

THESIS

NETWORKING NARRATIVE:

A RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF *THE LIZZIE BENNET DIARIES*

Submitted by

Lydia Page

Department of English

In partial fulfillment of the requirements

For the Degree of Master of Arts

Colorado State University

Fort Collins, Colorado

Spring 2014

Master's Committee:

Advisor: Lisa Langstraat

Debby Thompson
Rosa Mikeal Martey

Copyright by Lydia Page 2014

All Rights Reserved

ABSTRACT

NETWORKING NARRATIVE:

A RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF *THE LIZZIE BENNET DIARIES*

Transmedia storyscapes, nonlinear narratives told across many different media platforms, have emerged as important sites of non-traditional reading and writing practices. These narratives enable a type of reading and writing that is subversive to exclusionary Western rhetorics. This study applies a Bitzerian rhetorical analysis to *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, a successful transmedia storyscape. Bitzer's definitions of exigence, audience, and constraints are challenged when applied to a transmedia text. This thesis will explore how meaningful redefinitions of key elements within Bitzer's rhetorical situation can further an understanding of transmedia. This rhetorical analysis will highlight the ways in which Rhetoric and Composition can use transmedia narratives to make space for important matters of identity and feminist forms of writing as identified by Cixous and Rich. Transmedia storyscapes are an important, though as of yet largely unconsidered, form of digital rhetorics. This thesis seeks to establish transmedia storyscapes as a viable genre of writing that successfully embodies feminist principles through the subversion of traditional writing practices.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to the following individuals:

Dr. Lisa Langstraat, thank you for the many guiding and informative conversations we engaged in during the last five years and especially the last five months. I am deeply grateful for all that I have learned from you.

Dr. Debby Thompson and Dr. Rosa Martey, thank you for engaging with me during this process. I appreciate your input into the development of this document and the significant time given to reading and responding to my work.

Dr. Sue Doe, thank you for encouraging me on this course. I would not have pursued this work without your belief in its worth and your willingness to laugh at my self-deprecating jokes.

Thanks to John in the Writing Center for asking the tough questions, like, “Did you even think about organizing this paragraph?”

To my family, especially my mother and my sisters, thank you for seeing me through. Thank you for teaching us to love stories, Mom. Your patience and your love have been invaluable.

Finally, to the many important women in my life: Mom, Lindsay, Madelaine, Megan, Sam, Sarah, Shannon, Vani, and Whitney, thank you for your support and encouragement throughout this process. You make feminism fun.

Thank you.

DEDICATION

For my mother, who taught me to love stories.

And for Lindsay, who showed me different kinds of stories.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
DEDICATION.....	iii
LIST OF FIGURES.....	vi
Introduction.....	1
History of Transmedia.....	4
Overview of <i>The Lizzie Bennet Diaries</i>	23
Method: Bitzerean Rhetorical Analysis.....	35
Rhetorical Analysis: Contextualizing <i>The Lizzie Bennet Diaries</i>	41
Rhetorical Analysis: Exigence, Audience, and Constraints.....	58
Discussion.....	76
Conclusion.....	88
Works Cited.....	90
Appendix.....	93

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Screenshot of Lizzie’s YouTube page, 2014.....	48
Figure 2. Screenshot of a list depicting the Twitter accounts used in the storyscape, 2014.....	49
Figure 3. Screenshot of Lizzie’s Tumblr blog, 2014.	51
Figure 4. Screenshot of Lizzie’s Facebook page, 2014.	53
Figure 5. Screenshot of Lizzie’s Google+ page, 2014.....	54
Figure 6. Distribution of Social Media Accounts, 2014.	94
Figure 7. Timeline of <i>The Lizzie Bennet Diaries</i> Videos, 2014.....	95

INTRODUCTION

Transmedia storyscapes, narratives which are told across an array of media platforms, have emerged as a means of disruption to traditional hegemonic forms of writing, as an inclusive space that makes attempts to account for culture and identity, and as a site that encourages access for a wide readership. The development and delivery of transmedia storyscapes complicate and further notions of what it means to read and to write.

Increasingly, transmedia stories exist on the edges of fiction and reality. The lines between the two are blurred as fictional stories intrude upon our daily lives in new ways. When stories extend beyond the fixed page, they become a part of our lives that cannot be closed between the covers of a print book. I am interested in the ways this form of writing and reading can be used to challenge canonical forms of writing, to become political sites of language use and ownership, and to reach an audience that may be excluded from engagement with print texts.

Transmedia storyscapes have a unique sense of temporality; they may be read in real-time, as the story is released to reader-participants. In *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, an adaptation of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, the storyscape disperses knowledge across time and space, while working from the static narrative of the original text. In an embodiment of the feminist writing principles identified by Cixous and Rich, this temporality is used to disrupt the traditional narrative form.

The Lizzie Bennet Diaries unfolded over a variety of constantly updating social media platforms. The story ran for one year, beginning in early April 2012 and ending in late March 2013. The primary method of delivery came in video blogs released on YouTube at 9 a.m. Pacific Standard Time on Mondays and Thursdays. The strict adherence to this schedule gave the

story an important kind of credibility through reliability for its reader-participants, and set it apart from both less-structured transmedia projects and static published books. Furthermore, the enormity of the project, 52 weeks of constant interaction, was unprecedented and is incomparable to most other narrative undertakings. This, along with the quality of the storyscape, later earned *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* a Creative Arts Emmy for Original Interactive Program. The extraordinary undertaking and execution of this storyscape makes *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* a text apt for close analysis.

I first encountered and experienced *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* without an academic focus. I had long struggled to reconcile my appreciation for *Pride and Prejudice* within my generational context, and especially within a feminist framework. For years, I had tried to convince my sister to read *Pride and Prejudice*, because I wanted to share the story with her and to hear her opinions on the narrative. The book was always a seemingly insurmountable obstacle for her, due to a variety of learning blocks such as dyslexia and ADHD. It was my sister who found *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* and shared it with me. The series gave us an opportunity to finally engage with the narrative together. The adaptation foregrounded sisterhood and friendship over romantic unions and was presented in a way that did not privilege traditional literacies. This was important to me, given my personal feminist values and my desire to share the story with my sister in a way that was accessible to her. It was not until several months after the series had ended that I chose to examine it as a central piece of my academic work.

In my research, I plan to explore the ways in which transmedia storyscapes can be viewed as an emerging genre. By engaging a rhetorical analysis of *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* I will be able to consider the relationship between transmedia narratives, digital literacy, and feminist forms of writing. Rhetorical implications found in narrative choices, specifically those

concerning where and how the story was deployed, will situate and support the importance of considering transmedia storyscapes within Rhetoric and Composition. This study will seek to establish transmedia storyscapes as spaces that value identity and privilege alternative forms of reading and writing.

CHAPTER ONE: HISTORY OF TRANSMEDIA

In order to situate transmedia storyscapes as an emerging genre within digital discourse, I will offer a discussion of the history of digital rhetorics in Rhetoric and Composition and an overview of the important theories shaping transmedia.

Digital modalities occupy an important space in Rhetoric and Composition, a field intimately concerned with reading and writing practices. Methods of reading and writing in a digital context are typically referred to as new media. The term “new media” is becoming outdated, as the “newness” is simply commonplace to a generation of digital natives. Increasingly, technological communication exists as a discourse community into which widespread membership is accepted and assumed. Here, discourse community refers to the definition set out by John Swales. They feature six distinctive characteristics: a broad set of common goals, shared intercommunication between members, participatory features, use of one or more genres, specific lexicon, and are comprised of members who have specialized knowledge (212). A digital discourse community indicates working knowledge of how to operate, communicate, and pursue technological practices. Digital discourse is unlike other discursive practices as the forum in which it is created necessarily evokes change. Digital discourse communities have specific characteristics that do not mirror or imitate the characteristics of other discourse communities. They are interdisciplinary, situational, target specialized audience groups, and value concentrated analytic skills. Membership into digital discourse communities is becoming so commonplace as to go unnoticed or uncommented on. As digital mediums become ever more present in our daily lives, their dominance achieves a state of invisibility. This is significant to the success of transmedia storyscapes, which can most

generally be conceived of as nonlinear narratives that are told across multiple media platforms, given that they rely heavily on the ability of their reader-participants to seek out and navigate the many platforms used to deploy the narrative.

The emerging methods of technological communication, digital discourse communities, and the use of multimodal platforms reflect the growing importance of digital modalities. Students today and in the future will enter writing classrooms with specialized digital skills and will be expected to have a heightened mastery of these modalities in their eventual workplaces. New media researcher Clement Chau considers new media to be well suited to address the needs of digital rhetorics, stating that,

These Web sites combine media production and distribution with social networking features, making them an ideal place to create, connect, collaborate, and circulate novel and personally meaningful media (65).

Transmedia storyscapes provide an opportunity for students to practically explore reading and writing across the disciplines, in distinct situational contexts, and for targeted audiences, all while gaining analytical skills. Chau notes five key characteristics of participatory culture in new media: low barriers to expression and engagement, support for sharing creations, informal mentorship, the belief that contributions matter, and a sense of social connection. Transmedia storyscapes use these characteristics to engage an active audience. *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* incorporates these five characteristics by using social media to create a highly accessible storyscape and to involve the audience as an active and integral component of the narrative. These specific benefits illustrate the seemingly perfect union of Rhetoric and Composition and transmedia storyscapes. Furthermore, transmedia storyscapes offer an intricately interwoven networked narrative. For writers and readers, this approach disrupts tradition and illuminates the significant rhetorical concerns that must be considered in composition.

TRANSMEDIA IN RHETORIC AND COMPOSITION

Although the stylized execution and packaging of new media may at first glance indicate a lack of intellectual acumen- a creation existing only for entertainment- transmedia texts tend to require more time and engagement to produce and explore than traditional linear texts. In my work, I will not argue for the removal of traditional print texts or imply that they are inferior to digital mediums; rather, I will seek to assert that excluding new media from our curricula is an oversight and disservice to contemporary students of writing. This exclusion is somewhat surprising because, as previously stated, new media is far from new. Scholars of Rhetoric and Composition have been actively engaged in discussions around the relationship between computers and composition since at least the 1980s. Theories of the role of digital technologies in discursive practices have developed alongside the advancement of technology. For this reason, I will provide a chronological arrangement of the major discussions about digital writing within Rhetoric and Composition. This will lead to an understanding of the field's historical situating of new media while illustrating the space into which transmedia storyscapes will enter.

Early concerns focused on the validity of digital texts as sites of academic scholarship. A central argument in the legitimization of these texts is found in James Raymond's article "Media Transforming Media: Implications of Walter Ong's Stages of Literacy." Here, a link is built between the seminal work of Walter Ong and what many viewed as irreverent digital texts. Raymond posits, "The most significant transformations...occur between residual orality and high literacy and between high literacy and electronic orality. In this first transformation, writing becomes not just a way of remembering, but a way of thinking" (56). Much as Ong asserted a cognitive difference among oral and literate cultures, Raymond positions digital writing as a means with which to shift cognitive processes. This effort to position digital discourse

communities as defensibly valid literacy practices among scholars and students of writing was a key step in the process of legitimizing digital modalities. Though this text is now more than three decades old, its importance remains as attempts to declaim and condemn technological modalities continue to circulate (See: Turkle).

A decade after Raymond's text, Stuart Moulthrop addressed another central argument against digital texts—the belief that their proliferation would necessarily render print texts obsolete (1991). Moulthrop argues for the opposite, positing that as digital texts flourish, so too will print texts. Further, digital texts will force print texts to be more thorough in their consideration of visual elements. The intervening decades have proven Moulthrop's speculations to be true. Print texts have not vanished, and have become more conscious of the rhetorical use of visual components. While transmedia texts are gaining in popularity, they are not doing so by replacing print texts. The accuracy of Moulthrop's assertion is significant, especially as this argument continues to arise among scholars. Historical precedence shows that digital texts exist alongside print texts, offering an approach to reading and writing that may require different cognitive functions, which are neither superior nor inferior. *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* is not a replacement of *Pride and Prejudice*, but an alternative narrative approach that requires a different set of skills to navigate.

After establishing an acceptance of digital texts, rhetoricians shifted their focus toward critical considerations of the potential uses of technology. Gunther Kress considers the way language acquisition and meaning making can be affected by the use of multimodality by arguing that incorporating images and medias in addition to plain text will deepen understanding and encourage knowledge creation. This argument is framed in terms of a semiotic revolution:

The semiotic modes of writing and of image are distinct in what they permit, that is, in their *affordances*. Image is founded *on the logic of display in space*; writing (and speech

even more so) is founded on *the logic of succession in time*. Image is spatial and nonsequential; writing and speech are temporal and sequential. That is a profound difference, and its consequences for representation and communication are now beginning to emerge in this semiotic revolution [emphasis in the original] (339).

The simultaneous conflict and complement of text and image are essential to positioning transmedia narratives as a means through which language is acquired, knowledge is created, and meaning is made. This is particularly relevant to the ways in which transmedia storyscapes provide an opportunity for transitioning from the top-down model of engaging with narrative toward a collaborative bottom-up approach. For example, engaging with the static text of *Pride and Prejudice* is largely passive while engaging with *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* requires active participation. The implications this alternative model holds for redefining notions of readership and authorship are expansive and will be considered later in this study.

The work of Cynthia Selfe and Gail Hawisher has been especially formative in establishing digital rhetorics within Rhetoric and Composition, particularly through their advocacy for technological literacy. Their works include *Literate Lives in the Information Age* (2004), which considers the increasingly inextricable link between technology and literacy practices, and “Literacies and the Complexities of the Global Digital Divide” (2006), which considers issues of access and literacy acquisition.

The field has addressed obstacles in naming and incorporating new media, such as in Miller and Shepherd’s “Blogging as Social Action: A Genre Analysis of the Weblog” (2004) which considers the trouble of applying traditional genre theory to the ever-evolving forms of digital writing. There is a marked awareness of the importance and relevance of digital writing, despite a struggle to define and position it. Framing transmedia storyscapes as a genre within digital rhetorics allows for expansive analysis. Applying traditional theories and definitions of writing to transmedia storyscapes limits the ability to fully analyze and articulate their worth, as

they have unique characteristics that differentiate them from traditional texts. Though *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* and *Pride and Prejudice* are inextricably linked, they are independent texts that call for separate analysis.

Speilmann and Bolter sought to address the ways in which digital technologies act on and around traditional print texts in “Hybridity: Arts, Sciences, and Cultural Effects” (2000).

“Hybridization” is the name given to the union of digital modalities and print texts. Speilmann and Bolter cite the importance of visual elements in art, science, and culture, acknowledging the semiotic gains made by including images in texts, noting that “digital hybridity works across and integrates a diverse range of modes of representation, such as image, text, sound, space and bodily modes of expression” (106). By defining hybridity as the “convergence of real and virtual spaces,” hybridization is positioned as the future of writing across a variety of cultural landscapes. Hybridization is especially meaningful to those who face obstacles in engaging with traditional print texts. *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* is an accessible text due to the hybridized structure that did not privilege any one form but used many in the construction of a multimodal network. This more equitable distribution of modality allows an audience to engage with the aspects of the narrative that they find most comprehensible and accessible. The presence of some accessible components will likely encourage readers who struggle with print modalities to engage with the more traditional aspects of the narrative, and may help to develop their skills beyond the transmedia storyscape.

The inherently hybridized nature of transmedia necessarily changes cognitive approaches to the processes of reading and writing. In *The Anti-Education Era: Creating Smarter Students Through Digital Learning* (2013), James Gee builds upon the work of Raymond, Moulthrop, and Miller and Shepherd by arguing that digital texts work in tandem with print texts to change

cognitive thought processes and enact social change. Gee proposes that an unfettered mind is a way to free ourselves from the negative aspects of a modern consumerist culture. To lighten the Mind, (capitalized to show difference, as with Gee's previous discussions of discourse and Discourse) we must utilize preexisting toolkits to tap into a paradigm shift that is both cognitive and educational. This form of "distributed cognition" reflects the collective intelligence theories that drive transmedia narratives (122). Gee identifies digital texts and virtual spaces as prime sites to accomplish this work, as they possess "multiple tools, different types of people, and diverse skills sets [that] are networked in ways that make everyone smarter and make a space itself a form of emergent intelligence" (174). This call to action around digital texts and spaces closely aligns with McLuhan's positioning of the medium as the message, which will be discussed at length in subsequent chapters of this study.

Rhetoric and Composition has established a broad and significant corpus of study around digital composition. Myriad terms have emerged in an attempt to give name to a diverse conglomeration of digital texts. New media, cybertexts, hypertext, and ergodic literature all carry slightly different meanings depending on the context and time frame in which they are used though they all refer, in general, to digital writing (See: Manovich, Boston, Nelson, and Aarseth). Among forms of digital composition, transmedia storyscapes stand as a consistently nuanced genre due to their holistic approach to storytelling, their layered delivery of narrative, and the implications for both readers and writers of these texts.

By engaging a story across existing social media platforms, transmedia storyscapes disperse narrative and offer a variety of access points. These specialized styles of creating and telling stories provide a new way of approaching reading and writing, as they move beyond static print texts and beyond static digital texts—texts which exist in a digital medium without

engaging any noticeable difference from their print counterparts. Transmedia storyscapes fill the gap that has yet to be addressed concerning composing a singular narrative across multiple digital mediums. In this study, I aim to undertake a rhetorical analysis of a transmedia storyscape in order to present new ways of thinking about reading and writing in an increasingly networked world.

SITUATING TRANSMEDIA IN RHETORIC AND COMPOSITION

Academic work around transmedia narratives has been primarily housed in Media Studies. Writing Studies in general, and Rhetoric and Composition in particular, have a growing stake in transmedia texts. As teachers and students of writing contend with the globalization and digitization of professional writing, transmedia narratives act as both a critical and a practical framework for developing essential rhetorical and communicative skills.

The term “transmedia” is relatively new in academic scholarship. The phrase was first developed in Marsha Kinder’s 1991 book *Playing with Power in Movies, Television, and Video Games: From Muppet Babies to Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*. Kinder’s transmedia refers to the ways digital narratives made for children tend to stretch across many mediums. Kinder also references the potential for interactivity available in these mediums.

However, the term did not gain widespread traction within academic contexts until the publication of Henry Jenkins’s 2003 work “Transmedia Storytelling.” An updated version of this publication provides key definitions of both the concepts and the functional delivery of transmedia stories. Jenkins’s explication begins by clearly delineating the terms of a transmedia storyscape:

Transmedia storytelling represents a process where integral elements of a fiction get dispersed systematically across multiple delivery channels for the purpose of creating a

unified and coordinated entertainment experience. Ideally, each medium makes its own unique contribution to the unfolding of the story (2007).

For the purposes of this study, transmedia narratives will be understood according to Jenkins's definition. That is, as stories that unlike print books, extend beyond the confines of a single source (such as a print book). Transmedia narratives (literally, across media) are stories told in many different venues. This could exist as a tie-in novel for a movie or television series. As this example illustrates, transmedia can sometimes be thought of as a way to franchise a narrative. The franchise model raises valid ethical concerns about the curricular inclusion of transmedia narratives as educational tools. The term "franchise" invokes a sense of corporatization that is antithetical to the notion of higher education as sites of Marxist resistance to the oppressions of societal economies. Indeed, early transmedia efforts have largely been attempts to capitalize on the success of a central stand-alone text, due to "the current configuration of the entertainment industry [that] makes transmedia expansion an economic imperative" ("Transmedia Storytelling 101"). Alternatively, in his call for Rhetoric and Composition to shift the teaching of writing from a service model to a franchise model, Gregory Colomb defines franchise as "awarded by a public entity for the performance of a public service" (13). This definition serves an understanding of transmedia narratives as nuanced franchises that function as collective and immersive storytelling experiences rather than as economically driven models. There is some tension between these two understandings of transmedia; one privileges narrative while the other focuses primarily on fiscal gain. *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* uses transmedia to build an expansive and immersive storyscape. Products associated with movies or television shows, such as tie-in novels or branded merchandise, can be described as a form of transmedia, but these products do not directly further the narrative experience.

The Lizzie Bennet Diaries can be categorized as what is sometimes referred to as “Integrated Transmedia,” a definition of transmedia that references a single story told across many different media platforms (Bushman). This extends beyond the franchised approach (which may center primarily around creating ancillary merchandise that does not contribute to the narrative) and speaks instead to texts that are understood as a holistic interdependent unit spanning across numerous platforms and methods of delivery. *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* is a notable example of such integration, as its narrative was delivered on a variety of social media platforms including YouTube, Twitter, Tumblr, and Facebook. The content on each platform is not repetitious. Instead, each platform adds another layer of meaning to the narrative. This “additive comprehension” contributes to Jenkins’s call for each independent element to “be accessible on its own terms even as it makes a unique contribution to the narrative system as a whole” (“Transmedia Storytelling 101”). Creation of a transmedia narrative, in which all elements must have the capability to be understood on their own and as part of functioning whole, requires writing practices and rhetorical considerations which extend far beyond traditional methods.

The narrative dispersal utilized by transmedia storyscapes invokes the notable concern of missing key elements of the narrative due to the vast quantity of information proliferating across the platforms. It is almost impossible to ensure engagement with every platform used to deploy the narrative, especially when the story is being consumed during its initial real-time release. However, this method of storytelling mimics pre-existing and increasingly common methods of engaging with social media. Target audiences for transmedia narratives are likely accustomed to engaging with multiple media platforms. The dispersal of a fictional narrative mirrors the multi-platform usage already in place for audiences. The concern around an overabundance of

information is further countered by the ability for readers of transmedia texts to engage with the dispersal of narrative in a way that enables co-authorship. As the level of engagement shapes the story and the readers' experience of it, effective use of social media platforms as a narrative delivery device becomes essential to the creation of a holistically functioning text.

When constructing a transmedia narrative, Blumenthal and Xu identify four connectors necessary to build an effective storyscape: mythology, canon, character and genre (193). Mythology refers to the creation of a networked world in which the story unfolds. Canon is comprised of the established facts and events of the storyscape. Three forms of character, embodied, abstract, and archetypal, exist throughout the storyscape as a means of connecting the world and narrative. Finally, genre refers to the necessity of adhering to an established standard of narrative delivery across the storyscape- that is, maintaining "in-world" unity across platforms. To practically and functionally organize, develop, and deploy a transmedia narrative, the authors suggest the creation of a "transmedia bible" in which all elements of the storyscape are plotted and maintained (192).

Such plotting would include the delineation between in-world and out-of-world features. In-world features are those that are presented as an active component of the narrative. Out-of-world features are associated with the narrative but do not actively contribute to it. Out-of-world elements are generally produced by the storyscape's authors and serve as a means of delivering information about the narrative to the audience. This information could include a guide to navigating the storyscape, projected publication dates, biographies of the production team, or any other relevant material that does not exist within the narrative. In *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* this out-of-world information can be found on the project's website, LizzieBennet.com, which

features compiled information about the production team and provides guides to navigating the narrative.

Transmedia narratives are often posed as operating in opposition to traditional linear narratives. A linear narrative tells a story straightforwardly, from beginning to end. A nonlinear narrative uses myriad techniques to challenge that structure. The disruptions of temporality in the narrative timelines of Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five* and in J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* are examples of nonlinearity. Linearity can be disrupted in non-temporal ways as well. Jonathan Safran Foer's *Extremely Loud and Incredibly Close* and Mark Danielewski's *House of Leaves* both incorporate multimodal elements into their texts in ways that challenge and interrupt their narratives. These text-based examples of nonlinearity counter the assumption that transmedia narratives are necessarily nonlinear. In fact, the majority of successful transmedia storyscapes employ a linear progression of plot and character development. *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* does not stray far from the linear plot presented in *Pride and Prejudice*. As with the franchise, linearity calls for a redefinition that does not focus on chronology. Writers of a transmedia narrative build a storyscape, not just a storyline. M.J. Clarke's work in *Transmedia Television: New Trends in Network Serial Production* describes linearity as,

a model of series storytelling that more resembles a network (in the sociological sense) in which episodes do not simply accrue one after the other in a linear fashion, but form a dense grid and relate to one another in any set of combinations, not guided by simple chronology (139).

While the plot may progress linearly, it does so across a narrative network. This network provides an audience with abundant access points. This can also offer an opportunity for audience engagement, which has the potential to influence the development of the narrative.

When social media platforms are used to deploy a transmedia narrative, the lines between fiction

and reality become blurred. The story begins to exist, inescapably, alongside the audience's "real" life. The convergence of a fictional story with an audience's conception of reality, the extent to which an audience is able to shape a narrative through interaction, and the significant world-building enacted in transmedia storyscapes can certainly be conceptualized as a challenge to linear narratives. For instance, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* used social media platforms to build and deliver its narrative. The audience was able to connect with the characters as if they were real people. The structure of the storyscape inserted the characters and the narrative into the audience's daily lives in ways that traditional print texts do not. This blurring of fiction and reality is unique to transmedia narratives and will be an important point of analysis later in this study.

THEORIES OF TRANSMEDIA

Espen Aarseth's theories of labyrinthine, ergodic literatures and Henry Jenkins's theory of convergence culture best inform the scope of my research, which seeks to establish transmedia narratives as a genre of writing that disrupts phallogocentric approaches to writing and meaning making. Given their disruptive, nontraditional approach, transmedia storyscapes can be read as feminist texts. For this reason, discussions Cixous's *écriture féminine* and Rich's call for a feminist re-vision of writing have a clear and necessary presence in my study. To place these theories in conversation with transmedia, I will explore the role of convergence and the layered structure of *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* storyscape in this study. Establishing transmedia storyscapes as a viable genre of reading and writing must happen before the feminist aspects of these specialized narrative structures can become more salient and open for analysis.

Helene Cixous's "The Laugh of the Medusa" calls for a uniquely feminine form of writing that disrupts traditional masculine approaches to text construction. Cixous states,

It is by writing, from and toward women, and by taking up the challenge of speech which has been governed by the phallus, that women will confirm women in a place other than that which is reserved in and by the symbolic, that is, in a place other than silence (881).

Transmedia narratives can be seen as a manifestation of the theory of writing the body in that the genre necessarily subverts the traditionally phallic structure and delivery of text. The dispersal of narrative can be seen as an embodied form of writing that is reflective of the feminine approach Cixous identifies. *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* exemplifies Cixous's approach to writing by spreading its narrative across a network of social media platforms and requiring active audience participation.

Adrienne Rich writes of the need for an explicitly feminist form of writing and critique in "When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Re-Vision."

Re-vision, the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, of entering an old text from a new critical direction—is for us more than a chapter in cultural history: it is an act of survival. Until we can understand the assumptions in which we are drenched we cannot know ourselves. And this drive to self-knowledge, for woman, is more than a search for identity: it is part of her refusal of the self-destructiveness of male-dominated society (18).

The Lizzie Bennet Diaries achieves this by adapting a classic text through the lens of modern technology. By calling attention to the past, in both content and form, transmedia storyscapes can simultaneously draw attention to and resist dominant writing systems. By breaking traditional form through a networked structure of narrative, transmedia storyscapes call attention to the phallogocentric history of Western writing, a history that privileges masculine constructs. It is by confronting this history and constructing an alternative form of writing that culturally marginalized identities can be rewritten and revalued.

In *Cybertext: Perspectives on Ergodic Literature*, Espen Aarseth proposes a new way of thinking about nonlinear texts. The term “ergodic” was created by combining the Greek words “ergos” (work) and “hodos” (path). Aarseth goes on to discuss labyrinths, largely eschewing the modern understanding of a labyrinth as a maze with one correct path leading to one fixed point. Labyrinths, Aarseth theorizes, are much more varied and complex than our present perceptions indicate. Meditative labyrinths feature a single linear path. The classical labyrinth, in its origination, was a confined warren in which many paths led in, out, and through. A meditative labyrinth may be reflective of traditional linear narratives, but transmedia storyscapes more closely resemble the classical labyrinth.

Non-linear narratives are frequently misunderstood as being treacherous maze-like labyrinths, but in practice, transmedia narratives provide reader-participants with a variety of entry-points and encourage varied interpretation. Unlike a meditative labyrinth, transmedia texts do not lead readers directly to an established Meaning. Transmedia narratives are not meant to be a maze, either. The goal is not deception or trickery and readers will not be led down irrelevant paths. Any navigation of a transmedia text will produce a meaningful reading, highlighted by a variety of semiotic markers. In this study, I will apply the theory of the classical labyrinth in my rhetorical analysis of *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* as a means of creating a concrete framework in which to situate the text. *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* functions as a classic labyrinth—a confined warren with many paths leading in, through, and out of the narrative. This labyrinth is comprised of 38 social media accounts running across twelve unique platforms. The audience was able to engage with any combination of accounts and platforms to experience the storyscape.

Henry Jenkins’s theories of convergence culture will also inform my research. Jenkins’s use of the term “convergence” refers to the recent paradigm shift in media, particularly the trend

of audience participation and dispersed storytelling. In short, Jenkins's convergence culture aptly describes a transmedia storyscape. This theoretical framework will allow me to explore the edges of fiction and reality and the convergence of media forms. *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* is unique in that it is an adaptation of an established text. Here, more so than in other transmedia texts, there is a convergence between the old and new: *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* is more than a modernized retelling of *Pride and Prejudice*; its diversified storytelling platforms and engagement of its audience embodies the convergence culture Jenkins identifies.

Convergence culture merges two forms of knowledge construction: top-down, where one entity holds knowledge and distributes it to the group; and bottom-up, where the group collectively constructs knowledge. While the creators of transmedia texts make top-down decisions, the interactive influence of reader-participants enables bottom-up changes to the narrative. While control of the narrative and the media platforms used belongs to the creators, the consumers have a significant role in the outcome and delivery of these texts. The degree to which reader-participants interact and engage with the texts will alter the construction, delivery, and reception of the narrative. This is an important paradigm shift in itself and hearkens to the increasingly capacious influence of media consumers. In a way, the bottom-up method of constructing narrative makes reader-participants co-authors of transmedia texts.

Transmedia narratives allow for the combination of authorial and audience roles, which traditionally exist as separate entities. The text not only belongs to its readers, it is shaped and co-written during the collective process of experiencing the narrative. This is a reflection of Pierre Levy's theory of collective intelligence, the creation and dissemination of knowledge in an interconnected society. Levy says of this changing societal structure, "we are witnessing the development of complex forms of confrontational interdependence among skill zones that are

fluid, delocalized, based on their singularities and agitated by permanent molecular movements of association, exchange, and rivalry” (255). The structure and delivery of transmedia narratives reflects Levy’s complex forms and demands to be experienced collectively. The process of unifying audience and authorial roles in transmedia storyscapes embodies Levy’s call for collective construction of knowledge and consciousness.

My rhetorical analysis of *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* will primarily use Aarseth’s and Jenkins’s respective theories as a grounding framework. The metaphor of the classical labyrinth and the paradigm shift of convergence culture will frame my research into the reading and composing of transmedia texts with specific regard given to the methods of narrative delivery. I will apply these theories to the text and to the shifting culture of media consumption in order to closely analyze the effect of transmedia storyscapes as they relate to Cixous’s and Rich’s calls for feminist approaches to and structures of writing. The theories discussed in this section will form a framework of conceptualizing transmedia storyscapes as a meaningful genre that subverts traditional writing practices by engaging the audience and foregrounding identity.

THE POTENTIAL FOR TRANSMEDIA IN THE ACADEMY

I believe my research will reveal that the bottom-up knowledge construction encouraged by collaborative transmedia texts will produce the critical feminist environment called for by Cixous and Rich. While engagement with traditional print texts has always informed successful writers, transmedia texts broaden the landscape of authorial potential. Transmedia texts build upon the success and usefulness of print texts by demanding for increased attention and involvement. Transmedia texts are particularly suited to the interests of Rhetoric and Composition as they illuminate the conventions and concerns of the writing process by

disrupting tradition. The ramifications of these considerations have the potential to echo through the field in important and long-lasting ways. In particular, the move to redefine hallmarks of classical rhetorical theory, the rhetorical situation, and the kairotic moment will be significant to theories of reading and writing.

Aarseth's use of quantum theory- the idea of valuing the sum over discreet histories- reflects the classic approach to writing as a process of making meaning rather than a quest to reach a Platonic truth. All text production requires the travelling of some path; transmedia texts make these paths visible and ask reader-participants to actively explore them. Like the classical labyrinth, reader-participants will traverse a variety of paths, exploring semiotic markers through the union of narrative and modality. As meaning is both signified and created by the act of engaging with content and traversing the storyscape, reader-participants will have the opportunity to generate important histories that will ultimately produce a salient, meaningful sum.

There is not one correct path through a labyrinthine transmedia storyscape; nor is there an incorrect path. Rather, reader-participants can explore a holistic storyscape and interpret their experiences into a somewhat crystallized meaning. Whereas traditional storytelling branches out from a fixed location, transmedia storytelling builds a networked web around many fixed locations. I will argue that this approach to understanding reading and writing is more effective than traversing a linear text due to the increased potential for meaning making and representation of identity.

The narrative dispersal present in transmedia storyscapes reflects the concept of multiple impossible worlds coexisting at once. Transmedia texts require reader-participants to engage with a narrative, which may include several plot lines, across myriad media platforms. The

reader-participant must accept the multiple worlds of the storyscape into the reality of their own world (or worlds). This exercise in multiplicity is not needed in linear narratives, and therefore calls attention to the conventions of traditional reading and writing while offering an alternative, one that values the audience and seeks to create a space of embodied identity.

I will use a rhetorical analysis of *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, a highly effective award-winning transmedia storyscape, to illustrate the ways in which digital literacies impact knowledge construction through their revision of traditional forms of writing. I believe that the incorporation of transmedia texts into our traditional reading and writing practices will create more critical and contextual awareness at all stages of the composition process, especially with regard to identity construction. The questions this study seeks to answer are:

1. How do transmedia storyscapes offer unique opportunities to read and write?
2. What is the rhetorical situation of a given transmedia storyscape?
3. How is Bitzer's Rhetorical Analysis transformed when applied to a transmedia storyscape?
4. What can an analysis of a narrative deployed via transmedia tell us about the relationship between technology and texts?
5. How does a transmedia storyscape complicate notions of authorship and readership?
6. How will a study of a transmedia storyscape provide new considerations with which to expand the field of Rhetoric and Composition?

As I move toward engaging with these questions, I will offer a detailed overview of *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, followed by a situated analysis from which I will draw conclusions about the potential role of transmedia in Rhetoric and Composition. This study will engage with and critique Rhetoric and Composition theorists in an attempt to bring transmedia into current discussions in the field.

CHAPTER TWO: OVERVIEW OF *THE LIZZIE BENNET DIARIES*

SCOPE AND AIMS

In order to fully focus on the transmedia nature of the storyscape, I will examine not the content of *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* but rather the methods of delivery. In so doing, I will consider that, as communications philosopher Marshall McLuhan asserts, “the medium is the message” (205). For a transmedia storyscape, the methods of delivery are among the most provocative and as of yet unexplored areas of scholarship. This study will focus on the methods of delivery because as McLuhan states, “This fact, characteristic of all media, means that the ‘content’ of any medium is always another medium. The content of writing is speech, just as the written word is the content of print, and print is the content of the telegraph” (203). Especially for a transmedia narrative, form is as important as content because the methods of delivery necessarily shape the message. For *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, the plot does not veer far from its source text, but the methods of delivery make the story new. It is not the content of the story that needs to be examined, but the way that content is shaped by the construction and delivery of the story.

Rhetorical theory will be used in this study in order to position transmedia storyscapes as a viable and valuable field of analysis. Transmedia storyscapes should be conceptualized as relevant and important within the field of Rhetoric and Composition. This can be achieved through a careful rhetorical analysis of the digital texts that comprise a transmedia storyscape. In this study, I will examine how Bitzer’s rhetorical situation can be applied specifically to the delivery of a transmedia narrative. Particularly in this study, which examines a variety of

platforms (here meaning the specific social media sites used to deliver the narrative), Bitzer's terms may need to be modified in accordance with the respective modalities being analyzed.

Given the dispersal and disrupted temporality of the transmedia storyscape, even terms such as "narrative" may need to be reconstructed. In a storyscape such as *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, ideas of authorship are challenged, existing as a triad instead of as a single entity. First, the writers producing the content that fills the storyscape embody the role of 'author' in its most traditional sense. However, the characters themselves appear to have ownership of their respective social media accounts. Inquiries, comments, and interactions from the reader-participants appear to occur with the characters, not the writing team; though the writing team is, of course, creating and managing the character accounts. In this sense, the characters themselves inhabit their own authorial role, thus occupying the second point of the triad. The third authorial role is fulfilled by the reader-participants who engage with the transmedia storyscape and through that engagement find the narrative becoming immersed with their lived realities. Social media updates from the characters appear alongside those of living, "real" people. Reader-participants are able to interact with the characters on their social media sites. Engagement with the storyscape can have a direct influence on the direction of the narrative as audience input is taken into consideration by the writing team. In *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, this emerged most prominently in Lizzie's Question and Answer videos. It is clear, then, that the reader-participants are also co-authors of the narrative. This authorial triad, across all of the storyscape's platforms, will necessarily complicate Bitzer's rhetorical situation.

I will consider the ways in which each platform, with given strengths and weaknesses, functions holistically to create an interwoven narrative web. I will address how a reader-participant's experience of the narrative may be limited or expanded by the ways each platform

functions individually and as a piece of the storyscape. Through this rhetorical analysis, I aim to answer the primary questions set out by this study. I believe that a careful consideration of a transmedia storyscape will provide insights into a new form of reading and writing. Furthermore, this study aims to fill the gap in literature between theories of transmedia and a realized example of a successful storyscape. In so doing, it will provide an opportunity for the field of Rhetoric and Composition to embrace and explore the valuable new approaches to reading and writing afforded through a transmedia storyscape.

In order to understand the specific ways in which *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* functions within its rhetorical situation, I will offer an overview and description of the narrative.

PRODUCTION BACKGROUND

In this study *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* will be used as a case study of a highly successful transmedia storyscape. *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* was created by internet entrepreneur Hank Green and writer Bernie Su. The official website (lizziebennet.com) describes the story as:

The Lizzie Bennet Diaries is a modernized adaptation of Jane Austen's "Pride and Prejudice" told through original episodic video and **multiplatform storytelling**. Altogether, the series filmed over 150 video episodes across five different **YouTube** channels with over 9.5 hours of video – amassing over 40 million views. Transmedia elements provided parallel views of events across 35 social media profiles and created a unique bond between the characters and the audience. With over 200,000 subscribers, **800 pieces of Lizzie-inspired fan fiction** and a whole world of web art, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* has inspired a passionate, engaged following.

The project's transmedia team consisted of Jay Bushman as Transmedia Producer, Alexandra Edwards as Transmedia Editor, and Bernie Su as Executive Producer. The eight writers credited on the show are Bernie Sue, Margaret Dunlap, Rachel Kiley, Daryn Strauss, Anne Toole, Kate Rorick, Jay Bushman, and Hank Green. The five women on the team are credited as writing the majority of the narrative. An additional production team including cinematographers, directors,

consultants, designers, and makeup artists was involved in other aspects of bringing the series to life. The immersive world of *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* was so seamless as to render this extensive production team largely invisible across the storyscape.

The process of modernizing and adapting *Pride and Prejudice* involved specific decisions made to reflect the context and time period in which *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* was delivered. Transmedia narratives are particularly well suited to facilitate reinterpretations of white canonical literature. This important political work around culture is especially effective in the visual elements of the storyscape, which undeniably foregrounds a consideration of identity. These processes are further, and perhaps literally, reflective of Cixous's theories of writing the body. Set in modern-day southern California, the series necessarily called for an ethnically and racially diverse cast. The character of "Bingley" in *Pride and Prejudice* was changed to "Bing Lee" and cast as an Asian man. His sister, Caroline Lee was also intentionally Asian. The role of Lizzie's best friend Charlotte was not written for a specific race, but ultimately became "Charlotte Lu" after the casting of Julia Cho, an Asian woman. Charlotte's sister Maria is incorporated into the series, adding another Asian woman to the cast. Colonel Fitzwilliams was reimagined as Fitz Williams, the gay black best friend of William Darcy. There are five Bennet sisters in *Pride and Prejudice* but only three in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*. Mary appears as the Bennet sisters' cousin and Kitty exists as Lydia's pet cat. These choices reflect the kind of writing of women by women that Rich and Cixous deem as necessary to the revision of traditional writing practices.

DELIVERY

The Lizzie Bennet Diaries, in a particularly ergodic fashion, spanned 38 separate social media accounts across twelve unique platforms. The specific distribution of these accounts and platforms can be found in Figure 6 in the appendix. The primary method of narrative delivery came from the video blogs (henceforth, vlogs) made by the titular character, Lizzie Bennet, reimagined as “a 24-year-old grad student with a mountain of student loans living at home and preparing for a career” (“My Name is Lizzie Bennet – Ep. 1”). The first episode premiered on Lizzie Bennet’s YouTube channel ([youtube.com/LizzieBennet](https://www.youtube.com/LizzieBennet)) on April 9, 2012. The final episode, “The End – Ep: 100” was posted on March 28, 2013. Over the 52-week span of the series, a new episode was posted to Lizzie’s channel on Monday and Thursday mornings at 9 a.m. Pacific Standard Time. The strict adherence to this schedule built credibility among the creators, the immersive world, and the reader-participants. A timeline of the videos posted during *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* can be found in Figure 7 in the appendix. The vast and intertwined network of narrative is labyrinthine in the sense that, as Aarseth notes, it offers many points of access and seemingly endless routes of travel.

The vlog style of narrative enabled *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* to stay true to the first-person narration style of *Pride and Prejudice*. Lizzie’s videos featured a stationary camera in a single location. The location did change throughout the series, as Lizzie moved from her bedroom to visit VidCon, Netherfield, Collins and Collins, and Pemberley Digital, before returning to her home- though not her bedroom. The vlogs featured Lizzie sitting in front of the camera and delivering a monologue or interacting with the other characters, who were generally aware they were being filmed. This approach did rely somewhat on a suspension of disbelief as important narrative events just happened to be captured while Lizzie was recording a video.

Other videos, particularly Lydia's, did not follow Lizzie's style and form, and instead reflected the personalities of the characters producing the videos. Lydia's videos were filmed on her cell phone, were shaky and mobile, and seemed to embody Lydia's untamed personality. All of these choices served both character development and plot progression, and were key to the delivery of the narrative. The use of image and space throughout the storyscape reflects Kress's theories of the relationship between meaning making and multimodality, wherein knowledge creation is necessarily altered by the different semiotic affordances found in images and in texts.

The first episode of the series introduced three characters: Lizzie, her best friend Charlotte, and her sister Lydia. The second episode introduced Lizzie and Lydia's sister Jane. While other characters were discussed and imitated in Lizzie's vlogs, a new character did not appear on screen until Ricky Collins entered "Vidcon Interruption – Ep: 25" posted on July 2, 2012. This vlog in particular is a notable moment of the transmedia narrative as it positioned fictional characters in a real-world online media conferencing event. A panel featuring the actors ran at the event, further blurring the lines between fiction and reality. Notably Vidcon was established by Hank Green, co-creator of *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*. In a highly meta, transmedia moment, a clip of Lizzie meeting Hank Green at Vidcon is included in one of her videos ("Questions and Answers #2 ft. Charlotte Lu"). This moment is exemplary of the kind of hybridity Speilmann and Bolter defined and the convergence culture Jenkins described, as it illustrates a multimodal convergence of the real and the virtual.

Before characters appeared on Lizzie's vlogs, they interacted with other characters and with the audience via various social media accounts. Every character in the storyscape had a Twitter account, and many actively operated accounts on other platforms. The actors for each role were not announced until they had appeared on screen. The characters' social media profiles

did not display images of the actors until they were visually introduced in Lizzie's vlogs. This technique built intrigue and anticipation among the audience while adding to the mythology (one of Blumenthal and Xu's four key story connectors) of the storyscape. Ten months before the actress portraying Gigi Darcy appeared on camera, her character used various social media platforms to share her favorite songs and movies and to interact with an eager audience. Though Lizzie did not speak about or seem to have an awareness of Gigi prior to her on-screen appearance, the audience was able to interact with and gain insight into Gigi's character due to the storyscape's expansive transmedia work. *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* was able to fulfill Blumenthal and Xu's four key story connectors by using social media to emphasize hybridity and convergence within a labyrinthine structure.

Practical navigation of the storyscape depended upon the audience's willingness to seek and discover the expansive transmedia elements across a variety of platforms. Lizzie's video blogs included direct discussion of her presence across social media. Careful exploration of these accounts would lead to other characters' profiles and accounts. Out-of-world accounts, those that were managed by the production team but existed outside of the world of the storyscape, could be relied upon for updates and information about the story. The out-of-world Twitter account for *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, The LBD Official (twitter.com/TheLBDofficial) featured lists of the characters, production and writing teams, the cast, and later included the fan-generated parody accounts made for *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*. The official website for the series posted story updates and navigation tips for new viewers. This comprehensive collection of information allowed the audience to interact with the storyscape without missing key parts of the narrative. Further, a large fan community grew around *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*. Audience interaction on various fan sites allowed for speculation on the narrative and for the sharing of information about

newly added or newly discovered elements of the storyscape. A sense of mystery around the storyscape and the expansive fan community became an integral part of initial experience of *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*. Navigation of such a networked narrative requires, as is called for by Gee, active engagement and specialized discursive practices. These features are unique to transmedia storyscapes and can be seen as fulfilling the kind of feminist writing practices Cixous and Rich identify while simultaneously using the many theories of transmedia and collective knowledge construction to build a networked narrative.

TRANSMEDIA ELEMENTS AND AUDIENCE INTERACTION

One of *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* most successful elements was the seamless incorporation of its transmedia features. In “Snickerdoodles – Ep: 48” Lizzie says, “I haven’t seen Jane at all since she found out Bing left town without telling her. She hasn’t left her room in two whole days. The only reason I know she’s still alive is because she keeps pinning sad pictures on Pinterest.” Jane’s Pinterest page (<http://www.pinterest.com/LooksByJane/>) at this time did indeed feature the sad pictures Lizzie referenced. While engaging with nothing more than Lizzie’s vlogs provides a full understanding of the story’s plot, the additional social media presence of the characters enriches the reader-participant experience. Aarseth cites the labyrinthine nature of narrative as one of the most fundamental features differentiating transmedia from traditional texts. The network of *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* is exactly the sort of labyrinth Aarseth identifies, as it allows the audience to engage with the narrative in many different ways.

The Academy of Television Arts and Sciences press release for the nominees for Immersive and Interactive Digital Media Programs praised *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* for the use

of “social media presence to interact with the audience, creating an addictive world of engagement, while driving important plot points for the main video through their separate channels” (2013). While the entire storyscape was highly interactive, Lizzie’s vlogs, the principle form of narrative delivery, appeared to be plotted to an extent that limited audience manipulation. However, the audience was able to enter the narrative in meaningful ways on the YouTube platform through a series of Question and Answer videos.

Lizzie’s YouTube channel features ten Question and Answer videos, often filmed with another character including Lydia, Charlotte, Caroline and Bing Lee, Fitz Williams, Ricky Collins, and Gigi and William Darcy. These in-character videos feature questions from the audience collected from Lizzie’s Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube pages. Often, the questions hint at events that have occurred in *Pride and Prejudice* and feature humorous self-reflexive responses, such a conversation between Lizzie and Gigi about being pressured to play the piano. In these Question and Answer videos the audience is able to respond to Lizzie’s own judgmental and prejudiced tendencies. Notably, Lizzie responds to criticisms of a vlog in which she labeled Lydia a “slut.” Her response is a further development of her judgmental characteristics while also serving as a critical communication between the showrunners and the audience. The Question and Answer videos also account for certain adaptations and attempts to situate the narrative in a modern context. For instance, when responding to a concern that Lizzie’s mother’s obsession with finding husbands for her daughters is sexist, Lizzie states, “In her case, less sexist than Paleozoic. I’d like to think that if I had brothers, she’d be just as focused on finding them wives” (“Questions and Answers #1 ft. Lydia Bennet”). Responding to the question “How do you think your mother would have reacted if one or even more of your sisters turned out to be

gay?” Lizzie responds in an imitation of her mother, “Oh, that’s wonderful dear! You’re still going to get married and have babies, right?” (“Questions and Answers #8 w/Gigi Darcy”).

The second Question and Answer video ends with Lizzie showing the viewers branded merchandise they can purchase, including t-shirts and videos. The products are distributed by DFTBA Records (another company belonging to series co-creator Hank Green) but are introduced on the show as integrated products, designed and distributed by Lizzie herself. This is another instance of convergence, world-building, and narrative cohesion across the storyscape. Similarly, in the third Question and Answer video, Caroline gives Lizzie an expensive handbag. Not being her style, the two decide to give it away to a viewer who visited Lizzie’s Facebook page. The penultimate Question and Answer video includes a seemingly innocuous question regarding Lizzie’s opinion on seahorses. The writers included this as a nod to a formidable fan group that had grown around the series, who chose to call themselves “The Seahorses” (“The LBD Seahorses, a Q&A”). These connections between the audience and the characters were crucial to the transmedia world-building process, to the development of a loyal fan base, and to the integrated interactive nature of the storyscape. This is particularly reflective of Levy’s discussion of the collective construction of knowledge. Positioning readers as active co-authors of a text is a key feature of transmedia narratives and has widespread implications for the ways in which the reading and writing processes are conceptualized. The ability to enter and embody a narrative can be seen as a type of *écriture féminine*, a political process of constructing identity through the act of co-constructing narrative.

RECEPTION AND CONTINUING PROJECTS

The enthusiastic reception of *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* spawned many record-breaking

achievements and awards. The series won Best Interactive Series awards from The International Academy of Web Television, the Streamys, and TV.com before winning the 2013 Primetime Emmy for Outstanding Creative Achievement in Interactive Media. A 30-day Kickstarter campaign was launched in an effort to fund the creation, production, and distribution of a DVD collection of the web series. The \$60,000 goal was met within six hours. The project was ultimately 771% funded after selling more than 5800 DVDs and raising more than \$462,000 (“Press Release”). The Kickstarter campaign also provided the opportunity to purchase a special *Lizzie Bennet Diaries* edition of *Pride and Prejudice* featuring fan-made art and an introduction by Hank Green. A novelization entitled *The Secret Diary of Lizzie Bennet* is forthcoming from series writers Bernie Su and Kate Rorick. The book aims to provide “more character introspection, with revelatory details about the Bennet household, including Lizzie’s special relationship with her father, untold stories from Netherfield, Lizzie’s thoughts and fears about life after grad school and becoming an instant web celebrity” (“Book”). Additional branded merchandise, including fan-designed posters, diaries, and coffee mugs, is still available for purchase. This continuation of the narrative in a franchised manner reflects Spielmann and Bolter’s hybridity and Jenkins’s convergence culture to combine the integrated transmedia with more economically focused aspects of transmedia.

After wrapping production on *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, series co-creators Hank Green and Bernie Su registered William Darcy’s company, Pemberley Digital, as a Domestic LLC company. The social media accounts associated with Pemberley Digital that were used as an in-world narrative device in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* have now transitioned to serve as an out-of-world hub for distributing the bulk of narrative content for the company’s subsequent projects. The web video production company aims to tell “stories like never before” by specializing in

multiplatform and new media adaptations of classic public domain works. *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* was initially funded, out of pocket, by Hank Green. Ad revenue began to fund production, but the initial investment was not recouped until *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* secured a funding deal with DECA, a digital media and entertainment company. The details of the DECA deal were not made public, but the collaboration has extended to Pemberley Digital's future projects ("Hank Green and Bernie Su..."). Such subsequent projects include *Welcome to Sanditon* based on Jane Austen's unfinished novel, and *Emma Approved* adapted from Jane Austen's *Emma*.

According to the Twitter Fiction Festival, a storytelling event occurring from March 12-16, 2014, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* was reactivated to mark the anniversary of the storyscape's conclusion:

The team behind The Lizzie Bennet Diaries (@[berniesu](#) and @[noblerorick](#)) will be presenting a week long story campaign bringing Lizzie Bennet back online, almost one year to the day when she started dating Mr. William Darcy. After Mr. and Mrs. Bennet finally decide to sell the family house, Lizzie will have to postpone her birthday and anniversary plans to come back to her childhood home for the final time.

This narrative revival marks the only major departure from *Pride and Prejudice*. Coming so long after the storyscape's conclusion, it can be thought of as an addendum that will allow enthusiastic fans to return to the storyscape, and may encourage a new audience to engage with the narrative from the beginning.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

RHETORICAL ANALYSIS OF A TRANSMEDIA NARRATIVE

This study employs elements of Lloyd Bitzer's rhetorical situation—audience, exigence, and constraints—to conduct a situated rhetorical analysis of a transmedia storyscape. Given the transmedia focus, Bitzer's elements will likely be challenged and redefined. In a digital realm, seemingly established and well-defined terms such as audience, exigence, and constraints, take on different meanings. Rhetorical theory is apt for this study as emergent technologies and approaches to narrative delivery call for close analysis. While the idea of 'transmedia' can be traced to postmodern theories, such storyscapes have only recently been deployed with success, and are therefore apt for analysis and scholarship. I will examine the ways in which a transmedia narrative differs from a traditionally static narrative by analyzing how Bitzer's elements function within the platforms used to deliver the narrative and how a transmedia storyscape may necessarily redefine Bitzerian boundaries. The fragmentation of narrative and engagement of audience utilized in transmedia storyscapes challenge Bitzer's views of the ways in which time and space operate within a rhetorical situation. Issues of space and temporality as they relate to transmedia storyscapes will be foregrounded in the development of the rhetorical situation.

Of the rhetorical situation, Bitzer says, "I want to know the nature of those contexts in which speakers or writers create rhetorical discourse: How should they be described? What are their characteristics? Why and how do they result in the creation of rhetoric?" (1). Situational context necessarily alters discourse as it is delivered and received. Describing the context and characteristics of a transmedia storyscape is dependent on an understanding of the fluid nature of narrative dispersal. However, the narrative is delivered through a variety of social media

platforms, each of which function in a stable context. The union of static platforms and the fluidity of content create a layered rhetorical situation that calls for analysis.

In describing the rhetorical situation, Bitzer begins with a discussion of the aims and purposes of rhetoric writ large,

A work of rhetoric is pragmatic; it comes into existence for the sake of something beyond itself; it functions ultimately to produce action or change in the world; it performs some task. In short, rhetoric is a mode of altering reality, not by the direct application of energy to objects, but by the creation of discourse which changes reality through the mediation of thought and action. The rhetor alters reality by bringing into existence a discourse of such a character that the audience, in thought and action, is so engaged that it becomes mediator of change (3).

This definition is particularly apt when applied to transmedia storyscapes as they require a high level of engagement and, through that engagement, change. The change Bitzer proposes is likely social, a response to a rhetor's call for action. In a transmedia storyscape, the change is found in the intermingling of fiction and reality. Through engagement with the storyscape's rhetorical discourse, notions of authorship and readership become situationally altered; the progression of plot is sometimes altered by audience engagement as well. Thus, the audience is indeed so engaged as to become a mediator of change. Transmedia storyscapes further fulfill this definition through their blurring of fiction and reality. If, as Bitzer posits, "rhetoric is a mode of altering reality," and a key function of transmedia storyscapes is to insert fiction into reality (and conversely, reality into fiction as the audience shapes the story) as a means of altering reality, it can then be conjectured that transmedia storyscapes function as a form of rhetoric. This study aims to examine the ways in which the independent rhetorical situations of the platforms used in a transmedia storyscape work together to create a rhetorically sound narrative.

A focus of this study is to establish transmedia storyscapes as a genre with a well-established rhetorical situation that is not weak in structure but is utilized to its fullest extent.

This is challenged by Bitzer's assertion that "situations may become weakened in structure due to complexity or disconnectedness" (12). The ramifications of this claim are numerous for a transmedia storyscape that is complicated and interconnected by nature. Concerns that a single storyscape may possess numerous or conflicting exigencies, may compete for the attention of the audience, or complicate notions of audience across narrative dispersal will be explored in this study. An effective storyscape will maintain an awareness of these potential conflicts and will strive to deliver the narrative in a manner that is reflective of a stable rhetorical situation.

BITZER'S RHETORICAL ELEMENTS

The key elements of Bitzer's rhetorical situation—audience, exigence, and constraints—will be applied to a sampling of the platforms used to deploy *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*. Though these terms will be altered in their application to a transmedia storyscape, an understanding of Bitzer's intentions is necessary before modifications can rightfully be made.

Bitzer identifies exigence as the first key factor in a rhetorical situation. While any given situation is capable of possessing numerous forms of exigence, rhetorical exigencies are specific to the rhetorical situation. For an exigency to be rhetorical, it must be capable of being altered through and by discourse. As Bitzer notes, "death, winter, and some natural disasters" have exigency, but are not rhetorical because they cannot be modified by rhetoric (6). Rhetorical exigencies must also be "marked by urgency" prompting their delivery. Though Bitzer does not name it specifically, this is related to the idea of *kairos*, "the right or opportune time to do something" (Kinneavy, 80). *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* is governed by exigencies and a specific kairotic moment, one that is new and needs to be addressed by rhetoricians. The transmedia storyscape could not have existed without the development and widespread adoption of the

various social media platforms used to deploy the narrative. Further, each platform is operating with a set of its own exigencies. This study will aim to explore and rhetorically analyze these on a singular and collective level.

Rhetorical exigence effects change through discourse. An audience, Bitzer's second key factor, must be present in order for this change to be enacted. According to Bitzer, "a rhetorical audience consists only of those persons who are capable of being influenced by discourse and of being mediators of change" (7). The definition must be slightly reimagined if it is to apply to a transmedia storyscape. The reader-participants who comprise the audience of a transmedia storyscape may enact change simply by participating in and with the narrative. Thus, they have the power to enact change not only through discourse but also onto the discourse. That is, by engaging with a transmedia storyscape, an audience inhabits simultaneous roles of observer and co-creator. This is further complicated by the experience of readers who find the text after it has deployed. They then inhabit a role of interpreter; though the active creation process has ended their engagement with the storyscape, and thus their experience, will be unique. This cohabitation of roles will be important to a close analysis of the storyscape's audience. In a notable response, Barbara Biesecker has characterized "the rhetorical situation not so much as an interaction between speaker and exigency, but as a process of mutual identity creation engaged in by speaker and audience" (31). In a transmedia storyscape, there is a complex and intermingled relationship between audience and author. Exigence can be constructed, as Vatz argues, by the speaker through the discourse and by the audience through its engagement (31). The role of audience in a transmedia storyscape, and its particular tie to exigence, thus becomes the most crucial and fluid of Bitzer's elements.

Finally, Bitzer identifies constraints as the third key factor in a rhetorical situation. Constraints are those limiting factors that may modify exigence. Two classes of constraints are identified, “(1) those originated or managed by the rhetor and his method...and (2) those other constraints, in the situation, which may be operative” (8). Constraints limit both audience persuasion and the potential to change exigence. Constraints may be borne from an author’s choices or limiting views as well as from the limitations of the existing structures used to deliver an argument. In a transmedia storyscape, constraints may include an audience’s limited awareness of the breadth and depth of the storyscape or the authors’ failure to produce cohesion of narrative dispersal across platforms.

NUANCED INTERPRETATIONS OF THE RHETORICAL SITUATION

The details of Bitzer’s rhetorical situation have been frequently challenged and questioned, but the principles remain steadfastly valued among rhetoricians. As previously discussed in this chapter, the nature of transmedia storyscapes calls for a nuanced understanding of Bitzer’s terms. This study will utilize responses to Bitzer outlined below.

Vatz confronts Bitzer’s notions of time, arguing that rhetoric is not used to convey meaning but that rhetoric creates and shapes meaning. This will be particularly important to an analysis of a transmedia storyscape wherein the construction of the narrative concurrently develops and delivers narrative.

Biesecker builds upon this temporal disruption by placing the audience in tandem with the text. Whereas Bitzer positions the audience as largely passive receptacles, their action coming after receiving the message of the rhetor, Biesecker suggests a theory of mutual identity

creation between the audience and the text. In a transmedia storyscape, it is the audience's engagement with the storyscape that shapes the structure of the narrative.

Mary Garret and Xiaosui Xiao also foreground their interpretation of audience as central in "The Rhetorical Situation Revisited" by:

1) seeing the audience rather than the speaker as the pivotal element, as a active entity which is crucial in determining exigency, constraints, and the "fittingness" of the rhetor's response; 2) recognizing the powerful influence of a culture's discourse tradition in shaping both speaker and audience perceptions of these same elements; and 3) placing much greater stress on the interactive, organic nature of the rhetorical situation. (31)

This approach has clear and prescient connections to transmedia storyscapes that are primarily audience-driven, respond to and interact with a unique technologically focused cultural moment, and rely on the interactivity of their rhetorical situations.

This interpretation is especially relevant in light of Kathleen Jamieson's study of genre as it relates to Bitzer's rhetorical situation. Jamieson suggests "that perception of the proper response to an unprecedented rhetorical situation grows *not merely from the situation* but also from antecedent rhetorical forms" [emphasis in the original] (163). In the case of *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, narrative is informed by the history of the source text, *Pride and Prejudice*, and by cultural expectations regarding the usage and functions of the social media platforms used to deliver the story.

These responses to Bitzer will be used to inform my rhetorical analysis of *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*. Though flawed, Bitzer's rhetorical situation is important within Rhetoric and Composition and provides a meaningful structure through which to approach texts. However, in order to tailor the rhetorical situation to a transmedia storyscape, redefinitions such as those discussed above, must be acknowledged and applied.

CHAPTER FOUR: CONTEXTUALIZING *THE LIZZIE BENNET DIARIES*

To operationalize this study, I will conduct a focused rhetorical analysis of the social media platforms utilized by Lizzie's character in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*. The three key elements of Bitzer's rhetorical situation—audience, exigence, and constraints—will be applied to the five platforms used by Lizzie. This analysis aims to reveal how each platform functions independently and as part of a narrative whole. I will seek to readapt Bitzer's terms in the context of a transmedia storyscape.

This chapter will provide a discussion and analysis of the specific context in which *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* operated, with regard to adaptation and technical delivery. In particular, this study will focus on the ways in which the use of time and space in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* complicate Bitzer's definitions. Further, by narrowing the focus of this study to the five platforms used by Lizzie, I will be able to offer a targeted analysis of the functions of the storyscape, from character development and narrative delivery to complicated notions of authorship and readership.

ADAPTATION AS CONTEXT

Before addressing audience, exigence, and constraints, the larger rhetorical situation needs to be established. Identifying the context in which *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* is situated requires a discussion of the role of adaptation in the storyscape. The process of resituating the narrative in a modern context and in a digital setting necessarily affects the functional components of Bitzer's rhetorical situation. The element of adaptation is as important to the rhetorical analysis as exigence, audience, and constraints, because these three aspects of the

storyscape are influenced by the choices made in the adaptation process. The transmedia elements of the storyscape further alter the context of the rhetorical situation. As Garret and Xiao identify in their response to Bitzer's structure, culture and the interplay between the audience and the text must be foregrounded as vitally important in every rhetorical situation. Especially in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, the structure and function of the storyscape were as important, arguably more important, than the content being delivered given that the medium ultimately shaped the content.

The process of modernizing the story was significant in terms of context and representation. For example, the storyscape was more diversely cast with regard to race and sexual orientation than in the original text. This modernization enabled the foregrounding of identity, which is a central factor in feminist writing. The use of identity in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* is crucial to the development of the rhetorical situation. Bitzer argues that rhetorical discourse must emerge from a specific historical moment because discourse "does obtain its character-as-rhetorical from the situation which generates it" (3). The adaptation process modernized *Pride and Prejudice* to provide generational context, especially with regard to gender, racial, and sexual identity. As established by Cixous and Rich, these identities carry specific discourse traditions that are generally underrepresented in Western rhetorics. Garret and Xiao identify three key ways a discourse tradition influences a rhetorical situation:

It generates needs and promotes interests in an audience that must to be met by new discourses; it cultivates an audience's expectations about the appropriate forms of discourses, the proper subject matter, the right modes of argumentation, and so forth in relation to a given circumstance; and it also affects an audience's recognition and interpretation of a rhetorical exigency (39).

Foregrounding identity in the adaptation reshaped the rhetorical situation around the unique discourse traditions afforded by the intersection of identity and technology. Giving narrative

space to a diverse set of identities required discourses that would reflect those identities. Meanwhile identity and technology were used to build a rhetorical relationship with the audience. The discourse traditions borne from this adaptation cultivate expectations about discourse while affecting the recognition and interpretation of exigency.

Adaptation was able to inform the rhetorical situation of the text by responding to modern discourse traditions in order to connect with a rhetorical audience. A key plot point in *Pride and Prejudice* is Lydia's scandalous unplanned marriage to George Wickham. In *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, this is replaced by Wickham's elaborate plan to sell a sex tape of Lydia for his own financial gain. As our cultural views around marriage and especially of women have drastically changed, an unannounced marriage no longer holds the kind of shock and scandal that devastated the Bennet family in the novel. Circulated images of women's bodies, though frequently consumed in modern culture, often result in moralizing and shaming of the women whose bodies are depicted, especially if the depiction is sexual in nature. While releasing a sex tape of Lydia should only reflect negatively on Wickham's character, such an act would have conceivably caused the same kind of moral and social scandal that Austen sought to portray in *Pride and Prejudice*. The use of technology, the construction of a sex tape, continues to build upon current cultural dynamics and trends. This adaptive moment reflects current societal trends that speak to Garret and Xiao's assertion that the rhetorical situation in general recognizes "the powerful influence of a culture's discourse tradition in shaping both speaker and audience perceptions" (31). The process of adapting *Pride and Prejudice* did more than simply setting the story in a modern context. The adaptation placed the rhetorical situation in a discourse tradition that reflects culture and identity in a way that privileges the audience's reception and interpretations.

The plot of the narrative was dictated by its source text, which meant that audience input and engagement did not directly affect the narrative direction of the storyscape. Though the narrative remained relatively static, the storyscape did provide an opportunity for the audience to engage in other ways: by experiencing the story within their own social media, by interacting with the characters directly, by interacting with a community of other fans, and by creating and sharing art inspired by the story. Rather than altering the plot, the audience was able to enter a complicated arrangement of narrative layers. This layering can be understood as a means of subversion in itself. Whereas traditional narratives are linear and progress to the revelation of an established Truth, a transmedia storyscape uses narrative layering to create an expansive network. The use of space and time in this layering approach circumvents linear progression and challenges traditional generic forms. The limitations of adaption on the narrative informed certain exigencies and constraints across the storyscape. The exigencies of the creators and the exigencies of the characters are independent and yet interwoven in the sense that they jointly inform the ability to construct and deliver the narrative. It is notable that the delivery of the storyscape demanded active audience participation. Accessing the dispersed storyscape required intentional engagement from the audience. There is a nuanced relationship between adaptation, which established the storyscape's situational context, and audience, which shaped both the initial adaptation and the wide reception of the storyscape. This contradicts Bitzer's definition, which largely relegates the audience to a passive role, privileging the speaker as the source of all exigencies. In Bitzer's definition, the audience will effect change after being influenced by the rhetor. *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* uses adaptation to place the audience in an active role. This reflects Garret and Xiao's positioning of the audience as the center of the rhetorical situation:

The rhetor is not separate from the audience but arises out of the audience... In the same way, the rhetorical exigencies are expressions of the situational audience's unsolved

questions, concerns, anxieties, frustrations, and confusions, which need modification by discourse. The constraints, on the other hand, reflect the audience's expectations for an appropriate discourse in a given circumstance (39).

In *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* adaptation is used as the first means of establishing the context of the larger rhetorical situation. The choices made in the adaptive process challenge Bitzer's rhetorical definition by privileging cultural discourse traditions with regard to identity and audience. The context of *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* will necessarily affect ideas of audience, exigence, and constraints, all of which work within the rhetorical situation.

PLATFORM FUNCTIONALITY

Just as the role of adaptation was crucial to understanding the context of the storyscape, a discussion of platform functionality is necessary to emphasize what Garret and Xiao call the "interactive, organic nature of the rhetorical situation" (31). Being a transmedia storyscape with explicitly interactive components, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* has a particular need for a perspicuous consideration of the nature of its rhetorical situation. These interactive components can be thought of as among the 'tools' Gee identifies as necessary. Education professor Todd Lilly synthesizes Gee's claims by stating that we must focus on

Teaching students how to identify and solve problems by tapping in to the minds of those who exhibit critical knowledge and skills. This is achievable through face-to-face, real-time interactions as well as through engagement in digitalized simulations and Internet *affinity sites* (355).

These affinity sites are those digital spaces that promote mastery of diverse skill sets through a process of distributed cognition. The interactive components in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* are well suited to developing the kind of tools Gee points to as necessary for an education paradigm shift to occur.

For *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* both adaptation and format emerged from a substantial rhetorical history. This example relates to Jamieson's suggestion that "perception of the proper response to an unprecedented rhetorical situation grows *not merely from the situation* but also from antecedent rhetorical forms" (163). The source text and the history of social media platforms informed the construction and delivery of the text and therefore must be considered as meaningful aspects of the rhetorical situation. The relationship between the source text and the adapted narrative speaks to Raymond's belief that electronic orality and digital discourse will produce important cognitive processes as well as to Moulthrop's belief that the interaction between print and visual texts must be rhetorically significant. McLuhan's notion that the media is the message aligns with the importance of the transmedia elements in the text. The content of the narrative was influenced by the methods of its delivery. This section will discuss those methods in order to establish an understanding of their rhetorical function. The specific abilities of each platform will affect the audience, exigence, and constraints of the rhetorical situation, and therefore needs to be considered as an important contextual aspect.

The platforms that will be analyzed in this section include Lizzie's accounts on YouTube, Twitter, Tumblr, Facebook, and Google Plus (Google+). The accounts were presented as an in-world feature of the narrative, meaning they were presented as a component of the story, originated and operated by Lizzie Bennet herself. Because the transmedia and writing teams ran these accounts, interactions between the audience and Lizzie's accounts were actually interactions between the audience and the invisible production team. However, during these communications it was likely the actress portraying Lizzie that was envisioned by the audience. These layered interactions are at the heart of transmedia storytelling. The success with which *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* was deployed speaks to the effectiveness of the storyline's planning and

use. The layering of narrative and intermingling of author and reader complicate Bitzer's somewhat singular definition of the rhetorical situation by privileging multiple rhetors and by placing the audience in an active role with the ability to produce exigencies within the story.

The principal form of narrative delivery was through video blogs posted to Lizzie's channel on YouTube. These videos were filmed with a single camera in a fixed location and were generally a direct monologue or featured a conversation between Lizzie and one or more additional characters. This style was in accordance with that of other video bloggers who post on YouTube and therefore served to create a sense of reality within the narrative. Jamieson's assertion that the "existence of standard forms of address guarantees a sense of continuity" can be used to justify Lizzie's use of YouTube, because adhering to the established genre of vlogging was necessary to the construction of the storyscape (165).

The platform allowed audience members to subscribe to Lizzie's channel, which provided them with updates about new activity, such as when a new video was uploaded. Other features of the platform enabled the audience to rate the video positively or negatively. These statistics, along with the total view count are displayed beneath each video. Furthermore, the audience was able to add each video to their own playlists for their personal reference. The comments section allowed the audience to leave their thoughts, ask the characters questions, and to interact with other viewers. These functions privileged audience engagement, further challenging Bitzer's definition of the audience as largely passive.

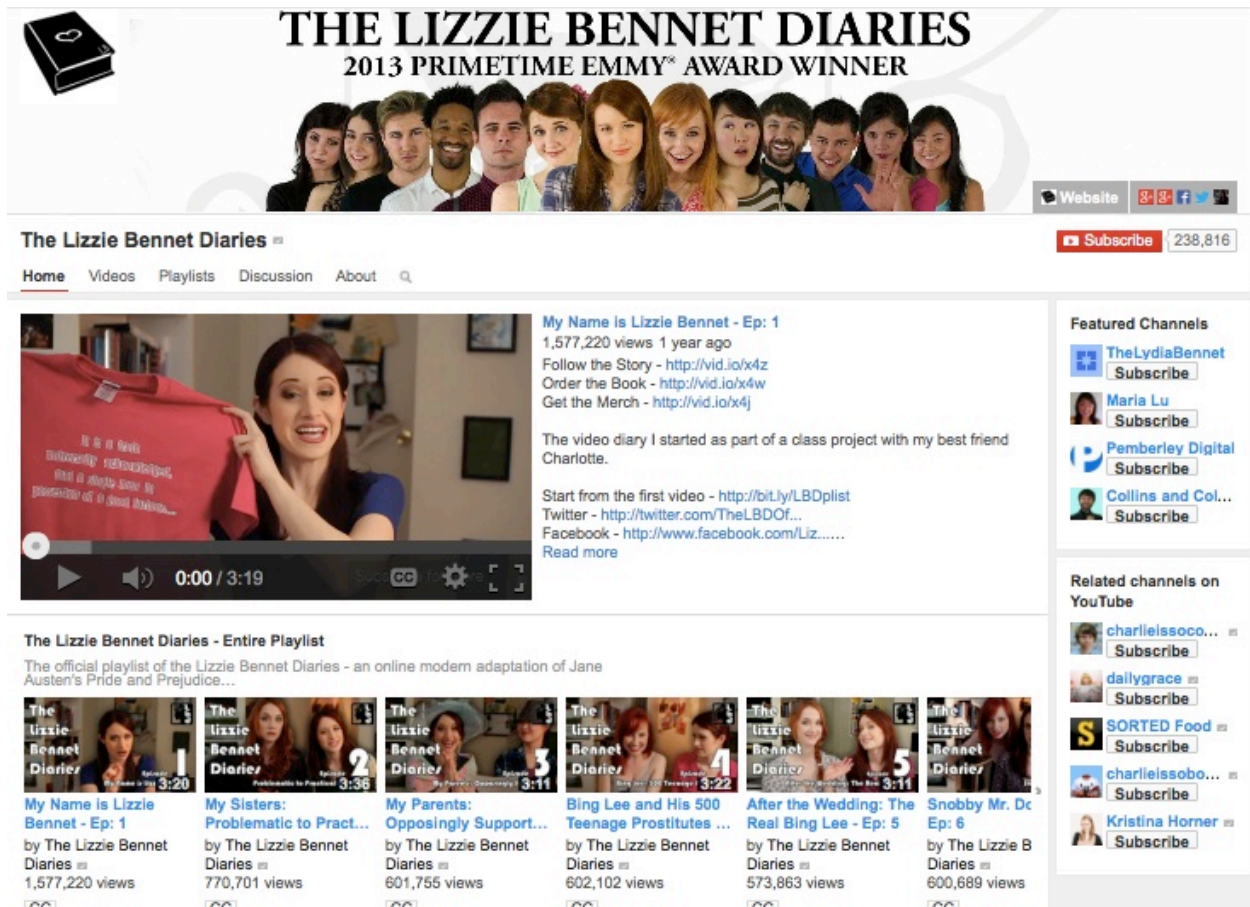


Figure 1 Lizzie's YouTube Channel

Twitter was used as a supplementary form of narrative delivery and provided the most new narrative content outside of YouTube. This platform enables users to make public text posts, up to 140 characters in length. A 'follow' function allows users to subscribe to public accounts. Posts will appear in a chronological timeline that contains all updates from the accounts that have been subscribed to. Therefore, posts from the characters would have appeared alongside posts from every other account a user was subscribed to. This emphasized the intermingling of fiction and reality that is inherent in transmedia storytelling. It is notable that every character in the storyscape (including the Bennet cat) had a designated Twitter account. This was the only platform used by every character in the storyscape. From a production standpoint, running Twitter accounts for the characters (which does not require the presence of actors) is much more

manageable than producing video blogs. The medium allowed the characters to interact with each other and to have their own voices, unmediated by Lizzie’s perspective. This was an important story and character-building aspect of the narrative. Additionally, the platform allowed the audience to share, save, or respond to a character’s posts.

Characters
A public list by LizzieBennetDiaries
The Characters in the world of The Lizzie Bennet Diaries
MEMBERS 15 SUBSCRIBERS 3,609
Subscribe

Tweets >
List members >
List subscribers >

Recently added members · View all

- Pemberley Digital @PemberleyDig Follow
- Fitz Williams @FitzOnTheFitz Follow
- George Wickham @TheGWickham Follow
- Maria Lu @MariaOfTheLu Follow

More lists by @TheLBDofficial · View all

- Fan Generated
- Characters
- Production
- Writers
- Cast

© 2014 Twitter About Help Terms Privacy Cookies Ads info Brand Blog Status Apps Jobs Advertise Businesses Media Developers

List members

- Pemberley Digital** @PemberleyDig
Production company responsible for @EmmaApproved, @SanditonSeries and the Emmy Award winning @TheLBDofficial.
- Fitz Williams** @FitzOnTheFitz
- George Wickham** @TheGWickham
live in the sunshine, swim the sea, drink the wild air.
- Maria Lu** @MariaOfTheLu
Sister to @theCharlotteLu. Fangirl of Harry Potter, Doctor Who, Anime, and The Legend of Korra
- Rick Collins** @MrRickCollins
Entrepreneur
- Mary Bennet** @TheMaryBennet
I am Mary, never forgotten.
- Gigi Darcy** @gigdarcy
Coordinator for @PemberleyDig's Domino beta test in @SanditonCA. (Yes, William, I am working.)
- Kitty Bennet** @TheKittyBennet
@TheLydiaBennet is my master and I follow her everywhere.
- Jane Bennet** @LooksByJane
Hi I'm Jane Bennet. I'm a Merchandise Coordinator, and I love Fashion. Big sis to @TheLizzieBennet & @TheLydiaBennet
- Charlotte Lu** @TheCharlotteLu
Business partner to @MrRickCollins. Sister to @MariaOfTheLu. And I help edit @TheLizzieBennet Diaries.
- Lydia Bennet** @TheLydiaBennet
THE LEE DEE YAAAA! --- Yes I'm double jointed!! What's it to you!?!?
- William Darcy** @wmdarcy
I like things to be well-ordered.
- Caroline Lee** @that_caroline
Coffee, now, and nobody gets hurt.
- Bing Lee** @bingliest
Can't wait to see what's next.
- Lizzie Bennet** @TheLizzieBennet
My name is Lizzie Bennet. I'm a student and I have a video diary.
<http://youtube.com/lizziebennet>

Figure 2 List of *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* Twitter Accounts

The characters would sometimes respond to the audience, further blurring the lines between fiction and reality. For instance, Kitty Bennet's Twitter account was ostensibly run by Lydia. Like all the Twitter accounts, Kitty's was still managed by the production team, but it is meaningful that Kitty's account was shown to be Lydia's creation. Creating social media accounts for pets is a popular and well-worn trend across a variety of platforms. That Lydia would choose to tweet as Kitty Bennet provides insight into her character and adds more realism to the story by showing Lydia engaging in such an established if nuanced form of social media use. The immersion of the story into the audience's lives is a rhetorical act. Bitzer discusses rhetoric as a means to create change, stating that "rhetoric is a mode of altering reality, not by the direct application of energy to objects, but by the creation of discourse which changes reality through the mediation of thought and action" (4). The platform features of Twitter allowed the narrative to alter reality by entering the reality of the audience.

The unique features of Tumblr transformed the way Lizzie presented and distributed her narrative. Tumblr allows users to create text, photo, quote, link, chat, audio, or video posts. Unlike Twitter, Tumblr does not limit the character length of posts. These posts are compiled on a user's blog, which can be followed by other Tumblr users. Posts can be 'reblogged' by other users. The reblogging feature allows a user to share posts on their own blogs. Reblogging also allows space to add comments or responses beneath the original post before sharing it, which enabled the audience to add their own commentaries to posts from the characters before sharing the content with their own blog followers.



Figure 3 Lizzie's Tumblr Page

Lizzie's posts were generally links to her YouTube videos. She also reblogged posts originally published on her sisters' Tumblr blogs and from her audience. Lizzie's reblogging practices added to the storyscape's world and character building while emphasizing the co-authorship elements of transmedia narratives by allowing the audience's voices to enter the story. It is important to note that new narrative content was not added to Tumblr in the same way that it appeared on YouTube and Twitter. Though the platform was primarily used as a means of circulating existing narrative content, it was the site with the most incorporation of audience

creations and voices. Tumblr's privileging of the audience reflects Garret and Xiao's belief that the audience is central in any rhetorical situation. The incorporation of the audience on this platform negates Bitzer's inattentive view of audience. Tumblr was able to disrupt traditional temporality of the rhetorical situation. The audience did not effect change after ingesting the narrative; rather, the audience created change in tandem with the narrative. This change contests Bitzer's rhetorical situation by reconsidering the importance of each rhetorical feature.

On Facebook, Lizzie's presence was created as a public page rather than a personal profile. A public page is generally created for public figures who may want or need to limit the kind of engagement their audience can initiate. A personal profile enables features such as the ability to post on other users' pages or to join groups and events. A public page allows an audience to receive updates and to comment on posts without adding the user as a 'friend.' Lizzie's Facebook page was used primarily to post links to the videos after they were published on YouTube. There were often updates announcing that a new video was uploading or that there may be a publishing delay. Before Question and Answer videos were made, Lizzie would ask her audience to submit questions. A handbag presented in one such Question and Answer video was later given to an audience member who commented on the Facebook page. Like Tumblr, some audience-generated work was shared on the Facebook page, but to a lesser extent. Due to the functionality of Facebook, when a user posted about Lizzie Bennet on their own page, even if that post was meant only for the user's friend group, it would appear in Lizzie's own timeline. These posts had the potential to detract from the realism of the storyscape as they typically referred to the production as a whole and not to Lizzie as a character. Again, the relationship between fiction and reality reflects the ability of the storyscape to alter reality. Bitzer's

definitions of the rhetorical situation are further challenged through the engagement of the audience and the ability of the audience to enter the narrative.



Figure 4 Lizzie's Facebook Page

Finally, Lizzie established a Google+ account, though of her five social media accounts, it was by far the least utilized. The majority of the posts were links to content originally published on other social media sites, primarily YouTube and Tumblr.

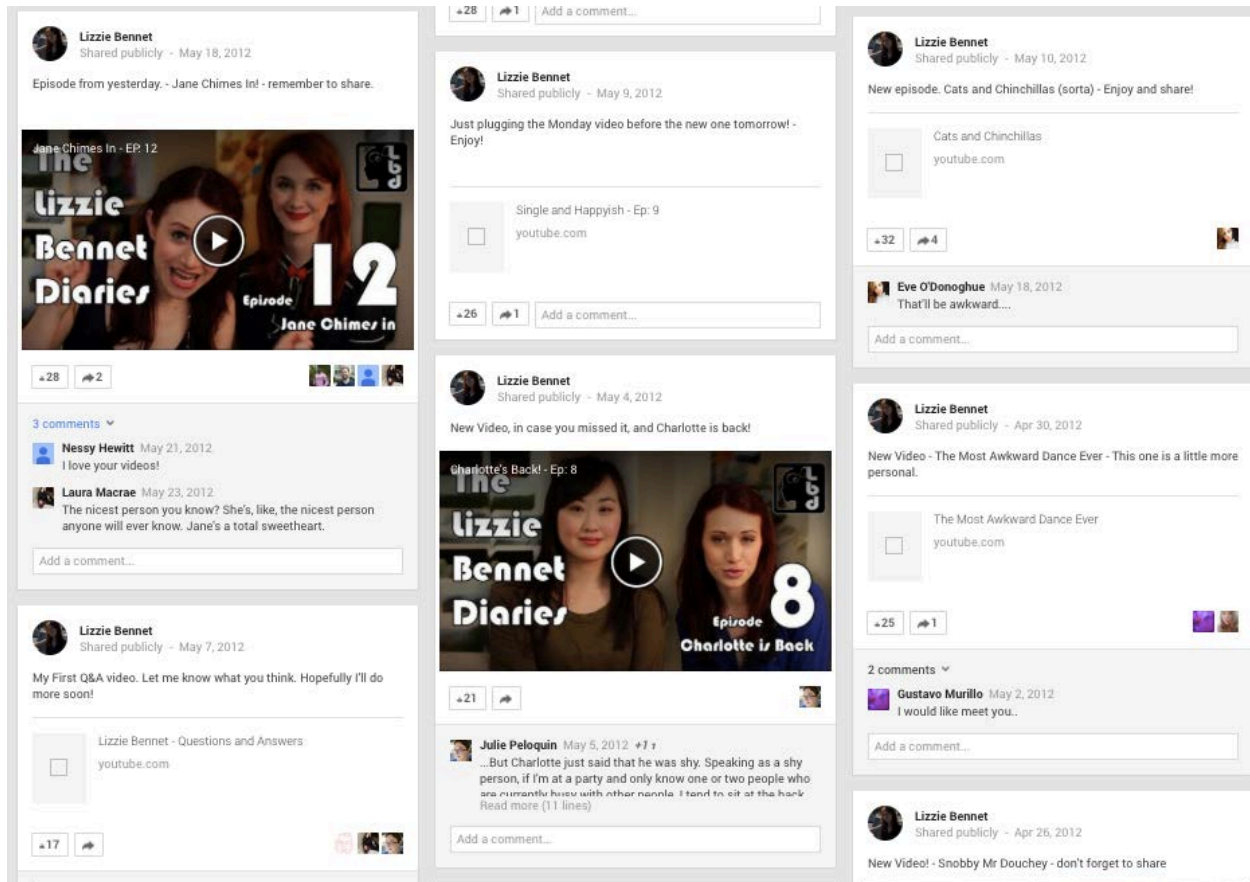


Figure 5 Lizzie's Google+ Page

Only one original post was added to the Google+ page, shortly after the series premiered. The relative disuse of Google+ in the storyscape is likely reflective of the platform's widespread failure to gain popularity with users. Google+ did not function as a particularly effective feature of the storyscape because it is not particularly effective as a social media platform. Lizzie makes reference to this (and perhaps breaks character) in her second Questions and Answers video, "Remember to ask more on Twitter, Tumblr, Facebook, YouTube, Google+... are we still doing—is anyone on Google+? What is Google+?" ("Questions and Answers #2 ft. Charlotte

Lu”). After linking to the 27th episode “Welcome to Netherfield,” Lizzie’s Google+ account was abandoned. While the limited use of the platform can be viewed as a Bitzerian constraint, it did not necessarily break the realism of the storyscape, as most users of Google+ abandoned the platform after a short period of engagement. This realistic use of the platform furthered the sense of authenticity within the rhetorical situation.

These five platforms will be the central component of this rhetorical analysis, which will seek to consider the particular exigence, audience, and constraints as they are dispersed across a transmedia storyscape. The ways in which each platform affected the narrative by engaging with exigence, audience, and constraints will be considered in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE: EXIGENCE, AUDIENCE, AND CONSTRAINTS

Establishing the rhetorical context of the storyscape through adaptation and platform function allows for a situated discussion of Bitzer's key elements: exigence, audience, and constraints. Each of these elements are as important in a transmedia storyscape as they are in a traditional print text, but the ways each term is defined and utilized throughout the narrative has fundamental differences. I will discuss these terms and their unique application to *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* in the following section.

EXIGENCE

A fundamental flaw in Bitzer's discussion of rhetorical elements is the interpretation of fiction as lacking rhetorical agency. Bitzer is occupied by how the perceived division between the real and the fictive influences rhetorical exigency. Bitzer negates the rhetorical worth of fiction by arguing that it lacks a real situation and thus lacks true exigency:

The speech of a character in a novel or play may be clearly required by a fictive rhetorical situation—a situation established by the story itself; but the speech is not genuinely rhetorical, even though, considered in itself, it looks exactly like a courtroom address or a senate speech. It is realistic, made so by fictive context. But the situation is not real, not grounded in history; neither the fictive situation nor the discourse generated by it is rhetorical (11).

Bitzer's claim that fiction is rhetorically ineffective and unsound is, at best, an arbitrary division of the poetic and the rhetorical. Bitzer's definition essentially pigeonholes art to satire and commentary that cannot generate 'real' change in society. By this definition, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* could not have any real rhetorical exigency because it is not marked by the urgency that motivates a Bitzerian rhetor. This study relies on a suspension of Bitzer's exclusion of fictional texts as valid rhetorical situations.

This objection to Bitzer's negation of fiction is supported by Vatz's critique, which posits that the rhetorical situation is mythic. Bitzer's view of the fictive is a result of his belief that meaning is found in rhetorical events. This rather Platonic view is countered by Vatz's belief that meaning is created by rhetoric, that any event or situation is shaped by its surrounding rhetoric. While Bitzer argues that exigency creates action, Vatz believes that action creates exigency, stating:

If, on the other hand, you view meaning as a consequence of rhetorical creation, your paramount concern will be how and by whom symbols create the reality to which people react. In a world of inexhaustible and ambiguous events, facts, images, and symbols, the rhetorician can best account for choices of situations, the evocative symbols, and the forms and media which transmit these translations of meaning (158).

Vatz's view of rhetoric and meaning makes space for the fictive and emphasizes the importance of using rhetoric to shape reality. Whereas Bitzer identifies rhetorical exigency as being marked by urgency, this study focuses on the specific *kairotic* moment from which the storyscape emerged and the tools used to develop and deliver it. The storyscape was deployed with success due to the technological and cultural development of the platforms used in the narrative. In *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, 'the forms and media used to transmit translations of meaning' that Vatz identifies are the social media platforms used to deliver the story. This reinterpretation of rhetorical agency is essential to a reading of exigency in a transmedia storyscape because, as Vatz states, "It is only when the meaning is seen as the result of a creative act and not a discovery, that rhetoric will be perceived as the supreme discipline it deserves to be" (161). The use of platforms as a narrative device created a reality into which the audience was able to enter and react.

The Lizzie Bennet Diaries has multiple exigencies due to the layering of narrative present throughout the storyscape. These exigencies operate individually and collectively, within each

platform, and for the production team, characters, and audience. Throughout the storyscape, the importance of narrative layering and networked storytelling consistently complicates Bitzer's understanding of rhetorical elements. The multiple exigencies driving the narrative are unlike the multiple exigencies found in other rhetorical situations largely due to the storyscape's positioning of the audience as rhetors. Bitzer identifies the rhetor as the source of exigency and the audience as largely disengaged recipients of rhetoric, who will enact change after listening to a speaker. Conversely, a transmedia storyscape identifies its audience as a fundamental element of narrative, one that necessarily influences exigence by stepping into the role of the rhetor, acting as a co-author of the storyscape.

Narrative layering is more explicit in a transmedia storyscape because even as the production team is rendered invisible, their choices as compared to the characters' choices are much more apparent than in traditional print texts. In a transmedia storyscape both the separation and intermingling of author, character, and audience are magnified. *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* was motivated by a number of exigencies borne from many different authors of the text. For instance, the storyscape had in-world and out-of-world elements that could be accessed by the audience. The out-of-world elements provided information about the production team and collected and archived the narrative in a single location. Visiting the official website for *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* quickly illustrates the expansive nature of the storyscape, and suggests a complicated network of rhetorical exigencies. Lizzie's use of her social media accounts indicates a different kind of exigency, one borne from the need to gather research for her graduate thesis and the desire to use online writing practices to untangle her personal life. The audience has exigencies related to a desire to experience the storyscape, to engage with the characters, and to

become contributors to the narrative. All of these exigencies are informed by the exigencies of the platforms themselves.

Each platform has unique features and functions that contributed to the storyscape. As a whole, the platforms functioned to further the creation of a networked narrative. The storyscape was designed in such a way that Lizzie's video blogs could deliver the narrative independently but the additional social media accounts provided greater depth of plot and character. The features of each platform allowed for access to a variety of cultural caches. The union of the platforms provides an expansive toolkit of features and capabilities with which to deliver the narrative, as well as nuanced audience groups who can be reached through their preferred social network.

For the production team, the primary exigency driving the storyscape was likely the desire to create a functioning, accessible narrative network. The contributions of each platform to the storyscape as a whole were necessary to the creation of an expansive well-functioning narrative. For Lizzie, establishing an active presence on many social media sites reflects the current cultural practice of fracturing online identity. In the most simplistic sense, Lizzie's social media platforms were used in the following manner: YouTube delivered the narrative, Twitter developed the characters, Tumblr engaged the audience, Facebook archived the storyscape, and Google+ failed to do much of anything. Each successful social media network has various capabilities and limitations so that the use of many is needed in order to create a complete virtual presence. No single social network was capable of delivering the entire storyscape or accurately representing the dynamic facets of the characters. Through narrative splintering, dispersing the story across many platforms, the narrative was strengthened and became more complete. This is at odds with Bitzer's belief that, "an *exigence* is an imperfection marked by urgency; it is a

defect, an obstacle, something waiting to be done, a thing which is other than it should be” (6). The exigencies driving *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* were not imperfections, were not marked by urgency, and indeed did not have any of the negative connotations Bitzer cites. Rather, the storyscape was driven by the *kairotic* moment in which it was created and by the intertwined relationships between author, character, audience, and platform. The exigencies informing the storyscape created a specialized rhetorical discourse that ultimately resulted in meaning making. As Vatz asserts, “rhetoric is a *cause* not an *effect* of meaning. It is antecedent, not subsequent, to a situation’s impact” (160). The rhetorical structure of the storyscape was not a response to an event but a creation of many events.

This reversal of Bitzer’s definition, the shift from rhetoric as a response to meaning to rhetoric as the creation of meaning, is especially significant in regard to the unique temporality of a transmedia storyscape. The ability of the audience to inhabit an authorial role and to create exigency within the narrative disrupts the Bitzerian views of exigency and audience. According to Bitzer, exigency should motivate the narrative and the audience should respond to the text after its delivery. Lizzie’s use of platforms engages an active temporality wherein exigency and audience are created and engaged along with the development of the storyscape. The highly creative structure of the storyscape created meaning. Bitzer would assert that the storyscape should function to respond to or deliver meaning, to convey a Truth. In actuality, the ability of the audience to enter the narrative, and the potential for the narrative to enter the lives of the audience, was a meaning-making process. The process of experiencing the storyscape created meaning.

The use of social media platforms changed the context and content of the narrative, thereby differentiating it from the source text, *Pride and Prejudice*. The use of social media and

the exigencies each platform created gave space for matters of identity and culture to take precedence in the narrative. A strictly Bitzerian interpretation of *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* would negate all of these crucial aspects of the storyscape. Vatz's response to and reinterpretation of the rhetorical situation provides the opportunity for an analysis that is fundamentally more expansive and expressive. This interpretation, paired with the important temporal disruptions present in a transmedia storyscape, expands upon and complicates Bitzer's definitions. While exigency is, as Bitzer asserts, a key component to any given rhetorical situation, the definition and function of exigency must be reimagined when applied to a transmedia storyscape. Matters of identity and culture are accentuated within *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*. Undervaluing these essential aspects of the narrative would only serve to further the erasure of identity that already exists within Western rhetorics. The capacious elements of transmedia texts act as important sites of feminist rhetoric. Therefore, any meaningful analysis of such texts must foreground features that are not typically discussed or considered in traditional texts.

AUDIENCE

Bitzer's interpretation of a rhetorical audience, "only... those persons who are capable of being influenced by discourse and of being mediators of change," does not fully reflect the audience of a transmedia storyscape (8). While the audience of *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* was, as Bitzer identified, capable of creating change as a result of discourse, the type of change was not in response to discourse as much as it was in tandem with the discourse of the storyscape. Because the audience occupies a co-authorial role, Bitzer's definition is not fully representative of a transmedia storyscape's rhetorical audience. Garret and Xiao suggest that audience plays a

much larger role in the construction of any rhetorical situation. As such, a rhetorical analysis of *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* must foreground the audience as an active participant in the construction of the rhetorical situation in order to fully and accurately represent the interconnected nature of the narrative.

Biesecker's response to Bitzer offers an expanded consideration that seeks to place the audience in a more fully realized role within the rhetorical situation. Biesecker argues that traditional discussions of audience are reductive, stating that,

if we posit the audience of any rhetorical event as no more than a conglomeration of subjects whose identity is fixed prior to the rhetorical event itself, then we must also admit that those subjects have an essence that cannot be affected by the discourse. Thus, the power of rhetoric is circumscribed: it has the potency to influence an audience, to realign their allegiances, but not to form new identities (111).

An audience, according to Biesecker, will engage the text in a process of mutual identity creation. This definition of audience most closely aligns with the audience of a transmedia storyscape, who necessarily shapes and is shaped by the process of engaging with the narrative.

The Lizzie Bennet Diaries can be thought of as having one large audience who followed the entire storyscape (the project as a whole) while simultaneously containing subdivisions of smaller audience groups who followed some or all of the transmedia elements. Just as the narrative was dispersed across many platforms, the audience was also dispersed, with some following every social media site, some following a few, and some watching only the video diaries posted on YouTube. The storyscape had to find a way to concurrently cater to each audience group while continuing to market toward new viewers. Just as there were different exigencies for the use of each platform, a slightly different audience was privileged and targeted by the platforms. This allows for the reading of audience identity as "the provisional and practical outcome of a symbolic engagement between speaker and audience" (Biesecker, 112).

As the audience inhabited various sites of the storyscape, they engaged in articulate and conscious identity creation rather than simply succumbing to rhetorical influence.

Across all the social media platforms, the audience was encouraged to ask Lizzie questions, some of which would appear in her Questions and Answers videos. Art created by the audience was frequently posted to Lizzie's social media accounts. Questions and comments from the audience were shared across the platforms. A feature of YouTube at the time *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* ran allowed audience members to record and upload response videos. These videos could be approved by Lizzie and would then be displayed next to her original video. Garret and Xiao argue that "the rhetor is not separate from the audience but arises out of the audience" (39). The ability of the audience to directly engage with the narrative, because the use of social media enabled accessibility, places the audience in the role of the rhetor.

While not every audience member engaged with every social media platform utilized, indeed many likely did not seek out more than one or two platforms, the structural integrity of the storyscape allowed for a fulfilling narrative experience across all platforms. Lizzie's Twitter, Tumblr, and Facebook pages linked to all of her YouTube videos, as they carried the core narrative content. If Lizzie had not posted the videos to her other social media accounts, the narrative would have been incomplete for viewers who were not aware of her YouTube activity. Additional content posted to the Twitter, Tumblr, Facebook, and Google+ allowed for the expansion of the narrative, for character development, and for audience involvement. Audience members likely followed Lizzie on the platforms with which they were already comfortable and familiar. Some audience members followed Lizzie's story on more than one or on all of her accounts. This allowed the storyscape to reach an expansive audience.

The dispersal of narrative reflects the dispersal of the audience's own social lives. Just as many platforms were used to deliver the narrative, the audience was likely already accustomed to using multiple social media accounts in their own lives. *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* capitalized on these existing social media practices in order to appeal to its audience by creating an engaging and expansive narrative network that spoke to the diverse identities of its audience. Rather than imagining the audience in a traditional sense, "as a collective animated by an identifiable and shared predisposition" (Biesecker, 123) *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* uses platform and presentation to make individual connections by allowing the audience to navigate the storyscape through their unique identities and consumption practices. Facebook and Google+ rely upon this juxtaposition of the fictional and the real, and the positioning of the fictional as real. Both platforms aim to be online representations of real people whereas Twitter and Tumblr allow for greater anonymity. Facebook and Google+ purport to reflect reality. Lizzie's presence on both of these sites served to further her integration into the audience's lives by placing her alongside the real people the audience followed.

In the broadest sense, the storyscape sought to present its characters as real people engaging with an invested audience. The commitment to building a narrative that mirrored reality was one of the most successful elements of the storyscape. Although the audience was not able to change major plot points, they did become co-authors of the narrative in small but meaningful ways. Even the presence of the audience's words and artwork alongside Lizzie's content is unique to the genre of transmedia storytelling and further complicates the conceptualization of the audience as "a 'mob' of individuals whose significance is their gullibility and failure to respond to 'logical' argument" (Biesecker, 123). The presentation of the characters as real and the privileging of the audience within the storyscape led to a

reinterpretation of the rhetorical necessity of audience within a rhetorical situation. Rather than being acted on by rhetoric, the audience was able to actively create rhetoric.

This intermingling of narrative and reality was dependent upon the extent to which the audience chose to engage with the storyscape. For instance, audience members who only watched Lizzie's video diaries would not have experienced the narrative entering their lives in the same ways that audience members who engaged with the additional social media platforms would have. As each platform was able to reach a specific audience, users who engaged with transmedia elements beyond just the video diaries were privileged and privy to a very different narrative experience. The process of engaging with the narrative in order to create meaning reflects Biesecker's assertion that,

If rhetorical discourses are deciphered as practices that perform the situated displacement and condensation of identities and audiences, then our tendency to gloss over differences and find refuge in a common existential or ontological condition will be checked (126).

The extent to which the audience was able to engage with the storyscape and with the characters, along with the audience's enthusiastic willingness to participate, sets *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* apart from other narrative endeavors. Traditional forms of delivering narrative, most generally through print books, do not require or allow for the extensive active inhabitation of narrative that was found in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*. This inhabitation and co-authorship creates a form of reading and writing that is unlike traditional approaches because it calls attention to the role of the reader in and on the text.

An example of this targeted and mutual identity creation between the audience and the text can be found on YouTube, the primary form of narrative delivery. While the additional social media sites provided narrative expansion, the story could not be fully understood without watching Lizzie's video diaries. The most general audience for *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* can be

thought of as those who watched the series unfold on Lizzie's YouTube channel. By the time the series completed, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* had more than 200,000 YouTube subscribers ("Lizzie Bennet"). Subscribing to a channel on YouTube provides users with updates about activity on the channel, such as receiving a notification when a new video is uploaded. *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* followed a strict schedule, publishing new videos bi-weekly. This consistency built trust and anticipation among the audience. As the series progressed, the wait between videos was used as a narrative tool. Sometimes a cliffhanger plot point would be introduced at the end of a video, leaving the audience clamoring for the next video blog to be posted. In the days between videos, other social media accounts would be used to tease this cliffhanger or to develop important plot points off-screen. This built loyalty and eagerness among the audience, who were able to developmentally engage with the narrative during these anticipatory moments. This process of conjointly building identity and narrative is what Biesecker calls for,

A reading of the rhetorical situation that presumes a text whose meaning is the effect of *differance* and a subject whose identity is produced and reproduced in discursive practices, resituates the rhetorical situation on a trajectory of becoming rather than Being (127).

A situated example of this mutual identity creation came around the visual introduction of Darcy. Lizzie's videos did not introduce Darcy on screen until the 60th episode of the series, more than halfway through the entire narrative. His entrance was teased in the final seconds of the 59th video. The production team chose not to announce the identity of the actor playing Darcy until his on-screen appearance, which further fueled speculation and anticipation. In the days leading up to the release of the 60th video, and Darcy's official on-screen introduction, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries'* audience created such a frenzy across social media that the series gained widespread media attention, which drove more traffic to the project and introduced new audience groups to the storyscape.

It can be assumed that not every audience member chose to subscribe to Lizzie's YouTube account. Audience members began watching Lizzie's video diaries and joined the storyscape at varying points throughout its delivery. The consumption practices of the audience varied, with some likely subscribing and following the story in real time, some choosing to wait for several episodes to be released before watching them, and some watching the entire story after it had been fully deployed. A strength of the storyscape was its ability to cater to all of these varying audience groups without compromising narrative integrity. This is a result of the refocusing of the rhetorical situation around the process of meaning making rather than the attempt to deliver a pre-established meaning.

CONSTRAINTS

Bitzer identifies two forms of constraints in any rhetorical situation--those borne from the rhetor and those emerging from the structures used to deliver the argument. Again, the narrative layering and networked aspects of *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* complicates Bitzer's definitions. The rhetor in a transmedia storyscape is not a singular entity but an expansive group of authors who collectively construct the narrative. The use of multiple social media platforms to deploy *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* presented technological constraints, most prominently for those navigating the storyscape after it had deployed and could only be experienced as an archive. These technological constraints emerged only after the narrative had been fully presented. Audiences experiencing the storyscape in real time did not have the same constraints pressing on the narrative. These complications are unique to transmedia storyscapes and require a slight reinterpretation of Bitzer's terms. The primary constraints acting upon the storyscape are the result of the need to define transmedia as a genre. Jamieson's considerations of generic

constraints as they relate to Bitzer's rhetorical situation provide a useful framework for conceptualizing transmedia as a genre.

Especially given the complicated narrative network and the expansive transmedia elements utilized to deliver the storyscape, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* faced many more constraints than other forms of storytelling. Maintaining the division between the production team and the characters was a notable obstacle. Creating a storyscape dispersed across twelve social media platforms while maintaining continuity posed obvious challenges and limitations. Further, the reliance on social media as a narrative device was complicated by the ever-evolving nature of social media platforms. As Jamieson notes, "Some rhetors are more constrained than others because of their sense of the presentness of the past" (165). The most challenging aspect of the narrative was likely the attempt to manage the storyscape in such a way that it would be an accessible archive for audiences who came across it after it had deployed in real time. All of these constraints contributed to the production of the storyscape and have significant implications for the construction, distribution, and consumption of the narrative.

Technological constraints could not be controlled by the production team, but nevertheless had and continue to have effects on the storyscape, especially for an audience attempting to navigate the storyscape in its completely deployed form. In the time since *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* completed, YouTube has changed a number of features. Notably, the comments section was drastically retooled and the option to create video replies was removed. The removal of the video response feature limits audience engagement. In one episode, Lizzie discussed her family's holiday traditions and asked her audience to record video responses to share their traditions. The audience was then able to film themselves responding to Lizzie and upload their videos as a response. These videos would be approved by Lizzie and would then be

displayed next to the original video. As a result of YouTube disabling this feature, the response videos no longer display next to Lizzie's videos. These videos have been compiled into a playlist that can be accessed from Lizzie's channel, but the user experience has significantly changed.

For those navigating the storyscape now that it has been fully deployed, there are obvious complications. When the storyscape was being deployed in real time, the audience received carefully timed updates across the social media platforms. When characters chose to tweet was often important to the development of the story. One significant platform constraint is Twitter's compilation of posts in reverse chronological order. This means that the oldest tweets appear at the very bottom of a user's feed while the newest tweets are at the top. A user experiencing the storyscape after its initial launch would face substantial obstacles in attempting to chronologically place all the characters tweets in relation with Lizzie's videos and inter-character conversations. To address this problem, the production team utilized Storify, a website used to curate social media content. *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* features Stories created with Storify that compile and reorder the narrative content so that it can more easily be experienced chronologically. The archived format of the storyscape is limited in comparison to its real-time deployment, but the transmedia elements remain salient, as "genres are shaped in response to a rhetor's perception of the expectations of the audience and the demands of the situation" (163). The storyscape was created around the needs of the audience and the situational moment. The use of transmedia reflects these needs so that, even after the initial moment, the storyscape remains prevalent and meaningful.

In some cases, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* reflected both forms of Bizterian constraints, those emerging from the rhetor and those emerging from the structure. This is due to the fact that a transmedia storyscape conflates notions of rhetor and structure in a way that allows both to act

upon each other. This is furthered by the ability of the audience to inhabit the role of rhetor within the storyscape. The speaker, audience, and structure all work together in a transmedia storyscape. For instance, Tumblr's user interface is very different for those with accounts and those who are not members of the site. In order to like or reblog a post, a user must be registered with Tumblr. While this is true for all social media sites, Tumblr's interface is particularly restrictive for those who are not registered. Without an account it would have been very difficult for an audience member to experience the narrative as it unfolded on Lizzie's Tumblr blog or to connect with other fans who posted and contributed to the Tumblr community. Of all the social media sites used by Lizzie, Tumblr is the least intuitive and relies most heavily on a technologically savvy audience. Choosing to engage with Tumblr meant risking alienation of some audience members who may not have had an expansive understanding of the platform and would therefore not be able to fully engage with the narrative. While this risk was most pronounced with Tumblr, it is reflected across the entire storyscape and is an unfortunate liability associated with breaking traditional generic form.

Lizzie's Facebook page was created as a public page that, due to Facebook's guidelines, required that she be identified as a fictional character. This obviously detracted from the realism of the story. However, Facebook limits personal profiles to 5000 'friends' or people who can follow a given user. Lizzie's Facebook page has nearly 32,000 likes. Opting for a public page rather than a personal profile allowed for a wider audience engagement but detracted from the realism the storyscape sought elsewhere. Certain features of personal pages, such as the ability to write on other Facebook users' walls or to RSVP to events, were not available on the public page. This limited the extent to which Facebook could be utilized to further the narrative arcs of the story, but was necessary in order to assure that the story remained visible to an audience of

more than 5000 people. This structural constraint speaks to the specific genre of the transmedia storyscape and the inability to “avoid generic classification in perceiving and evaluating the critical object” (Jamieson, 166). The role of Facebook in the storyscape, and especially the functionality of the public page, is as a critical object within the transmedia genre.

The failure of Google+ to gain traction as a viable means of storytelling can be interpreted as a narrative constraint. While the general acceptance and use of social media platforms could have been used to predict the reception of the storyscape in various locations, there was no way to tell how successful a platform would be until it was already established and utilized. Google+ failed to find success as a narrative tool, but the disinterest in the platform could not have been predicted. This example is emblematic of the risks and uncertainties associated with transmedia storytelling. Breaking generic conventions of reading and writing obfuscates certainty and success, which is fitting because “genres should not be viewed as static forms but as evolving phenomena” (Jameison, 168). Acknowledging that some transmedia elements may fail and willingly accepting that risk can be a limitation but can also be interpreted as an embodiment of the ambiguity and uncertainty that is likely to arise in the initial stages of any subversive act, here being the attempt to challenge traditional writing practices. The extent to which a new approach will function and be accepted by an audience cannot be known until it is attempted.

The Lizzie Bennet Diaries faced considerable constraints in the production, delivery, and acceptance of its narrative. The majority of these constraints were related to the form of the storyscape and the extent to which transmedia is viewed as a genre unto itself. Of genre, Jamieson writes,

Rhetors perpetually modify genres. New genres to emerge. Neither does genre necessitate critical stagnation. An understanding of genre will enable the critic to explicate a work, to

explore the continuity and discontinuity of rhetorical forms, and to cast a work into productive perspectives (168).

Establishing transmedia storyscapes as a genre illuminates specific technical and rhetorical constraints. Such a generic definition would include discussions of the unique relationships to time and space, rhetor and structure, audience and exigency that exist within a transmedia storyscape. Despite its many challenges and constraints, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* was executed with incredible success and provided important developments in the move toward defining transmedia storyscapes as an established genre.

IMPLICATIONS

Bitzer's rhetorical situation provides a valuable template through which the myriad data present in a transmedia storyscape can be organized and analyzed. However, the unique functions and presentation of transmedia texts necessarily require a retooling of Bitzer's approach. Refocusing and redefining Bitzer's key terms can provide a meaningful understanding of transmedia narratives. While Bitzer's rhetorical situation was useful to the conceptualization of *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* as a viable text for study and interpretation, a close analysis of the storyscape revealed various ways in which transmedia elements complicate the rhetorical framework. Bitzer's structure is a useful base template in identifying the exigencies driving the use of Lizzie's platforms, the audience groups targeted throughout the storyscape, and the various constraints the narrative faced. However, the act of performing a detailed rhetorical analysis requires that Bitzer's definitions be redefined and reinterpreted. Biesecker, Vatz, Garret, Xiao, and Jamieson have all offered crucial interpretations of Bitzer's work that have become significant to the rhetorical analysis of *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*.

The Lizzie Bennet Diaries utilized a network of social media platforms to deliver an engaging narrative. The particular exigencies, audiences, and constraints for each platform and for the narrative as a whole served to create a story unlike those that are presently privileged in academic discourse. The intertwining of exigence, audience, and constraints offers a more equitable power distribution than Bitzer's rhetorical situation, which dismisses fiction and almost entirely discounts audience. The success of *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* has opened the possibility for alternative forms of reading and writing to gain traction, thereby making space for subjugated voices to find a stage in society. The visibility of identity as well as the non-traditional construction of the narrative can both be read as providing space for marginalized voices and writing practices to flourish.

The implications of this rhetorical analysis will be discussed in the following section of this study.

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION

As demonstrated by the rhetorical analysis of Lizzie's platform usage in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, reading and writing are transformational experiences in a transmedia storyscape. In the following section, I will consider how the rhetorical analysis answered the original research questions driving this study and how *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* engages with rhetorical theorists.

TECHNOLOGY AND TEXTS

The Lizzie Bennet Diaries utilized technology to create a networked narrative unlike any traditional text. The use of technology was not just a means of delivering the narrative but became an integral component of the story itself. The use of digital elements within the storyscape needs to be considered in light of discussions concerning the role of technology in Rhetoric and Composition.

Transmedia storyscapes are built upon the intertwining of many different discourse communities. As they are defined by Swales, discourse communities are comprised of members who share common goals, communicate across genres with a specific lexicon, and employ specialized knowledge to engage with participatory features. *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* as a whole can be seen as a single discourse community occupied by the collective audience of the series. There are also many smaller discourse communities embedded within the broad storyscape. This example further emphasizes the ways in which narrative layering and audience groups are key features of the storyscape.

The structure of the narrative engaged several different genres and platforms, each of which had a unique lexicon. Lizzie's platform usage reflects the conventions and adhered to the specific discursive practices associated with each platform. Lizzie's YouTube vlogs had a different style than her Twitter posts, which were again different from her Tumblr posts, and so on. As the audience learned to navigate the storyscape, they relied upon their specialized knowledge of these platforms to gain credibility within the discourse community. Full knowledge of each platform was not a prerequisite for engaging with the storyscape, however. The structure and community of the narrative allowed for easy entry into the discourse community by encouraging new members to learn through participation.

To join the discourse community of *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, members first needed to be invested in the narratives of the characters. The characters were able to build ethos and engage the audience through their effective use of social media platforms. The use of social media was not only effective but an integral component of the storyscape. The characters and the larger narrative were inextricably tied to their social media platforms.

Lizzie in particular was able to appeal to a nuanced discourse community by employing the genre of vlogging. This genre allows an audience to becoming invested in the personal lives of the vlogger. In this form of writing, a sense of connection is built when the audience begins to imagine the vlogger as part-celebrity and part-friend. The use of participatory features throughout the storyscape allowed the audience to capitalize on their perceived relationship with the characters. Opportunities to engage with and directly enter the narrative were powerful tools that helped build membership and investment in the discourse community.

The participatory features also encouraged intercommunication between the characters and the audience, and among the audience who formed fan groups not directly connected to the

narrative. In this way, the larger discourse community of *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* informed and constructed additional discourse communities beyond itself. The ability to construct and inspire discursive practices within and through the storyscape, and beyond it, has larger implications for the role of technology to inform and inspire discourse.

Discourse communities, as they are defined by Swales, are clearly prevalent in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*. Membership into a broadly imagined digital discourse community would certainly aid in the navigation of *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, but was not necessary for the narrative to be meaningfully experienced. The storyscape itself invited its audience into a discourse community constructed by and through the experience of engaging with the narrative. Imagining transmedia narratives as small communities into which membership is attained simply through the act of engaging and participating has the potential to resonate throughout the field of Rhetoric and Composition. Especially as Raymond argues that electronic orality is “not just a way of remembering, but a way of thinking” (56). The discourse communities constructed around transmedia storyscapes invite new ways of thinking by shifting cognitive processes.

The discourse communities surrounding traditional academic writing has an exclusionary history; populations not privileged in society or in the canonical tradition of the academy may struggle to gain membership. A transmedia storyscape encourages broad membership and collaborative construction of narrative, knowledge, and meaning. The discourse community of *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* speaks to the ability of technology to act as an equalizer that disrupts and subverts traditional forms of reading and writing. The use of social media in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* deconstructs notions of how reading and writing should be conducted and creates a more accessible and representative space for a large population of readers who are excluded by traditional forms.

This challenge to Western rhetoric is further realized through the hybridization of text present in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*. Spielmann and Bolter position hybridization as a form of writing that occurs at the intersection of real and virtual spaces. The extent to which *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* was able to effectively obfuscate the lines between fiction and reality by presenting itself as both real and virtual marked an important change in the way reading and writing is conceptualized. The intricacies of the networked storyscape served to mimic reality. The dispersal of the narrative enabled the characters to inhabit spaces usually reserved for real people. The characters were presented as real people and for the duration of its real-time deployment, the narrative was directly inserted into the lives of the audience. *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* was hybridized due to its integration of “image, text, sound, space and bodily modes of expression” (106) and due to its simultaneous occupation of the virtual and the real. The hybridity of the storyscape has long-reaching implications for the future of writing in and across culture and identity.

The hybridization present in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* was further reflected by Henry Jenkins’ theory of convergence culture. This storyscape heavily utilized convergence as a means of developing and delivering the narrative. The adaptation converged with the source text in a meeting of new and old that had important implications for representation and modernization. Central to the storyscape was the convergence of fiction and reality. Convergence was further employed throughout the storyscape through the meeting of reader and author, and the ability of readers to become coauthors of the narrative. Jenkins identifies this convergence as enabling a meaningful shift in the model of knowledge construction. Rather than relying on a traditional top-down model, transmedia storyscapes engage bottom-up constructions of narrative, and thus, of meaning.

The use of technology in transmedia storyscapes, especially as illustrated by *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, is a means of deconstructing traditional writing forms by creating a networked alternative. The following section will consider the implications this model has on notions of writing and authorship, and of reading and readership, especially with regard to calls for feminist forms of writing.

TRANSMEDIA TEXTS CHANGE READING AND WRITING

This research aims to reveal the ways in which transmedia storyscapes can act as sites of resistance to oppressive colonial writing forms, thereby honoring the 1974 CCCC's statement on Students' Right to Their Own Language while also creating space for underprivileged voices. A transmedia storyscape's approach to context and representation holds unique political and social power not necessarily evident in traditional forms of writing. Traditional writing forms reflect our distinctive cultural values and norms by privileging the voices of those with mastery of Standard American English. Linear approaches to storytelling, even within those print texts that disrupt temporality, tend to reflect dominant power structures. Transmedia storyscapes, especially as a result of their networked approach to narrative, have the potential to disintegrate the values inherent in dominant writing practices.

Using transmedia as a form of writing offers the ability to deconstruct patriarchal forms of reading and writing by challenging generic forms, circumventing linear progression, and reimagining narrative as a network. It is this power that makes transmedia storyscapes such compelling areas of analysis. In these ways, the genre of transmedia writing can act as resistance to hegemonic writing systems by providing an alternative mode of constructing, delivering, and consuming narrative. In so doing, transmedia storyscapes can create space for the emergence of

cultural narratives historically suppressed by and in Western writing. In “When We Dead Awaken: Writing as Revision” Adrienne Rich discusses the importance of writing for and by women:

A radical critique of literature, feminist in its impulse, would take the work first of all as a clue to how we live, how we have been living, how we have been led to imagine ourselves, how our language has trapped as well as liberated us; and how we can begin to see—and therefore live—afresh... We need to know the writing of the past, and know it differently than we have ever known it; not to pass on a tradition but to break its hold over us (18).

Reading *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* cannot be approached in the same way as reading *Pride and Prejudice*. Though the adaptation closely followed the plot of the novel, the construction and delivery of the storyscape presents a radically altered text, one that acknowledges its past and seeks to forge a liberatory future. Navigating the storyscape requires an entirely different set of rhetorical skills than is needed to engage with a print text. The rhetorical activities used in transmedia storyscapes engage with theories of social justice and language politics by subverting cultural norms and valuing voices not traditionally privileged in dominant discourse. In *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*, this cultural and political work occurred through the process of modernizing and adapting the narrative with an emphasis on identity and in the very construction of the storyscape, which manipulated space and time to subvert the traditional writing styles that uphold masculine Western values.

The Lizzie Bennet Diaries, especially when compared to *Pride and Prejudice*, emerges as an overtly feminist text. Rich reflects on the obstacles women writers face as men have largely conducted the historical construction of feminine identities. Rich confronts this idea by stating,

A lot is being said today about the influence that the myths and images of women have on all of us who are products of culture. I think it has been a peculiar confusion to the girl or woman who tries to write because she is peculiarly susceptible to language. She goes to poetry or fiction looking for *her* way of being in the world, since she too has been putting words and images together; she is looking early for guides, maps possibilities;

and over and over in the “words’ masculine persuasive force” of literature she comes up against something that negates everything she is about: she meets the image of Woman in books written by men (21).

The adaptation shifted the focus of the narrative content away from romance. The relationships that were foregrounded in the narrative were those of friendship and sisterhood. The choice to refocus the narrative in this way is further supported by the form of the storyscape. Dispersed across many platforms, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* requires an attentive audience who will actively participate in finding, following, and consuming the narrative. In these aspects, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* can be read as enacting the kind of embodied writing Cixous called for in “The Laugh of the Medusa.” The storyscape’s networked approach deconstructs the traditionally phallic structure of writing by occupying a broad narrative space, one that is certainly, as Cixous desired, “other than silence” (881). The occupation of space and disruption of time offers an alternative form of writing that, by its very construction, requires a dismantling of traditional Westernized thoughts about writing. The construction and delivery of *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* disrupted masculine forms of writing by reframing the narrative as a layered network that required active engagement.

The layering aspects of the narrative, in terms of content, authorship, readership, and delivery, reflect the classic labyrinth as it is described by Aarseth. Though the video diaries were the central element of the storyscape, navigation of the additional platforms and narrative content was not prescribed or directive. Like the classic labyrinth identified by Aarseth, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* functions as a confined story with many paths leading in, out, and through. The storyscape did have not deceptive paths meant to incite confusion; instead each navigation provided a unique reading experience. As was illustrated in the rhetorical analysis, each platform used to deliver the narrative had specialized functions and capabilities that targeted different

audience groups. This created a plethora of narrative experiences for the audience, from following the video diaries alone to engaging with one or all of the additional platforms.

Aarseth's conceptualization of transmedia storyscapes as labyrinthine structures further supports Cixous's call for an explicitly and purposefully feminine form of writing:

By writing her self, woman will return to the body which has been more than confiscated from her, which has been turned into the uncanny stranger on display – the ailing or dead figure, which so often turns out to be the nasty companion, the cause and location of inhibitions (1527).

The use of space in particular, the dispersal of narrative across many platforms as opposed to compiling it in a single location, reflects Cixous's theoretical aim of writing the body, writing with regard to the whole rather than through a phallogocentric lens.

The labyrinthine structure of *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* further reflects feminist forms of writing by relying on the kind of collective intelligence discussed by Levy. The interconnected nature of the storyscape is reflective of the societal shifts Levy identifies, wherein knowledge is decentralized and instead fluidly moves among discourse communities. In *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* narrative shifted from the central location of the source text and was dispersed across time and space. Each element of the storyscape catered to a specific audience group who had membership in the community of a given platform. The narrative was constructed collectively by the reader-participants, by the platforms used to deploy the storyscape, and by the production team managing the development and dissemination of the content. This networked approach to the writing and reading of texts is subversive to the Western tradition of reading and writing in isolation. The narrative dispersal and the community aspect of meaning making disrupt the tradition of a single author delivering Truth to a single reader. In this way, too, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* can be read as a feminist text that resists and challenges masculine forms of reading and writing.

COMPLICATING NOTIONS OF AUTHORSHIP AND READERSHIP

Just as the acts of reading and writing were subverted in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* so too are the roles of author and reader. The transmedia aspects of the storyscape relied on a layered approach to creating and delivering narrative content. This layering often blurred the lines between author and reader, allowing the roles to become fluid and intermingled. This networking of narrative can be understood through Clarke's definition of transmedia as,

a model of series storytelling that more resembles a network (in the sociological sense) in which episodes do not simply accrue one after the other in a linear fashion, but form a dense grid and relate to one another in any set of combinations, not guided by simple chronology (139).

While *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* is certainly networked in a technological sense, it is the sociological aspect that holds true implications for reimagining aspects of the rhetorical situation. *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* is complicated in that it was a largely linear narrative. The story unfolded chronologically and the social media platforms allow for the narrative to be sectioned by time. Beyond the plot however, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* contradicts concepts of linearity. The most important temporal disruption comes through the complication of Bitzer's definition of audience. The audience was empowered to act in tandem with the narrative, to co-construct the storyscape, and to immerse themselves within the story.

Especially given the relative invisibility of the production team, the characters themselves inhabited an authorial role within the storyscape. Social media sites are generally reserved for real people or tend to explicitly operate as fiction or parody accounts. In *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* the characters' use of social media sites was not presented as explicitly fiction. Rather, the storyscape made every attempt to portray the characters as real people. The characters would respond directly to audience comments and questions, illustrating narrative variability. Although the storyscape followed a linear plot progression, the characters strayed from purely plotted and

planned content in order to engage with the audience. In this way, the characters became authors of the narrative. This authorial role was further complicated by the actors who portrayed the characters in Lizzie's video blogs. The actors' on-screen mannerisms had to match the characters' presentation of self across the other platforms. The production team wrote and published the narrative content on the additional social media platforms, but the actors were responsible for creating a visual representation of the character that was aligned with their representation across the rest of the storyscape. In Lizzie's Questions and Answers videos, the actors would directly address audience members who had submitted inquiries. The characters' and the actors' inhabitation of authorial roles within the narrative continued to add layers to the storyscape. This engagement with and ownership of the narrative is in accordance with Rich's discussion of the role of imagination and transformation in resistive writing:

For a character or an action to take shape, there has to be an imaginative transformation of reality which is in no way passive...Moreover, if the imagination is to transcend and transform experience it has to question, to challenge, to conceive of alternatives, perhaps to the very life you are living at that moment (23).

Transmedia storyscapes are able to enact the kind of questioning and challenging Rich calls for by presenting an alternative form of writing. The technological and sociological networks of *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* storyscape can be read as in opposition to masculine writing, especially through the union of audience and author.

The audience was also able to become a co-author of the narrative by engaging with the storyscape as a reader-participant. The extent to which the audience was able to enter and influence the narrative was limited by adaptation, feasibility, and story integrity. Though the authorial role of the audience was more confined in *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* than it may be in other transmedia storyscapes, there was still ample opportunity for the audience to enter the narrative. The use of social media platforms allowed the audience to directly connect and engage

with the characters in the storyscape. When characters used their social media accounts to share artwork or other media created by the audience, the audience was able to enter the narrative and share ownership of the storyscape. The words and work of the audience became a part of the archived narrative that can still be accessed, a practice that elevated the audience from reader to author.

The act of reading a transmedia text also challenges traditional approaches to narrative consumption. The fragmented construction of the storyscape required active participation by the audience. Following the story and participating in the narrative relied on the willingness of the audience to engage with the text and to continually seek out the various transmedia elements used in the storyscape. The audience had the opportunity to follow the characters on a variety of social media websites, to directly engage with the characters, and to contribute to the developing narrative. This act of engagement is in stark contrast to traditional reading practices. While print texts can be very absorbing and often require a great deal of attention, they can be consumed without the varying levels of engagement that are required by transmedia texts, due to the collaborative construction and consumption of storyscapes. As the storyscape became increasingly expansive, the audience had to consciously navigate the various elements and platforms used to deliver the narrative. The dispersal of the narrative required a certain amount of engagement and work that is generally not found in traditional print texts. Of the struggle to create a fully feminine and feminist text, Rich states:

To be a female human being trying to fulfill traditional female functions in a traditional way *is* in direct conflict with the subversive function of the imagination. The word traditional is important here. There must be ways, and we will be finding out more and more about them, in which the energy of creation and the energy of relation can be united (23).

Transmedia storyscapes unite these energies of creation and relation by positioning the audience as coauthors. *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries*' active engagement of its audience allows the audience to participate in the development of narrative. Such acts are unique to transmedia storyscapes and disrupt the masculine tradition that Rich identifies. Whereas Bitzer dismisses the ability of the fictive to enact change, Rich notes that there is a "subversive function of the imagination." *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* is a collectively constructed creative endeavor that engages matters of culture and identity while deconstructing patriarchal and masculine forms of writing.

Decentralizing knowledge by conceptualizing authorship as a collective activity has wide-reaching implications for traditional reading and writing practices. Reimagining authorship as a collaborative act rather than maintaining the current societal understanding of writing as a solitary act has the potential to broaden the scope of academic and cultural discourse. In so doing, we will be able to continue enacting the theoretical frameworks laid out by feminist writing scholars such as Cixous and Rich while making space for marginalized populations to find an authorial voice that has value in society.

CONCLUSION

Transmedia storyscapes exist in fundamentally feminist spaces at the edges of fiction and reality. These multimodal networks of narrative disrupt traditional masculine forms of writing. The dispersal and fragmentation of narrative draws upon complicated understandings of space and time. Reimagining the rhetorical situation in light of the unique aspects of a transmedia storyscape will allow for more nuanced understandings of both digital and print texts. This will necessarily inform the extent to which culture and identity is valued within reading and writing.

The Lizzie Bennet Diaries is particularly adept in illustrating the feminist nature of transmedia storyscapes. In both adaptation and structure, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* presented a narrative that sought to foreground matters of identity. By refocusing the content on familial and platonic relationships instead of purely romantic matters, the production team offered a more holistic view of womanhood, and therefore, of feminist writing. The engagement of the audience is an especially meaningful feminist act in that it moves toward a deconstruction of the division between author and reader.

Transmedia storyscapes have the potential to engage influential political work by giving space and voice to those who are silenced in and by traditional discourse. The interconnected narrative web of *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* uses a variety of modalities and platforms. This increases accessibility, as the storyscape does not privilege one form of discourse. The creation of multiple discourse communities within the storyscape allows for a wider audience, one who may be excluded by traditional discourse, to engage with narrative and to become an author in meaningful ways.

Within Rhetoric and Composition, transmedia storyscapes need to become sites of active engagement and scholarship. Especially as we consider the future of the teaching of writing, transmedia storyscapes emerge as important to both readers and writers. Engaging with and constructing a transmedia text requires critical analytic skills that are already valued within Rhetoric and Composition. Future studies should expand upon these skills by engaging students with the composition and consumption of transmedia texts, continuing to explore the relationship between methods of delivery and subversive tactics of privileging identity in Western rhetoric, and should continue to challenge established theories within the field. Transmedia storyscapes have the potential to move the field in a new direction, one that builds upon the important work already founded by rhetoricians, transmedia and feminist theorists, in order to create an accessible and inclusive space to engage all students of writing.

WORKS CITED

- Aarseth, Espen J. *Cybertext: perspectives on ergodic literature*. JHU Press, 1997
- "About." *Lizziebennet.com*. The Lizzie Bennet Diaries, n.d. Web. 10 Mar. 2014.
- Austen, Jane. *Pride and prejudice*. Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Bennet, Lizzie. "My Name is Lizzie Bennet – Ep: 1." Online video. *YouTube*. YouTube, 9 April 2012. Web. 10 March 2014.
- Bennet, Lizzie. "Questions and Answers #1 (ft. Lydia Bennet)." Online video. *YouTube*. YouTube, 5 May 2012. Web. 10 March 2014.
- Bennet, Lizzie. "Questions and Answers #2 (ft. Charlotte Lu)." Online video. *YouTube*. YouTube, 23 June 2012. Web. 10 March 2014.
- Bennet, Lizzie. "Questions and Answers #3 (ft. Caroline Lee)." Online video. *YouTube*. YouTube, 28 July 2012. Web. 10 March 2014.
- Bennet, Lizzie. "Questions and Answers #8 w/ Gigi Darcy." Online video. *YouTube*. YouTube, 19 Jan 2013. Web. 10 March 2014.
- Bennet, Lizzie. "Snickerdoodles – Ep: 48." Online video. *YouTube*. YouTube, 20 September 2012. Web. 10 March 2014.
- Bennet, Lizzie. "The End – Ep: 100." Online video. *YouTube*. YouTube, 28 March 2013. Web. 10 March 2014.
- Bennet, Lizzie. "Vidcon Interruption – Ep: 25." Online video. *YouTube*. YouTube, 2 July 2012. Web. 10 March 2014.
- Biesecker, Barbara A. "Rethinking the Rhetorical Situation from within the Thematic of 'Différance'." *Philosophy & rhetoric* (1989): 110-130.
- Bitzer, Lloyd F. "The rhetorical situation." *Philosophy & Rhetoric* (1992): 1-14.

Blumenthal, Hank, and Yan Xu. "The ghost club storyscape: designing for transmedia storytelling." *Consumer Electronics, IEEE Transactions on* 58.2 (2012): 190-196.

"Book." *Lizziebennet.com*. The Lizzie Bennet Diaries, n.d. Web. 10 Mar. 2014.

Boston, Bruce. *Cybertexts*. Talisman Books, 1992.

Bushman, Jay. Interview by Julie Gray. "The Lizzie Bennet Diaries and the Power of Transmedia." *Just Effing Entertain Me*. 25 April 2013. Web. 6 February 2014.

Chau, Clement. "YouTube as a participatory culture." *New directions for youth development* 2010.128 (2010): 65-74.

Cixous, Hélène, Keith Cohen, and Paula Cohen. "The laugh of the Medusa." *Signs* 1.4 (1976): 875-893.

Clarke, Michael Jordan. *Transmedia Television: New Trends in Network Serial Production*. A&C Black, 2012.

Colomb, Gregory G. "Franchising the Future." *College Composition and Communication* 62.1 (2010): 11-30.

Danielewski, Mark Z. *Mark Z. Danielewski's House of leaves*. Random House LLC, 2000.

Foer, Jonathan Safran. *Extremely loud and incredibly close: A novel*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2013.

Garret, Mary, and Xiaosui Xiao. "The rhetorical situation revisited." *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 23.2 (1993): 30-40.

Gee, James Paul. *The Anti-education Era: Creating Smarter Students Through Digital Learning*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.

"Hank Green and Bernie Su's Lizzie Bennet Diaries Celebrates #darcyday." *Gigaom.com*. Gigaom, 4 Nov. 2012. Web. 10 Mar. 2014.

- Jamieson, Kathleen M. Hall. "Generic Constraints and the Rhetorical Situation." *Philosophy & Rhetoric*. 6.3 (Summer, 1973): 162-170.
- Jenkins, Henry. *Convergence culture: Where old and new media collide*. NYU press, 2006.
- Jenkins, Henry. "Transmedia storytelling 101." *Confessions of an Aca/Fan: The Official Weblog of Henry Jenkins* (2007).
- Kinder, Marsha. *Playing with power in movies, television, and video games: from Muppet Babies to Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*. University of California Pr, 1993.
- Kinneavy, J.L. "Kairos: A Neglected Concept in Classical Rhetoric." *Rhetoric and Praxis: The Contribution of Classical Rhetoric to Practical Reasoning*. Ed. J.D. Moss. Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1986. Web.
- Kress, Gunther. "Multimodality: Challenges to thinking about language." *Tesol Quarterly* 34.2 (2000): 337-340.
- "The LBD Seahorses, a Q & A." *TheLbdseahorses.tumblr.com*. The LBD Seahorses, n.d. Web. 10 Mar. 2014.
- Lévy, Pierre, and Robert Bonomo. *Collective intelligence: Mankind's emerging world in cyberspace*. Perseus Publishing, 1999.
- Lilly, Todd. "The Anti-Education Era: Creating Smarter Students Through Digital Learning." *IJEP-International Journal of Educational Psychology* 2.3 (2013): 353-355.
- Manovich, Lev. "New media from Borges to HTML." *The new media reader* (2002): 13-28.
- McLuhan, Marshall. "The medium is the message." *Communication theory* (2008): 390-402.
- Miller, Carolyn R. and Dawn Shepherd. "Blogging as Social Action: A Genre Analysis of the Weblog." *The Norton Book of Composition Studies*. Ed. Susan Miller. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2009. 1450-1474. Print.

- Moulthrop, Stuart. "You say you want a revolution? Hypertext and the laws of media."
Postmodern Culture 1.3 (1991).
- Nelson, Theodor H. *Literary machines* 93.1. Mindful Pr, 1993.
- "Press Release." *Lizziebennet.com*. The Lizzie Bennet Diaries, n.d. Web. 10 Mar. 2014.
- Raymond, James C. "Media Transforming Media: Implications of Walter Ong's Stages of Literacy". *Rhetoric Society Quarterly*. 10:2. 56-61. (1980). Print.
- "Release: Immersive and Interactive Digital Media Programs to Receive Emmys." *Emmys.com*. Television Academy, 21 Aug. 2013. Web. 10 Mar. 2014.
- Rich, Adrienne. "When we dead awaken: Writing as re-vision." *College English* (1972): 18-30.
- Rowling, J. K. "Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban. 1999." *New York: Scholastic* (1999).
- Selfe, Cynthia, and Gail Hawisher. "Literacies and the complexities of the global digital divide."
Writing and Digital Media, Amsterdam: Elsevier (2006): 251-85.
- Selfe, Cynthia L., and Gail E. Hawisher. *Literate lives in the information age: Narratives of literacy from the United States*. Psychology Press, 2004.
- Spielmann, Yvonne, and Jay David Bolter. "Hybridity: Arts, sciences and cultural effects."
Leonardo 39.2 (2006): 106-107.
- Swales, John. "The Concept of a Discourse Community." *Analysis: English in Academic and Research Settings*. Boston: Cambridge UP, 1990. 21-32. Print.
- "@TheLizzieBennet and @TheLydiaBennet Return Home One Last Time, from the Team behind @thelbdoofficial." *TwitterFictionFestival.com*. Twitter Fiction Festival, n.d. Web. 10 Mar. 2014.
- Turkle, Sherry. *Alone together: Why we expect more from technology and less from each other*. Basic books, 2012.

Vatz, Richard E. "The myth of the rhetorical situation." *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 6.3 (1973):
154-161.

Vonnegut, Kurt. *Slaughterhouse-Five Or The Children's Crusade*. Panthers Book, 1979.

APPENDIX

Lizzie Bennet	Twitter	YouTube	Tumblr	Facebook	G+						
Lydia Bennet	Twitter	YouTube	Tumblr	Facebook							
Jane Bennet	Twitter		Tumblr	Facebook		Lookbook	Pinterest				
Mary Bennet	Twitter										
Kitty Bennet	Twitter										
William Darcy	Twitter										
Gigi Darcy	Twitter	YouTube						This Is My Jam			
Bing Lee	Twitter										
Caroline Lee	Twitter										
Charlotte Lu	Twitter		Tumblr	Facebook							
Maria Lu	Twitter	YouTube	Tumblr								
Ricky Collins	Twitter	YouTube						LinkedIn			
George Wickham	Twitter								OKCupid		
Fitz Williams	Twitter										
Pemberley Digital	Twitter										Website
Novelty Exposures	Twitter										Website

Figure 6 Distribution of Social Media Accounts

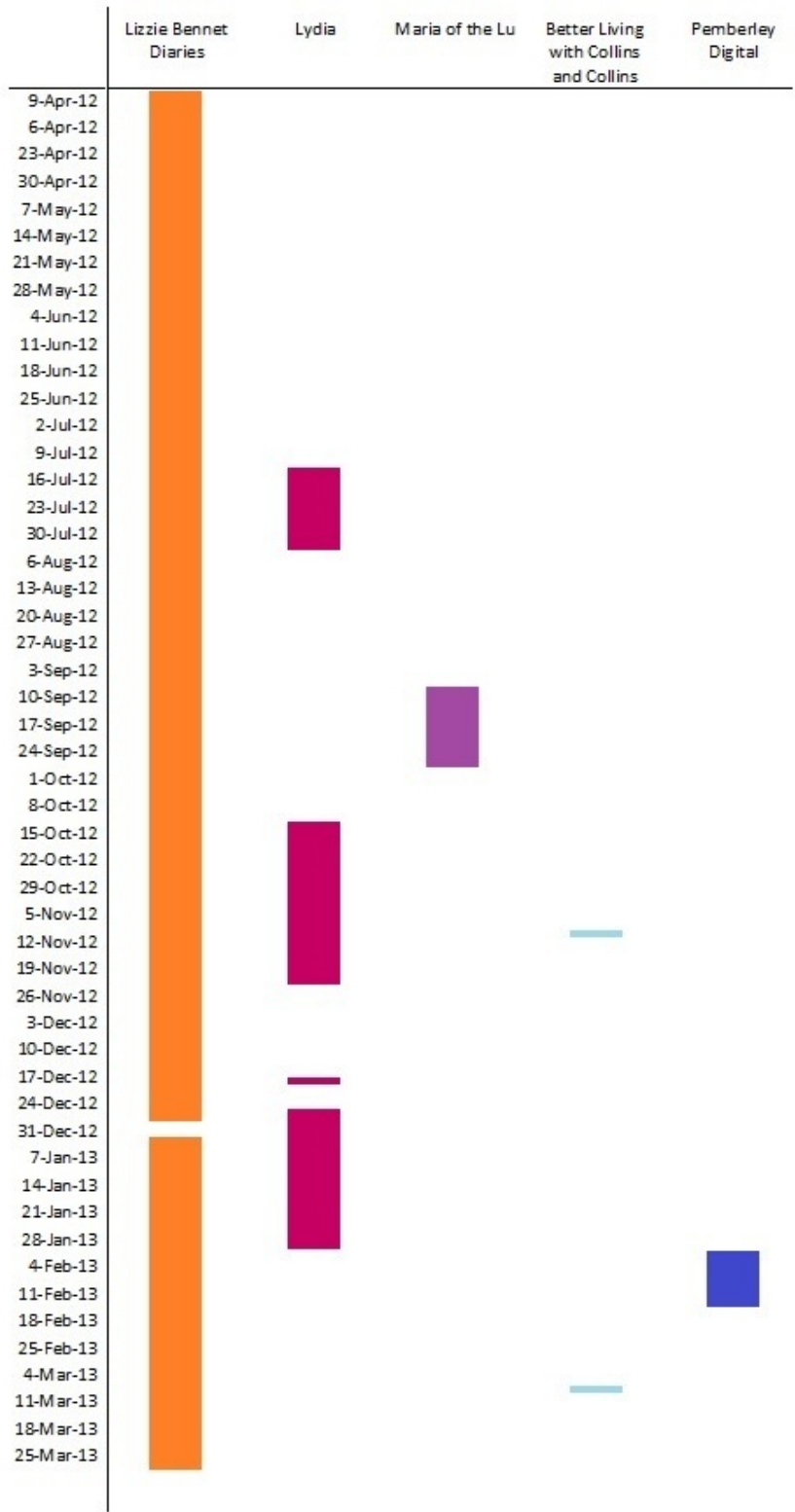


Figure 7 Timeline of *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* Videos