SOUND MATTERS: AURAL RHETORIC IN PHARMACEUTICAL ADVERTISING (TOWARD A THEORY AND METHOD OF AURALACY)

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SOUND MATTERS: AURAL RHETORIC IN PHARMACEUTICAL ADVERTISING
(TOWARD A THEORY AND METHOD OF AURALACY)

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ABSTRACT

As scholarly theories and explorations of visuality continue to grow in prominence within the discourse on multimodal communication, a gap remains in the literature regarding the affective qualities of sound in multimedia messages. The following study attempts to address this gap and likewise propose a theory of auralacy (aural literacy) by examining the audiovisual interactions present in three different pharmaceutical commercials.

This study begins by examining literature regarding Gestalt perceptual theory, with emphasis on its origins, historical developments, and current status in perceptual research. The literature shows that perceptual wholes may be formed visually, tactilely, aurally, or even intermodally. After reviewing this literature, a holistic methodology is presented for the interpretation of multimodal messages. Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen’s Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design is invoked to help analyze on-screen movement of visuals in the pharmaceutical commercials, and Leonard Meyer’s principles of pattern perception—derived from Gestalt theory and set forth in Emotion and Meaning and Music—are brought to bear on the advertisement’s soundscapes. The affective qualities of each soundscape are examined, including music, narration, and sound effects. A visual strategy for presenting audiovisual interaction, dubbed as the movement analysis, is used to help foreground the aural mode and display patterns of movement and shape. This study concludes with a discussion of auralacy as an important tool for understanding contemporary composition and communication, as well as potential directions for further developing the movement analysis.
DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my amazing wife, Sarah. She somehow managed to keep me motivated in my writing without sacrificing any of her ebullience. She is amazing! Additionally, I would like to dedicate this thesis to my daughter, who will be born in close proximity to the time that I receive the first bound copy of this text! She has provided me with great motivation to finish writing.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My family also provided me with consistent support throughout the writing process. My father and mother, Terrell and Jan Hovan, have always encouraged me in my studies; this thesis is a direct result of their leadership. My brothers Jeremy, Benjamin, and Timothy helped keep me writing with their frequent phone calls and visits.

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I would like to express my gratitude to Dr. Jan Holmevik and Dr. Susan Hilligoss. They were key in helping me clarify my methodology, and were instrumental in helping me develop the visual materials involved in this text.

Finally, I thank my committee chair, Dr. Steven Katz, for his guidance. No one else could have helped me navigate the intricacies of this thesis. His professionalism, high intellectual standards, and genuine excitement made my writing all the more rewarding. This thesis would not have taken shape without his mentoring; I’m sincerely glad that our paths converged at Clemson University. Any student who has the opportunity to work with him should count themselves fortunate.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TITLE PAGE .................................................................................................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT .....................................................................................................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEDICATION ..................................................................................................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ......................................................................................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES .......................................................................................................</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GLOSSARY ..................................................................................................................</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**CHAPTER**

I. INTRODUCTION ........................................................................................................... 1

   - Aurality in Advertising? ................................................................. 1
   - Importance of Study ........................................................................... 2
   - Materials and Sources ........................................................................ 3
   - Thesis Organization ............................................................................. 4

II. LITERATURE REVIEW .............................................................................................. 6

   - Origins of Gestalt Psychology .......................................................... 10
   - Gestalt Wholes and Other Theories of Perception .............................. 15
   - The Sensory Modes .............................................................................. 20
   - Audition and Gestalt ............................................................................ 23
   - Conclusion ............................................................................................. 28

III. HOLISTIC METHODOLOGY .................................................................................. 30

   - Introduction ............................................................................................ 30
   - Subject Selection ...................................................................................... 31
   - Visual Analysis ......................................................................................... 32
   - Aural Analysis .......................................................................................... 39
   - Movement Analysis .................................................................................. 44
   - Conclusion ............................................................................................... 48
### Table of Contents (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IV. ANALYSES</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zoloft</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mirapex</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enablex</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. CONCLUSION</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcomes</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Auralacy: An important counterpart to electracy?</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Directions</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APPENDICES</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A: Zoloft: Screen Captures</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B: Mirapex: Screen Captures</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C: Enablex: Screen Captures</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D: Zoloft: Commercial Timeline</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E: Mirapex: Commercial Timeline</td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F: Enablex: Commercial Timeline</td>
<td>111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G: Zoloft: Commercial Transcription</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H: Mirapex: Commercial Transcription</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I: Enablex: Commercial Transcription</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J: Zoloft: Visual Analysis</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K: Mirapex: Visual Analysis</td>
<td>122</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L: Enablex: Visual Analysis</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Rubin’s Vase</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Taoist Taijitu</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The author’s rendering of two relationships. The actor/goal relationship is shown in the box at left, and the reactor/phenomenon relationship at the right.</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Sample illustration of movement analysis</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Screen capture of the smiling Zoloft &quot;pharmacloud&quot;</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Zoloft &quot;pharmacloud&quot; with bluebird</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Zoloft ad portrayal of nerve ending chemistry</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Reductive timeline of pattern densities in Zoloft theme music. From left to right: 5-against-15 and 3-against-6 note pattern</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Complete movement analysis of minute-long Zoloft advertisement</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Movement analysis of the first 21 seconds of Zoloft ad</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Movement analysis of Zoloft cut portraying nerve endings</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Movement analysis for the penultimate segment examined</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Movement analysis of the final four seconds of Zoloft ad</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Screen capture of Mirapex wordmark</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Screen Capture of Mirapex logo in motion</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Screen Capture of Mirapex logo captions</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Screen capture of Mirapex logo</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Movement analysis for entire length of Mirapex advertisement</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
List of Figures (Continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Screen capture of first 18 seconds of Mirapex commercial</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Movement of final four seconds of Mirapex commercial</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Screen capture of Enablex wordmark</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Screen capture of Enablex commercial</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Screen capture of Enablex commercial</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Movement analysis of 60-second Enablex commercial</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Movement analysis of final 12 seconds of Enablex commercial</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
GLOSSARY

Actor - The active participant in an action process from which a vector (visible or invisible) emanates or which is joined with a vector. (Kress and van Leeuwen 74)

Auralacy - A term proposed in this study, intended to foreground the importance of defining and developing “aural literacy” within the discourse of multimodal communication; inspired by Gregory Ulmer’s notion of electracy.

Center/Margin - The informational areas of a visual composition which correspond with the inside and outside of the composition, respectively. Elements in the center of a composition are most important, while items in the margin are supportive and/or subservient. (Kress and van Leeuwen 209)

Connection - The degree to which an element in the perceptual field is joined to other elements, either spatially or temporally. (Kress and van Leeuwen 210)

Cut - A distinct and deliberate temporal separation from one scene to another; a distinct and deliberate temporal separation from one sound to another.

Disconnection - The degree to which an element in the perceptual field is separated from other elements, either spatially or temporally. (Kress and van Leeuwen 210)

Framing - An effect in audiovisual composition that is achieved by strategic delineation on screen or canvas with lines or other visual components; a structure possessing “isolating” qualities; akin to a picture frame. Audiovisual compositions may be temporally framed by cuts to other images or sounds, thus dividing and framing them in time. (Kress and van Leeuwen 203)

Gestalt - A perceptual whole—which may occur in/between the sensory modes of sound, touch, and sight—manifested as more than just the sum of its constituent parts. (Hamlyn 44)

Given/New - The two informational sectors of a visual composition which correspond with the left and right sides of the composition, respectively. (Kress and van Leeuwen 209)

Goal - The passive participant in an action process; the object at which a vector is directed. (Kress and van Leeuwen 74)

Ideal/Real - The two informational sectors of a visual composition which correspond with the top and bottom of the composition, respectively. (Kress and van Leeuwen 209)
**Information Value** - The location of an element in a visual composition suggests that it possesses qualities in relation to its positioning among these relationships: given/new, real/ideal, and center/margin. (Kress and van Leeuwen 209)

**Intermodal Activity** - That which occurs between/across separate modes (i.e.-the visual and the aural).

**Intramodal Activity** - Activity occurring within one specified mode. (i.e.- Patterns of sound present in spoken narration).

**Mediator** - The center of a composition which acts as a bridge between the top and bottom of the composition (Ideal/Real) and the left and right (given/new). The mediator serves to “reconcile” opposing quadrants. (Kress and van Leeuwen 209)

**Panaural** - A term used in this text which encompasses/spans all aural elements in the perceptive field, including music, sound effects, and spoken narration.

**Phenomenon** - The passive participant in a reaction; the object of a reactor’s eyeline vector (Kress and van Leeuwen 75)

**Prägnanz** - The tendency (and ability) of the human mind to search out and produce complete forms from elements in the perceptive field.

**Reactor** - The active participant in a reaction process; the reactor’s eyeline creates a vector. (Kress and van Leeuwen 75)

**Salience** - The perceptual prominence of an element, either visual or aural; the amount that a modal element “sticks out” at the perceiver.

**Vector** - An arrow, either visible or invisible, which suggest directional motion/movement in a still picture, or is the literal path of movement in a film. (Kress and van Leeuwen 210)
CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Aurality in Advertising? A tremendous amount of research has been conducted on the psychology of music, with musicologists and psychologists both writing prolifically on the subject. Film theorists have discussed sound extensively, as it comprises a large part of their discipline, and myriad organizations such as NASA, IBM, and the CIA have employed the MUZAK company to provide their offices with background music (Lanza 44). Discussions abound that engage the notion of aesthetics and sound, particularly in film studies. Music and sound are tremendously important to filmmakers, who have an entire industry devoted solely to the creation of film sound.

Advertising professionals have done a great deal of empirical research into the psychology of consumerism as well: deliberately structured background music has been proven to alter employee mood and customer purchasing patterns (Lanza 44 & Bruner 7). Rhetoricians and psychologists have made significant contributions to the discourse regarding music in film and advertising, too, using theoretical frameworks such as Kenneth Burke's notion of symbolic action (Scott 234). However, even considering this discussion of music in film and advertising, there is almost no research available that examines entire soundscapes in television advertising, or the corresponding affective qualities that these soundscapes possess (Soundscape is defined here to include three aural elements: music, sound effects, and narration). It is this dearth of scholarly research on sound design in advertising that has led me to write this thesis.

Television viewers are, in theory, continuously exposed to aural rhetorics while
watching television ads, and there is little material available to aid in understanding the aural constructs present in these direct-to-consumer pitches. In this thesis, I try to address this research gap by conducting an analysis of the aural design of pharmaceutical commercials, with an emphasis on the movement and shape of sound. The primary question that underpins my study is "How are sound effects, narration, and music rhetorically structured in pharmaceutical commercials?" This study foregrounds aural rhetoric as an intrinsic part of affective TV advertising, while likewise providing a holistic look at the interactions that take place between the aural mode and the visual mode in several pharmaceutical commercials.

**Importance of the Study**

Aside from being an area of personal interest, the study of aural rhetoric is important to the field of technical communication. Multimodal composition is a burgeoning area of development in college curriculum, and I seek to contribute to the discourse of multimodality by suggesting that the notion of *auralacy*—or aural literacy—is vitally important to understanding and interpreting contemporary multimodal communications. Indeed, the concept of auralacy is directly inspired by the work of composition theorist Gregory Ulmer. Ulmer first proposed the term *electracy* to suggest that being literate in the contemporary world requires an understanding of digital and electronic communication mediums; electracy, therefore "is to digital media what literacy is to print" (Ulmer 2003). My suggestion is that aural literacy simultaneously complements Ulmer’s notion of digital literacy while presenting a unique method of understanding
holistic multimodal perception. Although my study poses at least as many questions as it answers, an aurally-focused thesis will help to pave the way for related qualitative and quantitative work. Although focused on short-form television commercials, my own research into pharmaceutical ads could lead to other critical studies on the aural rhetorics of podcasting, FM/AM radio, prime-time news programs, or the multimodal composition of full-length films.

Indeed, as such multimodal messages can be crafted to elicit a particular response, I see a need to develop new sound, critical methods with which these messages can be studied. As I have discovered in my research, commercial speech is frequently deployed under cover of the First Amendment (Haan 1284). There was a 330% increase in pharmaceutical advertising revenues from 1996 to 2005—which gives me cause to question this communication genre’s form and function (Donohue et al 673). An attempt to understand the ethics of aural rhetoric is a key point that I address in this thesis; a point of phronesis.

Materials and Sources

In writing this thesis, I draw from a diverse set of scholarly work. I review some of the key theory developed by a few pre-Gestalt theorists, including Franz Brentano, Edmund Husserl, and Christian von Ehrenfels. I then examine the work of the recognized progenitors of gestalt psychology: Kurt Koffka, Wolfgang Köhler, and Max Wertheimer. Since the beginning research in gestalt, this work has inspired a host of studies in human perception, and I discuss several studies that demonstrate gestalt formation—the principle
that the mind works holistically when assimilating sensory information—in three modes: visual, tactile, and aural.

Aside from this literature, I use two theories to frame my audiovisual analysis. I employ Gunther Kress & Theo van Leeuwen’s text, *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*, to provide the primary means for looking at on-screen visual activity in pharmaceutical commercials. Their work provides a method for analyzing moving images within the social context of Western cultures by looking at the representational, interactive, and compositional features of film. I use Leonard Meyer’s *Emotion and Meaning in Music* as the foundation for analyzing affective aural shapes in television advertisements. His text revolves around the “principles of pattern perception,” a gestalt-oriented method of examining how patterns and forms present in a given piece of music affect the listener. As the focus of my study, I examine three television advertisements in detail. These commercials are for the medications Zoloft, Mirapex, and Enablex.

*Thesis Organization*

This thesis is comprised of five chapters. The second chapter contains my literature review, in which I examine the origins and development of gestalt perceptual theory. I show how, based upon existing research by prominent psychologists and music theorists, there is a body of work in place that explores both visual and aural gestalt, as well as the validity of gestalt between perceptual modes.

The third chapter is where I explicate the methodology for my study. It is here that I lay out my strategy for analyzing affective intermodal activity in pharmaceutical
commercials via the work of Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen, the music theory of Leonard Meyer, and others.

In chapter four I conduct my holistic analysis of three pharmaceutical commercials. The analysis of each commercial has three parts, beginning with a brief analysis of the visuals according to Kress and van Leeuwen’s text. I then analyze the music, narration, and sound effects in each advertisement by applying Meyer’s principles of pattern perception. Finally, by using the movement analyses, I examine the affective qualities present in each commercial’s intermodal activity.

Chapter five contains the conclusion of my thesis, where I examine the results of my analysis and further expound upon the notion of auralacy. I end this final chapter by discussing directions for future research in multimodal composition and analysis. Immediately following the fifth chapter, I have included works referenced in the writing of this thesis, as well as a series of appendices that support my analysis in chapter four.
Issues concerning visuality increasingly dominate scholarly discussions of communication. Whether the debate is centered on strategies to facilitate effective visual communication between disparate cultures, the most appropriate typeface for a magazine layout, or how to effectively structure a webpage for a particular audience, visual rhetorics are obviously important to consider when presenting information.

Some of the most prominent educators and scholars believe that society is gradually moving away from a textually-oriented mode of communication to that of a visually-oriented mode. Gunther Kress, composition professor and semiotician, propounds that we are experiencing a shift “from the temporal-sequential logic of spoken…and written language, to the spatial-simultaneous logic of the visual” (Kress 68). He also notes that a growing number of communication channels are being organized around task-based structures as opposed to linearly organized narrative structures (Kress 68). To back up these theories, he references and/or analyzes changes in textbook layouts, newspapers, music videos, and the extremely flexible organization of Internet hypertext (Kress 69).

Although multimodal communication has been around in various forms for centuries, Kress points out that the proliferation of modern technology has created an intensely multi-modal, multi-semiotic milieu (Kress 74). One of his concerns is that current theories of linguistics are not adequately suited to explain the creation and
reception of multimodal messages, nor do they provide methods with which we might begin to explore interactions between different modes (Kress 78).

In *Music and Form: Rethinking Organization in Writing*, Peter Elbow also addresses the importance of intermodal relationships. As a writing scholar and English professor, he actively engages multimodal discourse to help explain the structural features of compelling writing. He cites various musical examples—with corresponding visual representations and mappings—to help explicate the temporal phenomena that are created by “good writers” (Elbow 625). At one point in this text he discusses film sound as a means to help bind visual elements together in time. Aurality is not the focus of the article, as his concern lies in dynamic forms in writing, yet the text is peppered with sound-oriented references to help explicate these same written forms. He writes:

> Readers have an experience that is more temporal than spatial. The problem of organizing a piece of writing is not…in…building a visual or spatial creation and giving some kind of satisfying visual/spatial relationship among the parts. It’s more a problem in binding time. (Elbow 625)

He mentions this *time binding* eleven times in his article. According to Elbow, written texts can benefit from thoughtful, spatial layouts, but what really keeps a reader involved in a text is its ability to harness time to create rhythms, energy, meters, and likewise create “itching” and “pulling” forces for the reader’s benefit (Elbow 654). While suggesting that writers look to music for examples of dynamic compositional strategy, he
goes as far as to suggest that “hearing—the modality that works in time—reaches an older, deeper, and more instinctual part of the brain than sight” (Elbow 651). Time and motion become critical compositional elements for Elbow, especially in the holding together of the text for the reader.

In *The Epistemic Music of Rhetoric*, a key resource for my study, professor Steven Katz examines issues of temporality in written composition, as well as the affective qualities of sound that are manifest in writing. He suggests “a temporal philosophy based on a harmonic association and holistic synthesis of thought and feeling rather than the sequential extraction and hierarchical differentiation of meaning” (Katz xii, 1996). His book, a call to consider new strategies for understanding reader response, makes use of several music theorists to help describe the sensuous nature of the written word. He writes “[I]t is reasonable to speculate that there is a connection between the presentational pattern of music and the presentational pattern of prose” (Katz 205, 1996). Acknowledging that sight has prominence in our epistemic processes, he explores the possibilities for expanding our empirical research (and pedagogical) methodologies to incorporate all the senses (Katz xi, 1996).

Concerning the issue of emergent, visually-oriented, multimodal forms in academia (perhaps this means an English student writing a short story and then presenting it as a photo-essay, or perhaps a short persuasive film), The National Council of Teachers of English has gone to the effort of writing a position statement on the subject of multimodal literacy, at one point stating that “all modes of communication are codependent. Each affects the nature of the content of the other and the overall rhetorical
impact of the communication event itself” (nete.org). It is no surprise that scholars are keen to study the evolution of various information channels, especially those that impact classroom instruction. The proliferation of social networking applications such as Facebook, Twitter, and Blogger has most certainly affected my own first year composition students, as have the plethora of multimedia editing software programs that now ship standard with computer operating systems. These technologies have on more than several occasions served to help facilitate class discussion amongst my own composition students.

Rhetorician Patricia Bizzell of the College of the Holy Cross discusses paradigmatic change in the academic world as taking place “when the material world impinges more frequently or urgently (on a discourse community) than before” (Bizzell 50). Undoubtedly, we are witnessing widespread technological impingements on academia, with multimodal composition being recognized as an increasingly important component of post-secondary education. Perhaps we are observing a change in the educational paradigm. I happen to believe that new technology, and the literacies that it affects, are positive forces in academia.

This discourse of rhetorical theory, research methods, pedagogy, and composition (multimodal as it might be) always seems to gravitate towards the arenas of textuality and visuality. Aurality, however, is a mode of communication that seems to be largely overlooked in the ongoing dialogue concerning multimodality. I wish to examine the relationship between sound and image, particularly in terms of sound’s saliency within the context of professional communication; I am interested in how the senses of sight and
sound might be used in tandem to achieve particular rhetorical effects, to affect the audience.

To that end, I researched scholarly work in the fields of aural and visual communication. I examine some of this literature below, with a primary emphasis on gestalt theory. In doing my research, I have found many connections between Gestalt psychology and music. Issues of form and shape, of pattern and movement, can be seen at play in a variety of different aural forms, as well as in many different visuals, including both moving and still images. Gestalt theories of perception help to provide a different perspective with which to examine interactions between communicative modes, including the aural. Reviewing the current body of research helps to set the stage for my stylistic analysis of audio-visual forms in television advertising, as there are a variety of carefully-documented studies that show holistic interpretation of aural signals.

*Origins of Gestalt Psychology*

The German philosopher Franz Brentano (1838-1917) laid much of the groundwork for the development of modern phenomenology. His text *Psychology from an Empiricist Standpoint* is considered to be one of the great influences on the later Gestaltists (Hamlyn 42). He held the stance that philosophy should be approached as methodically and scientifically as possible, and likewise held the same stance towards psychology (Stanford). Although he is considered to be an empiricist, the meaning as it applies to Brentano is different from the common connotation of empiricist: as opposed to a third-person research focus, he held a particular interest in first-person-based research via
introspectively-derived data (Stanford). It is important to mention that Brentano rejected the possibility of doing introspective studies of one’s mental processes in the moment (i.e., it is impossible for one to examine oneself, real-time, during a fit of rage, and not distort that very experience), but suggested that the logical analysis of memories of mental acts is a means with which to study mental processes “quietly and empirically” (Hothersall 191).

Indeed, one of the key theoretical contributions that he made to the field of psychology was that of the mental act, the notion that psychologists should not study the mental products which are generated during human experience (i.e.-pleasure, sadness, or other emotions derived from watching a film), but to the actions and processes which occur in the mind and underpin these products (Hothersall 190). According to Brentano, these mental acts may mix with one another, reference one another, or even reference past sensations and emotions (Hothersall 190). It is Brentano’s teachings and discussion of mental acts that strongly influenced two of his most prominent students, Christian von Ehrenfels and Edmund Husserl (Hothersall 192).

Considered by many to be the father of phenomenology, Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) was also influential to the development of Gestalt psychology (Hamlyn 42). Unlike Brentano, he believed that it is prudent to analyze both the mental act and its object as a form of experience (Hamlyn 43). He maintained a “naïve” empiricist’s stance that psychological study must examine “mental phenomena as they appear to one who knows nothing of the circumstances or relevant theory,” something to be achieved by “bracketing off” any presuppositions (Hamlyn 44). His contemporary, Christian von
Ehrenfels, was a philosopher and music composer who developed the term *gestaltqualitäten*, or form qualities, and conducted analyses of music and art (Hothersall 207). One of his primary concerns was to develop the notion of *gestaltqualitäten* so that it could account not only for spatial, instantaneous wholes, but also for temporal matters such as melody, rhythm, and other motion-based forms (Smith and Ehrenfels 124). A portion of Von Ehrenfels’s work analyzes and questions the issue of *transposability* of specific melodies across different keys, voices, and instruments, and was influential to Max Wertheimer (Hothersall 208). The fact that melodies remain recognizable even after transposition was of particular interest to Wertheimer, the founder of Gestalt psychology (Hothersall 208).

Wertheimer was initially spurred towards his studies of visual perception while taking a train from Austria to the German Rhine (Hothersall 208). He was so taken by the apparent motion of the trees, mountains, and fences—which seemed to move with the train—that he immediately abandoned his vacation and began inquiry into this unusual visual phenomenon (Hothersall 208). Upon recommendation from Physicist Friedrich Schumann at Frankfurt University, he collaborated with Kurt Koffka and Wolfgang Köhler, and the three went on to become the “triumvirate of Gestalt psychology” (Hothersall 211).

Along with these two professors, Wertheimer successfully carried out an experiment in which he projected two images in rapid, alternating succession: a white vertical line followed by a white horizontal line (Hothersall 209). Based upon making minute changes in the time interval between the projections of these two images, the test
participants each made strikingly similar observations, noting that the visuals appeared to
move from one position to another (Hothersall 209). Two telling remarks from
Wertheimer’s test subjects include: “[I]t is impossible to think about it as a succession; it
is not the white vertical that moves, but there is simply a process of transition,” and the
white line seemed to “lie down” (Hothersall 209). Movement and rhythm were integral to
this experiment. The apparent motion between the two projected lines was dubbed by
Wertheimer as the phi phenomenon, and is the principle upon which Gestalt psychology
was launched (Hamlyn 48). In 1912, Max Wertheimer published Experimentelle Studien
über das Sehen von Bewegung (Experimental Studies of the Perception of Movement),
officially launching the Gestalt movement, and likewise the discipline of Gestalt
psychology (Hothersall 210).

Wertheimer’s experiment, as well as many succeeding experiments, helped the
Gestaltists to usher in a more “lively” sort of psychological inquiry (Hothersall 211). This
was partially a rejection of the strict, empirical, structuralist psychology that was
dominant at the time (Hothersall 211). These early Gestaltists were more interested in a
dynamic study of behavior than of the “rare facts, which only an artificial
(introspectionist) procedure can reveal” (Köhler 85). Their work has prompted numerous
studies and debate on human perception, ranging from studies in aesthetics to complex
studies in the neurosciences. For example, Gestalt psychology has influenced the realms
of psychiatric therapy and abnormal psychology ever since its inception, with
Wertheimer himself employing holistic analyses while working with brain-damaged
patients (Silverstein and Ulhaas 259). Recent research has shown that Gestalt psychology
might be a valuable tool for diagnosing and treating people with schizophrenia (Silverstein and Ulhaas 261). The notion of a perceptual whole assists not only in the analysis of visual perception in schizophrenic patients, but in the impairment of “gestalt processes affecting consciousness as a whole” (Silverstein and Ulhaas 272).

In the discipline of counseling, the Gestaltists’ foundational concept of prägnanz is sometimes employed therapeutically under the term “organismic self-regulation,” a state where the individual in therapy is striving for balance and equilibrium (Latner 13). Further defined, prägnanz is the human “tendency to see an object as being simple, regular, symmetrical, continuous, closed, and the like” was (Hamlyn 53). Although difficult to translate into English, prägnanz essentially sets up the mind as an entity that is always searching for structure and order, be it visually or in other modes of communication. Another succinct definition of prägnanz that is quite telling is that it is a state of “phenomenal singularity or uniqueness” (Uttal 22).

Figure-ground is seen in Gestalt therapy with the individual and his/her environment comprising the background, while the issue being focused upon/dealt with is the figure; the creation and destruction of these figures is called gestalt formation/destruction (Latner 22). The issue of situational context is critical to this Gestalt therapy, as needs and concerns are contingent upon individual circumstances (Latner 22). Much like the perceptual principles demonstrated in the founding experiments of Gestalt psychology, Gestalt therapy revolves around motion and change, where the “elements of the universe exist together in a continually changing process of coordinating activity” (Latner 5).
Dr. Steven Lehar, cognitive scientist and research fellow in Ophthalmology at Harvard University, submits that Gestalt theory experienced a decline around the 1950’s—which closely corresponded with the height of modernism—due to the fact that it did not provide an effective way of computing/analyzing the global nature of perception (Lehar 45). This mathematical challenge, coupled with the development of modern filmmaking techniques (in particular the ability to record frame-by-frame “all” points in a motion) and the development of the digital computer, caused researchers to shy away from studying the “fieldlike” attributes of perceptive wholes and towards an elemental breakdown of visual components via the power of new microprocessors (Lehar 45). However, after several decades of “experiments specific to a microscopically oriented theory and…theories that either deal with a narrowly defined data set at one extreme or…a global breadth so great that data are virtually irrelevant,” there has been a gradual shift by many psychologists back to the study of holistic theories of perceptual grouping (Uttal 290). The fact that visual stimuli possess such a wide range of complexity makes it very difficult to objectively study visual perception (Lasaga 183). Psychologists have even referred to this challenge as an “Analytic/Holistic Purgatory” (Smith 316)!

*Gestalt Wholes and Other Theories of Perception*

Having briefly reviewed the basic history and development of Gestalt Psychology, it is useful to demonstrate how *gestalt*, translated into English as “form” or “shape” is pertinent to visual communication, before applying it to aural phenomenon. Wertheimer,
Koffka, and Köhler delineated how the perception of visuals can occur holistically in a number of different scenarios, and laid out the first gestalt principles of perceptual grouping (Hothersall 212). Among those principles propounded by Wertheimer, which are commonly referenced by visual scholars today: similarity, proximity, good continuation, closure (or completion), symmetry, and periodicity (Lehar 47). Many more principles have been discovered since their work in the early-to-mid 1900’s, but the seven listed above are some of the most important to Gestalt theory (Lehar 46).

Each of these principles exists in a cumulative sense, with the perceiver creating wholes from various elements in the human field of perception. A good visual example of these principles (excluding perhaps the principle of closure) would be a flock of migrating geese. Their alignment, grouping, and similarity serve to create the perception that they are a “whole,” even though they might be traveling together at a great rate of speed. Their collective pattern in flight is a strong gestalt; one which allows the viewer to maintain a clear understanding of their structure, even while it is moving.

These principles also serve as strategic design techniques for graphic artists—as methods to generate a desired effect for their audience. The deliberate use of Gestalt psychology is encouraged by renowned design scholars like Alex White, who advises, “by manipulating the interaction of the individual parts, you affect the cumulative perception” (White 59). In The Non-Designer’s Design Book, Robin Williams gives a colorful acronym to assist in graphic design: contrast, repetition, alignment, and proximity (Williams 13). Williams admits that these four principles are her unique reduction of many visual design theories, yet they still have a strong connection to gestalt
principles of perception in that her rules can help the reader to “instantly know” due to “spatial relationships” (Williams 22).

Edgar Rubin, Danish phenomenologist and contributor to the Gestalt movement, was strongly influenced by the work of the early gestalt researchers and likewise tested their theories with the use of ambiguous images (Hothersall 211). He developed one of the most famous examples of how the mind seeks out such symmetry by creating what is now known as “Rubin’s vase” (see Figure 1 below) (Hothersall 211).

![Figure 1: Rubin's vase](image)

In its very construction this display forces the mind to focus on one figure or the other, a vase or two opposing profiles, and likewise allows for a flexible flipping of the perceived foreground and background. Hence, another important gestalt principle that has been discussed for almost a century: figure-ground (Hothersall 211). Figure-ground implies that when we perceive, we dynamically define an object (figure) and place it in
an environment (space or ground). The two entities necessarily work together, with strong contrasts between figure and ground creating strong perceptions. The notion of figure-ground applies not only to obvious examples such as Rubin’s Vase or the Taoist Taijitu (see Figure 2), but can also occur in strong gestals: in viewing the characteristic v-shape of geese in flight, you are looking at a strong gestalt, which likewise becomes a stable figure against its background, the sky.

The holistic, mental creation of gestalten is vastly different than simply observing the various elements in one’s field of modal perception. Most likely, in the perceptual processes of the human mind, observing individual sensory stimuli can only happen after the mind has taken in the entire perceptual field. Scientists specializing in visual research have noted on many occasions that the brain does not—and cannot—immediately categorize and interpret all individual elements in a given scene, but likely starts at a
much broader level of interpretation (Uttal 168). Once the mind has a good all-around understanding of the field of perception, it then can “zoom-in” on and examine individual elements (Uttal 169).

There are also bottom-up theories of visual perception, propounding that individual elements in a scene are absorbed first and then synthesized into wholes (Uttal 172). Many of these “elementalist” studies are presently being questioned by neoholistic researchers due to that fact that the elementalists tend to isolate and analyze small visual triggers (Uttal 175). An underlying problem with both bottom-up and top-down theories of perception is put forth by eminent visual scholar William Uttal as follows: “Behavioral, stimulus-response, or input-output analysis cannot, in principle, determine the inner structure of a closed system” (Uttal 171). At best, researchers are able to create metaphorical “black box” accounts of how we perceive sensory information, theorizing on the systems at play without getting any closer to understanding these systems than to “infinitely distant black holes” (Gregory et al 7). These are important points, especially considering that come from a prominent psychologist and industrial engineer. If the scientific measurement of closed systems is viewed as impossible, then perhaps holistic analyses of perception can produce equally as valuable studies on perception as can rigid atomistic studies. Thomas Kuhn, heavily influenced by the works of the Gestalt psychologists, aptly noted:

Normal science…often suppresses fundamental novelties because they are necessarily subversive of its basic commitments. Nevertheless, so long as those
commitments retain an element of the arbitrary, the very nature of normal research ensures that novelty shall not be suppressed for very long. (Kuhn 5)

The Sensory Modes

The pioneers of Gestalt psychology propounded a new way of looking at perception that has led to much debate amongst scholars in the “hard” sciences and philosophy alike. Their psychology provides no clear line of demarcation between either perceptual or cognitive functions of the mind (Lehar 109). This, perhaps, is one reason for the huge number of studies conducted in both the sciences and the arts that employ gestalt perceptual principles. Although Gestalt theory is frequently applied to visual perception, we can also see that it has been employed to help explain tactile and aural experience as well. For example, perceptual researcher Eugene Narmour has recently used the gestalt principles of closure, good continuation, and proximity as tools to research musical expectancy and music cognition (Narmour 1990). Indeed, some of the first research in Gestalt psychology was not focused on any one particular mode of perception.

Vittorio Benussi, Italian contemporary of Max Wertheimer, carried out an experiment in which apparent motion was observed through the sense of touch. He found that when two different points on a test subject’s body were stimulated—at different time intervals—the subject perceived a “flea-type” (or jumping) sensation between the two points (Hothersall 210). The careful, rhythmic modulation of physical triggers was critical in achieving this perceived motion between the two points, which Benussi referred to as gestalt formation (Hothersall 210). A similar experiment was conducted by
psychologists Geldard and Sherrick, whose test subjects noted the sensation of a “small rabbit” hopping up and down their arm (Hothersall 210). This sensation of movement was generated by the rhythmic application of both electrical and mechanical stimuli (Hothersall 210).

In yet another tactilely-based experiment, Nobel Laureate Georg von Bekesy used vibration to generate a tactile gestalt. By placing vibrators on both knees of blindfolded test subjects, and likewise triggering them at different rates, the subjects noted that the sensation would move from one leg to the other as well as float at a point between their knees, a phenomenal experience that did not correspond with the actual location of the triggers (Hothersall 210). Researchers have also shown that apparent movement can be similarly experienced as traveling between the right and left hands (Kolers 149). This is a curious fact considering that, unlike the ears and eyes, tactile signals are projected by the left and right hands into totally different hemispheres of the brain (Kolers 149).

Having noted that Gestalt phenomena can occur visually or tactiley, it is also interesting to see that intermodal gestalts have also been demonstrated in perceptual research: in a study completed in 1928, apparent motion was achieved by pairing alternating flashing lights with aural and kinesthetic impulses; a demonstration of apparent motion between three different modes (Kolers 149).

An incredible experiment completed in 1932, which was repeated in 1969, involved four trials studying the relationship between sound and light patterns (Kolers 149). The scientists conducting the study demonstrated apparent motion between visual impulses and aural impulses in two separate experiments, and then combined these
impulses in two more tests (Kolers 149). By intentionally creating spatial and temporal alterations when presenting the aural and visual impulses, the test subjects reported some remarkable perceptual phenomena, including “a fused motion of luminous sound or audible light” (Kolers 149). Also noted by a participant in their final experiment was the presence of “something that moves between the sound and the light or between the light and the sound, a light and sound tunnel which grows longer and shorter, or a light tunnel that grows longer and shorter while a sound passes through it” (Kolers 149).

The above experiments are intriguing examples of how apparent motion can exist phenomenally as perceptual gestalt. By factoring in Wertheimer’s research we thus have a small set of examples where gestalt is demonstrated to have affective properties—aurally, visually, and tactiley—and based upon key elements of motion and rhythmic alteration in these experiments, these gestalts were shown to exist temporally. Regardless of the many experiments conducted on the subject of holistic perception, scientists have yet to codify or identify the specific cognitive mechanisms that generate such forms (Uttal 221). Even so, perceptual researcher Lehar goes as far as to say that “any model that fails to address the gestalt phenomena of perception is worse than no model at all, for it is a diversion from the real issues” (Lehar 56).

Although Gunther Kress has examined the increasing salience of visuals in contemporary communication, he has likewise raised the call for the development of a method with which to study how different semiotic modes interact with one another. He advises that we need a new theory of semiosis in which synaesthesia, a process by which “the transduction of meaning from one semiotic mode…to another semiotic mode” is
recognized as “an entirely usual and productive process…rather than as a pathology to be remedied” (Kress 86). He acknowledges that it is critical to look at information both from the standpoint of how it is sequenced, as well as how it is organized spatially, and to consider the implications of new technologies in pedagogy (Kress 13).

Having discussed briefly the role that Gestalt theory has played in studies of visual and tactile perception, and in preparing to discuss aurality and aural forms, it might be prudent to note the work of psychologist Ernst Mach. Mach was a major influence to the founders of Gestalt psychology, an associate of Christian von Ehrenfels, and he wrote a text called *Analysis of Sensations* (Hothersall 207). In this book he discusses how different visual and aural elements might be perceived in collective form as an entity that is entirely different than its constituent elements, a “compounding of sensations” (Hothersall 207). As we prepare to look into the possibility of a gestalt-based analysis of aurality, we should consider this notion of compounding of sensations. Mach writes, “all systems of space sensation…are connected by a common associative link—the movements which they serve to guide” (Schwartz 118). Movement could very well be a key to discussing interactions between visual, tactile, and aural gestalts.

_Audition and Gestalt_

To further the discussion of multimodal gestalten—with particular emphasis on aurality—we may look to the work of Viktor Zuckerkandl and Leonard Meyer. Both of these music scholars employed gestalt perceptual principles in their writing to help explain how music functions and is perceived by the listener. I believe their work has
implications for not only musical analysis, but also for the analysis of all types of sound—all aurality.

In *Sound and Symbol*, Viktor Zuckerkandl invokes the work of the Gestalt psychologists to assist in his analysis of musical composition. He draws a comparison between the illusory visual motions generated in Wertheimer’s experiments and the fact that motion is also perceived aurally between notes in a piece of music, commenting that Wertheimer uncovered the “core of pure dynamism” in his experiments, that “every seeing of motion is, essentially, a perceiving of purely dynamic phenomenon” (Zuckerkandl 136). He actually goes as far as to say that when we listen to music we do not hear the notes, we are listening to pure motion—pure “betweenness”—which travels across the tops of tonal “pillars” (Zuckerkandl 137)! Zuckerkandl believes that the experiments conducted by Wertheimer show that “musical motion is at the core of every motion; that every experience of motion is, finally, musical experience” (Zuckerkandl 138). His reasoning here is that since sound has no “place” and represents no “thing,” it is the purest form of motion (Zuckerkandl 138). His discussion of continuity in tonal motion, and its movement from one note to the next, implies aurally the gestalt principles of good continuation and proximity, even though he does not state this explicitly.

In a section of his text titled “Digression II: Temporal Gestalt,” Zuckerkandl makes an examination of melodic form and the fact that a series or group of notes becomes different than the mere summation of its constituent parts. He notes that melodies are necessarily temporal—specifically ordered series in time—but that there is a difficulty in negotiating the work of the Gestalt psychologists with music analysis.
According to Zuckerkandl, while the Gestaltists primarily studied spatial gestalten, an entire melody given one note at a time is impossible to analyze in simultaneity (Zuckerkandl 229). He proceeds to explain that it is impossible for a listener to stay engaged in the flow of music, accurately recall the immediately previous note, and effectively anticipate the next note in sequence. According to Zuckerkandl, the “the existence of the individual tone…is a being directed toward what no longer exists and what does not yet exist…hearing a melody is hearing, having heard, and being about to hear, all at once” (Zuckerkandl 235). His notion of musical gestalt includes both simultaneity and temporality in that the music listener experiences a spatial gestalt that encompasses (and integrates) past sounds and anticipates future aural elements: “It is a condition of hearing…that the tone present at the moment should fill consciousness entirely, that nothing should be remembered, nothing except it or beside it should be present in consciousness” (Zuckerkandl 231). He emphasizes that the motion of time cannot be stopped and is felt most acutely when listening to music; it is always one step ahead of the listener, pulling her forward: “time is always new” (Zuckerkandl 233).

Although primarily concerned with music, Zuckerkandl mentions that such a notion of temporal gestalt applies to the experience of all arts, as we experience music and other art forms temporally because time “stores itself and anticipates itself” (Zuckerkandl 235). He notes that we undergo such gestalten when reading a book; I would assume that he would feel similarly about a ballet or film.

In concluding his passage concerning temporal gestalt, Zuckerkandl makes an observance of two forms upon which he postulates all music is built: circular form and
serial form (Zuckerkandl 237). He advises that these two forms are closed and open, respectively, with the closed form being defined by symmetry, equilibrium, and polarity, and the open form being defined as “again and yet again and yet again…” (Zuckerkandl 237). These two forms, used in both macro (the overarching musical architecture of a composition) and micro-level composition (the composition of a four-bar melody, for example), represent at minimum two perceptual principles of Gestalt theory: the closed form is an aural example of the principle of closure/completion and the open form might be seen as good continuation. These temporal gestalten are strictly rhythmic, according to Zuckerkandl, and he propounds that all temporal gestalten are rhythmic gestalten (Zuckerkandl 238).

The deliberate structuring of music using open and closed forms allows the composer to create deliberate musical “building blocks” with which to create “oriented tension” and strategic repetitions of melody and rhythm (Zuckerkandl 238). (It is worth noting here that repetition is perhaps the most well-known affective rhetorical principle employed in the written and spoken word). The thoughtful arrangement of wave cycles is designed to pull the hearer forward in time until the very last note of the composition, as the Gestalt “whole is not past, but is built up…in the perfectly definite dynamic quality of the last step…that brings such a gigantic construction to completion” (Zuckerkandl 238). Even through the careful structuring of cycles and waves, the musical meaning itself manifested through dynamic tension between notes: in space.

With Zuckerkandl’s method of analyzing dynamic gestalten, he places the experience of aural perception outside of the individual’s mind: it is neither objective nor
subjective; “[I]t cannot be described by either physical or psychological terms,” whether in music or in writing (Katz 317, 1996). The system of dynamic interaction that he draws up is excellent for analyzing the interaction of aural elements in time, but it is presented in a way that does not allow for the hearer’s situational biases to be factored into the musical experience. He writes, “[T]ones…are events in a dynamic field…are conveyors of forces. Hearing music means hearing an action of forces” (Zuckerkandl 37). This notion of sound as pure dynamism positions music in “an ideal temporal realm of meaning not dependent upon the listener,” with little room to analyze affective aural experience outside of tonal/rhythmic/melodic tensions in writing and rhetoric generally (Katz 174, 1996).

Leonard Meyer, influential music theorist and author of *Emotion and Meaning in Music*, also discusses Gestalt theory in an aural context. Instead of explicating the affective qualities of music in the context of a purely external, dynamic field, however, he discusses how music’s “patterns become experienced as feelings and emotions” (Meyer 4). His work is still being actively used to study style, composition, and psychology 50 years after his landmark text was first published.

In his text, Meyer decries the atomistic, universalistic, and hedonistic stances in music psychology research as insufficient for analyzing music’s affective and meaningful properties, calling upon the Gestaltists to help explain how music impacts the listener (Meyer 5). In Meyer’s own words:
Thinking and feeling need not be viewed as polar opposites but as different manifestations of a single psychological process. There is...no inseparable gulf between the affective and the intellectual responses made to music. Both depend upon the same perceptive processes, the same stylistic habits, the same modes of mental organization; and the same musical processes give rise to and shape both types of experience...Communication depends on, presupposes, and arises out of the universe of discourse which in the aesthetics of music is called style. (Meyer 39)

I further review Leonard Meyer’s gestalt-based theory of musical form in the following chapter. His principles of pattern perception form the core of my analytical methodology and I describe them in greater detail while simultaneously explaining how they can apply to the examination of not just music, but to the narration and sound effects incorporated in pharmaceutical television advertisements.

Conclusion

Based on a review of the literature, we can see how gestalt forms are seen in both in a spatial-instantaneous sense, as well as in a temporal-linear sense. Gestalt theory has been, from its outset, rooted in holistic perception with movement as a key factor in generating apparent motion and dynamic forms. Rhythm and movement are present in all of the works I examined in reviewing the literature: aural gestalt, visual gestalt, and tactile gestalt—all create dynamic fields of perception via oscillation. I believe that the gestalt
principles of perception discussed above can be purposefully applied to analyze multiple, simultaneous communicative modes, perhaps assisting in the holistic analysis of affective, multisensory information.

In the following chapter, I outline my methodology for analyzing and foregrounding aurality in multimodal messages. I use gestalt theories of perception to provide a fulcrum with which to examine interactions between both the visual and the aural.
CHAPTER THREE
HOLISTIC METHODOLOGY

Introduction
Based largely upon the gestalt theory reviewed thus far, in this chapter I describe the methodology employed in my analysis of aural and visual forms in television commercials. I begin by explaining how and why I have specifically chosen to analyze pharmaceutical commercials and give a brief explanation of their common traits. I then explain how, based upon the recent work of Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen, I examine the visual activity in each commercial. In hopes of building upon the existing gestalt-oriented research on affective aurality, I explain my strategy for analyzing aural shapes, patterns, and movement, grounding my method in the writing of Leonard Meyer. To conclude this chapter, I discuss the implementation of my movement analysis, which is the cornerstone of my study.

As a student of composition and technical communication, I am particularly interested in how sound can be used to affect an audience. This is something I intentionally try to foreground throughout this study. During my initial research I found little scholarly work pertaining to panaural rhetorics in the context of television advertising, and so have chosen as my subject an ubiquitous multimodal advertisement, the pharmaceutical commercial. The dearth of related work in this area leads to a number of challenges, not least of which being how to find an appropriate sample of TV ads from this communication genre. In the end, I have selected three separate advertisements to examine by means of this gestalt-based methodology.
It should be noted here that this study’s methodology is of a qualitative nature. As I develop my method for looking at both the visual and the aural simultaneously, I am intentionally cautious in how I approach the categorization and measurement of the material. Indeed, as gestalt perceptive theory helps in understanding perceptive wholes, I work hard to avoid analyzing commercial elements in complete isolation, or with rigid measurement. I further expound upon the potential for such quantitatively-oriented gestalt research in chapter five.

Subject Selection
I have chosen to analyze commercials for the drugs Zoloft, Mirapex, and Enablex (please see Appendices A, B, and C for screen captures of these commercials), which are advertised as treatments for depression, restless leg syndrome, and overactive bladder, respectively. Although these medications are advertised as treatments for vastly different ailments, their representative commercials have a lot in common. I selected them partially on the basis that, being entirely computer-generated and portraying relatively “simple” elements, they operate at a fairly high level of visual abstraction. The simplicity of these visuals—and the fact that they have less precise referential qualities than, say, an actual film of a human being in a depressed state—aids in conducting an initial examination with my holistic methodology. As I demonstrate below, this abstraction is valuable in helping me isolate the visuals present in each commercial for the analysis of their movement via Kress and van Leeuwen’s visual theory. Of primary importance is the fact that all three of these commercials also possess three specific audio elements: voice (narration), sound effects (which includes ambient sounds), and music.
One of the reasons that I chose three separate minute-long commercials to analyze is their scope. In these three different minute-long advertisements, I have a good sampling of diverse material to analyze, but not so much that overlooking important rhetorical details is a concern. Examining several different advertisements aids in the development of the movement analysis that I outline below. Looking at several short-form broadcasts has been an ideal test bed for this technique, a new analytical method that is the primary contribution of this thesis.

Another important reason that I have selected three high-profile pharmaceutical advertisements is that, to the extent that they are prime examples of strategic technical communication, they certainly contain a carefully structured core of rhetorical strategies in their composition. The tremendous amount of money put into these ads—a 330% increase in advertising revenues from 1996 to 2005—suggests a growing level of importance is being placed on these ads (Donohue et al 673). My focus here is to reveal the carefully-vetted aural and visual shapes and forms that underpin these messages. In the conclusion chapter, I use data from my analyses to discuss the possibility that these advertisements are actually structured to create “pharmaceutical exigencies” for the viewer.

**Visual Analysis**

I base the visual analysis in my thesis on chapter eight of *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*. The methods that Kress and van Leeuwen put forth in this chapter for the study of moving images underpin the visual study of each commercial. They advise that their grammar “can be usefully applied to the spatial aspects of moving images,” an
acknowledgement of dynamic common ground between simultaneity and motion (Kress and van Leeuwen 265). In particular, I look at these three commercials in terms of their representational, interactive, and compositional elements. Kress and van Leeuwen use these three categories to explicate the meaning of both still and moving images, and I likewise apply them in analyzing the key compositional elements of moving images.

I choose their grammar to analyze moving images for several reasons. An observation, made by Kress and van Leeuwen at the very beginning of their text, pairs nicely with my own desire to find a culturally-sensitive method of visual analysis: “The dominant visual language is now controlled by the global cultural/technological empires of the mass media, which disseminate the examples set by exemplary designers” (Kress and van Leeuwen 5). At the time of this writing, the United States and New Zealand are the only two industrialized nations to allow such direct-to-consumer TV advertisements; it seems that Kress and van Leeuwen’s method is suitable for critically examining these pharmaceutical ads as they pertain to their exclusively western audiences (Diller 29).

They also advise that their grammar, which is based upon their study of Western cultures, is not comprised of hard and fast rules but is a very general method of looking at the “social resource[s] of a particular group” (Kress and van Leeuwen 3). This flexibility pairs perfectly with my desire to look at how the visuals in these pharmaceutical commercials operate holistically when paired with audio.

My application of Kress and van Leeuwen’s grammar to these pharmaceutical commercials starts with their notion of the representational. Just as Gestalt theory studies the role of motion and rhythm in visual, aural, and tactile perceptions, Kress and van
Leeuwen’s work also examines motion—vectors, in particular—as a key representational aspect of both still and moving images (see Figure 3 below for a simple rendering of these vectors).

The vector, although usually invisible or implied, denotes movement and direction along a path. Such a vector may be represented by a line with an arrowhead on one or both ends, and may emanate from any onscreen element (Kress and van Leeuwen 59). In Figure 3 above, I have conveyed simply how these vectors might work on screen. If the box at left represents a single frame of film, the plane’s movement along a vector toward the black target may be conveyed visibly by use of an arrow. At right, the relationship is different, as the only vector active in this scene emanates from the dog’s eyes.
According to Kress and van Leeuwen, “The hallmark of a narrative visual ‘proposition’ is the presence of such vectors: [sic] narrative structures always have one,…” (Kress and van Leeuwen 59). These vectors indicate different types of interaction and movement; they represent “doing” (Kress and van Leeuwen 59). If these vectors emanate from the eyes of a “human, or a human-like animal,” that character is referred to as a reactor, and the vectoral endpoint is called a phenomenon (Kress and van Leeuwen 67). If the vectors are associated with the movement of other shapes and forms—sans eyelines—these forms are referred to as actors, and the objects of their endpoints are called goals (Kress and van Leeuwen 64).

I identify the visual actors, goals, reactors, and phenomena present in each commercial, as well as the vectors that connect them. Although Kress and van Leeuwen define a large number of factors involved in the semiotic construction of still images, they transfer the four representational components noted above to the realm of moving images. Thus, I too examine what I think are the key components in each commercial, as well as what is significant about their movements on screen and in time.

Kress and van Leeuwen’s acknowledgement of vectors-as-motion, discussed in-depth in relation to the still image, is given new complexity on the television screen with their discussion of disconnection and connection. Connection and disconnection, achieved by carefully editing, arranging, and organizing cuts in relation to one another, can be construed as generating specific temporal meanings. I examine in my visual analyses the strategically-timed segues and juxtaposed cuts from one scene or angle to
another, especially in regards to the timing and duration of different shots as they fall on the commercial’s timeline, and look at how they relate to the commercial in its entirety.

In their discussion of the representational aspects of film, Kress and van Leeuwen also briefly touch upon the importance of film sound, but primarily in terms of synchronized voice: where call-outs can play an important role in the narrative verbal processes of the still image, synchronized audio can fulfill the same role in the moving picture (Kress and van Leeuwen 261). Synchronous (and asynchronous) sound effects and music are not explicitly considered in their text, but are important representational aural elements that I factor into my holistic analysis.

In terms of the interactive, I examine the camera angles and camera distances (or zoom amounts), used in the production of the three pharmaceutical commercials. According to Kress and van Leeuwen, the angle from which a scene is shot has the ability to place the viewer in a specified position of power: a high-angle implies viewer power, eye-level implies equality, and a low angle indicates more of a subservient role on the viewer’s behalf (Kress and van Leeuwen 148). In terms of social positioning, the level of camera zoom employed in a scene has the ability to invoke different feelings of social involvement and relationships (Kress and van Leeuwen 149). This social continuum runs from impersonal to intimate, based on how far from the subject the viewer is positioned (Kress and van Leeuwen 124). Therefore, in each commercial I look at how close the camera is placed to the on-screen participants and interpret what this is means in terms of ad-viewer interactivity.
Kress and van Leeuwen’s notion of *compositional* strategy is somewhat more involved than their notion of the interactive, as it “relates the representational and interactive meanings of the image to each other through three interrelated systems” (Kress and van Leeuwen 177). I examine how their three compositional systems are realized in each commercial. The first system is that of *information value*. The positioning of the elements on-screen imparts certain understanding of those elements upon the viewer: left/right, top/bottom, center/margin are dichotomous relationships and speak to the importance of the visuals that reside in (or pass through) these positions. These positions represent relationships regarding the given/new, real/ideal, and mediation/subservience (Kress and van Leeuwen 197).

*Salience*, the second system of visual composition that they discuss, can be explained simply as the degree to which a visual element “stands out” or maintains the viewer’s attention. Salience can be enhanced through a visual’s positioning, size, brightness, or through a multitude of other techniques. I thus point out the key strategies used to generate visual salience for the components in each pharmaceutical ad, and salience ends up being one of the most important concepts at play in all three sections of my analysis (i.e-the visual, aural, and movement analyses).

When considering Kress and van Leeuwen’s notion of salience in terms of gestalt theory’s *figure-ground* dichotomy (see Figure 1 on page 17), it can actually be reenvisioned as a “*more salient-less salient*” relationship. Therefore, when a visual element presents in such a manner that it “stands out,” we have an instance of that visual becoming a prominent figure in a ground of activity. Below, I further explain how this is
salience is expressed on the \( y \)-axis of my movement analysis; both visual and aural activity can be analyzed in terms of their salient qualities.

The third system of composition is framing, and is a critical connection between the visual and aural analyses. Framing can be manifested in a spatial-simultaneous sense through dividing lines or objects, but can also be achieved temporally with strategic use of film editing techniques (Kress and van Leeuwen 177). The presence of “specific time-ordered patterns” is key to composition and framing in multimodal texts and Kress and van Leeuwen see “rhythm [as being] the dominant integrative principle” for filmic composition (Kress and van Leeuwen 265). As the visual composition of each commercial changes over time, it provides a valuable temporal connection with which movement and shape can be used to examine both visual and audio. That being said, I incorporate the gist of each visual study directly into each commercial’s movement analysis, while providing more in-depth descriptions of these visuals in the appendix for further reference. Also contained in the appendix is a collection of screen captures referenced during the analysis of each commercial (see Appendices A, B, and C).

The penultimate chapter of their text is not intended to give a thorough methodology for analyzing film—it is more of an acknowledgement of the potential for analyzing film via their grammar—and I heed their call to “begin to integrate the field of moving images into [their] social semiotic approach to visual communication” (Kress and van Leeuwen vii). This portion of their text provides a brief discussion of film analysis and it focuses on the “area where the spatial and the temporal interact and overlap”
(Kress and van Leeuwen 265). I am confident that their strategy not only complements, but helps in foregrounding the audio via Leonard Meyer’s theory of aural gestalt.

**Aural Analysis**

Meyer begins his study of affective aural gestalten by briefly reviewing the concept of prägnanz put forth by the Gestalt theorists. He sees this mental process, first propounded by the founders of Gestalt psychology, at play in our aural perceptual field. When considered in a musical milieu, prägnanz implies that a listener continuously tries to find order and organization amongst different musical elements, even if the order that we happen to impose is not entirely satisfactory. This order, satisfactory or not, gives rise to “the natural modes of expectation,” which likewise impact the listener’s emotions (Meyer 87). Meyer advises that expectation formation can be examined in terms of gestalt principles of perception, and outlines his analytical methodology according to three principles: *the law of good continuation*, completion and closure, and *the weakening of shape* (Meyer 92).

As Meyers begins to outline his method of analysis, he makes an interesting point, a testament to the perceiver-sensitive nature of his methodology: “The laws already established can lead us to a general understanding of…the modes of expectation within a cultural context” (Meyer 86). Immediately, we see that Meyer addresses the listener’s individual experiences and internal psychological makeup: “Without thought and memory there could be no musical experience” (Meyer 87). He also advises that “[M]emory, activated by knowledge and information, is a force in organizing musical experience” (Meyer 91). It is with individual experience that Meyer attempts to negotiate
Gestalt theory as a means to understand music’s affective qualities. This provides a good counterpart to Kress and van Leeuwen’s visual grammar: both leave analytical room for cultural factors and experiences.

According to his musical interpretation of the law of good continuation, which encompasses both rhythmic and melodic forms, “[A] shape or pattern will continue in its initial mode of organization” (Meyer 92). Meyer is careful to note that this notion of good continuation does not just encompass simple repetition, but is a mental process in which change occurs. It “always operates within a…cultural stylistic context” (Meyer 101). The mind perceives and enforces the notion of aural continuation as “motion towards a goal,” yet allows for gaps and fluctuations in the process (Meyer 93). Good continuation, which was initially described by Max Wertheimer, is frequently employed to examine the perception of spatial wholes, but Meyer uses the principle to describe a “vital…aspect of the musical process,” the organization of music temporally (Meyer 102).

Rhythm is the key to organizing music temporally and achieving continuity, says Meyer, and he addresses this by looking at a tripartite system of temporal patterns: pulse, meter, and rhythm (Meyer 102). Meyer shows that continuity can be strategically created and disturbed by altering rhythmic and melodic forms in a composition. I apply Meyer’s notion of good continuation to my analysis of each pharmaceutical commercial’s constituent audio elements. Speech patterns are of particular interest, but I also examine the music and sound effects as they serve to create or forestall continuance in the advertisements. For example, the Zoloft commercial contains a music track with strong melodic and rhythmic structure. By looking closely at the rise and fall of this melody, as
well as the timing of its various passages in relation to the greater commercial, I am able
to see how this aural track is used to create continuation of forward motion while still
providing support for the development of other aural and visual elements.

Meyer’s second principle of pattern perception is that of completion and closure.
He describes this principle as being a “corollary of the law of continuation,” as the mind
working in a state of prägnanz not only strives to find continuity, but completion and
resolution in the field of perception (Meyer 129). He stresses that the presence of
completion and closure in aural forms is found in the “relationships between antecedents
and consequents” (Meyer 129). The presence of good continuation and completeness and
closure is determined by the musical forms and patterns incorporated in a piece of music
(Meyer 130). A sense of incompleteness is perceived due to structural gaps caused by the
noticeable skipping over or omission of musical elements, or by intentionally delaying
the realization of different aural figures.

Meyer emphasizes that the individual must bring his or her own experience and
training into the hearing of a piece of music in order to understand the style-specific
incorporation of completion and closure. The awareness of certain stylistic conventions
(i.e., melody, rhythm, and harmony) helps the listener to “know when a sound term is
incomplete, partially complete, or finally closed” (Meyer 130). I use Meyer’s musically-
oriented notion of completion and closure to examine not only music in these
pharmaceutical ads, but also the manner in which each aural element serves to create
expectation and fulfill tension. By looking closely at recapitulations of melodic form,
weakly phrased rhythms, and even the placement of sound effects in relation to the
temporal flow, I am able to interpret potential points at which the commercials signal to the viewer that a grouping or shape has ended.

Saturation is an important factor in Meyer’s work, too, as a repeated pattern or form can assume the qualities of ground—in the gestalt figure/ground sense—and sets the expectation for change, either in terms of further continuation or completion. A prolonged saturation, however, can cause the repeated form to be taken by the listener not as ground, but as a focal point, so the composer must incorporate saturation, the “interplay of forces leading to increase[ed] tension,” with care (Meyer 136). I pay particularly close attention to how aural saturation is incorporated into the selected advertisements as the majority of these commercials have music and narration running the full length of each minute-long clip.

The third and final principle of pattern perception that Meyer discusses is the weakening of shape. Weakening of shape, according to Meyer, is strategic:

A stimulus series…is well-shaped when its progress…articulation into phases of activity and phases of rest…modes of continuation…manner of completion and closure, and even its temporary disturbances and irregularities are intelligible to the practiced listener and enable him to envisage with some degree of specificity and accuracy what the later stages of the particular musical process will be.

(Meyer 161)
Musical shape may be intentionally weak or ambiguous, but even these weak shapes can serve to create powerful expectations or anticipation in the listener; shape helps to provide the listener with a sense of direction. The notion of shape may include completion, closure, and good continuation, as Meyer’s three aural gestalten frequently overlap and complement one another. This overlapping of aural gestalten is very similar to the manner in which the visual perceptual principles set forth by the Gestalt psychologists work dynamically to create wholes from multimodal stimuli.

Meyer notes that it is extremely difficult for a composer to create such discord in his or her work, such wild, conflicting shapes that the mind cannot create (“under the aegis of the law of prägnanz”) some sort of perceptual order (Meyer 162). Uniformity in rhythm and melodic structure, on the other hand, serves to provide ambiguity in the shape of a composition, as a highly uniform passage, repeated for a while, will create anticipation of change in the listener’s mind (Meyer 164). There are no clear “focal points” around which a listener can plan their path through the music when uniformity is continued for a protracted amount of time (Meyer 163). Aural differentiations in time and/or focal points are integral to my application of Meyer’s theory to film. Although melodic weakening of shape is not particularly strong outside of the Zoloft commercial, weakened shape is present rhythmically in all three ads. I look at the duration of sentences, the entrance of sound effects, and the overlapping of aural elements to help in determining when aural shape is strong, weak, being built, or decaying.

Aside from being valuable heuristics for examining the affective qualities of music, Meyers’s principles of perception work well with Kress and van Leeuwen’s
notion of framing and salience; these principles are key to achieving effective timing and presence in the aural mode, as shape and movement are important in an analysis of temporally-complex film. By applying Meyer’s principles we are able to see how different elements from the aural mode can become either key figures in, or the very ground of the perceptual field itself. I explain below the movement analysis, and its effectiveness in analyzing both aural and visual salience.

In a compelling passage in *The Epistemic Music of Rhetoric*, Steven Katz calls upon the work of Leonard Meyer to formulate a strategy for examining temporally affective style in writing. Granted, Katz’s work incorporates the work of many other philosophers, but he employs Meyer to help address temporal experience in the written word. He notes, “[T]he point…is that different rhythms, created by different figures, create different effects; we have a choice in how we construct affective experience through sound” (Katz 193, 1996).

Reading through Katz’s application of Meyer to the realm of writing poses new opportunities for further application of Meyer’s principles of pattern perception; I believe that Meyer’s work has implications for analyzing both non-referential “pure” sounds like music or sound effects, as well as for analysis of the spoken word. Meyer’s three principles of pattern perception give us a unique strategy for applying Gestalt theory to aural fields of perception in television ads.

*Movement Analysis*

I have developed a timeline, dubbed a *movement analysis*, for the spatio-temporal examination of visual and aural elements in the moving picture. My order of study for
each commercial begins in the visual, moves to the aural, and then proceeds to a study of dynamic interaction between both the visual and aural. That is accomplished by bringing the two modes—visual and aural—together in one comparative timeline (see Figure 4 below), a visual that conveys many points of spatio-temporal information at a glance. The areas of overlap represent the simultaneous, salient activities under examination. These colored areas of confluence portray an important selection of “data ink” (Tufte 96).

The goal here is to study individually the movement of forms in each mode, and then compare their forms simultaneously. Anders Fagerjord has proposed that “the different modes form different voices that not only communicate on their own, but also work together in a mélange,” a key point I interrogate in my own study (Fagerjord 2). These timelines are used trans-methodologically to show change over time. In the sense that it is motion-based, the movement analysis is adaptable to both Kress and van Leeuwen and
Meyer’s work. This timeline acts as a sort of notational system, thus allowing me to better foreground the movement of forms present in each commercial.

The y-axis, labeled salience, is intended to be a flexible reference for apparent activity levels in the commercial. Since the premise of the movement analysis is to examine holistic activity, solely using the vertical axis to chart such multimodal activity is ideal. For a more elemental breakdown of the pharmaceutical ads, please reference Appendices D, E, and F. These appendices provide thorough breakdowns—also in timeline format—of all audiovisual activities in each commercial, but without giving any attention to interaction between the elements. I use these appendices to help guide the development and accuracy of the different movement analyses.

In terms of what specifically constitutes salience, I should describe how I map visuals in relation to the y-axis. Although I apply Kress and van Leeuwen’s representational, interactive, and compositional in my analyses, my main focus in showing visuals on the vertical axis lies in the physical movement of the objects on screen. This might encompass the movement of one actor on screen, or combine in one swath of color a collective of all onscreen movements. Thus, depending on what I am explicating, I may portray one or more visuals on the movement analysis simultaneously. I change the arcs and angles of colored areas based upon when the on-screen visuals start and stop. If the movement begins suddenly, such as the movement of the bluebird in the Zoloft ad (see Appendix A for a screenshot and Appendix D for the timeline), it is represented with more of an abrupt angle. If a visual’s movement begins slowly, or is maintained for a protracted amount of time, it is represented in relation to the y-axis by a
less severe angle, curve, or even an area of level color. If a visual element under consideration stops moving entirely, or leaves the screen, then the colored area returns back to the $x$-axis (or zero).

This same principle is applied when mapping aural activity on the movement analyses. I examine the affective qualities, and thus the salience, of music, sound effects, and narration, each in terms of Meyer’s principles. Based upon this, I am able to represent visually the commercials’ soundscapes (see Appendix D for a detailed breakdown of the Zoloft commercial’s audio elements). Meyer’s principles allow for the mapping of affective shapes, which are created by variations in volume, rhythm, and tone/pitch. Once again, the abruptness of angles and curves on the movement analysis corresponds with different aural shapes.

For example, certain sound effects in the Zoloft ad come and go suddenly, and are thus represented by arcs that return fully to the $x$-axis (see sound effects noted in Appendix D). In terms of the narrative tracks, most of these commercials don’t have sizable breaks in their aural conveyance, and run the duration of the commercial. Therefore, representing narrative salience lies largely in demonstrating changes in inflection. For most of these commercials, the narration is a fairly stable field of color (see Figure 9 in the next chapter to see this presented in the first movement analysis). Regarding musical salience, this is somewhat more complex to demonstrate visually. Based upon Meyer’s theory, and with accompanying written analysis of the musical activity, I attempt to show on the timeline where changes in melodic, rhythmic, and tonal patterns occur.
To assist in my analysis, I have used several free software programs to extract screen captures from the advertisements, which I include in my analyses and Appendices A, B, and C. I also used the built-in counters in these programs to help determine where key activity, such as the entrance and exit of sound effects, takes place in each commercial (please see Appendices D, E, and F for detailed timelines). I transcribed the narration in each commercial with the assistance of the same software (Appendices G, H, and I).

By rendering each modal component in a different color, the movement analyses become holistic visual references for the study of temporal action. Since none of the commercials exceed one minute in length, I base all movement analyses on a one-second increment of measurement; denoted on the x-axis of each timeline. I examine where these various components enter and leave the video, and by observing the overlapping of multimodal elements, their confluences, and divergences, I attempt to see how the viewer’s emotions are also moved. At points in the analyses, I isolate and magnify shorter segments of the three commercials to see in detail how multimodal transitions are constructed to create a unified expression of feeling.

Conclusion
This methodology, therefore, is rooted in movement. The next chapter proceeds in three sections, each focusing on a different advertisement. I start with the Zoloft commercial, analyze its aural elements, and then compare the visual and aural elements using the movement analysis. I then proceed to the Mirapex commercial, followed by the Enablex commercial, thus analyzing each commercial individually in two stages. This
progression, from the least to the most complex commercial, allows for the analytical method to be established and then progressively challenged.

After my analyses are completed, I conclude by discussing the results and implications of my study for aural literacy. Collectively, the three theorists’ works provide a new strategy for looking at multimodal advertisements that incorporate audio into their messages, allowing for the interpretation of intermodal (and *intramodal*) forms in sound film.
CHAPTER FOUR

ANALYSES

Zoloft: Introduction
The first commercial I have chosen to analyze is for the depression medication Zoloft.
This minute-long commercial is the most visually abstract (see Figure 5 below) out of the
three commercials selected for audiovisual analysis, and a good place to begin applying
my methodological strategy. In terms of visual abstraction, I have chosen to organize my
three analyses from least to most abstract commercial.

Although the Zoloft ad contains vastly fewer filmed shots than the other two
commercials, it has quite a few more aural elements than they. In particular, it includes
many more sound effects with its narrative and musical elements. It is the relative
simplicity in the visual presentation of this advertisement allows for greater ease in
foregrounding its aural components.

Figure 5: Screen capture of the smiling Zoloft "pharmacloud"
**Zoloft: Visual Synopsis**

This commercial is unique among the three I analyze in that it only implements four visual cuts during its entire duration. To speak in terms that Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen use to describe participants in a visual composition, it contains only a few key actors and reactors (Kress and van Leeuwen 74). The filming techniques employed here are straightforward, as are the compositional strategies used.

The visual elements included in the ad are portrayed in a bleak landscape (see Figure 6), with the commercial in its entirety being rendered in simple black lines. This includes the main character, which I will henceforth refer to as the *pharmacloud*, and the bluebird. Only the captions that appear at the bottom of the screen and the drug wordmark (Appendix A) are rendered in what might be considered relatively “high fidelity.”

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*Figure 6: Zoloft "pharmacloud" with bluebird*
The actors and vectors that constitute the filmic flow of this commercial reveal a great deal about the energy levels of the onscreen components. The commercial begins with a fairly subdued opening cut in which the pharmacloud moves very little, and most other on-screen movement by the bluebird and raincloud occurs along horizontal and vertical paths.

The second cut is rendered to portray a chemical reaction between nerve endings, and contains a great deal more vectoral movement than is present in the first cut (Figure 7). This motion occurs not only horizontally and vertically, but also along arcs that connect each nerve ending on the left and right side the screen. It stands in drastic opposition to the first cut (again, see Figure 6 above) in its increased amount of visual activity.

Figure 7: Zoloft ad portrayal of nerve ending chemistry
The third scene reintroduces the pharmacloud, as well as a significant amount of new visual activity. The entire landscape begins to scroll and the pharmacloud and bluebird travel forward along assorted, arched vectors. Green, blue, and yellow spot-coloring are brought into this final scene, and are used sparingly. This scene continues until the final three seconds, when the wordmark and bluebird brought together and portrayed as unmoving (see Appendix A for more screen captures).

Thus, from beginning of the commercial to its end we see a growth and increase in activity levels, an increase in the number of directions along which this visual movement occurs, and a brief conclusion where all visual movement is brought to an end. (please see Appendix J for a detailed visual analysis; Appendix D for a complete breakdown of the commercial’s audio and visual elements on a timeline.)

Zoloft: Aural Analysis

Introduction – I will now begin explicating the aural elements in this ad by first looking at the music, then discussing the aural facets of the narration, and finally by discussing the sound effects. The subject matter of the narration is briefly touched upon, but is not the main focus in analyzing the spoken text; tone and rhythmic order (manifested in the speaker’s inflection), of the narration are of primary interest. Leonard Meyer’s principles of pattern perception are brought to bear on each of these three aural categories (see page 37 for a review of Meyer’s principles).

Aural Analysis of Music – The music track in this commercial is occupied by a recording of a solo clarinet. Without going too far into the music theory of this piece, it is present during the latter two-thirds of the commercial’s soundscape, running for
approximately 40 seconds. This music presents us with several good examples of melody and rhythm as musical gestalt. I will not go into a detailed note-by-note musical analysis of this commercial’s music, as gestalt principles of perception are the specific focus here.

In terms of the law of good continuation, one of the most striking ways that this is achieved in the Zoloft theme music is through the rhythmic grouping of notes (see Figure 8 below). For the first eight bars, we see groups of roughly five notes per bar being juxtaposed against groups of approximately fifteen notes per bar, while the ninth and tenth bars pair groups of roughly three against groups of six notes. Although the overarching meter upon which the music itself is built remains the same throughout the piece, these alternating groupings manifest as a pulse or block of “openly-spaced” notes followed immediately by the feeling of notes being “compressed” into a smaller space. After the first two bars have been presented, rhythmic expectation for the rest of the melody is set up to occur between these alternating densities of notes, and thus continuation is achieved.

Figure 8: Reductive timeline of pattern densities in Zoloft theme music. From left to right: 5-against-15 and 3-against-6 note patterns
In Figure 8, I have made an effort to visually illustrate the four key rhythms used in the construction of the Zoloft theme music, where each vertical line represents a note. This figure is only meant to give a rough visual representation of the music’s structure in time. Since the focus of my analysis is on movement and shape across the modes, I provide only the basic musical pattern here. I carefully consider pattern and rhythm when listening to the other commercials, too, but fully transcribing the music present in these ads would require a shift in focus towards a “stricter” musicological analysis, and would thus cause a move away from the stylistic, gestalt-based analysis that I am striving for.

The two major transitional passages in this piece are featured in bars eleven through twelve and seventeen through eighteen. Both possess unique rhythmic patterns, likely incorporated by the composer to affect continuation of the piece. The first transition is written with a dense string of slurred notes, which indicates to me an intentional rhythmic continuation towards the later half of the commercial. The final transition, however, is a series of clearly articulated individual notes, which seems to be a rhythmically achieved instance of the weakening of shape.

It is interesting that although the overall pattern of phrases is constructed by repeating open and compressed groupings of notes, the two transitions in this piece are presented in exactly the opposite order, from dense to sparse. This not only appears in the strategic weakening of shape via transitions for each half of the piece, but also an example of completion and closure via the manipulation of—and deviation from—the antecedent/consequent patterns established in the main rhythmic scheme (Meyer 129).
This also obtains in the ending of the piece: the final bar completes the melody with a string of nine slurred notes.

Leonard Meyer also discusses melodic form in his text, and based on the rising and falling of the melody, we see several clearly defined forms present in the Zoloft theme. If this rising and falling is mapped out by bar-by-bar, it reveals a piece with two overarching undulations from low to high, and a sudden peak in the concluding bar. None of the three points at which the melody runs into the highest register occur during the two transitions. In Leonard Meyer’s discussion of saturation we see that when an aural figure, either melodic or rhythmic, is repeated over and over the listener is inclined to expect “progressive change and growth” (Meyer 135). Thus the establishment of these musical forms presents a good sense of continuation and strong shape in the piece.

The structured, repetitive progression from low to high in the Zoloft commercial also creates a sense of uniformity via pitch progression, so as the commercial proceeds the listener increasingly expects a resolution (Meyer 163). Indeed, the melodic and rhythmic cycles both shorten in length as the piece proceeds toward the end of the commercial, which leads to greater expectation for change through the weakening of shape. The compression of these cycles in time is largely what guides the listener toward the completion and closure of the piece, yet the piece seems to violate the “principle of return” which Meyer discusses: it ends in a higher register than it started in. This appears to be a strategy to close the piece on a “high note,” maybe to signify the elevated mood achieved by introduction of the medication.
Aural Analysis of Narration – Narration in the Zoloft commercial runs throughout the duration of the advertisement (see Appendix G for a transcription of the narration). Essentially, the narration is divided into four passages, which likewise focus on the following four subjects: a description of depression, the science of Zoloft, a disclaimer, and a reference to the Zoloft brand and slogan. Steven Katz writes that “[I]t is reasonable to speculate that there is a connection between the…pattern of music and the…pattern of prose as sensuous speech, between musical performance and reading out loud,” and this can be illustrated by listening to the deliberately patterned narration of the Zoloft ad (Katz 205, 1996). The commercial provides a particularly good example of how rhythmic continuation can be achieved with the strategic use of structural gaps.

On the whole, the narration has a rather staccato-type presence. As the commercial proceeds from beginning to end, though, the phrasing becomes more fluid, and increasing variation in the narrator’s inflection is manifested as the commercial draws to a close. As Meyer notes, “our sense of closure is in part a product of the…configuration of relaxation and quiescence” (Meyer 139). This can be seen in the manner that the speaker executes his monologue. He begins with a series of short, downwardly-inflected phrases, and ends with a warm, wide-ranging series of vocal tones, thus a sense of relaxation is perceived in progression of the spoken word.

This style of narration, possessing many interposed moments of silence, presents the viewer with what seems to be intentionally-generated incompleteness. There are several “undulations” of phrasing as each subject is addressed, yet the overall narration seems to be set up to have a fairly steady, uniform flow. The uniformity seems to create
weak shape. The listener is confronted with so many gaps in the narration that it becomes
difficult to find any distinct point of rest (Meyer 163). The law of good continuation is
also observed at the outset, but soon into the commercial the rhythmic pattern of
narration ceases to be a mere continuance; it becomes rhythmic saturation. This causes
the listener to anticipate change, which also demonstrates how aural saturation—
particularly extreme uniformity—can cause the hearer to perceive a weakening of shape
and desire either resolution or improved shape.

The strongest instance of completion and closure in this commercial’s narration
falls within the final five seconds, in these lines: “Zoloft, when you know more about
what’s wrong, you can help make it right” (Zoloft). The entire narrative flow is
interrupted by a single, isolated word “Zoloft,” and then the tagline is given. Closure is
thus achieved—as though the word Zoloft functions as an aural comma—and the final
tagline is separated from the rest of the narration as its summation. The pattern of the
narration thus requires you follow all the way to the end to get any sense of rhythmic
relief (thus embodying the pull, magnetism, or “dynamic coherence” that Peter Elbow
(Elbow 633) advises contribute to the music of form), even though the vocal stylizing
becomes more and more animated in its own inflection.

Aural Analysis of Sound Effects – There are five different sound effects
implemented in the Zoloft commercial: rainfall, human sighing, bird chirps, wing flaps,
and a dog bark. They are integrated into the overall audio track at various points, and it is
important to note that they possess greater referential qualities than the music or narration
tracks. They clearly represent the specific sounds that might be generated by specific
elements in the ad. Not only do they correspond temporally with specific visual elements, but they help to provide a sense of shape and likewise help to achieve a sense of closure in the beginning and ending thirds of the commercial.

For example, in the first twenty-one seconds of this commercial we encounter five instances of sighing or moaning. In between each instance of this sighing you will find a dog bark, bird chirp, or flapping of wings. This produces an almost call-and-response type of effect, with sounds of discouragement being countered by the ostensibly cheerful sounds of puppies and birds. This alternating sequence of sad and happy sounds is gradually compressed in time toward the end of the first twenty seconds, and the sequence ends as it began, with a sigh. A pattern of lows and highs is thus established and presents the viewer with good continuation through rhythm.

Although the gaps between these alternating sound effects decrease in terms of seconds, not an extremely obvious rate of fluctuation, it is certainly worth noting. This pattern is therefore effectively “compressed,” or accelerated rhythmically while moving forward in time, and this shows a weakening of shape. As this shape is subtly weakened, closure is manifest by a quick entrance of the clarinet music. Sound effects are then entirely absent for the next fourteen seconds.

For the final twenty-five seconds, the bird chirruping effect is simultaneous with the music track. No other sound effects are present, and the bird chirruping is not merely used as aural punctuation. It becomes a continuous sound, parallel to the narration, until the very end of the commercial. Thus a general sense of continuation is achieved through the presence of non-rhythmic bird sounds. The shape of this sound effect is weak
considering its overall randomness, and it abruptly stops in the penultimate second with the sound of flapping wings.

**Zoloft: Movement Analysis**

Having briefly reviewed the key visual activities in this advertisement at the beginning of this chapter, as well as the shapes and patterns of aural elements present in the soundtrack, we can now attempt to look at how these two modes interact temporally. By using a movement analysis, it is possible to look at how aurality functions as a key affective mode in the ad; by focusing on the principles of Gestalt psychology, we can get a unique perspective on multimodal interaction within the Zoloft advertisement.

A quick glance at Figure 9 below is a good place to begin looking at intermodal movement. In order to compare the interactions between the visual and aural, I have decided to take the four main shots in this commercial and address how the audiovisual elements function as figure or ground. There is not a continuous correspondence between visual activity and aurality in the ad, but there is a striking amount of interactivity between the two modes present in the Zoloft commercial. Below, I take several segments from this figure and expound upon them in greater detail.
As a starting point, we may begin by looking at the first visual cut in this ad (see Figure 10 below). What takes place here visually is in significant contrast to the latter half of the commercial. The visual vectors occurring in this scene either move downward, or sluggishly forward. The slow zoom outward from the beginning sets up an isolating shot of our main character, who moves along a short horizontal vector.

Even the bluebird’s vectors, which flow in opposition to the majority of other vectors in the first third of this ad, are eventually withdrawn as the bird exits this scene stage left. It is almost as if these opposing vectors are substantial enough to “cause” the bluebird to go into retrograde motion. There is a flat, stagnant feeling to the visuals in this scene. There is a sense of “vectoral gravity” affecting the pharmacloud, and it overwhelms all other visual vectors during the opening twenty seconds. This motion on screen seems to mirror the sounds present, indicating that the main character is “stuck” in his current physical position.

![Figure 9: Complete movement analysis of minute-long Zoloft advertisement](chart)
Specifically, we can compare this visual activity to the sounds of narration and rainfall—represented in the visual by the landscape itself by a dark, rough line—and see that in their aural “flatness” they also create a sense of closure through the gestalt principle of similarity. Their “drone-like” qualities do not impart a strong sense of closure; when these two sounds are perceived in parallel to the visual vectors they could also be described as conveying a sense of continuation; albeit a “woeful” continuation.

A relationship in terms of pattern, present in the similarity between the choppiness of the spoken prose and the unsure motion of the pharmacloud and bluebird, likewise affords the viewer an opportunity to make a cross-modal connection. This has little to do with any sort of moment-by-moment temporal simultaneity; it involves more of a juxtaposition of serrated patterns in the visual and the aural. They are perceptually similar without strict coordination in time. Interestingly, the instances of sound effects in this first cut do directly complement many of the non-transactional reactions of the

Figure 10: Movement analysis of the first 21 seconds of Zoloft ad
pharmacloud and bluebird. Their entrances and exits are proximate, providing one another with mutual emphasis.

I suggest that this first shot is constructed to impel the viewer onward temporally in search of stronger modal forms. The weakness in visual activity, paired with a downwardly-inflected voice-over, shows poor overall shape. This crossmodal flatness may be implemented to create a depressed feeling in the viewer, and with such weak shape in its audiovisual movement, it encourages the viewer to seek out resolution.

This is partially achieved when the flatness of the first scene is interrupted by a sudden cut to the visual portrayal of nerve endings; providing a perceptually-rich scene in contrast to the rather bleak introduction (see Figure 11 below). When this second cut is begun the majority of the established visual framework is removed and a new series of actors and vectors are presented. Likewise, we see a complete change in the aural shapes and patterns. This interposed scene is more buoyant, holistically speaking.

![Figure 11: Movement analysis of Zoloft cut portraying nerve endings](image)

63
This is a notable contrast to the opening shot, where the movement is sparse and flat. The second cut contains vast amounts of almost pure movement. Even with the presence of general black-and-white styling continued from the first shot, we are “seeing” a visual balance emerge in this scene through vectoral movement. Literally every informational quadrant that Kress and van Leeuwen discuss is occupied to some extent by the nerves, orbs, and their related vectors (see screen capture again in Figure 7, above).

What we see manifested in the aural during this cut is a strong presence of cross-modal shape. Strict coordination—or punctuation—between the visual and the aural is not as strong as it was in the first scene, yet there seems to be a much stronger sense of balance. This balance becomes apparent in the soundscape when the white noise effect engendered by the rain is cut off as the clarinet music enters—and becomes a key figure in the perceptual field. Indeed, the total spectrum of sounds is made to rise and fall significantly; the narrator’s voice begins to incorporate a wider range of inflection and the music present swells and falls at least one full octave. It is worth noting that the clarinet piece spans six bars during this shot. These six bars start in a low register, proceed to a higher octave, and then return to the base. This, in effect, is a musical mirroring of the visuals on screen, an audiovisual symmetry.

At the very time that the narrator is discussing chemical imbalance, there is a strong sense of musical balance at play, as well as an increased feeling of movement forward (again, see Figure 11 above). A sense of closure between forms can be seen if the arching musical phrase is viewed as the figure in this segment, while the visuals function
as ground (see Figure 7). As this segment is only twelve seconds long, the strong, succinct sense of audiovisual symmetry here is quite efficacious. The passage is framed temporally by musical shape, while it simultaneously expands the total breadth of motion and sound being experienced by the viewer. It seems likely that this expansion is timed and constructed to create the feeling of a “broadened” or “enhanced” perspective on the part of the commercial viewer. In their strong completion and closure, the shapes presented in this second cut impart a sense of emotional balance to the viewer.

After the brief scene regarding depression chemistry, the shot is quickly cut back to our main character and horizontal landscape, likely an intentional correspondence between the new energy in the narrator’s voice and the additional background music (Figure 5 above and Figure 12 below). As this scene scrolls, visual vectors of all varieties are set in motion, including movement of the entire screen itself. A pronounced sideways scrolling begins, which in many ways connotes that the viewer has also become invested with the very sense of life that the pharmacloud now possesses. As the pharmacloud begins to move—indeed, to jump boisterously—he is accompanied by the bird and we are taken from an almost strictly two-dimensional landscape to a three-dimensional landscape.
This depth-change is accomplished partially through vectoral motion, and partially through overlap between visuals. For example, within a mere second or two of when the pharmacloud makes his first jump, we are able to discern that the clouds, bird, landscape, and Zoloft wordmark are moving across the page at entirely different rates. I interpret these elements as having close temporal proximity, but in order to understand them in relation to one another, I assign them various depths. It is almost as though the state of prägnanz affords the viewer the means to perceive movement-based closure.

There is not only a strong sense of continuation in the horizontal crawl of visual elements, but the scene is given added depth with the bluebird and pharmacloud both traveling in arcs. The bluebird’s vectors of motion overlap with the pharmacloud, who is likewise moving along a path that eventually overlaps with every other on screen element. With the removal of the rain clouds, and the entrance of a series of upward vectors in the two main reactors, we see that the sense of downward “gravity-type”
vectors from the first cut is being counteracted. Thus, we have depth through contrasting speeds, as well as depth via the overlapping of the various two-dimensional elements.

Seeing as how the entire visual field assumes a much more dynamic state in this third cut—almost as if the new activity are too much to be contained in a mere two dimensions—it is worth noting that the aural mode is also developed here. All three aural categories examined in this cut reveal several distinct forms. As the depth of elements in the visual field is increased, the aural elements seem to be structured to help frame the entire commercial temporally and achieve a deliberate weakening of shape as the commercial draws to an end (see Figure 12, above).

Before examining the music and sound effects—the two most critical types of sound for the formation of this third cut—the subject matter of the narration during the shot should be addressed (again, see Appendix G for transcription). The narration is tonally well-continued from the previous cut, yet its content appears to contrast with the increased multimodal vibrance present at the same time. As the scene becomes more vibrant, the narrator begins to describe the potentially harmful side effects of the medication. The strong symmetry and continuation present between the visual and aural almost overshadows this content. If we speak in terms of Gestalt psychology, the subject text at this point is shifted into the position of ground, while the changes in visuals and other pleasant aural elements are situated in the position of figure.

The quality of timbre of the sounds incorporated in this third scene helps to create a holistic weakening of shape for the commercial in its entirety. The music, although continued from the previous cut, is aligned with the entrance of this scene during an
upswing in the melody (again, see Figure 12 above). As we see the newfound beauty of
the pharmacloud’s world, we hear the seventh and eight bars of the music. Where the
second cut portraying the nerve endings was framed by one clear musical arch, this third
scene starts on a literal and figurative “high note.” The music not only provides
continuity from the previous scene, and a sense of forward movement, but it provides an
instance of cross modal symmetry between its initial octave and the initial vibrancy of the
third scene. It is curious that this cut, though containing the remaining three quarter’s of
the melody that was begun during the “scientific” portion of the commercial, starts in a
high octave and eventually descends to a low octave before the final cut (see Figure 12,
above). This is a “wedge-shaped” musical passage, which contrasts in musical shape to
the previous passage of music; three octaves sequenced to form an upward arch.

In addition to the music and narration, the bird chirruping is also re-introduced in
the final third of this ad as a steady stream of sound. This provides a sense of symmetry
when compared to the first cut of the commercial; the rain sound is removed as a
consistent, unrelenting element and the bird sound is put in its place (see Appendix D for
timeline of this activity). It serves to frame the commercial temporally in the sense of an
antecedent-consequent of sound effects, and also to provide a well-continued presence of
the happiness that Zoloft has imparted via the bluebird’s song. This third scene, viewed
holistically, actually seems to invert the activity levels present in the first cut from the
aural to the visual: the actors and reactors both become more active, while the three audio
tracks flow almost completely uninterrupted throughout the scene.
As the third cut draws to a close, the viewer is brought into the final scene with a smooth transition of forms. A sense of continuation is strongly present, as the visual transition, a smooth cross-fade into a text-oriented frame, connotes a passing through into an ideal destination. This transition is immediately preceded by the narrator invoking the word “Zoloft,” and is followed by the appearance of the Zoloft wordmark. This is an effectively-timed transition, as tapering before this cut is achieved by the music’s gradual descent in octave. The pharmacloud’s vectoral paths are continued through the transition with no discernible weakening of shape.

After the transition away from the pharmacloud, the viewer gains a strong sense of closure both aurally and visually. There is a tremendous amount of intermodal balance in this final four-second shot (see Figure 13 below). In terms of symmetry, we see this strongly in the center-aligned text. All motion and activity from the previous three scenes is brought to a point of stability, and this centering provides closure and completion by its contrast to the previous scene. The final narration of this advertisement is essentially a mirroring of the on-screen text, thus providing symmetry between the visual in the aural. As a sign of the ad’s completion, the bluebird flies into the scene, alighting atop the wordmark. Her final flight corresponds with the clarinet’s melody, a one-bar reiteration of the main musical theme in a higher octave.
The final three active audiovisual elements come to an end at the exact same moment: when the final note is played, the narrator utters the word “right,” the bluebird cocks her head, and we see that it is sound that actually has the key role of creating completion and closure in the commercial through fully weakened aural shapes.

From the beginning of this commercial until its end, we see a gradual growth in the dynamism of aural and visual forms, all the way to the final frame. In the first scene, we have a balance between fairly weak forms in the audio and visual, which, in their concomitant flatness, lead the viewer to the middle cut in search of more sufficient perceptual wholeness. The forms in this second scene, although rising and falling in a general arc, help to create forward motion and expand the total amount of activity taking place in the perpetual field. Indeed, this second scene’s solid shape invokes a sense of relief from the drab forms presented in the first cut. In the third cut, the entire perceptual

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**Figure 13: Movement analysis of the final four seconds of Zoloft ad**
field expands again in terms of depth, directions of motion, and the continuance of all
sounds. The last cut provides the final iteration in sensory activity: an upwards tapering
of musical shape is coupled with an upwards movement in the bluebird’s path, both being
presented against a centered backdrop of black text.

The aural and visual forms possess strong affective qualities. They not only
interact with one another in terms of their complementary movement through time, but at
different points they present themselves as the key element in a given scene. Looking at
the previous scenes holistically, we certainly see aurality as a key rhetorical mode in
providing balance to this commercial. Whether used to directly complement a visual
element, or implemented as the key perceptual figure, sound is a critical factor in this
commercial’s structure. Interestingly, the narrative track is the only element that runs the
entire length of the commercial, and we could easily choose to look at the spoken word
here as the primary modal figure in a ground of changing visuals.

Mirapex: Introduction
This pharmaceutical commercial advertises Mirapex, a drug for the treatment of a
medical condition called Restless Legs Syndrome, or RLS. Much like the Zoloft
commercial, this ad is visually abstract, with the majority of color in the ad being
presented through the construction of the Mirapex logo itself (see the yellow and green
“arcs” above the wordmark in Figure 14).
This logo is animated with humanlike movement over the course of the ad, an illustration of the “restless legs” that the drug claims to treat (see Figure 15 below). Like the Zoloft commercial, this ad possesses music, narration, and sound effects. It differs from the Zoloft ad, though, in the complexity of its visual construction, which presents a good opportunity to further develop the intermodal analysis under consideration.

**Mirapex: Visual Synopsis**

This ad’s visual construction is somewhat more complex than that of the Zoloft commercial. It contains nine distinct scenes, triple the number of scenes present in the Zoloft commercial. It contains a wide variety of camera zoom levels, camera angles, and transitions. A key transitional point in the advertisement falls 20 seconds into the
commercial, when the Mirapex wordmark is first introduced into the filmic flow along with the animated logo (again, see Figure 15 above). This five-second scene provides a good point around which to briefly examine the ad’s visuals.

The first twenty seconds of the ad prior to the introduction of the wordmark portray the logo in two settings; both show the logo engaging in frenetic activity (see Appendix B for more screenshots). The first scene shows him walking across the screen anxiously, and then transitions into the second scene with the logo falling onto a bed. At this point, his legs go through several visual transformations, as though he is being tormented uncontrollably (see Figure 16 below).
The vectoral movement on the part of the logo is extremely high during the first third of the commercial; the main character and his surroundings engage in a wide variety of non-transactional, bidirectional, and unidirectional actions. Unlike the Zoloft commercial, these initial actions proceed along a variety of different vectors and convey—appropriate to the commercial’s subject—a feeling of great restlessness.

The wordmark is introduced at the eighteen-second mark with a swiping transition, and all vectoral activity is brought to a standstill. After briefly “resting” atop the wordmark, the logo jumps down and re-engage his surroundings. Although the onscreen vectoral activity resumes significantly and continues at a high level, the logo is
clearly able to control his own movement during the remainder of the ad. His own bodily vectors are reduced significantly in the final 35 seconds. This decrease in vectoral activity implies a more relaxed physical state in the main character post-Mirapex (see Figure 17 below).

This helps to create an interesting visual dichotomy: movement by the main actor is progressively reduced as the ad proceeds, even through a greater number of scenes are presented in the last half of the commercial. The style of cuts in the latter half of the ad is characterized by a series of gentle swipe or transitions in which the Mirapex logo moves
from a living room, to an airplane, a café, a theater, and finally into a doctor’s office. Thus, it is vectorally suggested through this series of seamlessly-connected scenes that the main character proceeds from a sense of conflict with his environment to being peacefully accommodated. After proceeding through each of these scenes—scenes that would be challenging for a sufferer of RLS—the logo walks into a final scene containing the wordmark, at which point all action is discontinued (see Appendix K for a detailed visual analysis of this commercial; Appendix E for a detailed audiovisual timeline).

Mirapex: Aural Analysis

Introduction – This commercial is similar to the Zoloft commercial in its high level of animated abstraction. When compared to the Zoloft ad, the variety of aural forms present in this ad seems to be significantly less. The method of aural analysis employed above in analyzing the Zoloft commercial is equally effective when brought to bear on this advertisement for Mirapex. This commercial’s soundscape is constituted of a narration track and a jazz music track. There is one instance of a sound effect being used, and that effect is impressionistically generated by the jazz band. The commercial begins with weak aural shape and evolves aurally into a well-continued rhythm, right until the very end, similar to the Zoloft commercial. I outline below the aural shapes and forms present in this commercial that are key in explicating the advertisement’s affective qualities.

Aural Analysis of Music – The music in this commercial is divided into two main sections. The first section, which takes place during the initial twelve seconds, possesses weak shape as it is constituted of punchy horn blasts and drum accents. Although
structured loosely around a swung jazz rhythm, these hits have no discernable, repeating pattern. Outside of the presence of the supporting drumbeat in the background, there is only very weak shape present in this first passage. The jazz rhythm here seems to be the only element that provides any sort of continuation, and considering the overall aural randomness of this passage, the listener is encouraged to seek stronger aural shapes. Shortly after this frenetic passage is begun, it is interrupted by the lone instance in this advertisement of a sound effect.

The band creates this effect by coupling a sustained, dissonant-sounding chord in the horn section with a descending chromatic run on the piano. The effect comes in suddenly at the end of the first musical passage and acts as impressionistic segue. It possesses a downward tapering in the shape of its tones, lasts for approximately six seconds, and provides completion and closure to the first passage. A profound weakening of shape is observed here, and almost all non-vocal sound is heard as “decaying” from the ad. This sets up listener for a flashy entrance into the second musical passage.

After this first passage, a strong pattern emerges in the form of a jazz groove. The orchestration of this piece initially starts with weak shape until it is built in depth by bringing in the bass, piano, horns—the full band. As the upbeat music proceeds, the shape continues to be strengthened but then it seems to plateau. To the degree that this groove exhibits good continuation, it is without any major rhythmic or harmonic changes, to the point that the shape begins to exhibit a quality of saturation; leading the listener to expect closure. Although saturation of rhythmic pattern is present in the latter portion of
the commercial. This type of shape might be the very sort of even, “grooving” shape that is intended to convey balance to the viewer.

Aural Analysis of Narration – Peter Elbow advises in *The Music of Form*, “Temporal objects like music and speeches require dynamic time-derived modes of organization” (Elbow 645). We can hear this manifested in the spoken text of this commercial. The sound of the narration in the Mirapex ad is strongly tied to the driving effect of the jazz band, but exhibits stronger shape and distinct patterns. In contrast to the Zoloft ad, the narrator of this commercial uses colorful inflection through the entire duration of the clip. Although this inflection serves to provide a sense of melodic continuation from beginning to end; it is the grouping of phrases and sentence length that helps to create the three primary swells in the narrative flow. The opening phrase describes the RLS condition in three sentences and is followed by a stand-alone assertion “Fortunately, there’s Mirapex” (Mirapex) (see Appendix H for transcription of ad narration). Thus we see that the shape of the first aural passage is most clearly defined by the spoken word.

The second passage is likewise shaped by sentence length; it contains a description of the drug in two long sentences and achieves closure with the assertion, “So, your legs feel better and you feel better” (Mirapex). The third passage operates similarly, with long spoken sentences shortening in length towards the concluding tagline. It seems that the repetition of this antecedent-consequent spoken pattern helps to not only create a sense of aural continuation through repeated shapes across the duration of the ad, but aids in the overall completion and closure of the ad.
Mirapex: Movement Analysis

The cross modal forms in this commercial are best examined in regards to what occurs pre-wordmark and post-wordmark. The entrance of the Mirapex wordmark at approximately eighteen seconds signals a profound change in the rhythm and flow of the commercial. Closes correspondences between narration and visuals abound in this ad, with the sound appearing to provide the strongest coherence and support for the activities of on-screen actors. In terms of the overall shape of this commercial, we see that most multimodal activity falls fairly closely in line with the three main passages of narration (see Figure 18 below). There is a weak opening, a suddenly congealed (and then well-continued) audiovisual explanation of the drug, and finally a sudden completion.

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**Figure 18:** Movement analysis for entire length of Mirapex advertisement
As for the introduction, a gestalt whole formed via the principle of similarity when looking at the relationship between the weak aural pattern and the erratic vectors along which the main character moves. He starts out walking in a confident gait, and then a series of swirling footprints enter the screen which, upon contact with the main character, cause his body language to slump in a posture of desperation. There, aural discord in the form of the “falling” sound effects is made to immediately follow the Mirapex figure’s collapse onto a bed. Although close in proximity, these two frenetic activities do not correspond in time until the final two seconds of the bedroom scene. Here, the sound effects passage and body language of the main character likewise “fall” into line, and almost function as a coordinated pause; intermodal symmetry (see Figure 19 below). Indeed, if the goal of this passage is to convey a feeling of restlessness, it is achieved with the choppy forms—Meyer’s notion of weak shape—in the music, and the lack of control that the main character appears to have over his own body.

Figure 19: Movement analysis of first 18 seconds of Mirapex commercial
After the main actor unveils the text, there is a rapid acceleration into fullness of forms; driving jazz is introduced in tandem with the billowing of the sheet. The sheet sweeps across the screen, and as the narrator exclaims the word “Mirapex,” we likewise see the wordmark being uncovered. As this rhythmic ground of music is built into a stable support for the action on screen, the number of onscreen vectors involving bodily movement of the main character is gradually decreased. This provides symmetry between the stability of the music and the apparent relaxation of the main character. The evenness of movement here is certainly appropriate if trying to convey a feeling of balance to the viewer. Even the rapidly changing montage of scenes in the character’s post-Mirapex life is unable to fluster him as he has reached a state of equilibrium; an unusual instance of gestalt completion though contrasts.

As we saw in the Zoloft commercial, we have an upbeat narrator speaking of several serious Mirapex side effects as though they are of little consequence; the upbeat inflection is well-continued in its pattern which is established from the outset of the ad. This takes place during most visually intense portion of the commercial, where wave after wave of visual transitions are shown. This might be coordinated so that the viewer will be distracted from the content by the increased motion on screen.

In a coordinated effort to close the commercial’s movement, the narration and audio align again in the final sentence, on the word Mirapex. Here, at the moment that the main character opens the door, there is a horn hit, and the drug name itself is uttered. A smooth, left to right vector is visible in the character’s movement and then discontinued as the figure blends itself into a scene with a center-aligned wordmark and text. Another
doubling, and thus fulfillment of forms, is observed in the final three seconds with the narrator reading the tagline (see Figure 20 below).

It is interesting to note that the flow of shapes and patterns in this commercial is, on the whole, an inversion of Zoloft commercial. Where the Zoloft commercial starts out by conveying a paucity of feeling in its movements and ends up moving to a place of greater holistic activity, the Mirapex commercial starts out aurally and visually frenetic and becomes much more level in the end. Granted, the overall activity level is higher throughout the Mirapex commercial, but by the end of the commercial the main character is conveyed in a relaxed state, even when rendered in such scenes that could be particularly challenging for one with Restless Leg Syndrome.

**Figure 20: Movement of final four seconds of Mirapex commercial**
Enablex: Introduction

The final commercial I examine, which advertises a medication for the treatment of overactive bladder, is also the most visually complex of the three. It holds with the previous two ads in that it is a visually abstract animation, yet it differs in its strong rendering of perspective in three dimensions (Figure 21). This commercial is also more aurally complex than the previous two. The audio track is comprised of four separate musical clips (which likewise each possess unique melodies and rhythms), a narration track, and one sound effect (please see Appendix F for a detailed timeline of audiovisual elements).

Figure 21: Screen capture of Enablex wordmark
Enablex: Visual Synopsis

Out of the three pharmaceutical advertisements, this commercial has the greatest amount of variation in its assembly of cuts and movement. The advertisement’s fourteen total cuts include shots from nearly every camera angle discussed by Kress and van Leeuwen, and these cuts vary widely in how they are integrated into the three primary scenes. The primary actors portrayed in this ad are water balloons, which synecdochically represent humans—human bladders (see Figure 22 below). The main character is given visual prominence by the fact that he is the only orange water balloon depicted, and he is the only actor present through the entire visual narrative. The ad includes three scenes: the first is set at a high school reunion, the second in a living room, and the third is a brief, concluding shot containing the main character and the drug.

Ten of these cuts are dedicated to the scene in the school gymnasium (Figure 23 below). This scene comprises 47 seconds of the commercial’s total length, and contains the majority of visual diversity. Through the sheer variety of transitions—as well as the frequent, sudden disconnections from one vantage point to another—one is given the impression that the reunion is a high energy event; cuts are faded and dissolved quickly, while reflections from the mirrored ball at the center of the room create a nearly continuous field of pure movement from right to left. Based upon the “Class of ‘68” textual motif present throughout this scene, we can assume that these balloons are intended to represent participants in a forty-year class reunion (see Figure 22 below).
After this visually active scene involving the balloon classmates dancing and socializing, there is a transition to a scene with the main character in his home. The majority of vectoral activity is discontinued, and as the main character and his partner are looking through a photo album, the camera angles being shown are confined to a medium-distance shot from a medium angle. Panning and zooming are almost entirely discontinued, and the scene transitions to the final five-second cut with a swiping transition (See Appendix C for more screen captures of this commercial).

This third shot shows the main character moving across the screen from left to right, as he does during the majority of the commercial. He comes to rest on the right side of the screen, and the commercial is ended. Thus there is a high level of vectoral activity during the first three quarters of the commercial, but this activity decreases quickly as the
commercial draws to a close (For a more thorough look at the representational, interactive, and compositional features of this advertisement, please see Appendix L).

Figure 23: Screen capture of Enablex commercial

Enablex: Aural Analysis

Introduction – The Enablex ad seems to be the most audiovisually complex when compared to the two drug commercials discussed above. The types of sounds implemented here are fairly consistent throughout the advertisement, with both breaks and emphatic musical sound alike being incorporated at key transitional points in the ad.
This ad, like the Mirapex ad, contains female narration that runs from beginning to end. It also has a musical track that runs the length of the commercial and one transitional sound effect near the end of the commercial. Both the narration and music possess greater rhythmic variety than the respective aural elements in the Mirapex commercial, and appear to be much weaker in terms of overall pattern.

*Aural Analysis of Music* – The “party band” style of music used here aptly fits into the setting of a class reunion and is presented as a sequence of four unique shapes and rhythms. Although it is consistent in key and volume, without the corresponding visuals it might not seem like a holistically well-organized musical whole. As the lone sound effect in the Mirapex commercial was described as operating impressionistically, the many stops, starts, and big band hits in this ad could be described as operating emphatically.

To summarize the general flow of music, there are four primary passages divided roughly into fifteen-second segments. They contain distinct rhythmic and melodic schemes that demonstrate little in the way of melodic change or growth, and they each reach completion and closure with the sudden appearance of the following sounds: a drum and organ hit, horn blast, and the lone sound effect in this ad: a camera flash. This flash is used in tandem with music in the third major transition, and as this flash is discharged the music is quickly shifted in melody. It provides a sudden sense closure to the third musical passage while helping to cross-fade, and likewise maintains, a sense of continuation into the final music block.
In attempting to count time based on the rhythm initially presented in the first musical segment, it seems that most of the musical passages are not joined together according to a master beat. Thus, overall musical shape presented is very weak, and rhythmic continuation is unclear. Continuation through simple melody and rhythm are present within each of the four individual clips, but they are highly repetitive within themselves. Melodically speaking, the clearest sense of completion and closure occurs at the very end of the commercial in the form of a descending organ run.

It is interesting to note that the first musical segment of this commercial, much like the Mirapex commercial, contains a stretch of erratic horn and drum hits. The initial shape presented is weak; aural continuation is only partially achieved by the desire for the establishment of solid form, which effectively draws the listener toward the second musical passage. A melodically-formed shape is introduced here in the form of an ascending organ run, which helps prepare the way for the segue, and a discernible rhythmic form is then established in the second musical passage.

The second passage is constructed in a general “A-B-A-B-C” melodic form, with a stable rhythm during its eighteen-second span. This is in contrast to the first passage; in its solid structure it stands out as a strongly formed shape. The repetition of its two primary passages (“A” and “B”) concisely establishes a pattern, and then progresses into the third musical passage through an ascending horn riff (“C”). This riff ends in a high register and one full second lapses before the third passage is brought in. Thus, this second passage is able to stand alone as a well-formed, well-continued, and well-shaped musical gestalt.
The third passage is loosely constructed by first introducing a basic rhythm and then bringing in other musical parts to create an increasingly saturated field of music. Visualized, this might appear as an ever-widening wedge of sound (see movement analysis below, Figure 24). Even as layer upon layer of instrumentation is added to this grouping, there is little melodic continuation or growth. At best, there is a sense of simple rhythmic continuation, but this sheer accretion of sounds contributes to a feeling of saturation. This creates strong anticipation for change and deterioration in its shape. Consequently, as the music swells it serves to help foreground the camera flash sound effect. This abrupt cut-off provides an entrance point for the final musical passage and a sense of relief through closure.

The final passage is comprised of a basic organ riff, which the listener begins to hear in medias res. Even considering this, a clear structure is quickly established in its presence. The melody makes one undulation into a higher passage, and then is fully weakened and closed in a downward progression of notes. In addition to the melodic shape of this passage, a majority of other band instruments appear to have dropped out of the arrangement at this point, thus providing a “thinner” sound.

Aural Analysis of Narration – This advertisement contains somewhat choppier narration than the Mirapex ad. In terms of the overall structure of the spoken content, it can be broken down into four sections that closely correspond in temporal proximity with the entrances of each musical block. The narrative inflection used across the thirteen sentences in the ad is, like the previous ads, very upbeat (see Appendix I for transcript).
What is most telling about this structure is the length of sentences. When looking at these sentences listed one after another, there is a fairly smooth contour visible amongst these sentences from beginning to end (see Appendix I). There actually appears to be more coherent shape present in the overarching spoken word than in the musical track. Although the entrances and exits of each spoke passage align closely with the music, the overall contour of sentence length in the ad does not. We can examine how this narrative structure creates “expectations…at the level of meaning [and] also at the level of sound” (Katz 187, 1996).

The first block of narration starts with a medium-length sentence and slopes downward in word count to a seven-word sentence. There is then an upswing in sentence length through the entire second block, a peak and then a decrease begins in the third block. Finally, there is a small wave or undulation with which the commercial is ended. In effect, the commercial contains a medium, tall, and short peak in its content flow. In the continual, driving rhythm of speech, there is a sense of good continuation, while the shape of the spoken text operates as one large arch from beginning to end. It is largely the changes in sentence length that serve to abate a sense of saturation present in the steady flow of speech. The narrative track is well-shaped, and although not immediately apparent, it certainly possesses a sense of completion and closure in its growth and tapering.

**Enablex: Movement Analysis**

Even though “[t]emporal knowledge is always uncertain knowledge (Katz 185, 1996),” and the audio tracks are not strongly shaped by themselves, we can see that this
commercial—probably more than the other two commercials—uses the cooperation of shape and movement to become a cohesive, fluid, audiovisual whole. Both the aural and the visual play critical roles in creating a coherent message, yet when isolated and observed as individual modal forms they do not appear to be nearly as functional. In particular, interactive rhythm seems to be the temporal glue that holds the commercial together; a possible example of Peter Elbow’s assertion that “Rhythm could be called the essential source of energy that binds time” (Elbow 624).

First, we might note the growth and decay of sentence length in relation to the entirety of multimodal elements in this ad (see Figure 24 below).

![Figure 24: Movement analysis of 60-second Enablex commercial](image-url)
This quality of narrative arching is critical to the temporal framing of the commercial. Without it, it might be difficult to see that approximately 75% of the commercial occurs inside one arch of the narration. This narrative section occurs proximately with the majority of the musical content, as well as with the most vigorous vectoral activity on screen. With the large amount of visual activity being subsumed under this first arch, we are likewise introduced to the drug itself and its side effects. A sense of continuity in form is achieved here through the similarity of shapes present in the constantly fluctuating visuals and the frequent starting and stopping of the musical track, all of which are subsumed under the narration. These shapes, although somewhat jarring in their presentation, seem quite appropriate if intended to convey a sense of instability; ostensibly a facet of poor bladder control.

The narration in the final quarter of the commercial, containing four of the shorter sentences in the commercial, likewise creates a smaller sub-arch and occurs during the portion of the commercial when the on-screen vectoral motion has almost completely subsided (see Figure 25 below)

Figure 25: Movement analysis of final 12 seconds of Enablex commercial
Thus is, in a sense, there is multimodal closure through the tapering of aural shapes and lessening of on-screen visual movement. Not only is there a lessening of multisensory activity, there is an increasing correspondence between the shape of the narrator’s commentary and what occurs on screen.

The commercial becomes much more symmetrical in its presentation during the last seven seconds, with the screen reflecting the spoken word moment-by-moment. As the commercial draws to an end, aural shape is clearly weakened, and the audiovisual elements are brought into closer alignment. Like the previous two commercials, the Enablex commercial ends in with a final scene containing a center-aligned combination of wordmark, tagline, and contact information, in that order and visual hierarchy. This final audiovisual reiteration of the drug name and its purpose promotes a sense balance and completion, and likewise a balance series of forms that connote the stability imparted by the medication.
CHAPTER FIVE
CONCLUSION

Outcomes

The results of the movement analyses above suggest a number of interesting venues for further research in multimodal rhetorics. As an initial attempt at explicating the holistic analysis of audio in television advertising, these timelines work help foreground and display the affective qualities present in the commercial soundtracks. Visually presenting sound and image in tandem is certainly a difficult proposition; regardless of the mode chosen to present the data, one mode or another will always end up being privileged.

This constriction by presentational medium appears to be an unavoidable dilemma, but I believe this is where new, holistically-rooted interpretive theories and strategies for multimodal composition will become valuable. A holistic approach to analyzing multimodal messages is flexible in that it encompasses the entire perceptual field and allows for the examination of different modal foci without being myopic. Such an approach has the ability to yield rich interpretations without being constricted by a positivistic (or atomistic) stance.

Future studies with the movement analysis might address this difficulty in conveyance by employing an animated, sound-enhanced video version of the movement analysis itself. Another option to assist in circumnavigating the dominance of textual and visual mediums would be to present a split-screen analysis showing a video clip in one half of the screen, a movement analysis in the other half, and a spoken explication on top of the entire presentation.
Research by Robert Ochsner suggests that hearing is more of “an holistic task,” while the “visual melody of sight permits us to fixate on something, to analyze it carefully” (qtd. in Katz 157, 1996). As new compositional resources are developed, it would certainly be appropriate to expand our methods for presenting scholarly work to accommodate holistic methodologies. I think that moving towards a notion of auralacy—possibly towards the development of a grammar of aural design—would help to establish a perceptive bridge between these two modes.

Auralacy: An important counterpart to electracy?

If Gregory Ulmer’s notion of electracy can serve to foreground the importance of digital literacy in modern communications, then it would seem that auralacy would also be an important, viable concept. Films, television, podcasts, and even blogs are being used to proliferate multimodal messages containing audio components. The lines between such presentational genres is often unclear, as network television can now be watched online at sites like Hulu.com, Flash-based commercials are being embedded in blogs, and films can be downloaded as podcasts. The aural mode remains an important information-bearing channel in the digital age. Ulmer notes on his blog that “Electracy, like literacy and orality...is an apparatus...it is a social machine” (Ulmer n.d). Auralacy, as I propound it, is more of a heuristic for understanding the affective activity which occurs at interstices between the visual and the aural, as well as audiovisual movement in time. Auralacy would not only provides a strategy for looking at the temporal, but likewise for looking at spatial phenomena in multimedia.
Since I am suggesting that the concept of auralacy is worth developing further, it might be worth noting the growing use of aural communication in post-secondary education. For example, Duke University has made strong efforts to promote aural learning, and went as far as to distribute 1,650 iPods to incoming freshmen in 2004 (Stiler 24). Drexel University, Penn State, Michigan State, Georgia College, and Stillman College have embraced podcasting as an important learning channel, and this includes audiovisual podcasts (Stiler 24 & Copley 388). The ability to listen—and listen critically—to multimodal messages is important, and pedagogically-oriented messages are only one of many different areas in which auralacy is needed. So the question arises: How might we be able to apply the concept of auralacy to gain a better understanding of such emergent communications? Another method is necessary to examine the interaction between visuality and aurality, something altogether different than electracy.

New Directions

I believe that auralacy as a concept could be established by taking the time in the composition classroom to specifically acknowledge sound as an active, dynamic communicative mode, not merely something in the “background.” The analysis in Chapter 4 shows clearly that sound is used affectively, purposefully, and is not merely the ground into which visual figures are placed. We see that there are, at points in these commercials, several aural processes taking place simultaneously. A look at both modes mapped onto the movement analysis shows a deliberate structuring of both modes being examined.
Fortunately, by applying Leonard Meyer’s work, we can see that one does not need to be a trained music theorist to engage in such analysis. It might be reasonable to consider a gestalt-based approach for the further development of auralacy in that intelligent perception may actually be hindered by reductionist methodologies. Gestalt researcher Steven Lehar pointedly writes that “right-brained spatial thinking has been continuously undervalued...as a component of scientific thinking...despite the fact that many of the great discoveries...were originally arrived at by the process of mental imagery, including those of Einstein, Maxwell, Faraday, Hadamard, Poincaré, Tesla, Mandlebrot, and Gleik” (Lehar 262). He then proceeds to explain that some of the most “creative and ingenious spatial thinkers...seek refuge in the field of art, where their way of thinking receives the recognition it deserves” specifically referencing film theorist Rudolph Arnheim (264). Interestingly, Max Wertheimer Wolfgang Köhler, several of the founders of Gestalt theory, served as academic advisors to Arnheim (Behrens)!

This not to say that the quantitative study of audiovisual interaction is impossible, or undesirable. The notion of salience that is featured so prominently in my movement analysis might be further developed to portray a more “accurate” measurement of the actions at hand, perhaps something akin to the holistic type of scoring system that is used in grading certain standardized tests. I suspect that this would become difficult when examining the interstices between completely different perceptual modes, but it is feasible. Salience, as I present it in my analysis, is intentionally subjective.

The notion of auralacy, positioned in the context of gestalt theory, would provide a new perspective to the discourse of multimodal composition. For example, new studies
could engage the concept of auralacy to examine more closely gender- or age-specific audiovisual constructs present in the moving picture. As rhetorical negotiation is used across all disciplines to shape and order knowledge, we can probably assume that the aurality present in advertisements we see on television are not merely incorporated *ad hoc*. An ethnographic study might provide a unique perspective on how auralacy is consciously implemented by communication professionals.

The aural constructs examined in my analysis appear to strategically enhance, obscure, or deliver a message, while speaking to the shapes and movement of visuals; it is prudent to have a way of strategically perceiving these sounds. With a medium such as the sound film, which only exists temporally, it is difficult to find ground on which to base such study. Using a flexible theory for analysis, such as Meyer’s principles of pattern perception or my movement analysis, allows for a thoughtful critique of the aural, a truly immeasurable subject.
Appendix A

Zoloft: Screen Captures
Appendix B

Mirapex: Screen Captures
Appendix C

Enablex: Screen Captures
Appendix D

Zoloft: Commercial Timeline (1-15 seconds)
Appendix E

Mirapex: Commercial Timeline (1-15 seconds)
Mirapex: Commercial Timeline (45-60 seconds)

- **45-46 seconds**
  - Theater
  - 2 logos sitting, facing right

- **46-47 seconds**
  - Doctor Office
  - 1 logo sitting, walks to right, thru door
  - Faces viewer, jumps atop logo, lies down

- **47-48 seconds**
  - Chairs, Stars, Moon, Building
  - Projector, 3 chairs, popcorn, drink

- **48-49 seconds**
  - 3 chairs, signage, plant, door

- **49-50 seconds**
  - Doctor

- **50-51 seconds**
  - MIRAPEX pramipexole dihydrochloride tablets

- **51-52 seconds**
  - 1-877-MIRAPEX. See our ad in Woman's Day

- **52-53 seconds**
  - Boehringer Ingelheim Cares Foundation logos

- **53-54 seconds**
  - Visit MIRAPEX.com
Appendix F

Enablex: Commercial Timeline (1-15 seconds)
Enablex: Commercial Timeline (15-30 seconds)
Appendix G

Zoloft: Commercial Transcription

You know when you feel the weight of sadness/
You may feel exhausted, hopeless, and anxious/
Whatever you do, you feel lonely, and don’t enjoy the things you once loved/
Things just don’t feel like they used to/
These are some symptoms of depression,
   a serious medical condition affecting over 20 million Americans/
While the cause is unknown, depression may be related to an imbalance of natural
   chemicals between nerve cells in the brain/
Prescription Zoloft works to correct this imbalance/
You just shouldn’t have to feel this way anymore/
Only your doctor can diagnose depression/
Zoloft is not for everyone/
People taking MAOI’s or pimozide shouldn’t take Zoloft/
Side effects may include dry mouth, insomnia, sexual side effects, diarrhea, nausea, and
   sleepiness/
Zoloft is not habit-forming/
Talk to your doctor about Zoloft, the number one prescribed brand of its kind/
Zoloft/
When you know more about what’s wrong, you can help make it right.
Appendix H

Mirapex: Commercial Transcription

Every day you count on your legs to get you where you want to go/
But, when you suffer from restless leg syndrome, your legs don’t want to stop, even when you do/
Annoying sensations can keep you up at night when all you want to do is get some rest/
Fortunately, there’s Mirapex/
Mirapex is a prescription medicine that helps relieve the frequency and severity of many RLS symptoms/
Like those irritating sensations and the uncontrollable urge to move/
So, your legs feel better and you feel better/
Prescription Mirapex may cause you to feel drowsy, or fall asleep during normal activities such as driving, or to feel faint or dizzy when you stand up/
Tell your doctor if you experience these problems, if you drink alcohol, are taking medicines that make you drowsy, or if you have experience increased gambling, sexual, or other urges/
Other side effects include nausea/
Talk to your doctor about Mirapex and RLS/
Because when your legs feel better, you feel better.
Appendix I
Enablex: Commercial Transcription

There are moments you look forward to, and you shouldn’t have to miss out on them/
But sometimes a bladder control problem can cause unwanted…interruptions/
It doesn’t have to be that way/
Overactive bladder is a treatable medical condition/
Enablex is a prescription medicine that can help reduce bladder leaks and accidents for a full 24 hours/
Enablex is specifically designed to target the muscles that control the bladder, and more control means less interruptions/
You should not take Enablex if you if you have certain types of stomach problems, glaucoma, or have trouble emptying your bladder/
Side effects of Enablex include blurred vision and more commonly dry mouth, constipation, indigestion, and abdominal pain/
Reduce bladder leaks and accidents for a full 24 hours/
Because there are moments you don’t want to miss/
Ask your doctor about once daily Enablex/
For life, less interrupted.
Appendix J
Zoloft: Visual Analysis

*Representational* - According to Kress and van Leeuwen’s text, most of the components here function as actors. Although they have roles in the commercial and move along very specific vectors, they do not possess eyelines (Kress and van Leeuwen 74). These vectors are important to conveying energy levels in the commercial. Even considering this, the majority of elements present here possess less representational complexity than the bird and pharmacloud: these two reactors exhibit more humanoid likeness in their expressions and eye movement.

Most of the actors in this ad move strictly along vectors that align with the $x$-axis. This serves to create a strong feeling of linearity while simultaneously foregrounding the actions of the bluebird and pharmacloud. The fact that the bluebird and pharmacloud are not actors—but *reactors*—means that they possess eyelines from which vectors emanate. This causes the bluebird to stand out dramatically in terms of her interactivity. Not only does she fly along assorted angles and curved paths, clashing with the 90-degree vectors present in such elements as the falling rain or the nerve endings shown midway through the ad, but her eyeline vectors also connect with other phenomenon throughout the commercial in the form of transactional reactions.

By looking at the pharmacloud’s movement, we see that his paths of motion imply a major shift in his countenance. He is initially introduced as a rather timid *reactor*, with a vector proceeding from his eyeline in the form of a non-transactional reaction.
This eyeline vector clashes with the very vector along which he travels bodily; the phenomenon of his eyeline is unknown. Following two unclear attempts at making eye contact with the raincloud and bluebird, and immediately following a scene portraying nerve endings, we see that he not only begins to smile, but makes direct eye contact with the cloud above him; a transactional reaction. He also visually acknowledges the bluebird and begins to bounce happily along assorted vectors until the very end of the commercial, thus engaging as both reactor and actor, with his vectoral motion indicating a great change in dynamism.

The actors and vectors in this commercial reveal a great deal about the filmic flow and energy levels of the onscreen components, but another important tool of representation that should be addressed here is that of film cuts between scenes. The main narrative in this commercial is that of the pharmacloud struggling with his sadness, and it is bisected by a quick dissolve into a shot portraying two simplistically-rendered nerve endings and their linear interactions. Upon completion of this shot, the scene is quickly cut back to the main scene. When the main narrative of the pharmacloud is resolved, there is a medium-speed dissolve into a shot of the bluebird of happiness sitting upon the wordmark. This visual interposition of the chemistry of Zoloft and its associated drug’s wordmark suggests that the drug provides a quick and simple solution to abating the sadness of depression. By quickly cutting to, and then dissolving from, it is suggested visually that quick action towards taking this drug provided a good way to resolving the pharmacloud’s depressed state.
Interactive - This commercial does not make extensive use of cuts to provide different points of view; the entire commercial is based on a frontally positioned long shot of a two-dimensional landscape. According to Kress and van Leeuwen, this is the type of shot that involves the viewer without placing her in a position of power, potentially important for an advertisement of depression medication (Kress & van Leeuwen 148). Aside from a medium shot of the nerve endings, the commercial provides only a modicum of interactivity in its filming. No eye contact is made between the commercial’s characters and the viewer, and there is virtually no variety in perspective throughout. The ad itself is two-dimensional, save for a few depth-creating elements: minor overlap that occurs between several visual components during the commercial, a slight shadow underneath the body of the main actor, the facial expressions of the main character (which are portrayed in the round), and the differing speeds of actors on-screen.

Compositional - According to Kress and van Leeuwen, the visual positioning of elements on screen speaks to the value of those elements (Kress & van Leeuwen 177). In the Zoloft commercial, we can see that their notions of information value certainly obtain. The entire commercial is based upon movement from left to right, a visual progression from new to old, respectively. As the pharmacloud proceeds in his walk, we see that his “old” life is interrupted by the entrance of Zoloft, and that the bluebird (his new joy of life) takes a position to the right of the screen, in front of him. At different times the realm of the ideal, at the top of the visual stage, is occupied by clouds and the Zoloft wordmark (Kress & van Leeuwen 197). Disclamatory and informational captions are positioned at the very bottom of the screen, the position of the real. The main
character is positioned in the middle of the screen throughout the ad, clearly making him the focus and mediator of the action.

Visual salience is largely expressed here through line weight and spot color. The elements presented in color truly standout, as does the main character’s rendering via a thick black line. The wordmark appears as a striking black component, attesting to its importance in the overall scheme of the commercial. As the commercial progresses, the wordmark becomes larger, and more color enters the scene in the form of flowers and grass. This juxtaposition of wordmark and spot coloring likely signifies a “brighter outlook” that can be brought about with the medication.

As for the framing of the visual elements in this commercial, this is accomplished visually via cuts to other scenes. As Kress and van Leeuwen have noted, a “composition may be strongly or weakly framed” (203). This notion of “weak framing” appears to be the case in the Zoloft advertisement. The screen contains a variety of elements, entering and leaving at various times, and is only given a sense of framing by cuts to the scenes containing the nerves and the final scene with the wordmark. These interjected scenes help to create a rhythm and strategic narrative divisions for the commercial, interrupting the scrolling to make specific points, and then cutting back to show the improved mental state of the pharmacloud. It might be said that the weak framing in the first and third scenes might actually be intended to convey a sense of both overwhelming vacuousness and boundless freedom, respectively.
Appendix K

Mirapex: Visual Analysis

*Representational* – In terms of visual elements present in this ad, it is worth noting that the Mirapex commercial is almost exclusively comprised of sheer *actors*. There are no visual elements—aside from a very quick passing shot of a goldfish—that possess an eyeline, therefore we have a commercial containing *actors* and *actions* and almost zero *reactors* or *phenomenon*. In other words, there is very little interaction between the on-screen elements outside of corporeal movement.

From the very outset of the commercial we see that, as an actor, the Mirapex logo moves in a unidirectional transactional action towards different goals—i.e. a footprint pattern—and at another point it is the goal upon which an assortment of “spikes” and “dots” act. Furthermore, the logo’s action at one point presents us with an example of pure movement that Kress and van Leeuwen advise can only be achieved in the moving image: while lying on the bed, his legs are animated as being creased (or perhaps crumpled), which gives us a situation where it is “hardly possible to disentangle process and participants…[who are] neither active nor passive” (Kress and van Leeuwen 261). Thus, we have a main character that moves, is moved upon, and possesses pure movement in his bodily motion.

*Interactive* – In terms of the interactive quality of the advertisement, it presents itself as a strongly-driven flow of varying angles. Low angle, eye-level, high angle—even a God’s-eye view—are all used in the ad. This invokes the viewer into every position of power that Kress and van Leeuwen discuss in their text; all within a time span of 60
seconds. Perhaps these angles are implemented in order to place the viewer in a position that suggests an overall sense of restlessness and powerlessness that is said to occur with Restless Legs Syndrome. In terms of camera zoom, the majority of the film is shot at a medium distance, which places the viewer on a social level with the main character, neither on an intimate nor an impersonal level (Kress & van Leeuwen 148). Thus, we are made to relate to the main character’s agitation.

*Compositional* – Despite the fairly cubist milieu present in its filmic angles, transitions, and zooming, this commercial does not deviate a great deal from the Zoloft ad in terms of its compositional qualities. The main character generally moves from left to right—from the *given* to the *new* —in the first half of the commercial and eventually comes to rest near the top of the screen on the wordmark in the realm of the *ideal*. Various elements pertinent to the drug, such as the captions and contact information, are presented consistently at the bottom of the frame in the realm of the *real*. After the first half of the commercial, the Mirapex character is presented near the center of the screen indicating that he has achieved balance or mediation amidst his restlessness. There is an implied stability in this positioning, even as his surroundings continue to move.

In terms of visual salience, the elements are made to have greater or lesser importance through two basic methods. The first is that of color, as the main character is the only multi-colored element in the ad aside from a green colored banner that appears near the end of the ad. Everything else is merely gray or black. Indeed, the wordmark and main character are also portrayed in thicker lines, thus helping to foreground their importance in the visual hierarchy. Even considering this, the scenes in which the action
takes place are rendered in significant enough detail that the viewer is able to recognize their commonality in real life. There is a contrast in color and weight on one level, and a contrast in the details of actors and scenes on another.

Visual framing here is strongly based in the rhythm of the cuts from one scene to the next, a significant difference from the Zoloft commercial. Temporally speaking, each scene is framed in time by moving from one swiped or morphed transition to another. Most of these scenes do not contain rigid frameliike “structures,” such as doorways, trees, lines, or the like, but are framed in time by the successive zooming of transitions. For example, at 35 seconds the camera zooms towards and then through an airplane window, framing the main character sitting in his seat. After the transition, though, the scene in its entirety is presented as a sort of “group-portrait…stress[ing] group identity” (Kress and van Leeuwen 203). This grouping of actors in each scene is key to the coherence and general framing of each shot.
Appendix L

Enablex: Visual Analysis

*Representational* – Much like the previous two commercials discussed, this one is also chosen for analysis due to its abstract nature. The drug is one for the treatment of overactive bladder, a point blatantly made in its visual construction. Although it does render its component scenes and actors with a higher degree of detail than is present in the other two commercials, there are still no reactors portrayed.

The water balloons here travel in fairly consistent vectors going from left to right, while simultaneously bouncing a significant amount. These actors are unique in that some of their movement is pure movement; bodily quivering is comprised of vectors without a goal, or non-transactional actions (Kress and van Leeuwen 74). In addition to these innate movements, the actors at this class reunion initially engage in *unidirectional* transactional actions in the conga line, but after introducing the drug their dancing becomes more vigorous in terms of *bidirectional* transactional actions. Although the directions of on-screen vectors changes a fair degree over the course of the commercial, the type of transactional action seems to be the biggest change in movement. There is, essentially, a greater apparent willingness for the balloon characters to clash vectorally with one another after the drug has been introduced.

This presents us with representational similarity and difference regarding the Mirapex advertisement. While the Mirapex advertisement shifted from bidirectional transactional actions to more unidirectional transactional actions, indicating a relaxation, the introduction of Enablex marks a shift from unidirectional to more bidirectional
actions, thus indicating an increased confidence in the main character’s vectoral motion. As Enablex is promoted as a treatment for overactive bladder, this makes a great deal of sense.

*Interactive* – The consistent level of zoom throughout this commercial is appropriate to the event. The scenes, portrayed via medium-distance shots connote a social relationship between the viewer and the subject. What changes most in the filming of this commercial is the cycling of angles. Most of the film is shot from a high angle, putting the viewer in a position of greater power, while specific points in the dancing are shot at eye-level. It is notable that the viewer is brought to eye-level when the main actor bursts. This is a shot of equality, suggesting perhaps that the viewer could be in the very same unfortunate position at his own reunion. As the viewer is taken from an angle of high viewer power to this eye-level shot, we might consider that the commercial is structured to interactively take the viewer from an assumed position of control to being in the position of no control.

The sense of interaction is enhanced when the zooming is coupled with panning. The previous two commercials did not have much panning present in their filming, nor did they have nearly the sense of perspective in three-dimensional space. Most of this film, despite the angle or zoom, gives a strong sense space, and uses fairly deep focus. Thus, the viewer gets a strong sense of the tremendous amount of activity occurring at the class reunion, and possibly the sense that they are viewing a familiar place—the viewer is given a generic rendering of a school gym and living room.
Compositional – The focus of most action in this ad is on the center of the screen. In terms of information value, we see that the main character almost continually occupies this region. His placement in the region of mediation serves to showcase the changes in action that coincide with the introduction of the medication. Regarding the other informationally-suggestive regions, we see that the Enablex wordmark at various times occupies each of five realms that Kress and van Leeuwen use to describe visual composition. At one point, the word “Enablex” is positioned in the real, the given, and the mediated at the same time! It is almost continuously present as a part of the setting; it is incorporated as a truly diegetic element. This compositional strategy almost makes Enablex appear to be a sort of sponsor for the reunion itself; it becomes an ad-in-an-ad.

So much activity is presented in these informational spaces—and from so many perspectives—that a postmodern effect is elicited. Aside from the captions and disclaimers, which are consistently placed in the realm of the real at bottom of the screen, most of the key actors appear in each of the five regions at different points in the ad.

In terms of visual salience in this film, it is accomplished primarily through use of color and size of the balloons. Framing also helps to foreground the main actors in each scene, and has a significantly greater presence in this commercial than in the others. The main actor is framed temporally by frequent cuts to other angles, and spatially by doorways, drapes, tables, gym floor markings, and table lamps. With the increased amount of perspective used in this commercial, framing is also accomplished at a number of different depths other than the plane on which the main character operates.
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