

RECLAIMING MEMORIA FOR WRITING PEDAGOGIES: TOWARD A THEORY  
OF RHETORICAL MEMORY

by

Tammie M. Kennedy

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As members of the Dissertation Committee, we certify that we have read the dissertation prepared by Tammie M. Kennedy entitled Reclaiming Memoria for Writing Pedagogies: Toward a Theory of Rhetorical Memory and recommend that it be accepted as fulfilling the dissertation requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: October 31, 2008  
Roxanne Mountford

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: October 31, 2008  
Thomas P. Miller

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: October 31, 2008  
Adela Licona

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: October 31, 2008  
Krista Ratcliffe

Final approval and acceptance of this dissertation is contingent upon the candidate's submission of the final copies of the dissertation to the Graduate College.

I hereby certify that I have read this dissertation prepared under my direction and recommend that it be accepted as fulfilling the dissertation requirement.

\_\_\_\_\_ Date: October 31, 2008  
Dissertation Director: Roxanne Mountford

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SIGNED: Tammie M. Kennedy

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“Beauty and goodness are always there in each of us. A true teacher, a true spiritual partner, is one who encourages you to look deeply in yourself for the beauty and love you are seeking. The true teacher is someone who helps you discover the teacher in yourself.”

--Thich Nhat Hanh

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## ABSTRACT

While *memoria* is the fourth canon of rhetoric, its generative power remains essentially absent from rhetoric and composition studies. In my dissertation I use Mnemosyne's story as a way to reconceptualize *memoria* beyond the confines of mnemonic techniques and memorization. I provide an overview of *memoria* using the terministic screens of storehouse, invention, and subjectivity in order to explain its absence and the consequences of this gap. I posit that the generative, critical, and embodied qualities of memory shape our ways of knowing and being and our hermeneutical, inventive, and revisionary practices.

I argue that memory is rhetorical: it's not just what is remembered/forgotten that matters, but *how* it is remembered, by whom, for what purpose, and with what effect. Rhetorical memory is a process—and product(s)—of remembering. Rather than remaining fixed, rhetorical memory is dynamic, relational, infused with emotion, steeped in imagination, and context-dependent. It is also relational, not autonomous and continuous. When memory is written, it expresses, analyzes, connects, rebuilds, and transforms the links between private and public, past and present, self and other, reason and emotions, fact and fiction, and mind and body. Rhetorical memory is (re)visionary. In chapter two, I explicate the constructed/reconstructed nature of rhetorical memory as demonstrated by Maxine Hong Kingston in "No Name Woman." I also examine how rhetorical memory enriches feminist pedagogy(s), especially how agency might emerge and be sustained. In chapter three, I focus on the critical aspects of rhetorical memory by investigating how the memory of Mary Magdalene was constructed to maintain cultural

hegemony. I argue that rhetorical memory provides a critical tool for underrepresented groups to critique, disrupt, and revise truth claims often represented in traditional bodies of knowledge. In chapter four, I assert that rhetorical memory empowers writers to uncover white privilege and take action against such injustices. I also include a section on how I incorporate rhetorical memory into my pedagogical practices. I call on scholar-teachers to address how our professional discourses and scholarly conventions impede how we communicate about the kinds of insights we gain from rhetorical memory.

## CHAPTER ONE: RECONCEPTUALIZING *MEMORIA* IN WRITING PEDAGOGIES

*When a person says 'I remember,' all things are possible.*

—Linda Hogan, *The Woman Who Watches Over the World*

### **Introduction: Defining Rhetorical Memory**

Memory,<sup>1</sup> like rhetoric, has many meanings. And like rhetoric, the history of memory is marked by its shifting prominence. For the ancient Greeks, “Mnemosyne, the goddess of memory, was also the goddess of wisdom, the mother of the muses . . . and therefore . . . the progenitor of all the arts and sciences” (Samuel vii). From that point, memory’s fortunes fell until it was almost completely associated with memorization, database storage mechanisms, or genre. Furthermore, like rhetoric, memory often operates as the absent presence, appearing in a “variety of forms, but mostly in unconscious, imbedded, or implicit treatments” (Reynolds, “Memory” 13). Ironically, because memory has been subsumed by other concepts (e.g., experience, history, culture, consciousness, identity, ideology, subjectivity, invention, personal writing), it remains forgotten and diffused within the epistemic and philosophical frameworks of the day. While *memoria* is the fourth canon of rhetoric, its generative power, even in the wake of the process movement and critical/social pedagogies, remains largely truncated from rhetoric and composition studies.

In order to broaden the theoretical terrain of *memoria* and reconfigure it beyond the domain of the Enlightenment’s unified, rational, autonomous “individual,” it is critical to understand memory as rhetorical, as the act—and the artifacts—of remembering. Kendall Phillips highlights memory’s rhetorical dimension when he

explains that the substance of memories “attain meaning, compel others to accept them, and are themselves contested, subverted, and supplanted by other memories” both socially and individually (2). Both Sue Campbell and Paul Eakin, for example, argue that rhetorical memory is also relational, not autonomous and continuous. It changes just as the body, consciousness, and identities shift within various contexts (personal, social and cultural) and across time. In other words, rhetorical memory is revisionary:

Memory is always already secondary revision: even the memories we run and rerun inside our heads are residues of psychological process . . . and their (re)telling—putting subjective memory-images into some communicable form—always involves ordering and organizing them in one way or another. (Kuhn 184)

And so I define *rhetorical memory* as a process of remembering, or “re-memory” to use Toni Morrison’s term; in other words, there is no “memory-in-itself,” but instead it is always and already mediated.<sup>2</sup> Rather than remaining fixed, rhetorical memory is dynamic, relational, infused with emotion, and context-dependent. It is also constructed from real life experiences and the imagination, an interconnection that disrupts the rhetoric/poetic binary that categorizes much of the work we do in English departments.<sup>3</sup>

Another rhetorical dimension of memory, embedded within the mediated quality, involves its private and public dimensions. While rhetorical memory is autobiographical or personal in nature, it also intersects with both cultural and public memory.<sup>4</sup> When rhetorical memory is written, the private becomes public. It expresses, analyzes, connects, rebuilds, and transforms the links between past and present, self and other,

reader and writer, public and private, and mind and body—dualisms that circulate throughout the history of our disciplinary debates. As such, rhetorical memory is subject to the “discursive” power that Foucault articulates in *Discipline and Punishment*. Memory, like any knowledge-claim, is linked to power and the subordinating norms that are part of language. My particular interest is in how rhetorical memory may be employed in our writing pedagogies as a tool of “interpretative intervention”<sup>5</sup> (Ratcliffe’s term). By helping writers understand that memory material is both process and product, an interpretation and in need of interpretation, and constructed and revisionary in nature, they are more likely to engage in the processes of what Kenneth Burke calls “identification” with other rhetor’s memories (*Rhetoric of Motives*). Furthermore, “identification” addresses the complexities of communicating across differences, offering writers access to agency in order to sustain social action. Thinking about rhetorical memory from this perspective begs the question: Why don’t rhetoric and composition studies value memory?

To help answer this question, I begin by (re)telling Mnemosyne’s story, who serves as the inspirational foremother for this project, as a way to appreciate the transformative qualities of rhetorical memory embedded within her legacy.<sup>6</sup> Then I use Kenneth Burke’s notion of “terministic screens” as a lens to understand the history of *memoria* in rhetoric and composition studies. By examining the terministic screens that influenced various scholars’ theorizing, I demonstrate how *memoria* was renamed, dismissed, or abridged. More specifically, these terministic screens help to illuminate how *memoria* stalled in Enlightenment notions of a fixed self where memory functions

like objects in a scrapbook. Burke's "terministic screens" are also useful in articulating the inextricable connections between memory and film, especially in terms of Foucault's understanding of discursive power and film's capacity to "reprogram" memory, as well as Robert Burgoyne's idea, drawing on Nietzsche, that films "burn in" images in our consciousness that feel like personal memories. In an effort to move beyond the Enlightenment-based terministic screens that linger in rhetoric and composition studies, I look at how feminist and postmodernist work done in autobiographical studies, as well as neuroscience, help to contest the connotations of *memoria* that pockmark our field. These conceptual frameworks offer a means to (re)conceive rhetorical memory as a multidimensional, multidirectional, dynamic matrix of seeing, knowing, being, and doing. As such, rhetorical memory provides a pedagogical tool of discourse that serves critical consciousness and social and ethical actions at the foundation of our writing instruction. Furthermore, because rhetorical memory is embodied and then written, it provides the critical linchpin between the cognitive and emotional aspects of intellect that Victor Villanueva illustrates in "*Memoria* is a Friend of Ours" (4). As a result, rhetorical memory helps to address the emotional dimensions of rhetoric, which according to Lynn Worsham are often ignored in our theories and pedagogies that focus on difference. By the end of this chapter, I establish rhetorical memory as a foundation from which I might better articulate the critical and generative tools necessary to augment pedagogical strategies that can make student writing more purposeful and persuasive, facilitate and sustain the tools necessary for both collective and personal agency, and create a community of writers in the classroom that breaks down some of the inherent problems

of organizing around identity categories of difference. Rhetorical memory also helps to bridge binaries such as private/public, fact/imagination, self/other that have maintained many of the academic paradigms that erase or silence underrepresented groups or fail to capture the complexities of our lived experiences in discourses. Pedagogies that engage the critical, generative, and embodied dimensions intrinsic to rhetorical memory might better empower writers to locate and disrupt hegemonic discourses/practices, communicate within/across differences, and sustain social consciousness and awareness after the writing course ends, especially in the feminist and whiteness pedagogies on which I focus.

### **Mnemosyne Remembers**

*Memoria* begins with a story, a call to *remember*.

Mnemosyne, the Greek goddess of memory, was a daughter of the first generation of deities in Greek mythology. According to Hesiod's *Theogony*, she was one of twelve siblings, the daughter of Ouranos, the father sky, and his mother, Gaia, the mother earth. Her father was controlling and jealous, forcing Gaia to keep the unborn siblings in her body (157-58). Held inside her mother's womb, Mnemosyne experienced the wrath of patriarchal oppression and her mother's pain. She survived by bonding with each of the different aspects of her brothers and sisters, forming a union of Earth and Sky. But unlike her other sisters, she did not couple with a brother-spouse. Instead, she chose to be the one who *remembers* (Borofka 16-17)

Mnemosyne is usually depicted as a beautiful woman, with a full mane of luscious hair, often a rich auburn color. Ovid tells us that Mnemosyne's memory of her

mother's pain made her unwilling to be vulnerable to a lover (293). However, Zeus changed that. Longing to preserve the memory of his great victories as the leader of the Olympians, Zeus disguised himself as a shepherd and seduced her. They coupled for nine nights before he left her. Months later, "she gave birth to nine daughters of harmonious mind,/carefree maidens whose hearts yearn for song" (Hesoid 56-61). The Muses' gift, according to Hesiod, was to "soothe men's troubles and make them forget their sorrows" (53-55).

While I am suspicious of the story behind *the story* of Zeus' "seduction" of Mnemosyne, the account opens up a wide range of possible connotations of memory's prowess. From my perspective, the very core of this myth suggests that Mnemosyne, beget from both Heaven and Earth, viewed memory as a source of agency for creating her own identity and challenging the oppressive forces that threatened to stifle her coming into being. She transformed her painful memories into a creative energy, giving birth to a sisterhood: Calliope (epic poetry), Clio (history), Erato (love literatures), Euterpe (music), Melpomene (tragedy), Polyhymnia (sacred hymns), Terpsichore (dance), Thalia (comedy), and Urania (astronomy). The nine Muses, preservers of human civilization and purveyors of inspiration, honored their mother's legacy, embodying the powers of memory to inform all aspects of being and knowing.

I had never heard of Mnemosyne when I wrote my first memoir, *Leave of Absence*. Two years later, as I reflect on the writing process and the ensuing transformations that underscore my personal life, as well as my teaching and scholarship, I like to think that Mnemosyne accompanied me on that journey. She was the soul voice

that inspired me to search my memories, to embrace my vulnerabilities in remembering and (re)remembering, especially as a daughter who witnessed my own mother's pain, carried her traumas as my own, survived my father's oppressive behaviors, and committed myself to living a different way. Under Mnemosyne's influence, I experienced my own paradigm shifts, listening to different voices, hearing my own, and learning to seek knowledge through my heart, my head, my body, my senses, and my intuitions. She supported me as I grappled with the mysteries of understanding my past, my present, and my future and the inextricableness of remembering, forgetting, and imagining a different way of being and acting in the world. Mnemosyne reminded me that memory lives to serve transformative actions. As Patricia Hampl explains, "memoir is not a matter of nostalgia. Its double root is in despair and protest" (204). As such, Hampl maintains, memory is not tied to an individual self but instead allies itself to the larger political and social contexts in which it is embodied. But more than anything else, Mnemosyne showed me that memory opens up new spaces of (re)vision: "To write one's life," Hampl argues, "is to live it twice and the second living is both spiritual and historical" (37). And in the remembering, the reliving, the retelling, there is transformation.<sup>7</sup>

While the Mnemosyne myth had found itself mostly footnoted or archived in dusty annals, I imagined that the inextricable tenets that underscore her story—memory as agency, as social action, as private and public, as fact and imagination, as epistemologically and ontologically holistic, as rhetorical identification/disidentification) and creation, as a means to link past and present—would surely inform our discipline. Supposing I had overlooked the scholarship on memory, I rifled through my book

shelves, searching for “memory” in the indexes of rhetoric and composition books on theory and pedagogy. I conducted Boolean searches of memory and rhetoric and composition studies on Google, Compile, and MLA databases, trying out various combinations of terms and eventually widening my search into other disciplines. Even though memory (i.e., history, culture, consciousness) could be understood as the beginning, the foundation upon which all other knowledge and understanding is built, I found that “memory” didn’t really exist in our field in the ways I had presumed it would. Most mentions of memory were linked to listing the canons of rhetoric, genre (e.g., narrative, autobiography, and memoir), mnemonics for memorizing, computers, and cross-cultural and postcolonial studies. But *memoria* had been conceived so broadly or so narrowly that it almost ceased to exist on its own terms.

Memory’s shadowy significance is puzzling. In the wake of the process movement and the burgeoning of progressive pedagogies that suppose to empower our students to critique the power structures that proliferate hegemonic practices that subordinate those marked by gender, ethnicity, race, class, sexuality, and other differences, why was the generative power of memory truncated from our disciplinary practices? How did *memoria* get relegated to the confines of mnemonic techniques and memorization, a *techne*, a way of regurgitating information that hardly does justice to the range of elements that constitute memory? More specifically, how did memory get reduced to a pragmatic tool of reason, a devise garnered from Descartes and his “I think therefore I am” Enlightenment thinkers?

## The Terministic Screens of Rhetorical Memory

*The charm, one might say the genius of memory, is that it is choosy, chancy, and temperamental: it rejects the edifying cathedral and indelibly photographs the small boy outside, chewing a hunk of melon in the dust.*

—Elizabeth Bowen

Memory often functions as a litmus test that registers intellectual, cultural, and pedagogical trends. In *The Art of Memory* (1966), Frances Yates' extensive work on classical and medieval memory, she argues that by tracing how *memoria* was valued throughout history, we can better understand the "vital points on the history of religion and ethics, of philosophy and psychology, of art and literature, of scientific method . . . and open up new views of some of the greatest manifestations of our culture" (389). These results also help to explain memory's demise in rhetoric and composition studies that perpetuates some of the binaries that stall our discipline (e.g., rhetoric/poetic, personal/academic, reason/emotions, mind/body). Given the scope of my project, I will use Kenneth Burke's concept of "terministic screens" to help me map out the history of *memoria* in rhetoric and composition studies. Using the analogy of how photographs of the same subject vary depending on the kind of lens used, Burke concludes the following: "Not only does the nature of our terms affect the nature of our observations, in the sense that the terms direct the attention to one field rather than to another. Also, many of the 'observations' are but implications of the particular terminology in terms of which the observations are made" (*Language as Symbolic Action* 46). Burke's concept is useful in understanding how certain aspects of memory were highlighted given the vocabularies and god-terms of various eras (e.g., reason). If we are to understand memory's erasure

and the consequent need for a revised notion of *memoria* in rhetoric and composition theory and pedagogy, then we need to understand how certain interpretative framing devices abridged the potential power of Mnemosyne's legacy.

Although scholars cannot pinpoint exactly when *memoria* was added to the list of rhetorical canons, Sharon Crowley, one of the few scholars in rhetoric and composition studies who discusses memory, points to the legacy of sophist Hippias, famous for his memory prowess, and the *Dissoi Logoi's* instructions for creating a memory system, to suggest that formal instruction in artificial memory predated the fifth century (*Ancient* 318-9). Certainly, as Eric Havelock has argued, memory occupied an important position in ancient rhetoric where whatever was forgotten was lost. Of the traditional five canons of Western rhetoric—*inventio*, *dispositio*, *elocutio*, *memoria*, and *actio*—*memoria* (memory) has proven particularly susceptible to shifts in importance throughout the ages. While the canons were eventually understood to represent the process followed by rhetors as they composed any piece of discourse, *memoria* fell in and out of favor depending on the epistemological imperatives of the times (Crowley *Methodical* 1). In his review of *Logic and the Art of Memory*, Ned O'Gorman describes the fluctuations this way:

From its propulsion of Homeric lore to its grounding of rhetorical invention to its exile under print culture to its recent revival in public memory studies, the promiscuous and perplexing history of memory in the West may be one of the least appreciated, and perhaps least understood, elements of rhetorical and intellectual history. (168)

I maintain that this same “perplexing history” is evident in rhetoric and composition studies, which has kept *memoria* less than “memorable.”

Over the course of our disciplinary history, memory has been linked to concepts such as “storehouse,” “invention,” and “subjectivity,” isolating one dimension of memory and directing our attention away from *memoria* as a vehicle for critical and creative social praxis. As the art of memory became known as a “useful skill” rather than a “way of understanding the world,” its importance as a canon of rhetoric was minimized (Hutton 372). Scholars such as Kathleen Welch, Robert Connors, and John Reynolds demonstrate that the majority of our writing textbooks are based on the relationship between these five canons. Therefore, when one of the canons is minimized, there are pedagogical consequences: “In composition studies, the first three canons—invention, arrangement, style—organize the vast majority of current textbooks, but the last two—memory and delivery—are typically deleted without a word of explanation (Welch qtd. in Reynolds 245). George Kennedy argues that the deletion of memory over the years stems from “memory’s absorption under disposition and, most often, to the western world’s shift from orality to literacy (qtd. in Reynolds 245). While the shift from orality to literacy explains part of *memoria*’s demise, this explanation overlooks the critical and generative dimensions of memory that have been ignored by rhetoric and composition studies. I agree with Kathleen Welch that *memoria*’s erasure disrupts the “organic interrelationships of the recursive movements [of composing]” and bulldoze[s] the landscape of memory into a terrain only suited for “prescriptions of technical rhetoric” (*Plato* 5, 13). A problem, Sharon Crowley argues, that played out in current-traditional

pedagogy that privileged reason and employed a method of memory where “invention consisted in the rhetor’s review of her ideas and the connections made between them” (*Methodical* 45). Both of these explanations may be traced to the terministic screens through which rhetoric and composition scholars have viewed *memoria* that distracted scholars from realizing the critical and generative power embodied in the canon.

Even if *memoria* faded from prominence, it was never totally erased; its contours were uncovered during rhetoric and composition’s various paradigm shifts (i.e., social turns). For example, the revival of classical rhetoric in our writing pedagogies led some rhetoric and composition studies scholars to reconsider the “lost” canon. Despite the preliminary interest, however, Edward P.J. Corbett created a bumpy path for memory’s revival in our field in *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student* (1965):

Of all the five parts of rhetoric, *memoria* was the one that received the least attention in the rhetoric books. The reason for the neglect of this aspect of rhetoric is probably that not much can be said, in a theoretical way, about the process of memorizing; and after rhetoric came to be concerned mainly with written discourse, there was no further need to deal with memorizing . . . There will be no consideration in this book of this aspect of rhetoric. (38)

Given that Corbett was such an influential scholar in our field and his textbooks were staples of composition classrooms across the country, his dismissal had long-reaching effects.

While *memoria* seemed to vanish from rhetoric and composition studies, Mnemosyne's fingerprints can be revealed everywhere in our pedagogies and theories. John Reynolds argues that memory has functioned as the absent presence in our textbooks. In his 1989 article "Concepts of Memory in Contemporary Composition," Reynolds illustrates how "memory appears in our writing textbooks in a variety of forms, but mostly in unconscious, imbedded, or implicit treatments. Chances are, then, that most composition teachers today to some extent rely on the classical canon of memory, whether they realize it or not" (251). He cites examples from various texts where the authors focus on ways to "make writing memorable" (e.g., topic sentences, thesis statements, reader-expectations, textual design, language/details); "tapping memory's repositories" to "guide invention, arrangement, and style"; and the relationship between memory and psychology, especially cognitive psychology (248-50). Later, in "Memory Issues in Composition Studies," which is part of his edited collection on memory and delivery, he picks up on these ideas to argue that the "classical canon of memory is still central to writing and reading, [and] memory remains as important to contemporary composition studies as it was to rhetorical studies in antiquity" (12-13). However, despite the covert traces of memory in our discipline, as long as *memoria* exists as an absent presence in rhetoric and composition studies, its critical, generative, and transformative qualities will remain untapped.

In order to understand how scholars like Corbett so easily dismissed *memoria*, it is helpful to examine the terministic screens that influenced their theorizing. One of the most prominent images, derived from classical rhetoric, was memory as a "storehouse."

Interestingly, this terministic screen was founded on a different origin story with a new hero. The art of memory (*ars memoria*) referenced by Corbett begins with a story told centuries later by Cicero, the anonymous author of *Rhetorica Ad Herennium*, repeated by Quintillian, and chronicled by Francis Yates. Hired as the entertainment for the banquet festivities, the popular Greek poet Simonides of Ceos (c.556-468 BCE) honored the wealthy nobleman Scopas of Thessaly with a lyric poem to commemorate his boxing victory. During his performance, however, Simonides also praised the boxing talents of the twin gods, Castor and Pollux, which angered Scopas who had not paid to have those men included in the ceremony. Out of spite, Scopas declared that he would pay Simonides only half of their agreed-upon fee; he said the gods could foot the rest of the bill. Mysteriously, during the banquet merriment, Simonides was called outside to meet two young men whom he could not find. While he was outside, the banquet hall roof collapsed, crushing Scopas and all the other guests beneath the rubble. The bodies were mangled beyond recognition so that relatives called to the scene were unable to identify their loved ones.

Like an archaic version of *CSI*, Simonides volunteered his services, exclaiming that he could identify all of the guests by remembering where they had been seated during the banquet (Yates 1-2). Not only did Simonides lend a hand in recovering the bodies, he also discovered a method for developing a good mnemonic memory: One must “select places (*loci*) and form mental images of the things they wish to remember and store those images in places, so that the order of the places will preserve the order of the things, and the images of the things will denote the things themselves” (Cicero qtd. in

Yates 2). Although lyric poets of the Greek Archaic era (e.g., Homer, Hesoid, Sappho) had certainly devised methods of memory in order to perform their poetry in the public sphere, Simonides was credited by the Romans as the founder of improving and training one's "artificial" memory (*memoria verborum*) versus one's innate or natural memories (*memoria rerum*) Thus, rather than celebrating Mnemosyne's legacy of social action, critical imagination, and transformation, *memoria* was reconceived as an organized *techne*, a way of regurgitating information by using mnemonic strategies. Here memory simultaneously invokes a narrative (a story of where people are sitting) with logic (linking one's place to another).

Reading this story steeped in mystery, death and destruction, and emotional drama, as well as the power of memory, it is interesting to consider what is being culled from this narrative. It first appeared in *The Rhetorica Ad Herennium*, written about 84 BC by an anonymous author, which is also the first text to articulate the five canons of rhetoric (Bizzell and Herzberg 241). According to Janine Rider in *The Writer's Book of Memory*, Book III contains the most complete treatise on memory, "consisting of the mnemonics and practice necessary to assure accurate delivery. . . . It provides the most complete and influential classical definition [of memory]" (9):

Now let me turn to the treasure-house of the ideas supplied by Invention, to the guardian of all parts of rhetoric, the Memory. . . . There are, then, two kinds of memory: one natural, and the other the product of art. The natural memory is that memory which is imbedded in our minds, born simultaneously with thought. The artificial memory is that memory which

is strengthened by a kind of training and system of discipline. (qtd. in Rider 205-6)

Rider argues that two key concepts come out of this description of memory and influenced Roman rhetoric: memory as a “waxen tablet upon which inscriptions are written” and “memory as a storehouse of knowledge” (10). Furthermore, the *Ad Herennium* author provides specific strategies for preparing a speech by “training the memory to memorize,” although he believes that some are naturally more gifted in this area (11).

Cicero’s conception of memory is very similar to *Ad Herennium*. He also uses the story of Simonides to articulate mnemonic techniques (artificial memory) based on images and places that augment a rhetor’s oratorical prowess rather than his ability to memorize a text word-by-word. However, he adds that natural memory can be trained whether it is weak or strong. Quintilian focuses on Simonides abilities as an orator to memorize specific details “by heart,” which shaped educational practices for centuries: “The most important thing is to learn much by heart and to think much, and, if possible, to do this daily, since there is nothing that is more increased by practice or impaired by neglect than memory . . . (qtd. in Rider 11). This focus on memory as a “storehouse” showcases how rhetoricians like Corbett could so easily dismiss the importance of *memoria*. First, because of the existence of writing, databases, and later, personal computers, these great feats of an orator’s memory were no longer valued. Second, when writing instruction shifted to student-written themes instead of communication-based courses where students recited passages from great literature, a shift well-documented by

John Brereton, memory was no longer regarded as an important part of English education. In this way, memory became nostalgic, a concept that no longer seemed important in contemporary rhetoric and composition studies.

### **Memory as Invention**

*We are able to find everything in our memory, which is like a dispensary or chemical laboratory in which chance steers our hand sometimes to a soothing drug and sometimes to a dangerous poison.*

—Marcel Proust

In *The Art of Memory* Frances Yates expounds upon Simondies' story in great detail because Cicero and Quintilian attribute the art of memory to him (Cicero *De Oratore* II; Quintilian *Institutio Oratoria* XI). However, she also focuses on the *Ad Herennium's* statement that memory is "the custodian of all the parts of rhetoric" (5) in an attempt to articulate the complex relationships between all five classical rhetoric's five canons. In addition to arguing that the classical art of memory was more than just memorizing, she is concerned that memory be considered as part of rhetoric, not just a section that can be used or not. Specifically, she lays the groundwork for connecting memory to invention, a move several rhetoric and composition studies scholars adopted for their work (5-9). In doing so, John Reynolds commends Yates' work because it "traced complex, multiple, interrelated notions of rhetorical memory to antiquity," potentially reviving *memoria's* place in our future scholarship ("Memory" 5).

Building on Yates' work in *The Book of Memory* (1990), Mary Carruthers illustrates "how greatly we misunderstand when we reduce ancient and medieval *memoria* to our word *memorization*" (208). Unlike ancient and medieval people,

contemporary scholars don't usually "reserve their awe for memory" or associate it as a mark of "superior moral character as well as intellect" (1). Instead, they privilege imagination as our highest creative power, reducing memory to something "devoid of intellect" (1). She likens memory's importance to thinking, arguing that "all mnemonic organizational schemes are heuristic in nature. They are retrieval schemes for the purpose of *inventio* or 'finding'" (20). Linking memory to a search rather than simple retrieval, Carruthers also views memory as a process, whether that means coming to know divine ideas we have forgotten (Plato) or the reconstructive process of recollection (Aristotle). Subsequently, Carruthers makes an important distinction between rote memorization and recollection or reminiscence: rote memory's purpose is to "reproduce something exactly" whereas recollection or reminiscent involves *investigo*, tracking-down what is needed or might prove helpful" (19-20). Carruthers uses the term "educated memory" to spotlight how the ancient and medieval notions of memory might be (re)interpreted today. From this perspective, "memory was much more than a matter of providing oneself with the means to compose and converse intelligently when books were not readily to hand, for it was in trained memory that one built character, judgment, citizenship, and piety" (9). Like literature, memory has a social function; it should be regarded as "*praxis* rather than *doxis*" (13), capable of inspiring ethical and moral actions.

While Yates and Carruthers' books serve as key texts on memory for scholars in other disciplines, Sharon Crowley's work is fundamental to any discussion of memory in rhetoric and composition studies. In *Ancient Rhetorics for Contemporary Students* she devotes an entire chapter to memory: "Memory: The Treasure-House of Invention." She

opens the chapter with the *Ad Herennium* quote, “Now let me turn to the treasure-house of the ideas supplied by Invention, to the guardian of all the parts of rhetoric, the Memory,” and a retelling of the Simonides story (316-7). She links memory to *kairos* (timing and attunement) and Quintilian’s notion of preparing a “tappable” memory that could be ready to perform at any moment of speaking or composing (317). She also adds that the relationship between memory and invention is fundamental for audience awareness.

While Crowley makes a compelling argument about how Aristotle proposed a different “memory system” from Simondies and the Romans, her focus on invention does not account for another key text on the subject. In Aristotle’s treatise on memory, *De Memoria et Reminiscentia* Aristotle first distinguishes between “memory” (sensory input plus time) and “recollecting” (a sort of reason, inference): “For those persons who possess a retentive memory are not identical with those who excel in power of recollection; indeed, as a rule, slow people have a good memory, whereas those who are quick-witted and clever are better at recollecting” (1). Scholars such as David Krell and Jocelyn Small argue that this passage has been interpreted in a variety of ways because Aristotle never gave a clear definition of what he means. Additionally, Aristotle adds to the confusion with illustrative tidbits like “dwarfs have abnormally weak memory, as compared with their opposites” and babies and old people have bad memories “owing to the amount of movement going on within them” (8). This perception also explains why children don’t have good memories because they are “dwarf-like in their bodily structure” (8). While these examples are humorous, they also point to Aristotle’s attempt

to understand memory through the body and how soul-body relationships shape all life, not just mental acts. Furthermore, Aristotle's philosophy of memory, Bruce Gronbeck maintains, is concerned with the "power of the past" and how all human beings might "bring it into consciousness" (139). By connecting how the past shapes the present, Aristotle provides a less static notion of memory's powers and implies the link between memory and identity.

Despite the complexities of Aristotle's views on memory and the fact that he devoted an entire treatise to the subject matter, Crowley focuses on the *Topics* in order to articulate the intersection between invention and memory: "For just as in a person with a trained memory, a memory of things themselves is immediately caused by the mere mention of their places, so these habits too will make a man readier in reasoning, because he has his premises classified before his mind's eye, each under its number (Aristotle qtd. in Crowley 321). Crowley emphasizes Aristotle's notion of memorizing commonplaces that help to construct enthymemes. *Topoi*, of course, are an important aspect of artificial memory, the composing process, and our pedagogical practices; however, I wonder how a discussion of the other treatise might help to articulate a more comprehensive view of *memoria* and the relationships among memory and identity, invention, action, and transformation. While Crowley includes a section on "cultural memory," this addition hardly amends the use of an abridged version of Aristotle's views on memory. Like Corbett's dismissal of *memoria*, Crowley's focus on the relationship between *topoi* and memory made a significant impact on our pedagogical practices, both reminding scholars

about the importance of the canon and directing our attention away from a more panoramic view of how memory functions in rhetoric and composition studies

Crowley's focus on the more practical aspects of Aristotelian memory certainly distracted rhetoric and composition studies scholars from the more embodied inventive elements to be explored in his theories. While Hutton articulates how the Aristotelian tradition of memory was often regarded as more instrumental than Plato's, Aristotle attempted to link sensory perception, imagination, and thinking through the "image-making part of the soul" (Yates 32). He picked up on Plato's wax tablet metaphor in order to account for the kinds of mental pictures derived from sense impressions, colored by time, and shaped by imagination and thinking: "It is clear that we must conceive through sense-perception in the sentient soul, and in the part of the body which is its seat,—viz. that affection the state whereof we call memory—to be some such thing as picture" (*De Memoria* 2). It is important to remember, as Mary Carruthers explains, that Aristotle's understanding of the soul embodies the

whole complex of organization and function of a human being; *mind* is invoked to explain that aspect of its function relating to its ability to understand and to acquire wisdom. . . . Memory images, are produced in the emotional (sensitive) part of the soul, are 'physiological affections [meaning both 'a change' and 'a disposition to change in a certain way'].

(49)

As a consequence, Aristotle's memory belongs to the same part of the soul as the imagination and, according to Richard Sorabji, plays an important role in providing the

raw material that human thought needs in order to function in their daily lives (6).

Furthermore, because the mental images are stored after a passage of time, they must be retrieved in some way—somatically, intellectually, spiritually, spatially, associatively—in order to enter our consciousness. And once in our consciousness, memories must be interpreted and represented beyond the “facts” they might suppose. Understanding Aristotle’s views on memory as the foundation of experience from which knowledge is made might have opened up discussions about *memoria* that moved beyond pragmatics and reason.

In “Memory: A Step Toward Invention,” Rick Cypert links memory to invention, focusing on style as both a product of invention and an aid in the writing process. Like Yates, he attempts to understand the canons as interconnected rather than separate entities that fall prey to hierarchical rankings. Because he wants to move away from associating memory with only mnemonics, he provides writing exercises that help students compose from the “less-commonly-explored-common-places (of memories) [that] might provide a place in the process of invention ...” (3). He disrupts the classical distinction between natural and artificial memory by arguing that the two are interdependent: natural memory leads to a narrative, and the artificial memory (organizing remembered material) encourages more analytical thinking. (1) He concludes by rewriting the *Ad Herennium*’s famous quote cited by Crowley. Cypert states, “I am bothered by only one word of this definition: the preposition ‘by,’ (i.e., “treasure-house of the ideas supplied by invention”) for I think that today memory may be the ‘treasure-house of the ideas supplied to Invention by style” (10). In this light, Cypert disrupts the usual notion of invention and

opens up a space in which rhetoric and composition scholars might reclaim the more generative powers of memory.

While some scholars try to articulate the relationships between canons, others theorize how these relationships have reduced our writing pedagogies. In *The Methodical Memory*, for example, Crowley chronicles how connecting invention, reason, style, and memory served to undergird current-traditional pedagogy. She argues that the “modern epistemology” served as a terministic screen that privileges human reason and “internalized the process of knowledge production” (5). As a result, invention occurred within a “single authorial mind,” which could reason in an “organized linear sequence” and thus had access to “universal truths” (12, 14). When eighteenth and nineteenth centuries rhetoricians like George Campbell and Richard Whatley rejected classical rhetoric’s invention schemes, a “universal” notion of clarity and logic became the goal of pedagogy wherein difference and diversity were not valued. From this perspective, memory was solidified as the pragmatic tool of reason. George Campbell, for example, argues that “an accurate memory was crucial to the inquiry process . . . [and] all the world knows . . . the utility of method for aiding the memory” (qtd. in Crowley 44). As such, method assists memory because it helps the rhetor to arrange his/her memories by time and place, emulating a “properly styled Method” of chronological order that made for effective proofs (44).

Because current-traditional rhetorical pedagogies dominated the writing classroom well into the 1980s, the parameters of rhetorical memory were reduced to a way to understand failure to produce standard discourse: “If students’ efforts [did] not

meet certain discursive standards, such failures [could] be laid directly at the door of some mental inadequacy—some lack of experience, failure of memory, or inability to make the required connections between ideas” (Crowley 54). From this perspective, “good writing” ignored the rhetorical nature of memory, focusing instead on the “strong powers of reasoning, good taste, and the ability to translate [one’s] thoughts into discourse” (58). This mindset maintained the “storehouse” image of memory, but relegated it even further away from agency and social praxis. In essence, memory was seen as an unorganized warehouse of stuff that only reason could sort through properly. Certainly, thinking about memory as a useful skill that aids the individual imagination was to be expected of modernists who equate originality with the creation of the individual identity instead of a postmodern notion of identities embedded in discursive structures and systems that make up the individual. Furthermore, while modern writing studies specialists talked about classical theories of invention, they did not always account for how classical models were appropriated to buttress notions of the individual self who made up the world from her/his individual recollections. Pre-modernists would have understood the use of a metaphor such as the “wax tablet” as more than an idea; listeners would have experienced Simondes’ tale as a tale of truth and wonder, an ethnographic dimension of tradition that helps to explain why certain types of people have certain types of memories.

### **Memory's Suspicious Subjectivity**

*It is surprising how much of memory is built around things unnoticed at the time.*  
—Barbara Kingsolver

Crowley's work is important for repudiating the individualistic conception of memory that privileges "individual" reason over collectivist ethical values and its effects on invention—a perspective that postmodernists also address in their suspicions of any version of authorized memory (i.e., grand narratives). However, this distinction between interior or exterior memory tends to ignore the discursive systems that comprise subjects and objects. The critical, generative, and embodied elements of rhetorical memory attempt to capture the ethnographic dimensions of story/history/memory that are vital because humans tend to move back and forth between the polarities of self/other, subjective/objective, my story/history without acknowledging that all these points of reference are subject to hegemonic notions of authenticity and truth. Rhetoric and composition scholars need to acquire the kinds of critical tools that better expose and articulate how memories are malleable and embedded—in the individual and in the connections of that person to how his/her communities/cultures interpret, obscure, and rewrite memories. Contemporary psychologists have focused on how memory/forgetting is adaptive within personal, social, and neurobiological contexts (Conway; Herman; Ross; Rosenfield; Schacter) and sometimes this adaptive is "false" as in invented false memories (S. Campbell). From this perspective, memories help to form our terministic screens, affecting the way we interpret and function in our world(s). These memories must also be critiqued in order to locate how hegemonic discourses are making what

seems “subjective” no more authentic or “real” than the discourses that uphold certain truth claims.

Kathleen Welch contests the negative connotations of “subjective” memory. She argues for the importance of the canon of memory by reexamining the Platonic tradition where memory was viewed as more than practical. Specifically, she argues that “the most important connection that memory as a canon of rhetoric gives us is its explicit pointing to psychology” (“Platonic” 7). While scholars like Flower and Hayes’ explore memory’s importance in the cognitive psychology of composing instead of Plato’s notion of psyche, Welch attempts to elevate the importance of the canon of memory by exploring Plato’s understanding of the relationship of consciousness and language and past and present.

Plato, navigating the meaning of the new technologies and changes in the *polis*, mirrors the complex dynamics of memory’s power and pitfalls that color modern and postmodern ambivalences. Famously, Plato rejects writing because of its detrimental effects on memory. At the same time, he also rejects poetry, the child of Mnemosyne (memory), as being idle and seductive, potentially disruptive of his transcendental goals (Schachtel 1). This contradiction stems from how Plato distinguishes between different kinds of memory and their epistemic ramifications. Specifically, Plato favors metaphysical memory in which the soul learns (recollects) the knowledge it possessed at birth through dialectic in order to discover Truth. And since poetry cannot offer the truth about reality (a notion with which many artists would argue), it is not an acceptable source of knowledge (memory). Plato’s *Theaetetus* articulates some of these issues through Socrates’ dialogues:

Imagine, then, for the sake of argument, that our minds contain a block of wax, which in this or that individual may be larger or smaller, and composed of wax that is comparatively pure or muddy, and harder in some, softer in others, and sometimes of just the right consistency [. . .]. Let us call it the gift of the Muses' mother, Memory, and say that whenever we wish to remember something we see or hear or conceive in our minds, we hold this wax under the perceptions or ideas and imprint them on it as we might stamp the impression of a seal-ring. Whatever is so imprinted we remember and know so long as the image remains; whatever is rubbed out or has not succeeded in leaving an impression we have forgotten or do not know (191 c-d.: 121—qtd. in Krell 25).

David Krell argues that Socrates “uses the metaphor not so much in order to explain what memory *is* as to show how false judgments are *possible*” (25), which is an attempt to refute the notion that knowledge is perception. Furthermore, according to Krell, “emphasizing that the slab of wax is Mnemosyne’s *gift*, not the great goddess herself in person,” supports Plato’s idea that false judgment cannot actually be blamed on memory as such but instead on the person’s soul which is not sophisticated enough to defend against sophistry and the seductive powers of poetry (25-6). From this perspective, writing only adds to the problems of accessing Truth, causing forgetfulness in the learner’s soul who no longer relies on memory for knowledge.

Plato’s disembodied notion of epistemic memory necessitates a rejection of writing because it can’t support the wisdom that is generated through dialectical

remembering. In the *Phaedrus*, Socrates further articulates his objections to writing. He tells the story of Theuth who brought his invention of writing to the King of Egypt, who rejects it:

You have invented an elixir not of memory, but of reminding; and you offer your pupils the appearance of wisdom, not true wisdom, for they will read many things without instruction and will therefore seem to know many things, when for the most part they are only ignorant and hard to get long with, since they are not wise, but only appear wise. (qtd. in Bizzell and Herzberg 165)

Yet Plato's rejection of memory is not so clear-cut. In "Hypertext and the Rhetorical Canons," Jay Bolter sees Plato's rejection of writing as a "gap between internal memory and external recording" (108). This explanation might be explored in our pedagogies by asking these kinds of questions: How do students access memory? What are some of the ways they may communicate about what they found? How might these findings provide avenues for critical and creative social practices? Bolter's interpretation suggests that inherent in Plato's concern is the rhetorical nature of memory, which is ignored by most modern thinkers and fodder for suspicion with postmodernists. Plato's suspicion also highlights how memory functions between the writer and reader. Because memory is more than a repository which one can transcribe, it calls for a different kind of relationship between the reader and writer. While the ancients owned a book by memorizing it, and read by listening, writing about memory carries similar complexities. As Czeslaw Milosz argues, the work of memory forms a relationship: "the one intimate,

the other public—creat[ing] a powerful call and reply” (qtd. in Hampl 86). Therefore, focusing on only the “subjective” notions of memory have failed to account for the relationships tendered between the one who remembers and the one who reads/listens to memory as documented by scholars such as Carruth; Felman and Laub; and Pennebaker.

This abridged understanding of subjectivity has been sustained in part by the rift between rhetoric and poetry that has permeated much of rhetoric and composition studies scholarship’s notions of truth. Charles Griswold contends that Plato’s views of writing and poetry are understandable given the two types of memory he describes. Exterior memory (*hypomnesis*) focuses on the recall of cultural events, while the interior kind (*anamnesis*) is concerned with “raising consciousness” of the forgotten elements in the soul (207). From this perspective, the written word “deprives [one] of true recollection (*anamnesis*) as well as dialectic,” resulting in unreflective distinctions between what is true and what is believed to be true (24). This form of *hypomnesis* is especially problematic given the nature of oral cultures. Because the audiences were thought to be under the spell of the poet, there was no time for self-reflection. While Plato’s dialectic attempts to break the passivity inherent in listening to poetry performances, writing, Thomas Frentz explains, “threatens to reinscribe it with a vengeance” (248). Therefore, Plato’s notion of *anamnesis* attempts to link self-knowledge to spiritual insights that expand our consciousness of the self in relation to the soul knowledge gathered from everyday life (i.e., consciousness-raising) (249).

While Plato’s view of epistemic memory (*anamnesis*) gives credence to memory as wellspring of knowledge and site of transformation, his rejection of poetry is often

understood as a dismissal of oral culture's methods of knowing and sharing important truths. However, as both Griswold and Frenzt point out, Plato's memory was more complex than previously understood. Although Plato's theory of recollection often gets folded into the hierarchies of discourse that play out today (e.g., philosophy/rhetoric/poetry), it suggests a richer method for interpreting the larger significance of memory.

My cursory overview of *memoria* using the terministic screens of storehouse, invention, and subjectivity point to some persisting problems. Like rhetoric, there are many definitions of memory, as well as types (e.g., personal, cultural, public). There are also various lenses through which one might examine *memoria* in terms of history, genre, and discipline (philosophy, psychology, literature, anthropology, neurological, and etc.). By articulating the most prominent terministic screens under which rhetoric and composition studies scholars have theorized, we can better comprehend how we have created, using Dewey and Burke's term, an "occupational psychosis" that focused on the more utilitarian aspects of *memoria* (qtd. in Foss 208). While these terministic screens provide glimpses of the richer and more varied possibilities of *memoria*, mostly they direct scholars' attention away from the critical, generative, and transformational qualities of memory. These qualities, I argue, might better serve writing pedagogies that attempt to sustain social and ethical awareness and action and disrupt the hegemonic binaries that separate imagination from invention or objective from subjective ways of knowing.

### **(Re)remembering Mnemosyne**

*It doesn't matter who my father was; it matters who I remember he was.*

—Anne Sexton

The “(re)remembering” subtitle reflects the centrality of memory in Toni Morrison’s work and what I view as fundamental to an enriched understanding of *memoria*. Because Morrison views memory as a “form of willed creation” rather than “research, her characters must undergo a process much more complex than calling up some facts” (“Memory” 385),. They must “rememory” the past. In *Beloved*, for example, Sethe deplures her “devious” brain for “remembering the . . . trees rather than the boys [hanging from them] . . . She could not forgive her memory for that” (6). Undoubtedly, the work by some scholars of color who focus on critical writing, as well the popularity of the memoir in the 1990s, led some rhetoric and composition studies scholars to revise the terministic screens (i.e., storehouse, invention, and subjectivity) that have obscured the pedagogical possibilities of memory work.

Kathleen Ryan draws on Morrison’s notion of memory and extends earlier understandings of how memory serves invention by revising *memoria* to be conceptualized as “rememoried knowing [that] attends to the relationships among history, literacy, and invention” (36). She looks to 18<sup>th</sup> century Italian humanist Giambattista Vico’s “tripartite concept of memory,” (37) which describes three different elements: “memory when it remembers things, imagination when it alters or imitates them, and invention when it gives them a new turn or puts them into proper arrangement and relationship” (*New Science* par 810, 313-4). Vico’s ideas about memory not only help to

reestablish the importance of rhetorical memory, they link invention and imagination as well as personal and cultural knowledge. Vico understands that the making of history is a collective act; we are not of our own making because our stories, our memories are not our own. In part, Vico resurrects the power of memory in order to criticize Descartes' reliance on scientific knowledge:

What kind of person, what kind of society, will be fostered by Cartesian disdain for probabilistic knowledge of law, ethics, politics, and medicine? The Cartesian method is useful, Vico concedes, but it cannot be allowed to overpower the kind of *sensus communis* or common sense that the study of eloquence stimulates with its appeals to imagination and memory and its practice in the commonplaces of argument. (qtd. in Bizzell and Herzberg 862)

Rider, too, looks to Vico as a way to open up our understanding of invention. She argues that because Vico “believes that poetic thinking is based in imagination (memory) . . . which is our first knowledge . . . he suggests the relationship of memory to all thinking” (24). Pedagogically, then, if we rely on the Cartesian notion of knowledge, we will stifle students' critical thinking, displacing the knowledge necessary to inform ethical social actions that sustain human relationships. Therefore, it is important to reconceptualize memory as a generative source that creates personal and cultural knowledge.

Ryan further draws on Morrision's use of the word “rememory” to articulate a “rememoried knowing [with] four dimensions”: “memory material, imagination and interpretation, context and subjectivity, and transformation” (39). These four dimensions

move beyond the termnistic screens of storehouse, invention, and subjectivity. Memory material is “made up of fluid impressions, associations, and tentative recollections that gain meaning through . . . imagination and interpretation” (40). The “rhetorical context” suggests the way “time, place, and urgency influence what and why people remember” (41) and influence the “creation and sharing of new knowledge” (42). Although Ryan focuses her attention on revising the canon of memory in order to augment discussions of personal writing, her ideas provide a starting point to better understand how *memoria* might be revised to inform all of our emancipatory pedagogies that hope to sustain social consciousness and action when the course ends.

While invention is a critical component in rhetorical memory, recognizing memory’s embodied qualities compels us to better understand the dynamic nature of memory and remembering/forgetting. In other words, how memory begets the acts and artifacts of writing (re)memory and how writing invokes (re)memory. In “Habit as Memory Incarnate,” Marion Francoz takes up the question of why the more recent scientific evidence surrounding memory—which suggests that memory is “dynamic; elaborated; generative; transformatory; dependent on context, meaning, and emotion; biologically unique, and yet, equally shaped by social environment” (11)—has been largely neglected in the field of composition studies and rhetorical theory. She argues that our terms for discussing the relationships between memory and writing have shifted in “an ironic twist of the Platonic hierarchy. [W]riting has now become the source of knowledge, while memory is consigned only to a species of ‘reminder’” (13). In order to understand how this shift happened, she explores how the idea of how habit is

incorporated into three main images for memory: “container,” “hydraulic system,” and “body” models (13). Of these metaphors, Francoz favors the latter because it reflects that memory, like the living body, is “always in a state of becoming” (26). By thinking about how *time and space* are embodied in acts of reading and writing about memory, Francoz, like Burke, focuses on how memory work provides for a kind of identification between the reader and writer that might sustain social action.

This notion of space<sup>8</sup>—rather than invention, as posited by Crowley, or invention as part of a storehouse retrieval system—permeates other more recent attempts to view memory more panoramically, as is evident in Susan Jarratt’s feminist historiography of the “differently gendered need for memory” embodied in Sappho’s work (13). After reviewing how space functioned in ancient rhetoric, especially for the task of participating in the *polis*, Jarratt argues that Sappho’s verse was “unlike the architectural systems with their fixed objects” described by Simonidies, Cicero, and Quintillian (36). Sappho’s memory provided the “rhetorical means to mourn—a way of remembering that returns us again and again to the loss of countless others who have come and gone, and urges us to seek persistently their traces” (37). This kind of critical public memory provides an avenue to understand how hegemonic social structures might be disrupted by memory. Jarratt’s recovery of Sappho’s work reminds us that public/private are not diametrically opposed spaces bordered by time, gender, and ideology. Rather, memory is active and dynamic, functioning across, within, and beyond borders. Like a Mobius strip memory embodies the interconnectedness of seeing, knowing, being, and doing.

If we start to move beyond the terministic screens employed to conceptualize memory in the past, we must also look at how our discourses (dis)serve the generative qualities of rhetorical memory. In “*Memoria* Is a Friend of Ours,” Victor Villanueva tries to move the discussion of *memoria* out of genre. He argues that “memory simply cannot be adequately portrayed in the conventional discourse of the academy,” which is especially problematic for people of color who seek to “reclaim” and “retain” memory of their culture(s) (12). Because academic discourse is cognitive, strong in ethos and logos, but weaker in pathos (cultural/personal), he reminds the reader that “*memoria* was the mother of the muses, the most important of the rhetorical offices” (16). From this perspective, Villanueva argues for narratives that do more than help listeners/readers’ recollection; he seeks narratives that connect the individual, history, and memory in order to “jog our memories as a collective in a scattered world and within an ideology that praises individualism” (16). Throughout the essay, Villanueva captures the importance of memory by using different voices, genres, and public and private discourses that are not easily assimilated within traditional academic discourse(s). In the end, memory provides a linchpin between the cognitive and emotional aspects of the intellect in order to “validate . . . resonate . . . and awaken” both the writer and the reader/listener to the importance of *memoria* to reflect the contradictory nature of consciousness (15). Unlike Ryan, though, Villanueva points to how *memoria* can be understood beyond “the personal” notions of writing pedagogy. Instead, he seeks to employ *memoria* in the service of transforming rather than reproducing academic discourse(s) that replicate domination through logos and ethos.

**Theoretical Underpinnings of Rhetorical Memory: Film Composition,  
Autobiographical Studies, Foucault, and Neuroscience**

*It is memory that provides the heart with impetus, fuels the brain, and propels the corn  
plant from seed to fruit*

—Joy Harjo

Articulating a theory of rhetorical memory requires a new set of analytic tools that move us beyond the Enlightenment-tinged terministic screens of storehouse, invention, and subjectivity that have influenced rhetoric and composition scholars' understanding of *memoria*. I believe that the concepts articulated by Morrison, Ryan, Francoz, Jarratt, and Villanueva point us in a more productive direction. However, because *memoria* has been subsumed by various conceptual and epistemological frameworks, the call for new ways of understanding memory as rhetorical is at once overwhelming and invigorating. To reconceptualize memory as rhetorical is to embark on a quest to excavate much of what seems familiar in order to map out our theoretical blind spots and create new sites for theorizing the power, problems, and politics of remembering/forgetting. While there are numerous routes on this journey, it is critical that a theory of rhetorical memory accounts for two competing tensions. On one hand, rhetorical memory must transcend the limits of its Enlightenment legacy. On the other hand, it must not stall out in a postmodern paralysis where there is no truth, no agency, and no self, especially for those who have been marginalized and dismissed within dominant discourses. Creating a space in which students might gain the kind of *phronesis* needed to navigate these tensions poses many challenges.<sup>9</sup> Advocates of Progressive writing pedagogies such as Elizabeth Ellsworth and Richard Miller lament the disconnect between students understanding oppressive hegemony, for example, and being able to recognize it in their own thinking and actions.

The same is true for understanding the nature of one's constructed self(s) writing and written by memory.

As I explore a theory of rhetorical memory, I will ground my work in the ideas that focus on the construction of memory and identity formation found at the intersections of film composition, Foucault's notions about power and discourses, autobiographical studies, and neuroscience. These interdisciplinary tools are especially useful for understanding how the personal significance of memory anchors our lives and (dis)connects us to time, places, people, and ideas. As Paul John Eakin explains, "The latest developments in brain science today confirm the extent to which memory, the would-be anchor of selves and lives, constructs the materials from the past that an earlier, more innocent view would have us believe is merely stored" (*Lives* 106). Therefore, a theory of rhetorical memory must address both the promise and perils of its constructed nature, especially as represented textually. In the classroom, it is vital that students understand remembering as rhetorical rather than a retrieval and transcribing process. However, it is equally important for students to grapple with the fragmented, temporary notions of self, or what Julia Kristeva calls a "subject in process" without negating the agency necessary to purposely craft the truth(s) contained in their memories.

One poignant but simplistic way to begin a discussion of rhetorical memory as more than a storehouse is to think of memory in filmic terms. Memory is more akin to a set of moving pictures, a film, than a still photo tucked inside a scrapbook to be viewed as a static object. For example, imagine a typical 90-minute movie being a huge jigsaw puzzle that has more than 100,000 pieces to sift through to get the 1,000 pieces to create

the film. The editor/director, like a writer excavating memory material, must put together all of these fragmented images in order to say something, relying on all the elements of film which correlate to the other four canons: invention (selectivity of scenes, cinematography, actors); arrangement (selectivity, coherence, continuity, and rhythm, transitions, expansion and compression of time); style (mise en scene, creative juxtapositions, special effects, sound), and delivery (genre, cinematography, marketing and distribution). While each of the shots may be traced to the personal imagination/memory, they all carry cultural significance. Then multiply the complexity of creating a 90-minute movie by the infinity of memory.

From this perspective, rhetorical memory, like film, is not a passive, autonomous entity. Like film, rhetorical memory is a social practice for writers and readers—in the way we put together the pieces of memory, in the meanings we derive, in the ideologies at play, in the combination of shots (Eisenstein) or the composition of shots (Bazin), in the ways we focus on representation, and in the languages we use (Turner). Renowned Russian filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein argues that the unique nature of the cinema is that it produces the “synchronization of the senses” that allow the filmmaker to converse with his/her audience on a higher, deeper, and subtler levels of communication, replicating the multidimensional epistemologies of lived experience (69). This same philosophy might be applied to envision a more comprehensive view of memory in writing pedagogies. In other words, rhetorical memory, like film, is more than just a storehouse of objects for invention to be sorted into “clear and distinct” content to be used by the rational, singular authorial/auteur mind. Writing memory has the potential to disrupt and rewrite

hegemonic discourses and to uncover our multiple selves, which may be (un)seen in dominant representations.

Undoubtedly, thinking about rhetorical memory as more like a film than a photograph has its limits, especially when we attempt to move between modernist and postmodernist views of representation and truth.<sup>10</sup> Similar to my efforts to reconceptualize rhetorical memory, postmodern documentary filmmakers and theorists attempt to redefine documentary in ways that reflect both its constructed nature and how it is able to reveal new truths. They, too, must grapple with the ramifications of questioning the Enlightenment projects of truth and reason, or what Linda Williams refers to as the “mirror with a memory” way of thinking about photography and film, as well as the power of film to “move audiences to a new appreciation of previously unknown truth” (380). Williams provides a definition of documentary that attempts to negotiate the tensions between these important aspects of film:

Truth is not ‘guaranteed’ and cannot be transparently reflected by a mirror with a memory, yet some kinds of partial and contingent truths are nevertheless the always receding goal of the documentary tradition . . . [Documentary then is] not an essence of truth but a set of strategies designed to choose from among a horizon of relative and contingent truths. The advantage, and the difficulty, of this definition is that it holds on to the concept of the real . . . even in the face of tendencies to assimilate documentary entirely into the rules and norms of fiction. (386)

I quote her at length because her definition of documentary also provides insight into a way of thinking about rhetorical memory that doesn't totally disregard the rhetor writing memory or the reader reading memory. While it is important to acknowledge the constructed nature of memory, it is equally important to honor the representations of selves through which memory speaks. Rhetorical memory helps to account for how an individual's memory, while fragmentary and constructed, offers a site to investigate *how* the memory was remembered/forgotten and how various memories compete with other memories (discourses) in order to be written. The idea of truth, then, is linked to agency because some form of truth emerges from the attempt to represent the selves when writing memory.

While Michel Foucault is not often associated with memory per se, his interest in power, knowledge, and subject-positions are useful for rethinking rhetorical memory. Specifically, Foucault's understanding of discursive formation and the rules that govern these formations (e.g., what may be talked about, who is allowed to speak/write, what are considered the proper forms within which to speak/write, and what is accepted as knowledge) provide a useful framework to contest the terministic screens that have informed our views of *memoria* in the past. Furthermore, his work helps us to consider the discourse (i.e., rhetoric) of memory—what memories may be remembered and written, who is allowed to write their memories, what forms (dis)allow the writing of memory, and what is the (un)sanctioned link between memory and knowledge? In *Power/Knowledge*, for example, Foucault argues that the question of truth is less important than understanding how power and knowledge are linked and regulate social

conduct. In his other works (e.g., *The Archeology of Knowledge, Madness and Civilization, The History of Sexuality*) Foucault focuses on the tensions between official history (disciplinary knowledge) and how memory might offer alternative versions to these “grand narratives.” Susannah Radstone articulates Foucault’s connection to memory this way: “[A] key aim of [postmodern] memory research has been to explore, then, the subjectivity of memory, opening a door to the examination of lived, historical experience and its complex relation to ‘H’istory” (84). Therefore, rather than arguing that the subjective nature of memory cannot be relied on to produce a “truth,” Foucault engages the rhetoricity of memory in order to uncover *how* memories are written and read.

Feminists such as Nancy Harstock have criticized Foucault’s disregard of how gender, race, class, sexual orientation are deployed differently in various power structures. However, Foucault’s genealogical method of history, which he also links to memory in “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” provides insight into the complexities of power/knowledge/subject. He argues that history, like memory, is not a linear process. Rather, history seeks to show the plural and sometimes contradictory past that reveals traces of the influence that power has had on what we perceive to be our truths. In *Radical Feminisms, Writing, and Critical Agency*, Jacqueline Rhodes acknowledges the usefulness of his genealogical approach: “The main advantage to a Foucaultian approach to history (i.e., memory) is that it acknowledges the rhetoricity of historization itself. . . . [These] are rhetorical choices, invested heavily in questions of who writes the histories, who reads them, and the purposes for which the writing and reading are done” (9).

Furthermore, as Leigh Gilmore argues in *The Limits of Autobiography*, Foucault's interest in counterdiscourse in books such as *Madness and Civilization* and *The History of Sexuality* point to how

memory is required for the resistant political practices his work inspires and in which he participated. At the heart of self-representation lies a process of self-construction . . . the material of which is a mixture of memory and invention. Acts of remembering the past differently . . . [constitute] a remnant from which a counterdiscourse may emerge. (34)

Yet such methods are always at risk because, as John Fiske demonstrates in *Media Matters*, "discourse is a social product with political effects in a society of inequalities" (4). These risks reveal that memory is never neutral. One needs only to skim some of the work in Holocaust and trauma studies<sup>11</sup> to understand the tenuous threads between memory and representation and how contesting discourses bring into question the rememberers' credibility and competency. As Jean-Francois Lyotard argues in *Heidegger and "the jews,"* memory "misses" in its attempts to represent and establish any sense of closure on atrocities such as the Holocaust. If any record of memory/history is constructed, there is also a politics of forgetting (10). Furthermore, this body of work demonstrates the difficulty of both representing certain truths culled from memory and the imperative to do so, even when the self uttering the memory is not the self of that memory.

Postmodern and feminist autobiographical scholars seek to tease out and redefine the complexities and contradictions through which the selves are constructed. In *How*

*Our Lives Become Stories: Making Selves*, Paul John Eakins disputes the modernist view of thinking of autobiography as “a theater in which the self’s uniqueness, privacy, and interiority are on display” (110). He argues that autobiographical memory is socially and culturally constructed. The “I” writing memory, unlike the disembodied *subject* of Descartes’ philosophy, functions as a self which Eakins thinks of as “less an entity and more as a kind of awareness in process” (x). As a result, this embodied consciousness creates “registers of self” that are performed in our daily lives (1). From this perspective, memory is rhetorical in that it constructs many stories for the self to tell, within (un)sanctioned forms of telling, and relies on more than one self to tell them.

The postmodernist thinking of feminist autobiographical scholars such as Elizabeth Grosz, Nancy K. Miller, Joan W. Scott, Leigh Gilmore, Caren Kaplan, as well as scholars of color like Sidonie Smith, Shirley Geok-lin Lim, and Lourde Torres has done much to advance autobiographical studies beyond the domain of the white, male, and Western self at play in the modernist terministic screens that shape our past understanding of subjectivity. In “Introduction: Situating Subjectivity in Women’s Autobiographical Practices,” Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson provide an excellent guide to how the field has evolved, especially in terms of the debates on subjectivities and generic practices. The authors conclude that autobiographical remembering requires new practices “that refuse any simplistic notion of autobiography as a master narrative of the bourgeois subject” (37). They outline potential sites for theorizing, including autobiographical ethics, the relationship between identity formation and autobiographical narration, spatiality, and more—all of which grant agency to the writer/rhetor. Of specific

interest to me is their understanding of “memory [as] the project for the millennium . . . [in which] scholars are studying the making and unmaking of memory” (39). Because autobiography “unfolds in the folds of memory,” they argue for examining the ways memories are recovered and validated, both in terms of the hierarchies of discourses and the politics of remembering that infuse how memory is written and read and by whom. In essence, they call for theories of rhetorical memory.

Historically, scientific discourse has provided the foundation upon which the terministic screens of storehouse, invention, and subjectivity have been supported. However, recent work in neuroscience negates the tenets of these views that create and sustain a focus on the inventive hierarchies of modernity (e.g., imagination versus fact, objective versus subjective). In her brief philosophical treatment of memory, Mary Warnock explains that our notion of memory as a retrieval system (i.e., storehouse) is rooted in thinking of memory as a fixed entity stored in the brain. For many years, scientists thought that “records of memory were held in certain specific molecules, which could be transferred” (7). As such, memories create images and the power to remember stems from our ability to revive the perceptions that created these imprints. In other words, memories help us “to [think] about things in their absence” (17). However, several neuroscientists have expended great energy to refute this prevalent conception of memory. They have, as Joan Francoz argues, demonstrated that memory is “dynamic; elaborated; generative; transformatory; dependent on context, meaning, and emotion; biologically unique, and yet, equally, shaped by social environment” (12). In fact, according to Oliver Sacks, their findings have been so compelling they have obliterated

the common metaphor of imagining the mind as a machine (qtd. in Fancoz 12).

Therefore, in order to reconceptualize rhetorical memory as a multidirectional, multidimensional, dynamic matrix of seeing, knowing, being, and doing, it is important to better understand its neurological qualities.

Composition scholar Alice Brand provides an excellent overview of memory and the brain, specifically rejecting Descartes' dualism and "cognitive scientists' [insistence] that intellectual enterprises have sovereignty over emotion" (201). The limbic system (e.g., hippocampus and amygdala) is of particular interest to rhetorical memory as it relates to personal or autobiographical memory. Brand's research into brain underscores how the embodied nature of memory provides an important bridge between body and mind, especially in terms of teaching writing where the historic attention to academic logos has created an unfortunate gap for many students who bring a wide variety of literacy(s) to the university. Her research also highlights the flexibility and plasticity of neural activities that create new connections and understandings about the rhetorical nature of our personal memories. In short, how memory supports transformation. By understanding that the limbic system, like the rhetorical situations in which we "remember" and write our memories, is a system of choices about what gets stored and the strength with which it gets stored, we might better understand how rhetorical memory provides a platform on which critical consciousness might be realized.

Contesting the storehouse concept of memory has opened up more ways to think about revision and transformation in our pedagogies. Gerald M. Edelman, a neurologist and Nobel-laureate, challenges the notion of memory as fixed images stored in the brain.

In *Bright Air, Brilliant Fire*, he articulates his “Theory of Neural Group Selection (TNGS),” arguing that the brain’s configuration is not fixed. It is constantly modified, meaning the brain is adaptive and open-ended rather than programmed. Therefore, memory is an open system where interactions between the mind and body and individual and social worlds create and revise meanings. Edelman’s “neural Darwinism” not only “rescues mind from the dilemmas of philosophical dualism,” as James McConkey writes, it “shows how memory—that ‘key element in consciousness’—is connected with intentionality, enabling us (within limits) to have the freedom to determine our future” (47). This ability to envision a different future is especially important to a theory of rhetorical memory, if we think of it as providing a tool and process for understanding and combating hegemonic oppressions. Just as Foucault argues in “Film and Popular Memory” that remembering can “reprogram” popular memory (92), Eakin believes that remembering has the potential to transform not only identity(s) but memory as well (18-9). If a theory of rhetorical memory is to engage and sustain social/ethical action, writing memory must be at the core of its praxis. Students must be able to disrupt the memory imposed on them by dominant discourses that circulate the notion there is nothing else worth remembering.

This need to understand the intersecting complexities of subjectivity and remembering is important to our writing pedagogies. Israel Rosenfield, a former colleague of Edelman’s, focuses his research on challenging problematic notions of memory’s subjectivity as well as its static nature. He argues that memories are perceptions newly occurring in the present rather than images fixed and stored in the past.

Just as Edeleman's TNGS theory shows the constructed nature of the brain, Rosenfield focuses on recollection as a perception: "[E]very context will alter the nature of what is recalled" (*Invention* 89). Therefore, because memory is embodied and rhetorical, "[e]very recollection refers not only to the remembered event or person or object but to the person who is remembering" (*Strange* 42). This understanding of memory as self-referential is not to say that memory is private, or part of an autonomous individual, the Enlightenment's ideal. Rather it points, again, to the relational aspects of memory where memory unfolds against a "constructivist background, a sense that our representations of reality—literary, psychological, neurological—are dynamic and constructed rather than static and mimetic in nature" (Eakins 107). In other words, memory, Larry Squire surmises, is not a "single faculty but consists of different systems that depend on different brain structures and connections" (qtd. in Eakin 198).

Ironically, while neuroscience has tried to refute the dualisms of mind/body in which memory remains a key player, the discourses of science and art have often maintained them. However, Jonah Lehrer, a scientist and expert in memory, demonstrates that the binary which creates epistemic mistrust between disciplines is in fact quite false. In *Proust was a Neuroscientist*, he argues that artists such as Virginia Woolf, Paul Cezanne, and Gertrude Stein, theorized some of the key scientific discoveries, sometimes almost a century before science articulated their findings. Of special interest to the discussion of rhetorical memory was Lehrer's study of Marcel Proust, arguably the poster boy for skepticism about the navel-gazing nature of autobiographical/memoir writing and the blurring of imagination (invention) and reality-based discourse. Chronically ill and

bedridden as a young man, Proust created his art from his memories where he lost himself in space and time (75-6). Influenced by Henri Bergson's 1909 book *Matter and Memory*, Proust embraced the need to understand our realities through intuition rather than "describing things" as they are (78). It was Proust's determination to understand reality *subjectively* that led to the famous story of the madeleine cookie that, according to Lehrer, supplied the "prophetic crumbs of sugar, flour, and butter" . . . that provided Proust's insights into how the brain structures memory (79).

Proust recognized that smell and taste are essential to memory. Psychologist Rachel Herz explains that this primacy results from these senses being directly connected to the hippocampus, which is the location of long-term memory. While the other senses are first processed by the thalamus, which provides the language for consciousness, these senses are more difficult to call up from the past (qtd. in Lehrer 80). Proust also rejected any notion that our memories are representational: "Because every memory is full of errors, there is no need to keep track," he said. (82). While Sigmund Freud created psychoanalytic theory based on the dishonesty of memory, neuroscience was slow to explore "how the act of remembering might alter memory" (83). However, Proust recognized the transformative potential inherent in the malleability of memory. Because memories are full of errors, they can be revised just like the sentences Proust so painstakingly changed over and over in his manuscripts (85).

Lehrer cites a 2000 study by Nader, Shafe, and LeDoux to argue that Proust's obsessive revisions mirror the nature of memory: "Memory [is] a ceaseless process, not a repository of inert information . . . Every time we remember anything, the neuronal

structure of the memory is delicately transformed, a process called reconciliation” (85). From this perspective, memory, like writing, is a process. What we knew then has to be modified to fit what we know now. In other words, memory must be put into a context. It cannot, as Lehrer argues, be separated from the “moment of its recollection” (88). Furthermore, if one attempts to fix the memory, prevent it from changing across time and space, it ceases to exist. Yet this is not to say that our memories are not enduring. Dr. Kausik Si explores how memories are made of “something sturdier than even our cells” (qtd. in Lehrer 91). Si found that prions, which are often associated with neurodegenerative disease, create both the endurance and plasticity: “While the prions that mark our memories are virtually immortal, their dendritic details are always being altered, shuttling between the poles of remembering and forgetting. The past is at once perpetual and ephemeral” (94). And while it is often more difficult to embrace randomness, unpredictability, and instability, it is these qualities that give memory its rhetorical nature (i.e., it is always in a state of becoming) and potential for transformation.

While understanding the constructed rather than representational nature of memory helps to refute some of the outdated tropes that inform rhetoric and composition studies’ terministic screens, this perspective also has helped to create what Sue Campbell calls the “memory wars,” a skepticism that “autobiographical memory is too easily manipulated to be a trustworthy source of information about the past” (1). While postmodernists have argued that memory can function as an insidious mirror of “reproduction,” the quest to deconstruct master narratives has in some ways maintained

hegemonic ideologies rooted in what Sara Scott calls the “discourse of disbelief” (33). Because of neuroscience’s understanding of the malleability of memory, the emotional constitutes of memory, and the reconstructive nature of remembering, Campbell argues that debates around False Memory Syndrome have created new problems for women and other minorities, where some researchers question the “flimsy curtain that separates our imagination and our memory (Loftus qtd. in Campbell 10). As these are very complex and problematic issues, I will explore these issues further in chapter two and chapter three.

As we map the terrain of post-process rhetoric and composition studies in the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it is critical that we reclaim *memoria* as part of our pedagogies. If we envision our pedagogies as more than neutral classroom practices that produce “good writing,” then *memoria* takes on more significance in rhetoric and composition studies praxis. In essence, we need to understand *rhetorical memory* as a multidimensional, multidirectional, dynamic matrix of seeing, knowing, being, and doing. Just as Mnemosyne consciously transformed her memories in order to shape her identity and actions, our memories might help us understand, as Jacqueline Royster articulates, our “passionate attachments” and how the “mind, heart, body, and soul operate collectively” in our knowledge-making enterprises (279-80). From this perspective, the generative elements of rhetorical memory can engage writers to look underneath the embedded traces of memory to investigate, deconstruct, reconstruct, and communicate the meaning(s) found in our individual and collective memories. It also

provides them “material” to work with in order to make the kinds of changes they want to see in the world and empowers them to write and (re)write the movie of their lives.

In order to facilitate such a shift in our terministic screens surrounding *memoria*, I will focus on answering some fundamental questions throughout the rest of the book: What are the traces of *memoria* found in other concepts but which fuel our pedagogical discussions (e.g., personal writing, experience, and politics of location)? What are the embodied, critical, and generative tools of rhetorical memory? How can the complexities of rhetorical memory augment our writing pedagogies? How can a focus on rhetorical memory empower students to locate and disrupt hegemonic discourses and practices, communicate within/across differences, and sustain social consciousness and awareness after the writing course ends? How does rhetorical memory help to question and disrupt hegemonic binaries that fail to do justice to the complexities of knowing, being and doing? Do we need to construct different ways of remembering and writing about memory?

Chapter Two examines how feminist pedagogies have focused on terms such as “experience” to understand gendered constructs. I articulate how rhetorical memory might serve as a resource for feminist pedagogies, especially in terms of how it might help us understand and disrupt our ways of thinking and acting within gendered and racist discourses. I focus on grounding and more concretely defining rhetorical memory by examining its constructed/reconstructed nature as demonstrated by Maxine Hong Kingston in "No Name Woman." I also look at how rhetorical memory might support the work of feminist pedagogies, especially how agency might emerge and be sustained to

create alternatives for the future. Chapter Three frames my discussion of rhetorical memory by looking at the debate on feminist historiography that played among Jarratt, Glenn, Gale, and Bizzell in the 2000 issue of *College English* and thinking about these issues through the lens of rhetorical memory. I focus on the critical aspects of rhetorical memory, examining how the memory of Mary Magdalene was constructed to maintain cultural hegemony, especially in popular films, despite the "facts" of her apostolic role. Doing a close reading of her representations in these films through the lens of rhetorical memory explicates how Magdalene has been "burned in" (Nietzsche) both our collective and individual memory. Furthermore, I argue that rhetorical memory provides a critical tool for underrepresented groups to critique, disrupt, and revise "truths" often represented in traditional bodies of knowledge. And, in Chapter Four, I look at how whiteness pedagogy has stalled in terms of sustaining social actions that combat racist practices. I argue that rhetorical memory helps us to better understand how films might provide a kind of "prosthetic memory" (Landberg's term), memory which is both critical and generative, helping writers to uncover white privilege and empowering them to better sustain social actions against injustices. I also include a section on how I incorporate rhetorical memory into my pedagogical practices in my basic writing course. I use rhetorical memory to augment our discussion on the intersections between representations of difference and inequality in films and literacy. The appendixes provide the syllabus, writing exercises, and the writing assignments used in the course.

Before I wrote my memoir, I had a troubled relationship with memory. Many of my self-defining memories were filled with forgetful question marks at the same time

their past-ness informed an eternal present that I couldn't quite put into words. As I started to write my memoir, to dig deeper, past the scent of memory, between the official versions of memory, over the history of memory, through the flooding of memory, and finally down into the marrow of memory, I realized that I hadn't forgotten. I just hadn't fully (re)remembered.

## Notes

1. Kendall Phillips argues that a distinction between memory and history can be traced to Maurice Halbwachs, “who saw history and memory as opposing ways of recalling the past. History, with its apparent claims to accuracy and objectivity, is—or at least had been—viewed as implying a singular authentic account of the past. Memory, on the other hand, is conceived in terms of multiple, diverse, mutable, and competing accounts of past events” (2). “Memories” are also a “way of understanding the complex interrelationships among past, present, future” (2).

2. Drawing on Toni Morrison's work and other scholars who theorize memory, I use the term “re-membering” throughout to reflect her concept of memory and coinage of the term “rememory.” In “Memory, Creation, and Writing,” Toni Morrison emphasizes the “re” in remembering and rememory: “Memory is for me always fresh, in spite of the fact that the object being remembered is done and past” (385). It is the “deliberate act of remembering,” a “form of willed creation” . . . “dwells on the way it appeared and why it appeared in that particular way” rather than to find out what really happened (385). This notion of memory reflects a methodology, a process one undergoes in order to use memory for invention, interpretation, and revision.

3. James Berlin argues that changes in the economic and social structures during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries resulted in a new conception of the division between rhetoric and poetics (4). Drawing on the work of Raymond Williams, Berlin argues that literature was reserved for creative or imaginative works that were “placed in opposition to the horrors of social experience” (6). Such a division underscored other binaries such as high/low culture, art/craft that relegated rhetoric and composition studies into skills-based service courses. Postcolonial scholars like Emma Perez question the binary between history and imagination. She coined the term the “decolonial imaginary,” a “third space where agency is enacted” in order to “uncover the hidden voices of Chicanas that have been relegated to silences, to passivity” (xvi). The imagination provides an alternative, or rupturing space to that which was written (or unwritten) in history (7). Much of Trinh Minh-ha's work focuses on disrupting the hegemonic nature of genres, categories and labels. Minh-ha's films are characterized by attempts to cross the genre borders between fiction and documentary, imagination and truth. She says she

does not like to categorize her films and instead works to make her ideas less clear or to seek closure.

4. There are many definitions of public, cultural, collective, and social memory. I will draw on Maurice Halbwachs' use of the term "collective" memory to collapse communal and collective memory. The needs and interests of a particular community dictate narrative frameworks that structure memory. These frameworks, in turn, invest meaning into the collective memories that define that community. This interrelationship is rhetorical, constructing memories which maintain and subvert interpretation. I like Edward Casey's definition of public memory because it focuses on action: "Memory that occurs in the open, in front of and with others, as distinct from concepts like 'collective memory' or 'social memory.' These public memories are those about which we can interact, deliberate, share. . . . [They] serve as a horizon within which a public finds itself, constitutes itself, and deliberates its own existence. . . . [Public memory] becomes a realm within which we act together" (qtd. in Phillips 4). John Bodnar also links public memory to competing and unequal discourses of "official" memory that are promoted and protected by power (15). He says the "process of cultural memory is bound up in complex political stakes and meanings. It both defines a culture and is the means by which its divisions and conflicting agendas are revealed. To define a memory as cultural is, in effect, to enter into a debate about what that memory means. . . . Cultural memory is a field of cultural negotiation through which different stories view for a place in history" (1). Therefore, as Grainge argues, memory is socially produced and is bound to the struggles around identity formation (2).

5. In *Rhetorical Listening: Identification, Gender, and Whiteness*, Krista Ratcliffe uses the term "interpretative invention" in order to articulate the "intersections" between hermeneutics and rhetoric—both key terms in each field of study.

6. While "transformation" is a problematic term that requires interrogation as we've seen especially in critical pedagogies, I'm adopting Kristie Fleckenstein's definition: "Change radical enough to rewrite the rules supporting a particular arrangement of culture" (761). This definition underscores Adrienne Rich's notion of "revision," the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, or entering an old text from a new critical direction--is for women more than a chapter in cultural history: it is an act of survival" (35). Memories certainly constitute identity. It is also important to include individual changes that accompany social changes. I'm thinking of Anderson and MacCurdy's notion of healing in *Writing and Healing*. [Healing] is a "change from singular self, frozen in time by a moment of unspeakable experience, to a more fluid, more narratively able, more socially integrated self" (7). I also like bell hooks' notion that a transformation of consciousness is the shift from being to doing. For example, "I am a feminist" to "I advocate feminism" (*Feminist Theory* 29). According to hooks, this shift represents a political commitment, an act of will rather than a preconceived "notions of identity, role, or behavior" (29).

7. Adrienne Rich explores the connections between memory and revision in “When We Dead Awaken.” She describes her experiences as a female writer overwhelmed by the “patriarchy” in the “masculine world of the academy.” Rich’s concept of “revision” allows her to see the past and deal with her present situation accordingly and improve it: “Re-vision--the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, or entering an old text from a new critical direction--is for women more than a chapter in cultural history: it is an act of survival” (34). In *Anglo-American Feminist Challenge to the Rhetorical Traditions*, Krista Ratcliffe articulates the way Adrienne Rich’s work challenges the ways we think of memory. Because Rich wants to revise and rewrite history, memory serves a key function in feminist consciousness: [M]emory lives within a person’s body, not as static images but as feelings, ideas, and actions. It functions there, consciously and unconsciously, as a ‘smoky mirror’ that reflects the world differently from different angles and at different times” (125).

8. There is a great deal of work on “third space” and borderland spaces of the both/and that draw on the idea first articulated by Chela Sandoval. Adela Licona argues that third space can be “understood as a location and/or practice” (“Borderlands Rhetorics 105). Doreen Massey deploys the notion of space as “stories so far.” Space becomes a context of competing/contest histories or memories. Adela Licona’s article on third space consciousness, “Borderlands Peregrinations” defines “third space” as an “interstitial space of intersections and overlaps. It is an epistemological as well as an ontological space revealing ways of knowing and being in the world” (3). Emma Perez think of third spaces as the “decolonial imaginary”, which is a rupturing space that allows one to reclaim or re-tell stories in order to resist historical misrepresentations.

9. Thanks to Drew Kopp for directing my attention towards this rhetorical term as a way to understand the challenges of progressive pedagogies. In Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* *phronesis* is the virtue of moral thought, usually translated “practical wisdom” or “prudence.” *Phronesis* is concerned with particulars, because it is concerned with how to act in particular situations. One can learn the principles of action, but applying them in the real world, in situations one could not have foreseen, requires experience of the world.

10. I focus on fictional, mainstream films as part of my writing pedagogy. However, there are many interesting discussions and debates about the role of documentary film in documenting the “real” and when and if documentary film and non-fiction film are the same thing. Barry Gran and Jeannett Sloniowski’s book *Documenting Documentary: Class Readings of Documentary Film and Video* provides an excellent introduction to the topic. See also Trinh Minh-ha’s *Woman, Native, and Other* and *Framer Framed*.

11. There are numerous books on trauma studies. Judith Hermann’s *Trauma and Recovery* is a classic psychological text on the subject. For a more rhetorical approach, Alcoff and Gray’s article “Survivor Discourse” is excellent. Lawrence Langer’s

*Holocaust Testimony: The Ruins of Memory* offers an excellent starting point in which to explore the connections between memory and the holocaust.

**CHAPTER TWO: MNEMOSYNE’S HEIRS: RHETORICAL MEMORY AND  
FEMINIST RHETORIC AND COMPOSITION PEDAGOGIES**

“why some people be mad at me sometimes”  
they ask me to remember  
but they want me to remember  
their memories  
and i keep remembering  
mine

—Lucille Clifton

Clifton’s poem echoes the myth of Mnemosyne, the Greek goddess of memory and mother of the nine Muses, purveyors of civilization and inspiration. While Mnemosyne’s commitment to remembering unjust deeds represents an act of resistance, a way of rendering and reclaiming her truth, her erasure also demonstrates how power governs memory to conform within its structures. Clifton illuminates the problems of hierarchal power in the poem, speaking to the tensions among conflicting desires, discourses, and representations of memory and the complexities of agency within these constructed subjectivities and knowledge(s). She reminds us it’s not just what is remembered (or forgotten) that matters. It is how it is remembered, by whom, for what purpose, and with what effect. As Rosalyn Collings Eves demonstrates in her article on memory and identity in African-American women’s cookbooks, “[m]emories from the margins—particularly those of women and minority groups—are often suppressed, distorted, or deliberately forgotten to make room for the publicly promoted accounts of dominant culture” (281-2). In other words, remembering is a social practice subject to discursive power, a mediated process of construction rather than a process of retrieval or transcription, or the production of a static object for study. Therefore, it is essential that

we understand the rhetoricity of memory, namely the promise and perils of its constructed nature within discourses of power, especially as represented textually.

Rhetoric and composition scholars have much at stake for refiguring memory rhetorically in order to question and undermine the rhetoric/poetics bifurcation that does not support the types of tools needed to transform the hegemonic dualities that have silenced and erased underrepresented groups (e.g., public/private, fact/imagination, objective/subjective).<sup>1</sup> However, as I argued in the previous chapter, memory remains prone in what Sharon Crowley calls a “historical hangover” (*Methodical* xii) that perpetuates the modernist view of memory as an object of “individual” reason. At the same time, postmodernists have typically described memory as an insidious mirror of “reproduction.” Both perspectives underestimate the generative and critical possibilities gained from situating memory rhetorically.

Negotiating the tensions between modernist/postmodernist epistemologies constitute the heart of feminist rhetoric and composition studies: The ongoing attempts to disrupt hegemonic discourses that dispel a universal subject that suppresses women’s lives; grappling with the fragmented, temporary notions of self without negating agency.<sup>2</sup> This struggle is evident in the binaries challenged by feminist pedagogies (personal/academic; reason/emotion; self/other; fact/fiction; private/public; mind/body; performance/essence)—binaries that also inform and confound the work in much of memory studies. By calling attention to the constructed nature of memory—both the process and products—feminist rhetoric and composition scholars might create a transformative space that reflects the generative and critical potential of approaching

memory rhetorically. In other words, if we reconceptualize memory as constructed, it can also be deconstructed and reconstructed as well. And within these (de)/(re)constructed spaces of memory, rhetoric and composition scholars might better expose the false binaries that have defined our field. Furthermore we might theorize new ways to enact, facilitate, and sustain the tools necessary for both collective and personal agency—the precious legacy Mnemosyne bestows her heirs.

In order to reconfigure the theoretical terrain of memory, it is critical to understand memory as rhetorical, as the act and artifacts of remembering, a process of “rememory.” Toni Morrison’s notion of “rememory” in “Memory, Creation and Writing,” focuses on the rhetorical dimensions of memory: “Memory (the deliberate act of remembering) is a form of willed creation. It is not an effort to find out the way it really was—that is research. The point is to dwell on the way it appeared and why it appeared in that particular way” (385). In *Beloved* Toni Morrison demonstrates how rememory functions powerfully for her main character, Sethe, who exemplifies both the promise and problem of memory, especially for oppressed groups. For this project, I expand on the rhetorical dimensions of Morrison’s view of rememory. I define *rhetorical memory* as dynamic, relational, infused with emotion, steeped in imagination, and context-dependent. While it is autobiographical and personal in nature, rhetorical memory also intersects with both cultural and public memory. Rhetorical memory occupies different sites of memory—written, body, academic, visual, and spatial. It not only makes the private public, but it also makes memory visible from one public to another, moving not only from individual to groups but also from group to group as in

cross-cultural memory. Rhetorical memory expresses, analyzes, connects, rebuilds, and transforms the links between past and present, self and other, reader and writer, public and private, and mind and body. In essence, rhetorical memory is both constructed and revisionary. Therefore, we need to understand rhetorical memory as a multidirectional, multidimensional, dynamic matrix of seeing, knowing, being, and doing that is forged and articulated against a contextual background, which is both unique and shaped by social forces. Such an understanding opens up new ways to dismantle hegemonic dualities and encourage attention to and valuing of the multiplicity and complexity inherent in our ways of knowing, being, and doing.

In this chapter, I briefly look at how rhetorical memory intersects with foundations of feminist pedagogies. Then, using Maxine Kingston Hong's essay "No Name Woman," I demonstrate how rhetorical memory functions, focusing on the generative elements that shape and inform agency. I agree with Carl Herndl and Adela Licona in "Shifting Agency: Agency, *Kairos*, and the Possibilities of Social Action" that it is important not to think of agency as an attribute of the individual, something a person has in order to enact counter-hegemonic action. Like rhetorical memory, agency is mediated and shifts in various contexts. Similarly, agency can be ambiguous, offering a generative and/or a space of reproduction. For this chapter, I use their definition of agency: "The conjunction of a set of social and subjective relations that constitute the possibility of action. Agency is a diffuse and shifting social location in time and space into and out of which rhetors move uncertainly" (Herndl and Licona 133). Such a definition captures the critical, embodied, and generative dimensions of rhetorical

memory in which agency is fundamental. I also look at how Kingston's use of rhetorical memory enriches our understanding of some of feminist pedagogies' key terms. In the end, I demonstrate how rhetorical memory exposes the intertwined relationships between personal/collective, fact/fiction, self/other, imagination/history, and past/present/future for the rhetor. Agency emerges in two ways: when private memory is constructed to escape the hegemonic power of collective memory<sup>3</sup> and through efforts to critique how collective memory constructs private memory. While the previous chapter outlined the limits of thinking about memory through the terministic screens of storehouse, invention, and subjectivity, here I want to demonstrate how rhetorical memory provides a theoretical tool of what Emma Perez calls the "decolonial imaginary" for uncovering the uncontested histories of underrepresented groups who have been silenced, rewritten, and erased by history (xvi).

### **Memory and Feminist Rhetoric and Composition Studies**

As feminist scholars have attempted to rediscover, resurrect, and re-tell women's experiences, they are searching memory (individual and collective) as a way to disrupt and liberate themselves from the dominant discourses that have silenced, forgotten, or erased them. Although we may not speak Mnemosyne's name in feminist rhetoric and composition studies, memory constitutes the very foundation of feminist theory and pedagogies, as indicated by the key terms that circulate throughout the scholarship—"feminist historiography," "experience," "agency," "alternative discourses," and "transformation and social action." In other words, any discussion of these concepts is

inherently rooted in a particular relationship to rhetorical memory in that it refers to past knowledge(s) being recovered or critiqued.

Contemporary feminist pedagogy in rhetoric and composition studies was in part fashioned out of a fundamental question posed by Adrienne Rich in “Taking Women Students Seriously”: “What does a woman need to know?” This question, of course, was not asked as a way to help women merely survive in a “man’s world.” Rather, it attempted to mark out the parameters of a feminist methodology that sought to change the world rather than change women to fit the world (Manicom 366). Arguably, memory was fundamental to these changes. Essentially, social change movements are plagued by the need to overcome what Gayle Green calls the “collective amnesia” that blots out the struggle for the gains that future generations of women enjoy:

Nancy Cott refers to the ‘disremembering process’ by which ‘feminism is aborted and repressed’; Adrienne Rich refers to the ‘the erasure of women’s political and historic past’ wherein the ‘history of women’s struggle for self-determination has been muffled in silence over and over’; Elaine Showalter notes that ‘each generation of women writers has found itself . . . without a history, forced to rediscover the past anew, forging again and again the consciousness of their sex.’ (298)

According to Greene, each generation starts over, creating “rooms of our own” (Woolf), “diving into the wreck” (Rich), and “searching for our mother’s gardens” (Walker), so that we might “[re-member],. . . [re-assemble] our lost past and lost parts of ourselves” (300). Like Toni Morrison who “depends heavily” on memory because she “cannot trust

the literature and sociology of other people [i.e., research] to help [her] know the truth of [her] own cultural sources” (“Memory” 386), Greene argues, using feminist fiction as examples, that memory, “re-memory,” is key to the feminist agenda. Therefore, by foregrounding the importance of memory that many writers have explored, feminist rhetoric and composition pedagogies might reframe Rich’s question this way: What does a woman need to “re-member”?<sup>4</sup>

The proliferation of literature on feminist pedagogies in rhetoric and composition since the 1980s demonstrates the complexities of navigating the tensions between the past and future. While different feminists (e.g., liberal, cultural, womanist, Marxist, Afrocentrist) have disagreed over what constitutes a feminist approach to teaching and how these deep-seated changes might be realized, which Gail Hawisher outlines brilliantly, feminist pedagogies share common goals and methods. Linda Briskin, for example, views feminist pedagogy as a standpoint, which is rooted in the politics of social justice movements that attempt to make systemic changes. Feminist pedagogy, then, seeks to provide the kinds of tools that empower students to understand and act on the world and to transform inequities and social relations among and between various groups (23). Susan Jarratt argues that feminist pedagogy might be best understood as a set of questions rather than practices or a handy set of instructional techniques:

- Who created the knowledge and practices of this field?
- In whose interests do they operate?
- Are there realms of experience left out in the traditions of this body of knowledge?

- Who gets to teach this material?
- Who gets to learn it?
- Are there ways of teaching and learning that seem more suitable for one gender or another? (116)

At the root of these questions is both the hope and kinds of work necessary to address oppressive relations of class, gender, race, ableism, and heterosexism in order to realize a better present and future for all humans. And because memory gurgles underneath the foundation of these ideals, feminist pedagogy in the rhetoric and composition classroom must include rhetorical memory as part of our question-set in order to first engage and then prolong both the individual and collective memory necessary to sustain social change. Therefore, rhetoric and composition scholar-teachers need to add another series of questions to Jarratt's list: How is memory *constructed* in this discourse or rhetorical space? (Who is remembering/forgetting? What is being remembered/forgotten? And how is it being remembered/forgotten?) By foregrounding the role of rhetorical memory in our ways of being, knowing, and doing in feminist rhetoric and composition studies, scholars might fashion another lens through which to understand how oppressive ideologies are written and write us.

### **Rhetorical Memory in Maxine Hong Kingston's "No Name Woman"**

The critical and generative spaces of rhetorical memory are evident in Maxine Hong Kingston's opening line of "No Name Woman," the first chapter in *The Woman Warrior: Memoirs of a Girlhood Among Ghosts*: "'You must not tell anyone,' my mother said, 'what I am about to tell you'" (3). Kingston contests this command immediately. In

doing so, she echoes Michel Foucault's observation that silence and speech are the same in that both types are subject to discourse power—"how those who can and those who cannot speak of [forbidden topics] are distributed" (*History* 27). Kingston's story is also compelling because the silence is steeped in a collective memory that wields a kind of power that not only erases a particular woman's history but also threatens to relegate Kingston and future generations to a kind of gendered passivity that perpetuates the oppressive legacy.

To narrate and reflect on the memory of the nameless aunt represented in her mother's story, Kingston divides the text into two parts. For the first few pages of the essay, the mother provides the "collective memory" of the aunt. She tells her daughter (Kingston) the secret of her paternal aunt, a family member banned from family memory because of how she "shamed" them. According to Kingston's mother, the nameless aunt became pregnant outside of marriage, invoking the wrath of her famine-ridden Chinese village: "On the night the baby was to be born, the villagers raided our house" (3). Wearing "white masks" they "threw mud and rocks at the house. Then, they threw eggs and began slaughtering our stock" (4). Once inside the house, the villagers ransacked the food supplies and the family's belongings. After relaying the traumatic story, the mother adds, in a terse two sentences that seem like a tangent, "Your aunt gave birth in the pigsty that night. The next morning when I went for water, I found her and the baby plugging up the family well" (5). The mother ends the memory-story by issuing a warning to her daughter that connects the past to the present, the collective to the personal: "Don't let your father know that I told you. He denies her. Now that you have started to menstruate,

what happened to her could happen to you. Don't humiliate us. You wouldn't like to be forgotten as if you had never been born. The villagers are watchful" (5). By disclosing this collective memory, the mother also makes clear that the aunt's "real punishment was not the raid swiftly inflicted by the villagers, but the family's deliberately forgetting her" (16). Needless to say, the whole memory-story is especially confusing for the adolescent first-generation Chinese-American girl.

While the mother's disclosure of the aunt's tainted memory is supposed to function as a warning, a way to control her Chinese-American daughter's behavior, Kingston hijacks and deconstructs the memory for the next twelve to thirteen pages. On the surface, Kingston's mother leaves out what most would consider key details in a story of such magnitude even though she seems to believe that she "told [Kingston] once and for all the useful part" (6). However, there is more to Kingston's quest for information than accounting for some missing facts. Rather than accepting her mother's memory-story as the "official truth," Kingston excavates the memory in an attempt to "get things straight," [and try to] "name the unspeakable" (5). Because Kingston cannot resurrect and understand her aunt by saying, "Remember Father's drowned-in-the-well sister?" (6), she harnesses the power of rhetorical memory to *construct* what might have happened. She contextualizes the memory-story, sifting through the complexities of gender, culture, and history in order to make sense of the oppressive environment under which her aunt drowned. In other words, Kingston remembers rhetorically. Blurring past/present, personal/cultural, and fact/fiction, she employs a "perhaps" (6) to informed imaginative scenarios that help to explain who her aunt was and what happened to her.

To begin, given what she knows about gender dynamics at that time, Kingston deconstructs the memory-story to cast her aunt as a rape victim rather than adulterer. This familiar face from the village area, her attacker, was “not much different from her husband. They both gave orders: she followed” (7). Then, knowing how families lived in China, Kingston rebuts her mother’s testimonial. Kingston realizes that her mother probably didn’t “witness” the raid because “daughters-in-law lived with their husband’s parents, not their own . . . Her husband’s parents could have sold her, mortgaged her, stoned her” [but they wouldn’t have] sent her back to her own mother and father” where the raid took place (7-8). By deconstructing the collective memory as told by her mother, Kingston starts to disrupt the hegemonic discourse that threatens to “discipline” her into a certain way of being.<sup>5</sup>

While Kingston employs rhetorical memory as a deconstructive critique, she also carves out a more generative space of memory which invalidates “truth” claims even as it calls attention to their construction. She imagines her aunt as drawn to the “forbidden,” unable to resist the “question-mark line of a long torso” of her lover (8). She also imagines her as a fiercely independent women who “combed individually into her bob” (9), but who also “reaped a reputation for eccentricity” (9), perhaps even vanity because “unusually beloved” by her family made her “spoiled and mirror gazing” (10). Whether she casts her aunt as lustful, feminist, or coddled, Kingston reaches no definitive conclusions. Each imagined personality attempts to refuse and resist a particular perspective in order to honor the multiplicity, which Trinh Minh-ha argues is a way to disrupt hegemonic thought (*Woman*). As Kingston acknowledges the multiple meanings

inherent in her aunt's story, each of these perspectives eventually collide with cultural and personal realities because such individual freedom doesn't exist in Kingston's experience: "I don't know any women like that, or men either" (8), especially in a small village where personal/collective memories caused pain for anyone who dared to transgress them.

Kingston's personal memories also prompt her to consider the more personal motives of her father within this collective context, examining why he might want to erase his sister's memory. Kingston remembers "stories that my grandfather was different from other people, 'crazy ever since the little Jap bayoneted him in the head'" (10). In fact, there was a story that her grandfather had "traded her father for a girl" (11), which also might explain why her father "never went back to China" (11). Not only do these family memories reveal the complex looping between personal and collective memories, they also suggest that the erasure of the aunt was motivated as much by personal jealousy and shame as it was cultural mores. As a patriarch, Kingston's father had the power to enact his personal revenge by not only dishonoring but forgetting his sister. As a result, he maintains an oppressive cultural framework within which memory wielded much potential harm for not only Chinese women but his own daughter.

Understanding the interconnected relationship between memory and behavior (individual and collective), Kingston begins to reconstruct her aunt's memory by acknowledging this fundamental truth: "The villagers punished her for acting as if she could have a private life, secret and apart from them" (13). Knowing that her aunt certainly had private experiences, Kingston focuses on reconstructing the birth and

drowning after the villagers' raid, opening up the landscape of memory excluded by her mother's glossing over of this part of the story. Kingston revises the memory as if she were there. She embodies the emotions unaccounted for by pure reason, imagining the scene as a witness to the unfolding tragic events of her aunt's demise:

An agoraphobia rose in her, speeding higher and higher, bigger and bigger; she would not be able to contain it; there would be no end to the fear. Flayed, unprotected against space, she felt pain return, focusing her body. This pain chilled her—a cold, steady kind of surface pain. Inside, spasmodically, the other pain, the pain of the child, heated her. For hours she lay on the ground, alternately body and space. Sometimes a vision of normal comfort obliterated reality; she saw the family . . . congratulating one another, high joy on the mornings the rice shoots came up. When these pictures burst, the stars drew yet further apart. Black space opened.

(14)

In a moment of survival, Kingston's aunt re-members the stories of women giving "birth in their pigsties to fool the jealous, pain-dealing gods" (14). The aunt "ran to the pigsty . . . and knelt in the dirt" (14). As the mother starts to bond with her newborn baby, her collective memory reminds her of how the illegitimate baby will suffer. As "a last act of responsibility," the aunt drowns the baby in the well with her, a motive that Kingston interprets as love: "Mothers who love their children take them along. It was probably a girl; there is some hope of forgiveness for boys" (15). While Kingston has (de)/(re)constructed her aunt's memory throughout the narrative, she ends the

countermemory<sup>6</sup> here, implying that this is the salient truth of the memory. The rest of the essay shows Kingston, having been transformed by re-membering her aunt, assuming her own responsibility in the construction of this family memory.

Kingston realizes that she, too, has participated in her aunt's punishment by her own silence and sense of duty not to ask questions: "But there is more to this silence: they want me to participate in her punishment. And I have" (16). And in this "moment of being," Virginia Woolf's term for those "exceptional moments"—insights or experiences that jolt us out of our everyday complacency, but whose significance becomes apparent only through their hold on memory—Kingston reveals the generative space created by re-remembering the past (Schulkin 21).<sup>7</sup> By contextualizing the links between her own memory and the "official" family memory, and constructing multiple often paradoxical types of memory, she gains new insight into her own struggles as well those of her culture and community. As a result, there is a sense that she is "telling on her [aunt]" by identifying her as a "spite suicide" who "haunts" Kingston and those family and community members who fear "the drowned one, whose weeping ghost, wet hair hanging and skin bloated, waits silently by the water to pull down a substitute" (16). Through the fictive construct(s) of her aunt's memory, Kingston reveals the rhetoricity of the original memory and the power dynamics at play about who remembers and for what purpose. Ironically, she remembers more realistically, taking into account the context within which the memory of her aunt was constructed. Relying on the generative and critical dimensions of rhetorical memory, Kingston embodies a kind of agency that might be sustained in and across both individual and collective memory. Like Mnemosyne,

Kingston's agency stems from choosing to be the "one who remembers," a process that produces the act and artifacts of memory that have the potential to rewrite the damning logic within which many women find themselves. She has remembered what she needs to know. Consequently, she frees her aunt and herself from this fixed position within personal and collective memory.

Now that I have illustrated how rhetorical memory functions in Kingston's "No Name Woman," it is important to explore the intersections between some of the key terms in feminist pedagogies and how rhetorical memory might enlarge our understanding of feminist ways of seeing, knowing, doing, and being. In what follows, I will look at the key terms of feminist pedagogies through the lens of rhetorical memory. While I'm not arguing that feminist rhetoric and composition scholars are already doing memory (they just don't know it), I am interested in positioning rhetorical memory within the frameworks we have already established. More specifically, rhetorical memory helps to circumvent some of the binaries that undergird our theories and pedagogies. Rhetorical memory provides the critical and generative means to understand and enact the dynamic, interconnected nature of personal and collective memory, promising new insights into agency.

### **Rhetorical Memory and Historiography**

Kingston's "No Name Woman," an essay that is often anthologized in both first-year composition and feminist texts, showcases a stellar example of rhetorically savvy, subversive ethnic autobiographical writing. Moreover, it highlights how rhetorical memory provides a comprehensive "method," which Kirsch and Sullivan define as a

“technique or way of proceeding in gathering evidence,” for articulating and critiquing epistemic and ontological sites of feminist inquiry (2). In their 2008 article “Feminist Research Methodologies in Historic Rhetoric and Composition,” Tasker and Holt-Underwood provide an overview of the major trends and debates that have shaped historic research. Of particular significance is the upsurge in feminist historiographies represented in scholarly works by Cheryl Glenn, Susan Jarratt, and Jacqueline Royster, which are essentially stories (i.e., memories) that are rhetorically presented. Undoubtedly, feminist historiography remains a contested site, as evidenced by the Gale, Glenn, and Jarratt debate in the 2000 edition of *College English*, and Patricia Bizzell’s discussion of the same debate in “Feminist Methods of Research in the History of Rhetoric.” I will address the complexities of historiography and rhetorical memory more specifically in Chapter Three. Feminist historiography, Bizzell argues, has provided an “alternative method to the fact-finding mission of traditional historic research [and] . . . has made room . . . for historical *recovery* (the location of lost or overlooked texts and acts of rhetoric and composition) and *revision* (the rereading of existing texts, theories, and artifacts)” (55). Harnessing the transformative power of her aunt’s memory achieved through remembering her rhetorically, Kingston finishes the book by connecting herself to the mythical swordswoman Fa Mu Lan. The myth of the warrior Fa Mu Lan, like the myth of Mnemosyne, provides vehicles through which we might sort out the interrelatedness of our personal, social, and cultural connections, especially how these connections both maintain and subvert oppressions.

Recovery and revision constitute the core method of rhetorical memory. Because remembering is no longer conceived of as finding *the* truth about a memory, as we saw with Kingston's version of her aunt, rhetors gather evidence through memory, "re-memory," paying special attention to the contextual factors that shape and silence individual and collective memories, as well as their interpretations of such memories. Furthermore, because Enlightenment notions of subjectivity are subverted by the constructed nature of rhetorical memory, emotion is foregrounded in the process of remembering, which attempts to disrupt public-private hierarchies and the traditional belief that emotions should be left out of the research process. As Jane Tompkins argues in "Me and My Shadow," a methodology that "excludes emotions from the process of attaining knowledge radically undercuts women's epistemic authority," especially because women are socialized to do emotional work (170). Therefore, just as emotions, which neuroscientists and psychologists have correlated to how and why certain memories resonate personally, socially, and culturally, are essential to rhetorical memory, they also inform feminist historiography.

In *Traces of a Stream*, for example, Jacqueline Royster theorizes the role of emotions in her Afrafeminist methodology. Rather than deny the emotional aspects of our epistemic practices, Royster argues that it becomes a matter of ethics to articulate our "passionate attachments,"<sup>8</sup> our embodied ways of knowing and being. By excavating memory material, we might not only better understand these "passionate attachments" but also explore how our memories might help us recognize how the "mind, heart, body, and soul operate collectively" in our knowledge-making enterprises (279-80). From this

perspective, as we witnessed in the interconnectedness of how logos, ethos, and pathos operated in Kingston's essay, the generative elements of rhetorical memory can engage writers to look underneath the embedded traces of memory to investigate, deconstruct, reconstruct, and communicate the meaning(s) found in our individual and collective memories. In essence, rhetorical memory can help us explore how "knowledge, experience, and language merge" in our academic and personal lives (Royster 259), as well as "remap" (Glenn's term) history (i.e., memory) in a way that provides more spaces for "interpretative invention," (Ratcliffe's term) intervention, and revision.

### **Rhetorical Memory and Experience**

On one level, we might argue that Kingston relied on her "experience"<sup>9</sup> to articulate her Chinese-American upbringing. However, because much of the essay blurs the lines between fact/fiction, past/present, and private/public, Kingston is doing more than reporting on events that have already happened to her. She is creating a generative space that bridges her engagement with personal and collective memory—a critical dimension that invites communication and "identification" (Burke) across differences. As Catherine Lappas argues in "The Way I Heard it Was . . .", the fictive constructs of Kingston's experiences with(in) memory, "bridge two cultures and their separate visions of reality, [creating] a third culture that mixes reality and myth (life and fiction) . . . until the reader begins to recognize all reality as mythical construction" (58). Foregrounding rhetorical memory in feminist pedagogies helps to interrogate how "experience" works epistemically, experientially, and analytically in various rhetorical spaces: "Memory is our means of connecting past and present and constructing a self and versions of

experience we can live with” (Greene 293). Rhetorical memory provides another lens through which to explore how the authority of personal experience can only be understood in relation to how it operates in other discourses and how those discourses shape our identities.

Yet modernity’s lingering hold on the notion of a fixed self often distracts us from the important truths forged in rhetorical remembering. Given that “feminist and antiracist pedagogies place a high value on subjective experiences as a route to understanding our lives and the lives of others and emphasize the legitimacy of knowledge that arises from socially marginalized positions” (Bell, Morrow, and Tastsoglou 23), theorists have also tried to account for the “limitations of feminist uses of experience in our field” (Ritchie and Boardman 10). Min-Zhan Lu offers such a critique in “Reading and Writing Differences: The Problematics of Experience.” Lu is concerned that focusing on the primacy of gendered experiences in our theories and classrooms creates two key problems: It functions as an “essentializing force around gender and conflates differences that maintain the hegemony of whiteness” (241). In other words, as women of color have long espoused, our yearning to unite as women around our gendered experiences negates the material realities of how race, ethnicity, class, (dis)ability, and sexuality intersect with and inform other forms of inequalities and domination.

Theorists such as Lu and Joan Scott suggest that we think of experience as a “construct” in order to appreciate the value of personal experience in our knowledge-making enterprises but also to develop a more critical tool with which to understand it. Joan Scott famously challenges the notion that “experience” can adequately serve as the

foundation of feminist analyses. She proposes that experience be redefined in order to minimize its essentializing qualities:

Experience is at once always already an interpretation *and* is in need of interpretation. What counts as experience is neither self-evident nor straightforward: it is always contested, always therefore political. . . .

Experience is, in this approach, not the origin of our explanations, but that which we want to explain. (69)

Chandra Talpade Mohanty also questions the epistemic status of experience in the classroom: “While ‘experience’ is an enabling force in the classroom, unless it is explicitly understood as historical, contingent, and the result of interpretation, it can coagulate into frozen, binary, psychologistic positions” (51, 52). Kingston’s use of rhetorical memory not only demonstrates the constructed nature of remembering, but also how the resulting ambiguities of memory provide a viable screen on which to articulate and critique her experiences.

The postmodern focus on the hermeneutical and rhetorical dimensions of experience reasserts the need to consider rhetorical memory in feminist pedagogies. Just as experience is not, according to Anneliese Kramer-Dahl, “a transparent window on reality” but instead a “product of our insertion into particular practices and discourses,” (252-53), so is memory. However, rhetorical memory functions even more as an interpretative “sign” than individual experiences, creating a dialectical relationship between the general information contained in experience and the memories created to represent this experience. I like to think of rhetorical memory as multi-dimensional—the

always already past/present/future and constructed/deconstructed/reconstructed memory. Depending on the age and impact of the memory, it exposes more layers of discourse, which are typically overlooked from a one-dimensional view of “experience.” Sue Campbell argues that personal memory is “processed to signify repeated rather than singular episodes” (49). The focus on the repetition of certain experiences that come to be represented by rhetorical memory enables rhetors to uncover and disrupt the discourses that corroborate and collide with each other. In the “Truth about Memory,” Marya Schechtman also complicates the relationship between experience and memory, demonstrating that they are not interchangeable terms. She argues that memory functions summatively and representatively—it might condense the details of several particular experiences into one representative memory (10). This summative and representative relationship was certainly apparent in Kingston’s essay, which Sidonie Smith might explain this way: “Memory leaves only a trace of an earlier experience that we adjust into story” (“Construing” 145). Therefore, rhetorical memory provides a bridge between experience and our critical reflection/interpretation of it. It encourages and deepens our renderings of gender and other differences so that we might better critique and revise the assumptions that shape our understanding of ourselves and the world.

### **Rhetorical Memory and Agency**

The notion of agency has been fundamental to feminist pedagogy in terms of Spivak’s notion of “finding one’s voice,” or “having one’s voice heard”, and knowing how to take and sustain action. Kingston, too, embodies this call to speak the unspeakable and transgress the silences imposed by gender and culture by “devot[ing] pages of paper

to her [aunt]” (16). However, little attention has been paid to how memory informs agency, providing links among consciousness, action, and change. Traditionally, as Sue Campbell argues, the connections among self, memory, and agency were first formulated by John Locke in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. For Locke, personal identity is linked to memory, which Sue Campbell summarizes this way: “I can remember my past actions. I can therefore be held responsible for them” (36). Because I am able to remember my past, “I am a self to myself, a person to others, and a moral agent—capable of following a law and a fit subject for punishment and reward” (37). Campbell points out that while Locke’s view on the relationship between the ability to remember and our sense of self/identity is critical, his idea that we remember with the same consciousness we had at the time of the past action is problematic. This static view of agency is especially restrictive when we think about how rhetorical memory functions in Kingston’s essay. Personal identity is steeped in the fluid, contextual, and relational interactions between personal and collective memory. Any potential agency is forged at the intersections of multiple and contradictory memories engaged in ideological struggle rather than within a one-dimensional notion of remembering “the past.”

While Kingston’s essay reiterates that we certainly don’t want to simplify agency by associating it with the unified, autonomous individual who exercises free will, we also don’t want to overlook how memory provides spaces in which clarifying moments, ways of seeing and understanding things differently as our consciousness shifts, might be constructed and inspire agency. In other words, rhetorical memory facilitates the impetus toward agency. Previously, agency has been linked to interruption. For example, in

“Interrupting Our Way to Agency,” Nedra Reynolds argues that “agency is not simply about finding one’s voice but also about intervening in discourses of the everyday and cultivating rhetorical tactics” [such as interruption] that empower marginalized speakers/writers (59). She envisions this tactical rhetoric as more than “rude behavior.” Rather it may be employed in institutional contexts such as conferences and meetings and as a means to interrupt texts and the reader/writer relationship. However, as Andrea Greenbaum asserts, many young women are virtually incapable of enacting such strategies of interruption. They are not trained in the art of argumentation and debate and have been acculturated into disbelieving their own ability to assert and maintain a position. While interruption and disruption are often used interchangeably, I prefer the term “disruption” when thinking about rhetorical memory. The inventive dimensions of rhetorical memory support the kinds of critical processes necessary to find the arguments necessary to “interrupt” various discourses. However, the embodied and generative qualities of rhetorical memory establish the kind of foundation necessary to sustain “disruption,” a prolonged action of questioning, rupturing, and rewriting of hegemonic spaces and discourses.

This trope of “disruption,” according to Ritchie and Boardman in “Feminism in Composition: Inclusion, Metonymy, and Disruption,” has circulated throughout much of feminist writing pedagogies as a “link to postmodern theories of power, discourse, and ideology rather than to consciousness-raising sessions, discussions of pedagogy, or attempts to create equitable and inclusive conditions for women” (17). However, disruption as a form of agency has its limits. Interrupters can be easily dismissed.

Furthermore, even if they have the skills to disrupt, often they are not able to sustain the disruption: “If theorizing and disruption are detached from lived experience and material history, they may remain irrelevant. And if disruption only fractures and doesn’t again create connection, . . . it will lack the vital energy and supportive alliance to sustain its own taxing work” (22). In other words, disruption has real consequences—some more severe than others. Kingston’s use of rhetorical memory suggests that memory comes before disruption, both providing memory material for critique and augmenting the generative capacities of consciousness that make the possibility of taking different actions possible. By remembering—constructing, deconstructing, and reconstructing the competing realities that constitute her aunt’s story—Kingston moves beyond a simple interruption. For example, she might have bombarded her mother with questions about the missing pieces of the story or interrogated her about the fact that she didn’t “witness” the aunt’s death because she wasn’t there. She might have also opted to interrupt the mother’s warning about sexuality by leaving the room or proclaiming that she would live a sexually liberated lifestyle. One needs only to cull through her own teen memories to come up with a list of possible interruptions.

Kingston’s approach to disrupting her mother’s “talk story” memory goes deeper. She extends agency beyond her own individual actions, recognizing, as Herndl and Licona argue that the possibility of agency is located in the “conjunction of a set of social and subjective relations” (133). While Kingston certainly doesn’t dismiss her personal power in creating the possibilities for agency, she enlarges the landscape of agency through rhetorical memory. Furthermore, Kingston seems to recognize the

tenuous and contradictory nature of authority and agency, as she demonstrates when she imagines the personality(s) of her aunt (e.g., rebel, spoiled family favorite, sexual free spirit). Certainly, the aunt's demise is tragic within the casting of any of these roles. Yet depending on the ratio of authority and agency that Kingston imagines her aunt embodies, the tragedy resonates with fluctuating tones. For example, remembering her aunt as the victim of sexual assault is different from thinking she might have acted on her lustful impulses when her husband was away.

Herndl and Licona illuminate the relationship between agency and authority, recognizing that “the same social subject can occupy different, sometimes contradictory identities and social spaces. Thus the same person is sometimes an agent of change, sometimes a figure of established authority, and sometimes an ambiguous, even contradictory, combination of both social functions” (134). Kingston recognizes these contextual, multiple, and temporary positions not only through remembering her aunt, but also by empathizing with her father's motives for forgetting his sister, as well as her own role in contributing to the erasure of her aunt's memory. Kingston enacts how in using rhetorical memory as a way to explore and critique these contradictory and multiple positions, we can locate the gaps between our intentions (often based on oppressive hegemonic discourses) and how we might reproduce the domination/discrimination we seek to challenge.

The multiple positions one occupies in relation to agency and authority are also underscored by the notion of temporality, or temporary agency —what Susan Miller calls the “textual subject,” a subject who temporarily yet purposefully acts—and acts through

writing (qtd. in Rhodes 2). In *Radical Feminism, Writing, and Critical Agency*, Jacqueline Rhodes analyzes the texts of radical feminism (i.e., histories or memories of the movement) as a way of rethinking agency in the postmodern era that underscores the tenets of rhetorical memory. Although Rhodes doesn't speak of memory specifically, she argues that it is important to

see oneself and one's texts in context, as part of a vast network of possible selves and texts, each of which depends on shifting social relations and constant rewriting. Thus, to be an agent in this network is to be ever aware of the shifting, temporary situation of the text. And yet, importantly, it is necessary somehow to *write* oneself into the network, to momentarily identify as or with some discourse or other text. (86-7)

Kingston demonstrates, too, that one can write oneself in and out of discourse, using both the critical and generative elements of rhetorical memory. Rhetorical memory stresses that memories shift and change due to their constructed nature, constituting ethical actions: "Agents [rhetors] are sometimes held responsible for an action or they sometimes take responsibility for an action that they would have experienced and described differently at the time of acting than they do at the time of retrospective evaluation" (Campbell 39). Kingston performs this shifting agency in the essay. She remembers her aunt both from the perspective of an adolescent and later as an adult narrator reflecting back on the memory who has more avenues of agency available to her. Therefore, it is important to embrace the temporality and rhetoricity of remembering rather than lament its imperfections in writing accurate transcriptions of memory facts. As Kingston shows

us, agency emerges at the intersections of invention and reflection, fact and fiction, imagination and history, invoking a temporary congruence between knowledge, consciousness, emotion, and memory.

### **Writing Rhetorical Memory and Alternative Discourse(s)**

Kingston's foregrounding of rhetorical memory in "No Name Woman" brings the limitations of "academic discourse" into bas relief. Given Kingston's need to transgress the boundaries between personal/collective memory, storytelling and silence, one can only imagine what would have been lost had she written about her aunt using academic prose.<sup>10</sup> In other words, what might have been forgotten or silenced within a more traditional scholarly form that privileges logos? Undoubtedly, postmodernism has shifted the way we think about descriptions of reality as already theory-laden and part of some specific paradigm. However, it has also created a style of writing that remains largely disembodied, employing a persona that enacts a type of authoritative argument (however transient or constructed), which separates itself from emotions and ambiguities not contained within argumentative discourse environment.

There have been numerous feminist challenges to a monolithic notion of "academic discourse" and the taboo of associating bodily/emotional processes with intellectual matters: Attempts to articulate a theory of women's writing (Bloom; Bridwell-Bowles; Flynn; Nancy Meyers; Tomkins; Zawacki), accommodate new technologies (Haraway; LeCourt and Barnes; Selfe), write the body (Cixous; Junker; Kristeva; Irigaray), advocate for more experimental forms (Behar; Johnson and Moneysmith; Jung; Schroeder, Fox, and Bizzell), blend personal and academic voices

(Bloom; Bridwell-Bowles; Brodkey; Hindman; Tompkins) critique static notions of genre and the privileging of argument/logos over autobiography/pathos (Frey; Lamb; Nancy Miller; Tompkins), employ metaphors such as *contact zone* (Pratt), *borderlands* (Anzaldúa; Lunsford), and *third space* (Sandoval; Licona) to refigure academic writing as sites for transcending the dualities of academic discourse, and extend/cross/disrupt the borders of academic prose (Anzaldúa; Bishop; Bridwell-Bowles; hooks; Reynolds). Regardless, Jane Hindman exposes the futility of these enterprises: [T]his “dissonance between current calls for a more material, affective discourse and a competing commitment to conventional reading habits presents a crucial ethical dilemma in our professional discursive practice: we argue for innovations in our professional writing but remain faithful to conventional logics, gestures, and epistemologies in our reading” as is evident in our professional journals (“Thoughts,” 12). While my overview hardly does justice to the complexities and nuances of each scholar’s work, my point is to illustrate the plethora of scholarship devoted to questioning and crossing generic boundaries in a ways that try to capture the multiplicity of epistemologies and experiences. In other words, even with all the feminist theories protesting the constraints of academic discourse, the “master’s house” remains firmly intact—at least as a matter of degree in terms of Aristotle’s *topoi*.

Writing memory is already subjected to the conventions of discourse in which they are written and read. There is always already a disconnect between what is remembered and what can be written/read in a text. As Jill Ker Conway reminds us in *When Memory Speaks*, “Whether we are aware of it or not, our culture gives us an inner

script by which we live our lives” and the narratives that emerge (6). Therefore, if rhetorical memory is to be generative and transformational, it is not enough just to include narratives about memory into our texts that already include self-limiting genre expectations. It is also not enough to insert what I call a “sanitized I” into our professional texts—a disembodied personal anecdote or narrative introduction—while silencing the underlying range of epistemologies and lived experiences, Royster’s “passionate attachments” that inform how memory is represented in our texts. When writing/reading memory, we need to account for what Mikhail Bakhtin understands as the messy, disturbing, and uncertain ways of knowing, being, and becoming, all that that “protrudes, bulges, sprouts, or branches off . . . [that are] eliminated, hidden, or moderated” in our academic prose (320). Because we assume, as Shirley Geok-Lin Lim argues, an “embodied relationship between the memory and the person remembering” (442), rhetorical memory, forged at the intersections of among intellectual, emotional, bodily, and spiritual ways of knowing and being, invites the kind of mapping that Bakhtin describes.

As Kingston demonstrates with her disruption of the static, authoritative self of academic prose, the embedded nature of rhetorical memory offers a way to attend to more than the intellectual authority performed on the page and disembodied analyses of artifacts. Kingston “puts herself” directly into an imaginative scene that attempts to reconstruct her aunt’s motives for killing herself and the baby. In short, as Kingston demonstrates, writing rhetorical memory requires “embodied writing,” which Rosemarie Anderson defines as a creative mode of communication and expression that provides a

more adequate style of reporting transpersonal experiences and ways of knowing than academic writing usually recognizes: “Embodied writing seeks to reveal the lived experiences of the body by portraying in words the finely textured experience of the body and evoking sympathetic resonance in readers” (83). In addition to the stylistic features, embodied writing purports to bridge the writer/reader, past/present, and private/public relationships that underscore the generative aspects of remembering rhetorically. While the modernist style of academic discourse “perpetuates the object-subject bifurcation between the world of our bodies and the world we inhabit,” embodied writing “tries to let the body speak.” Therefore, embodied writing tries to “make the experience ‘present’ in the writer while writing and in the reader while reading” (84). By augmenting both the consciousness of the writer and reader through (re)constructing the embedded qualities of memory (e.g., sensory details, emotions, representative scenes versus paragraphs), embodied writing helps us better recognize our own constructed nature so that we might more successfully resist the hegemonic forces that inform such constructions.

“Embodied writing” emerges at the intersections of “personal writing,” autoethnography, and memoir. Historically, the notion of “embodied writing” stems from efforts to articulate an alternative to masculinist discourse(s) by incorporating “embodied rhetoric” into professional discourse practices (Hindman; Wilson and Lewiecki-Wilson). For example, Patricia Bizzell endorses Royster’s afrafeminist methodology as appropriate for all scholarly work in the field. Likewise, Lynn Worsham considers the need for more affective, material professional discourse(s) and method(s) in order to better understand both the “semantic and affective levels to produce and organize knowledge and

experience” (“On the Rhetoric of Theory” 397). In “Making Writing Matter: Using ‘the Personal’ to Recover[y] an Essential[ist] Tension in Academic Discourse,” Hindman further envisions embodied writing as a model based on her recovery writing, which is personal writing that “begins in intense affect, . . . [with] expression of undisciplined emotion for its invention; the body as its generator” (103). When it is successful, it “transforms my immediate self-absorption with subjective affect into an awareness of not only how my responses have been socially conditioned and socially perceived, but also how I as author can intervene in that conditioning” (103). Will Banks adapts Hindman’s definition and refines the meaning of embodied writing to include his “gender/sexualized practices that contain within them markers of identity which require us to revisit our pasts or which . . . can subject us to shame” (22). While Hindman and Banks foreground embodied writing in terms of advocating for the use of “the personal” in our professional work, the workings of rhetorical memory that underscore their ideas help to move us beyond Enlightenment notions of “personal memory” or “personal writing.” However, what’s missing is a way to move beyond the contested notions of “the personal” in order to open up more spaces within which memory might function.<sup>11</sup>

One way to position rhetorical memory as more than “personal” is to think of embodied writing as a kind of autoethnography—a way to produce knowledge about the remembering process. Kingston demonstrates this brilliantly, exposing the many layers of remembering and forgetting that shape her multiple identities and ways of knowing. Ellis and Boucher describe autoethnography as revealing “multiple layers of consciousness, connecting the personal to the cultural . . . [so that autoethnographers focus] “outward . . .

then, they look inward, exposing a vulnerable self that is moved by and may move through, refract, and resist cultural interpretations” (739). From this perspective, autoethnography blurs the lines between private and public memory. As John Eakins suggests, “the ‘I’ functions as auto-ethnographer, the insider who explains to the uninitiated the customs, the way of life, of the . . . community of his [her memory]” (77). Such an understanding of the “I” writing memory needs to move the writer, as Licona argues in “Borderlands Peregrinations,” beyond the attempt to engage “mis/representations of lived experiences” often at the heart of autoethnographic writing described by Louise Pratt (2). Rather, the embodied writing of rhetorical memory seeks to create (re)generative spaces of dissonance (Foucault’s counterdiscourse and practices of resistance). In addition, embodied writing provides the means to communicate within and across differences, between rhetors, and to build transformative spaces between the past/present.

These kinds of regenerative spaces are often found in the embodied writing performed in contemporary feminist memoirs. In addition to Kingston, memorists such as Patricia Hampl, Karen Brennan, Mary Karr, Audre Lorde, and Carolyn Steedman, to name just a few, understand the use of memory as self-invention and as a way of remembering the past differently. It is a kind of truth-telling that moves the writing “I” beyond shameful silences or the masks of an “as-if-personality” (Alice Miller’s term) that maintain harmful denials, truncates the totality of epistemic and ontological multidimensionality(s), and nullifies one’s authenticity. The result of such a persona, Miller argues, leaves one susceptible to manipulation rather than with a deepened sense

of agency (36-7). Kingston averts what Sandra Lee Bartky calls a “pedagogy of shame,” stories that instruct girls to see their bodies as dirty and dangerous, resulting in a legacy of internalized shame, guilt, and feelings of inferiority. Instead, she re-members as a way to empower both her aunt’s story and her own, the aunt’s memory serving as a text for invention, interpretation, and intervention rather than recapitulation.

Writing memory in an embodied way also constitutes a kind of promise, which Ellerby explains this way:

The memoir makes one’s past and *future* accessible, even communal; it ups the ante. . . . The memoir exists not just for the individual memoirist’s well-being; its ultimate purpose is the cultural community’s betterment, the citizenry’s ongoing struggle. . . . [It can be] likened to what bell hooks calls the ‘liberatory voice’ because they seek meaning in language in order to contest boundaries and disrupt the certainties of more dominant narratives. (129)

The specificity and call to imagine and examine the complex experiences culled from memory, our lived lives, as evident in a work like Kingston’s, facilitate a generative space between Enlightenment notions of a fixed self and the problems of disappearing within the instability of self(s). To write one’s memory in a memoir requires an “ethic of candor” rooted in “detailing our situatedness, and exploring and contesting through reading and writing the moral values and cultural expectations we have inherited” (Ellerby xxi). Richard Rorty argues that the “detailed descriptions” of one’s pain and struggles that constitute the core of feminist memoir are the means to reduce human

suffering because the reader must “hear” the voices of the suffering (xvi). Rather than suppress one’s emotions or hide behind the language of half-truths, Kingston the memoirist commits to important cultural work, freeing herself from the shame that often accompanies those on the margins of what David Feinstein and Stanley Krippner call the “consensus trance,” the “hidden assumptions” of social groups that limit our ways of being and knowing and “programs much of our behavior” (191).

The embodied writing of many contemporary feminist memoirs, such as Kingston’s, depicts the complexities of the connections among memory, power, and ideology while building more intimacy between the writer and reader. Using the tools of a memoir—which Hampl describes as writing to “find out what I know” instead of transcribing what is already known—embodied writing invites writers and readers to co-create meaning, mapping how memories construct our understanding and (in)abilities to act in certain ways. As Ellerby surmises, “The memoir acts as the bridge between isolated individuals and receptive communities, between the rigid ‘ought’ of ethical principles and the ‘is’ of narrative specificity” (127). These tools also help to expose the cultural logics at play in our individual memories, providing for the possibility of “deepening our sense of ourselves as ethical agents” and inviting the reader to “compose and clarify ethical positions” in relation to the text (130). The kind of clarification gained through writing memory motivates the revisionary impulse. In her book on feminism, *Approaching Eye Level*, Vivian Gornick sees the revisionary possibilities of memory and embodied writing as a way of halting “an endlessness of ‘remembering’ what I already know” (69). However, it is important to understand that embodied writing is not just a stylistic or

aesthetic shift in our academic prose style. Instead it provides inventive and interpretative spaces where we might account for the kinds of muted memories that corral our more holistic ways of remembering, knowing, feeling, and intuiting how we might live more fully. In other words, the embodied writing of memory might help us to transform an eternal present into (re)visionary futures.

### **Rhetorical Memory and Mestiza Consciousness**

Kingston demonstrates that in order to escape the kinds of damaging imprinting that memory transmits to both the collective and individual psyche, transformations must “transcend the fear and instability inscribed onto [the] body [memory] within patriarchal discourse” (Griffiths 365). As academics, many of us still harbor the fantasy that the intellect can achieve this feat. If we can construct the right arguments, using the most compelling facts, theories and examples, we can evoke significant changes (individual and social) through our writing pedagogies. However, feminist writing pedagogies have reminded us that the kinds of deep-work necessary to prompt and sustain social action and provide for the possibility of transformation both in and out of the academy often remain elusive. As Lynn Worsham points out in “Going Postal,”

a tear is not simply an intellectual thing, and a change of heart does not follow, naturally or simply, from a change of mind. . . Grief, hatred, bitterness, anger, rage, terror, and apathy as well as emotions of self-assessment such as pride, guilt, and shame—these form the core of the hidden curriculum for the vast majority of people living and learning in a highly stratified capitalistic society (216).

Rhetorical memory, then, provides rhetors access to this “hidden curriculum,” a means of culling through memory material so that we might rewrite those discourses that attempt to write us into a universal notion of reality that we do not share. More specifically, it helps to usher rhetors into the kind of consciousness necessary to sustain personal and collective transformations, or what Gloria Anzaldua calls a *mestiza consciousness*.

Rhetorical memory facilitates a process that underscores Anzaldua’s *mestiza consciousness*, a way to account for the multiplicity of identities across time, space, and culture. Like Kingston, the key to agency for Anzaldua is not just disruption, which “locks one into a duel of oppressor and oppressed” (100). Instead, the kind of agency needed to sustain social action and transformation is gained from the ability to “shift out of habitual formations; from convergent thinking, analytical reasoning that tends to use rationality to move toward a single goal (a Western mode), to divergent thinking . . . [and] a tolerance for ambiguity” (101). Furthermore, as Burke reminds us in *A Grammar of Motives*, “it is the area of ambiguity that transformations take place; in fact without such areas transformations would be impossible” (xix). The generative potential of ambiguity is also at play in rhetorical memory, a process which embraces the understanding that it is not so much *what* is remembered as it is *how* it is remembered, by whom, and for what purpose. Such memory work, like *mestiza consciousness*, “takes place underground—subconsciously. It is the work that the soul performs” (101). As Kingston accomplishes in her essay and many feminists have tried to explain and embody, new social possibilities exist within the ability to live within contradictions, to imagine innovative ways of negotiating the paradoxes to discover new possibilities of

living in harmony with all of our multiple and transient selves. The acts and artifacts of rhetorical memory provide the spaces in which contradictions, constructions, and creativity can come to blows. Within these spaces, rhetors are afforded the means to locate themselves within the multiple memories that shape them, as well as empower them to contest the oppressions that render us most vulnerable.

The first step of the *mestiza* is to re-member, to “take inventory” of the baggage inherited from one’s ancestors—memories, beliefs, values, viewpoints (104). The *mestiza* rhetor puts “history [memory] through a sieve, winnows out the lies, looks at the forces that we as a race, as women have been a part of” (104). This process is similar to the agenda Adrienne’s Rich describes in “Diving into the Wreck” in which she asks women to know their own histories, memories, and salvage what they can. Embedded as well within Kingston’s essay is her quest to uncover all the connections between the past and present: “Unless I see [my aunt’s] life branching into mine, she gives me no ancestral help” (16). It is this salvaging, the recycling, reinterpreting, and reimagining of memory materials that supports and sustains the hopes and necessities of feminist pedagogies. Rhetorical memory, like *mestiza consciousness*, begins as an inner struggle to remember and re-remember. Anzaldúa asserts that “awareness of our situation must come before inner changes, which in turn come before changes in society. Nothing happens in the ‘real’ world unless it first happens in the images in our heads” (109). And it is these images (i.e., memories) that support the rhetor’s capacity to deal with ambiguities and contradictions of the “I” writing memory situated within various contexts and shifting over time and with changing knowledge and awareness.

## **(In)Conclusion**

While rhetorical memory hardly represents a panacea for all that stunts, silences, or subordinates our efforts to address social injustices, it provides another means in which to examine how our memories and ways of knowing, being, and doing are inextricably linked. By its contextual, constructed, and revisionary nature, rhetorical memory helps rhetors to hone and articulate the kinds of epistemic innovations that reveal what Audre Lorde calls the “dark and true depth which understanding serves, waits upon, and makes accessible through language to ourselves and others. It is this depth within each of us that nurtures vision” (95). Rhetorical memory supports the kinds of *mestiza* excavations necessary to remember what we need to remember in the ways we need to remember. It supplies both a process and products that might alter our beliefs about ourselves in ways that allow us to better “forge the collective subject capable of making mass movement” envisioned by Worsham and embodied in the spirit of Mnemosyne’s legacy (“After Words” 329). Rhetorical memory inspires us to “keep remembering” our memories as part of a process that doesn’t reach a conclusion but opens up (re)visionary possibilities across time and place. It is in the remembering, the lucid courage central to the construction and reconstruction of memory material, that feminist wisdom(s) are realized and upheld.

## **Notes**

1. James Berlin argues that changes in the economic and social structures during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries resulted in a new conception of the division between rhetoric and poetics (4). Drawing on the work of Raymond Williams, Berlin argues that literature was reserved for creative or imaginative works that were “placed in opposition to the horrors of social experience” (6). Such a division underscored other binaries such as high/low culture, art/craft that relegated rhetoric and composition studies

into skills-based service courses. Postcolonial scholars like Emma Perez describe the “decolonial imaginary” as a “third space where agency is enacted” in order to “uncover the hidden voices of Chicanas that have been relegated to silences, to passivity” (xvi). The imagination provides an alternative, or rupturing space to that which was written in history (7).

2. Theorists like Jonathan Culler have discussed why the modernist/postmodernist divide is more complicated than the binary suggests. In terms of agency, Krista Ratcliffe articulates the tensions this way: “Modern theories of identification often foreground personal agency and commonalities while backgrounding differences: postmodern theories of identification/disidentification often foreground differences while backgrounding personal agency and/or commonalities” (48). She attempts to challenge this false binary by retheorizing rhetorical listening across and within differences.

3. There are many definitions of public, cultural, collective, and social memory. I will draw on Maurice Halbwachs’ use of the term “collective” memory to collapse communal and collective memory. The needs and interests of a particular community dictate narrative frameworks that structure memory. These frameworks, in turn, invest meaning into the collective memories that define that community. This interrelationship is rhetorical, constructing memories which maintain and subvert interpretation. I like Edward Casey’s definition of public memory because it focuses on action: “Memory that occurs in the open, in front of and with others, as distinct from concepts like ‘collective memory’ or ‘social memory.’ These public memories are those about which we can interact, deliberate, share. . . . [They] serve as a horizon within which a public finds itself, constitutes itself, and deliberates its own existence. . . . [Public memory] becomes a realm within which we act together” (qtd. in Phillips 4). John Bodnar also links public memory to competing and unequal discourses of “official” memory that are promoted and protected by power (15). He says the “process of cultural memory is bound up in complex political stakes and meanings. It both defines a culture and is the means by which its divisions and conflicting agendas are revealed. To define a memory as cultural is, in effect, to enter into a debate about what that memory means. . . . Cultural memory is a field of cultural negotiation through which different stories view for a place in history” (1). Therefore, as Grainge argues, memory is socially produced and is bound to the struggles around identity formation (2).

4. Mary Daly’s theory of radical feminism relies heavily on “re-membering” as a way to uncover the patriarchal myths that subjugate women. In her analysis of Daly’s feminist rhetorical strategies, Ratcliffe argues that Daly envisions “re-membering” as a way to disrupt the kinds of memories that, in Daly’s words, “perpetuate the ‘cock and bull’ story [of] patriarchal history . . . [that] erases the existence and history of women and all Others” (79).

5. “Talk story” is the Hawaiian pidgin term Kingston uses to describe her style and also serves as a major trope in Chinese American women’s narratives based on the

“low” Chinese oral tradition. These narratives are part history, mythology, genealogy, bedtime stories and how-to stories usually passed down from mother to daughter. The story is told differently for different purposes and audiences and affects the narrator’s and reader’s memory. See for example, Cheung, Kim, Lim, and Ling.

6. Foucault defined counter-memory as practice which “transforms history from a judgment on the past in the name of the present truth to a ‘counter-memory’ that combats our current modes of truth and justice, helping us to understand and change the present by placing it in a new relation to the past” (160, 163-4). Giroux’s interpretation of this theoretical tool is helpful. He sees it as a way to connect the language of public life and the discourses of difference. It’s revisionary, a language of resistance that allows people to “speak from their particular histories and voices” (153).

7. In Jeanne Schulkind’s introduction to Virginia Woolf’s *Moments of Being*, she articulates Woolf’s concept of memory: “[Memory, itself the test of the enduring quality of the moment of being, is invaluable in extending the dimensions of the moment; memory is the means by which the individual builds up patterns of personal significance to which to anchor his or her life and secure it against the ‘lash of the random unheeding flail’” (21). For Woolf memory is fluid and context-bound, bridging the past and present in order to (de)/(re)construct how memory is put into discourse.

8. Royster explains that “knowledge has sites and sources . . . produced by someone and that its producers are not formless and invisible. They are embodied and in effect have passionate attachments by means of their embodiment. They are vested with vision, values, and habits; with ways of being and ways of doing. These ways of being and doing shape the question of what counts as knowledge” (280).

9. “Experience” rather than “memory” has functioned as the keyword in feminist and antiracist pedagogies as evidenced by the indexes of two key anthologies for feminist scholar-teachers—*Feminism and Composition Studies* and *Feminism and Composition: A Critical Sourcebook*. While it might be easy just to substitute the word “memory” for “experience” in these works, it is important not to replace one problematic term for another, especially given the historical skepticism that surrounds both concepts. In “Feminism in Composition: Inclusion, Metonymy, and Disruption,” Joy Ritchie and Kathleen Boardman attempt to articulate the various ways feminism has functioned in rhetoric and composition studies. As the title suggests, they argue that “three overlapping tropes” inform feminist rhetoric and composition studies: “inclusion,” “metonymy,” and “disruption” (9). In addition, they find that “experience” is a concept that informs the rhetorical strategies embedded in these tropes.

10. Feminist pedagogies have long wrestled with discourses, searching for ways to honor marginalized and multiple ways of knowing and being. On one hand, pedagogies must utilize and teach the discursive practices of dominant culture (i.e., masculinist, academic discourse or “the oppressor’s language”). Otherwise, writers won’t

be empowered with the “tools” they need to succeed in academia and feminist ideas are more likely to be squelched and silenced in our professional journals. On the other hand, relying on a monolithic ideal of “academic discourse” often requires that women reject/subvert our own discourses and identities, especially if we are from non-privileged/marginalized backgrounds. Furthermore, even if we are adept at writing in traditional “scholarly” forms, we often feel constrained and silenced by the discourse (see Tompkins; Daly). Audre Lorde captured this paradox by asking, “Can we use the master’s tools to dismantle the master’s house?” (110). In other words, how can we empower writers within the dominant discourse while opening up the spaces for critique and resistance? What’s more, how do we (or do we) use the master’s tools to create feminist discourse modes within the patriarchal, racist, classist, heterosexist, ablest culture? Or, how do we claim/master the conventions of academic writing (don’t hand over the tools to the master), but also look beyond the master’s house as the only source of support, forging our own ways to explore/expose/resist the ideology underlying such discourses? Moreover, how might rhetorical memory provide more generative spaces in which rhetors might confront, critique, and transform memory materials?

11. *The Private, the Public, and the Published: Reconciling Private Lives and Public Rhetoric* explores the conflation of the private life with public expression. Of particular interest is Krista Ratcliffe’s discussion about the two “personal turns” that have occurred in rhetoric and composition studies. She argues that there are different stakes in “getting personal” in one’s academic writing. Including the “personal” in one’s writing can reflect both “genre and rhetorical tactic” and “expose the material dimensions of language and written texts” (212). Rhetorical memory helps to theorize these dimensions in new ways.

**CHAPTER THREE: MNEMOSYNE’S RUINS: USING RHETORICAL  
MEMORY TO (DE)CONSTRUCT MARY MAGDALENE’S MEMORY IN *THE  
LAST TEMPTATION OF CHRIST AND THE DA VINCI CODE***

*People who told and retold stories . . . of Mary Magdalene . . . did not themselves often distinguish between historical fact and legendary imagination. Historical memories, later embellishments, and pure fabrications were all told and retold because they related truths, beliefs, views, and ideas that Christians wanted to convey and to which they responded.*

—Bart Ehrman, *Peter Paul and Mary Magdalene* (xv).

*Changing practices in the future are underwritten by changed visions of the past.*

—Susan Jarratt

While understanding memory as constructed can be generative, as Maxine Hong Kingston demonstrates when she remembers her aunt in “No Name Woman,” memory’s constructed nature also makes it susceptible to dominant ideologies. This liability plays out prominently in the 2000 *College English* exchange among Xin Liu Gale, Cheryl Glenn, and Susan Jarratt about feminist historiographic methods. Even as feminist historiographers foreground the constructed nature of their methods that are capable of recovering, revising, and rereading historical women like Aspasia, they are reproached by scholars like Gale who find their work too fictive. Pointing specifically to Glenn, Jarratt, and Rory Ong, Gale argues that feminist rhetorical approaches to historical scholarship are moving too far away from “traditional” methods. At issue is the charge that these methods produce scholarship that cannot be trusted as “truthful.” Gale then endorses Madeline Henry’s work on Aspasia as a model of historical research because Henry “combines feminist scholarship and postmodern concerns with traditional philological methods” (379). Glenn and Jarratt respond immediately. Glenn states that Gale clings too much to the “unquestioned privileges . . . [of] ‘tradition’ and ‘truth’ and does not

recognize that “postmodern historiography does not attempt to do away with the notion of truth; instead, it attempts to think of truth outside the confines of a mythical objectivity” (“Truth” 387). Jarratt adds that “Gale finds a problem in feminist historians making both factual claims and interpretative assumptions” (“Rhetoric and Feminism” 391). Patricia Bizzell later joins the debate, drawing on Jacqueline Jones Royster’s interpretative and emotional connections to her research, and concludes that Gale is uncomfortable with the emotional and personal aspects of feminist research—an approach Bizzell argues is necessary to advance the history of rhetoric (“Feminist Methods”). While Gale’s view reflects a more modernist view of epistemology, such an emphasis overlooks the realities of less empowered groups and the need to counter master narratives that are often no more “true” than the histories constructed using the “intertextual interpretive methods” employed by Glenn, Jarratt, and Royster (Jarratt 391).<sup>1</sup>

I understand Gale’s critique of feminist rhetorical historiography as a misunderstanding of the political, epistemic, and ideological functions of memory, revising, and rereading historical women who have been erased and diminished by dominant discourses that shape what is regarded as a truth value. Furthermore, Gale’s disregard of the role memory plays in historiography overlooks how projects that attempt to expose and resurrect the memory of these forgotten figures require more than retrieving stored material using traditional methodologies. Rather, such an enterprise requires an understanding of the rhetoricity of memory inherent in feminist historiography, or what Toni Morrison calls “rememory.”<sup>2</sup> As an African-American

woman, Morrison “cannot trust the literature and the sociology of other people to help me know the truth of my own cultural sources” (“Memory” 386). Like Kingston, Morrison’s work reveals the intersections among memory, rhetorical context, and imagination that forge a capacity to tell the untold stories ignored by history (officially sanctioned narratives), challenge oppressive discourses, and make new knowledge (“Sites of Memory” 192). Emma Perez calls the kinds of “rupturing spaces” created by rhetorical memory “the decolonial imaginary,” a “third space” of knowledge-making that provides the necessary “theoretical tool for uncovering the hidden voices of Chicana/o history that have been relegated to silences, to passivity” (xvi). This “decolonial imaginary” is used to re-member the histories of oppressed groups not represented by the dominant culture’s writing of history. Contrary to Gale’s view, such an undertaking does not produce subjective fictionalizations that obscure the truth about past lives. Instead, using the critical tools of rhetorical memory helps to expose how historical truth claims are put into discourse through the production of hegemonic history, or as Peter McLaren puts it, to “read critically the narratives *that are already reading us*” (89, emphasis in original). Subsequently, rhetorical memory helps scholars look behind, between, and beyond the master narratives of “truth” that inform our day-to-day lives.

Writing history, like writing memory, is rarely a process of transcription because our “terministic screens” reflect, select, and deflect versions of reality (Burke, *Language* 45). Because rhetorical memory is dynamic, it relies on imagination to critique ideologically encoded representations of historical memories, thus bridging and opening up the spaces between past/present, self/other, fact/fiction. Feminist scholar Gerda Lerner

concurr. The historian must understand past events and texts of history by mediating the past and the present. Because this is an interpretative activity, it “demands imagination and empathy, so that we can fathom worlds unlike our own, contexts far from those we know, ways of thinking and feeling that are alien to us” (201). From this perspective, the lines between fact/fiction and reality/imagination must be blurred in order to recover and revise women’s contributions to rhetorical history. Furthermore, as Kingston, Jarratt, and Glenn demonstrate, it is often impossible to separate dominant narratives from storytelling, especially when the enigmatic details of historical figures from less empowered groups are interpreted and represented in ways that perpetuate what Laura Mulvey calls the “male gaze” perspective of women.<sup>3</sup> While memories about real people are shared in order to convey “facts” about what happened, they are also constructed in order to mean something. This “will to meaning”<sup>4</sup> makes memory vulnerable to ideological forces at the same time that it invites recovery and revision.

Reading how the memory of Mary Magdalene has been constructed and usurped by ideological frames and constraints provides a way to understand the politics of remembering intrinsic to feminist historiographies. While Mary Magdalene has captured the imagination of people throughout history, from New Testament Gospels and Gnostic sources, to Christian storytellers, medieval legends, and popular culture, she remains an enigma wrapped in hypotheses and presented as fact. Within the complex of roles she has historically occupied—apostle and disciple, harlot and repentant devotee, and saint and wife and mother—she embodies how history, memory, rhetoric, and hegemony are inextricably bound. However, unlike historical women who are mostly erased from

memory, Mary Magdalene is often (mis)represented, (re)written, and maligned throughout history,<sup>5</sup> especially in popular memory.<sup>6</sup>

Most notably, she has been stigmatized as a prostitute and an outcast, particularly in Martin Scorsese's controversial 1989 film *The Last Temptation of Christ* (*LTC*). More recently, she has been revered as wife and mother in Dan Brown's 2003 best-selling novel, *The Da Vinci Code* (*DVC*) and Ron Howard's 2006 film adaptation. Rarely has Magdalene been lauded for her important apostolic leadership role in early Christianity despite the prevalence of scholarship that argues for this interpretation (King; Thompson; Schaberg; de Boer; Ruether). However, while most scholars agree that the images of Magdalene as a repentant whore (King) or dutiful wife and mother (Ehrman) have no basis in the historical tradition, this image persists in mainstream movies like *Last Temptation of Christ* and *The Da Vinci Code*. This persistence not only points to the politics of remembering intrinsic to history and popular memory but also to the necessity of theorizing the kinds of critical tools that will help to expose how truth claims are put into and recapitulated in discourse. Rhetorical memory provides a powerful critical tool for underrepresented groups to critique, disrupt, and revise truth claims often represented in traditional bodies of knowledge.

Given the wealth of both biblical and Gnostic scholarship that documents her leadership role in early Christianity, the recapitulation of a purely sexualized Magdalene in both films is fascinating, especially when considering the intersections between movies and memory. Michel Foucault begins to articulate this connection in "Film and Popular Memory": "[Memory is] a very important factor in struggle . . . if one controls people's

memory, one controls their dynamism” (28). Furthermore, movies offer sites where memory as a political force (i.e., rhetoric) can play out, either resisting or opposing “official histories” or “reprogramming” hegemonic knowledge. The political dimensions of remembering are particularly salient, as Adele Reinhartz argues in *Jesus of Hollywood*, when looking at “biopics”—movies that rely on fictional techniques in order to portray real life people from history. The blending of history, memory, and fiction in these types of films creates a complicated relationship between the viewer and the film: “[The viewer’s] expectations of historicity are actively encouraged by these films themselves . . . , which imply not only that they are telling a story about people who really existed, but also that they are telling a ‘true’ story” despite the viewer’s awareness of the fictional nature of filmmaking (4). It is no wonder, then, that given the genre expectations of biopic movies that feature Jesus as the hero, Magdalene may only occupy certain roles within the film. As a result, she is subject to the tensions between what Reinhartz calls the “reel” life of a character versus the “real” life as it was lived (4). Furthermore, whether we like it or not, historical movies rather than scholarship shape the way most people remember the past, especially a past in which we were not witness.

Because of the power of film to persuade and transform how we remember historical figures, it is important to understand how biopic films like *LTC* and *DVC* manufacture memories that have real consequences on everyday lives. Nietzsche says it best when he posits that “[i]f something is to stay in memory, it must be burned in” (*Basic* 61). Understanding how Magdalene has been “burned in” both our individual and collective memory is to engage in rhetorical memory—the process and products of

memory. Through the lens of rhetorical memory, we are able to examine the politics of remembering (forgetting), which indoctrinate and reinforce subjugations and silences in the guise of making historical claims. The fact/fiction binary of history and history writing, as witnessed in the Gale, Glenn, and Jarratt debate, compels us to reconsider issues of rhetoricity in memory. Rhetorical memory helps us conceptualize knowledge (represented in both our individual and collective memories) as dynamic, relational, contextual, and revisionary. Furthermore, rhetorical memory's critical capacity to expose this process helps to chronicle how women like Magdalene are put into discourse, their memory maintained in ways that reify gendered ideologies. If, as Glenn argues, "historiography, reading it crookedly and telling it slant, could help . . . a female rhetorical presence" (*Rhetoric Retold* 8), then rhetorical memory can also expose and complicate the fact/fiction categories that shape our ways of seeing, knowing, and doing.

Deconstructing how Magdalene has been remembered and who benefits from these memories leads us back to historiography's central questions about knowledge, ethics, power, and historical evidence (Glenn "Truth" 389). As Glenn argues, historiography, like rhetorical memory, provides "disruptable ground for engaging and transforming traditional memory or practice in the interest of both the present and future" (389). Such remembering of women and other marginalized groups opens up new avenues of agency. If religion can be assumed to play a key role in the dynamics of women's oppression, as Jane Schaberg argues in *The Resurrection of Mary Magdalene*, then feminist rhetoric and composition scholars have much at stake for understanding how the memory of Magdalene has been (de)constructed. Furthermore, there is more at

stake than the historical inaccuracy or ignorance displayed in mainstream movies when considering, as Henry Giroux asserts, that “issues of memory, identity, and representation are being most intensely fought over as part of a broader attempt by dominant groups to secure cultural hegemony” (“Memory” 81). Over time, a successful movie might be seen by millions of people in the theater, on DVD, or television, creating a public memory that shapes, informs, and replicates representations of social identities. Subsequently, Giroux maintains, film functions as “public pedagogy:” “Film produces images, ideas, and ideologies that shape both individual and [social] identities. . . . [and] open up the ‘possibility of interpretation as intervention’. . . [making] clear the need [to understand] how knowledge is constructed and enters our lives” (*Breaking into the Movies* 6-7). From this perspective, films, like rhetorical memory, bring to light both the generative and destructive effects of their construction. They function as a technology of rhetorical memory both exposing and reifying dominant ideologies. Such constructions have profound results on both individual and public memory, which Robert Burgoyne explains this way: “Film, in effect, appears to invoke the emotional certitude we associate with memory. Like memory, film is associated with the body; it engages the viewer at the somatic level, immersing the spectator in experiences and impressions that, like memories, seem to be ‘burned in’” (2). As a result, memories from film become part of one’s “personal archive of experience” (Landsberg, *Total Recall* 179), which may conceal how oppressive ideologies and their memory-images are replicated.

In this chapter, I focus on how the memory of Mary Magdalene was constructed in *The Last Temptation of Christ* and *The Da Vinci Code*. While the pedagogical nature

of film has the potential to create generative spaces for critique and contestation, which I will look at in Chapter Four, I turn my attention here to how film's effect on memory also maintains the unexamined circulation of hegemonic ideologies, especially in the guise of entertainment. First, as an act of "re-membering,"<sup>7</sup> I provide a brief overview of the scholarship on canonical and non-canonical sources that spotlight Magdalene. Next, I highlight the types of sources Martin Scorsese and Barbara Heshey used to create the Magdalene character, as well as examine the scholarship upon which Dan Brown based his best-selling novel and subsequent movie adaptation by Ron Howard. Then, I analyze the memory of Magdalene represented in both films, augmenting my rhetorical analysis with the critical tools of rhetorical memory. While the movies remember Magdalene differently, they share several commonalities. Both films were made when a wealth of scholarship existed that pointed to Magdalene's leadership in early Christianity and refuted her role as prostitute or wife and mother. In addition, both films are adapted from novels, steeped in controversy, and directed by popular and well-respected directors. Furthermore, they both feature the Magdalene character more prominently than previous films—although in *DVC* she only appears alive in one flashback sequence. While both films purport to create a more revisionary characterization of Magdalene based on a range of research, instead they reify a memory of Magdalene in which she has no apostolic authority.

By understanding *how* memory is constructed and represented in these films and the effects of these choices, I hope to articulate a site of "interpretative invention," a generative space of rememory that both uncovers how a sexualized Magdalene was used

to legitimate patriarchal bias and inspires new ways of navigating the fact/fiction dimensions necessary in order to re-member her. Rhetorical memory—the process and products of memory—provides a critical lens through which to articulate how Mary Magdalene has been constructed and put into discourse despite the plethora of research that provides different interpretations of her role in early Christianity. The compelling example of Magdalene as both a rhetorical and historical figure in our collective memory opens up new spaces in which we might better theorize how to write-in and rewrite those groups usurped by silence, erasure, and malice—often an unconscious symptom of gendered discourses. By drawing on the critical and generative dimensions of rhetorical memory, rhetoric and composition scholars can not only reconceptualize the terrain of historiography, but also refine their methods of analysis in order to expose the hegemonic truth claims that often go unmarked or unnoticed in our epistemological paradigms.

### **Re-membering Mary Magdalene**

Before looking at how the memory of Mary Magdalene is represented in the films, it is essential to gain a more accurate, historical sense of her as documented in a variety of biblical and scholarly sources. From a rhetorical perspective, such an examination highlights the types of premises relied on to argue for certain ways of remembering Magdalene. Furthermore, it is important to account for the array of sources available to Martin Scorsese, Barbara Hershey, Dan Brown, and Ron Howard as they constructed their Magdalene for the screen. As Pamela Thimmes surmises in her 1998 literature review, “Memory and Re-Vision: Mary Magdalene Research since 1975,” there have been more than nine monographs and hundreds of scholarly articles written about

Magdalene, not to mention thousands of anecdotal references and footnotes. Furthermore, the range of studies is remarkable, ranging from “biblical text-critical, historical-critical and feminist studies to biographies and studies examining the art, music, drama, liturgy, piety and poetry” devoted to Magdalene (193). In *Mary Magdalene, The First Apostle: The Struggle for Authority*, Ann Brock Graham seconds Thimmes’ conclusions, stating that an “impressive number of studies and monographs on Mary Magdalene have appeared in recent years” that focus on both canonical and non-canonical sources (11-12). The success of *The Da Vinci Code* has prompted even more scholarly and mainstream works that examine the role of Mary Magdalene in early Christianity and her relationship to Jesus.<sup>8</sup>

Despite the plethora of information on Mary Magdalene as one of Jesus’ followers and her presence at his crucifixion and ascension, little is known about her before and after the time. As a result the enigmatic elements surrounding her life “lend themselves to fictionalization” (Thompson 1). Therefore, prompted by feminist readings of Christianity, the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Nag Hammadi Library, and the popularity of Magdalene’s image in art and popular culture, historians have attempted to trace the “real” evidence of Magdalene and “restore some of the pre-Gregorian understanding of a woman who was a friend of Jesus, loyal disciple, leader among early Christians, and primary witness to the resurrection” (9). For example, in *The Resurrection of Mary Magdalene*, Jane Schaberg summarizes the Gospel sources that allude to Magdalene:

According to all four Christian Testament gospels, Mary Magdalene is a—perhaps the—primary witness to the fundamental data of the early Christian faith. She is said to have participated in the Galilean career of Jesus of Nazareth, followed him to Jerusalem, stood by at his execution and burial, found his tomb empty and received an explanation of that emptiness. Two texts mention that seven demons had come out of her (Luke 8:2; Mark 16:9). According to three accounts (Mark 16:7, Matthew 28:7; Josh 20:17) she is sent with a commission to deliver the explanation of the empty tomb to the disciples. Also according to three accounts (Matt 28: 9-10; John 20: 14-18; Mark 16:9) she was the first to experience a vision or appearance of the resurrected Jesus. (66).

While her biblical prominence is on par with Mary (Jesus’ mother) and Eve, Bart Ehrman emphasizes that Magdalene’s name occurs only thirteen times in the entire New Testament, including parallel references. Furthermore, when she is mentioned, not much is said (*Peter, Paul, and Mary Magdalene* 185). Yet despite the sketchiness of some of the details surrounding Magdalene’s life, no where does the New Testament say that she was a prostitute, a scholarly “fact” that Karen King expresses this way: The “portrait of Mary Magdalene as a prostitute, repentant or otherwise, has no basis whatsoever in historical tradition” (18). Instead, this representation emerges from the Vatican tradition.

The Gnostic texts that feature Mary Magdalene present her in an even more favorable light, elaborating on her relationship to Jesus. For example, the *Pistis Sophia*, which was discovered in the eighteenth century, presents a Q & A session between Jesus

and the other disciples. Esther de Boer states that Magdalene asks thirty-nine of the forty-six questions (77), demonstrating her leadership role. Ehrman concurs, adding that the text also represents Magdalene's ability to "move beyond the [other disciples] in her spiritual perception and progress" (209). Schaberg argues that The Gospel of Mary, written in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, "presents [Magdalene] as a leading intellectual and spiritual guide of the early, post-Easter community, as a visionary, the Savior's beloved companion, a conduit for and interpreter of his teachings" (66). While there are missing pages in the three-part text, most scholars agree she is portrayed as an "exemplary disciple" because of her unwavering devotion and deep understanding of Christ's teachings, despite the attempts of the other disciples to reject her authority because she is a woman (King xvii-xviii).

While the Gnostic sources more specifically depict Magdalene's spiritual leadership, they also showcase some of the inherent patriarchal biases that will plague the memory of Magdalene. As the Gospel of Mary chronicles, even while Jesus charges Magdalene with the responsibility to serve as *apostolorum apostola* (apostle of the apostles) after his Ascension, disciples Peter and Andrew take issue with Magdalene's teachings, refusing to embrace her vision and expressing their jealousy that Jesus appeared to her rather than them. Yet Magdalene perseveres as a visionary leader, defended by Jesus and her fellow disciple Levi who honors her: "Peter, you have always been hot-tempered . . . If the Savior made her worthy, who are you to reject her? . . . Surely the Savior knows her very well. That is why he loved her more than us" (22). In fact, while Graham demonstrates that numerous early Christian texts assign apostolic

authority to Magdalene, when “Mary and Peter are both present in the text, Peter consistently challenges her authority or diminishes her status, often in overt and blatant ways” (102). Because all of the canonical and non-canonical texts are written *about* Magdalene rather than by her, they are all subject to the gendered ideologies that constrain and diminish Magdalene’s apostolic authority.

Such ideological constraints are even more apparent once the pro-Petrine tendencies in the Gospel of Luke were adopted by church leaders who wanted to diminish women’s leadership roles and, as Scharberg argues, “attach female sexuality to notions of evil, repentance and mercy,” political and ideological forces that superseded historical realities (37). The emphasis on women’s sexuality rather than egalitarian leadership roles within Christianity sealed Magdalene’s skewed representation in our collective memory. While Thompson notes that some scholars trace Magdalene’s misrepresentation as a prostitute back to a fourth century interpretation of Luke 8:2 that juxtaposes immoral behavior with prostitution (14), most trace the inaccuracy to 591 when Pope Gregory the Great falsely conflated her with Mary of Bethany (John 12: 1-8) and the unnamed sinner in Luke 7:36-50 (60). As King argues, once these initial identifications were secured, “Magdalene could be associated with every unnamed sinful woman in the gospels, including the adulteress in John 8:1-11 and the Syrophenician woman with her five or more husbands in John 4:7-30. Mary the apostle and teacher became Mary the repentant whore” (18). While centuries later, in 1969, the Catholic church officially corrected its error, trying to erase her sinful reputation by declaring that she was one of many followers of Jesus, the conflated image of Magdalene as a prostitute lingers in the

mainstream memory (Scharberg 99). Even Dan Brown's 21<sup>st</sup> century mission to elevate Magdalene's status within the church is colored by gendered ideologies that depict Magdalene and Jesus as a romantic couple rather than intellectual and spiritual colleagues. As Ehrman asserts in his historical scholarship, the vast majority of scholars of the New Testament and early Christianity have claimed that Jesus was not married, let alone married to Mary Magdalene (*Truth and Fiction* 153). Therefore, it is remarkable how despite the wealth of information (biblical, Gnostic, and scholarly) that provides a more compelling argument for Magdalene's apostolic significance in early Christianity, the majority of people remain impervious to these arguments. Instead, they are swayed by a representation that Judith Butler describes as the fantasy binary distinctions ascribed to male/female, body/mind, Madonna/whore, Mary/Eve that both naturalize women's inferiority and subvert their agency in order to serve patriarchal hegemony.

**Pre-production Notes: Constructing Martin Scorsese's Memory of Magdalene**

Adapted from the 1955 novel *The Last Temptation of Christ* by Nikos Kazantzakis, the film began pre-production in 1983 for Paramount Pictures. Weeks before shooting started, the project was cancelled, largely due to a letter writing campaign engineered by right-wing fundamentalist Christian groups (Ehrenstein 1). Martin Scorsese persevered, finally gaining production approval from Universal in 1987, enduring a 58-day physically demanding shooting schedule and a wave of protests, beginning on August 11, 1988 (Kelly 203). Even though most of the protestors hadn't seen the movie, fundamentalist leaders such as Tim Penland and Bill Bright "orchestrated a campaign demanding nothing less than [the movie's] total destruction" (Medhurst 55).

Once Jerry Falwell, Pat Robertson, Pat Boone, and even Franco Zeffierelli voiced their disapproval, the movie assumed its rightful role as the “most controversial film of the 1980s” (Ehrenstein 2). The main objection stemmed from the film’s focus on Christ’s humanity, which dramatizes the mortal struggle of Jesus as Everyman to discover his divinity (2-3). The fundamentalist wrath was fueled by a “sex scene” between Jesus and Mary Magdalene. Although the film begins with a disclaimer that it is based on a “fictional exploration of the eternal spirit” (*LTC DVD*) rather than the Gospels, and this scene is part of a dream sequence as Jesus hangs on the cross in agony until he embraces his divinity, right-wingers attacked it as “blasphemous.”

In addition to all the controversy, the story behind the making of *The Last Temptation of Christ* remains almost as interesting as the film itself, especially when examining the available scholarship and the creative choices made by both Scorsese and Barbara Hershey. Scorsese explains that Hershey gave him a copy of Kazantzakis’ book in 1972 when they were filming *Box Car Bertha*. When he finally read it, he was captivated. Raised a Roman Catholic, Scorsese was intrigued with the human side of Christ. He wanted to make a film that reflected those ideas and prompted people to think about or rethink their perceptions of Jesus. After the 1983 production was cancelled, he told Barbara Hershey, who had been cast as Magdalene, “I’m not going to give up until I make the film.” Hershey assured him, “I was put on earth to play this part” (Friedman 153-55). While Scorsese’s vision of Jesus (and even Judas) in the film was open to new possibilities, he only partially considered a revision of Magdalene’s characterization. In the DVD commentary, Scorsese explains that he thought the book’s premise that Mary

Magdalene was a prostitute because of Jesus' rejection was too convenient. Scorsese argues that what is important about Magdalene is that she is part of the overall scheme: "She, like Judas, is part of his sacrifice and redemption. They are both holier than the other characters." In *Biblical Epics* Bruce Babington and Peter Evans conclude that Scorsese's version of Magdalene "does not represent a disdain for female sexuality, but an inability to see women as other than sexual, that is, as female and spiritual" (165). Therefore, while Scorsese grants the character more agency and screen-time than previous films, he still frames her within the same gendered constructs that have libeled her for centuries.

As Hershey waited for the film to be made, she immersed herself in study, focusing on the Gospel of Thomas in the *Gnostic Gospels*. She reports uncovering the patriarchal nature of ancient times and discovering how the patriarchal establishment became very anti-female in order to suppress the older religions where women had power. She also records how she learned that Christ welcomed women among his followers. Even when everyone else ran away, women remained at the Crucifixion (Kelly 205). Interestingly, even though Hershey consulted a Gnostic source that names Magdalene as one of the six disciples, she does not seem to reconsider Magdalene's leadership qualities or uncover the wealth of evidence provided by scholars that refute her depiction as a prostitute.

While Scorsese and Hershey's oversights might reflect the barriers that complicate how scholarship enters the mainstream consciousness, they report conducting extensive research about the history and culture, as well as into the scripture itself (on the

DVD Commentary, Scorsese documents some of his research over the years to get the look and feel of the film). Therefore, it is important to keep in mind the wealth of sources about Magdalene that were available at that time, including many of the resources I outlined earlier. Antti Marjanen provides a useful historical overview of the sources that would have been available during the conception of the film in the 1970's and early 1980's. While much of the interest in Mary Magdalene focused on the canonical texts and the question of Magdalene's relationship to the four anointers of the New Testament, by the 1970s Marjanen illustrates how the situation "changed decisively," because of three key factors:

First, the publication of the Nag Hammadi Library begun in the late 50s and completed in the form of a facsimile edition in the 70s, offered four new sources in which Mary Magdalene is depicted in a way different from that of the canonical gospels but somewhat similar to that of the *Gospel of Mary* and *Pistis Sophia*. The *Gospel of Thomas*, the *Dialogue of the Savior*, the *First Apocalypse of James*, and the *Gospel of Philip* all give Mary Magdalene a significant role. Second, . . . the number of sources multiplied, but also a new and third perspective . . . was introduced. . . . [R]eligious texts dealing with women have been studied more than ever before under the presupposition that they provide information about attitudes towards women prevailing in the religious circles where the texts originated and were read. (4-5)

In light of the available scholarship and feminist theories of interpretation, historical recovery, and revision, it is fascinating to witness the power of patriarchal ideology to maintain the Magdalene myth even when individuals like Scorsese and Hershey presume to open their minds to other possibilities.<sup>9</sup> Their perceptions and interpretations of the novel—“terministic screens”—were so steeped in a gendered system that maintains the inaccurate representation of Magdalene that they didn’t even question the assumption that she was a prostitute. Interestingly, their inventive process mirrors how Magdalene became recognized as a whore—an intricate process where historical texts and memory are empowered and de-powered, ignored and observed within dominant ideologies.

When the movie was finally put into production, Hershey and Scorsese met to discuss the character. After all of her reading in preparation for the part, Hershey recalls that she “brought [a] list of questions about what Mary Magdalene would look like” (Kelly 205). While a focus on physicality is essential to creating a character, it also suggests some deep-seated assumptions about Magdalene. Scorsese and Hershey had both seen tattoos on women, as well as henna on the feet, when perusing various archeological sources. Agreeing these features were essential to Magdalene’s character, they decided to make these attributes red in the film because “it’s more beautiful, it would show up more, and it seemed like something a whore would do” (205). Such a racialized reductive interpretation of the tattoos is similar to the gendered elisions that are evident in the ways in which memory can serve hegemonic ideology. Therefore, at the inception of the character, Hershey and Scorsese locked Magdalene into a visual representation that reinforced a historically circumscribed view of her agency.

From a scholarly viewpoint this assumption suggests a certain historical ignorance or neglect; however, Hershey reports a different perspective about constructing the character. She asserts that all the contradictory research “liberated” them to do what they wanted with the Magdalene character: “Marty had me walking with Jesus and the disciples in many scenes. The only scenes I couldn’t appear in were the ones at the temple where women weren’t allowed. He even embraced the idea of Christ’s having women at the Last Supper” (205). While their meticulous research resulted in some important representational innovations, they never seemed to debate the issue about characterizing Magdalene as a prostitute. In fact, Hershey describes her fascination with the conflated version of Magdalene: “The thing that fascinated me about Mary Magdalene is that she represents all aspects of womanhood: she’s a whore and a victim, a complete primal animal, and then she’s reborn and become virginal and sister-like. She evolves through all phases of womanhood, so it was a wonderful role in that way . . .” (205). Obviously, Scorsese agreed with this image. While he envisioned Jesus as a man “who broke all the rules,” who wouldn’t tell women to “wait in the kitchen” (224), he could/would not see beyond the Madonna/whore paradigm of Magdalene that Hershey articulates. As such, even though Magdalene appears briefly within Jesus’ trusted inner circle, she is hardly liberated from her historical condemnation as whore. Applying Gayle Rubin’s framework for understanding prostitution, casting Magdalene as a repentant harlot keeps her in the “straight-jacket of gender” that condemns women to a secondary position in human relations and perpetuates Christianity’s Madonna/whore paradigm. In essence, Magdalene is “trafficked” in exchange for Scorsese’s vision of Jesus, which

ultimately serves the patriarchal misrepresentation of her memory that he (re)produces (157). Therefore, by using the tools of critical memory in order to analyze how Scorsese constructed Magdalene in his film, I am better able to account for the unspoken and unnoticed gaps in his gendered representation. Moreover, I am able to map out and articulate the ways in which various hegemonic power structures (i.e., “terministic screens) “burn in” the memory of Magdalene as a prostitute. Like Foucault’s method of archaeology, rhetorical memory provides the critical tools necessary to question and disrupt the hegemonic systems of epistemology and representation that resonate in our collective memories. Furthermore, rhetorical memory helps to more precisely pinpoint and open up transformative spaces in which rhetors might better resist and rewrite dominant ideologies that erase or misrepresent underrepresented groups.

### **Pre-production Notes: Constructing Dan Brown’s Memory of Magdalene**

Dan Brown’s 2003 novel *The Da Vinci Code*, published a year after the disconcerting reports of sexual abuse by Catholic priests, has sold an estimated 61 million copies world wide as of 2006, making itself “on course to become the second-biggest selling book in publishing history—[second only to] the Bible” (Hastings). Its popularity generated scores of books, articles, websites, lectures, conferences, and sermons that attempted to decode, debunk, and discuss the claims made by the book.<sup>10</sup> Despite the backlash against the novel, its popularity continued to soar, including the much-anticipated film adaptation by Ron Howard. Sony Pictures paid Dan Brown six million dollars to acquire the rights to the book and hired legendary Brian Grazer as producer. In order to offset some of the novel’s inherent controversy and ensure a hit, Sony hired Ron

Howard to direct and Everyman Tom Hanks to star (imdb.com). Howard employed award-winning screenwriter Akiva Goldsman to adapt the novel. However, as Goldsman points out, the novel poses certain challenges for the script adaptation: “The characters get into long dialogues about obscure history that go on and on. It’s great fun on the page. It’s very exciting and beguiling and riveting. But it’s all talk. It’s not the sort of thing that screams ‘Make me a movie!’” (qtd. in Svetkey). According to *The Da Vinci Code Illustrated Screenplay*, Howard and Goldsman opted to stay true to the novel, including as much of the text in the film as possible. This choice, according to many critics, was part of what hampered the overall effectiveness of the film.

Although controversy didn’t delay the making of *DVC* in the same ways it did *LTC*, strong denunciations were made against the movie, especially because, unlike Scorsese’s film, millions had already read the book and *DVD* was slotted as a summer blockbuster. During shooting Howard and Hanks received hate mail, encountered around 200 protesters when they were filming in Lincolnshire England (Howard said most of them wanted autographs), and navigated location problems, such as getting access to historical sites like Westminster Abbey (Svetkey). When *DVC* opened at Cannes in spring 2006, Archbishop Angelo Amato, a high-ranking Vatican official, denounced the book, calling it “stridently anti-Christian” and “full of calamities, offenses, and historical and theological errors”; he also made a plea about the movie version: “I hope that you all will boycott the film.” Cardinal Francis Arinze of Nigeria threatened to take legal action against the film because it “insulted” the founder of their religion. On the red carpet one British nun prayed before a wooden cross in protest. She said, “I think this movie will

confuse people. The world is a mess, and Jesus has the answers” (Morris). As expected, most questions to Howard and the cast focused on the hullabaloo. Howard summed it up this way: “There’s no question that the film is likely to be upsetting to some people. My advice, since virtually no one has really seen the movie yet, is to not go see the movie if you think you’re going to be upset. . . .This is supposed to be entertainment, it’s not theology.” Hanks said he didn’t feel pressure from religious groups because Hanks’ religious heritage “communicates that our sins have been taken away, not our brains.” Despite the cool handling of the conflicts by all of those involved with the project, the movie continued to generate strong reactions. Christian groups from various countries, including India, Thailand, Hong Kong, and Australia also organized various ways to boycott or block screenings of the film (“Controversy Continues”). However, unlike the protests surrounding *LTC*, efforts to diminish the film hardly made an impact. Even with all the hype, mixed reviews, and disappointing opening weekend box office figures, *The Da Vinci Code* movie has grossed \$217.5 million domestically and banked \$540.7 million internationally. As of July 2008, competing with summer blockbusters like *Batman*, *Star Wars*, *Spiderman*, and *Harry Potter*, *DVC* ranks as the eighteenth highest grossing summer movie of all-time (boxofficemojo.com)

At the center of all the *Da Vinci Code* controversy is Magdalene’s sexual relationship with Jesus. In order to get the backstory on Brown’s construction of Magdalene, I will conflate the novel with the film. Because the film adaptation remains true to the book and a large majority of the viewers of the film had read the novel, Brown’s arguments in the novel also inform the film. One of the key points of contention

about Brown's quest to recover the "sacred feminine" is his "Fact" page, which appears on the first page of the novel: "All descriptions of artwork, architecture, documents, and secret rituals are accurate." While scholars and clergy found such a statement problematic, this rhetorical move complicates fact/fiction distinctions between history and storytelling and confers additional authority to the memories he constructs on screen. Although Brown later clarifies on his website that "*The Da Vinci Code* is a novel and therefore a work of fiction," he goes on to reiterate that all of the items depicted in the novel "exist" and that the "theories discussed by these characters may have merit" ([www/danbrown.com/novels/davinci\\_code](http://www.danbrown.com/novels/davinci_code)). In other words, as Ehrman argues, "Brown's characters [are] actually making *historical* claims [about Magdalene], which readers/viewers are to "accept as factual, not fictitious" (*Truth* xii-xiii). Even more interesting, when Charlie Gibson interviewed Brown in December 2003 on *Good Morning America*, Brown stated that the theories about the Priory of Sion, the Holy Grail, alternative gospels, and Mary Magdalene as found in the novel were true. Moreover, he assured the viewers that if the book had been non-fiction, his theories would not have been different. As a result, in addition to the inherent persuasive power of biopic films, Brown's blurred fact/fiction rhetorical strategy makes the subject matter and arguments even more compelling to viewers.<sup>11</sup>

To further augment his factual claims within the world of the novel/film, Brown provides a "partial bibliography" for *The Da Vinci Code* on his website. These citations offer two ways of reading the arguments espoused in the film. On one hand, the bibliography functions like a scholarly works cited, enhancing the credibility of his

fictional “facts.” On the other hand, the list of sources makes it possible to explore the ideological assumptions that construct Brown’s memory of Magdalene, as he purports to empower women within Western religion. Brown uses two primary sources to establish the historical foundation from which his characters construct the memory of Magdalene: *Holy Blood, Holy Grail* and the Gnostic gospels. The central argument in Brown’s plot is the claim that Jesus and Mary Magdalene were married. Pregnant at the crucifixion, Magdalene later escaped to France (known then as Gaul) in order to bear his child. Therefore, Magdalene, rather than some inanimate chalice, is the real “holy grail” because she carried the royal bloodline. As a result, the Catholic Church has spent the last 2000 years trying to cover up these facts in order to diminish the role of women in the early church (“the lost sacred feminine”) and to deny that the bloodline still exists in France today. In essence, Brown contests one of the central tenets of Christianity since the fourth century—that Jesus was divine, not mortal. Furthermore, he obliterates one of the most prominent images of Magdalene in cinematic memory—that of the repentant whore. As one character says in the movie, “What if the world discovers that the greatest story ever told is actually a lie?”

Brown the author drew heavily on *Holy Blood, Holy Grail*, written by three “independent scholars”—Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh and Henry Lincoln—and first published in England in 1982. While Brown doesn’t explicitly acknowledge *Holy Blood* as the primary source for his representation of Magdalene, his website commends the work done by these researchers. Therefore, an understanding of the authors’ key arguments is warranted in order to examine how Brown constructs Magdalene’s memory.

While almost all biblical scholars have discredited the hypotheses promoted in *Holy Blood*, especially the notion that Jesus was married, the parallels between Brown's novel and the authors' theories are uncanny (Ehrman). In fact, the authors sued Brown for plagiarizing the entire plot of his book from their non-fiction work. Ironically, Brown won the suit precisely because his book was a work of fiction rather than non-fiction.

For Baigent, Leigh, and Lincoln, Magdalene's significance stems from her sexual relationship with Jesus and her reproductive capabilities. Ideologically, then, the authors move away from the repentant harlot version of Magdalene (333-4). They replace that memory of Magdalene with a new focus on her merit as wife and mother. While they occasionally acknowledge passages that speak to how Magdalene is favored by Christ, the authors ultimately interpret this favoritism as a function of her role as spouse instead of spiritual leader (334-5). The authors contend that Jesus was married to Magdalene based on a variety of factors. For example, they maintain that Jewish custom mandated that men marry rather than remain celibate (330). They also argue that the John 2: 1-11 wedding at Cana is actually Jesus' wedding. When Mary tells the servants "whatever he saith unto you, do it," the authors interpret this to mean that Jesus' mother is acting as the wedding hostess (332). In addition, they support their hypothesis that Jesus and Magdalene were spouses by arguing that it was unthinkable for an unmarried woman to travel without her father or husband (334). While certainly it is an established fact that women's roles in the public sphere were minimal, scholars like King, Graham, Pagels, Ehrman, and Thompson have demonstrated, using both canonical and non-canonical interpretations, that women were part of Jesus' ministry. Furthermore, Baigent, Leigh,

and Lincoln link Mary of Bethany to Magdalene, ignoring that surnames were based on geographical regions—Magdala in Galilee and Bethany in Judea (334-5). All told, the authors conclude that if their hypothesis about Jesus’ marriage to Magdalene is correct, then the “Holy Grail would be two things simultaneously . . . Jesus’ bloodline and descendants . . . and the womb of Magdalen” (400). Hence, despite their attempt to challenge traditional beliefs about the relationship between Jesus and Magdalene, the authors still locate Magdalene’s agency in her body and sexuality, although this time as wife and mother.

While Brown the author draws on *Holy Blood* to construct his plot, whenever his characters talk about Magdalene, they claim to get their information from the Gnostic gospels discovered in the 1950s (ironically, Brown lumps the Nag Hammadi and Dead Sea Scrolls together, thereby also providing an incorrect date for these sources). These lost Gospels represent not only the conspiracy to deny the “sacred feminine” in Christianity, but also present the *real* historical truth about Jesus. Within this logic, the characters seem to be providing credible information even though Brown is making uncritical use of Baignet, Leigh, and Lincoln’s interpretations of the information contained in some of the Gnostic sources. For example, while the canonical gospels say only that Magdalene was a follower of Jesus, that she was one of the first people Jesus appeared to after the resurrection, and that the apostles didn’t believe her when she told them that Christ had risen, the Gospel of Phillip elaborates on the relationship between Jesus and Magdalene. The partial passage in question reads like this, including the gaps: “And the companion of the [. . .] Mary Magdalene. [. . .] her more than [. . .] the

disciples [ . . . ] kiss her [ . . . ] on her [ . . . ] (Newman 151). While it is understandable that one might fill in the blanks in a way that indicates a sexual relationship, especially if one inserts the word “mouth” at the end of the missing text, there is no proof that such an inclusion is accurate. Furthermore, Leigh Teabing, Brown’s Holy Grail expert in the novel, points to another passage in The Gospel of Phillip to convince viewers that Jesus and Magdalene are husband and wife: “As any Aramaic scholar will tell you, the word *companion*, in those days, literally meant *spouse*” (*Da Vinci* 246). However, as biblical scholars like Ehrman and Schaberg point out, the Gospel of Phillip is written in the ancient Egyptian language of Coptic. “Companion” is borrowed from the Greek word, *koinônos*, which means “associate” or “companion,” not spouse (*Peter, Paul, Magdalene* 215). Therefore, if Brown had known about the more accurate translation of the word, his plot structure might have taken a different turn. The Gospel of Phillip’s passage provides the same (sketchy) information as the canonical Gospels—that Magdalene was a spiritual associate of Jesus. As a result, because Howard chose to stay true to the spirit of the novel, Magdalene’s agency stems from her sexuality.

Looking at how Magdalene is conceived of by both Scorsese/Hershey and Brown/Howard is a fascinating exploration of fact/fiction dichotomies. While Trinh Minh-ha might applaud their efforts to cross genre boundaries and use fiction to expose the false fact/fiction dichotomy of filmmaking, she would also argue that the films embody particular ideologies—and all ideologies are suspect (*Woman*). Rhetorical memory provides a critical tool to question and challenge the ideologies inherent in the construction and reception of these films—how the filmmakers’ rhetorical techniques

kept gendered ideologies in place by relying on stereotypes and particular beliefs, values, and interpretations, which maintained a (mis)representation of Magdalene. On the one hand, it is evident that Magdalene's memory is constructed by artists who seem less concerned about what constitutes credible scholarship and what might be described as fascinating speculation and legend. On the other hand, the artists emphasize the factual aspects of their work are also steeped in imagination. Documentary film scholar Charles Warren puts it this way: "Objectivity and transparency are impossible ideals . . . and the methods of science seem not to ensure enlightenment" (1). Blurring the fact/fiction binary as a rhetorical move raises important issues. While we can't expect artists to necessarily be theorizing scholars, it is important to examine how fictions-presented-as-facts impact viewers' memories of Magdalene, which rhetorical memory helps to highlight. Furthermore, while the artists' efforts were intended to challenge certain ways of thinking about Jesus, the universal male hero, Magdalene's representation remained tethered to a gendered vision, fixed within the male gaze. To his credit, Brown takes on the popular memory of Magdalene as a prostitute and offers a more expansive version of her role in early Christianity. However, even though he speaks of Magdalene twice as an apostle, the main point of her agency is her sexuality. While Brown condemns the church for saying Magdalene is a prostitute, he replicates the focus on her sexuality, making her wife and mother instead of a valued intellectual/spiritual disciple and apostle. Paradoxically, by trying to elevate the status of women within the church—arguably Brown's intention and part of the popularity of his work—Brown constructs Magdalene's memory from gendered ideologies that objectify her, circumscribing her agency within

the nature of her biology rather than her spirituality and intellect. And, in turn, this patriarchal resonance makes a focus on sexuality seem more important than a focus on spirituality and intellect. Maybe if Magdalene had been constructed as a complex character in which her sexuality was only one dimension of her being, the viewer might gain a richer view of her relationship with Jesus and the other disciples. Within this narrative, her sexuality might be celebrated as a site of agency in which a filmmaker honored the multiplicity and complexity of perspectives surrounding not only her relationships but the embodied nature of spirituality and intellect that shape her being.

### **Scorsese/Hershey's Memory of Magdalene on Screen<sup>12</sup>**

Frame by frame, Scorsese and Hershey reveal the implications of their complete disregard of Magdalene's *being* beyond the prostitute stock character, cementing her memory in the popular imagination. In *The Last Temptation of Christ (LTC)*, Scorsese gives Magdalene more screen time than other biblical films—past or present. In fact, she and Judas function as main characters in the movie. Unfortunately, much like the fate of most female characters in Hollywood, *LTC*'s Magdalene soon finds her place among the litany of Scorsese film women—wives, mothers, or mistresses who mostly suffer in silence and provide temporary distractions for the male protagonists. In addition to historical inaccuracies, Magdalene's characterization on screen underscores how sexuality is represented differently for men and women, especially in Western Christianity. While Jesus (man) can serve as universal signifier for humanity, his sexual drives the norm, women are not supposed to have sexual drives, the model for sexuality being the Virgin Mary (woman) who remains unscathed by desire. Therefore, women

associated with sexuality (Magdalene) outside of marriage must occupy the position of “fallen woman,” a staple of Western patriarchal narratives. When Scorsese casts Magdalene within the discourse of “fallen woman,” he renders her a symbol of men’s temptation. Scharberg articulates the significance of this assignment: “Reduced to her sexuality, she is . . . blamed for provoking sexual desire . . . , often the target of male sexual aggression and hostility, moral outrage, and condemnation” (106). Within this conceptual framework, Magdalene the prostitute is viewed as seductress, victim, or entrepreneur, which not only greatly reduces the complexity surrounding prostitution but also the scholarly evidence about her apostolic authority. However, as Andrea Dworkin argues, even without demonizing prostitutes, most people are ambivalent and uncomfortable thinking about the nature of prostitution because of the realization that “male domination of the female body is the basic material reality of [all] women’s lives” (200). From this perspective, whatever agency Scorsese/Hershey may have envisioned for Magdalene as the world’s most famous prostitute is quickly thwarted by the historical stigma she embodies in popular memory, making her an archetype of sin rather than spirituality and agency. Such a status not only diminishes Magdalene’s significance and complexity in individual and collective memory, but also articulates far-reaching consequences for women trapped in the same one-dimensionality of being.

Many second- and third-wave feminist scholars remind us that the concept of prostitute has meaning only within the patriarchal ideology in which such forms of work carry a stigma generated from double standards of sexual morality and negative attitudes to sex (see Lerner; see also Nussbaum). Debra Satz, for example, argues that “if

prostitution is wrong it is because of its effects on how men perceive women and on how women perceive themselves. In our society prostitution represents women as the sexual servants of men” (78). Satz conjectures that the negative image of women promoted by prostitution “shapes and influences the way women as a whole are seen” (79). Satz’s view is dramatized within the first five minutes of *LTC* when Magdalene’s character is introduced. Magdalene appears as a marked body, immediately signifying the male gaze. A close-up of Magdalene’s feet covered with henna tattoos transitions into a pan up her body into a close-up of her face as she spits in Jesus’ face. The tattoos reinforce her inferior status and highlight how Jesus (and society) perceives her. Hershey used the tattoos as part of her backstory, explaining that Magdalene is trying to “make herself despicable because she’s trying to be the lowest of the low” (Kelly 206). The tattoos would give “a feeling of a woman marking herself. And yet, they were beautiful” (206). While one might read the tattoos as Magdalene’s attempt to control her body under the most extreme circumstances, to express herself, mapping her rebellion onto a body bound by patriarchy, this interpretation ultimately disintegrates within the film’s gendered environment.

As Scharberg asserts, viewing Magdalene within the typical connotations of prostitute “underplay the moral agency and survival skills of Magdalene and those she represents, emphasizing instead the power of Jesus and his forgiveness” (105). Ultimately, Magdalene never belongs to herself, whether she is acting out as “whore” or “redeemed” by Jesus. In fact, Magdalene is defined by her relationship with Jesus. Because Scorsese/Hershey seem unaware at the time of other interpretations about Jesus

and Magdalene's relationship, they collaborated on how to show their connection: "[When she spits on him] you know they have something going on, that she's a woman, he's a man—angry enough to spit at someone, there must be something going on" (Kelly 225). They also conceived the relationship in terms of romantic attractions rather than any semblance of intellectual or theological debate in which the two might engage. Even in Scorsese and Hershey's attempt to open the spaces that Magdalene might occupy, she remains defined by an emotional relationship to Jesus. Consequently, like any movie ingénue, her worth is determined by the male gaze and enacting her proper subservient role. As Hershey explains, "if she couldn't get her man, be Jesus' bride, what she feels is her destiny, then she'll 'be mud'" (Kelly 206). Interestingly, when Magdalene spits on Jesus, there is a glimpse of her power. While the intention of the action was meant to dramatize their intimate relationship, it might also be construed as Magdalene's appraisal of Jesus' spirituality. From this perspective, the spitting seems to express her disdain for Jesus' weakness in light of his chosen piety more than her feelings of rejection. However, Magdalene's self-assertion is quickly absorbed in the patriarchal paradigm that maintains her as the whore in the mainstream imagination. The trend here seems to be that any sense of individual agency is quickly co-opted by the structural power of a more patriarchal, gendered context, thus underscoring that dominant ideologies pressure rhetorical memory so as to protect themselves and maintain the status quo.

Later in the film the contradictions between artistic intent and patriarchal representations manifest in the film's "brothel scene," one of the most memorable sequences in which Jesus' humanity is introduced, including his sexuality. In the first part

of the scene, Jesus sits in the outer room of Magdalene's brothel, waiting among her "clients," declining his own turn and watching men of all ethnicities bed her until night falls and only he remains. The intensity of the scene is remarkable, making it difficult for viewers to witness. Indescribable pain and humiliation engulf Magdalene's face as she essentially endures a public gang bang. Scorsese's provocative *mise-en-scene* dramatizes Hershey's view of the character: "Magdalene was supposed to be fantastic, to warrant the fact that men would come throughout the world to see her" (Friedman 154). Even though Hershey and Willem Dafoe report on the DVD commentary that one of the actors "overplayed" his part, actually ravishing Hershey so that Scorsese and the cinematographer Michael Ballhaus yelled out for the man to stop, Hershey kept the camera rolling and used the molestation to "express the profound pain" of the character (Kelly 226). She also rejected the use of a body double: "I didn't feel that [a double] would move like I would move. I knew if I did the scene, I'd really feel like a whore" (225). While Hershey's account can be understood as method acting, the degradation of both the character and actor's body contradicts Scorsese's vision that the scene should highlight Jesus' compassion as he "fights his sexual desire for her" (Corliss 42). The brothel scene also unveils a dramatic shift for both characters. While Jesus gains agency to embrace his destiny, Magdalene assumes a more tertiary role in his life and submits to her role as repentant whore—the persistent image in our collective memory.

Other issues emerge from this dramatic rendering of Jesus and Magdalene's interaction in the brothel. Interestingly, while this scene is designed to demonstrate Christ's divinity through his resistance to sexual temptation, it also marks Jesus'

complicity in the patriarchal ideologies that construct “prostitute,” and the slippage between Scorsese/Hershey’s articulation of Magdalene’s agency in the film and the patriarchal condemnation she suffers. While in the novel Jesus sits outside in the courtyard unable to view the action inside, in Scorsese’s version Jesus watches Magdalene and remains fully aware that these sexual acts are self-destructive, not pleasurable or transgressive. The medium point of view shots are edited between the pain and humiliation that resonates from Magdalene’s face and Jesus’ reactions and inability to admit the truth of what is happening to her. In fact, Jesus’ pained reactions suggest more about his inability to intervene or acknowledge Magdalene’s victimization rather than his capacity to resist sexual temptation. While Hershey explains that she approached the scene thinking “what is more difficult for Christ to watch, her pleasure or her pain”?, she also documents how she got to the extreme pain of the character, noting that Magdalene doesn’t ever express sexual pleasure (Kelly 226). In this way, the scene is not just about Jesus’ sexual desire. Rather, by maintaining the conflated memory of Magdalene, it marks another example of Scorsese’s inability to represent women as other than sexual. While this mindset mirrors patriarchal Christianity’s ideology about women’s prescribed roles, it also reduces how Magdalene’s memory might be constructed within the film’s narrative possibilities. Instead of Magdalene and Jesus discussing and debating his reluctance to accept his divine destiny and Magdalene serving as an apostle (a more probable portrayal of their relationship), she is forced to express herself only through her subjected and objectified body.

In the second part of the scene, Magdalene sees Jesus. The cinematography emphasizes Magdalene's pain and self-contempt. A tracking, point of view shot leads to a close-up of Magdalene's naked back as she asks: "Who's out there? Who is it?" Scorsese also uses subliminally slow motion in the moment that Magdalene turns and looks at Jesus, the wretchedness of her exposure and humiliation wash across her face as she tries to cover her naked body in front of him: "You sit out there all day with the others and come in with your head down and say forgive me. It's not that easy. Go away. God can save your soul." The slow motion creates a feeling of urgency between the characters. While the scene was designed to reinforce Scorsese's emphasis on the "inner torments of spiritual life" represented by sexual temptation, it also unmask the realities of Magdalene's subjugation at the hands of patriarchal discourse (Kelly 227). Her pain stems from anger and shame, both rooted in her perception of Jesus' weakness and indecision and the psychic brutality of her subjection to the male will. Scorsese's intention was to emphasize that Jesus feels guilty because his rejection of Magdalene results in her prostitution. However, in the movie Magdalene seems more frustrated by his complicity in her agony and lack of agency than just his "rejection" of her as a romantic partner: "If you weren't hanging onto your mother, you were hanging on to me; now you're hanging onto God." While Scorsese describes the core conflict of the film as Jesus' journey to his ultimate destiny, it is striking how his assent is supported by the diminution of the women in his life who must suffer in the wake of his transformation. The "brothel scene" provides the necessary narrative conflict that propels Jesus forward on his divine journey. Nevertheless within twenty minutes, Magdalene is repositioned in

the background for the rest of the film, recapitulating centuries of misrepresentation in the public's memory.

Throughout the rest of the film, Magdalene is relegated to serve as *bas relief* for Jesus' divinity. In effect, her behavior/body (i.e., prostitution) rather than her being (Magdalene who steadfastly stays by Jesus' side even more than the other apostles) becomes the character in the film and image in our memories. Because of her prostitution and thus pension for Edenic temptation, Magdalene serves as the instrument that grants Jesus his agency. When Jesus goes out into the desert and inscribes a circle in the sand in an effort to assert his will over the demons in his head, a serpent appears speaking in Magdalene's voice. According to Scorsese the snake "represents sexuality in all its forms—even in thought" (Kelly 227). This symbolic choice also reflects the patriarchal ideologies circulating throughout the film. The female, specifically Magdalene, must represent temptation, in all forms. The snake utters, "Jesus, I forgive you." While Scorsese does not resist the temptation to perpetuate the myth of woman as the downfall of man, Jesus, unlike Adam, resists the temptation of carnal knowledge, thus gaining more potency from the encounter.

While it is clear that Scorsese/Hershey empower Magdalene in some ways, once she assumes her role as "repentant whore," her personal power is depleted. As an angry mob drags Magdalene by her feet preparing to stone her for her sins, Jesus "saves" her, proclaiming: "Love one another." While Jesus begins his ministry, Magdalene, although spared of death, is relegated to a plot device rather than antagonist or even associate. She also grows to be dependent on the paternalistic "help" of Jesus. Furthermore, when she

attempts to gain more equity in the relationship after her “conversion,” asking to accompany Jesus on his travels, he demands that she remain in Magdala. After he tenderly wipes the blood from Magdalene’s feet following the aborted stoning, she submits to her role as redeemed sinner, veiling her face, covering her body, and penitently following Christ.

Repentance, however, doesn’t spare Magdalene from more pain and judgment. Henna tattoos and black garments are replaced with the bright blue dress associated with the Virgin Mary. As Magdalene, Jesus, Judas and a couple of his other apostles attend a wedding, they are abruptly stopped by one guest who protests the attendance of a whore: “You don’t belong here. . . . It’s against the law.” While Jesus proclaims that “the law is against my heart” and that the kingdom of God is like a wedding where God is the bridegroom and man’s spirit is the bride, Magdalene never escapes the victimization that accompanies her characterization of whore—practicing or reformed. Even when Magdalene is portrayed at the Last Supper, she embodies the Madonna/whore paradigm, appearing with Jesus’ mother, Mary. Therefore, even in her steadfast support of Christ’s journey towards his divine destiny, she remains configured by patriarchal discourses, a scapegoat upon which male narratives are construed and remembered. Remaining as part of the *mise-en-scene*, Magdalene endures only in the capacity of serving the conflated memory that the film (re)produces.

While the “blasphemous” dream sequence provides Christ’s last temptation, it also seals Magdalene’s fated memory on screen. Even though the vision presents her as chaste bride, she is still associated with carnal lust and temptation. A satanic angel

dressed as a little girl (not in the book) escorts Jesus to a vision of Magdalene all in white who lives in a little house in the woods. When he arrives, she cradles Jesus in her arms and tenderly washes him. They make love and then take pleasure in their domesticity—Magdalene pregnant and fixing dinner. However, Magdalene dies; a bright white light highlights her smile as she disappears from the screen. In his grief, Jesus grabs an axe and seeks revenge only to learn from the little girl that “God killed her,” and that he should “trust God’s way.” Christ soon marries Lazarus’s sister, Mary—“Magdalene with a different face,” the little girl suggests—and raises a family. He also enjoys an adulterous fling with Martha, which the little girl justifies, stating “there’s only one woman in the world—one with many faces.”

Critics interpret the meaning of this interchangeability differently. Friedman, for example, sees it as a narrative convenience designed to “excuse Christ’s hasty remarriage and hastier adultery” and imply the “self-serving” version of what constitutes a “normal” existence (161). On the other hand, Medhurst reads the scene as playing out the Oedipal complex in which Jesus transfers his love for his mother to other mother substitutes (i.e., all the Marys) in order to gain his own identity. From this perspective, there is truly only one woman in the world—the mother (59). As such, Medhurst interprets Scorsese’s film as an allegorical account “structured by a complex calculus of myth, metaphor, and sign.” Furthermore, Medhurst argues that Scorsese’s Christ is Everyman, “a metaphor for universal humanity in both its ontological and psychological dimensions” (57). However, readings such as Medhurst’s call attention to a critical oversight when thinking about the film. A film that purports to offer a vision of “universal humanity” fails when it

reproduces a sexualized version of Magdalene. In fact, it serves patriarchal discourses that shape social arrangements that deny women's full humanity.

The final scene in *The Last Temptation of Christ* imprisons Magdalene in the eternal flicker of celluloid that resonates in popular culture's collective memory. In a brief, final close-up of Magdalene's face, she reveals her understanding of what has transpired. Dressed in black, her face is washed by a peaceful calm that stands in stark contrast to the wailing grief displayed by the other women or the disbelief and silence etched on the faces of the men who remained. While this moment could launch the real story of Magdalene, the apostle of the apostles, instead she remains in the background, silent and buried within the patriarchal ideologies that have ravaged her memory in word and art. Hence, the filmmakers, despite their attempt to question Magdalene's relationship to Jesus, ultimately are unable to resist the gendered ideologies that privilege women's inferiority. Thus, the critical and generative tactics of rhetorical memory fail to provide anymore than a superficial rendering of Magdalene within this system.

### **Brown/Howard's Memory of Magdalene on Screen**

While Scorsese explores the human aspects of Jesus, Brown, according to his website, purports to empower women whose fate, like Magdalene's, have been "stripped of their spiritual power" in a "world solely of Gods" (danbrown.com). Rather than focus on Madgalene's leadership in early Christianity, Brown sanctions women's power by tapping into their "natural" roles of wives and mothers. As numerous feminists have argued, when women are linked to nature and biology, whether idealized or not, their agency is often circumscribed to heteronormative domesticity and devalued as part of the

binary structures of patriarchy (i.e., emotion/reason; woman/man; body/mind). In addition, in order to address the plight of women, Brown creates two primary male protagonists, Harvard professor Robert Langdon (Tom Hanks)—an expert on religious symbology and handsome “Harrison Ford in Harris tweed” type (9)—and Sir Leigh Teabing (Sir Ian McKellan), a wealthy holy grail expert with a disability. Langdon and Teabing’s efforts to understand the clues left behind by murdered curator, Jacques Sauniere, and expose the truth behind Magdalene and the Holy Grail are thwarted by antagonists, Silas (Paul Bettany), the albino Opus Dei devotee, and Captain Fache (Jean Reno), who believes Langdon is the killer. The main female character is Sophie Neveu (Audrey Tautou), a police cryptographer and granddaughter of the murder victim. Because Sauniere had chosen to leave his final message with Langdon, Sophie<sup>13</sup> helps him escape and then accompanies him as tries to solve the mystery behind her grandfather’s cryptic communication. While the plot revolves around the “truth” about the sacred feminine, men control most of the information and carry out the heroic deeds—in other words, it’s still very much a man’s world. Therefore, Magdalene’s memory is constructed in three ways: how she is spoken about by the other characters, how she is embodied in Sophie Neveu, Magdalene’s supposed heir, and her brief appearance in a flashback scene. Because much work has already been done about the historical accuracy/inaccuracy of Magdalene’s memory provided by both Langdon and Teabing, some of which I discussed earlier, I will focus on Sophie and the flashback scene. By analyzing the film, I will also reveal how her character might be “burned in” to memory.

Sophie Neveu is played by French actress Audrey Tautou, famous for her starring role in 2001's *Amelie*. Tautou has commented that she likes playing strong-minded characters: "I think it's maybe because I'm like that" (imdb.com). However, she refused to go to LA and screen test for the much coveted role in *DVC* despite Howard's insistence. "I didn't see how it could work. I thought this character had my strong-mindedness but it didn't go further than that. And I thought at 27 that I was a bit too young when Ron contacted me. To me, Sophie was older" (imdb.com). But Howard persuaded her to audition, and she landed the part opposite Hanks, twenty years her senior. While critics note Tautou's beauty, they are typically less impressed with her acting in the film. David Ansen, for example, says that "she's been dumbed-down but not warmed up or fleshed out . . . she looks ill at ease" (*Newsweek.com*). Another critic said that "she's given nothing to do except look worried and dismayed" (imdb.com). In other words, she plays the stereotypical female role to the male hero. Certainly, one of Sophie's main functions in the film is to throw Langdon and Teabing softball questions like "I've never heard of that" or "Why did this happen?" or "I don't understand," so that the "experts" can go into long-winded lectures that display their vast knowledge and require her to silently listen. However, because Howard cuts out the romance between Sophie and Langdon depicted in the book, the film creates more tension between the genre expectations of Langdon as the hero and Sophie as his feminine helpmate. Instead of focusing on their romantic chemistry, the film often conveys a more egalitarian collegiality between them, mirroring the kind of interactions that might have taken place between Jesus and Magdalene in her role as spiritual colleague and apostolic leader.

In fact, by studying Sophie more specifically, I was surprised by how much of her agency was located both in her physical and mental fortitude rather than sex appeal or association with Langdon. Although Tautou herself is quite young and petite, Sophie dresses and behaves professionally rather than provocatively. When she enters the Louvre murder scene, she is wearing a classic trench coat, skirt, blue blouse, cardigan sweater, and sensible pumps—the feminine version of Langdon’s sport coat and slacks (no tie). Such wardrobe choices help her to perform a more egalitarian role in solving the mystery. While Hillary Clinton might opt for a sensible pantsuit, Sophie is able to drive the get-away car, traipse across Europe, snoop through historical landmarks, fight off bad guys, and even run through the crowded streets of Paris on foot without falling down once.

Certainly, Langdon and Teabing showcase their mastery of historical knowledge and ability to analyze and theorize scholarly material, as well as intelligently debate contesting hypotheses. Because these “lectures” assume so much time within the narrative and are embodied by the male protagonists, it is easy to overlook Sophie’s contributions. In other words, it’s important not to mistake Langdon and Teabing’s subject-specific pontifications as signs of their superior intellect to Sophie. As feminists like Deborah Tannen and Mary Belenky et al have argued for decades, constructed gender differences play out in how people process and share knowledge. While Sophie tells Langdon that she can’t solve the mystery without him, she demonstrates her expertise and collegiality throughout the movie. In the opening scene at the Louvre, she operates as “the brain.” She devises a way to help Langdon escape without tipping off Captain Fache. Although she often plays the “straight guy” to Langdon’s “expert” with

her questions, she augments his responses with her own insights as they puzzle through clues—Langdon serving as the anagram guy and she as the keystone person. This teamwork requires that she also make some tough decisions. For example, when they go to the bank where the ever-important safety deposit box is kept that requires a specific 10-digit code, Langdon asks her “scrambled” or “unscrambled” in terms of punching in the code based on the clues they’ve amassed at that point. While a wrong choice means their demise, she confidently asserts “unscrambled,” thereby acquiring the keystone and assuring their safe passage.

With the keystone in hand, she lectures Langdon on the history of the devise and shows him how to manipulate the letters. When she spouts off that there are twelve million possibilities to the secret code—obviously doing the math in her head—Langdon says, “I’ve never met a girl who knows that much about cryptics.” Although Langdon is obviously impressed and this scene is designed to depict Sophie’s intellectual status, it also diminishes her expertise. First, the humor of his response is steeped in the notion that women aren’t as smart as men about such matters. Second, he uses the word “girl” instead of woman or police officer. And third, his statement ignores the fact that at the beginning of the movie she was introduced to him as a cryptologist. Therefore, while Brown/Howard created an intelligent and capable female character, Sophie is subject to sexist stereotypes that shape how she (i.e., Magdalene) is represented and thus how she will be remembered.

Despite this previous example, however, for the first half of the movie, Sophie and Langdon function mostly as intellectual partners with few differences ascribed to

their genders. However, about midway through the movie, when Langdon admits that he is “out of his field,” he seeks out Leigh Teabing, *the* expert on the Holy Grail. Once Teabing enters the narrative, Sophie’s intelligence is relegated to the background and she assumes the role of “woman” more overtly. While Teabing recounts the sacred feminine, he constantly refers to Sophie with a patronizing “my dear” and engages in debate only with Langdon. In fact, Daniel Bormann argues that these scenes depict the inherent sexist ideology at play in *DVC*: “The treatment she receives from Teabing, an enthusiast of the sacred feminine, is little more than verbal rape. Building on the Romantic tradition which equates the pursuit of knowledge with rape, her lack of knowledge about the Grail makes Teabing proclaim her a maiden and virgin” in the book” (339). While Sophie continues to insert important questions and responses that complicate and further the film’s arguments, there is really only one moment when Teabing is present that she is able to assert a more pointed comment. As the two experts argue about the historical facts versus interpretations regarding Constantine’s religion and his role in making Jesus divine, Sophie attempts to point out the absurdity of such dichotomies: “Who is God, who is Man?” While she might also add “who is man, who is woman?” within these masculinist diatribes, she attempts to disrupt a binary focus. Furthermore, her interruption helps to move the conversation onto another topic—“The Last Supper” fresco where she also learns, among other things, that Magdalene was never a prostitute.

While regard for Sophie’s intellectual capacities are diminished once Teabing enters the narrative, she asserts her ability to “hang with the boys” in other ways. Sophie, unlike Langdon, rarely appears overly afraid throughout the movie. For example, when

arriving at the American Embassy after their escape from the Louvre, Sophie slams on the brakes, seeing that the place is surrounded by cops. She screeches away backwards, weaving in and out of parked cars and sidewalk patrons for several blocks. As Sophie confidently handles the heroic get-away, the camera cuts back and forth between her steady view and Langdon's terror-ridden expression. When she approaches an oncoming garbage truck, Langdon braces himself, saying "You're not going to make it." She makes it just in time and simply asserts, "We need to get out of sight."

She drives to a seedy part of Paris to a park populated with prostitutes and drug users. As a guy cooks his heroin at a picnic table off the beaten-trail, Sophie approaches him, Langdon following behind her, and flashes her badge. Even though the drug user reacts with hostility, she offers him money and persuades him to leave. The drug addict complies to which Langdon adds, "Did it ever occur to you that that could be dangerous?" She says "no," and tells him they now have a place to think. Even when held at gunpoint, first by the bank manager, then by Silas, and later by Teabing, Sophie remains calm. While some might attribute this calmness-in-the-face-of-danger to poor acting, many of the actions depicted in the film suggest that such a performance is purposeful. When Silas is knocked to the floor after a skirmish with Langdon, Sophie grabs his head and smashes it up and down on the floor before she retrieves the gun and checks on Langdon's well-being. In a later interaction with Silas, Sophie clutches his robe and shakes him, confronting him about whether or not he had killed her grandfather. When Silas replies, "I am the messenger of God," Sophie hauls back and slaps him across the mouth. Towards the end of the film, she refuses to tell Teabing the code despite a gun

threat to both she and Langdon. After Langdon throws the keystone in the air, supposedly destroying the information contained within, Sophie turns the gun on Teabing and his henchmen until the police arrive. In a world where men physically dominate the weak, Sophie remains steady and composed in the face of danger.

Sophie's unruffled resolve in the face of physical danger stems from a strong psychological foundation despite the pain of her past. While she mocks Langdon for acting like a psychologist as he tries to probe her memories about her grandfather, the viewer never gets the impression that she tells Langdon anything she doesn't want to share. Like Magdalene who withstood the insulting dismissals leveled at her by the other disciples, Sophie's mental resilience sustains her throughout the film. Ironically, while Langdon is relied upon for his intellectual expertise, his claustrophobia threatens to undo him throughout the movie. This fear is captured by his reluctance to enter enclosed spaces and how he clenches and rubs his hands in agony once inside a cramped space. While Sophie proclaims that "she [doesn't] much like history [because she's] never seen much good from looking at the past," Langdon experiences traumatic memories of his childhood from when he had fallen in a well. Although Sophie also sifts through flashback memories of her childhood, which I will talk about in greater detail later, they do not threaten to paralyze her. Rather, noting Langdon's suffering while trapped in the back of the armored car, she rubs her hands together and places them on either side of his forehead. As she holds his head in her hands, she shares her traumatic story about how her parents and brother were killed in a car accident. The camera pans to a shot of

Langdon's hands, relaxing, as his face fills with surprise and awe that her technique worked.

While Sophie is presented through the male gaze, slippages occur, specifically when looking at the *mise en scene* of the movie—how each shot can be looked at as an ideological cell, which helps to depict the power relationships between characters as indicated by how they are arranged in space. Because we read from left to right, figures who occupy the right side of the frame or somehow tower over or stand out tonally from the other figure tend to read as dominant (Giannetti 63). Before Teabing triangulates the relationship, Sophie was literally “in the driver’s seat” of the relationship. Often Langdon walks behind her, never really leading her or dragging her along in some physical way. To illustrate, her power and equality are suggested by the scene in the park when she sits on top of the picnic table on the viewer’s right above Langdon—the one she had acquired from the drug addict. In another scene, inside the armor truck, she also sits on a bench on the right above Langdon who squirms nervously on the floor. While they eventually meet each other eye-to-eye after these scenes, the majority of time is spent within these suggestive power arrangements. Subliminally, at least, Sophie embodies as much (if not more) power than Langdon in these potentially dangerous scenarios.

The power dynamics between Sophie and Langdon shift once they arrive at Teabing’s mansion. When Langdon introduces her to Teabing, he kisses her hand. She smiles for the first time in the movie, almost coquettishly. As the men talk, she stands in the background. When Teabing serves them tea at a long table, Langdon sits at Teabing’s right hand as the men start lecturing Sophie about goddesses, how the Priory protected

the great secret that the Grail is not a “magic dish,” and whether or not Jesus was divine. Then as Teabing moves his guests into another room to view Da Vinci’s “Last Supper” reproduction, Teabing shows Sophie how the Grail is represented in the negative space between Christ and the figure on his right, who seems “joined at [his] hip.” Teabing points out the feminine characteristics of this figure, and states that the disciple is Mary Magdalene (not John). Through computer technology, Teabing then moves the figure to Jesus’ left where it looks like Magdalene is adoringly leaning on him. At this point, Sophie, too, is relocated to the left side in her relationship with these men until the end of the movie when she’s reunited with her grandmother at Rosslyn Chapel in Scotland, and Langdon kisses her forehead as they part company. Therefore, despite some interesting filmic choices that grant Sophie some agency, ultimately these memories will be subsumed by film’s more far reaching ideology about women’s sexuality. As a result, the typical viewer will not look for or remember any of these glimpses of Sophie (Magdalene’s) more egalitarian relationships with men.

While Sophie may or may not be Magdalene’s heir, Magdalene as a historical figure is talked about throughout the entire movie. Yet she appears in the flesh—rather than as bones under her sarcophagus—only once in the film. When Teabing and Langdon discuss the Gnostic gospels of Phillip and Mary, along the meaning of *sangreal* (royal blood), Sophie asks how Christ could have a bloodline and then answers her own question: Magdalene was pregnant at the crucifixion. The film goes into flashback, denoted by a washed out, overly lit palate. In a long shot, Magdalene is shown on the left side of the screen, holding her swollen belly as soldiers march across the bridge on horse

back. The viewer doesn't see her face within the space of the shot. The next scene depicts her silhouetted, accompanied by other silhouetted figures as Teabing's voiceover narration indicates the Magdalene fled to France. The scene cuts to a medium shot of a woman standing on blocks, her face—down-turned and amassed in long wavy hair—barely visible. The camera cuts to a close-up of her feet quivering under her white gown. A quick cut to another close-up on her obscured face shows her agony during childbirth and then cuts to a woman kneeling at Magdalene's feet who gathers the newborn daughter. The next shot focuses on Magdalene who hangs her head in exhaustion, her black wavy hair strewn across her face like a mask that hides her features. Another quick shot shows her holding the baby, Teabing's voiceover declaring, "She gave birth to a daughter, Sarah." The whole flashback clocks in at less than a minute.

What struck me most about this scene is how Magdalene's memory is "burned into" our consciousness. Although Magdalene is finally not depicted as a prostitute (repentant or otherwise), nevertheless she remains a body. Not even a specific body, complete with distinguishable facial features or personality traits as imagined by artists throughout the centuries, but a pregnant body enduring both the oppressive forces that threaten to kill her and the agonies of childbirth. She is silent throughout the sequence with Teabing's voiceover narration, her significance located only in her ability to procreate and give birth. In other words, she is depicted as an ends to a means. Although she briefly holds the child, the encounter feels temporary. Instead of reading like a moment of bonding between mother and infant, the shot seems to imply that Magdalene has completed her duty. Like Sophie who was taken in after her parents' death, Sarah,

too, seems almost motherless, sacrificed to some larger cause. While other flashback scenes show Templar Knights kneeling to worship Magdalene's remains and generations of men waging bloodshed over the secret of the *hieros gamos* (sacred marriage), no one seems to recognize anything about Magdalene's *being* other than her ability to produce an heir.

The politics of remembering constitute the core of *DVC*. The movie features a series of memories—both historical reenactments and Sophie's childhood memories. Although the memory of Magdalene constructed on screen does little to convey the intellectual and spiritual relationship she had with Jesus (i.e., contest gendered ideologies that locate women's agency only in their sexuality), the film depicts the rhetorical nature of remembering and the generative capacities of such an approach, especially for oppressed groups. Throughout the film, Sophie demonstrates how rhetorical memory helps her conceptualize that knowledge is dynamic, relational, contextual, and revisionary. As she tries to make new knowledge in order to solve the mystery of her grandfather's coded message and grapple with the information being presented to her about Magdalene and the Grail, memory takes on an epistemological function. Through a series of flashbacks, she re-members details that help her to understand her relationship to her deceased grandfather. For example, the first flashback features a very young Sophie running through a field dotted with red flowers outside of some historic church. While the image is still murky and does not explain much at the time, the same memory, after a series of other childhood flashback scenes, appears again when Sophie and Langdon go to the Rosslyn Chapel in Scotland. At that point, we learn that the Chapel is where the

original memory had taken place. With more information at her disposal, Sophie remembers additional details in the second flashback: As she sifts through material in her grandfather's study, trying to learn more about her deceased family, he scolds her, making her promise not to search for them because they're dead and buried. Sophie promises and runs away through the field. Re-membering these added elements also prompt Sophie to recall another encounter with her grandparents. After she had been sent away to boarding school, she returned unexpectedly to her grandparents' house to find them engaging in sex, which terrified her and caused her estrangement from her grandparents. Now that she can identify what the mysterious pagan figure represents in the sexual encounter she witnessed as a child, the traumatic tenor of the memory subsides.

Once her remembering seems more complete, the mystery is solved: "Sophie," Langdon says, "you are the secret. . . . You are the heir, the end of the bloodline. You are the last living descendant of Jesus Christ." While memory and flashback scenes are standard film conventions, the important relationship between personal and collective memory in *DVC* might imply more than standard Hollywood fare. The fact/fiction disruptions throughout the film help viewers to see how memory is constructed in ways that are both generative and destructive to both the collective and individual memory. Furthermore, through Sophie's experiences, the viewer understands how memory is steeped in power in ways that reinforce subjugations and silences. At the same time, Sophie's rhetorical memory also has the capacity to expose the politics of remembering

so that we can better understand how women like Magdalene are put into discourse and the effect of these memories on individuals and culture.

### **(In)Conclusion**

At the heart of the backlash that circulates around biopic movies like *The Last Temptation of Christ* and *The Da Vinci Code* and the epistemological debates surrounding feminist historiography is the struggle over memory—not only what is remembered, but how it is remembered, by whom, and for what purpose and with a curiosity about the effects that may not be part of the purpose. In other words, how memory is “burned in” to our consciousness in ways that legitimate and perpetuate more “traditional” ways of seeing, knowing, and doing despite our intentions to do otherwise. (De)constructing *LTC* and *DVC* through the lens of rhetorical memory provides a dramatic example of how women’s lives remain extremely vulnerable to oppressive forces that construct memory in ways that serve patriarchal hegemony. Such a critique also opens up the discussion surrounding feminist historiography and truth. Just as Emily Dickinson advocated to “Tell the Truth but tell it Slant,” acknowledging the material realities of our embodied epistemologies, creations, and beliefs, it is important to recognize that truth, like remembering, is a social practice subject to discursive power, a mediated process of (de)/(re)construction rather than a process of retrieval or transcription, or the production of a static object for study. Moreover, within the realities of the “relations of exploitation, domination, censorship, and erasure” (Glenn 389), disenfranchised groups must employ new critical tools that help to expose the promise

and perils of memory's constructed nature within discourses of power. By calling attention to the constructed nature of memory in feminist historiography—both the process and products—we might move beyond unproductive discussions about the “fictive” nature of recovery work. As Morrison demonstrates, when specific bodies of knowledge silence or make invisible the breadth and depth of human existence, it is important to “dwell on the way [memory] appeared and why it appeared in that particular way” (“Memory 385). Such an enterprise provides dimensionality to how we understand the past and future and the narratives we create to share our knowledge. Furthermore, if we reconceptualize memory as constructed, it can not only be *deconstructed* but *reconstructed* as well. And within these (de)/(re)constructed spaces of memory, new truths may emerge that better inform the diversities of our individual and collective histories.

While I have focused on how rhetorical memory provides a powerful critical tool to (de)construct representations of memory in historical texts, *DVC* also hints at the generative aspects of rhetorical memory, which I will take up in Chapter 4. Despite Brown's reliance on gendered ideologies that locate women's power in their reproductive organs rather than intellectual and spiritual fortitude, *DVC* starts to invite more productive discussions that explore the intersections between history, memory, and truth. Through the false dichotomies performed between fact and fiction—in Brown's rhetorical choices as a writer and as depicted through his characters—viewers may be more inclined to heed Langdon's call to “seek the truth.” In doing so, we may start to question our inclination to get entangled in discussions about the kind of “truth”

embedded in “mythical objectivity” that often ignores how memories are put into discourse and their effect on individual and public memory. Just as Maxine Hong Kingston re-members her aunt, and Jarratt and Glenn recover the memory of Aspasia, Sophie, too, devises innovative ways to understand the truth claims about her past, present, and future. Her journey to re-member—to embrace the complexities of how memory is put into discourse and to understand the ramifications of both—offers a means to negotiate the tensions between fact and fiction, history and imagination, and memory as fixed and memory as fluid and context-bound. As *DVC* closes with Sophie’s realization that there is no empirical way to prove that she is the royal descent and a final shot of Magdalene’s tomb buried in a secret chamber underneath the Inverted Pyramid, the viewer is left with more questions than answers. Within these questions—the mysteries of what seems foreign or fictive, outside our own experience, or unknowable—we are prompted to interrogate our beliefs, to cull through the annals of memory, using the critical and generative tools of our imagination and intellects in order to (de)/(re)construct what it is that we need to re-member.<sup>14</sup> And in the re-membering, there is the hope of transformation.

## Notes

1. Susan Jarratt uses what she calls an “intertextual interpretative method” to reconstructing Aspasia. This method allows her to “take ‘Aspasia’ both as a rhetorical construct in Plato’s text and as a real person” and to make a “speculative leap that [allows] scholars to imagine women in relation to the practices of rhetoric, philosophy, and literary production so long considered almost completely the domain of men” (391).

2. Drawing on Toni Morrison’s work and other scholars who theorize memory, I use the term “re-membering” throughout to reflect her concept of memory and coinage of the term “rememory.” In “Memory, Creation, and Writing,” Toni Morrison emphasizes the “re” in remembering and rememory: “Memory is for me always fresh, in spite of the

fact that the object being remembered is done and past” (385). It is the “deliberate act of remembering,” a “form of willed creation” . . . “dwells on the way it appeared and why it appeared in that particular way” rather than to find out what really happened (385). This notion of memory reflects a methodology, a process one undergoes in order to use memory for invention, interpretation, and revision.

3. Laura Mulvey provides a psychoanalytical theorization of gender representation. The cinematic spectacle is a relay of looks *at* the woman—the spectator looks with the camera, which looks at the hero who looks at the woman. The gaze, therefore, is constructed as a masculinized gaze—the subject-position offered by film’s mode of address is masculine. This gaze reproduces the positions of sexual difference or gender. On one hand, the male characters are positioned as the bearer of the look (active eye) in the film story, with the feminine coded as visual spectacle (passive object to be looked at). On the other hand, the look of the spectator is aligned with that of the male character. This gaze creates a gender imbalance, which maintains gendered power relations.

4. For Victor Frankl, a Holocaust survivor and philosopher and psychotherapist, the will to meaning is the basic striving of human beings to find and fulfill meaning and purpose in life.

5. Magdalene scholars differ in explaining why, how, and when these misrepresentations occurred. For example, Antti Marjanen notes that since at least the sixth century, the most common perspective among nonscholars remains the conflated version of Magdalene: “Mary Magdalene, Mary of Bethany (John 12, 1-8), and the anonymous anoiters in Mary 14, 3-9 (Matt 26, 6-13) and Luke 7, 36-50 were one and the same person” (1). Furthermore, since the time of Gregory the Great in the late Middle Ages, this “interpretation gained such a dominant position in the Western Church that those who disagreed with it risked being condemned by the church” (2). Magdalene as wife and mother might be traced to *The Holy Blood and the Holy Grail* by Michael Baigent, Richard Leigh, and Henry Lincoln, the inspiration for Dan Brown’s *The Da Vinci Code*. Given their understanding of the historical-cultural context of the time, the authors argue that Jesus would have been married. Furthermore, given the same context, if Magdalene traveled with Jesus, she must have been his wife because unmarried women could not travel unaccompanied by family (333).

6. In “Film and Popular Memory,” Michel Foucault discusses how “popular” or unofficial memory is often at odds with official histories, as is evident in 1970s French cinema in films that focus on the French Resistance. I also include non-academic work as part of the “popular memory,” especially in the case of Mary Magdalene research. It is clear that historically the academic work done on Mary Magdalene was not trickling down into popular culture or evident in most everyday discourses, including most sermons.

7. Mary Daly's theory of radical feminism relies heavily on "re-membering" as a way to uncover the patriarchal myths that subjugate women. In her analysis of Daly's feminist rhetorical strategies, Ratcliffe argues that Daly envisions "re-membering" as a way to disrupt the kinds of memories that, in Daly's words, "perpetuate the 'cock and bull' story [of] patriarchal history . . . [that] erases the existence and history of women and all Others" (79).

8. In addition to the scholarship I've cited, Amazon.com lists over 15,000 sources related to Mary Magdalene. A few of those include Jean-Yves Leloup's *The Gospel of Mary Magdalene* (2002); Susan Haskin's *Mary Magdalen: Myth and Metaphor* (1995); Bruce Chilton's *Mary Magdalene: A Biography* (2006); *Mary Magdalene* (2003) by Lynn Picknett; and *Mary Magdalene Understood* (2006) by Jane Schaberg and Melanie Johnson-Debrufre. There are also several novels about Magdalene, including *The Woman with the Alabaster Jar: Mary Magdalen and the Holy Grail* (1993) by Margaret Starbird.

9. Some might argue that the directors were bound to the novel's plot line. However, film scholars note that film and literature employ different tools to describe the world or to express a point of view. Furthermore, novels require significant cutting and shrinkage if they are to be recreated within the temporal format of a movie. While these choices about what to include or omit or how the story will be narrated and by whom may be a matter of economics, directors such as Scorsese and Howard have more choices. Therefore, their creative decisions are more significant. As Dudley Andrew argues in "Adaptation," often viewers expect a reproduction of the text, or what Andrew calls "fidelity." However, "transformations" must take place in order to translate one language (literature) into another language film. This process involves interpretation (264-66).

10. *The Da Vinci Code* has garnered much attention from those who want to discredit the ideas suggested by the novel. While I have included some notable scholarship by historians and religious studies professors that explore the concepts and facts presented by the novel, there are numerous other mainstream publications that focus on the "truth" contained in the material: *Breaking the Da Vinci Code: Answers to the Questions Everyone's Asking* (2006) by Darrell Bock; *The Truth Behind the Da Vinci Code: A Challenging Response to the Bestselling Novel* (2004) by Richard Abanes; *The Da Vinci Hoax: Exposing the Errors in The Da Vinci Code* (2004) by Carl E. Olson and Sandra Miesel; *The Da Vinci Code: Fact or Fiction* (2004) by Hank Hanegraaff and Paul Maier; and *The Gospel According to the Da Vinci Code: The Truth Behind the Writings of Dan Brown* (2006) by Kenneth Boa and John Alan Turner. While these sources try to take a more balanced look at the novel, some titles represent more orthodox views, such as *Rejecting the Da Vinci Code: How a Blasphemous Novel Brutally Attacks Our Lord and the Catholic Church* (2005), written by the TRP Committee on American Issues.

11. Much of Minh-ha's work focuses on disrupting the hegemonic nature of genres, categories and labels. Minh-ha's films are characterized by attempts to cross the

genre borders between fiction and documentary, imagination and truth. She says she does not like to categorize her films and instead works to make her ideas less clear or to seek closure.

12. A version of my reading of Mary Magdalene in this film was previously published in “(Re)Presenting Mary Magdalene: A Feminist Reading of *The Last Temptation of Christ*.” It appeared in *The Journal of Religion and Popular Culture* 9 (Spring 2005): [www.usask.ca/relst/jrpc/articles9.html](http://www.usask.ca/relst/jrpc/articles9.html)

13. Unlike the other main characters, Sophie Neveu is always referred to by her first name. I will replicate that reference in my analysis.

14. In addition to the popularity of *The Da Vinci Code*, which has sparked discussion and debate from various perspectives, the efforts of feminist scholars such as Graham, King, Jansen and Schaberg have started to trickle down into popular culture, notably in documentary films that focus on telling the “real story” behind Magdalene’s reputation: *Mary Magdalene: An Intimate Portrait* (1995), Biography’s *Mary Magdalene: The Hidden Apostle* (2000), and *Rediscovering Mary Magdalene: The Making of a Mythic Drama* (2001). In fact, Amazon Books features a Mary Magdalene booklist and other suggested readings for those who want to buy *The Da Vinci Code* and *The Last Temptation of Christ*. Many of these suggestions focus on more historically accurate portraits of Magdalene in both scholarly and popular sources. Movies such as *Sex in a Cold Climate* (1998), a documentary, and *Magdalene Sisters* (2002), have argued for the detrimental consequences that resulted from misrepresenting Magdalene’s memory as a “fallen woman” or symbol of repentance. Mainstream magazines like *Time* have summarized some of the scholarly accounts of Mary Magdalene that challenge her image as prostitute (Van Biema). Even *Tori Amos: Piece by Piece* (2005) features a chapter entitled, “Mary Magdalene: The Erotic Muse,” which focuses on telling “the greatest story never told” (100). This chapter chronicles Amos’ own research into the scholarship on Magdalene in which Amos encourages people to “open up to the Magdalene as a Being, not just as a demeaned prostitute” (59). Furthermore, these kinds of mainstream materials are prompting people to search the Internet for more accurate information. For example, Lesa Belleve operates a Mary Magdalene website that “celebrates the mysteries of the Woman Who Knew All” ([Magdalene.org](http://Magdalene.org)) and keeps readers up-to-date on new resources about Magdalene (popular and scholarly). After the success of her website (she estimates 2000 visitors a day), she published *The Complete Idiot’s Guide to Mary Magdalene* (2005) in an effort to present the public more accurate information about Magdalene’s legacy.

**CHAPTER FOUR: MNEMOSYNE'S TECHNOLOGIES OF SOCIAL ACTION:  
REREADING WHITENESS PEDAGOGIES THROUGH RHETORICAL  
MEMORY**

*Interpretations of the past are always confrontations with arguments of the present.*  
—Steven Mailloux

*For white people, learning to see the world through black eyes might have a radical effect on both their worldview and their politics.*  
—Alison Landsberg

With the advance of new technologies such as the VCR, DVD, video sharing websites, and technology-supported classrooms, film is increasingly prevalent in the writing classroom. In the beginning, film was used as a supplement to writing, a visual aid or another form of a text, such as a film adaptation of a novel. Occasionally, films were used to teach the composing process.<sup>1</sup> However, when composition studies moved away from current-traditional writing pedagogies, the uses of film broadened, especially in the context of social construction and cultural studies. As David Blakesley argues in *The Terministic Screen*, films may be read as an “isolated, substantive, and symbolic form of expression, but also through more general, cultural, psychological, and rhetorical frames, ones that guide interpretation and that shape our understanding of what meanings film make possible” (8). From this perspective, films function as social texts situated within rhetorical, political, psychological, and cultural contexts that require interrogation.

In the wake of multiculturalism, scholars have also theorized the use of film in the writing classroom as a way to grapple with the complex issues of identity, difference, and inequality, particularly in terms of gender, race, social class, and sexuality. Instructors often teach “social problem” films such as *Mississippi Burning*, *Do the Right Thing*,

*Higher Learning*, and *Crash* in order to help students more critically think and reflect on these issues on both personal and social levels. In *Reel to Real: Race, Sex, and Class at the Movies*, bell hooks argues that her students

learned more about race, sex, and class from the movies than from all the theoretical literature I was urging them to read. Movies not only provide a narrative for specific discourses of race, sex, and class, they provide a shared experience, a common starting point from which diverse audiences can dialogue about these charged issues. (2)

Henry Giroux extends the pedagogical dimensions of film beyond the classroom in *Breaking in to the Movies: Film and the Culture of Politics*. While films provide content for writing assignments that help students confront issues of racial formation<sup>2</sup> and analyze *how* a film means something and why, Giroux argues that film's power extends beyond the classroom and functions as "public pedagogy": "Film combines entertainment and politics, . . . [assuming a major educational role in shaping] . . . individual behavior and public attitudes in multiple ways, whether consciously or unconsciously" (6, 11). Subsequently, films do more than reflect society; they also construct it: "Films allow their ideologies to play out pedagogically in a way that a three-minute pop song or a 22-minute sitcom cannot do, and by doing so offer a deeper pedagogical register for producing particular narratives, subject positions, and ideologies" (7). Understanding film as "public pedagogy" locates its power beyond questions of interpretation and meaning. It also provides a lens through which we can interrogate how hegemonic discourses are constructed, how they construct viewers, and how they might be challenged.

While the pedagogical nature of film has the potential to create generative spaces for critique and contestation, because the production and consumption of movies are rhetorical, social acts, they also serve to reproduce dominant ideology in our personal and collective memories. In the previous chapter, I demonstrated the hegemonic effect in my analysis of how representations of Mary Magdalene maintain gendered ideologies that misrepresent and malign her memory. The vulnerability of oppressed groups to the circulation of hegemonic ideologies in films presents many challenges to our writing pedagogies that focus on difference and inequality.

Scholars who write about race/whiteness and film have questioned the effectiveness of using films to teach about race.<sup>3</sup> Drawing on works such as Toni Morrison's *Playing the Dark* and Richard Dyer's *White*, these scholars reveal how whiteness hides in film, reproducing images of whiteness that perpetuate dominance and stereotyped representations. Even when students are engaged with these issues and instructors better understand the challenges and complexities of teaching about race/whiteness using films as texts, whiteness has a long reach. For example, bell hooks reminds us in "Making Movie Magic" that it is important to interrogate films that claim to be progressive and anti-racist to see if they really promote counterhegemonic methods that challenge the conventional structures of domination that uphold and maintain what hooks calls "white supremacist capitalistic patriarchy" (3). Such an interrogation is evident in the *College English* symposium on Paul Haggis' 2006 Academy Award winning film *Crash*, an increasingly popular film to teach in the writing classroom. The movie garnered commercial and critical success and was perceived by many mainstream

critics such as Roger Ebert to be a realistic look at race relations that did not hide behind the “filters of political correctness” (rogerebert.suntimes.com). However, scholars David Holmes, Joyce Irene Middleton, Victor Villanueva and others demonstrate how Haggis’ use of interlocking stories that reveal everyone’s prejudices and a color-blind rhetoric that purports to defuse the power of racism for viewers often, paradoxically, reinforces white supremacy. Critiques such as these remind us of two key factors inherent in antiracist writing pedagogies that use films as texts: First, we need powerful critical tools that help to expose what Victor Villanueva calls the “experiential ignorances,” the “ways in which racism creeps into individual ideologies, into the general hegemony,” which are unintentional or silent yet beget more racist practices that plague our best intentions to address issues of oppression in the writing classroom (qtd. in T. West 216). And second, while film offers a technology that allows viewers to inhabit various social realities and move across time and space, whiteness conceals its power and resists exposure. Therefore, using film to engage students in critical thinking and self-reflection about the politics of representation can be a daunting enterprise.

Focusing on film as public pedagogy also brings up questions of civic engagement, agency, and social transformation. From this perspective, the complexities of using antiracist pedagogies run deeper than acquiring the critical tools to better inform our movie selections and pedagogical approaches designed to empower students to interrogate the representations constructed on screen without reifying the “white gaze.”<sup>4</sup> Recognizing and naming is only the beginning of understanding how hegemony perpetuates racist practices. Consequently, a critical understanding of how race/whiteness

is constructed does not necessarily inspire the kinds of deep-seated changes that might spur students into long-term ethical actions. One of the primary challenges of antiracist pedagogies is how to translate these critical skills into transformational ways of thinking, being, and doing. If racism, as Etienne Balibar argues, is a “mode of thought, . . . a mode of connecting not only words with objects, but more profoundly words with images in order to create concepts” (200), then how can instructors better facilitate change in one’s “mode of thinking?” Moreover, how do instructors account for the ways that racism hijacks one’s bodily and visceral reactions that encompass more than intellectual thought? Given the multidimensionality of racism in our ways of seeing, being, and doing, especially for those who do not share the same social spaces and lived experiences, how do we inspire and empower students to assume and sustain ethical social actions once the course ends? In other words, once racism/whiteness is exposed and deconstructed, what’s next? How do we transform insight into action?

In *Traces of a Stream* Jacqueline Jones Royster traces the problem of ethical social action to our tendency to disregard how the “mind, heart, body, and soul operate collectively” in our personal and professional lives (279). In her analysis of African American women writers, Jacqueline Royster argues that rhetors such as Ida B. Wells, Alice Walker, and Audre Lorde, to name just a few, appeal to a sense of “right action,” which does not get stalled in disembodied reason:

They also appeal to experience, emotion, suffering, and imagination. They center their arguments, not just rationally and ethically, but in the body—in the head, the heart, the stomach, the backbone—in the interest,

apparently, of inducing not just an intellectual response but a holistic one, that is, a whole-body involvement. The goal seems often to be quite literally to ‘move’ the audience. (68)

This kind of holistic rhetorical approach puts the reader/audience “on alert,” “compelled to participate in positive action” against an injustice (69). Royster’s work challenges us to explore different ways to invoke the kind of holistic understanding of oppression and inequality represented in the production and consumption of films, especially when, as Cornel West argues, “the fight against white supremacy,” has never been a priority for the vast majority of white people in this country” (176).

I believe that a more significant “consubstantial space” that invites “interpretative intervention” across differences that may inspire and sustain social action can be realized by exploring the critical, embodied, and generative elements of rhetorical memory. While in Chapter Three I focused on how rhetorical memory helps to deconstruct how something is remembered, by whom, and for what purpose, in this chapter I want to look at how those constructed memories can be replaced and revised. In other words, once our critical tools unmask how hegemonic memories are put into discourse, what might we do next in order to take action? The types of public appeals to “experience, emotion, suffering, and imagination” that Royster portrays are often based on memories that a community shares that move their response beyond a mere intellectual understanding of ethics and social responsibility. Edward Casey calls these communal spaces that focus on action “public memory”:

Memory that occurs in the open, in front of and with others, as distinct from concepts like ‘collective memory’ or ‘social memory.’ These public memories are those about which we can interact, deliberate, share. . . . [They] serve as a horizon within which a public finds itself, constitutes itself, and deliberates its own existence. . . . [Public memory] becomes a realm within which we act together. (qtd. in Phillips 4)

However, public memory is not a homogeneous entity. How do we share and invoke public memory(s) if the audience members do not consider themselves stakeholders in the cultural and historical specifics of a memory or a group’s memory of memory? More specifically, how might whites who do not have memories of slavery or racist/ethnic oppressions muster and maintain the kind of passion and persistence necessary to think and act more ethically to address these issues?

In this chapter, I provide a very brief overview of whiteness pedagogies and film, focusing on the critical tools used to uncover whiteness and racist stereotypes. Then I explore how rhetorical memory augments whiteness pedagogies that use film texts in order to create more multidimensional critical and generative tools that prompt social action. I also look at the argument made by Alison Landsberg, who has coined the term “prosthetic memory” to describe the way mass media technologies of memory enable individuals to experience public memories as personal regardless of their social locations. I next demonstrate how I would incorporate rhetorical memory into my own approach to teaching and talking about racism/white privilege in a basic writing course, including classroom activities and writing assignments. I argue that by incorporating rhetorical

memory into the writing classroom that uses film texts, teachers are better able to invoke the kinds of holistic appeals that augment the goals of whiteness pedagogies and break down some of the inherent problems of organizing around identity categories of difference and subjective experience that often halt “right action.”<sup>5</sup>

### **Whiteness Pedagogies and Film**

While rhetoric and composition studies have focused a great deal of attention on exploring differences and inequalities in terms of race and ethnicity, until the 1990’s whiteness remained mostly invisible as a social construct (Kennedy, Middleton, and Ratcliffe). In *Playing in the Dark*, Toni Morrison confronts this discrepancy, arguing that whiteness is a race that needs to be examined. As a racial category, whiteness functions simultaneously as nothing (invisible) and everything (normal), coloring the way we think about knowledge, the pedagogies we create, our assumptions about our agency as scholars, writers, and teachers, and the ways we analyze and present our scholarship. Whiteness has been said to operate as cultural norm (Keating), trope (Ratcliffe), strategic rhetoric (Nakayama and Krizek), “white” frame of reference (Anzaldúa; Lunsford), organizing paradox (Dyer), disciplinary absent presence (Prendergast), performance (Warren), and enthymematic hegemony (Jackson) that conceals power and resists exposure. Certainly, whiteness scholarship, indebted to more than a century of work by writers and scholars of color, has helped to name and expose how whiteness (white privilege/white supremacy) shapes our discourses and rhetorical practices so that scholars and students might “rethink the ways in which individuals and groups construct identity, administer power, and make sense of their everyday lives” (Nakayama and Krizek 291).

However, despite rhetoric and composition scholars' contributions to whiteness theory in the last decade, white supremacy maintains its hegemonic stronghold.

Using films as key texts in the writing classroom offer students a way to critically engage their daily lives, as well as enrich their critical skills and understanding of race/ethnicity/whiteness issues—a kind of literacy that is both academic and self-reflexive. In a word, a kind of approach that is holistic. Furthermore, mainstream movies, produced for a diverse and broad audience, also serve as the great equalizer among teachers, students, and the world outside. In fact, movies may provide “one of the few mediums left that enables conversations that connect politics, personal experiences, and public life to larger social issues” (Giroux, *Breaking 7*). In short, students are often less resistant to studying and writing about movies because they already possess a level of interest and competency for interpreting and discussing them.

Scholars who write about whiteness and film in the classroom focus on two key aspects of pedagogy that facilitate such critiques: First, pedagogies must be designed to unveil how whiteness hides in movies, both in terms of the film's grammar (mise en scene, cinematic style, narrative structure, character types, editing) and how these elements reproduce images of whiteness that perpetuate dominance and affect the ways we see difference and inequality (Bernardi; Dyer; Fiske; Foster; Gaines; and Willis). And second, the pedagogy needs to help students understand how stereotyped representations offer multiple and negotiable readings, especially how actors of color negotiate whiteness in order to acquire agency within the film's context (Bogle; Collins; Diawara; Pough; and Shohat and Stam;). In *Shaded Lives: African-American Women and Television*, Beretta

Smith-Shomade argues that whiteness, especially unacknowledged whiteness, connects “intimately” with representation. It reigns as a “controlling, dominating, patriarchal, standard-bearing ideology that regulates visual production, influences viewer consumption, and exists without notice or name” (31). Whiteness functions as one of the shorthand devices that enables stories to be told in 90 minutes. And because it is invisible to most whites, it does not get the kinds of analysis that are given to other shorthand devices used in film, such as voiceover narration for exposition. As such, it is important to read films within both contexts, locating the silences of whiteness that define and perpetuate our notions of self/other, oppressor/oppressed and witnessing moments of counterhegemonic resistance.

Giroux, hooks, and Ray’s work offer important examples that embody this first approach to writing about whiteness in film. In “The Politics of Pedagogy, Gender, and Whiteness in *Dangerous Minds*,” Giroux demonstrates that rather than regard *Dangerous Minds* (1995) as a story about an idealistic English teacher who attempts to reach inner-city students who have not been served by the educational system, it is important to analyze how the movie perpetuates racist stereotypes while maintaining the heroic enterprise of white colonialism. The teacher, LouAnne Johnson (Michelle Pfeiffer), a divorced ex-Marine is portrayed as civilized, rational, and educated while the Latino and Black students are violent, vulgar, and criminal until she “saves them.” Giroux argues that rather than dismiss the film for these issues, it may be used pedagogically, offering “white students an opportunity to engage with a popular text that embodies much of what they generally learn (or mislearn) about race without putting their own racial identities on

trial” (158). bell hooks, who like Giroux also regards film as public pedagogy, focuses on films that are supposedly “progressive” and race-sensitive to reveal how whiteness operates. In “Seduction and Betrayal,” hooks focuses on the incongruity between the intention of a film and how it might be received and interpreted if whiteness is exposed. *The Bodyguard* (1992), for example, was supposed to point to a new trend in Hollywood where an interracial romance developed between two big-name celebrities (Kevin Costner and Whitney Houston). While much of the publicity centered on how the remake of this film broke the racial barriers that had plagued Hollywood, hooks argues that film reifies the racial status quo: the African American female protagonist was still stereotyped as an oversexed, sexually aggressive “ho,” a representation that has persisted throughout Hollywood’s film history.

More recently, in “*Crash* or How White Men Save the Day, Again,” Sangeeta Ray explains how she gave up on using *Crash* as a multicultural text in her classroom. Her white students’ discomfort with the portrait of the two white cops but their denial about how the other characters were more stereotyped in terms of race/ethnicity and gender convinced her that the film “works best as a teaching tool if we focus on the film’s construction of whiteness, and its inextricable connections to ‘otherness(es)’” (351). By exposing how whiteness maintains unequal power dynamics between characters and their representations, these scholars maintain that such an approach helps to combat a color-blind rhetoric of equality and reinforce a more realistic vision of oppression and racism in America today. In the process, they hope that when white

students recognize white hegemony, they will engage in ethical social actions that seek to address these inequities.

While locating and naming whiteness in films is critical, it is also important to look beyond the links of whiteness and representation. Scholars who focus on the second area warn about the limits of character- or stereotype-centered analysis and theories of spectatorship that ignore how actors of color resist the “othering” apparatus of whiteness. In *Check It While I Wreck It: Black Women, Hip-Hop Culture, and the Public Sphere*, Gwendolyn Pough argues that “spectacle becomes key; one has to be seen before one can be heard. Spectacle and cultural representation . . . are the first steps in creating a disruption, the first steps in bringing wreck” (21). Historically, “bringing wreck” has marked moments of “disruptions that somehow shifted the way Black people were viewed in the society at large. Bringing wreck does not always change the world, but it is capable of making small and meaningful differences” (77).<sup>6</sup> Within the spaces of filmmaking, a vicious cycle emerges. One has to be heard before s/he can create more accurate representations of his/her community. However, to get this opportunity, oppressed groups often have to pitch movies that use stereotyped representations that will be marketable to white audiences. Therefore, while whiteness pedagogies give students the tools to recognize stereotyped representations and white hegemony, it is important not to dismiss these films or the performances by actors of color who play these parts. Instead, our pedagogies must help students to dig deeper into the complexities of racism and white hegemony in order to recognize, as Maria Lugones puts it, that people who are oppressed exist in “two realities: one of them has the logic of resistance and

transformation; the other has the logic of oppression. But, indeed, these two logics multiply and encounter each other over and over in many guises” (12).

In “Stereotype, Realism, and the Struggle Over Representation,” Ella Shohat and Robert Stam provide a useful approach to analyzing spectacle and moments of “bringing wreck.” They argue that it is important to examine images of a social group beyond what are “positive” or “realistic” character and plot representations and to look at performances beyond the stereotypes embodied. It is not enough to say race/whiteness is constructed. We also have to ask: Constructed for whom, and in conjunction with which ideologies and discourses? And how are these constructions mediated within the film environment (e.g., narrative structure, genre conventions, and cinematic style)? One important element of film to examine is casting, which is an “immediate form of representation” (189). Because it is generally assumed that films are more economically viable if they feature a star who has “universal” appeal (i.e., white), people of color are often limited to race-specific types of roles while whites may assume a range of roles, including playing ethnic characters. Yet even when actors of color are cast in roles originally earmarked for white actors (e.g., Denzel Washington in *Pelican Brief*) or when they are cast “correctly” in order to represent their communities (e.g., American Indians in westerns), the political, economic, and aesthetic dimensions often undercut any gains made. At the same time, these actors often subvert the stereotypes of the role, resisting or revealing “some unique quality . . . that audiences immediately respond to” (196). Therefore, after looking at the critical tools gained by both approaches to using film to expose whiteness and racist representations, which are densely complex, contradictory,

and resistant to any semblance of either/or thinking, it is easy to understand how multiculturalism failed in many ways. It is also clear that integrating film into the writing classroom that focuses on difference and inequality requires a keen appreciation of the myriad of contexts that provide for richer, more varied, and resistant readings.

The 2003 movie *Bringin' Down the House* (*BDTH*) offers a stellar example of how both approaches to reading and writing about whiteness in film might be utilized, which I explore in “Straight Trippin’ in the White Imagination.” In that essay, I offer a reading of this film and its usefulness for the study of whiteness. Here I focus on how *BDTH* could function in a writing class. In this comedy, a divorced, uptight workaholic attorney meets an intelligent, blonde woman in an online chat room. When they meet face-to-face for the date, he finds out that she has just escaped from prison and wants his help to clear her name. Students can critically read the film on two levels—both in terms of how race/whiteness is represented and constructed in the film and how the African American character (Queen Latifah) disrupts these stereotypes through her performance and agency in the filmmaking enterprise as both actor and executive producer. Writing students can use their research skills to unearth the contextual dynamics at play, the backstory of the film, in order to better understand and articulate how whiteness permeates all aspects of production, distribution, and reception while it maintains its invisibility. In terms of genre, the film is a big-budget entertainment comedy that relies on fairly standard narrative structures. In the beginning, the film plot sets up a typical romantic comedy where the two protagonists must overcome their differences in order to be together. However, it quickly moves into another genre because “race” is the

difference that cannot be overcome, at least between Peter (Steve Martin) and Charlene (Queen Latifah). The film strays from this romantic comedy (interracial romance) premise when Peter “rejects” Charlene after their face-to-face meeting, declaring that she is not “universally cute” (read white). Then the movie replaces the romantic comedy genre with a more generic “outsider” theme, positioning the storyline between two distinct worlds (white versus black; rich versus poor) where coexistence remains impossible steeped in such “innate” differences. Once the film establishes that it is *not* a “romantic comedy,” the stereotypical nature of Charlene’s character is foregrounded by associating her with criminality and violence and through the construction of stereotyped mammy/jezebel roles.

While it is important for students to recognize the intersections between white hegemony and stereotyped representations, it is also important to examine the agency gained and subverted by the casting of Queen Latifah as both the lead and as executive producer of the film. Queen Latifah’s crossover success depends on creating representations that mirror dominant stereotypes (hooks, *Reel 58*). However, that doesn’t mean her agency within the film is squelched. Because casting provides a very tangible point of analysis, it is essential that our writing pedagogies help students analyze and communicate how performers of color subvert the roles forced on them. When Queen Latifah was cast as a headliner in what is arguably a stereotypical role in a big-budget film, divergent perspectives about racial relations and the gains of African-Americans in the Hollywood system naturally emerge. However, as Stuart Hall reminds us, identity is constituted “not outside but within representation” and invites us to see film “not as a

second-order mirror held up to reflect what already exists, but as that form of representation which is able to constitute us as new kinds of subjects and thereby enable us to discover who we are” (714). Because Queen Latifah performs a “proud black woman” persona in a variety of film and TV roles, she complicates the film’s reliance on racist representations just by appearing on the screen. She also confuses issues of identification, especially for the white viewer. Throughout the film, regardless of race, gender, or class, the typical viewer identifies with Charlene who embodies a hip, smart, young, persona rather than the upper-class, uptight, middle-aged Peter. At the same time, white hegemony emerges again. Because Steve Martin’s character is lampooned, white audiences often think movies like *BDTH* are progressive because they make fun of stereotypes in the guise of equal-opportunity offending. Furthermore, they are more inclined to believe it is acceptable to reproduce these stereotyped representations of African-Americans because of Queen Latifah’s behind-the-scenes role. Students can also examine how the film was received by various critics and audiences in terms of the racial dynamics and the gains made (or lost) by Latifah for the African American community through this project.

While *BDTH* is hardly a classic film, it provides a text that warrants very complex readings from which to write about how whiteness operates and how it is resisted. After their critical readings of the film and various discussions, students are better equipped intellectually to write about complexities of race/whiteness and other social categories in America by addressing some of the following issues from the film: how Queen Latifah’s performance in *BDTH* is “bringing wreck” to the realities of

Hollywood's capital system; how her performance disrupts some of the prevailing images of African-American women, augments her power capital in Hollywood, and potentially opens up new spaces of agency for herself and other African-American artists; how her performance opens up new spaces of resistance and change in a system that (re)produces stereotyped representations and appropriates black culture; how the film, when read through the lens of whiteness, forces many viewers to question their assumptions about racist representations and provides avenues for resistant readings; and how agency remains blanketed in whiteness, a paradox within which African-American women are admired and demonized, valued and sabotaged, consumed and discarded. Because students initially regard the movie as a comedy that seems like benign entertainment, they quickly learn that even big-budget films like these possess pedagogical power and warrant further study. By combining whiteness pedagogies and the study of film in the writing classroom, students develop some of the critical tools they need to see behind the ruse of "color-blind" rhetorics, recognizing how many mainstream films reinforce white hegemony and racist representations, as well as implore resistant readings among various audience groups.

### **Whiteness Pedagogies and Rhetorical Memory**

Arguably, the marriage of whiteness pedagogies and film in the writing classroom provide some very powerful discussions and critiques about important social issues. By better understanding how whiteness is structured and maintains oppressive social relations, students also have the opportunity to "rewrite" whiteness in order to better challenge these struggles. However, are recognition and awareness about racism and

white privilege enough? Even though we're empowering students to be critical agents, "resisting spectators" to the media images that bombard their daily lives, and better able to communicate more effectively about complex social issues, I believe our writing pedagogies can do more to attend to the emotional dynamics that shape student interpretations and their ability to navigate these public and personal complexities more effectively.

In "Ideological Critique in Rhetoric and Composition," Gary Olson argues that rhetoric and composition scholars do exceptional work in empowering students to shape the future by helping them learn to engage in ideological critique. However, despite the ground-breaking work done in this area, Olson surmises that "most scholars, at least tacitly, treat ideology as simply a cognitive phenomenon—as a web of ideas, assumptions, values, ways of seeing the world and so on; few include the role of emotions or the affective dimension in the workings of ideology" (86). In addition, few scholars include the role of the body in discussions of ideology despite the insights of French feminists such as Kristeva and Irigaray who want to challenge the mind/body dualism of Western thought. While French feminists have been criticized for maintaining an essentialist view of women's bodies, there also seems to be a reluctance to engage the more "subjective" aspects of epistemology that underscore racism. Racism is a "mode of thought" but it is more than that. Racism is also a bodily and visceral reaction that exists beyond the "rational." Furthermore, ignoring the emotional and bodily dimensions of the ideologically-based components inherent in whiteness pedagogies often short-circuits the insights gained from the course that sustain student motivation to challenge various social

injustices. As Laura Micciche writes in “Emotion, Ethics, and Rhetorical Action,” “ethical and rhetorical action is motivated by . . . a judgment that not only emerges from reasoned deliberation but also from experience and belief and feeling about what is right, what is just” (168-9). This “feeling” component of “right action” has often been ignored in whiteness pedagogies in favor of focusing on more systemic issues that bypass explorations of individual “white guilt” that tend to stall the conversation and keep the focus, once again, on white folks. While we certainly don’t want to return to an uncritical focus on writing about individual moments of “white guilt” or prejudices that overlook how racism/white hegemony is steeped in a myriad of political, social, and historical contexts, we also need to be more willing to help students navigate the emotional realities of recognizing the oppressor in one’s self/selves despite our best intentions to be kind and fair and just in the world. James Golden and Richard Rieke pose the relationship of oppression and emotion this way: “Is racism/white supremacy a problem of persuasion or psychiatry? . . . [Can any intellectual understanding overcome] the defense mechanisms of denial, silence, and innocence that circumscribe and sustain the social and psychological privileges of whiteness” (qtd. in McPhail 45)? Given the persistence of racism and white hegemony in a variety of personal and public spaces, Golden and Rieke’s argument is compelling.

A few rhetoric and composition scholars have taken up the issue of emotion,<sup>7</sup> exploring the more forgotten appeal of pathos in our epistemologies. Lynn Worsham, for example, recognizes the “schooling of emotion” as central to ideology and pedagogy in her breakthrough article “Going Postal: Pedagogic Violence and the Schooling of

Emotion.” Later in “Coming to Term: Theory, Writing, Politics” she continues this argument adding that “emotion . . . is perhaps *the* key political and rhetorical category” that rhetoric and composition scholars must address in their writing pedagogies (emphasis in the original 105). I quote her argument at length:

Ideologies of gender, race, class, and sexuality are properly understood, at least in large part, as ideologies of emotion; they provide the conditions in which a primary affective mapping of the individual psyche occurs, one that sets the stage for all subsequent socialization. . . . Racism is not only the result of ‘incorrect’ thinking that can be remedied through, say, multicultural education; rather, racism is first and foremost a profound fear and loathing of the racialized other. It is an affective relation between self and other that runs much deeper than cognitive understanding, and it signifies the absence of the kind of reciprocity that originates in empathy as a disposition (both affective and ethical) to ‘feel along with’ and ‘live alongside’ the other. Through a focus on emotion, we can begin to see that the strongest and subtlest appeal of any given ideology is through emotion, that ideology works most effectively through emotion to interpellate us as particular kinds of subjects who ideally are not disposed . . . to question or sustain resistance to the structures of subordination through which we are constituted as subjects. (105-06)

Worsham’s linking of emotion and ideology establishes a solid foundation from which to better articulate why racist representations and white hegemony persist and how the

emotional component might be better addressed in our writing pedagogies. If we continue to approach identifying and disrupting social inequities by implementing critical tools that mostly appeal to our intellectual understandings, we are ignoring the holistic elements of knowledge. Students need to not only understand the ideologies that shape the dynamics between self(s) and other(s), but also how to change those dynamics. In other words, our whiteness pedagogies need to account for a more generative view of agency in which emotions are a principal component.

At the most fundamental level, the recapitulation of ideology is rooted in memory—what is remembered, by whom, for what purposes, and how these memories are put into discourse in ways that create what we perceive as “reality” (or lies) that shape our perceptions of self(s) and other(s). Memory is also at the heart of identity (individual, cultural, national), shaping our desire and ability to think, feel, and act in certain ways. Subsequently, memory is the foundation from which “right action” and transformation emerge. It is also the source of oppressive ideologies. Furthermore, while scholars in various disciplines have taken up the issue of race/ethnicity and memory explicitly (e.g., Morrison, Villanueva, Eves), whiteness pedagogies in rhetoric and composition seem to ignore this connection for white folks. As a result, whiteness pedagogies do little to address the normative function of white racial identity that recapitulates white supremacy-based memories that circulate within white communities and between generations.

Many writing instructors who use progressive pedagogies lament the incongruence between students understanding oppressive hegemony, for example, and

being able to recognize it in their own thinking and actions (Ellsworth; R. Miller).

Furthermore, even if students do recognize certain ideologies, it is difficult to sustain resulting transformational and ethical social actions once the course ends. In essence, students often “forget” the power of ideology to shape the way we see and do and how it diverts our attention in the guise of appearing normal or natural. In

*Pilgrimages/Peregrinajes: Theorizing Coalition against Multiple Oppressions*, Maria Lugones explains why the disjunction between understanding and doing persists, making the connection between memory, emotions, whiteness, and “right action” this way:

Perceiving oneself as an oppressor is harder to sustain morally than deception. There is often a lapse, a forgetting, a not recognizing oneself in a description, that reveals to those who perceive multiply that the oppressor is in self-deception, split, fragmented. . . . The oppressor can be seen to inhabit multiple realities all in the first person. As a self-deceiving multiple self, the oppressor does not remember across realities. Self deception lies in this disconnection of memory. (14)

Lugones’ description of the memory dynamics at play when exploring self/other relationships reminds us of the need to accommodate the emotional aspects both inherent in the recognition of whiteness as well as the investment in denying its oppressive elements. Therefore, while the intersections between whiteness pedagogies and film empower writing students with critical tools of analysis, the potential of this pedagogical approach is not fully realized when we don’t account for the embodied nature of ideology, ethical action, and transformation that construct memory. As such, we need to

augment whiteness pedagogies with a focus on rhetorical memory that better helps students not only locate and remember hegemonic discourses/practices, but also to sustain the memory of their social consciousness in order to disrupt these inequities after the writing course ends.

Rhetorical memory—the process and products of remembering, or “re-memory” to use Morrison’s term—augments whiteness pedagogies by opening up spaces in which students can explore how memory has been constructed by ideology and the intersections between the private and public dimensions of memory. Just as Foucault argues that counter-memory, remembering the past differently, is required for resistant political practices, rhetorical memory provides some of the critical and generative tools necessary for such individual and social transformations.<sup>8</sup> Thinking about memory rhetorically helps students to conceptualize knowledge as dynamic, relational, contextual, and revisionary rather than fixed. Reconceiving memory as rhetorical also foregrounds the emotional aspects of our ways of knowing, seeing, being, and doing. Furthermore, while it is important to acknowledge the constructed nature of memory, it is equally important to honor the representations of self(s) and other(s) through which memory speaks. Rhetorical memory helps to account for how an individual’s memory, while fragmentary and constructed, offers a site to investigate *how* the memory was remembered/forgotten and how various memories compete with other memories (discourses) in order to be written. In turn, these memories may be (re)/(de)constructed, providing a generative function that is linked to agency.<sup>9</sup>

Films provide a technology of rhetorical memory. When students are asked to examine the ways memories are recovered and validated in individual, cultural, and public texts, both in terms of hierarchies of discourses and the politics of remembering, they are more empowered to recognize that the ideology of representation, like remembering, is a mediated social practice of encoding and decoding. However, using films as a technology of rhetorical memory moves students beyond a cognitive understanding of social inequities and injustices. Films appeal to the emotions, revealing both the generative and destructive effects of their construction. Such constructions have profound results on both individual and public memory, which Robert Burgoyne explains this way: “Film, in effect, appears to invoke the emotional certitude we associate with memory. Like memory, film is associated with the body; it engages the viewer at the somatic level, immersing the spectator in experiences and impressions that, like memories, seem to be ‘burned in’” (2). Furthermore, the sensory nature of film, like good descriptive prose, has a profound impact on the viewer, deriving its power through affect. Renowned Russian filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein argues that the unique nature of the cinema is that it produces the “synchronization of the senses” that allow the filmmaker to converse with his/her audience on a higher, deeper, and subtler level of communication, replicating the multidimensional epistemologies of lived experience (69). In turn, the viewer’s experiences with a film both consciously and unconsciously shape his/her memory and ways of seeing (or not seeing) oneself and the world. Psychologist Rachel Herz explains that when information is taken in through the senses, it is processed by the thalamus and stored in memory, providing the language for consciousness (qtd. in Lehrer

80). From this perspective, analyzing and writing about difference and inequality in films provides an embodied experience for students, appealing to their cognitive, affective, and sensory understanding of these complex issues. As such, the insights gained from studying and writing about these films produces a heightened effect because these experiences register more profoundly in memory.

The generative aspects of using films as a technology of rhetorical memory to appeal to students' cognitive and emotional ways of understanding difference and inequality offer even more profound possibilities for change. Rhetoric and composition scholar Alice Brand provides an excellent overview of memory and the brain, specifically rejecting Descartes' dualism and "cognitive scientists' [insistence] that intellectual enterprises have sovereignty over emotion" (201). The limbic system (e.g., hippocampus and amygdala) is of particular interest to rhetorical memory as it relates to personal or autobiographical memory. Brand's research into brain underscores how the embodied nature of memory provides an important bridge between body and mind, especially in terms of teaching writing where the historic attention to academic logos has created an unfortunate gap for many students who bring a wide variety of literacies to the university. Her research also highlights the flexibility and plasticity of neural activities that create new connections and understandings about the rhetorical nature of our personal memories. In short, how memory supports transformation. By understanding that the limbic system, like the rhetorical situations in which films circulate ideologies that construct our memories, is a system of choices about what gets stored and the strength

with which it gets stored, we might better understand how rhetorical memory provides a platform on which critical consciousness might be realized and revised.

Because memory is rhetorical, it can be (re)/(de)constructed, which is a powerful tool for whiteness pedagogies that use film texts in the writing classroom. In *Bright Air, Brilliant Fire*, Gerald M. Edelman, a neurologist and Nobel-laureate, argues that the brain's configuration is not fixed. It is constantly modified, meaning the brain is adaptive and open-ended rather than programmed. Subsequently, memory is an open system where interactions between the mind and body and individual and social worlds create and revise meanings. Edelman's "neural Darwinism" not only "rescues mind from the dilemmas of philosophical dualism," as James McConkey writes, it also "shows how memory—that 'key element in consciousness'—is connected with intentionality, enabling us (within limits) to have the freedom to determine our future" (47). This ability to envision a different future is especially important to whiteness pedagogies, if we think of rhetorical memory as providing a tool and process for understanding and combating hegemonic oppressions. Just as Foucault argues in "Film and Popular Memory" that remembering can "reprogram" popular memory (92), John Eakin believes that remembering has the potential to transform not only identity(s) but memory as well (18-9). In his memoir writing, Marcel Proust famously rejected any notion that our memories are representational: "Because every memory is full of errors, there is no need to keep track," he said (qtd. in Lehrer 82). While Sigmund Freud created psychoanalytic theory based on the dishonesty of memory, neuroscience was slow to explore "how the act of remembering might alter memory" (83). However, Proust recognized the transformative

potential inherent in the malleability of memory. Because memories are full of errors, they can be (re)vised just like the sentences Proust so painstakingly changed over and over in his manuscripts (85). If whiteness pedagogies are to engage and sustain social/ethical action, rhetorical memory must be at the core of its praxis. Students need the critical tools to uncover multiple selves and learn to recognize racism and white hegemony often (un)seen in dominant representations that construct their memories. Moreover, once the constructed ideologies of these memories are recognized, students must be empowered to disrupt and rewrite the hegemonic memories imposed on them by dominant discourses that circulate the notion there is nothing else worth remembering. Therefore, the pedagogical project I am advocating for must include both an intellectual and emotional processing of complex issues that empower students to recognize whiteness, revise stereotypes, and create community across identities that may be perceived as antagonistic or unfamiliar. It also provides students a critical space for what John Schilb calls “rhetorical refusals”—a way to recognize how rhetors are defying their audience’s expectations in ways that point to undue privilege of authority, the ownership of truth, and the illusory divide between public and private lives. Such a project is forged at the intersections among whiteness pedagogies, film, and rhetorical memory.

While mainstream films recapitulate normative identities (whiteness, maleness, heterosexuality), they also allow audiences to “experience” unfamiliar memories and create new ones communally. Movies allow what Maria Lugones terms “world traveling,” a way to cross identity borders and see into other people’s worlds (12). This kind of traveling or border crossing echoes Aristotle’s notion that drama enables people

to experience pity and fear and thus experience imaginatively an understanding and catharsis that they don't have to experience physically. It also enables audiences to engage with different subject positions in order to open up more possibilities for productive discussions about, across, and within differences, so that, as Jacqueline Royster argues, communication becomes a matter of talking with members of other social groups rather than "for" or "about" or "around" them ("First Voice"). This concept of traveling or crossing boundaries of difference means is that memories don't have to be based on actual experience; they can be passed across boundaries of difference represented in movies. In *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture*, Alison Landsberg refutes the postmodern negativity towards memory and its links to nostalgia and commodification. Instead, she wants to redeem the generative qualities of mass technologies arguing that films have the capacity to "create shared social frameworks for people who inhabit . . . different social spaces, practices, and beliefs" (8). In turn, viewers are "invited to take on memories of a past through which they did not live" (8) in order to "generate new courses of action in the present" (45). In effect, movies have the potential to implant new memories because they can cause real emotional experiences of empathy and affect in the viewer. She calls these technologically produced memories "prosthetic":

[Prosthetic memories are] not natural, not the product of lived experience . . . but are derived from engagement with a mediated representation; [they], like an artificial limb, are actually worn on the body . . . and often mark a trauma. . . . [Their] interchangeability and exchangeability [make them]

feel real, [and] help condition how a person thinks about the world and might be instrumental in articulating an ethical relation to the other. [In addition], prosthetic memories . . . produce empathy and social responsibility as well as political alliances that transcend race, class, and gender. (20-21)

However, prosthetic memory is not about individual subjectivity. Like rhetorical memory, prosthetic memories are “neither purely individual nor entirely collective but emerge at the interface of individual and collective experience. They are privately felt public memories” that are “portable, fluid, and nonessentialist” (18-19), and “affect people both intellectually and emotionally in ways that might ultimately change the way they think and how they act in the world . . . to bring about social justice” (154).

While Landsberg’s notion of “prosthetic memory” is conceptually powerful, she also acknowledges that prosthetic memories do not automatically guarantee social ethical action. The viewer may not know how to act ethically in response to the prosthetic memory. S/he may not choose to take on the responsibility or s/he might *forget* the affective response to the prosthetic memory. And certainly, there is a huge difference between living in Compton and watching characters from Compton in *Boys in the Hood*. While prosthetic memory cannot assure a worldview like Jean-Paul Sartre’s “I am responsible for myself and everyone else” (18), its generative qualities bring the process and products of memory into focus so that students can better intellectually and affectively engage with difficult subjects that exist in various contexts. In short, the odds are increased that transformation may occur if students have close, emotional, even

bodily connections with memories that are not authentically their own. This is especially true for white students whose memories (individual and social) are shaped by white hegemony.

Furthermore, for prosthetic memory to work best, it is crucial that rhetorical memory augment our writing pedagogies. Because rhetorical memory provides both critical and generative tools that facilitate emotional and cognitive responses, students are more inclined to ask “what next” after recognizing oppressive ideologies that maintain white supremacy and racist representations because they are more invested in the memory of the memory.<sup>10</sup> As I’ve shown in previous chapters, rhetorical memory empowers students to investigate how memory is put into discourse and shaped by power and ideology. It compels them to work from the simultaneous space of private and public, revealing the infinite intersections that produce multiple memories and histories. It also helps students negotiate the distances perceived between self/other, fact/fiction, past/present, tapping into the power of memories, like film, to render “absolute truth” or authenticity of experience less important than the will to take “right action.” Just as Maxine Hong Kingston and Toni Morrison reveal the blurring of the lines between fact and fiction, especially with oppressed groups, rhetorical memory augments whiteness pedagogies in a way that provides a new kind of literacy for students. Augmenting whiteness pedagogies that use film with rhetorical memory reveals the malleability and conceptual nature of memory and how our memories are (re)/(de)constructed in ways that shape our knowledge of the past, as well as our ability to revise and imagine a better future. Instead of focusing only on external critiques of what a movie means, and merely

naming hegemonic representations, students are empowered to feel a connection with the past/other, learning that one can learn to see, feel, think, and act differently, if we are willing to remember our selves and other lived experiences differently.

### **Classroom Praxis: Rhetorical Memory and Writing about Representations of Literacy in Movies**

What follows is a practical application of rhetorical memory—how this critical, embodied, and generative tool can be incorporated into the writing classroom that uses film texts to examine representations of difference and inequality in mainstream movies. I focus on how difference is linked to notions of literacy and how students' perceptions of literacy can be enlarged and revised. Appendixes C, D, and E include the main writing assignments used in The University of Arizona's English 101+ curriculum (basic writing). My discussion below will demonstrate the ways I augment the curriculum with my focus on rhetorical memory.

Before I get into my discussion of rhetorical memory, I want to provide a little background on the course. English 101+ replaced the English 100 course at the University of Arizona. Rather than requiring students who place into English 100 to take three sections of introductory composition, English 101+ adds a studio component to English 101. Students are required to attend class for 75 minutes on Tuesday and Thursday and also a studio section on Monday, Wednesday, or Friday for another 75 minutes. Attendance is mandatory for both. The students' placement in the course is based on high school GPA in English courses, as well as their ACT/SAT score, with the essay score most heavily weighted. The curriculum is very similar to English 101 except

that students start the course by writing a personal literacy narrative (rather than textual analysis) and then revise this narrative later in the course. The types of students often placed in the course tend to be those whose first language isn't English, who are less prepared from their high school education (e.g., they didn't write many essays), students who have learning disabilities, athletes, and students who do not perform well on standardized testing. Of the twenty-one students enrolled in my section of the class in the fall of 2008, eight identify as white, six as African American, and seven as from another ethnic group or mixed ethnicity, including Latino/a, Iranian, and Indian. The racial makeup of my course reflects the typical profile of students who have taken English 101+ the last three years.

As my course rationale for first-year composition (see Appendix A) and my English 101+ syllabus (see Appendix B) demonstrate, I articulate rhetorical memory as a key component for understanding and critiquing representations of difference and inequality, including how students read and interpret these images and how the ideological images interpolate them. At the most fundamental level, my course asks students to interrogate representations of personal and public memories of literacy and difference in order to question their most basic assumptions and enter into an informed dialogue of written argument on various social constructions that shape their identities and daily life. More specifically, my course focuses on writing about/across/within differences and how rhetorical memory—the process and products of memory—provide the critical tools to understand how memory is put into discourse and how it might be disrupted and rewritten. As such, the course focuses heavily on revision—(re)seeing

one's writing as well as one's ways of thinking, knowing, and being.<sup>10</sup> Memory, like their writing, is fluid and constructed. As such, it can be revised.

### **Exploring Students' Constructed Memories**

In order to foreground how rhetorical memory provides critical, reflective, generative, and embodied language tools, I ask students to keep a Writer's Notebook as a way to locate, collect, and make sense of their thoughts and memories about the content of the class and their own writing processes (see Appendix B). Students are asked to write three pages in their notebooks everyday outside of class. The Writer's Notebook provides students a space to develop the discipline and practice of daily writing as well as a place to explore and experiment as writers, jotting down observations and their ideas about reading/writing assignments. In essence, students are writing down their daily memories (both what's happening in the present as well as what has happened in the past), as well as navigating competing memories represented in other texts and viewpoints in the Writer's Notebook. On the most basic level, memory provides an excellent starting point for most writing assignments to get students to personally connect with the assignment and supporting texts. Students can cull their memory as an invention technique, locating moments when they encountered language in specific ways.

However, by foregrounding memory as constructed, a way to examine the self as a text, to make connections between personal and social issues, to "get at" those deep-seated ways of knowing, being, and doing, the Writer's Notebook also empowers students to translate memory into meanings. While a recent version of a popular first-year writing text, *The St. Martin's Guide to Writing*, includes a new chapter on memory, the authors

concentrate on memory as invention rather than also explore its critical and generative dimensions.

The first assignment in English 101+ asks students to share and analyze an experience, a memory about literacy that they can reflect on and critique (see Appendix C). While the assignment might first appear to be a simple “personal essay,” it requires a great deal of sophistication. Students must be able to identify and re-create a literacy memory (narrative and descriptive writing) and then analyze its significance (analytic writing). When they first receive the assignment, students often complain that they don’t have any compelling stories about literacy despite the fact that their lives are saturated by words. At this stage, I use the Writer’s Notebook to help them “re-member” the role language has played in their lives. Here is an in-class writing exercise:

1. List your “firsts” with language (jot down an age and/or a few notes about the memory): Your first words. The first time you . . . read. Wrote your name correctly. Wrote a letter. Read a book you loved. Language helped you. Language hurt you. You were rewarded for using language. You realized you used language differently than your family, peers, or in school. You got into trouble for language. Realized language was your strength/weakness? Used language to persuade someone of something? (Ask students to generate other possible “firsts” with language).

2. Thinking about some of the “firsts” you listed above, what is your most vivid memory about language? Write as quickly as possible all the specific details that come to mind about this memory.

3. Now write everything you have forgotten about this memory. *I can't remember . . .*  
. . . to start off a list of sentences.
4. Thinking about this same memory, write about the most important 5 minutes of whatever you wrote about. Now, write about the most important minute of this episode. And finally write about the most important 10 seconds of the memory.
5. Turn this memory into a scene. Re-create this scene so that your reader can experience in the way you did. As Brenda Miller and Suzanne Paola explain, a scene is based on action unreeling before us, as it would in a film, and it will draw on the same techniques as fiction—dialogue, description (5 senses, specific and vivid details), location, point of view, and movement through time. Writing a scene is cinematic not dry and summative. It should not summarize the experience or your thoughts like “For five years I lived in Alaska” (10). Because you can’t capture everything, you have to choose what is most representative about the scene that you want to convey. A dominant impression—mood, tone, focus.

While the in-class prompt starts as a simple listing exercise, it helps to facilitate a more concrete connection between how memories are constructed and how these memories affect one’s identity as a writer/student. After this writing exercise, students often comment how surprised they are by what they remember or don’t remember, especially if they are thinking back to early childhood. While they give me “are you crazy?” stares when I ask the third question, after completing the exercise, they realize that it helped them to “get at” some more of the specific details that were embedded more deeply than the initial blush of memory. They often volunteer to share some of their memories,

verbally practicing the narrative strategies that will be necessary for the first paper. In sum, they have started to reconstruct some the specific sensory and emotional aspects of their embedded memories in a way that will help them compose the literacy narrative.

The literacy narrative assignment also requires that students critically reflect on the meaning of this literacy memory within various contexts, including how it was constructed and reconstructed by them. Many basic writers have had bad experiences with writing. Their memories are filled with images of failing, fear, or inadequacy. Much of the course is designed to build their confidence and empower them to understand the context(s) that shape their misgivings about their writing abilities. I utilize rhetorical memory as a way to get at these fears, critique the kinds of ideologies that inform the notions of literacy that shape student's perceptions of their literacy abilities, and start to generate other ways of looking at their literacy. By focusing how memory is rhetorical, students start to unearth some of their subtle and complicated relationships with language, lingering in the details long enough to reflect on the memory in order to understand how language shapes not only their identities, but also their emotions and expectations about literacy.

During the next class period, I focus on enlarging the depth and breadth of these invention activities, providing students the critical and generative tools of rhetorical memory that help them to understand how and why we have come to understand literacy in certain ways and some practice describing and critiquing these connections.

1. Write about a time when you "failed" in some way in terms of literacy.

You might look through your Writer's Notebook from the previous

class. If you already wrote what you consider to be a “failure story” last class, then revise it here, making sure that you have captured all the elements necessary to convey to your reader the scope of this failure.

2. Write about this “failure” from someone else’s perspective. Either someone who witnessed it or with whom you shared the story. It might be your teacher, a parent, a sibling, or a friend. Re-create the scene from his/her perspective, using what you imagine to be his/her voice, point of view, interpretation, and emotions about the experience.
3. Analyze why you thought this experience was a failure. What notions of success or failure colored your perception? What other contexts surrounded this event (e.g., your family’s views on education, your personal philosophy, your culture/community’s ideas about success)? Do you still consider the moment a failure? Why or why not?
4. Rewrite the event so that it doesn’t seem like a failure. What things have you forgotten that put the event into perspective or explain more about what happened or what you needed in order to be a “success” with literacy?

The literacy assignment requires the ability to find a specific focus within a larger story/memory/experience, articulate a key scene that captures the power of this moment using descriptive and narrative prose, and critique it in terms of larger issues of literacy and ideology. However, this topic can be very emotional for students, especially basic

writers. Rhetorical memory helps students tap both the affective and intellectual dimensions necessary to understand their relationships to literacy. They have to confront their past memories of literacy—their sense of frustration, neglect, or failure—and embrace and critique these emotions from the inside out and outside in so that they can write an effective literacy narrative. By understanding how memory is constructed, students start to recognize why this literacy memory registers as a failure in their minds, noting the contextual factors that shape their interpretation. They are also given an opportunity to revise the memory, questioning and complicating some of the ideologies that might have rendered the memory as more negative than necessary. In the process of drawing on rhetorical memory to move from invention, to critique, to more generative capacities for rewriting the literacy memories, students augment their critical thinking skills in ways that support their writing of the first essay. These exercises also generate a great deal of discussion and agency for the students as they “re-member” their literacy experiences differently.

In order to reflect on the constructed nature of rhetorical memory, a concept few students were familiar with when they started the course, it is important to provide students the opportunity to critically reflect on this new way of thinking about the intersections between memory and literacy after they submit the paper for a grade. Not only does this reflection help to solidify some of the concepts covered in the writing assignment, it also encourages students to note the transformations that occurred during the writing process when they tapped into the constructed nature of their literacy

memories within various contexts. After students turn in the first paper, I have them write on the following questions and then we discuss them in class.

1. How did memory shape/influence the way you wrote about your literacy experience?
2. What were some of ways/techniques/strategies you used to help you “re-member” the literacy experience and communicate it to your readers?
3. Now that you’ve written the literacy memory, how has the memory itself changed?

Students often share that they are more conscious of memory, not just as a static scrapbook item in their minds, but how it has been constructed and revised by them as they gain more knowledge and experience in the world. They are also surprised by how they reconstructed their memories by feeling them in the body, assuming various roles and viewpoints, and relying on their senses and emotions in order to access and deepen their memory material. They also express some confusion about “truth” and memory. Because memory is constructed, they worry that nothing they remember is really “the truth” because it will change over time. Furthermore, because their narrative strategies rely on imagination and facts, they question which memory is more “real”—the one they remembered in their head or the memory represented in the essay. While the constructed nature of memory can be generative, it also opens up some very complicated issues that will inform the rest of the course.

### **Using Film to Build Prosthetic Memory**

For the textual analysis assignment (see Appendix D), I use the film *Higher Learning* to foreground the critical and generative aspects of rhetorical memory as students explore the intersections among film, representations of difference and inequality, and literacy. In addition to learning how to read/interpret film texts, students are encouraged to explore how the memories on screen reflect or contradict their own experiences with education/learning and shape social and political debates about literacy. Throughout her work, bell hooks illustrates that no matter how much we teach students to be “resisting spectators,” most viewers get sucked in by the power of the medium. Focusing on rhetorical memory provides a way to avoid some of the negative fallout of film’s ideological powers. Rather than surrendering to the notion that films are merely technologies of hegemonic deception, domination, or commodification that viewers can’t resist, it is essential to also focus on the generative aspects of memory. From this perspective, movies also offer a technology for creating what Alison Landsberg terms “prosthetic memory,” a way to create new memories outside of one’s lived social spaces, practices, and beliefs. *Higher Learning* emulates what Louise Pratt calls a “contact zone,” (social spaces where cultures meet and clash often in contexts of highly asymmetrical power relations), which also mirror the diversity of the students in 101+. As such, it is an excellent film to encourage students to “travel” into other worlds, trying to see and understand other people’s perspectives unlike their own. I also hope that the focus on rhetorical memory will enrich their viewing experiences, allowing students to embody competing viewpoints in ways that help to sustain their ethical thinking and actions.

Because students are often resistant to talking about “difference and inequality” and are accustomed to watching TV/movies for entertainment, we spend some time learning to “read” film and paying attention to how literacy is represented in movies and linked to issues of race, gender, and class. After reading all the foundational material about socially constructed “difference” categories and reviewing the kinds of prevalent ideologies and stereotypes in mainstream films, I ask them to keep a visual media journal for a week (TV, movies, music videos, Internet sites, print ads). They track the kinds of images they see about literacy, addressing the following types of questions:

- Who is reading or writing? In what settings? For what social goals?
- How might this representation of literacy influence public and political debates about literacy instruction, teachers' expectations of what will happen in their classrooms, and student's ideas about what reading and writing should be?
- How are different social groups situated in the frame? How does the medium portray those who are successful or savvy with reading and writing and those who struggle with literacy?
- How do you think this representation is constructing different people's memories about literacy?

This exercise is designed for two key purposes: In terms of anti-racist pedagogies, it empowers students with the critical tools to recognize stereotyped representations—students are often surprised by the prevalence of stereotyped representations and how they shape the ways they think about literacy and their abilities to use language effectively. It also reinforces the memory of these stereotypes, implanting new memories

because students have undergone an embodied experience with the images, which makes ethical social action more likely. In other words, if in the future students start to “forget” about how discrimination and inequality affect people of color, women, homosexuals, or those with disabilities, their analysis and discussions about the movie provide a tangible “prosthetic memory,” which they may call up. In turn, the images they remember from the film might prompt them to be more critical of various public opinions on discrimination and encourage them to reconsider their ethical relationship to people unlike

This next activity builds on the “prosthetic memory” gained from their general study of everyday media and the insights students have gained from analyzing and interpreting *Higher Learning*. The film was made in 1995 and follows characters in their first year of college who come from different geographical regions and identify with different social spaces, practices, and beliefs. Studying the movie can often make for some passionate—and sometimes uncomfortable—silences and discussions about how “realistic” this film is in terms of the students’ experiences. Students, who are constructing their own memories of the college experience, often like to dismiss the movie, arguing that it’s not like that at University of Arizona. Others, however, argue that the movie rings true even in 2008. While the realism and accuracy of the film aren’t necessary criteria for interpreting the film, these issues are important in terms of the generative aspects of “prosthetic memory.” As Landsberg argues, we want students to be able to “created shared social frameworks for people who inhabit [different social realities/identities]” (8) in order to “generate new courses of action in the present” (45).

After the students have turned in their textual analysis papers, I want to augment their critical skills by focusing on the embodied and generative elements of rhetorical memory. To do so, I ask them to “re-write” one of the scenes in *Higher Learning*, focusing on crossing and inhabiting the kinds of identity borders they see at the University of Arizona (gender, race/ethnicity, class, Greek-life, majors, and etc). The students work in small groups to create a new movie treatment and scene outline, which they pitch to the rest of the class.

Rewrite one key scene from *Higher Learning* that reflects your experience at UA, whether personal or what you have observed. Be sure to include the following elements: characters, dialogue, location/setting, clothing/music, plot, themes about literacy/higher education, possibilities for “unlearning.” Try to update the film in a way that speaks to students at UA in 2008. Or, rewrite the scene in a way that gives the viewer new ways to think about the links between literacy and difference. You’ll want to consider these two questions closely: What types of memories (public, cultural, personal) are reflected by your literacy scene? And, what are the consequences of this particular memory as it is represented? Your goal is to create new kinds of memories (more positive, less stereotyped, more realistic) about literacy that might be viewed on screen. Be creative.

In addition to prompting students to critically think about and reflect on the complexities of literacy and difference, this activity solidifies the memory work we’ve been focusing on. Students are required to use the critical, embodied, and generative elements of

rhetorical memory in order to (de)/(re)construct both private and public memories that circulate around the topic. In the past, students have commented that this is one of the key exercises they remember doing in the class. My hope is that the salience of the memory reinforces what they learned about difference and inequality and helps to sustain their ethical actions in addressing these issues. In other words, it provides an embodied touchstone that helps to call up the intellectual and affective knowledge they have gained about racism, sexism, homophobia, and classicism.

### **Exploring the Intersections of Private/Public Memories**

The Enlightenment understanding of memory as steeped in problems of “subjectivity” has resulted in the private/public binary that has shaped our writing pedagogies. Even whiteness pedagogies often focus the writing on external critiques written in academic language that purport to ignore the personal or individual relationships to oppression in lieu of focusing on the systemic.<sup>12</sup> However, foregrounding rhetorical memory in our writing pedagogies empowers students to question these constructed spaces of what constitutes “private” or “public” and navigate the “both/and” dimensions of knowing, being, and doing. Paper #3 focuses on contextual analysis (see Appendix E). Essentially, this is the “research paper” assignment, which asks students to interpret another film of their choosing by using a lens or context to understand it on a larger level. Therefore, rather than relying on their own memories and experiences as they had in the Literacy Narrative, students are required to cite “sanctioned” forms of memory (e.g., other people’s scholarship, history, database storage systems of factual/academic memory), that provide more “factual” support for their arguments. They

are also required to communicate these arguments using academic prose (e.g., MLA style, thesis driven, secondary sources), which is often a very difficult genre for them.

While it is important that students are able to communicate effectively using an academic genre, I want them to understand that this genre, like memory, is rhetorical. It has been constructed within our own disciplinary norms, conventions, and standards against which our “white-meaning-naming practices” take shape (Thompson 15) and perpetuates generic hierarchies that often downplay more holistic ways of knowing (Royster). One of the key benefits of using rhetorical memory in the writing classroom is gaining more tangible tools in order to question and disrupt the binaries between private/public and fact/fiction, foregrounding how our “passionate attachments” inform our research contexts even when we write from a more detached scholarly perspective. Throughout the course, I want to help empower students to navigate the tensions between the personal and the public, academic writing and real-life writing, reason and emotions, as well as explore how their personal experiences, community affiliations, and philosophies, shape their interpretations and modes of communicating, as well as those of others. Rhetorical memory provides the kinds of tools that enable a richer understanding of the interconnectedness of private and public memories and how they shape one’s literacy. Furthermore, students start to understand how memories can be (de)/(re) constructed in ways that challenge hegemonic discourses such as white privilege.

English 101+ requires that two of the three main assignments focus on writing external critiques of the films using academic prose (see Appendixes A, B, C, D, E). I augment these logo-centric analyses by emphasizing the relationship between private and

public memories and how they inform our interpretations and knowledge (e.g., Writer’s Notebook, rewriting a scene from *Higher Learning*, thinking about how representations of literacy on screen shape the way students perceive their own experiences and abilities). Before we start the contextual analysis/research paper, we revisit the “personal,” exploring the intersections between their previous literacy narrative papers and how they interpreted *Higher Learning* in the second paper. Here are some questions I ask them to write about in their Writer’s Notebook and discuss in class when we start Paper #3.

1. List all the communities/cultures/identities to which you belong or with which you identify. Or, what contexts shape you the most?
2. How are our everyday lives shaped by the communities/cultures to which we belong? When you read a text, think about an event, or watch a film, how do your own personal contexts (gender, race, religion, sexual orientation, class, education, etc.) affect/influence the way you respond? How have significant experiences in your own life shaped the way you interact/respond to texts, events, and films? Communicate about these experiences?
3. How did your memories—forged within these contexts—affect/influence the way you interpreted *Higher Learning*? (e.g., identity, community, value systems).

In addition to thinking about research as a context rather than a “patchwork” of other people’s ideas, this exercise underscores the context(s) that inform all research even if they are not acknowledged on the page. I also hope this exercise reinforces all the tenets of rhetorical memory that we’ve been covering so that students are more attuned to how knowledge intersects with both personal and private memory and how it is

(de)/(re)constructed. This exercise provides a foundation for understanding research paper writing as more than an enterprise of finding “objective” facts and citing them correctly. While my primary task is to make sure that students are better able to effectively write in this genre, I don’t want them to lose sight of how research contexts put competing memories into play—the representations of literacy they see on screen (e.g., getting an education guarantees success), academic experts explaining why literacy is the way it is, and how their own literacy memories may or may not support either of those views.

After the students turn in Paper #3 and prepare for their final exam, which asks them to rewrite Paper #1 (Literacy Narrative), I ask students to reflect again on their writing, particularly thinking about how their own literacy memories were represented or contested by the film they viewed and the research they found. In order to revise Paper #1 beyond cleaning up some surface errors or making general surface-level changes, I want to encourage them to “re-vise,” to “rewrite” those literacy memories by contextualizing them within larger social frames we explore in Papers #2 and #3. Here are some questions they write about in the Writer’s Notebook and that we discuss in conferences or in class:

1. How is your literacy memory (Paper #1) shaped by social/cultural factors that you examined for Paper #2 or #3?
2. How did investigating a context about the film you chose to write on change the way you remember your own literacy experiences?

3. How did your research and analysis change the way you think about some of the connections between representations of literacy and social perceptions/expectations about the goals of education and how they affect different social groups?

Focusing on the intersections between individual and public memory provides a means for students to more critically reflect on and articulate the complexities of literacy that go beyond a simple “learning to read and write.” For many students, it also helps to contextualize why they may have struggled with writing, especially in terms of the socioeconomic factors at play and societal beliefs about literacy that may skew the realities of learning to read and write well. Furthermore, this deeper understanding of how the personal and public intersect and shape their memories of literacy often motivates them to work on augmenting their reading and writing practices so that they may rewrite their future. In the end, students produce richer literacy narratives that delve into the complexities of this very political and personal topic.

### **(In)Conclusion**

By incorporating rhetorical memory into the writing classroom that uses film texts, we are better able to invoke the kinds of holistic appeals that augment the goals of whiteness pedagogies. More specifically, we are better equipped to break down some of the inherent problems of organizing around identity categories of difference and subjective experience that often halt “right action.” Students are not only encouraged to explore the emotional components of difference and inequality, they are also supported in their quest to take action on these matters through uncovering and rewriting their literacy

views and memories. Many students leave the course saying that I have “ruined” movies for them. I take that as a great compliment. They can no longer passively watch hegemonic representations of literacy and difference without questioning the images and attending to both their own memories and their responsibility to speak up and speak out about the dangerous consequences of maintaining these kinds of harmful stereotypes.

Students also often report that the class has made them start to see memory in everything. One student recounted how he now understands that “memory is a multi-sensory phenomenon . . . which provides many levels of understanding something” instead of a “solely static object in the mind.” Another student commented that he realized his own memory was much more “detailed and expansive” than he had previously thought. He added that “small fragments of my personal memory became deeper and enriched the way I understood my own life, as well as the lives of others. Some have told me that they will never forget some of the images about social injustices that they remember from the films they studied.

However, thinking about memory rhetorically also introduces some complex issues. Because students understand memory as rhetorical, they are bothered that they can’t claim that what they remember personally is more factual. Other students have lamented how confusing memory is to them because it’s constructed and relative. At the same time, they often feel more empowered to question the kinds of memories represented in other texts that don’t reflect their memories or experiences. But sometimes they long for just knowing something is “true” or not. Despite these complexities and frustrations, I am optimistic about the role rhetorical memory can play in supporting and

enriching student writing. While anti-oppression pedagogies have failed on some levels to realize the kinds of changes rhetoric and composition scholars have hoped for, I think that rhetorical memory provides a means for rethinking these pedagogical strategies. The critical tools of rhetorical memory help to account for how memory is put into discourse and to understand what gets left out—how the memories of oppressive groups are engulfed by ideology. Rhetorical memory also provides the generative tools that empower students to “rewrite” their own memories, understanding how their perceptions of literacy are colored by other private and public memories. The embodied nature of memory also aids students to transcend race, class, and gender in order to assume social responsibility to address injustices. Subsequently, rhetorical memory, coupled with whiteness/anti-oppression pedagogies and the use of film provide a more holistic method to disrupt and rewrite hegemonic discourses and to uncover our multiple selves, which may be (un)seen in dominant representations.

## Notes

1. For example, in 1976 Joseph Comprone created a bibliographic essay that advocated for the use of film in the composition classroom because of the relationship between the formalistic elements of writing and cinema. William Covino built on this foundation in his 1986 article “Film as Composition,” arguing that film could be used more productively in teaching composition strategies. See also Ellen Bishop’s *Cinema-(to)-graphy: Film and Writing in Contemporary Composition Courses*.

2. Racial Formation Theory is an analytical tool, developed by Michel Omni and Howard Winant, which is used to look at race as a socially constructed identity, where the content and importance of racial categories is determined by social, economic, and political forces (61). Breaking from traditional race theories, Omni and Winant argue that racial meanings pervade US society, extending from the shaping of individual racial identities to the structuring of collective political action on the terrain of the state” (66).. Instead of claiming race as something that is concrete-- where the person’s biology and

upbringing is what shapes your racial identity, Omi and Winant suggests that race is something that is fluid, where “the racial order is organized and enforced by the continuity and reciprocity between micro-level and macro-level of social relations” (67).

3. A very common trope in early whiteness theory scholarship was to spend time defining the term “white” (“whiteness,” “white privilege,” or “white supremacy”). I chose to address the definition in a note for two reasons: 1) I agree with Ellsworth that whiteness theory has often been so preoccupied with defining whiteness that white scholars often reinscribe the notion that s/he is the “one who ‘knows’ whiteness” and gains power from this position or gets to have the “last word.” However, not to define a term also presumes a privileged position or the “unmarked, unraced, unspoken norm” (265). 2) I want to be clear that I am not talking about skin color. I am referring to the role whiteness maintains in our understanding of racial formation (see Omi and Winant). I also want to acknowledge the power of whiteness. Jackson uses the term *white supremacy*. Although historically this term has wielded a variety of connotations (see Kennedy, Middleton, and Ratcliffe; see also Ratcliffe *Rhetorical Listening*), Jackson, drawing on the work of Charles Mills and Maulana Karenga, chose this term to emphasize how white supremacy is more than white privilege: [White supremacy] can be defined as “political, economic, and cultural systems in which whites are overwhelmingly in control of power and material resources, where notions of white superiority are widespread, and where relations of white dominance and nonwhite subordination are daily reenacted across a wide variety of institutions and social settings” (604). Like Jackson and other scholars who write about whiteness, I use “whiteness,” “white privilege,” “white hegemony,” and “white supremacy” throughout the chapter. For a more detailed overview of the terms, see, for example, works by Keating, Giroux, and Kincheloe.

4. Building on Laura Mulvey’s ideas about the male gaze in feminist film theory, Jane Gaines argues that gender is not the only important factor in determining what she calls “looking relations.” Race and class are also key factors. The structure of relations under slavery has radically different implications for historical, patriarchal configurations of race, since black men could hardly embody the traditional patriarchal position accorded the white male. In “Black Spectatorship: Problems of Identification and Resistance” Mantia Diawara argues that the racialized gaze in cinema can also be resistant one, while bell hooks calls the black female gaze in cinema “oppositional” in *Black Looks: Race and Representation*. While the white gaze may be resisted, racial and gender differences structure a hierarchy of access to images. While white feminists theorize the female image in terms of objectification, fetishization, and symbolic absence, their Black counterparts describe the body as a site of symbolic resistance and the “paradox of nonbeing.”

5. In *Church on the Margins*, Mary R. Sawyer takes a cross-cultural look at the Christian notion of “orthopraxis.” This perspective emphasizes that Christianity is more

than just belief. Orthopraxis embodies a way of being and living that is consistent with social justice imperatives.

6. Gwendolyn Pough explains that the phrase “bringing wreck” is used in hip-hop to “signify skill and greatness.” Often bringing wreck is “used in a boastful manner, such as Queen Latifah’s refrain ‘Check it while I wreck it, sing it while I bring it.’” In essence bringing wreck means that a person is really good at what s/he does (77).

7. Lynn Worsham’s definition of emotions informs my understanding: “A tight braid of affect and judgment that is socially and historically constructed and bodily lived. This view opposes the Western philosophical tradition that regards emotion as reason’s other, consigns it to the private sphere, genders it ‘feminine,’ racializes it ‘dark’ and tolerates it only as part of the body’s contrary magic” (“Coming to Terms” 105).

8. Nietzsche talked about forgetfulness as a defense mechanism that protects humans from the unpleasant aspects of the external world. He argues that if we become slaves to memory, we are unable to move forward in the present. At the same time, living in a sense of denial snuffs out the “will to power,” the essence of life and one’s ability to take responsibility for his/her own actions.

9. Trauma studies focus heavily on unraveling memories in order to gain insight and heal from one’s experiences of abuse. See for example Judith Hermann’s *Trauma and Recovery*.

10. In Beverly Daniel Tatum’s article “Can We Talk,” she describes a research study that articulates the effects of how misrepresentations shape memories not formed in experience. When the researcher asked preschoolers to draw a Native American, none of them could. When the researcher asked them to draw an Indian, they all drew a person semi-clothed with feathers and weapons, although none of the children said they personally knew an Indian.

11. Adrienne Rich explores the connections between memory and revision in “When We Dead Awaken.” She describes her experiences as a female writer overwhelmed by the “patriarchy” in the “masculine world of the academy.” Rich’s concept of “revision” allows her to see the past and deal with her present situation accordingly and improve it: “Re-vision--the act of looking back, of seeing with fresh eyes, or entering an old text from a new critical direction--is for women more than a chapter in cultural history: it is an act of survival” (34). In *Anglo-American Feminist Challenge to the Rhetorical Traditions*, Krista Ratcliffe articulates the way Adrienne Rich’s work challenges the ways we think of memory. Because Rich wants to revise and rewrite history, memory serves a key function in feminist consciousness: [M]emory lives within a person’s body, not as static images but as feelings, ideas, and actions. It functions there, consciously and unconsciously, as a ‘smoky mirror’ that reflects the world differently from different angles and at different times” (125).

12. Whiteness pedagogies are very careful to distinguish between discussions that focus on an individual's white skin and the systemic privileges of having white skin within various contexts. In other words, when the focal point of whiteness remains on individual actions, conversations and actions get stalled in "white guilt" rather than exploring ways to radically confront the systems that support these unearned privileges. The critical project of whiteness pedagogies, according to Giroux, is to unveil the "rhetorical, political, cultural, and social mechanisms through which Whiteness is both invented and used to mask its power and privilege" (290). This approach, therefore, provides a broader context for students to explore racial identities and examine what is at stake as citizens in a democratic society. Joe Kincheloe, for example, in "The Struggle to Define and Reinvent Whiteness," outlines some of the tenets of a critical pedagogy of whiteness that include an examination of white privilege, the complex nature of whiteness, the dynamic surrounding the white identity crisis, the redefinition of whiteness and the formulation of an emancipatory white identity (191):

Engage students in an examination of the social, political, and psychological dimensions of membership in a racial group; help students understand the multiple meanings of whiteness and their effects on the way white consciousness is historically structured and socially inscribed; refuse to use race as an essentialist grounding of identity by viewing race as historical concept that has been marred by inaccuracies and inequities; show students how to separate whiteness from white people to reduce individual blame, guilt, or hostility; help students (re)conceptualize identity as something that is not absolute or fixed essence; redefine whiteness, rejecting alternatives such as white nihilism or white denial; contextualize whiteness to expose the invisibility of its social power and privilege; instill a willingness to listen to nonwhites and analyze their social and political positions vis-à-vis their whiteness. (162-88)

This same focus on the external critique is found in "Diversity Vs. White Privilege," Christine Sleeter explains why a teacher's understanding of institutional racism is important. If an instructor individualizes racism and attempts to figure out how to be a less prejudiced person (which is important), then there's the risk that s/he will think the work is over, that s/he is a "good white" now. However, that doesn't address the documented institutional inequities that exist in secondary and higher education that a broader social/historical context can provide (3).

## CONCLUSION: IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH AND FOR PEDAGOGY

### **Mnemosyne Speaks**

*If one has only one good memory left in one's heart, even that may be the means of saving us.*

–Fyodor Dostoevsky

Nestled in my Holly Hobbie sleeping bag on the top bunk,  
stale potato chip crumbs nibbling my toes, I listen  
to my mother's laughter as if gazing at hundreds  
of stars on a clear dark night. Her laugh

floats up like cola bubbles, dancing  
and humming and tickling their way to my ears.  
At first a chuckle, soft and undulating like fresh linen hovering  
mid-air, defying gravity in that moment before landing  
and spreading across the bed. Someone's "shhh" flattens  
her chuckle into a snicker. She covers  
her mouth with her hand, creating a Morse code  
of silence and pfffffs of air. But the laugh is too deep, too wide. It takes  
flight into a giggle, swoops into her lungs, grabs  
enough air to sustain it, and then swooshes  
out of her belly so that it might soar, higher and farther and freer.

As I follow her into that full blast  
of joy, I feel my own happiness swell in its wake.

Decades later and still I listen, like a frog said to feed  
on the sound of its mother's voice, unable to grow  
without it. I rummage through that same dark night, searching  
for that slivered swelling of happiness  
that tethered me to you, hoping  
for that spark, that maybe-someday-snort  
that might bring you back to me.

I begin my conclusion with a poem that embodies the transformative qualities of a living, critical, generative memory. In order to write this poem, I had to burrow within the folds of memory, recovering, reclaiming, and relearning the past. In the process, I located this key memory of my mother, the one I hold in my heart of hearts despite the

shifts and changes in our relationship. During my re-membering, I also had to acknowledge how memory shifts just as the body, consciousness, and identities shift within various contexts (personal, social, cultural) and across time. I reflect on this memory as the person I am today, writing my memory of memory using the poetic tools that help me construct its emotional essence rather than the mere “facts” of my recollection. And in this juxtaposition of images, imagination, emotions, and knowledge, transformations materialize in the spaces in between what was, what is, and what might be. It is here, rooted in Mnemosyne’s legacy, that I attempt to reclaim the critical, generative, and embodied facets of *memoria*.

While *memoria* is the fourth canon of rhetoric, its generative power, even in the wake of the process movement and critical/social pedagogies, remains essentially absent from rhetoric and composition studies. In my dissertation I provide an overview of *memoria* using the terministic screens of storehouse, invention, and subjectivity in order to explain its absence and the consequences of such a gap. Because *memoria* has been reduced to a pragmatic tool of reason, its generative, critical, and embodied qualities have not been tapped. As a result, scholars overlook how memory shapes our ways of knowing and being and our hermeneutical, inventive, and revisionary practices.

Like rhetoric, there are many definitions of memory, as well as types (e.g., personal, cultural, and public). There are also various lenses through which one might examine *memoria* in terms of history, genre, and discipline (e.g., philosophy, psychology, literature, anthropology, and biochemistry). Furthermore, memory has often been subsumed by other concepts (e.g., history, experience, personal writing) that inform our

field. As my research and writing revealed that it's not just what is remembered/forgotten that matters, but *how* it is remembered, by whom, for what purpose, and with what effect, I began to (re)define memory as rhetorical. Rhetorical memory is a process—and product(s)—of remembering, “re-memory” to use Toni Morrison’s term. Rather than remaining fixed, rhetorical memory is dynamic, relational, infused with emotion, steeped in imagination, and context-dependent. It is also relational, not autonomous and continuous. When memory is written, it expresses, analyzes, connects, rebuilds and transforms the links between private and public, past and present, self and other, reason and emotions, fact and fiction, and mind and body. Rhetorical memory is (re)visionary.

My particular interest is in how *rhetorical memory* may be employed in our writing pedagogies as a tool of “interpretative intervention” (Krista Ratcliffe’s term), which helps writers understand memory (personal, social, and cultural) as a process and product, an interpretation and in need of interpretation, and as constructed and revisionary in nature. In my dissertation I attempt to rethink writing pedagogy through the lens of rhetorical memory in a way that transcends the limits of memory’s Enlightenment legacy but does not stall out in a postmodern paralysis where there is no truth, no agency, and no self. Having infused my teaching with what I have learned about writing, re-membering, and revising, I articulate pedagogical strategies that can make student writing more purposeful and persuasive, facilitate and sustain the critical and generative tools necessary for both collective and personal agency, and create a community of rhetors who remember in the classroom, which breaks down some of the inherent problems of organizing around identity categories of difference. By reclaiming

rhetorical memory for our writing pedagogies, I argue that memory can function as a discursive tool that serves critical civic, social, and ethical actions at the foundation of our writing pedagogies. It also empowers writers and scholars to better locate and disrupt hegemonic discourses and practices, communicate within/across differences, and sustain social consciousness and ethical actions.

In many ways I view my theory of rhetorical memory as a way to bridge and dismantle many of the binaries that shape and stall our writing pedagogies—academic versus creative writing, Enlightenment versus postmodern notions of truth and selves, body versus mind, reason versus emotions, and self versus other. This theory emerges at the intersections among embodied knowledges, feminist historiography, critical race and whiteness studies, and film as rhetoric. A theory of rhetorical memory builds on the work of feminist scholars such as Lynn Worsham, Jacqueline Jones Royster, bell hooks, and Gloria Anzaldua who have called for more embodied approaches to our scholarship and writing practices that can accommodate the breadth and depth of lived experiences that underscore our epistemologies. Rhetorical memory also illuminates how the debates surrounding feminist historiography and the recovery projects undertaken by Cheryl Glenn and Susan Jarratt require new lenses through which to examine the relationships forged between imagination and fact and the power dynamics that maintain how knowledge is put into discourse. While scholars who work on race and whiteness (e.g., Morrison, Ratcliffe, and Dyer) have made great strides in locating and critiquing the binary structures and hegemonic discourses that maintain racism and white supremacy, there is still much work to do in this area in order to understand the failings of the writing

classroom to address these disparities. Rhetorical memory provides the critical tools to expose how representations of difference are put into discourse as well as the generative tools needed to account for and authenticate underrepresented voices. Like Henry Giroux, I believe that films function as public pedagogy. A theory of rhetorical memory empowers scholars, teachers, and students to use film and other media in order to dislocate the hegemonic discourses of representation and generate new ways of seeing and knowing one's self and others.

The terministic screens under which rhetoric and composition scholars have theorized memory in the past have created, using Dewey and Burke's term, an "occupational psychosis" that focuses on the more utilitarian aspects of *memoria*. While these terministic screens provide glimpses of more generative possibilities, mostly they direct scholars' attention away from the transformational qualities of memory that might better serve our writing pedagogies. Consequently, rhetoric and composition studies have overlooked how rhetorical memory provides the fundamental content and tools through which agency and social change are derived from "identification" (Burke) and "disidentification" (Fuss). For this reason I call for further work by scholars in the field of rhetoric and composition studies to reclaim *memoria* for our scholarship and writing pedagogies, envisioning a variety of possibilities, including:

### 1. **Writing Memory into Academic Discourses**

Because memory is embodied as well as rhetorical, rhetoric and composition scholar-teachers need to address how our professional discourse and scholarly conventions might impede the kinds of knowledge and insights we gain from rhetorical memory

and how we communicate about those discoveries. Furthermore, because rhetorical memory is embodied and then written, it provides the critical linchpin between the cognitive and emotional aspects of intellect that enlarge the persuasive appeals of arguments, especially about difference and inequality. In “*Memoria* Is a Friend of Ours,” Victor Villanueva tries to move the discussion of *memoria* out of genre. He argues that “memory simply cannot be adequately portrayed in the conventional discourse of the academy,” which is especially problematic for people of color who seek to “reclaim” and “retain” memory of their culture(s) (12). Because academic discourse is cognitive, strong in ethos and logos, but weaker in pathos (cultural/personal), Villanueva argues for narratives that do more than help listeners/readers’ recollection; he seeks narratives that connect the individual, history, and memory in order to “jog our memories as a collective in a scattered world and within an ideology that praises individualism” (16). But how?

I believe that the poetic tools necessary to write what is re-remembered need to be included in our academic forms in ways that move us beyond simple narrative introductions or the insertion of a sanitized “I” into the logos. Critiques of “academic discourses” figure prominently in rhetoric and composition studies. Inspired by Langston Hughes, Lillian Bridwell-Bowles illuminates the issue: “Our language and our writing should be adequate enough to make our dreams, our visions, our stories, our thinking, and our actions not just revolutionary but transformative” (46). Many feminists and scholars of color describe the “colonizing” effects of a textual economy that does not honor different ways of knowing, being, and representing in written

documents (Anzaldúa; Gray-Rosendale and Gruber; hooks; Royster; Sandoval). Furthermore, while scholars like Nedra Reynolds urge us to “disrupt” academic writing and “rethink the forms of writing we find acceptable” (71), we still find our professional texts filled with essays that maintain the conventions of academic prose. Lisa Ede and Andrea Lunsford address the significance of feminists’ reliance on conventional academic prose when they note that the essays in *Feminism and Composition Studies* seem to “accept and embody, rather than to transgress, the conventions of traditional academic prose” (318). They question whether this move “mark[s] a place of paradox and difficulty or . . . a judicious response to [one’s] specific rhetorical situation” (318). While this is a difficult question to answer, it points to the ways we consent to certain assumptions and forms despite our critiques. It also highlights how the structure of academic discourse maintains itself by keeping out the kinds of holistic epistemologies that might upset its discursive power—the kinds of epistemologies found in the process and products of re-memory.

If rhetoric and composition studies are to realize the full potential of *memoria*, it is essential that we also explore how our writing can accommodate the multidimensionality of our ways of knowing and communicating. Even writing this dissertation, I am guilty of invoking the forms that I am critiquing and calling into question. While I have attempted to insert myself into the text on occasion, such as the poem above, these moments are cursory and hardly do justice to the journey undertaken that informs my views on memory. At forty years old, I took a leave of absence from the academy, invited my ninety-seven year old maternal grandmother to

live with me, and wrote a memoir about my childhood relationships in a small town. In the process, I discovered my body (how long had I been living in my head?), lost my identity (graduate student, writing teacher, academic), and gained some new identities (unpaid caregiver, dog walker, “mad housewife,” and witness to memory—both my grandmother’s and mine). As I nurtured my writing self while composing my memoir, I was forced to explore different ways of being and knowing. Or, as Adela Licona articulates so wonderfully, I “encountered my epistemologies.” Such a journey was filled with loss and mourning, a violence of learning I could not have foreseen. It was also transformational. While not conscious of the paradigm shifts I was creating at the time, hindsight ushers in a different kind of clarity now, providing me the material to articulate this theory of rhetorical memory. However, my memoir remains separate from my scholarship, at least as it appears on the page. In other words, all the messy, disturbing, contradictory, and uncertain ways of knowing, being, and becoming that emerged from the memoir writing are now, to use Mikhail Bakhtin’s words, “eliminated, hidden, or moderated” in my academic prose (320). What is the cost, I wonder, of this disconnect between my lived experience and the language of theory?

## **2. Rethinking the Construction of Identities through Rhetorical Memory**

The contributors to *Rhetorical Bodies* argue that a materiality of the body must be part of our rhetorical theory—both the body itself and the material conditions and practices that produce such bodies. Furthermore, as scholars like Lynn Worsham have articulated, the privileging of mind over bodies and reason over emotions that have

shaped Western thought needs to be displaced and opened up in order to recognize the continuum that exists between these terms. Understanding the both/and that exists within this continuum also complicates notions of identity. As Sharon Crowley argues, “bodies are marked in ways that carry a great deal of cultural freight. Identities are also marked by cultural constructions of bodies, and hence cultural evaluations of bodies extend to the subjects who inhabit them and with whose limits they are supposedly coterminous” (*Rhetorical* 361). By exploring the critical, generative, and embodied elements of rhetorical memory, rhetoric and composition scholar-teachers can explore how identity is linked to memory both in terms of how it constructs ideologies of “self” and “other” and how these ideologies construct memory. The rhetoricity of memory provides another focal point through which to understand how our material practices and structures shape and maintain identities and their meaning in various cultures.

Ann Branaman argues that Burke’s work helps explore “the question of if and how identity might serve as an instrument of social critique. . . . Rather than ignoring the socially imposed constraints upon the use of identity as a critical instrument, Burke explains how patterns of identification can be critical and transformative rather than merely reproductive despite the fact that experience is always already socially patterned” (444-45). Barbara Biesecker concurs, adding that Burke’s work “can admit the role of human agency in the making and unmaking of social structures and history without resurrecting the sovereign subject of Enlightenment philosophy” (9). Therefore, by enlarging the scope of *memoria* scholar-teachers might better map out

the limits of discourses that maintain identity binaries and subjugate the multiplicity of our ways of knowing and being in the world. It is within these overlapping spaces of memory that the transient multiplicity of identity(s) might be better articulated.

### 3. **Examining Third Space, Borderland Rhetorics, and Rhetorical Memory**

I envision my work as complementary to the scholarship that critiques modern notions of identity and attempts to open up more spatialized and mobile notions of identity. I regret that my dissertation doesn't include more theory from Latino/a scholars who theorize the transformational in-between spaces that inform lived experiences, coalition building, and activism. While the spatial component of *memoria* has been recognized in classical rhetoric, such a configuration is rarely articulated in terms of the agency needed to empower and mobilize underrepresented groups whose experiences are often not authenticated by prominent discourse. Adela Licona, for example, articulates borderland rhetorics and third space as practices and locations that accommodate the both/and realm of experience and knowledge-making. She argues that "authoritative practices of devaluing and dismissing the imagined, the ambiguous, and the contradictory as merely fictive, represent those dominant and domesticating practices that have obscured third space and borderlands rhetorics and their potentials as valid and legitimate sites and practices of knowledge re-production and representation" ("Borderlands" 13-14). While she argues that borderland rhetorics and third space can reveal "different realms of truth," I posit that rhetorical memory might provide the critical and generative tools to support such efforts. In fact, rhetorical memory might be employed as a third space tactic where

“subjectivities can be re-imagined and re-membered and from which they can be (re)presented” (27). In other words, borders might be transgressed.

#### **4. Implications for the Writing Classroom**

I believe that rhetorical memory informs the classroom in three important ways: (a) as a means of creating pedagogies, curricula, and classroom practices that strive to empower students with the critical, embodied, and generative elements of rhetorical memory that can serve a variety of epistemologies, identities, and learning styles; (b) as a rhetorical concept that provides students with the tools they need to examine the politics of remembering, representation, and the ways knowledge is put into discourse and maintained by our memory practices; and (c) as a means to explore new ways to integrate film into the writing classroom. For example, writing pedagogies need to provide spaces where writers can share their “rememory” as invention, interpretation, and intervention for their ways of being, knowing, and acting in the world. Writing assignments and activities need to better focus on articulating ways we can better access memory material in order to make new knowledge, revise our ways of thinking about how our selves function in various discourses, and interpret more familiar epistemologies. More specifically, I believe rhetoric and composition scholar-teachers need to create more embodied approaches to writing memory not usually accommodated by conventional academic forms and that move writers using memory beyond mere invention strategies. Furthermore, because private memory becomes public once written, students and instructors also need to discuss how memory functions in their writing and problematize some of the issues involved in making

private memories public, including the emotional vulnerabilities and opportunities for healing that may occur. We also need to account for the ways that memory is performed, not only in personal writing and memoir, but also in traditional research paradigms that rely on memory (databases, periodicals, books, websites, and libraries) in order to store and organize records of knowledge.

In terms of using film in the composition classroom, I think we can empower students to better recognize and utilize the parallels between the (de)/(re)construction of film and memory. Students need to not only write arguments about what and how a film means but also investigate how these meanings are maintained and replicated in discourses and ideologies. By better understanding how films are constructed, especially focusing on editing strategies and techniques, students have a more tangible way to understand how memory and knowledge are (de)/(re)constructed to mean something. Using film in this way empowers students to not only write critiques that locate these hegemonic representations but also to generate new ways of disrupting and rewriting oppressive representations, including offering their own memories of lived experiences as counterdiscourse.

As a writer, teacher, and activist, I must confess that I find it remarkable that I had not explored *memoria* in my studies before this project. In fact, I am gob smacked by its absolute absence in my work and, at the same time, how it penetrates and permeates all of my ways of knowing and being without my conscious awareness of its influence. Building on memory work undertaken by Crowley, Reynolds, and Morrison, I believe my scholarship in this dissertation has the potential to expand the

rhetorical tradition, not only in terms of understanding the interrelatedness of the rhetorical canons but also to draw attention to the critical, generative, and embodied dimensions of our rhetorical practices. While *memoria* is a contested and complex term steeped in a classical system of recursive canons, its significance to contemporary rhetoric and composition theory and pedagogy has hardly been realized. I believe that the most important implication of my work here is that there is much more to learn and do with this canon. In order to fully engage with *memoria*, I call for all of us in rhetoric and composition to locate ourselves with the constructed dimensions of memory: as embodied subjects, as teachers, and as writers. With such a view, we will be better able to chart the journeys that lead us to this place, honoring the fractures which inscribe our social relations and remembering those things we didn't know we had forgotten.

## APPENDIX A: COURSE RATIONALE

My first-year composition courses focus on how “difference” is represented in mainstream fictional films. The class focuses on writing about how social categories such as race/ethnicity, whiteness (often a new concept for students), gender, class, sexuality, and disability are represented in films and how these representations reflect our perceptions of ourselves and others. I provide students some background information on the interlocking nature of race/ethnicity/whiteness with other social categories, such as Richard Dyer’s “The Matter of Whiteness,” Peggy McIntosh’s “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack,” Beverly Daniels Tatum’s “Defining Racism: Can We Talk?” and Allan Johnson’s “The Trouble We’re In: Privilege, Power, and Difference.”

I also supplement their knowledge about movies with handouts that focus on overviews on how difference is represented in movies, such as “Film and Ideology,” “Images of Disability in the Media,” “Race, Whiteness, and Film,” and “Gender Stereotypes in Film.” Armed with these simplified concepts, students practice reading movies beyond their entertainment value, focusing on ideological critiques of social categories. Once a foundational understanding of “difference and inequality” and film criticism has been established in the first several weeks, students analyze individual films and how they are interpreted and received by critics, the viewing public, and other students. They learn to apply various rhetorical strategies to both interpret and communicate about films in ways that move beyond focusing on their entertainment value. The course also engages students in questions about how/why films matter today

and what makes certain films “controversial” or potentially transformative. It also engages them in exploring how private and public memories shape these films and our reactions and how these memories can both sustain and revise hegemonic discourses and power relationships. Subsequently, students are empowered with the critical and generative tools they need to (de)/(re) construct literacy memories and challenge white privilege. Focusing on these types of important social issues provide students with a wide array of writing opportunities that challenge them to think beyond their comfortable forms (e.g., 5-paragraph theme, AP-style writing, written texts), use multi-modal analyses (textual, visual, aural), augment their critical thinking skills, and communicate between and within differences to various audiences.

In order to teach students how to better assess their own work rather than rely on the teacher’s comments, students participate in a Writer’s Group (4-5 members) throughout the semester, helping each other to critique ideas and texts, brainstorm, revise papers, and figure out how to communicate effectively for different audiences. This is also a space where private and public memories are shared and examined, creating alliances between students as they “re-member” various experiences with literacy and (de)/(re)construct both private and public memories.

## **APPENDIX B: SYLLABUS (COURSE DESCRIPTION AND MAJOR ASSIGNMENTS)**

### **Course Description**

Movies are filled with scenes of people of all ages, sexes, races, and social classes reading and writing in widely varied contexts and purposes. Yet these scenes go largely unnoticed, despite the fact that these images recreate and reinforce our notions about literacy. As Bronwyn T. Williams argues, if we watch films carefully for who reads and writes, in what settings, and for what social goals, we can see a reflection of our perceptions of literacy. Such perceptions influence public and political debates about literacy instruction, teachers' expectations of what will happen in their classrooms, and student's ideas about what reading and writing should be. They also shape your memories about how successful you have been in literacy encounters and your confidence about future experiences.

English 101+ will ask you to read, write, and think critically about such representations. You will be encouraged to probe beneath the surface of what is represented to speculate not only on what these images say but also how they are put together; to locate assumptions, beliefs and values at work in these images; and to explore how these images reflect your own memories and experiences with writing and reading. Through both formal and informal writing assignments, you will practice analyzing your own literacy memories and experiences and those of others. Moreover, I hope you'll better understand your ways of knowing, being, and communicating about the world.

As you compose and analyze representations of literacy in English 101, you will practice strategies for generating and focusing ideas and for drafting, revising, and editing. You will have an opportunity to examine your individual writing practices, identify techniques that both help and hinder your writing (including the stories and images you have internalized about yourself as a writer), and reflect on the results of the writing choices you make. Peer response will be an important part of this process and will provide you with information about the effects of your writing decisions on readers. As a requirement of all major assignments, you will need to substantially revise your work following peer and/or instructor response.

The nature of this course and the materials are challenging. While opening up new spaces for discovery and growth can be exhilarating, fear and a sense of loss can also accompany the revision process. Risk and sacrifice, anger and frustration, fear and trust, elation and catharsis are ever-present in all stages of writing. Instead of ignoring the emotions that motivate or block our work, we will invite them into our learning process. As we write throughout semester, we will fall into our words, allowing our embodied experiences and memories to carry us to places and possibilities that we could not see before.

### **Major Assignments**

**Papers:** There will be **four** formal writing assignments for this course. The first will be a **Literacy Narrative**, in which you will examine some aspect of your writing or reading life for how it has helped shape your personal “story” about literacy. For the second assignment, the **Literacy Narrative Analysis**, you will analyze another writer’s story about literacy to defend a particular interpretation of it and identify strategies the writer uses to communicate his or her meaning. The third assignment, the **Contextual Analysis**, will ask that you examine your second paper through a set of secondary texts or “lenses.” In the **Final Exam Essay**, you will revise your initial Literacy Narrative and write an accompanying reflection. This will allow you to draw on what you have learned throughout the course.

**Studio Sessions (S):** You will also attend one Studio Session per week. These sessions will focus on craft issues at various stages of the writing process. You will be asked to substantially reinvent, refocus, and revise your writing to present a more effective and engaging exploration of your topic. You will be expected to bring whatever writing you have in progress to the sessions for further revision or discussion. You will receive course credit for this studio work, so it is important to arrive to class prepared, pay attention, and stay engaged. To receive full credit, you will be required not only to attend sessions but to actively participate, contributing your own writing and responding constructively to the writing of your peers.

**Your Role in Class:** This course requires your attendance, participation, and responsibility to your peers. I will assume that you will be prepared for class, on time, and offer productive, frequent, and meaningful discussion and feedback on the texts covered. In other words, this is not a sit-in-the-back-of-the-room-and-remain-invisible course. For example, if you do not have your essay ready for small group workshop or if you are late or absent for a workshop, all the students in your group suffer. You and your writing are part of the course. I also expect that you will adhere to the highest standards of behavior for an academic setting in order not to disrupt the class: be on time, turn off your cell phone, and respect your peers’ privacy and work.

**Writer’s Notebook (WN):** The **notebook** is intended for you to use as a way to locate, collect, and make sense of your thoughts about the content of the class and your own writing processes. It is also the location where you will experiment as a writer. I may ask you to answer specific questions, define terms, research details, or simply develop your ideas about the reading/writing assignments. You will also use the notebook to do exploratory writing, jot down observations, and collect notes on your investigations. You will be asked to **write daily** in your notebook (**3 pages** everyday outside of class). You will also use it to develop your ideas about the reading/writing assignments. Furthermore, you will use the notebook to do exploratory writing, jot down observations, explore your memory, and collect notes on your investigations. *Bring it to class with you everyday.*

### APPENDIX C: WRITING ASSIGNMENT 1 (LITERACY NARRATIVE)

A literacy narrative tells a story like Jimmy Baca’s “Coming into Language.” In his case, he relates how language in general, and writing in particular, “free” him from old patterns of thinking, helping him discover a new sense of self and connection with the world. A narrative like this relies heavily on vivid scenes and descriptive detail to convey some controlling idea or statement about literacy. Your narrative can explore how you understand the role of language, writing, or reading in your own life.

**Requirements:** Based on some of the writing exercises we do in class, along with your Writer’s Notebook work, pick a memory of an event from your past, either positive or negative, dramatize it in one or more scenes, and then reflect upon it to come to some kind of insight about how writing, reading, or language works, or what it means, in your life. You want to tell a good story, with plenty of vivid, specific, concrete detail. But you also want to hang the details on some larger idea or point that emerges as you brainstorm, work through your memories, and draft the narrative. This is your story, so it should convey some of your truth about writing, reading, or language, not some Hallmark card cliché about the joys of literacy. It should honestly depict some of *your* experience, in *your* voice, with *your* critical reflections on it.

To make this assignment your own, you should consider one of several ways to remember an important literacy event:

- You might look at an influential person or persons who helped or hurt your progress toward becoming a writer or reader.
- You might examine some significant event or series of events in your reading or writing life.
- You might look at cultural attitudes toward literacy and explore how you have navigated some of those for better or worse.
- You might explore judgments you or other people make about literacy. What makes someone too literate or not literate enough? A story might be lurking beneath those judgments.
- You might talk about becoming literate in some subculture or group, learning the lingo, gaining acceptance because you could read, write, or speak the code of the group.
- You might recall a specific movie or key scene that shaped the way you thought about language, writing, or reading.

**Remember:** *Less is more.* Don’t try to cover too much. Observe your literacy memory through a 1 x 1 inch frame, as Anne Lamott suggests.

## APPENDIX D: WRITING ASSIGNMENT 2 (TEXTUAL ANALYSIS)

Good movies, like good stories, poems, and plays, are best read more than once. Under close analysis, a well-made film can reveal qualities and meanings that we miss the first time through. Since readers' backgrounds and experiences are different, meanings that you can see in a text may not be ones your classmates recognize. For that reason, you need to back your interpretation with evidence and explain your line of thought. In this assignment, you will have an opportunity to hone your analytical skills in examining the strategies a filmmaker uses to create meaning in a text and how those strategies may affect the viewer.

**Assignment:** If we watch films carefully for who reads and writes, in what settings, and for what social goals, we can see a reflection of our perceptions of literacy. Given this perspective, what does the title of John Singleton's provocative film (*Higher Learning*) mean and how does it relate to issues of "difference and inequality"? In essence, that is the question you are being asked to answer in this assignment. You will write a **4-5 page** paper that attempts to answer this question, interpreting some aspect of the film in light of the issues posed about literacy and race/ethnicity/whiteness, gender, class, and sexuality.

Do not decide whether the portrayal of higher learning is accurate, but analyze how it constructs a certain image of literacy and what might be the significance of the representation. You will need to formulate a convincing thesis, provide evidence to support your claim about the film, and show your reader that your interpretation is valid, even if s/he disagrees. To write an analysis of a film, you must study the film carefully. Your critical analysis should be derived from your personal encounter with the film, not from published criticism. Furthermore, it is not enough to like or dislike the movie; you must determine how it works on the viewer and how it reflects relevant cultural and social issues.

### **Key Questions to Consider:**

- What does the film "really mean," that is, your interpretation of it?
- What is the purpose of the film? In other words, why was it created?
- How does the film affect (e.g., influence, draw in, turn off, anger, excite, etc.) its viewer?
- What is "higher learning"?
- What is "unlearning"?
- Who embodies the values of higher learning or unlearning? How?
- How does this embodiment speak to larger issues of race/ethnicity/whiteness, gender, class, sexuality, and (dis)ability engaged in the film text?

**If movies reflect our culture and help to communicate our values as a society, then think about some of these questions as they relate to literacy and "difference":**

- How does the film reflect our values about literacy/higher learning?
- How does the film reflect, help to create, or contradict our stereotypes or controlling images of race/ethnicity, gender, and class as they relate to literacy?
- What myths about literacy does the film reflect or contradict?
- What values about literacy/higher education does this film argue for?
- How does this film mark a change in our attitudes about some aspect of literacy?
- How does the film define what is "good" or "bad" or "normal" about some aspect of literacy?
- How does the film illustrate power relationships between different groups of people?
- Is character X a role model for a specific social group (e.g., Latina, gay, African-American, women) today who are in college?
- Why do viewers identify (or not identify) with character X?

**Purpose:** Argue your case in a way that **persuades** your reader to consider your view on the movie.

**Audience:** An educated, college audience who has NOT necessarily studied the film in great depth. To engage your classmates intellectually, you need to analyze and support your points in depth.

### APPENDIX E: WRITING ASSIGNMENT 3 (CONTEXTUAL ANALYSIS/DOCUMENTED RESEARCH)

**Context:** Any factor or influence surrounding a text, event, or rhetorical situation. These factors shape the way the work or event is viewed and understood by people. A contextual analysis means that you will look through multiple “lens” texts to help you “see” an issue more fully.

Contexts come in various forms. Directors/actors/writers have **biographical** contexts, the events of their lives that influence them. Sometimes the **historical, social and/or cultural** context is the story with the greatest influence on a film. The **critical** context of film might be interesting—what people have said about the film and how that changed the meaning. The **film genre** or **artistic** context may exert the greatest influence, or a prevalent **theoretical viewpoint** may matter most. Other contexts include the **political, psychological, personal, and technological**.

**Assignment:** In your second essay, you interpreted how you saw one feature of literacy operating within *Higher Learning*. But no text exists in isolation. What happens in a text makes more sense when you view it as part of a larger story. For the third essay, I want you further develop your close-reading and analytical skills by articulating an important feature(s) of a film by relating it to a larger story or context, specifically how literacy is linked to difference/diversity/identity/representations and memory. You may choose from one of the following films: *The Bourne Supremacy* (2004); *Dangerous Minds* (1995); *Finding Forester* (2000); *Freedom Writers* (2007); *The Great Debaters* (2007); *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* (2002); *Holes* (2003); *The Hurricane* (1999); or *Legally Blonde* (2001). In short, you will include secondary texts to support your assertions about the film you choose to write about.

#### **Key Questions to Consider:**

Your **4-5 page** essay will address this broad question: How does this film depict literacy, and how does it reflect other contextual issues or concerns, especially race/ethnicity/whiteness/gender/sexuality/class/ability? Some specific questions to consider:

- How is a particular group of people represented in the film?
- What personal and public memories about literacy are being represented in the film?
- What values/myths/concerns/themes about literacy does this film communicate?
- How are race/ethnicity/whiteness/gender/class/sexuality/disability portrayed in terms of literacy?
- Who is the film primarily directed towards?
- Who/what does the film ask the audience to identify with? (character, themes, types of power, uses of literacy, etc.)
- How does this film mark a change in our attitudes about some aspect of literacy?

- How does the film define what is "good" or "bad" or "normal" about some aspect of literacy?
- What kinds of literacy are not present? Why?
- How did the cultural climate at the time shape the film (history, politics, social trends)?
- How did other texts (contexts) influence the film?

\*\*\*\*No matter how you approach the film, you'll want to come to some conclusions about the representations of literacy and how they affect the underlying message of the film. **How does the film reflect the assumptions, conflicts, values, desires, and/or fears about literacy?**

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