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Title: The Queer Art of Writing: (Re)Imagining Scholarship and Pedagogy through Transgenre Composing

Abstract

There is much research in writing studies that points to the benefits of utilizing multimodal composing in the writing classroom, and I use “multimodality” in this project to describe compositions that use digital modalities and tools (audio, video, digital imagery, etc.). Research shows that “by broadening the choice of composing modalities...we expand the field of play for students with different learning styles and differing ways of reflecting on the world; we provide the opportunity for them to study, think critically about, and work with new communicative modes” (Selfe 644). However, while multimodal composing is a pertinent topic in recent and current research, there are few resources in rhetoric and composition that discuss the intersections of art and writing. Even though there is limited exploration in this area, “recent research in neuroscience...indicates that art may have unmatched potential to promote deep engagement, make lasting impressions, and therefore possesses unlimited potential to educate” (Leavy 3). “Broadening the choice of composing modalities” goes beyond digital tools, and as Leavy points out, art has “unlimited potential to educate” students in all disciplines, including writing.

“Transgenre” composing refers to work that crosses the boundaries of traditional genres and, specifically, this project focuses on transgenre work that contains both elements of art/image and text/writing. Transgenre composing and the intersections of art and writing can be traced back to the Dada and Surrealist movements of the 1910s and 20s which strived to encourage artists, writers, and viewers to create, compose, and think in new and exciting ways. Today, transgenre composing works toward a similar goal and gives composers and audiences the opportunity to experience art and writing simultaneously. The process-focused approach involved with transgenre composing (rather than a product-focused approach, which privileges a “finished” product) points “to our understanding that rhetorical awareness, which can demand that we create in multiple modes, is essential to any successful communicator” (Lutkewitte 2). Like art, utilizing digital tools promotes a process-focused approach and can be creative, as well. However, creating art can be a more personal, tactile, memorable, vulnerable (as many students may not have experience with art), and engaging process that can lead students to think critically about the decisions they are making in their work about form, content, and the ability of their project to properly communicate their goals and messages.

This research project uses arts-based and queer methodologies to examine transgenre composing and the ways it can help scholars and teachers rethink their composing practices and pedagogical approaches to writing. Traditionally, the print, alphabetic document has been privileged and valued in academic settings over other composing forms. Queer theory provides “a *theoretical approach* that goes beyond queer studies to question the categories and assumptions on which current popular and academic understandings are based” (Barker & Scheele 15). Further, art is typically categorized as “creative” rather than “scholarly.” Despite traditional dichotomies that privilege certain forms over others in institutional settings, the arts-based and queer

methodologies used in this project provide lenses through which to (re)examine these academic norms and (re)imagine them so that unnecessary barriers and over-simplified binaries are broken down. This project also utilizes textual analysis, interviews (from authors who have published transgenre compositions), and collage as methods and open coding and reflection as data analysis tools. In employing these methods and methodologies, this project works to (re)imagine traditional academic norms, advocate for the use of art in writing, and promote creative-critical scholarship for artists, writers, scholars, and teachers of writing.

Word count: 573

Works Cited

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- Selfe, Cynthia L. "The Movement of Air, the Breath of Meaning: Aural and Multimodal Composing." *College Composition and Communication*, vol. 60, no. 4, 2009, pp. 616-663.