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A LAND-BASED DIGITAL DESIGN RHETORIC

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A few years ago, my mom, a member of the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community among other things, shared with me a link to the website *The Ways: Stories on Culture and Language from Native Communities Around the Central Great Lakes*. This website features videos and interactive maps that explore Native culture and language, primarily of the Anishinaabe peoples in the central and upper Great Lakes region. Upon first glance, I was hooked. I spent hours exploring videos and reading essays, all the while feeling a sense of comfort. Wandering through the site felt like wandering my family's land on Lake Superior on a crisp autumn day. It's as though I could feel the sandy ground beneath my feet and the smell of jack pines and moss in the air. My experience with *The Ways* was a felt sense of belonging to a land, of being of a people—it was a melding of content and form that felt like home (Figure 19.1).

The fairly nascent (at least in name) discipline of cultural rhetorics has done remarkable work reframing rhetorical theory and composition practice so as to put a spotlight on marginalized groups' use of, and engagement with, language. In this chapter, I bring together some of this work in order to focus specifically on how we as teachers and scholars engage with the design of online spaces. I ask how we might understand digital spaces through a land-based rhetoric, one that, as Gabriela Raquel Ríos argues, "recognizes the productive potential of nature and of embodied ways of knowing" (68). By offering a land-based rhetoric, a theory that aligns with American Indian epistemologies, I propose an ethical, relational, and material approach to the design of digital spaces.

Rhetoric | Design

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, the multimodal turn in composition studies—arguably spearheaded by the New London Group's manifesto wherein they argued that "literacy pedagogy must now account for the burgeoning variety of text forms associated with information and multimedia technologies" (61)—focused a good deal on visual rhetoric. Composition textbooks like *Seeing and Writing* became popular, collections such as Carolyn Handa's *Visual Rhetoric in a Digital World* emerged, and a series of edited collections (Allen; Hill and Helmers; Hocks and Kendrick) and articles (George; Hocks, "Visual Rhetoric"; Selfe; Sorapure; Wysocki, "Monitoring Order," "Impossibly Distinct") on visual rhetoric proliferated our field. Visual rhetorical studies at the time tended to bifurcate into either an engagement with pictorial images

Figure 19.1 Front Screen of *The Ways*

or a focus on design. For the former, books such as *Ways of Seeing* took up John Berger's attention to the visual through pictorial images such as paintings and photographs. Scholars in rhetoric and composition, often intersecting with work in feminist and cultural studies, explored both the ways that visuals make meaning, and also the ways that such analysis should be part of the purview of rhetoric and composition research and pedagogy. For the latter, those engaged with design, scholars explored the ways that interfaces, design elements, and typography are rhetorical. While arguably an arhetorical take on design (see Wysocki and Jasken's 2004 critique), Robin Williams's *Non-Designer's Design Book* became a popular source for many teaching visual rhetoric as it provided students with a straightforward way of engaging with the production of designed pages and screens. The early 2000s were rich with visual rhetorical scholarship and pedagogy.

Since this time, while visual rhetoric has been taken up in different ways for different reasons, we no longer see a proliferation of edited collections or special issues specifically on The Visual (or sound, for that matter, which has followed a similar trend). Instead, visual rhetoric is often subsumed within multimodal theory and pedagogy. The New London Group proposed a pedagogy of multiliteracies that includes both production and analysis of the visual, spatial, gestural, aural, and linguistic modes. Multimodality is the interconnection between at least two of these modes, and digital writing is always to some degree dealing with multimodal production even if it's *just* the typing of words on a white background (which is a combination of the linguistic, spatial, and visual). And while, as Jody Shipka reminds us, multimodality and digitality are not synonymous and we should "resist equating multimodality with digitally based or screen-mediated texts," (84) digital rhetoric and writing has helped to make multimodality more visible in our practice and pedagogy.

In this essay, I turn to those earlier conversations on visual rhetoric, specifically design, within writing studies and place them in conversation with cultural rhetoric. Scholars concerned with the rhetoric of design during the early multimodal turn in writing studies (Hocks; Sorapure; Wysocki, "Monitoring Order," "Impossibly Distinct"; Wysocki and Jasken) argued that writing and rhetoric teachers and scholars pay careful attention to design in digital writing. They suggested an attention to designed digital spaces, both because our students' "writing" was taking place in these designed spaces, and because, as Diana George argued,

> [f]or students who have grown up in a technologically-saturated and an image-rich culture, questions of communication and composition absolutely will include the visual, not as attendant to the verbal but as complex communication intricately related to the world around them. (32)

While George spoke of the value of both pictorial visual literacy and design visual literacy, to be design literate was treated as part of engaging with a pedagogy of multiliteracies. I argue such attention to design is key to a robust digital literacy, and through offering a land-based digital design rhetoric, I return to, and extend, Wysocki's 1998 argument in "Monitoring Order" that

> visual designs can . . . be expressions of and means for reproducing cultural and political structures, and that such visual orderings are likely to be those that are repeated—and that hence can become invisible through constant use, as Bourdieu points out, whether they are intended to be invisible or not; second, that we nonetheless encounter designs individually, based on our particular bodily histories and presents. (np)

I feel patterns. I breathe in typefaces. I sense color. I am embraced by designs that feel like home. As briefly described above, design theory as manifest in and through rhetoric and composition has worked to bring design into the fold of digital and multimodal literacy. Wysocki's work reminds us that while our teaching tools (textbooks and handbooks in particular) tend to function from a form/content split, whereby design is seen as form, in practice the split between information and design is never quite as clear ("Impossibly Distinct"). For Wysocki, design is content, design is embodied, design is sensory, and it is always intimately connected to the cultures within which we find ourselves living, breathing, and making meaning.

> what any body is and is able to do—and how any one body differs from other bodies in its affective and physiological capabilities—cannot be disentangled from the media we use or from the times and cultures in, and technologies with which, we consume and produce texts. . . . ("Into Between" 8)

How we see and understand media, including visual information and design, is shaped largely by our own cultural materiality. Wysocki turns to Martin Jay's argument against "any one visual order." Jay, instead, argues for "the multiplication of a thousand eyes, which, like Nietzsche's thousand suns, suggests the openness of human possibilities" (591, qtd. in Arola and Wysocki 6). That is, as Wysocki unpacks it,

> people living in the Baroque period had different ways of seeing from people living during the Italian Renaissance, who saw differently from those who lived at the same time in Northern Europe; each of these ways of seeing articulated, Jay argues, to epistemological and so ontological habits of the time. (6)

It's not surprising, then, that I feel design, that the design of *The Ways* website brings me to a place of home. It's not surprising that the ways I feel and breathe this content would be very different were the video stories housed on YouTube instead of on this beautifully designed website.

Rhetoric | Design | Land

In order to understand my response to *The Ways*, I turn to cultural rhetorics, specifically land-based rhetorics, to explore how ways of seeing are cultural and embodied. In "Cultivating Land-Based Literacies and Rhetorics," Gabriela Raquel Rìos explores the literacy practices of farm workers and, through sharing their stories and experiences, suggests moving beyond rhetorical frameworks that use ecology primarily as a metaphor for literacy. Instead, she proposes a material engagement with the ways lived ecologies are always already part of literate practice. This suggestion is built on Matthew Ortoleva's critique that rhetorical ecologies tend to dematerialize discussions of ecology. Ortoleva makes a distinction between those working with rhetorical ecologies (Cooper; Dyehouse et al.; Edbauer; Syverson), and those engaged with environmental rhetoric (Killingsworth and Palmer; Stevens). The former are primarily concerned with process, looking at issues of interconnectedness and writing environments. As such, Ortoleva argues they "adopt ecological concepts in very broad ways, often wholly metaphorical" (68). The latter, those working with environmental rhetoric, suggest that composition and rhetoric is a "prime location to begin to address the exigency of environmental degradation" (68). As such, they are concerned more with content, that is, they want rhetoric and composition to focus specifically on environmental issues.

In an attempt to straddle this form/content divide embedded in rhetorical ecologies and environmental rhetoric respectively, Sid Dobrin and Christian Weisser offer the concept of ecocomposition, which they define as "the study of the relationships between environments (and by that we mean natural, constructed, and even imagined places) and discourse (speaking, writing, thinking)" (*Natural* 6). They suggest the biosphere (the physical environment) and the semiosphere (symbolic action) ("Breaking" 574) as co-constituted. While Ortolova suggests this bifurcation can at times cause remove from material ecological concerns, I find the distinction between the biosphere and the semiosphere to be useful in considering how our lived experience shapes our habitation of design. In engaging these authors, Rìos purposefully moves away from the term "ecology" to " 'land' to shift the ontological presuppositions inherent in the term 'ecology'. . . . As such, land-based literacies are literal acts of interpretation and communication that grow out of active participation with the land" (64). That is, our *active* participation with the land, that is our movement through the biosphere, is always already part of the semiosphere.

For Rìos, this move, from an ecological metaphor to the materiality of land brings relationality to the fore, a key tenant in indigenous epistemology. By thinking through how our actual lived experiences in and on the land are co-constituted with our lived experiences of all things, including our experiences navigating and reading a website such as *The Ways*, we come to see how digital writing and rhetoric are always already part of our ecology and vice versa.

Relations | Rhetoric | Land

Rìos argues that a land-based literacy is rooted in notions of indigenous relationality, one that "recognizes that humans and the environment are in a relationship that is co-constituted . . . [and] recognizes that environment's capacity to *produce* relations" (64). American Indian notions of relationality can help unpack this concept and further suggest how a land-based literacy offers an approach to understanding the design of digital spaces. In *The Common Pot: The Recovery of Native Space in the Northeast*, Lisa Brooks encourages an approach to land similar to that of Rìos. Brooks says,

> What I am talking about here is not an abstraction, a theorizing about a conceptual category called "land" or "nature," but a physical, actual, material relationship to 'an ecosystem present in a definable place' that has been cultivated throughout my short

> life, and for much longer by those relations who came before me which, for better or worse, deeply informs my work. (xxiv)

Andrea Riley-Mukavetz and Malea Powell rely on Brooks' definition of land and relations in their description of indigenous rhetorical practices. For Riley-Mukavetz and Powell, indigenous rhetorical practice includes a

> four-part layered web that situates the body in a particular place across historical time, rooted in cultural practices that arise from—and are responsible to—a land base. This orientation to that set of relations, and the responsibilities that arise from maintaining "right" relations, then forms the ambiguous boundaries of something we call *indigenous rhetorical practices*. (141)

This notion of relationality is found in the everyday lived practices of traditional American Indians. As American Indian philosopher Viola Cordova describes,

> I suppose one could use the analogy of a stone thrown into a pond. Each "thing"—stone, air, molecule, plant, animal, or vegetable—causes a ripple to form in the pond. The singular, particular being is not merely itself tossed into the pond. (230)

In Western thought, the analogy of a stone thrown into the pond is usually used to indicate how our individual actions have impacts beyond what we might originally intend. However, as Cordova describes it, the rock is never solitary. Broadly speaking, in American Indian thought the ripple is just one piece of the overall picture and the overall cause. It is the stone thrown, the air through which the stone travels, the person throwing the stone and where and how she's standing, it is all of these things and more. It is all of these relations.

Cordova suggests that for American Indian thought, knowledge is intimately knowing and understanding our relatedness to the world around, in, and through us. She suggests that while humans may imagine our skin closes us off the world, it is actually very permeable.

> Our senses connect us to the world. We have a broad range of emotional reactions; these, too, connect us to the world. And we have memory. . . . Knowledge, in a Native American sense, is derived from the connections we make between all of the facets of our sensate experience and the memory of the consequences attendant upon all of those experiences. (231)

Knowledge is the relations between our sensate experience, our memory, all of which are inextricable from the land upon which we have these experiences. Yet the concepts of land and experience are not fixed. Vine Deloria, Jr. also describes relationality (specifically for the Sioux people) as the idea that "everything in the natural world has relationships with every other thing and the total set of relationships that make up the world as we experience it" (34). One of these key relationships is our connection to place. Deloria elaborates,

> Indians do not talk about nature as some kind of concept or something "out there." They talk about the immediate environment in which they live. They do not embrace all trees or love all rivers and mountains. What is important is the relationship you have with a particular tree or a particular mountain. (223)

These particularities occur in relation.

Rìos' proposal for land-based literacies acknowledges "literal *acts* of interpretation and communication that grow out of active participation with the land" (64) and necessarily includes a relationality, one that can't disentangle the biosphere from the semiosphere, but instead acknowledges that particular moments and relations bring forth particular ways of being and particular ways of making meaning in the world. Our ways of understanding the world are profoundly shaped by our active participation with the land, and as such I suggest our ways of understanding design are shaped similarly.

Bodies | Design | Rhetoric | Land

The connection between design's effects and lived bodies is nothing particularly new, at least in design theory. Color theory relies on cognitive experiences and culturally specific understandings to make sense of how color impacts particular bodies in particular contexts. Rudolf Arnheim explores the concept of a center, arguing that "just as almost every organic and inorganic subject is shaped around a center, centricity is an indispensable structural property of any composition in the visual arts" (x). How our bodies feel, see, and experience centricity shapes our production and sensate experience of design. Designer Molly Bang makes the case that our body's experience with gravity plays a huge role in how we feel about design. For example, horizontal shapes give us a sense of stability and calm, whereas vertical shapes often feel more exciting and active. Our body's experience with pain and comfort also impacts how we understand design, whereas a round shape feels safer and calmer than a pointed shape which can often feel violent or threatening.

Connected to, but going a bit beyond, discussions of graphic design itself, Klemmer, Hartmann, and Takayama explore interaction design based on the idea that bodies intimately shape how users interact in online space. They suggest that users think through doing, and these ways of doing in the world (particularly physical action), as well as the physical co-presence of artifacts and bodies, should shape how designers understand human–computer interactions. They call for a theory of "embodied interaction," for as they argue "in designing almost any new technology, one is drawing on existing human understanding of the world" (7). They don't argue for "unreflectively replacing" the physical world through digital design, but instead finding solutions to design that "carefully integrates the physical and digital worlds" (8).

Klemmer, Hartmann, and Takayama's work is rich, and one that places bodies in the world as key in understanding how users make sense of digital space. What is missing, however, from this discussion is any conversation of the space and place within which these bodies act. That is, there is not so much a sense of bodies in a biosphere as there is bodies interacting with physical objects in a somewhat undefined space. For example, the authors engage with the Montessori method of teaching through bodily engagement with physical objects, but there is no discussion of the space within which such engagements happen. Nor is there any discussion in this work, or in that of Arnheim or Bang, of the land itself and how our physical interaction in specific places and spaces differs from our physical interaction in other particular places and spaces. Thinking back to Deloria, there is a relationship one cultivates with a particular tree, or landscape, in a particular time in a particular place. It's not just the user and the tree, it's *this* tree in *this* place. Think back to Riley-Mukavetz and Powell's claim that indigenous rhetorical practice "situates the body in a particular place across historical time, rooted in cultural practices that arise from—and are responsible to—a land base" (141).

I propose using a land-based rhetorics as a way of understanding how our experiences in digital spaces are shaped by our embodied interactions in the biosphere itself. In order to consider how one might explore design through this lens, I offer here three criteria for rhetorically engaging with digital design that I use in the next section to analyze *The Ways*.

- First, a land-based digital design rhetoric acknowledges how understanding comes from "active participation with the land." (Rios)
- Second, a land-based digital design rhetoric acknowledges the relationships we have with particular elements in the biosphere. (Deloria)
- Third, a land-based digital design rhetoric acknowledges our sensate experience and our memories of those experiences. (Cordova)

Embodied Design | Rhetorical Land

While I encountered *The Ways* through a suggestion from my mother, and while I experienced it as a space of digital storytelling that works to sustain and share Anishinaabe culture in the Great Lakes, the site was actually created as a very specific educational resource:

> *The Ways* is an ongoing series of stories from Native communities around the central Great Lakes. This online educational resources for 6–12 grade students features videos, interactive maps, and digital media exploring contemporary Native culture and language. *The Ways* supports educators in meeting the requirements of Wisconsin Act 31, seeking to expand and challenge current understanding of Native identity and communities. (http://theways.org/about)

Undoubtedly the site serves many purposes, and the money to make the site was likely garnered through meeting the requirements of Wisconsin Act 31 (which specifically charges educators to teach about American Indian treaty rights). That being said, the digital space is public and as such the audience is broader than public school students.

The site itself includes four main links—Stories, Map, About, Contact—but the largest component of the site itself is the Stories page (see Figure 19.2). This page includes twelve links

Figure 19.2 Stories Page from *The Ways*

to different topics, ranging from dancing on the pow-wow trail to language preservation initiatives to traditional food gathering practices. If you click on a story, you are brought to a page that includes two parts. Above the fold is a video (see Figure 19.3), and below the fold (Figure 19.4) is an essay that is part video transcript, part additional information. There is also a sidebar that includes links to sharing the story on social media, a map that indicates where the speaker is from, a section that offers questions for learning, below which is another section that offers resources for further learning (Figure 19.5). Finally, the bottom of the page (Figure 19.6) includes credits and also reveals the bottom of the slightly transparent background image that sits behind the below-the-fold content. This background image changes with each story and is related to the story itself. For example, the Manoomin story has a faint background image of a wild rice field.

Each story on the site is arranged in the same way. The above-the-fold content (Figure 19.3) includes a very large still image from the video itself contrasted sharply against a black background. *The Ways* logo (Figure 19.7) and navigation system sits atop the page itself, and is a rustic simple font that appears white on black, however at times has rollover functionality that turns the typeface a deep sea blue. There are small embellishments throughout the site, usually next to the log or the navigation system. These small symbols (Figures 19.7 and 19.8) are reminiscent of the petroglyphs found throughout the Great Lakes region. The logo is almost always white on black, except for the front page (Figure 19.8) where the background is a patterned wood grain.

The videos themselves are beautifully crafted, and I can't extract their effect from my embodied reaction to this website. However, what strikes me most about this site is the impact the videos, along with the essays and maps and additional content, have on me. It is an impact that I do not feel when I encounter these videos on YouTube. Figure 19.9 shows the same video essay from above, "Manoomin: Food that Grows on the Water," embedded the YouTube platform.

Figure 19.3 Above-the-Fold Screenshot of Manoomin Page

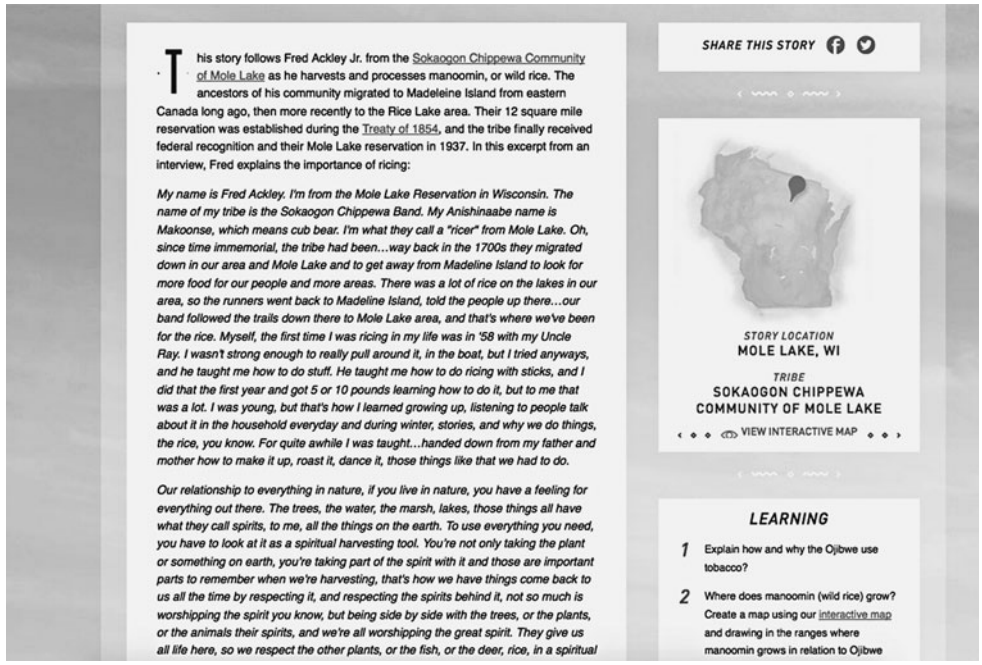

Figure 19.4 Below-the-Fold Screenshot of Manoomin Essay Part 1

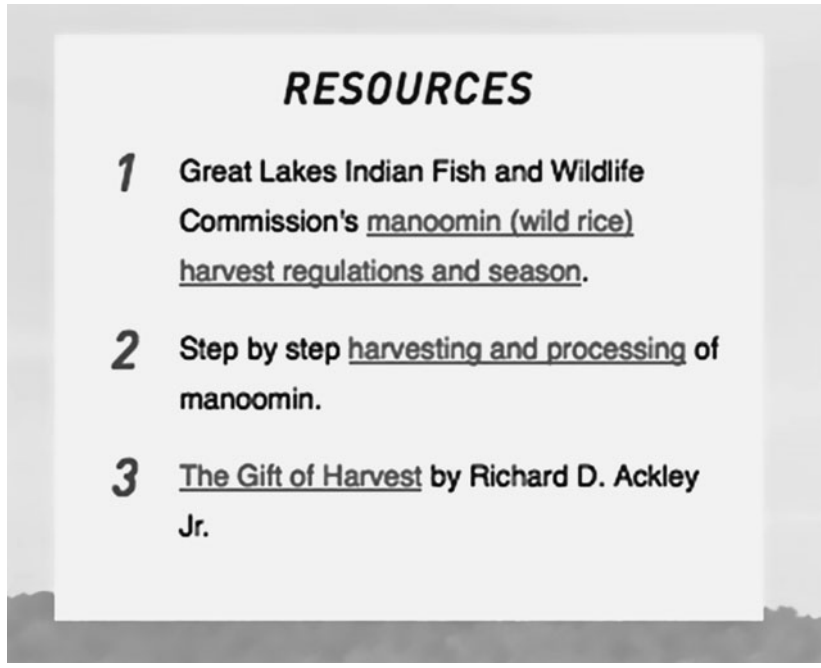

Figure 19.5 Below-the-Fold Screenshot of Manoomin Essay Part 2 (This Section Is Directly Beneath the Learning Section Seen in Figure 19.4)

Figure 19.6 Below-the-Fold Screenshot of Manoomin Page, Credits

If I press play, I am still captivated by the beautifully shot video. However, the standardized platform of YouTube does not even remotely give me the sense of home and place that *The Ways* does. I do not feel embraced, and I do not necessarily feel like staying and exploring. The contrast between the design of *The Ways* and the design of YouTube is stark, and my experiences with each site give me a very different sense of engagement with the space. To explore why this might be so, I turn to three explorations of *The Ways* through my three criteria for a land-based digital design rhetoric.

Figure 19.7 *The Ways* Logo from Interior Pages

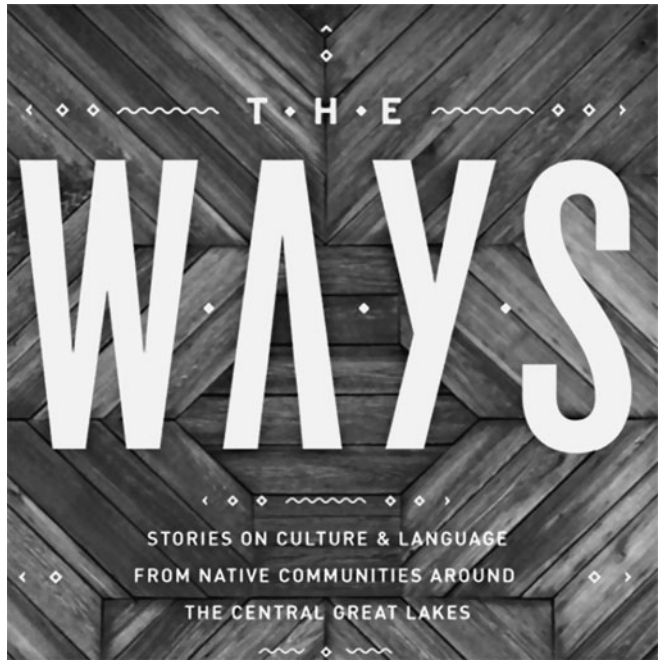

Figure 19.8 *The Ways* Logo from Front Page

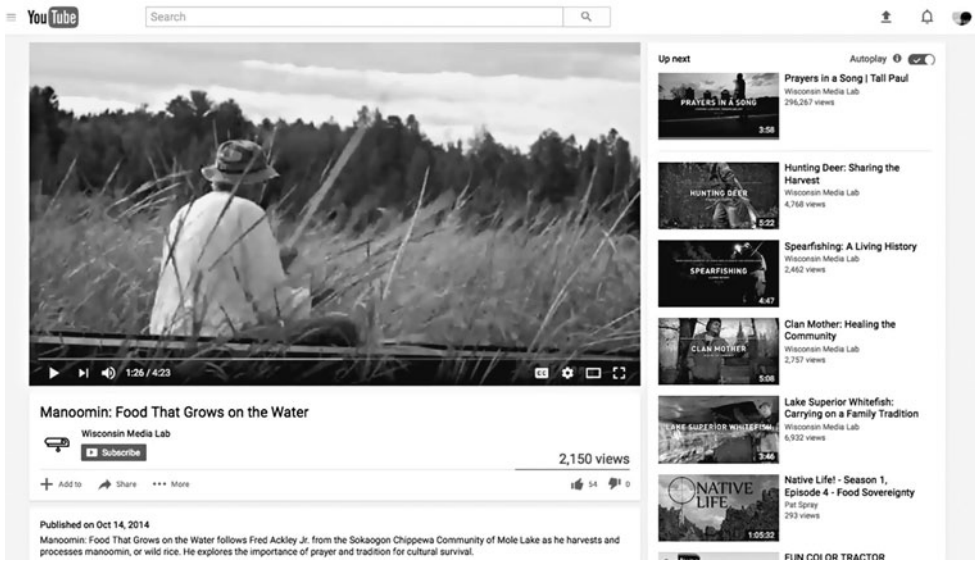

Figure 19.9 Manoomin Story from *The Ways* in YouTube, www.youtube.com/watch?v=uoBLE5IMOHI

Exploration 1: Active Participation with the Land

A land-based digital design rhetoric acknowledges how understanding comes from "active participation with the land" (Rìos). Rìos speaks specifically about the literacy with the land, but for a digital design rhetoric, I move to explore how experiences with the land shape how we understand digital spaces, in this case, how I understand *The Ways*. I grew up in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, on the northernmost peninsula. The Keweenaw Peninsula juts out into Lake Superior like a thumb. Growing up on this land you are never more than twenty miles from the lake, and around every corner is a stream, creek, or small inland lake. I didn't grow up in a particularly outdoorsy family, insofar as we never once went purposefully camping or hiking so far as I can remember. My family did hunt and fish to varying degrees, and most of my family (in a Scandinavian tradition) had small lakeside cottages (or what we call "camps") where they would spend time in the summer. These camps were usually no more than thirty minutes from one's home in town, and were usually quite rustic with the focus less on the building's structure itself and more on being able to be near the water in the summer months.

Land, for me, is a mix of both my time at these camps (swimming, playing in the woods or on the beach, picking berries), and my time in town. In town, the land was hilly and full of maple trees and thick underbrush, as opposed to the eastern Lake Superior waterfront which is covered in jackpines, sandy soil, and the occasional outcropping of sandstone. In the autumn, the leaves turn a spectacular color and then almost always fall off all at once during an early autumn storm. Early winter is a season of grays and browns, and winter itself is a long harsh season with low gun metal skies and intense snowfall. Summer, camp time, is a short season, but full of brilliant greens and blues, the smell of water and crisp lakeside humidity. The inland lakes are often swampy and sweet, with reeds and grasses, herons and turtles, and a dull brown hue that blends with the treeline.

My active participation with this land, where I spent the first eighteen years of my life, profoundly shaped me. I am drawn to the color blue, particularly when it is set against duller grays and browns (the lake against the sandy shore or the winter skyline). I like the contrast of a strong image against a flat background (the tree-lined horizons). I feel at home in dull flat colors that offer a small surprise of color or shape (the contrast of a bird or tree up against a swampy flat inland lake). All of these elements are seen in *The Ways*. The design, the colors and shapes, speak to my active participation with my homeland.

Exploration 2: Relations with Biospheric Elements

A land-based digital design rhetoric acknowledges the relationships we have with particular elements in the biosphere (Deloria). As Deloria argues, and as Powell and Riley-Mukavetz also assert, "what is important is the relationship you have with a particular tree or a particular mountain" (223). There are many stories I can tell about my relations with particular elements in the biosphere—the Hawthorne tree behind my house in Washington, the tide pools in Yachets, Oregon, the soft green curves of the Palouse hillside in early summer—but here I turn back to the particulars of my childhood. My grandparents have a camp on a tiny strip of land in Little Traverse Bay on the eastern edge of the Keweenaw Peninsula. On one side of this tiny strip of land has is Lake Superior, and on the other, a slough fed by Mud Lake Creek and Rice Lake. The slough opens up behind my grandparent's camp, forming a small pond-like area where they put a small dock on the water's edge from which to fish or launch a rowboat. As a child, I spent endless hours at the slough's edge or on the burgundy colored red dock that my Grandfather dutifully repainted every few years. The water is grayish black, and is dotted with

bright green lilypads and the occasional cluster of reeds. I was always on the lookout for painted turtles and the occasional beaver, and once even caught what seemed to me at the time a huge brook trout off the dock (turns out I was just small, as was the fish). This slough, this particular view of this slough in this place and time, is a very strong memory. I am seven years old, I am on summer vacation, I live in a navy blue swimsuit and bare feet, I am exploring nature and feeling wonder at the unexpected.

My particular relationship with this particular land is a strong one. I am drawn to any sharp pop of color (the burgundy dock, a bright green lilypad) against an otherwise still background (the grayish black water). I am delighted by any unexpected movement on an otherwise flat surface (a turtle's head popping out of the glassy flat water). The use of blue in the design of *The Ways* both as a point of contrast and as a rollover give me a similar sense of delight. The periodic use of both yellow and orange fonts provide a small, but sharp visual contrast that draws my attention. I could tell many other stories of specific places and elements in/on the land that have shaped my sense of design. All of these experience shape how I understand and experience design, and help me make sense of my love affair with *The Ways*.

Exploration 3: Sensate Experiences with the Land

Finally, a land-based digital design rhetoric acknowledges our sensate experience and our memories of those experiences (Cordova). As a reminder, Cordova argues that "Knowledge, in a Native American sense, is derived from the connections we make between all of the facets of our sensate experience and the memory of the consequences attendant upon all of those experiences" (231). The act of trying to articulate all facets of my sensate experience and memory is nearly an impossible one; however, I want to draw specifically from Cordova's attention to senses. While affect studies has had a substantial impact on rhetorical studies, Cordova's description of sensate experience and memory is rooted in an indigenous epistemology. In her discussion of relationality, that is, all things being in relation, she makes clear that these relations are felt through the senses:

> We might believe that our skin closes us off from the rest of the world, but it is in actuality a very permeable surface. Aside from absorbing the world through skin and lungs, we also see and hear and taste. Our senses connect us to the world. (230)

There is a trail behind by mom's camp in Big Traverse Bay (a Bay north of Little Traverse, where my Grandparent's camp sits). It serves as both a deer trail—one can often see deer taking this trail as the easiest path through the jack pine forest—and as a way for neighbors to walk between camps without walking the beach or dusty dirt road. I don't know who started the trail, probably the deer, but it is a well-worn and frequently used path. As a child I would often play on the stretch that went between our lot and the vacant lot next door. The vegetation is a sandy underbrush of blueberry bushes, ferns, and various mosses. Walking barefoot on this path, you can feel both the hard sandy earth below and the occasional prick of a pine needle. The ferns brush up against your legs as you walk, and the ants sometimes hitch along your leg for a ride. The smell is of water, pine, sand, and swamp. There are lessons to be learned about walking off the path (an accidental step in dog or deer poop, an attack of too many biting ants, a very sad squooshing of blueberries). The horizon in all directions is nearly impossible to see except for a few breaks of trees, but even without the perspective of distance it is clear that the land is flat. Any minor swell of land is noticeable, and usually exists only because a tree uprooted or someone dumped a random load of gravel behind their camp. The land is stable, steady.

If I close my eyes, I can feel this ground beneath my feet. I can smell the air, sense the land, I know I am home.

While design theorists such as Arnheim and Bang acknowledge how our bodily sense of space shapes our sense of design, there is not necessarily a sense of a specific body in a specific place having specific relations with that space. These relations are individualized to a point, for example my walking barefoot on a trail in the hopes of picking a cup of blueberries. But these relations are also culturally situated, for example my families' Finnish and Ojibwe roots and these relations to, for example, blueberries. There are also specific memories of these spaces, for example my grandmother's stories of running into black bears while blueberry picking (which is why she, and now I, always sing while picking).

The trail behind my mom's camp is a flat surface amidst an otherwise prickly forest bed. Walking on it one feels stable, secure, centered amidst the otherwise uncertain landscape. *The Ways* uses a center alignment for its text. Headers are evenly spaced, center aligned, providing a sense of balance atop the strong pictorial images of the video itself. The content below-the-fold floats above the faint background image, providing a sense of movement atop a stable landscape. My memories of walking on the trail along with my sensate experiences shape how I have come to know and sense the world. They shape how I see and feel design.

Conclusion

Imagining how my body has been part of, shaped, and shaped by the land I grew up on and putting these memories in relation to a digital design that I love has not been easy for me. Much of this essay was spent contemplating my relations with land, reflecting on how and whether these experiences have anything to do with my reaction to *The Ways*. But how can't they not? How can we bracket our lived experiences with the land from our rhetorical engagement with design, or with any text for that matter? Land is not a metaphor, it is a living thing that our rhetoric, digital or otherwise, exists on, with, and through. As Rìos' work reminds us, our *active* participation with the land, that is our movement through the biosphere, is always already part of the semiosphere. We are all bodies living on a land base.

As we continue to revise and revisit our rhetorical theories for producing and analyzing texts in digital spaces, it is important to think through how the seemingly landless place of cyberspace is always already part of the land. We bring our bodies and our lands with us online. We all bring our unique experiences and understandings and relations of and with land to all of our communication acts. Our theories of digital design should work to pay attention to these relations. Miigwech.

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