture is turning a blind eye to the ways in which colonization and language enact power over marginalized communities. Discussing ethics and the responsibility of designers, Carlos Salinas argues for the relevance of techne, stating “the significance of having a social (or cultural) savvy is that [designers] must not only figure out how to make something but also consider how what they make might be seen and used within a larger culture” (173). For Salinas, this comes down to an engagement with perception and techne. He argues “the art of making involves a systematic, productive knowledge of making artifacts along with savvy about the use value of artifacts within cultural contexts” (173). It is this “know how” and this attention to cultural contexts that cross-cultural design needs in order to be ethical and successful, so that all users have agency in their representation. Studies like the one I referenced by Swiftkey in Chapter Three are rich avenues for understanding cultural variance among symbol use. Moreover, conducting primary research that seeks to understand need based on culture for symbols can reveal not only how emojis are used, but also how they can be more inclusive cross-culturally.

We need to remain aware of culture and engage in more of the design of images as teachers and visual rhetoricians who work with digital technologies. Rather than push for our images to be usable and functional for a given purpose, we need to be thinking about the ways in
which we’re looking at and reading images, understanding how our perspective can have an impact on our contextualization of such images. In doing so I believe that we can be not designers just for the greatest audience possible but for all bodies, cultures, and users of images within the 21st century.

As Dylan Miner notes, visuality should act as a form of resistance to the hegemonic contained within visual culture. He argues that within visual culture “we must incorporate local epistemologies into the analysis of the global” (Miner 178). Applying this concept to emojis has the potential to change the ways in which the symbols are proposed, selected, and designed. Although there are differences in the ways in which colonization was implemented in the Southern Western Hemisphere, I believe that there are stark connections in how these Eastern-origin symbols are colonized as it pertains to visual culture and affective identification. Miner argues that “to fully comprehend any creative expression, one must contextualize its production within correct cultural parameters” (Miner 178). This is similar to what Salinas advocates in his discussion of techne, arguing for the cultural relevance for image production.

Perspective matters in how we look at and use emojis. Marcel Danesi claims that “if this trend of emoji use grows and evolves into a full-fledged, picture-phonetic hybrid language, one can argue that it is laying the foundations for a new civilization--a global one based on a common visual language” (5). Neither language nor images are neutral, and while Unicode may be standardizing emojis on the level of encoding, their visual manifestations are deeply rooted in hegemony as a way to manifest perception of a dominant discourse. As Stark and Crawford argue, these choices and representations are harnessing on the capitalization of affect, commodifying the popularity of these symbols so that corporate technology enterprises can profit
off of their use. When rhetoric is used as an enterprise to be exploited for capital, how successful can cross-cultural communication be?

**Toward an Ethics of Image**

Drawing cross-cultural examples of the ways in which discursive and non-discursive rhetoric manifests within colonization and the current hegemony reveals the role perception plays in how language is interpreted and maintained. While we cannot go back to change the representation of the Incans in the Spaniards’ representations of Incan bodies in Spanish literacy propaganda posters, I believe that we can learn from Guaman Poma in how agency in self-representation through affect can influence successful cross cultural-communication. In his texts, Guaman Poma was able to design the representation of his body, positioning himself alongside the written word in ways so as to constitute his own negotiation of discursive and non-discursive rhetoric.

As this technical discussion in this chapter illustrates, little agency is available in how users can represent themselves or their voices within the emojis as either users or members of the Unicode Consortium. As we look toward manifestations of emojis, Evans argues, “a fundamental design feature of human communication is that it is multimodal in nature” (55). While our resources may have changed for communication between the Incans use of visuals and current use of visuals through emojis, they are all still digital rhetorics because they are made by humans for humans. The juxtaposition of image and word as a way to negotiate competing symbol systems requires an ethics that honors cultural origin in order to negotiate the relationship these symbols have as means to gaining identification.
CHAPTER SIX: TOWARD A CRITICAL DIGITAL LITERACY

*Rhetoric, the art and science of humans communicating, taking action, making reality from our use of symbols, and persuading each other, will look different in the twenty-first century, in part because of the new forums of cyberspace. How this new rhetoric will function depends on how we design, implement, legalize, and use the new tools.*

- Laura Gurak, *Persuasion and Privacy in Cyberspace*, 136

Summary and Conclusions: Doing Digital Rhetoric

The conclusion of this dissertation offers two avenues for enacting critical digital literacy as part of doing digital rhetoric through metadata and ethical collaboration. In the beginning of this dissertation I argued that the subfield of computers and composition should view digital rhetoric as a verb as opposed to a determiner. Positioning the noun instead as an action necessarily evokes the body as integral to what might constitute digital rhetoric. Situating the making with our digits as rhetorical turns our bodies into active agents or resources that are part of a multimodal composition. We cannot *do* digital rhetoric without our bodies. This shift in meaning pushes against a machine-based focus of the term “digital,” and instead calls upon the embodied relationship of sender and receiver to be more integral to how we gain identification. As Haas would argue, our “digits” are part of the resources we use create a text. An ontology of any text begins with the body.

Modes, as understood in digital rhetoric, are also embodied elements that initiate action within the roles of sender and receiver. In the role of sender, modes are representations of meaning. Modes require an attention to design, discourse, and elements. From the role of receiver, modes are sensory channels in which we view or interpret texts. In this sense, the visual
becomes both seeing and representing information, and neither manifestation can exist without
the involvement of our corporeal bodies as part of the communication process.

If doing digital rhetoric requires action, then the question arises, what types of
composition constitutes the process and product of digital rhetoric? Whereas some within of
computers and composition has argued for the validity of multimedia composing as a practice
that constitutes the machine-based resources of digital production (see Ball; Selfe), instead I
argued that multimodality is a term that looks to all available resources, emphasizing the role of
design and discourse communities in how a text gets assembled. This view contrasts a current
emphasis on production and distribution within multimedia texts. Like Brooke, thinking about
the media as an ecology of practice which shapes and are shaped by the resources and discourse
communities necessary to do digital rhetoric helps to make visible the materiality and invention
of the texts we assemble online. In my understanding of multimodal composition, discourse
communities, resources, and interpretation all influence design and processes of creating
multimodal texts.

In terms of the processes of creating multimodal texts, I question the ways in which
perception influences both interpretation and design. As the examples in Chapters Three and
Four demonstrate, affect plays an integral role in cross-cultural communication. Whereas the
“digital” interface has allocated for the ability to communicate beyond geographical borders,
gazing backwards at the ways in which identification occurred “offline” between different
discourse communities demonstrates that issues of perspective and hegemony have always
influenced multimodal texts and our conceptions of language.

Despite Western European-based understandings of language as alphabetic, the Incans
were able to gain identification through hybridity. This hybridity allocated for a negotiation of
image and word, permitting different discourse communities to talk across cultures, while also communicating within their own. Despite moments of failure in cross-cultural identification in visual rhetoric like that of the *quipus*, hybridity was successful due largely to the affective negotiation of discursive and non-discursive rhetoric. In his *Primer Nueva Corónica y Bueno Gobierno*, Guaman Poma used the visual representation of his body as an affective identification, utilizing the identity of a visual subject to design a text in which he both “sees and acknowledges that he is seen” (Quispe-Agnoli 46).

In the hybridity created by Guaman Poma, agency becomes especially important to consider within cross-cultural communication. The representation and design of Guaman Poma as a visual subject and hybrid text were on his own terms. How he was represented as well as what was said in alphabetic text were rhetorical choices made by Guaman Poma as an identification practice between two communities. In its opposition, the Spaniards’ literacy propaganda posters were texts that designed the bodies of the Other, creating a successful, yet unethical cross-cultural affective identification in order to enact and maintain hegemony.

Within contemporary visual rhetoric, an analysis of emojis also leads me to question the role of agency in design as well as how the Other gets represented within cross-cultural communication. As Gries argues, our perceptions of knowing history and the experiences of the Other can never be authentic (“Practicing Methods in Ancient Cultural Rhetorics”). However, it is evident that historical accounts of emojis in academic and public spheres are overwhelmingly rooted in an origin manifesting within Western European culture, tracing their rise in popularity to a transition from emoticons, portrait emoticon forms, and then to emojis. While there are some scholars who trace the origins of emojis to their cultural heritage and early depictions of *kaomoji* (see Stark and Crawford; Blagdon), histories and preservation efforts are largely rooted in
Western European-based corporations that profit off of their use, such as Apple and the Unicode Consortium.

So then, why do ethics matter in affective cross-cultural communication? What are the implications for preserving culture in design or for using multimodal texts within 21st century rhetoric? As history has demonstrated, globalization becomes a current euphemism to hegemony. While communication networks continue to expand and connect users across time and space, the ways in which these communication tools are designed, used, and understood all operate within a dominant discourse. As such, McLuhan’s concept of a “global village” exists only within a dominant ideology within a hegemonic rhetoric. There is nothing ethical about globalization, which Lisa Nakamura argues that it “creates a monoculture which flattens all users to be alike” (15). In the same way that rhetoric has been traced to a particular history as opposed to histories, the design and use of communication and representation online operate under the perception of a default user.

While ethics are subjective ideologies that are determined by discourse communities, there is much to be gained in reimagining digital literacy and rhetoric as embodied actions. Envisioning this change in digital rhetoric and literacy necessarily requires a change in perspective. Moreover, it requires a change in perspective that moves from consenting within a particular hegemonic block to questioning the manifestation of its ontology, which then trickles down to how we conceive of the competencies of a user.

In what follows, I offer two avenues with which to enact changes in perceptions of critical digital literacy coding and collaboration. Each avenue offers embodied actions that seek to push against conceptions of a default user and how we might come to ethically design affective multimodal texts online for cross-cultural communication. I will return to Selber’s
conception of multiliteracies and expand on his understanding of functional literacy as more than knowing how to use a computer. I argue instead that functional literacy requires a deeper understanding of invention at the level of encoding. In my avocation for the relevance of coding in image design, I will argue that metadata is a digital preservation of cultural heritage.

**Under the Hood: Coding Metadata as Cultural Heritage**

Despite position statements in composition studies that highlight the significance of digital literacies, few stress the relevance of cultural nuances in how digital literacy is not only understood, but also in how it is enacted. These 21st century literacy statements are rooted in predominantly machine-based competencies. An example of a machine-based digital literacy practice can be seen in Selber’s categorization of multiliteracies. Within his framework, Selber is careful to distinguish his definition of functional literacy from the traditional “nuts-and-bolts” definition that focuses on hardware (32). Instead, Selber argues that functional literacy includes “the skills associated with writing and communicating processes as teachers have come to understand them in a digital age” (44). While I agree with his assertion, position statements by The New London Group and NCTE seem to equate a functional approach to understanding machine-based literacies for multimedia composing. Such literacies should not only constitute a rudimentary skill of knowing the hardware for production or analysis, but also for understanding the capabilities of preservation in order to sustain the texts we produce and assemble online, as well as the texts of others that we remix and circulate.

Selber also argues that functional literacy is a “necessary if not sufficient condition of all other forms of literacy” (33). Such hierarchy of literacies poses a problem, noting the ways in which those who may not possess functional literacies in technology may indeed come to enact
Selber’s concept of critical literacy in seeing computers as cultural artifacts. Nakamura states that
the Internet fosters “Western (as yet) cultural practice[s] upon ‘third world,’ minority, and
marginalized populations” (15). These practices are deeply tied to access and the socioeconomic
contexts of communities. In essence, it is possible to know the value of computers within a
society and to question the ways in which they enact certain hegemonic assumptions without
knowing how even to turn a computer on.

An integral component of functional literacy is concerned with the ontology of the device
itself, which necessary leads to a focus on design. In Selber’s definition of functionalist design,
he argues that “good tools become invisible once users understand their basic operations” (36). It
is in these kinds of assertions that ethics plays a fundamental role in how we conceive of digital
literacy. Understanding the ways in which images like emojis are designed reveals powerful
insight into how the hegemonic is maintained online. Making the design of preservation and
standardization tools like the Unicode Consortium ambiguous leads them to remain unchallenged
unless a user has money to gain entry into the emoji subcommittee. Critical digital literacy
should be practices that make visible the inherent design of the tools we use to create and
analyze online. Design is political and images are not neutral. A functional critical literacy
should make transparent the design of the tool even before the tool is even used.

One way of moving toward making the design of the tool more visible is through the
practice of digital preservation. While the Unicode Consortium makes the process of digital
preservation fairly ambiguous to the public, understanding the concept of metadata as cultural
knowledge could change the way we know and understand emojis as users. Within the process of
creating multimedia or multimodal texts, digital preservation is usually an afterthought as
opposed to a part of the invention process. However, when we think of invention as the
representation of cultural knowledge in the form of symbols like emojis, it becomes integral to code that heritage into the preservation itself, as the visual representations are subjective based on platform and may not do the work of communicating that knowledge themselves.

From 2015-2016 I served as one of the first-ever graduate research assistant at Washington State University’s Center for Digital Scholarship and Curation. The co-directors sought to develop a space that would sustain partnerships within and outside the academy, operating the center under the pillars of curation, design, stewardship, and collaboration. In action, these pillars embody cultural digital preservation through the “use [of] technology in ethically minded and socially empowering ways” (“Mission Statement”). So what does this look like? An example comes from what Christen identifies as a “blind spot in most content management systems: They do not provide granular levels of access for various types of users, nor a way to customize protocols for access based on cultural parameters (“Opening Archives” 186). To address this, Christen at one point worked with indigenous communities as well as software designers to create the Mukurtu *Wumpurrani-kari* archive. From there, Christen’s work with ethical preservation transitioned into the platforms of Mukurtu CMS and the Plateau People’s Web Portal (PPWP). In describing these platforms, Christen states the following:

> These two projects leverage the backend software of the original archive to build digital platforms for indigenous cultural heritage management. The PWPP is an online educational portal of Plateau materials co-curated by tribal nations across the Pacific Northwest region of the United States. Mukurtu CMS is a free and open source digital archive and content management tool aimed at the specific needs of indigenous peoples globally…Mukurtu CMS is a tool that can be adapted to the local and cultural protocols
and dynamic intellectual property needs of any indigenous community. ("Does Information Really Want to be Free?" 2873)

Mukurtu, as described by Christen, is Warumungu, which translates to “dilly bag,” meaning a safe keeping place (“Does Information Really Want to be Free?” 2883). Within both platforms, the cultural knowledge and artifacts of indigenous communities are maintained by the communities that created them. This is enacted several ways through the design of the online platforms themselves.

One way to enact online preservation is through metadata. According to Jeffrey Pomerantz, metadata can easily be understood by likening it to data so that objects of information can be found later in association with other objects (Metadata 23). In describing a descriptive metadata statement, Pomerantz states that “the subject is the entity being described, and the object is another entity being used to describe the subject” (28). One of the ways in which this is standardized is through the Dublin Core, which is a “metadata schema designed to enable description of any resource” (29). In the same ways that The Unicode Consortium subcommittee on emojis dictates which emoji pass and fail, “the Dublin Core has restricted the set of statements that one is allowed to make about a resource” (30). In analyzing metadata as a political act, Christen quotes Peter Turner’s discussion of dominant ideologies in metadata, in which he argues:

> It is obvious that the fundamental categories of metadata schemes like Dublin Core are based on Western systems of knowledge management. As archives work increasingly with indigenous communities on the repatriation of digitized cultural heritage materials, with a clear aim of local knowledge management, we must expand the categories of
metadata to include culturally significant styles and types of knowledge. (Turner qtd. in Christen. “Opening Archives” 193).

There are two types of encoding for metadata schemes: syntax and descriptive (Pomerantz 31). In essence, what encoding schemes do regardless of their categorization is “dictate how signifiers are constructed” (31). Whereas syntax schemes constitute representation that are primarily numeric such as dates, controlled vocabulary schemas represent concepts attached to the object (31-32). These terms that can be used in associated with an object are deeply regulated by the Dublin Core, which is what Turner argues marginalizes non-Western users from accurately encoding their own metadata within descriptive schemas. This concern is also echoed by Pomerantz, in which he argues, “How can a controlled vocabulary possibly hope to be able to represent all possible subjects?” (35).

In response to these shared concerns, Christen developed the PPWP as a way to “allow Plateau peoples not only access to their cultural heritage collections…but also to facilitate the reciprocal curation of these materials…by affording tribal knowledge the same categorical weight as the institutional Dublin Core metadata” (“Opening Archives” 193). Figure 5.1 showcases an example of tribal knowledge as metadata, which contains not only descriptive elements meant to represent the cultural heritage item in the photograph, but also to preserve the history and cultural knowledge surrounding its ontology.
Within the community of the Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture, the view of this item contains preservation information that reveals a great deal about the object. From the date to the content rights, a reader understands not only the origin surrounding the object, but also the history and cultural relevance of it as well. Under a different view, the metadata surrounding the object varies slightly, though still public. In Figure 5.2 in the place of a description of the object, the information is instead rephrased as a cultural narrative, which rhetorically differs in the construction of audience and preservation of what information should be valued for what community.
Within the cultural narrative, oral histories from elders within the tribe are preserved for the Spokane tribe community members. The cultural narrative leaves out the history of the colonizer and instead makes the focus on the use of the bag as opposed to the history of its preservation and “traditional” descriptive elements that the Dublin Core might require. In these two levels of access for metadata, we can see the Mirzeoff’s concept of visuality in action, which Miner argues, “counters imperial and hegemonic visual culture” (176). These efforts are understood under inverse visuality and veiled visuality, which Mirzeoff writes:

Inverse visuality is any moment of visual experience in which the subjectivity of the viewer is called into question by the density or opacity of what he or she sees…Veiled visuality performs a singular function by dividing visuality into two by means of the veil that is both visible and invisible at once. (“On Visuality” 70)
Seeing metadata as a veiled visuality allows it to operate as both cultural heritage and digital preservation. What’s more, this cultural knowledge is designed in a way that prominently displays an inverse visuality in its design, making the audience aware of which components of metadata are relevant for a particular visuality.

Currently, metadata surrounding emojis are not standardized, as they are connected to the platforms that constitute their design through whichever font the platform has assigned them to. However, I believe that designing metadata under the notion of inverse or veiled visuality in similar ways to the PWPP can allow for cultural knowledge to remain attached to emoji symbols.

Moving forward, I offer a second component of ethical image design, collaboration. In expanding my discussion of the work of the CDSC, I discuss both on-and-offline collaborations as essential components to what made the PWPP successful. In connecting these collaboration efforts to the current gatekeeping practices of the Unicode Consortium, I end this dissertation with a call to envision a global village, which truly embodies an inclusive online communication. Through a critical digital literacy, I believe that affective identification can be successful when we design with preservation in mind and cross-cultural partnerships in place.

**Cross-Cultural Partnerships: Collaborative Design**

As still graduate assistant, I was fortunate to be a part of many of the digital preservation projects that the center was working on. While projects such as the PWPP and Mukurtu were much older than the center itself, I was able to learn about the policies contributing to their success. One of those fundamental policies was the emphasis on stewardship and collaboration. I enjoyed experience of collaborating with archivist librarians who not only cared for the materials of different regional tribal communities being digitized, but also made routine trips to
regional museums and reservations to record oral histories of the objects themselves from tribal elders. One of my responsibilities was transcribing many of these histories. What I appreciated most about this project was not only the level of care the archivists and co-director Christen maintained in preserving cultural knowledge, but also the ways in which these oral histories were conducted. Rather than merely provide the audio equipment and technical support for the elders to record the history, Christen sat with them, engaging in a dialogue that turned the history into a storytelling that was engaging and dynamic.

These cultural narratives were not merely exchanges of information where knowledge was recorded and then passed on, they were dialectics that negotiated, laughed, and revisited moments of history and cultural heritage. The transcriptions were tedious because Christen was diligent to ensure that the knowledge was accurately preserved in a way that was conducive to how it was meant to be understood. In applying the CDSC’s practice of collaboration to Kirk St. Amant’s prototype theory for cross-cultural image design (CID), the prototype would be the objects that lead to cultural knowledge recorded in the oral histories. According to St. Amant, a Prototype Theory calls upon humans to “classify the objects that they encounter” (220). In the case of the artifacts being digitized by the CDSC, these objects already exist. However, in thinking about the process of design for new emojis that have yet to take shape, Prototype Theory could work to “embody what the ideal or the best representation of an object should be” (220).

Collaboration becomes integral to Prototype Theory because St. Amant argues it pushes us to dismiss the argument that there is a universality to design. In specific reference to images, St. Amant argues that “the best resources to use would be items made by individuals from a specific culture for other members of that culture. These individuals would have the best
understanding of that culture’s expectations and associations related to images” (220). In the tengu, collaborations with the Japanese could have maintained the cultural myth of the tengu within the image design by explaining the relevance of the long nose meant to signify a beak. There are several instances in which this collaboration could occur, such as the level of design itself for through Japanese representation on the Unicode subcommittee.

In his second step of Prototype Theory, St. Amant argues that several examples of representations and culture should be examined in design. Within the oral histories collected from the tribal elders, there was almost always more than one elder contributing to the cultural narrative around the object. With the tengu, designers could conduct research from multiple examples within Japanese culture in order to recognize the relevance of perspective in how the mountain-goblin is represented. From there, St. Amant asserts that associations with other cultural signifiers become integral to image design (221). These associations can refer to multimodal components such as color or material resources for representation, such as the color red for the body of the tengu or the fibers used to weave a basket for the Spokane Confederate Tribe of Indians. Ethical design remains attuned to cultural associations with resource and elements culturally relevant for that particular community. Collaboration with the community itself helps to make those associations possible. An example for relevance can be maintained through collaborations in emojis could manifest within the proposals themselves, making space for a justification for how a proposed symbol manifests or has relevance beyond a dominant discourse to either Japanese culture specifically or one that constitutes a more inclusive global use.

St. Amant argues that the culture in which the prototype originates from should always have the last say in how the image is designed, offering feedback or modifications as necessary
In returning to the example of the PWPP project, the tribes were always involved in every step of the process. In fact, the PWPP interface itself allows for iterative modification to cultural narratives and histories from those communities in the levels of access they make available for different users. For example, a tribal elder who is a male may be labeled an administrator for a particular community, giving him access to go into a portal to modify its content. Within another tribe, this role may go to a woman, or several people depending on the object and knowledge attributed to it. In the case of emojis, in their current implementation there is no opportunity for feedback before images are released. If collaboration was folded into image design through steps similar to prototype theory, then cultural image design has the potential to not only be ethical, but also inclusive.

Critical Digital Literacy as Embodied

Whether we are designing, using, or questioning digital tools as networks to compose and interpret content within, our bodies are always active agents. Representation of bodies and visual communication broadly has a higher rate of success when agency in the design is given to the person crafting the message. While media serve as dynamic channels and habitats for content, multimodal texts require an attention to the roles of perceiving and perceived body in order for modes and discourse to work harmoniously.

As we continue to utilize “digital” tools in a future of evolving technologies and symbol systems, critical digital literacy not only requires a collaboration and understanding of the invisible components of how interface and hardware design propel dominant ideologies, but also is about questioning the tools themselves. Questions of the visual subject that seek to answer “who’s media?” or “who’s body?” are important as we look toward a prominence of visual
culture online. Though emojis are continuing to change alongside the platforms that host them, they’re also seeping into social media interfaces such as Facebook, being used instead as behavioral metrics in order to tailor advertisements to each user. As Stark and Crawford argue, “Emoji offer us more than just a cute way of ‘humanizing’ the platforms we inhabit: they also remind us of how informational capital continuously seeks to instrumentalize, analyze, monetize, and standardize affect” (8). Hegemony is maintained through the commodification of the body as an identification practice.

As composition studies seeks to expand conceptions of literacy for a 21st century classroom, questioning the platforms and symbol systems of online communication are essential. Moreover, as “globalization” continues to permeate how we experience the Internet, we must remain conscious of the ways in which particular bodies and communities of people are marginalized. Critical digital literacy understands the machine on all levels: from hardware, to design, to authoring. Within each of these veiled elements of digital rhetoric, we should come to understand the ideologies coded into their ontologies. As we prepare students to be designers of our future, we would do well to make transparent the dynamic relationship that bodies have in doing and questioning the work of critical digital literacy and rhetoric.
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