STANDARDIZED
A MANIFESTO BY SHANNON CARTER

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Project Description: "Standardized" is a digital ethnography about Eric Carter (b. 1973), whose experiences with traditional literacy education and associated technologies (pen/paper) were altogether unsatisfying. Even so, his out-of-school experiences with other literacies—computers, video games, music--were extensive, rigorous, and ongoing. He describes these early experiences and the increasingly sophisticated literacies required of him at work and, especially, in his developing expertise as an electronic musician.

Clip also available on YouTube: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BasSXwwI-Y0

Motives for Undertaking Project: As a teacher, teacher trainer, and writer, I have been struggling for years to understand the disconnect between in-school and out-of-school literacies experienced by students like Eric (often marked by school measures as "basic writers"). However, making visible the complexities and intellectual rigor associated with out-of-school "reading" and "writing" activities like video games and electrical line repair is difficult when one must translate these non-traditional literacy experiences into the more traditional, academic modalities (like the page-bound, alphabetic text). Given that a major focus of the current study is Eric's developing literacy as an electronic musician, it only made sense to choose a modality (film) that would enable me to *play* his music rather than merely describe it. That way others can *hear* his music rather than merely read about it.
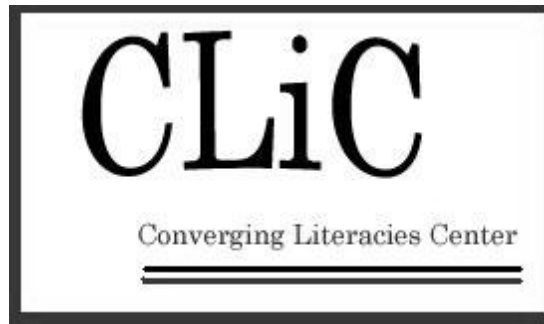
"Standardized" attempts to draw attention to the variety of ways literacy manifests itself in our lives and the lives of those often much less closely identified with school. The tools Eric finds most relevant and productive are not pens, paper, and alphabetic texts but computers, mixers, MIDI, complicated software for music production like *Fruity Loops*, and keyboards. It is important for us to better understand and make use of the variety of reading and writing experiences our students bring with them, helping them develop what I have called elsewhere "rhetorical dexterity"—"the ability to effectively read, understand, manipulate, and negotiate the cultural and linguistic codes of a new community of practice based on a relatively accurate assessment of another, more familiar one" (Carter, *The Way Literacy Lives*, 22).

Methodology: Audio/video sequences included in "Standardized" were culled and rearranged from about 10 hours of face-to-face, telephone, and email interviews conducted with research participant Eric Carter between June 2006 and July 2007. All music by Eric Carter, recording as Japanese Seizure Robots. Additional footage came from Carter family home movies, family photographs, and original photographs. Video source material beyond the Carter family home videos, interview recordings, and music clips came from Archive.org and Creative Commons.

Equipment used: Dell Inspiron 1501 Laptop, *Moviemaker, PhotoStory3, Photoshop, MS Word, Sony Vegas Video, Audacity,* and *MS Paint*

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TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY-COMMERCE

Where Literacies Converge

CLiC
Converging Literacies Center

The Converging Literacies Center (CLiC) at Texas A&M-Commerce is an interdisciplinary site (virtual and physical) where educators work with students and scholars work with one another to reimagine literacy education in ways that embrace multiple, diverse literacy experiences and multiple modes of communication--from the written to the aural to the digital.

Questions informing/informed by CLiC (including the current project "Standardized")

- What are the material realities limiting and shaping our student's acquisition of new literacies?

- What do these realities have to teach us about literacy learning and literacy education?

- How do digital literacies inform (and challenge) traditional ones?

- When (why and how) are print-based, alphabetic texts absorbed by multimodal ones?

- What can we learn from all this about writing and the teaching of writing?

converging

> to come together, approaching one another

"Convergence occurs within the brains of individual consumers and through their social interactions with others. Each of us constructs our own personal mythology from bits and fragments of information extracted from the media flow and transformed into resources through which we make sense of our everyday lives." (Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture*, 3-4)

literacies

> litera*cies*--versus literacy--emphasizes the multiple, socially-sanctioned, people-oriented nature of any "literate" act; literacy thus requires reading and negotiating various contextualized forces that are deeply embedded in identify formation, political affiliations, material and social conditions, and ideological frameworks.

> Literate Practices refer to those sanctioned and endorsed by others recognized as literate members of a particular community of practice.

center

> a place (virtual/physical) where the chief objects of attention are literacies (converging, multiple) as they manifest themselves in the lives of real people--authentic literacy experiences captured, studied, supported, understood, extended.