

'A KIND OF THING THAT MIGHT BE': TOWARD A POETICS OF NEW MEDIA

by

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DEDICATION

To my wife Nicole, the bravest and the best person I've ever known.

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INTRODUCTION

The term “new media” may be seen as the current label for scholarly work that investigates what occurs in the powerful intersection of language and computer technology, a place of intellectual concern that may have in the past been called “computers and composition,” “cyberculture,” “hypertext theory,” and so on. The divergence of thought and possibility that may occur in the exchange between language and computer technology remains vast—so immense, in fact, that the current term “new media” will undoubtedly come in due course to be replaced by another more in vogue, less familiar, more fetching, and less traveled.

This dissertation examines new media by taking as its starting point the definition offered by Lev Manovich, “the shift of all culture to computer culture”—new media are new not so much because they have not existed before but because they must adhere to the conventions of a computer. Media, according to Manovich, become programmable, and in their new programmability, along with a host of other implications and repercussions of that programmability, we human beings experience something new. Articulating that *something* remains no easy chore, and Manovich continually makes his case that “the language of new media” much resembles the language of that older medium, cinema.

However, to nod in agreement with Manovich is not the present task; instead, I take Manovich and place his notion of new media in direct dialogue with rhetorical theorists Aristotle, Plato, Kenneth Burke, Barry Brummett, Jeffery Walker, Michel Foucault, and other writers and thinkers in order to pursue a portion of that “shift of all culture”: I ask, “If new media has a language, what is the poetics of that language?” In

order to pursue an answer to this question, I take individual new media objects—the film *Saving Private Ryan*; the video game *Medal of Honor: Frontline*; the computer worm MyDoom; the media coverage of the 1996 presidential campaign trail, including the “Dean Scream”; the SanDisk’s cooperation with the Alzheimer’s Association’s “Take Action against Alzheimer’s” campaign; the film *The Manchurian Candidate*; and the modern database—and analyze how they make meaning. In order to do this, I frequently reach back into antiquity, specifically into the early and predisciplinary areas of philosophy, rhetoric, and poetics.

* * *

Though it may be said that that there is a nearly universal concord that computers have made life in the academy a better place, the question of the exact value of computers—the heuristic, the hermeneutic, the ontological, the epistemological, the philosophical, the artistic, the pedagogical, and any other one cares to name—remains far from settled in the humanities specifically and the academy generally, and terms like “new media” promise much in the same way that anything branded “new” promises: a departure from the tyranny of traditions; a freedom untasted waiting just around the corner; a shock that, failing promises, will at the very least awaken the senses; an optimistic hope for a future full of change and democratic possibility; a new path where before there was a damnation of ruts.

New media studies, then, strings a tightrope between opposing poles of History and the Future; it is arguable that many writers who publish in new media studies walk

forward and keep a fixed gaze on the future, on what will come to be, and take it on faith that the past behind them will continue to hold them up. It is a rare thing to read a new media scholar who concentrates solely on the past of known and unknown history, for she would have to edge backwards, like Benjamin's angel, toward an unseen future, her History in constant view. Given this scheme, it is next to impossible for a new media scholar to be mindful of history and the future in the present.

To be a responsible new media scholar, one must disregard this metaphor of unidirectional understanding and progressive causation¹ and instead consider an alternative metaphor: the Labyrinth. For it is in the metaphor of the Labyrinth that time bends back on itself: the Labyrinth offers a space for puzzlement, for containment, for memory and its machinations, but also a space for the monstrous, a space for the heroic, a space for possibilities and a space for choices. To enter the Labyrinth is to enter history and the future simultaneously; to enter the Labyrinth is to enter uncertainty.

* * *

This dissertation by implication suggests a corrective to traditional literature studies and the departments they engender. Perhaps the most injurious position that modern Literature programs hold is the one that strenuously defines what literature is and what it is not, to the exclusion of the manifest and manifold discursivities of people communicating globally. In their own way Literature departments continually recreate a canon of acceptable literature deemed excellent and fit for study, but insofar as this

¹ Additionally, one must do away with the spectacle of the solitary performer of the strange who exists to forecast an immanent way of living or possible way of living.

canonicity privileges printed, textual, single-author, limited-run work in accepted genres by university or literary presses, it seriously narrows the circumference of what may be studied in, say, the writing classroom.

I do not intend here to offer the false choice that one can either study serious literature or everything else; indeed, one can, and does, study whatever occurs to one as worthy of study. However, as Miller and Jackson have recently argued in “What Are English Majors For?” the heavy reliance on *literature* as a defining element of the US English major has resulted in declining numbers of English majors, a muddled identity of those remaining, and a disciplinary unwillingness to expand into other areas of inquiry. The authors ask “Why didn’t English studies expand and adapt, as did speech, which reached out to encompass new communications technologies and saw a rise in the number of BAs of over 500 percent between 1970 and 2000?” (683). By comparison, English majors during the same period fell: “there were 20 percent fewer BAs in English than thirty years earlier, even though the number of college graduates had grown by almost 50 percent” (683). Miller and Jackson offer a sobering account of the modern state of the English major, and they observe at multiple points the two probable culprits: a narrow definition of English (mainly literature), and an unwillingness on the part of departments to expand and adapt, which is another way of saying an unwillingness to become uncertain, an unwillingness to enter the Labyrinth.

My purposes, then, are threefold:

1. Keeping as open a mind as I am capable, I explore the new possibilities of these new media, with particular attention to the ways in which they make meaning. I seek, then, to extend poetics throughout the digital realm.

2. In order to accomplish this, I draw on divergent thinkers, though they may be loosely categorized into those writing on poetics, those on rhetoric, and a few on both. Blending areas of academic inquiry may be seen as another instance of entertaining uncertainty and of entering the Labyrinth.
3. I challenge the modern notion, disseminated by US Literature departments, that only certain discourse can and should be formally studied, and I make the case for the blending of film studies, computer game studies, literary studies, and cultural studies.

In order to accomplish these purposes, I proceed through the dissertation to enunciate four principles of a new media poetics. In chapter one, I theorize the previous ways that poetics emerged in particular cultures in precise times and served specific ends that articulated the relationship between discourse and culture—the Platonic, the Aristotelian, the Horacian, and the Longinian. These touchstone poetics reveal different implicit statements about the relationship of discourse, the individual, and the state—it is necessary to articulate these poetics in order to demonstrate how any new poetics does not just arrive at the doorstep of a culture; they instead are heralded. They inevitably rejuvenate a previous poetics. This point serves to contrast a sharp break with new media poetics, which violate all of these rules. New media poetics more resemble the most subtle rhetorical function that Barry Brummett discusses—the implicative level of common sense that is almost invisible—and though it may appear that I am equivocating in my use of terms (in that poetics can be seen to serve a rhetorical function), I am actually setting the stage for my use of thinkers like Kenneth Burke and Jeffrey Walker, who actually combine rhetoric and poetics with profit. In this way, I posit that perhaps

some of the most persuasive discourse makes little to no formal claims at being either persuasive or discourse—new media objects.

Chapter two sets forward the foundational principle of new media poetics—that metaphor is the engine behind meaning-making—and then tests that principle via a Burkean analysis of two new media objects, *Saving Private Ryan* and *Medal of Honor*. This chapter demonstrates how Burke’s general theory of the metaphor (as demonstrated by the Pentad and his Theory of Forms) can be seen as a prototype to Walker’s rhetorical poetics and also as a complement to Manovich’s notion of the transcoding principle. These three thinkers echo each other in their differing understandings of metaphor’s ability to transfer meaning. Specific to new media studies (especially to Manovich’s privileging of the term *cinema*), it is important that I analyze not just two new media objects, but two that demonstrate one example of the current “shift of all culture to new media” and its poetics, and this can be seen in the shift from cinema to computer game. Such an analysis places cinema and computer game on a continuum of new media objects—on a continuum of discursive objects, and in this way I propose that the humanities generally, and English Literature specifically, is in need of a corrective to the E. D. Hirsch-brand of acceptable discourse.

In chapter three, by harnessing the “rhetorical poetics” of Walker, I explore how memory works in both the enthymeme and in metaphor (representative of rhetoric and poetics) in order to articulate the second principle: new media objects discount human memory. This continues the trajectory of combining rhetoric with poetics by examining how the audience’s ability to make meaning can be indexed by its active participation. Traditional enthymeme production—articulated in Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*—relied on

knowing the particular *endoxa* common to a specific group, and these could be set up in a given speech and “completed” in the mind/heart/soul of the listener. Insofar as the use of enthymemes in the ancient Greek world relied on the personal memory of the audience, completing an enthymeme was an internal, personally logical, and autonomous process. New media practices are profoundly social and political, and the persuasion they effect is not necessarily achieved by formal reasoning, but in the poetic, in the ability of the audience to enthymematically and metaphorically complete texts and experiences.

In chapter four I collide rhetorics and poetics in looking at their respective valuations of memory, both in the rhetorical canon and in its reform by Peter Ramus. This chapter also recursively reaches back to chapters one and two when it analyzes how dominant metaphors shape meaning systems; its conclusion finds dual notions of the “universal key” to all knowledge and “the cyborg dream” of human transcendence. Taken together, then, thus far the poetics of new media begins in a human desire to shape meaning through creating associations; it progresses through memory’s ability to authenticate or deauthenticate knowledge; memory itself becomes externalized and can be seen to displace personhood; finally, the externalization of memory (in the form of computer information) suggests an ultimate merging with that data: instead of spiritual return, futurists and others in the field of transhuman studies seek a “return” to the machine.

My final chapter explores both the human motivations behind what Manovich terms “the database complex”; that is, my final chapter (1) traces the historical formation of the modern database, (2) explores the database as a unique cultural object, finding in the myth of the labyrinth a strong metaphor for the current dominant expression of data

organization, and (3) suggests two of many possible evolving worldviews encouraged by the database. It concludes that databases aggregate forfeited memory, and the data in databases may be seen as memory that waits for its own discovery.

CHAPTER ONE: WHAT IS A POETICS AND WHAT IS IT FOR?

[Pluralism] has now become the dominant doctrine in our schools, especially in those subjects, English and history, that are closest to culture making.... We shall need to restore certain common contents to the humanistic side of the school curriculum.... [W]e shall also need to modify the now-dominant educational principle that holds that any suitable materials of instruction can be used to teach the skills of reading and writing. I call this the doctrine of educational formalism. (Hirsch 365-66)

In Spring 2004, I was wrapping up my second year at the University of Arizona in its Rhetoric, Composition, and the Teaching of English (RCTE) program. I was also teaching two sections of English 109, an intensive honors composition class which, through its emphasis on analytic multi-text assignments, fulfilled the two-semester First-Year Writing Requirement in one semester. Despite whatever claims the Writing Program may have made about student excellence or instructor freedom to develop curricula, teaching honors was in fact a kind of reward—we honors-course instructors, having sweated it out in the trenches of regular composition, were no longer bound by the pre-assigned curriculum and required in-house textbooks; we could teach whatever texts we liked, and almost invariably, this meant that we taught literature. It seemed accidental that the honors course of study so closely mirrored the standard 101-102 sequence.

My first time teaching honors composition, I decided to have my students investigate the theme of monsters, and I quickly settled on the Norton Critical Editions of two classic novels: *Frankenstein* and *Dracula*. I wanted my students to get excited about

the source materials, to investigate the nature of Victorian monsters, and to make connections between our modern time and these relative ancients. I wanted them to forget the filmic clichés and Halloween caricatures in order to see the real stories underneath. Together we would write close readings, contextual analyses, reader responses; together we would write ourselves into a new understanding of literature.

But in practice, I remember lecturing on the epistolary form to a sleepy group of bright students who did not much seem to care. They did not resent my enthusiasm; rather, they seemed a little perplexed, as if underneath their polite nonparticipation they wondered, “Why does he like this old, dry material so much?” Despite my background in Classics and Poetry, I could not seem to make the material interesting and relevant to my students’ lives, yet we slowly made our way through drafts, conferences, and final essays.

One Friday near the end of the semester, the syllabus required all of the students to hand in revisions of their first essay. I collected the papers from all the students save one: Shawn, a grinning boy from Southern California with a shock of blond hair, ragged cutoffs, and a ubiquitous sweatshirt. He simply shook his head, bemused.

“I don’t have it.”

I noticed Shawn’s bloodshot eyes, black circles, and general personal squalor: was he a drug addict? Why the hell had he not written my draft, and what would explain his nonchalance?

“Why not,” I asked. Then, noting his appearance, “Was there an accident?”

“Nope.” Shawn gave knowing looks to a few of the other males. Unilateral understanding.

“What then?”

“*Halo 2* came out last night.”

* * *

This anecdote would no doubt burn in the heart of E. D. Hirsch much as it burned in my own; not only was I failing to make the canonical literature assessable to my students, but at least some of them also openly embraced the leisure of playing video games over the labor of a graded assignment. On the surface of his argument, Hirsch maintains that the notion of “cultural literacy” needs to be cemented and agreed upon to remedy the “decline in verbal SAT scores among the white middle class” (365). Without a commonly held (read: cultural) understanding of the literary canon, he concludes, “radical consequences follow” (373); thus, Hirsch proposes some equivalent of a “ministry of culture” that would isolate such a canon. Though he admits that it would change— “[I]n our media paced era, [the canon] might change month to month”—Hirsch argues strenuously for the general fixing of a baseline of “what counts”: despite the occasional changes in the canon, “much of it is within our control and is part of our traditional task of culture making” (371). Hirsch eventually undertook just such a project and published *The New Dictionary of Cultural Literacy*, which isolates 6900 entries that help to make an actively literate citizen. Unsurprisingly, both *Dracula* and *Frankenstein* made the cut.

In a sense, this debate—what to teach, to whom, and for what reasons—has raged for millennia. Many have taken issue with any number of Hirsch’s claims; I do not intend to do likewise here. In fact, I wish to point out the similarity between my honors course expectations and Hirsch’s notion of cultural literacy. My chapter title asks “What Is a Poetics, and What Is It For?” The position Hirsch occupies, and the one I unknowingly propagated, rests on a particular understanding of poetics, one that is inextricably linked

to culture. These two contested terms reveal sites of struggle over meaning—I will begin with the former first because it is necessary to review what I term the “poetics narrative”: the story of poetics as circulated in the Western tradition, in order to understand how poetics have meant, mean now, and may come to mean.

Poetics—A Brief History

Poetics as it has come down in the Western tradition has traditionally been associated with a theory of poetry, what poetry is and what poetry should be. As Susan Brown Carlton writes, the term “has been applied to discourse that has also been called ‘aesthetic,’ ‘literary,’ ‘fictional,’ or ‘imaginative’”; it has “consisted of theoretical reflections on the mode of being, way of knowing, or art of doing that such discourse evokes or presupposes” (528). Her encyclopedic essay traces the manifestations of poetics within the tension created by the rhetoric-philosophy-poetics triangle from Plato and the Sophists all the way to the 19th-century’s French Symbolists; in this scheme, poetics, at different historical points, is defined by its associations and dissociations with rhetoric and philosophy.

The Contradictory Poetics of Plato

At all events we are well aware that poetry being such as we have described is not to be regarded seriously as attaining to the truth; and he who listens to her, fearing for the safety of the city which is within him, should be on his guard against her seductions and make our words his law.
(*Republic* 10.608)

[B]ut in reality the greatest of blessings comes to us through madness, when it is sent as a gift from gods.... But he who without the divine madness comes to the doors of the Muses, confident that he will be a good poet by art, meets with no success, and the poetry of the sane man vanishes into nothingness before that of the inspired madman. (*Phaedrus* 148)

The above quotes articulate a seemingly irresolvable tension within the Platonic corpus: On the one hand, discourse offers dangerous mimesis, which, through engaging emotions hinder rationality; on the other hand, discourse that harnessed divine madness creates ultimate inspiration. I use *discourse* here, rather than simply *poetry* because Plato and many other commentators on poetics after him used poetry as an example of language that was specifically designed to invoke emotion rather than intellect. Because my project is aimed at extending poetics throughout the digital realm, *discourse* is a better term because most current theories of language admit that all language use—poetic or not—always invokes innumerable effects and affects. All discourse makes meaning, and what appears in Plato to be a contradictory poetics may alternately been seen holistically as a piecemeal poetic that reveals the purchase of emotions in the creation of meaning.

In the poetics narrative, Plato's understanding of poetics typically amounts to this poetry-as-mimesis: Because of its distance from the true forms, poetry is depreciated. Carlton succinctly articulates this mimetic understanding of poetics: Artistic objects like poems come from lowly poets who "ha[ve] no access to the realm of ideas but can only produce counterfeit copies of external appearances sealed off from truth: imitations of

imitations of reality” (528). Plato famously threw these imitators out of his republic, and for this reason it is tempting though incorrect to make assertions regarding Plato and his outright refusal to situate poetics in culture.

As Carlson and others have noted, scholars who adopt this uncomplicated stance choose to ignore “Plato’s definition of poesis as inspired madness,” which manifests itself as the highly evocative and poetic use of myth. A further contradiction: Though in the text “his explicit statements remain critical...yet by relying on myth as a mechanism for representing the moment of dialectical discovery, he harnesses the power of poetics to philosophy” (528). This is a noteworthy point, and C. Jan Swearingen agrees, locating Plato at the genesis of many intellectual antagonisms: “Plato’s importance as a literary artist instigated the wars between philosophy and poetry, poetry and rhetoric, and rhetoric and philosophy” (526). The debate over Plato’s proper designation—philosopher, poet, or rhetorician—is less important and less interesting than the observation that these three systems of meaning-making are able, through discourse, to audition all meanings.

Indeed, there is ample discourse that seeks to define once and for all a knowable and static Plato. One could claim that his dangerous mimesis represents an elitist moral philosopher’s understanding of “high culture”—that which edifies—and that this helped to engender its opposite, “high art”—art for art’s sake. One could claim him to be the enemy of all poets because he famously barred them from his republic. One could paint him as a civic enthusiast struck dumb by the political assassination of his teacher Socrates, a hypocrite who retreated to the safety of philosophy when the going got tough. One could claim that Plato’s literary genius lies in the fact that he is not considered a dramatist. All of these claims about representing him *in toto* are facile. A similar

reductionism occurs when trying to characterize Plato's thoughts on the Sophists, but as Swearingen points out, "The paradoxes of Socrates' roles in the dialogues, and implicitly of Plato's views of rhetoric, warrant repeated emphasis in light of the tendency to create a monolithic Plato who simply denounced rhetoric" (526). Consider the contradictory poetics contained in something like the *Gorgias*: Despite its obvious antagonism to rhetoric, this dialogue proposes an idealized rhetoric; despite his prior odium for poets, this dialogue offers up perhaps his most graceful and poetic of metaphors, the charioteer of the soul; despite his arguments against mimesis, he replicates in dramatic form this most intimate of dialogues; despite his condemnation of writing, it is only through his writing that Plato's thoughts come down through history; despite the last clause, Plato does not purport to represent himself, instead that of his mentor Socrates, who left no writing.

Revisiting the idea that Plato banished poetry wholesale, one finds that in the *Republic*, Plato actually sanctions two kinds: "only such specimens of poetry as are hymns to the gods or praises of good men are to be received into the city" (10.607). One must banish all others, or else "pleasure and pain will be kings in your city instead of law" (10.607). Such an extreme position (dangerous mimesis) seems to preclude his second position (inspired madness)—poetics outside of argument, like rhetoric outside of an understanding of the soul, threatens the state. However, both can be seen to come together: Plato strongly implies that among the primary functions of poetics is to regulate—at all levels of society, from the individual to the State—the kinds and degrees of expressible emotion. In the *Republic*, poetics serves to weed out emotional imitators who undermine rational government, and in *Phaedrus*, poetics serves to root out

worthless imitation while nurturing genuine divine inspiration (which, presumably, is not imitative because it derives from the gods). Seen this way, Plato is not contradictory so much as he illuminates the rules of his poetics piecemeal, one guideline in this text, another in that one.

Regardless of the impossibility of knowing Plato's true feelings on poetics, one may say that by calling poetry "mimesis," Plato was at the very least calling attention to the immense power of language to shape meaning. In a straightforward statement, Too writes that "[p]hilosophy, for Plato, had among its concerns the formation of the ideal community" (268). Plato is perhaps at his most successful when he utilizes the power of allegory to articulate such an ideal (consider the Allegory of the Cave, from *The Republic*). It is sometimes the case that the poetry of Plato outlives the philosophy: consider his story of Atlantis, as told in the *Timaeus* and the *Critias*. Though it was most surely intended as an invented myth to demonstrate his political thought, the notion of a prehistoric, advanced, and lost civilization remains the one Platonic idea to dominate popular imaginations since. For example, a Google search on "Atlantis" yields 57 million hits; over 30,000 matches on Amazon.com, (of those, 24,279 book titles); and 148 matches on the Internet Movie Database.² Clearly Plato understood the power of poetics to make meaning, and in vigorously attacking poets in the name of moral philosophy, he may have sought to corner that particular market. Summarizing Plato scholar David Roochnik, Moeller and McAllister agree: "In order to lay claim to the supremacy of philosophy, however, he [Plato] had to constrain, dismiss, and exclude other ways of knowing, including rhetoric, techne, and poetry" (192). Through his contradictions, Plato

² It is perhaps telling that as of this writing, no formalized system yet exists within MLA to cite search engine results.

demonstrates that how one illustrates one's argument is as important, if not more important, as the argument itself (a position that paradoxically echoes his rancor for the Sophists and reveals how all meaning-makers are able, through language, to create influence). This implicit poetics of form—(1) that philosophical argument may best be presented in dramatic form and (2) that metaphoric, emotional discourse can best incarnate rational argument—comes to bear on a discussion of Aristotelian poetics and the production of form.

Aristotle's *Poetics*

Aristotle's *Poetics* is typically discussed in one of three ways: (1) its status as a *techne*, or productive art, (2) Aristotle's method of defining the subject, and (3) the disputed term *catharsis*. An overview of Aristotle and his subsequent treatment suggests that in the poetics narrative, *Poetics* helped to cement both what qualifies as discourse and what social function discourse serves. However, these two qualities often and unfortunately overshadow the ability of discourse to be productive—productive of form, productive of knowledge.

In Atwill and Lauer's article "Refiguring Rhetoric as an Art: Aristotle's Concept of *Techne*," the authors recall that Aristotle's epistemological taxonomy was not limited to the binary of theory ("episteme") and practice ("praxis") but included a third, productive knowledge ("techne"), which unlike theory and practice, remains the only kind of knowledge with no end ("telos") in itself. Thus whereas Plato presumed a doctrine (practice), Aristotle actually explicated one (theory). For an example of this epistemological distinction, the philosophy and science of architecture demonstrate

theoretical knowledge; the means-to-an-end, nuts and bolts of the job site show practical knowledge; the productive knowledge is not in the house once constructed, but “in the use made of the house by those for whom it was constructed” (29). *Techne* is the art of coming-into-being; as Atwill and Lauer observe, all productive arts—like rhetoric, for example—are “concerned with the contingent, with what could be otherwise” (25). For instance, in the *Republic*, when summarizing his parable of the cave, Plato discusses how the “eye of the soul” of the uneducated man can be turned around. Plato specifically uses the word “*techne*” to characterize the method of transformation: “there might be an art (*techne*) of the speediest and most effective shifting or conversion of the soul...an art of bringing it about” (“αυτου τεχνηνε αν ειε τεισ περιαγωγεις, τιπα τροπον οσ παστα τε και ανυσιμοτατα μεταστραπηαισεσται”) (Loeb 135). The noun in this passage is “*techne*” and, the verb is “*metastrophaisestai*,” a relative of “*strophe*” (“to turn”). As a result, the motion throughout this passage gets at *how* things come into being, namely, through change.

Another key distinction that usually crops up is the “savior function” that Aristotle fulfills in applying his method to poetics. Whereas Plato vacillates between open hostility for and an equivocating embrace of poetic devices in his own writing, Aristotle seems to lend order to the discussion. In particular, he lends a philosophical method: begin with *arche*, or “first principles” of the subject, and then through deduction arrive at particular conclusions (Orsini 636). Edward J. Corbett, in his introduction to the *Rhetoric and Poetics*, paraphrases Elder Olson’s observation that “When one is trying to figure out the principles governing any productive art, he says, one starts out by looking at a completed product” (xxii). In the case of the *Poetics*, “the inductively arrived formula

is the definition, given at the beginning of Chapter 6, of one species of imitative poetry, tragedy. Using this definition or formula, one then proceeds deductively to determine what the constituent parts of such a whole must be” (xxii). What follows is an examination of the six parts of tragedy, in order of importance: plot, character, thought, diction, melody, and spectacle. By making plot central, “Aristotle aligns poets with the production of form...[which] ensures that attributes cohere into bounded objects and that occurrences over time can reappear as knowable events” (Carlton 529). This observation of form’s relationship to knowledge informs an understanding of new media.

In how many ways might new media poetics also harness the power of form? Might new media poetics be Aristotelian, a doctrine that guides the creation of new knowledge? Not only is poetics a kind of productive knowledge that simultaneously restricts, but Aristotle’s methodology also invites criticism by providing its theory, and the ability to gauge value depends on what Carlson terms “the sociocultural rationale, evocation of catharsis” (528). The term “catharsis” is widely contested to this day, but its component parts of pity and fear are not; in “Tragedy and Self-Sufficiency,” M. C. Nussbaum uses these two emotions to highlight the differences between Platonic and Aristotelian valuations of poetics. She argues that Greek literature—well before Aristotle wrote on catharsis—demonstrated that “[t]he vulnerability of good people to ethically significant reversals is among the central themes of tragedy” (263). For Nussbaum, pity is linked to “fellow-feeling.” Pity, that uniquely human feeling “takes as its object the suffering of another” and responds to it: “thus in pity the human characters draw close to the one who suffers, acknowledging that their own possibilities are similar,” which opens the door to fear (265-67). Echoing Carlton in this relationship, “the poets see, I believe,

the social benefits of pity” (267). In order to flesh out a broader understanding of these social benefits, like many scholars Nussbaum goes outside the text in question—here the *Poetics*—and reads the *Rhetoric* and *The Nichomachian Ethics* metarhetorically to understand Aristotle in the context of his corpus. This last strategy is understandable given that *Poetics* is incomplete.

To be sure, there are many impediments to any understanding of the text, and Stephen Halliwell describes a few: “incomplete...afflicted by textual corruptions...disproportionate...frequently elusive and tantalizing” (“Epilogue” 410). Despite the ambiguities of key terms like “catharsis” and “hamartia,” and despite the many problems that the abbreviated text offers, Aristotle makes a major contribution to the field of poetics, one lasting to the current day, when he argues for the epistemic function of discourse, a process that is guided by poetics. Contingency abounds; as a productive art, discourse deserves to be studied because, like rhetoric, its practice seeks to motivate audiences to specific purposes. Lastly, it should be noted that this text authorized the serious inquiry of an otherwise mundane part of life in ancient Athens: attending theatre. Aristotle, in exploring the machinations of Athenian tragedy, sought to give voice to a common, untheorized social practice that, like new media, had hitherto not been seen to merit such attention.

Horace’s *Ars Poetica*

Rome first staggered the world, then swelled / to fill it up; spilling wine /
in their Own Great Name, / Romans now feast like wild pigs, / Swilling
loud.... So musicians gave up being quiet, / grave, turned into strolling

players, / sneered, leered.... Playwrights...pushed a pack of naked satyrs /
 into the public eye...and audiences sat seduced, / coaxed, / titillated even
 in their drunken satisfaction, / ready to piss on Zeus. (Horace 18)

There are people, still, who have land, /and horses, and who know their
 father's name, /and care about these things, /and can be offended. (Horace
 18)

In the poetics narrative, Horace's *Ars Poetica* moves away from the Platonic poetic (discourse-as-dangerous-mimesis) and also away from the Aristotelian poetic (discourse-as-formal-knowledge) toward an Augustan poetics (discourse-as-redemptive-mimesis). This occurs partly because of an enormous political and cultural shift: as a Roman poet who lived through the transformation of the Roman Republic to the Roman Empire, "the *Ars poetica* is also in harmony with the evolution of Roman oratory...as it moved from the Forum to the salon...oratory became a formal, artistic, literary form different from the speeches Cicero delivered" (Cape 330). Indeed, as James J. Murphy writes, "According to Plutarch, Cicero faced his assassins with the cry, 'With me dies the republic....' He was the last great free orator of the Republic" (202). On the one hand, Cicero and the oratory of politics; on the other, Horace, and the declamation of poetry. The first quotation speaks to the moral depravity Horace sees in Rome; the second, to the best remnants of its lost culture, the audience to which poets should address their work. The poetics of Horace, then, frowns on the problems of his age and finds an idealized earlier literary culture in Greece. Horace was in fact a well-loved Roman poet whose *Ars Poetica* "is not a systematic treatise but a set of maxims for writing poetry that

emphasizes sincerity and attention to the best models from the past” (Chapman 615). The text is difficult to interpret: though in form it “poses as a didactic epistle to fellow poets...on the subject of poets” in practice it “fuses ancient poetic and rhetorical theories that had been kept relatively distinct,” can be easily read “as a collection of aphorisms,” and borrows heavily from Neoptolemus of Parium, “who drew from Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* as well as the *Poetics*” (Cape 329-30). Neoptolemus remains important to the discussion of Horace specifically and to poetics generally for his introduction of three key terms: the “schema of *poesis*, subject matter; *poema*, compositional technique; and *poeta*, the poet” (qtd. in Carlton 530). The emphasis on a poetics of method speaks to the need for a poetry that could, through a deep respect for technique, regain for Roman discourse some of the lost luster by taking Horace’s advice to “Read the Greeks.”

In *Ars Poetica*, Horace updates the poetic value of imitation: “Imitation is neither a copying of appearances nor a structuring of a work to elicit form” but instead imitation literally references the literary achievements of a superior Classical tradition, one a modern Augustan like Horace could not hope to improve (Carlton 530). This position sharply breaks from previous poetics in that it constrains the ability of discourse to rise above its lost acme as exemplified in Classical discourse. Such a constraint precludes an unmediated Augustan poetics that could speak directly to an Augustan present; instead, argues Horace, poets should look backward in time, immerse themselves in Greek discourse, and from it absorb the very items that now impoverish modern discourse: sincere emotions, appropriate models, laborious revision, and critical advice (Cape 330). In this manner, Horace sounds much like Plato: For the latter poems are two removes from reality of Forms; for the former, poems are two removes from the reality of

Classics. For Horace, that “reality” can be seen in the pure discourse of Homer, who “dares nothing / he cannot be sure of doing” (Horace 14). Rome has lost its way, says Horace, and this particular art of poetry becomes, then, the measured appreciation of past masters that must delicately toe the line between discipleship and transgression. The ambiguity and cynicism of such a position, though tempered by a call for the reform of Augustan poetry, lies in the way it solidifies discourse, which leads to an inevitable nostalgia for a misremembered past, as well as a narcissism needed to fuel that nostalgia.

Given these conditions, the poetics of Horace, in fixating on imitating past masters, puts a premium on technique that can be linked to the Moderns: “The importance of careful, craftsman-like consideration of vocabulary and syntax, of correction and rewriting in search of clear and harmonious expression are equally evident in Pope’s ‘Essay on Criticism’ (1709) and in T. S. Eliot’s ‘The Function of Criticism’ (1923)” (Mack 610-11). In the course of the neoclassicism that Horace inspired, this brand of poetics evolved into “‘technical’ poetics” bent on explaining “questions of artistry and poetic construction...in terms of the ends and means appropriate” (Marsh 560). This poetics, then, cannot exist without rules. If Plato presumed a doctrine, and if Aristotle explicated one, then Horace cemented a dogma that relied on rules to recursively measure the discourse of the present moment against an idealized prior discourse. The implications for a new media poetics are many: how, for example, might a Horacian poetics illuminate new media practices like sampling, scratching, and the calls to authenticity that explicitly make up hip hop music? Horace’s poetics remains a touchstone because instead of articulating—as Plato implicitly and Aristotle explicitly do—how poetics should inform the lived experience of a contemporary culture, *Ars*

Poetica articulates how poetics should inform the imagined experience of a previous one. How might the incessant measuring of one discourse by the yardstick of a superior one, be seen in new media? This is a question I will address directly in a later chapter.

[Pseudo-] Longinus *On the Sublime*

Real sublimity contains much food for reflection, is difficult or rather impossible to resist, and makes a strong and ineffaceable impression on the memory. In a word, reckon those things which please everybody all the time as genuinely and finely sublime. (7.1.3-4)

The fourth and final of the touchstone poetics texts I will discuss was attributed to “Dionysius Longinus,” of which next to nothing is known. Drawing inferences from the text itself, D. A. Russell dates the book “from the first century A.D.” based on its last chapter, which “discusses the relation between the decline of discourse and the political change from republican to monarchical government” (‘Longinus’ x).³ Though this echoes Horace, Longinus “wrote to counteract the pedantry of ‘classicists’ who insisted on the exactness of imitation” (xvi). To do this, Longinus, like Aristotle, sees in emotion a powerful force: “Over and against the reason-based and inventional approaches of Aristotle...and Cicero...the sublime is preoccupied with style and emotion...[and] we find here an appeal to the power of imagination and the grandeur of thought” (Oravec 759).

The concept of “the sublime” adds a unique contribution to the narrative of poetics, but as with “catharsis,” the term remains contested. The sublime might be “a

³ Due to the unknown authorship, the title to this text uses single quotation marks: ‘Longinus’ On Sublimity; I’ve preserved them here to distinguish other parenthetical citations.

quality that has a powerful emotional impact on its audience, or more specifically, an impact that awakens the audience members to their ‘higher natures’” (“Longinus” 345). Also, “[t]he sublime, *hypsos*, is an eloquence on an entirely different scale than can be produced by mere craft.... [because] the sublime uplifts, literally ‘transports’ the audience intellectually, psychologically, and ethically” (Carlton 531). It also may “relate poetic excellence to the profundity of the writers’ emotion and the seriousness of their thought” (“Literary”). Longinus’ conceptualization of the sublime “had its roots in the rhetorical distinction...of three styles of speech, high, middle, and low” but Longinus’ achievement was to divorce it from the “technical sphere” of style and marry it to “greatness in literature” best exemplified by the spark metaphor: “a thing of the spirit, a spark that leaps from the soul of the writer to the soul of his reader” (Else 819).

The sublime informs this discussion of poetics because of the way that Longinus, unlike Plato, Aristotle, and Horace, conceived of the effect of discourse on an audience: “‘Longinus’ dwelled upon the psychological effect of sublimity” (Oravec 758). And the poetics of Longinus attempt to give voice to that effect. The central word that Longinus uses to articulate this effect is “elevation”: “It is our nature to be elevated and exalted by true sublimity” (7.2), and in this the poetics of metaphor—the poetics of meaning transference—articulate the near magical quality of feeling one way, and then surprisingly, another. One possible clue to this unique contribution to poetics comes from Longinus’s use of Genesis as an exemplar of sublimity. That “no other pagan writer use[d] the Bible like this” suggests to Russell that “he was either a Jew or in contact with Jewish culture” (xi). Whether or not Longinus was Jewish, that he may have been motivated by a direct or indirect connection to religious enthusiasm offers an intriguing

read on his poetics. The sublime offers up an interaction with the ineffable, which offers a corrective to the technical poetics of neoclassicism. Importantly for the poetics of new media, the sublime, like the Romanticism it inspired, places a premium on the experience of the audience, and because I stress in this project the productive knowledge attained via imagination, this shift to the experience of the audience nicely relates to ways in which the audiences for new media experience similar elevations.

The Continuing Legacy of the Four Poetics

These touchstone poetics continued to inform an understanding of poetics well beyond their respective eras. Each touchstone text responds to previous touchstones while simultaneously stimulating others. Carlton warns that when read independently of their intellectual contexts, these texts present poetics as a discreet field, “and each text becomes the forefather engendering formalist, neoclassical, and Romantic poetics, respectively” (531). While I agree with her call for a broader understanding of the place of poetics, I discover that Plato, Aristotle, Horace, and Longinus still may be represented by these positions:

- (1) Discourse—especially in the form of rhetoric and poetry—is dangerously mimetic, which, by engaging the emotions hinders rationality thus threatens the stability of the state. As a result, poetics severely limits the role and work of poets in society.
- (2) Through individual transformative emotion, discourse improves the state. Poetics should concern itself with the study of form itself,

aiming to articulate the ways in which language can effect personal transformations.

- (3) Discourse should emulate a previous and lost acme. Poetics is the science of understanding the accomplishments of great artists of the past so that their techniques can be taught and practiced in the present.
- (4) Discourse should improve the individual and thereby the state. Poetics should articulate that edificatory experience.

From Aristotle's dissection of the principal parts, it is a short hop to New Criticism and J. C. Ransom; begin with a medieval fiction and work to Plato's injunction against imitation; start with Longinus and end with Reader Response theory; listen to Jonathan Swift and hear echoes of Horace. I do not propose here that all poetics may be reduced down to the four I've discussed, but they do act as major chords commonly played in different eras.

Considering the force that these four chords have exerted on whole societies for over 2400 years, it is perhaps a testament to the power of poetics that they have done so with missing notes. Plato's contradictory poetics must be gleaned from various texts because there is no known finished treatise on poetics. Aristotle's incomplete treatise opens up with the promise "to speak not only of the art in general but also of its species and their respective capacities" but in the end it delivers, mainly, a description of tragedy (1447a). *On the Sublime* "has survived only through medieval copies of a manuscript that was missing about one-third of its length...the earliest of these copies dates from around

the tenth century” (“Longinus” 344). This leaves Horace’s 476 lines of Latin poetry as the most complete of arguably the most circulated texts on poetics.

As the main examples demonstrate, to declare a particular poetics is to define the function of discourse for a particular culture, and this is difficult to do without a grave ethos. Consider the contradictory poetics within Plato, who both condemns poetry for its emotionally mimetic properties and celebrates poetry that is divinely inspired; and all this through the voice of a luminary no less than Socrates himself. From the historical remove of Plato’s time, it was clear that Socrates represented the failures of politics to rationally conduct itself; by the time of the writing of the *Republic*, Socrates could be summoned up to haunt the poetico-dramatic rhetorico-philosophic writings that become “the Dialogues of Socrates” and to remind its readers of his martyrdom.

As the student of Plato, Aristotle—brilliant scientist that he was—also stood up to this test of gravitas, of bearing the weight of a culture and making claims for its good. And it was no less than Horace himself, beloved Latin poet, who gathered together the 149 epigrammatic pieces of writerly wisdom.

In the cases of Longinus and Horace, more with the former than the latter, particular translators offer and fulfill the promise of grave ethos. Though the first translation of *On the Sublime* occurs in 1652, “a 1674 translation by the French literary critic Nicolas Boileau became widely known and launched the text on a career of far ranging influence” (“Longinus” 344). From there “Dryden is the first popularizer in England”; “the aesthetic distinction between ‘sublime’ and the ‘beautiful’” dominates much of the discourse of the latter half 18th century (‘Longinus’ xvi). And the English translator of Horace was none other the Virgin Queen, Queen Elizabeth I.

A poetics thus does not arrive on the doorstep of culture unannounced, but instead is fashioned literarily and delivered by an honored and powerful speaker: A Secular Martyr, A Famous Scientist, A Noted Critic, A Monarch. One problem with poetics—the stranglehold that they may exert on the production, circulation, and consumption of discourse—may be linked to the power of their heralds. One benefit of new media poetics is that, as argued by popular media critics like Steven Johnson and Henry Jenkins, new media practices (blogs, social networking sites, fan sites) can be seen as a popular, democratic discourse that disrupts this pattern of a centralized production and ruthless circulation that serve the ends of an acritical consumption. In other words, these critics imply, when consumers elect to become consumers and distributors—when the nature of new media encourages this transformation—one does not need a new poetics to herald a new age. Those who might have been literary critics of old media—writers like Johnson and Jenkins—when approaching new media are more likely to be seen as cultural critics; however, the undefined nature of this term, as well as its relationship to poetics, must be made explicit in order to arrive at a meaningful understanding of new media poetics.

Culture—A Definition from Linguistic Anthropology

After rhetoric, perhaps the earliest formalized academic study of culture became the discipline of anthropology, which may be profitably contrasted with one of its subfields, linguistic anthropology. An examination of both inform this discussion of culture by exploring the limitations of the term “culture,” particularly in how it relates to poetics. Such an understanding highlights the social ambivalence of poetics: in naming work deserving of study, poetics curtails that study. This ability to make meaning

depends on defining the field of meaning itself—the cartography of meaning—to the exclusion of manifold cultural practices. In this light, new media practices exist off the map of meaning, and its travelers are consigned to wanderer status. Considering that new media studies is still in its academic infancy—though it certainly has deep roots in more established fields such as media studies, computer science, and graphic and industrial design—it could be helpful to see how linguistic anthropology has struggled to distinguish itself from classical anthropology.

Perhaps the most succinct definition of linguistic anthropology comes from Alessandro Duranti “[T]he study of language as a cultural resource and speaking as a cultural practice,” one that “allows for interpsychological (between individuals) and intrapsychological (in the same individual) representations of the social order” (“The Scope” 2-3). Important for linguistic anthropologists, then, is to see speakers as social actors. By closely examining the language such actors employ, cultural anthropologists gain insight into linguistic epistemology, or how language creates meaning. Language as cultural resource here offers the epistemological trail; following the crumbs that make this trail allows for an endless hermeneutical cycle: agent, language, meaning, action, agent, language, meaning, action. On one island within ourselves is what we have (nature), and on another, what we create (culture). Because we look specifically at the islands of nature and culture as entities we may not see the fluid, binding, defining ocean (language) that creates them.

This understanding of modern linguistic anthropology is largely informed by early anthropologist Franz Boas, who synthesized the philosophies of Kant and Hegel to oppose culture and nature: According to Kant, culture is the action of free spirit “as

opposed to natural laws that govern human physiology; for Hegel, culture “is a process of estrangement from nature” (Duranti, “Theories” 25). This Hegelian distinction allows us to discriminate between self/other, and this unhappy set of bounded coordinates, Nature (Self)/Culture (Other), essentially framed the scope of classical anthropology. Critics of this approach like Erik Wolf see the inelegance (and inflexibility) of a parlor game:

“bounded objects...like so many hard and round billiard balls” (qtd. in Bashkow 443).

These pundits contend that cultures simply are not bounded like billiard balls, not objects of chance and sport to be “othered.” Answering that cultures are bounded by physical space brings up the objection of “aligning anthropology with the objectifications of colonial ideology”: like billiards, cultures become objects that are manipulated by their more powerful handlers for the purpose of amusement. Though defenders of Boas seek to reclaim/reform his notion of culture (“cultural boundaries are necessary,...[they] remain important phenomena...[and] they do not exclusively serve harmful or discriminatory purposes,”), Boas’ work may still be attacked as an uncomplicated “commonsense notion” unreflective of recent postmodern turns in the academy (Bashkow 453, 433).

To carry the metaphor through, the classical anthropologist might be portrayed as an 18th-century gentlemen, idling his evening away over the billiard table, surrounded by cigar smoke and opinions. He remains unaware that this game of chance is the setting for a cultural performance; he is not surprised that his fellows share similar backgrounds in education, class, religion, and sexual orientation. Though outfitted in the heavy cloth of luxury and refinement, he remains, in a word, simple. In order for the classical anthropologist to study an “exotic other” culture, he proceeds from the assumption that his own cultural superiority allows for it. In this scheme, the subject moves the object.

And it is this uncomplicated notion of culture that pervades reformers like Hirsch, who would like classics of literature—as the best exemplars of the culture, our Hegelian estrangement—to slide without friction into whatever milieu is at hand. The problem is that this type of play—call it the poetics of cultural determinacy—necessitates that essentially dynamic objects like novels, poems, and plays calcify into static ones. Such a process leaves little or no room for other items, such as new media objects. Indeed, new media objects and the practices they generate occur globally billions of times each day; in this light they exist as the mundane, invisible stuff of daily life. The classical anthropologist and the educational elitist see two islands of nature and culture; the linguistic anthropologist and new media scholar see the fluid, binding, defining ocean of language that links the islands and makes them inseparable.

More recently than Boas, rhetoricians like Barry Brummett have taken seriously and expanded the field of critical cultural studies, which argues against the “the edifying impulse” of high culture, of culture as improving the minds, hearts, and souls of its inhabitants (23). Brummett argues that the Greek criteria for rhetoric privileged “traditional rhetorical texts” that were “(1) verbal, (2) expository, (3) discrete, and (4) hierarchical” and that it is only in the 19th century that scholars begin to seriously entertain the study of popular culture (50). Several forces contributed to this major shift, including Giambattista Vico’s notion of probabilities, Addison and Blair’s idea of aesthetics, developments in psychology, and finally, criticism (61-64). In other words, Brummett traces the historical forces that led away from a reverence for traditional texts per se and toward an increased focus and exploration of the lived experience of the audiences that read those texts.

In order to teach students about the rhetoric of popular culture, Brummett borrows from the semiotic theory of Charles Sanders Peirce: Signs have indexical, iconic, or symbolic meaning; artifacts are perceived wholes, have widely shared meanings, and manifest group identification. Thus, artifacts are signs that become “charged with meaning” enough to “socially create[] reality”; finally, cultures are “complex,” “entail consciousness,” and “are experienced through texts” (1-39).

Such a scheme explodes the term “culture” into an infinite number of cultures that are defined by the texts—“smaller, interrelated sets of signs and artifacts”—through which they make meaning (34). *Halo 2* (Microsoft 2004), as a text laden with overlapping indexical, iconic, and symbolic meanings, had been charged with many significations and had grown into an artifact of first-year male student culture at the University of Arizona long before its release date; as an artifact, it orbited in a cluster of other artifacts that became a very real culture to Shawn, the gamer-student I described at the beginning of this chapter. This alternate (and increasingly potent) culture is becoming so attractive and necessary by contemporary imaginations that it trumped a perfunctory revision of my essay assignment on *Dracula*. Shawn had stayed up all night participating in a very different kind of knowledge creation, one far removed from any theoretical discussions we might have had about literary criticism, and also far removed from any practical discussion we might have had about the writing and revising of essays. Shawn had stayed up all night living and breathing the poetics of *new media*: the imaginative coming-to-know of the world of *Halo 2*. To date, this poetics has gone largely unexamined, but this project—“‘A Kind of Thing That Might Be’: Toward a Poetics of

New Media”—works to fill this gap by articulating the components of new media poetics.

The Poetics of New Media

As noted earlier, any proclamation of a new poetics simultaneously performs the following functions:

1. A new poetics articulates an “imaginative way of knowing” back to a particular culture.
2. A new poetics inevitably responds dialectically to challenge the dominant poetics.
3. Given Function 2 (above), a new poetics, in continuing a tradition that privileges certain cultural artifacts over others, reifies the value of *literary* texts.
4. Given Function 3 (above), a new poetics inevitably rejuvenates previous poetics.

Recognizing this dialectic of poetics writ large, it becomes clear that in order for a poetics of new media to exist in a meaningful sense, it must find a way to avoid the pitfalls that I argue are inherent in the production of poetics: Somehow a new media poetics must not simply *apply* one or another older poetics. To do this would be to fall into the trap outlined above that ends in the rejuvenation—knowingly or unknowingly—of an older poetics. Instead, the careful new media scholar should articulate a poetics of new media

that is already in place, and a review of the literature shows that this is not currently happening.⁴

For example, in his casual pastiche *Everything Bad is Good For You*, Steven Johnson makes a case for the cognitive improvement that video games affect in their players via “probing” and “telescoping,” his variant of James Paul Gee’s four-part probing cycle (probe, hypothesize, reprobe, rethink).⁵ Through his continual stress that “[I]t’s not what the player is thinking about, but the way she’s thinking,” Johnson privileges one way of thinking above all others, namely the “problem solving skills of the player”; those skills are contrasted against other “pleasures,” namely, networks that provide “social exchanges,” AI that provides “amazing interactions,” and—in a telling moment—“rich aesthetic experiences” (60). In Johnson’s epistemological framework, the highest function of computer games is educative: that self-improvement when the self unintentionally learns. Next come mere pleasures, ancillary to this knowledge, and mainly the products of exchange (presumably because they mirror his own “probing/telescoping” method). In dead last are those moments of mere pleasure, which are neither “knowledge” nor “exchanges” or “interactions” but wormy “experiences” gotten by “the objects and textures of the worlds” (60).

In fairness, the subtitle to Johnson’s book explains this rhetorical feature: *How Today’s Popular Culture Is Actually Making Us Smarter*. Johnson argues for “the Sleeper Curve”: that quiet improvement of the mental faculties of US youth affected by video

⁴ This is not to say that interesting and important work linking poetics and new media is currently not being done; for example, Tom O’Connor’s *Poetic Acts and New Media* seeks “to offer...clear theoretical guidelines whereby the relations between printed poetry and electronic/virtual media can be mapped out” (xxiv). However, O’Connor continues the tradition that Brummett outlines when he privileges traditional texts—written poetry—and applies it to a new medium. The same is also true of Loss Pequeño Glazier’s *Digital Poetics: the Making of E-Poetries*.

⁵ And, going further back, both are recycling McLuhan’s idea of the probe.

game play. Given that he is writing against popular expectation, Johnson must resist appealing to aesthetic experience and instead make logical appeals (IQ scores are up, neuroscience reveals why). However, as he discussed in an interview with NEH Chairman Bruce Cole, Johnson dropped out of a Columbia PhD program in Literature, preferring to write about “the technological world through the lens of the cultural critic” (“Game Playing”). Johnson the culture critic is neither a neuroscientist nor a doctorate in humanities: he is an ABD who abandoned his dissertation when he “realized that those two worlds [humanities and the computer world] could live together in a beautiful, intellectual way” (“Game Playing”). Thus Johnson reveals his charge to unify the opposing camps of thought that posit the incompatibility of divergent worlds, art and science. Of course, in doing so, he reifies this disjuncture.

In the interview Johnson retells a story from the book about introducing *SimCity* 2000 (Maxis Software, Inc.) to his nephew: “We were on vacation and it was a rainy day. I thought it would be fun just to show him *SimCity*. I was basically showing him the graphics.” When shown a problematical industrial area within the game, the child responded, “I think you might want to lower your industrial tax rate.” Imagine Johnson’s surprise at the peripeteia: What had been a rainy-day distraction for a seven-year-old—“the graphics”—becomes an illuminating revelation: “He was learning.” I need not parse further examples of the dominating, harmonic binaries—bad/good, arts/science, and most important to my discussion, experience/knowledge—in order to demonstrate that even in the most popular of manifestations of new media discourse, any consideration of poetics is contrasted to the serious work of knowledge-making. Rather, I propose that it is in the poetic, in the imaginative experience of new media objects, that knowledge gets made.

When I return to the anecdote that introduces this chapter, I wonder now: Why not allow Shawn to write his essay on *Halo 2*? If honors composition is, in fact, a reward, and I could have proposed any content I wanted, why did it not occur to me to propose that we study video games? The answer to that question is obvious for a scholar trained in Classics and Poetry: My understanding of poetics, like E. D. Hirsch's understanding, disallowed anything noncanonical, nontextual, and nontraditional. Unknown to myself, in asking for a close reading I was demanding New Criticism, a rejuvenation of Aristotelian poetics that put a premium on form, a reiteration that art (in the form of printed texts) should affect individual transformative emotion. The trouble, of course, is that for Shawn, they did not. *Halo 2*—a digital, animated, auditory, kinesthetic, interactive artwork—did. When we glared at each other, two very different poetics clashed and the duration of that silent stare spelled the distances between me and Shawn; between what I valued and what he valued; between how I imaginatively come to know and how he imaginatively comes to know; between an old art and a new art; between old media and new media.

Here I limit the term “new media” to the definition given in Lev Manovich's *The Language of New Media*: “the shift of all culture to computer-mediated forms of production, distribution, and communication” (19) and not to the more popular, temporal understanding of “new media” as outlined by Gitelman and Pingree: “a new perspective on the meaning of ‘newness’ that attends to all emerging media...considered within their original historical contexts, their novelty years” (xii). I find the former much more helpful than the latter because understanding new media in a temporal sense invites narrative causation (how “x” lead to “y”) followed by the consumer experience of that transition. Postulating new media in an emergent sense—as an emergent cosmology—

implies that new media is fundamentally different from old media: Old media theories must be reconsidered, old media poetics will not apply.

Though chapter two will further articulate Manovich's theory of new media, it is enough here to emphasize its central tenant: numeric representation. In other words, the defining characteristic of a new media object—*Microsoft Word*, a Mona Lisa thumbnail, *The Wizard of Oz* DVD—is that it is, can, and must be, translated into code. Old media objects—pad of paper, the original Mona Lisa oil painting, the original camera negative of *Wizard of Oz*—were bound up in a material expression that could not change. New media objects, then, change and are changed constantly. An added complexity: All old media objects may become new media objects, a process commonly called “digitization.” And new media objects also spawn yet other media, both old and new, the hard copy and the 128 bit WEP encrypted data stream.

Manovich asks, “How shall we begin to map out the effects of this fundamental shift” from old media to new media? Unlike old media objects, which were bound by a human organization of data, new media objects, though created by humans, are bound to follow an emergent cosmology, one that even its makers do not fully comprehend. This fact alone demands an illumination of new media poetics.

CHAPTER TWO: METAPHOR AND NEW MEDIA POETICS: KENNETH BURKE AND THE DRAMATISM OF WWII

My first chapter sought to answer the two-part question “What is Poetics, and What is a Poetics For?” by highlighting four touchstone thinkers (Plato, Aristotle, Horace, and Longinus) and their respective positions on the nature and uses of poetics vis à vis culture.⁶ To reiterate, they are:

- (1) Discourse—especially in the form of rhetoric and poetry—is dangerously mimetic, which, by engaging the emotions hinders rationality and thus threatens the stability of the state.⁷ As a result, poetics severely limits the role and work of poets in society.
- (2) Poetics should concern itself with the study of discursive forms, aiming to articulate the ways in which language can effect personal transformations. This is because individual transformations, including those born of emotional experiences, can influence discourse and eventually improve the state.
- (3) Discourse should emulate a previous and lost acme. Poetics is the science of understanding the accomplishments of great artists of the past so that their techniques can be taught and practiced in the present.

⁶ Merriam Webster gives ‘poetics’ a mixed grammatical function: “noun plural but singular or plural in construction”; thus, one can speak correctly of a singular poetics (as in the case of Aristotle’s *Poetics*) and of a plural poetics (as in the case of the four touchstones) (“Poetics”). The trouble with offering up ‘poetic’ as a singular noun to describe a particular theory of discourse is that the word ‘poetic’ functions only as an adjective (as in “the poetic beauty of Williams”). I will endeavor to distinguish the difference through context.

⁷ It should be noted that these definitions of poetics contrast with a modern poetics purely concerned with aesthetic value.

- (4) Discourse should improve the individual and thereby the state.
Poetics should articulate that edificatory experience.

From these different positions, then, I extrapolate how any particular articulation of a new poetics—any of the four positions above, for example—performs the following functions:

- A. A new poetics articulates an “imaginative way of knowing” to its situated cultural context.
- B. A new poetics inevitably responds dialectically to the dominant poetics.
- C. Given Function B (above), a new poetics, in continuing a tradition that privileges certain cultural artifacts over others, reinforces the value of literary texts over other kinds of texts.
- D. Given Function C (above), a new poetics inevitably rejuvenates previous poetics.

One could imagine a different project that applies the four-part functions of new poetics to each of the four thinkers. Such an analysis might reveal how Aristotelian poetics can be seen to rejuvenate Platonic poetics (especially through Aristotle’s clarification of exactly which kinds of emotions may be expressed, to what degrees, and for what purpose). One could explore the ways in which *On the Sublime* might be paired with *Poetics* (Longinus’ edifying elevation rejuvenating Aristotle purgative catharsis) or how Horace renews Plato (the premium on mimesis). Alternately, one could trace the manifold influences that these four touchstone poetics have exerted on all subsequent

poetics. Though interesting and applicable to poetics scholarship, these exercises are outside of the purview of this dissertation.

My project seeks to avoid two major problems outlined above: (1) Proclamations of new poetics invariably undo that newness by rejuvenating old poetics, and (2) these new poetics act as chords that get commonly played in vastly different times. I hope to avoid the first problem by directly challenging the textual tradition of poetics. I will not privilege literary discourse; in fact, this chapter will explore the poetics of how an audience experiences nonliterary, nontextual discourse: a video game and a Hollywood blockbuster.⁸ As for the second problem, I will remain on my guard so as to listen for those chords in the work of others, even as I strain to hear their echoes in my own work.

It is important to note my contention that, though a poetics sufficient to understand new media has yet to be articulated, one does exist that currently shapes meaning. When I consider the importance of imitation, emotion, forms, and transformation so crucial to the touchstone poetics; when I think about Manovich's definition of new media as fundamentally different from old media; and when I add a thinker like Kenneth Burke to this thread, I conclude that the first component of a new media poetics must be metaphor. If, as I write in chapter one, poetics can be seen as a *techne*, a kind of productive knowledge achieved by the imagination, then the engine driving that knowledge—that coming-to-know—is metaphor.

My analysis of Burke's and Manovich's similar understandings of metaphor reveals the need for a poetics of new media: Just as Aristotle—in articulating the common, untheorized social practice of theatre—drew attention to an otherwise

⁸ Though both *Saving Private Ryan* and *Medal of Honor: Frontline* may be seen as both literary and textual, in the experience they facilitate for an audience they are not strictly these; in other words, these two do not merit entries in E. D. Hirsch's *New Dictionary of Cultural Literacy*.

benighted subject, I audition the ability of metaphor within a poetics of new media practices that are similarly unenlightened. For example, how does playing a game about a war create meaning for the player of that game? In a time when billions of new media practices occur globally each day—and considering that all of the practices are discursive—it is difficult to agree with enthusiasts of media convergence (Jenkins; Johnson) or to concur with decriers of media violence (Grossman; Wessel). For the former, a poetics would undo the democratically grand narrative of global media access and consumer power; for the latter, a poetics exists only to explain—similar to Plato—the dangers of particular mimeses. To borrow Barry Brummett’s continuum of rhetorical functions, both groups embrace new media topics that “function rhetorically at the exigent level. That is, they are so immediately troubling that responding to them is relatively uncomplicated” (McAllister 55). Neither camp seems seriously interested in considering new media in more subtle ways, that is “at the quotidian and implicative levels” (55). These less obvious levels, especially the implicative level—“which includes the management of meanings that are unproblematic and taken for granted”—remain important underexplored sites of meaning creation (qtd. in McAllister 48). A new media poetics, then, should give voice to how metaphor operates in such a way that the roar and tremor of its engine is neither heard nor felt; transference occurs, as if through magic. As in Aristotle’s understanding of causation, in the universe of new media poetics the engine of metaphor transfers but is not itself transferred; it becomes “a movement that is itself unmoved and eternal” (*Physics* 260a1-2). Because his project closely mirrors the exploration of metaphor, Manovich offers an intriguing new media perspective of the ability of metaphor to make meaning.

Manovich and New Media

Media theorist Lev Manovich argues that technologies have consistently “change[d] existing cultural languages”: Both the printing press in the fourteenth century and photography in the nineteenth had “a revolutionary effect” on society and culture; however, these two forces pale in comparison to what Manovich sees as a shift of all modern culture—from old media to the “new media.” According to Manovich, all new media objects can be identified by five principles:

1. Numerical Representation (a new media object is described mathematically and manipulated algorithmically).
 2. Modularity (as fractals have the same structures on different scales, a new media object has the same modular structure throughout).
 3. Automation (principles 1 and 2 cohere to automate operations in media creation, manipulation, and access).
 4. Variability (a new media object can exist in different, potentially infinite versions).
 5. Transcoding (the new media object’s structure “follows the established conventions of the computer’s organization of data”).
- (27-45)

The first of the principles is also the most fundamental. Like the ancient Greek concept of *arche* (ἀρχή)—the “first principle” from which all other matter was birthed—Manovich’s concept of numerical representation prefigures and emanates all further new media principles. For example, once transferred into digital code, what was once the old

media object of a still photograph taken on D-Day transforms into a new media object: a JPEG file on a web site (in this case, from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Normandy):



Figure 1: Battle of Normandy

Once downloaded, this historic photo can be imported into an electronic document and resized (Principle 2: Modularity). Imported into an image editor, its contrast can be changed (Principle 3: Automation) and stored in innumerable formats and with countless visual differences in a database (Principle 4: Variability). As a result of these transformations, the new media object would then exist as data and necessarily adhere to a computer's conventions; in other words, it has a cultural and a computer layer (Principle 5: Transcoding). This last principle Manovich considers "the most substantial *consequence*" (my emphasis) of digitization because the computer layer has its own cosmogony, one distinct from the human, cultural layer.

What Manovich terms the "shift of all culture"—a large-scale transference—happens not just in the obvious manifestations (for example the consumption of a new media object), but this transference also occurs in the production and distribution of new media objects. For these reasons, the enormity of the shift cannot yet be appreciated. Having laid out his argument, Manovich asks, "How shall we begin to map out the effects of this fundamental shift?" (20). For him, that task begins with recognizing what new media are and are not; from there, applying the five principles to the present-but-less-visible layers of new media; and finally, teasing out the implications of new media objects in human communication.

Due to their digital nature, new media objects are created by transformation, create other new media objects through transformation, and transform all those who participate in new media—human agents—in ways difficult to see. In this capacity, new media objects take on a metaphor function, “metaphor” coming down from the Greek word *metapherein*, “to carry over, transfer.” This idea, in its simplest form, founds all new media poetics: everything digital can only ever be understood in terms of something else.

This understanding of metaphor reveals a paradox of epistemology, one that Kenneth Burke often delighted in pointing out: because agents use symbols to represent what those symbols are not (the word “dog” is not a dog), each individual word is itself a metaphor.⁹ Moreover, this metaphorical nature of language use gets so obscured through repetition that unconventional metaphors (“that big dog, the lion”) only seem new to their readers because the transference is novel (*Permanence and Change* 90). The same reader would, through this “naïve verbal realism” defend the accuracy of an older transference (“the king of the forest, the lion”) by making appeals to its essential meaning. For Burke, this substance of a thing is always expressed in terms of what it is not, a function he calls “The Paradox of Substance” (*Grammar* 21).

And this understanding of metaphor informs Manovich’s notion of transcoding. Like the basic Greek metaphor, transcoding is simple (“to ‘transcode’ something is to translate it into another format”). Also like the Greek metaphor it offers great complexity: “the computer layer and the culture layer influence each other...they are being

⁹ Kenneth Burke’s existence nearly spanned the twentieth century. From 1897 to 1993, *ab incunabulis ad infinitum*, his life was marked by war. As an overlay to these larger conflicts, one could add Burke’s professional and personal struggles. It remains no accident, then, that such an embattled life produced an oeuvre driven to explore the idea of *ad bellum purificandum*: towards the purification of war.

composited together” and the result offers “a blend of human and computer meanings, of traditional ways in which human culture modeled the world and the computer’s own means of representing it” (*The Language* 46). In short, the computer’s cultural layer (what the user sees—the interface, language) is already a transference of meaning.

Working backwards, a user begins with an interface (an open window of *Microsoft Word*, for example) and interacts with a virtual “page” in order to compose a document; the user does not see the software code “running” invisibly underneath these two metaphors (the ‘window’ that contains the ‘page’)—indeed, as Manovich observes, these virtual nouns that make up the culture layer can only be expressed in terms of the computer layer.

The commonalities between Burke’s understanding of metaphor (the epistemic exercise of understanding A in terms of B) and Manovich’s conception of metaphor (the co-compositing of the culture/computer layers) can be synthesized in order to articulate the ways in which metaphor acts within a poetics of new media. Despite their disparate backgrounds (Burke wrote mainly on literary criticism, Manovich on art and media) both thinkers aid an understanding of how metaphor makes meaning; in order to demonstrate their relevance to new media poetics, I isolate a particular metaphor that exists in various new media objects. As Lakoff and Johnson argue, because our conceptual system is “fundamentally metaphoric,” and because conceptual metaphors constrain our discursive ability, a close examination of these dominant conceptual metaphors should reveal how we make meaning. In their analysis, “[T]he ARGUMENT IS WAR metaphor is one that we live by in this culture”; our understanding of what ‘argument’ means must conform to the terms we normally apply to ‘war’ (3-4).

This chapter seeks to parse not how argument can be seen in terms of war, but how new media objects that provide an imaginative way of knowing about the world—about war, for instance—enact arguments. Thus, the film *Saving Private Ryan* and the video game *Medal of Honor: Frontline*, which tell particular US versions of the story of WWII, highlight how metaphor, Burke's theories of language, and Manovich's understanding of new media objects—specifically transcoding—all come together individually to shed light on one way that new media poetics make meaning: one idea carried over into another realm, one thing expressed in another's terms, a constant flux of intention and representation.

Metaphor and Burkean Terms

Kenneth Burke did not like neat systems or solid answers, and his notion of Dramatism helps to articulate the messiness of human communication: Language use is not unmotivated and passive, but active, motivated, and motivating (his term is symbolic action). Human agents use symbols in order to actively create identifications; sometimes it works, and sometimes not. In order to interrogate any given discourse to see what kinds of identifications it calls for, one should use the Pentad, Burke's theory of five terms (Act, Scene, Agent, Agency and Purpose) in order to ask questions like: what was done? who did it? where was it done, how was it done, and why? When these terms are used in combinations, or ratios, they may reveal what term is privileged: in other words, a pentadic analysis offers up the possibility of making explicit the kind of action that may lie obscured in discourse—it offers up a useful hermeneutic to understand the why behind language. Significantly, though, Burke's primary purpose in analyzing texts was what he

termed “the purification of war,” his Pentad applies surprisingly well, however, to simulated conflicts that are based on real-world conflicts, presumably because such simulations draw heavily on historical narratives. While Burke never himself discussed such applications of his analytical framework on virtual constructs, he did suggest that such an application would be reasonable: “Men have talked about things in many ways, but the Pentad offers a synoptic way to talk about their talk-about” (*Grammar* 56). As anyone who has played a computer game like *Call of Duty* (Activision 2003) or visited websites devoted to the Vietnam War would recognize, such new media forms are almost entirely “talk about talking about.” As such, they illustrate the unique ability of metaphor to explain historically completed wars in historically contingent ways. To reference this dissertation’s title, they invert Aristotle’s order: “From what has been” to “a kind of thing that might be” (*Poetics* 1451b.5).

However, in order to best reveal cultural motives, the particular “talk about” should be what Burke calls “a representative anecdote”: it should be “sufficiently demarcated in character to make analysis possible, yet sufficiently complex in character to prevent the use of too few terms in one’s description” (*Grammar* 324). Additionally, the truly representative anecdote “must be synecdochic...it must be a part for the whole” and as a final qualifier, it should be an anecdote “where human relations grandly converge” (*Grammar* 324-26).¹⁰ These four criteria of demarcation, complexity, synecdoche, and convergence cohere in the narrative of World War II as told from the US perspective; these particular new media objects exploit metaphor to create argument, and a poetics articulates this process.

¹⁰ And logically, this follows: “[I]f one does not select a representative anecdote...one cannot expect to get representative terms” (*Grammar* 324). In order for an audience to identify with the terms of an anecdote that is not representative, they must be persuaded (or persuade themselves) of its representative nature.

***Saving Private Ryan* and the “Representative Anecdote”**

A large, billowing flag fills up the frame, its blues and reds all muted as in an old photograph. Behind it the sun flickers, the wind makes rippling trills down the fabric. Next: The feet of an old man in khakis and a blue windbreaker walking far ahead of his family, his wife and their many adult children, grandchildren in tow. One son takes a photograph, the old man walks on, stops at a tree, and looks up with tears in his eyes at the US flag, then the French flag. The old man walks to the left, and this time instead of a flag interposing, a series of white grave markers. He searches for a particular grave, finds it, and falls to the ground, weeping. His family rushes to him, concerned looks on faces. A close up on his distraught eyes as he remembers the invasion.

Saving Private Ryan (Dreamworks/Paramount 1998) offers up, in symbolic terms, a primer on patriotism and its implicit themes of duty, honor, and sacrifice. Such an opening announces its dual audience: a love letter to fallen heroes and an advertisement to aspirants. Ostensibly this will be a vocabulary lesson, then, on motivating terms within a representative anecdote about WWII.

One further distinction: *Saving Private Ryan* is really two films—one 25-minute simulation of the D-Day invasion on Omaha Beach, and one 145-minute tale of a band of eight soldiers sacrificing themselves to save Private Ryan. The first film is introduced by the description above; the second ends when the young Ryan’s face morphs into senior Ryan, and the viewer is back in the graveyard. Thus the film announces itself as the document of the Ryan’s experience.

Though present US culture identifies the WWII narrative—particularly the US v. Hitler’s European-theatre version—as a “representative anecdote” about war itself, this analysis, by focusing on the shorter Omaha Beach narrative, reveals just the opposite. As noted above, in order to qualify for the designation, a “representative anecdote” must meet the four criteria of demarcation, complexity, synecdoche, and convergence. *Saving Private Ryan* (along with a host of other WWII narratives) is dangerously *not* representative.¹¹ It is informative, and the difference between representation and information speaks to one way in which new media poetics implicitly asks its members to see one hero, one battle, one sacrifice, and one war in terms of another.

This information-guised-as-representation maneuver can be seen as manifestations of Manovich’s five principles: The film relies heavily on digital effects in order to achieve its most informative moments, and though many of these effects have been achieved in old media, their near-instant availability as new media possibilities may encourage what Burke terms “sermonic” language. As Manovich writes, film and computers influenced each other early on: “‘the Universal Turing Machine’...could perform any calculation that could be done by a human.... [It] operated by reading and writing numbers on an endless tape” and for this reason “its diagram looks suspiciously like a film projector.” He observes one commonality between the two media: “A film camera records data on film; a film projector reads it off.... A computer’s program and data also have to be stored in some medium” (*The Language* 24). One good example of film uniting with the computer occurs in Konrad Zuse’s digital computer; Zuse punched

¹¹ The film’s tagline suggest a nexus of identifications between US citizens and war: “In the Last Great Invasion of the Last Great War, The Greatest Danger for Eight Men Was Saving...One” (“Taglines”). I argue that films such as this persuade US audiences of false identification, which relies as it does on information and not representation.

tape to control his programs—in this case, “discarded 35 mm movie film” (25). Punching the celluloid destroys the images it contains, of course, but the resulting computer record exists as a palimpsest whose original data (image) is sacrificed in order to serve up new media data (code). Manovich takes the Turing Machine’s continual writing/reading data loop as a handy metaphor for the depiction of new media object creation. This process not only forces media to conform to computer cosmogony, as Manovich argues, but it also opens up the narratives to a fracturing of detail. Storytelling becomes the selection and positioning of any of limitless details, and this surplus of information may work to the detriment of stories themselves. Manovich would agree with this assessment: “[T]oday we have too much information and too few narratives that can tie it all together” (217).

Storming the Beach: World War II in Twenty-five Minutes

An analysis of the shorter film—the Omaha Beach narrative—reveals that when measured by Burke’s four qualities of demarcation, complexity, synecdoche, and convergence, *Saving Private Ryan* right from the start attempts and fails to establish itself as a “representative anecdote” of war. The film appears to begin *in medias res*—in the middle of the war (D-Day), in the middle of protagonist John Miller’s war experience, in-between the land and the sea, and in the fog of war—but the US version of WWII begins at the start only of that narrative embraced as best representing US interests.¹² The war

¹² Meaning here that the US interest in WWII (the world’s savior narrative) begins with the monumental and humanitarian sacrifice necessitated by the invasion to stop the Nazis directly. In wishing to persuade viewers that the US of WWII should be identified with the US of the present, this propagandistic note must be rung.

“begins” not with the German invasion of Poland in 1939 (or, even in 1937 with the onset of the second Sino-Japanese War), not with Pearl Harbor but with D-Day.

Defining WWII in terms of this battle transforms the nature of the conflict into “substances” such as an absolute Nazi evil, absolute US good, absolute self-sacrifice, and absolute obeisance to the chain of command, these absolutes collect in the filmic narrative: storming the beach. Accordingly, this narrative is insufficiently demarcated to become representative, and perhaps because of this, Spielberg tries to add the necessary complexity by introducing imagery of medicine (the panicked field medic) and religion (the foot soldier kissing his cross) to temper the realistic ultra violence of the scene.

As for synecdoche—the rhetorical technique that substitutes the part for the whole—the 25-minute D-Day narrative purports to represent the whole of combat by implication. Spielberg attempts to convey some kind of emotionally synecdochic truth of live combat through the chaotic imagery of an active war zone and its psychological ramifications on the soldiery. This is supported through images such as a prone soldier holding his own exposed intestines and crying out for his mother, or in Captain Miller’s muted observation of a one-armed soldier picking up his own arm. From this chaos the soldiers rally around leadership (Miller’s), which Miller displays by common sense and example (“Every inch of this beach has been pre-sighted. You stay, you die”). This demonstration of leadership marshals the men to take the beach despite failed military intelligence, misdrops, and a lack of support. Miller quickly assembles bayonet, chewing gum, and mirror, which he uses to scope out a plan of attack on the dominating German gun turrets. Later his idea for making a “sticky bomb” out of empty socks and C-4 proves successful at blowing the treads off the German tanks, and in this way Spielberg offers up

Captain Miller as the modern Odysseus of military genius.¹³ Thus, there are pluralities of parts representing wholes, but the paucity of both demarcation and complexity create a surplus of synecdoche. There are too many cooks in the representative kitchen.

Finally, Burke's notion of convergence suggests that the truly representational anecdote articulates the "the grand convergence" of human agents. To this idea he added a "summational" character that represents the collective wish of a group. The 25-minute D-Day narrative exemplifies this convergence, but due to its essentializing character ("storming the beach"), that collective wish is so narrowed as to not be summational. Arguably, the second film attempts both convergence and summation when questioning a soldier's allegiance to his commanding officer, a soldier's ability to refuse a direct order, the ethical situation of sacrificing a group for an individual, of individual sacrifice for another. However, the second film suffers the opposite problem of the first: in a heavy reliance on the convergence of individual soldiers, groups of soldiers, and the final battle scene, Spielberg offers up an excess of demarcation, complexity, and convergence but largely ignores synecdoche through formal impropriety.¹⁴ Put another way, neither the 25-minute D-Day narrative nor the 145-minute narrative meet the requirements of a "representative anecdote."

¹³ Another identification of a uniquely US characteristic: the term "Yankee ingenuity" comes to mind as the quality, demonstrated best in the US Colonial period, of self-reliance and making do with materials on hand.

¹⁴ Here I mean Burke's understanding of both "form" and "impropriety": As discussed in the next section, "Form" relates to the psychological stirrings of the audience, and "impropriety" refers to the intentional violation of what properly goes with what.

The Problem of Form

Burke defines form as “[T]he creation of an appetite in the mind of the auditor, and the adequate satisfying of that appetite” (*Counter-Statement* 31); in other words, form has to do with the psychology of the audience, not the protagonist. However, there is a real problem of form embedded in the film’s structure.

When, at the start of the film, the camera closes up on the Elder Ryan’s blue eyes, the viewer understands that the memories that follow will be those of the Elder Ryan; however, once the camera cuts to D-Day, the viewer follows Captain Miller and the narrative of the story through his blue eyes, as it were. He leads his men into a successful storming of Omaha Beach, he takes the new assignment to find Ryan without question, and he accomplishes his mission of saving him. Not until the end of the film does the viewer understand: it is Miller who dies. When Ryan reacts to Miller’s death, the camera frames his face and the viewer sees it transform from the Young Ryan to the Elder Ryan. A transference of point of view has taken place, and the viewer should immediately be bothered that nearly all of this film would not have been known to Ryan himself.

Form itself creates an “appetite in the mind” of the audience and is successful insofar as it “adequate[ly] satisfies” that appetite. In this instance that appetite has been ruined by a flimsy plot device that will not stand up to a second viewing.¹⁵ Why has Spielberg so disrespected the audience?

Burke makes a compelling case that “the great influx of information” has led artists to emphasize the giving of information over the satisfaction of appetite. In other words, “art tends more and more to substitute the psychology of the hero (and subject) for

¹⁵ Burke puts it thusly: “The hypertrophy of information likewise tends to interfere with our enjoyment in the repetition of a work” (*Counter-Statement* 145).

the psychology of the audience.” This exactly characterizes the unjustifiable POV aberration in *Saving Private Ryan*: Spielberg presumably desires a kind of storytelling that is purposeful, persuasive, and full of certain information that is only to be gotten by this perspectival sleight-of-hand. Burke sums up this condition: “The hypertrophy of the psychology of information is accompanied by the corresponding atrophy of the psychology of form” (*Counter-Statement* 33). Otherwise put, instead of the audience being motivated by correctly identifying with the protagonist and bonding their emotional attention with him (form), Spielberg forces the viewer to consider Miller’s supreme ethos, leadership, ingenuity, etc. (information). The arrows of the viewer’s attention have been turned to effect a surprise ending, and this element of surprise Burke directly links to one test for “the psychology of information”: “the methods of maintaining interest...are surprise and suspense” (37). The suspense—Will they find Ryan? Will they save Ryan? Will they defend the bridge? Will they die trying—dovetails with the surprise ending: The protagonist was not Ryan at all, but Miller. What does it mean to understand the saved in terms of the savior?

When considering *Saving Private Ryan* as a representative anecdote about US terminologies of motive with regard to war, there is a lack of three qualities (demarcation, complexity, and convergence) and an overabundance of one (synecdoche). Moreover, the problem of point of view points to the symptom of “the psychology of information” prevailing over “the psychology of form” whereby Spielberg seeks to satisfy not the appetite of the audience, but his own appetite. This reliance on information points away from a “representative anecdote” and toward what Burke called an “informative anecdote”: “[It] contains *in nuce* the terminological structure that is evolved in

conformity with it. Such a terminology is a ‘conclusion’ that follows from the selection of a given anecdote” (*Grammar* 60). Thus, this anecdote about war, because it is informative and not representative, is sermonic and can not reveal any kind of complex statement about motives. In fact, none of the terms from *Saving Private Ryan*—brotherhood, sacrifice, America, the flag—are tenable as motivations.¹⁶ These items exist as information only: conclusions Spielberg exerts on the film *from without*. Considering the difficulty of telling a representative anecdote and the ease of slipping into an informative one, and considering the ease with which new media objects may be manipulated (as detailed by Manovich) in the service of that transfer, my analysis suggests that new media objects offer up a whole new toolbox for seeing A in terms of B, and the problem is that without a poetics of new media, these tools do not simply disappear from view: they never appear in the first place. The sly prestidigitation that effects a different point-of-view in the film must not go unnoticed: it is an example of metaphor’s ability to create for the film’s audience an imaginative way of knowing, one which in this case reveals the Burkean motivations embedded in Spielberg’s “sermon”.

Burke’s understanding of terms (like act, scene, agent, agency, and purpose) enriches an understanding of new media because for Burke, terms literally enact their epistemic, metaphorical function of explaining one thing in terms of another thing, which reveals the paradox of explaining the unknown through the known. This offers up a powerful analogy to the way in which the new media objects, when they “speak” carry an accent that can not be heard by the user. There is no shibboleth with which to test

¹⁶ This is a real problem when one considers that *Saving Private Ryan* earned \$216M in domestic boxoffice gross and \$481M in worldwide box-office gross, placing it 57th in the Internet Movie Database’s 250 All-Time Worldwide Boxoffice. Clearly millions of viewers identify with this film; given the strength of these numbers, it seems safe to assume that millions also accept Ryan as a “representative anecdote.”

computer code. The computer is forced to use its own terms (code) in order to transcode culturally-identifiable representations, and Burke in a way works backward from discourse (culturally-identifiable representation) and through an application of the Pentad (five interpretive terms) seeks to locate motive. Though I am tempted to say “the motive behind the words,” that is not what I mean—making the sequence unidirectional commits the psychoanalytical error of extrapolating cause from effect and discounts the notion that language use motivates more language. Manovich cautions against a similar mistake when he writes that both computer and cultural layers “are being composited together” (64). In their separate ways, Burke and Manovich both are concerned with motive: Burke uses terms as a “motivational calculus” for human symbol use, while Manovich’s five terms interrogate how the computer creates symbols, and then in turn how those mediated symbols affect communication. Both inform how metaphor functions in a poetics of new media.

***Medal of Honor: Frontline* as seen through the Pentad**

Manovich writes about his fourth principle of variability that “when a number of versions are being commercially released based on some ‘property,’ usually one of these versions is treated as a source of the ‘data’, with others positioned as being derived from this source” (43). And so it is with *Medal of Honor: Frontline*, which exists as a metaphor—a sort of interactive companion experience—for *Saving Private Ryan*.¹⁷

¹⁷ Manovich here speaks to my characterization of this particular new media object: “However, in the world of new media, the word narrative is often used as an all-inclusive term, to cover up the fact that we have not yet developed a language to describe these new strange objects. It is usually paired with another overused word—interactive” (228).

Developed and published by Electronic Arts, the game—a first-person shooter—was first released in 2002 and was the fourth title in the *Medal of Honor* franchise.¹⁸

When reinterpreting a past war (as well as when protesting or defending a present one), it is necessary for any speaker or writer—or game developer for that matter—to present that war as a story. Often the greatest exigence for such storytelling is raising soldiers' morale or educating civilians about the complexities of warfare. In WWII, for example, the US Army Special Service Division harnessed the creative power of Frank Capra to produce 1943's *Prelude to War: Aka Why We Fight*, perhaps the most famous piece of Allied propaganda ever produced. There was also Chuck Jones' direction of Mel Blanc in the *Snafu* series—the voice of character of Bugs Bunny reincarnated as Snafu, a dopey soldier whose misadventures serve to educate thousands of recruits on the dangers of malaria, easy women, and reckless spending.

When an exigence is so omnipresent and confusing—as war on one's doorstep would be—it is easy to understand why narratives might get constructed to ameliorate its most oppressive qualities. But what motives might underlie present-day game developers who routinely fashion WWII into a narrative, and why would consumers so far removed from the historical events that comprised WWII be so compelled by these narratives? The framework provided by Burke's Pentad, especially its development toward “the purification of war,” offers some compelling answers to these questions.

¹⁸ Other titles in the franchise include *Medal of Honor* (1999); *Underground* (2000); *Allied Assault* (2002); *Rising Sun* (2003), *Pacific Assault* (2004); *European Assault* (2005); and most recently *Heroes* (2006). In addition to these major releases, EA also released several special editions, expansion packs, strategy guides, console peripherals, and so on. Needless to say, this is a very strong franchise.

“The Naming of Parts”: Burke’s Theory of the Pentad¹⁹

Burke’s theory of Dramatism offers up five terms in order to answer the who, what, where, why, and how of meaning: each term can be used to explain another term, and each ratio can be seen as an evolution from one term to another. This plasticity assures an abundance of analytic possibility, and not a niggardly unilateralism. Burke wants to enter a complicated intersection of attitudes, motives, language, and actions, in order to attribute motives to what we say we do. By extension, contemporary scholars of language and media can look to Burke as a model for the articulation of multiple meanings, a sure sign of thriving meaning-making that remains open to possibility. It is this openness that metaphor engenders, and it is to this possibility that a new media poetics must turn.

The pentad gives analysts five basic questions to get the investigation started:

- Act: what took place?
- Scene: where did the act take place?
- Agent: what kind of agent did the act?
- Agency: by what means did the agent do the act?
- Purpose: why did the agent do the act?

¹⁹ “The Naming of Parts” is the subtitle (Part I) of Henry Reed’s famous anti-war poem “Lessons of the War.” While not in Latin, the poem begins with these two lines: “Vixi duellis nuper idoneus /Et militavi non sine Gloria.” It is an alternative to a Q. Horatius Flaccus original, and means, “Lately I have lived amidst war—capable/And have soldiered—not without glory.” Flaccus had lately lived amidst women; the substitution is evocative. In its associative cluster it harkens back to an early poem by an earlier poet about an earlier war: “Wilfred Owen’s “Dulce et Decorum Est,” on the subject of WWI. The title calls back to Horace’s epigram “Dulce et Decorum est pro patria mori”: “It is sweet and right to die for your country.” From women, to battle; from warfare to glory, there seems to be something in war that begs for a near-constant transference.

These components of the Pentad, though helpful in identifying and defining, are more helpful when considered in symbiotic pairs, or as Burke calls them, “ratios.” For example, instead of first analyzing the scene (Normandy Beach) and then analyzing the act (Storming the Beach) in a subsequent paragraph, it may be more fruitful to consider the ways in which the scene defines the act. Before considering some of these ratios, however, a brief explanation of the basic terms is in order.

Act²⁰

The act of the game is to systematically undermine the Nazi’s war efforts through covert operations in six major missions. The main act of the game is to infiltrate and engage the enemy as a sniper, and in that capacity the most frequent act aside from running, jumping, and crouching, is firing a weapon. Normally any German soldier will absorb two shots before succumbing, but a well-aimed shot to the head will kill with one shot. Thus, accuracy is rewarded not with time gained but with time not spent. Also, the one-shot coup de grace is aided by not being discovered, so the quieter the actions of moving, the more successful the act.

Moreover, each of the missions contains a separate list of level-specific objectives (“Meet your Captain on the Shore,” “Rescue 4 men trapped on the beach”) that must be met in sequence before moving on. Manovich refers to this as the “hidden logic” of the game—the algorithms that govern the series of tasks (222).

²⁰ I should comment here that for the most part I limit my analysis to the game itself and not the playing of the game; however, when dealing with pentadic ratios I must consider the gameplay. Because ratios offer up very dynamic understandings of the transference of one term into another, and because Burke’s Pentad is best suited to drama, my analysis must shift in my later section to another kind of “talk about.” In fact, the possibilities for pentadic analysis of video games are endless. One could easily imagine another essay in which the pentadic analyses were gradually telescoped out, from the game, to the playing of the game, to the reading about the playing of the game, to the analysis of readings that talk about the playing of the game, ad infinitum.

Scene

The scene for this game is the European theatre of World War II. Within this context the elemental scenes vary, though the developers have usually limited the game environments to enemy territory: enemy submarine, enemy pub, enemy dry dock, etc. The scenes limit the actions they can contain, but they also are limited by whether or not objectives (acts) have been met. Accomplishing objectives complicate scenes by revealing new routes that had previously been closed.

Agent

Though the indirect agent for the cause of the war is Hitler, and Eisenhower is the indirect agent for peace, the avatar in the game, James Patterson, is a brave 24-year old lieutenant who is the direct agent of this drama. This term changes (as does this analysis) when one differentiates between the cut scenes (I use “cut scenes” broadly to include those cinematic elements that temporarily interrupt direct play) and the gameplay. Here I accept McAllister’s definition: “That quality of a game that derives from the unique combinations of (a) the designers’ demands on the player that are expressed through the full range of possible actions built into the game...; (b) the game’s original physical interface; (c) the techniques by which the designers implement strategies to capture the attention of players” (201).

Agency

As Patterson, the player has many means to accomplishing acts; for example, the controller allows for multiple views of surroundings, including a sniper scope. The manifestations of stealth include crouching, shifting right and left, remaining unseen, and remaining unheard. Hidden or revealed health packs, ammunition, and alternative weapons (there are over 20 authentic WWII weapons in all) also offer player agency. Arguably, the information gathered through cut scenes offers a kind of agency to the attentive player.

Purpose

James Patterson's purpose is nothing less than to "turn the tide of World War II" according to *Medal of Honor: Frontline*'s packaging. This large-scale purpose offers a close analogy to genre of a film, announcing a kind of commonplace to the player. Unlike narratives employing Burke's "surprise and suspense...devices for the utilization of ignorance (the psychology of information)" these other narratives contain a suspense more akin to "the suspense of a rubber band which we see being tautened. We know that it will be snapped—there is thus no ignorance of the outcome; our satisfaction arises from our participation in the process..." (*Counter-Statement* 145).

Mundus vult decipi, ergo decipiatur: Pentadic Gameplay Analysis²¹

In "War and Cultural Life," Burke asserts:

The need to think of global war and of its counterpart, global peace, invites us to seek also a truly global attitude toward all mankind.... The

²¹ This Latin phrase is traditionally translated as "The world wants to be deceived, so let it be deceived."

study of war aims should thus be grounded in the most searching consideration of human motives.... And more basic inquiries into human motives seem to have been postponed, as a luxury that the moment cannot afford, precisely at a time when the need for such a search is all the more urgent. (qtd. in Blakesley, 31)

The Scene/Act Ratio

My point here is not to “discover” which philosophy the game developers created and supported when they created *Medal of Honor: Frontline*; my point is to demonstrate how a pentadic analysis might be used to make metaphor visible as it functions within a particular new media object. All metaphor has the power to transfer meaning, but when metaphor functions at levels that are less obvious, or obscured, it has enormous power. Like Burkean terms, obscured metaphors have the power to sublimate other meanings; an analysis of this sublimation achieved by new media poetics could potentially reveal philosophical and ideological leanings.

In the opening mission of *Medal of Honor: Frontline*, James Patterson storms Omaha beach. Once there, the beach contains all of the action that is possible: the avatar’s acts of meeting the captain, saving the pinned down troops, crossing a landmine field, and finally helping to breach the barbed wire all force the player to progress, by degrees, from the water to the top of the hill. The acts must be accomplished sequentially to progress in the game, and no act is possible outside of this scene. For example, while the player’s avatar may go back into the water, splash around, and sight objects up the beach, no actual game objectives can be accomplished. In this ratio, then, the scene exerts much more control than the act. Continuing with Burke’s trajectory, one could argue that

because scene dominates here, the developers may be closely associated with the philosophical school of materialism, which he defines as “the theory that regards all the facts of the universe as explainable in terms of matter and motion” (*Grammar* 131); thus, given this ratio, the game developers present a narrative of the war as something understood along simple, verifiable, material lines: the sea, the beech, the breach.

In another pentadic analysis, authors Anderson and Prelli observe that “Burke observes that technological discourses involve continual *transformation of agencies*, in their accumulation, into the industrial-technological *scene*. The scene as featured term infuses its vocabulary of motives with meanings explainable in terms of matter in motion, lacking spontaneity and purpose, totally mechanical” (Anderson and Prelli 81). Here the whole of World War II—after being reduced down to an “informative anecdote” of storming the beach—can be experienced as the transference of agency to scene.

The Agent/Act Ratio

As an infiltrator, your avatar must quickly and quietly go about achieving stated objectives by using as much stealth as possible. Assuming that the player is on board with the central gameplay mechanics of shooting and sniping, who you are means next to nothing to the gameplay—who you are does not change your stated six missions with their needed objectives. As Patterson you sometimes hear others and sometimes make noises that are heard: others sometimes speak to you, though you never speak. In the particular instance of your avatar, you only exist to achieve missions, which is to say acts. In this ratio, the acts (turning a steam valve off, blowing up a submarine’s torpedoes) accomplish smaller missions that act as synecdoche for the game purpose of undermining

the Third Reich. Rhetorically this reduces the process of war down to a list of small chores to be accomplished, in a logical and incremental fashion.

As before, if one pursues Burke's line of extending the dominant term to a philosophy, it is realism, which he likens to Aristotle's "formal cause: the form or the pattern, i.e., the formula and the essence" of a thing. Burke continues: "We can approximate the equation closely enough if we think of a thing not simply as existing, but rather as 'taking form' or as the record of an act which gave it form" (*Grammar* 228). Thus, the developers present here a narrative of the war as something having an essence that was created.

Like Aristotelian poetics, which privileges form as the featured term of its system, this Burkean analysis reveals an interpretive term (the act) that filters all other terms. Thus, the agency is seen in terms of the act; the scene, in terms of the act; the purpose and the agent, the act. If pentadic ratios can be seen as metaphors, the act becomes the vehicle for each tenor, which forces a ground to exist. This enacts a tyranny of meaning whereby the complexity and influence of other possible meanings diminish as the privileged term takes over, effectively forcing an act-based interpretation of non-actions. This ratio shows the transformation of an agent (one's avatar in a game) to an act. It sees the whole of war as different manifestations of acts; alternatively, it interprets war itself as one act. Were an uncritical participant in such a game—or game franchise—to unknowingly essentialize war as a created act that one enters into and accomplishes through a series of separate acts, she would be susceptible to any discourse that made similar appeals, and that vulnerability could be harnessed for profit, politics, military—for any claim that agreed with the internalized "war-as-act" logic. Where do the questions

about purpose come into such an experience? With what critical apparatus could such a person dissent? If war can be limited by the blinders of acts, and accomplishing acts above all else persuades humans, then such a ratio in its logical conclusion should embolden any uninitiated military propagandist to immediately take up game development. New media poetics, especially in detailing how metaphor acts to provide imaginative knowledge, offers a vocabulary for identifying such subtle meanings.

Bella gerant alii: Problems with This Analysis²²

Manovich addresses a tension between what narratologists term “description” and “narration” when he repeats that “[a]s noted by Mieke Bal, the standard theoretical premise of narratology is that ‘descriptions interrupt the line of fabula.’” He writes, “For me, this opposition, in which description is defined negatively as absence of narration, has always been problematic” because it privileges certain types of narrative over others (246). When I consider this analysis, I am struck by an opposite tension: the problematical issues of how cut scenes impact a pentadic analysis (which, admittedly, lends itself very well to constructed dramas like movies). On the surface, they seem very much akin to interrupting “description”; because of this, I want to argue that the cut scenes deliver exposition to the player—the exposition can set the scene as in *Medal of Honor’s* opening voice over of Eisenhower’s speech, it may clue the player as when your avatar overhears a German radio operator (on his way to disable a hidden radio), or it may reward a player for his or her achievement.

²² This Latin phrase—which is also a *World of Warcraft* (Blizzard 2004) guild name—is traditionally translated as “Let others wage war.”

However, it may be helpful to consider Burke's theory of literary forms and to make a distinction between gameplay and cut-scenes. During both gameplay and cut-scenes, I would argue that the player experiences "syllogistic progression": "A form of perfectly conducted argument, advancing step by step...given certain things, certain things must follow, the premises forcing the conclusion" (*Counter-Statement* 124). This makes sense of both the scene/act ratio and the agent/act ratio: The developers have created syllogistic progression when they programmatically require sequential mission objectives and (largely) unidirectional scenes of gameplay.

Along this line, cut scenes can be seen as short cuts through a portion of the game's argument; the player plays through certain of the details of the argument, then a cut scene spells out in short order a large section of subsequent actions, then the play picks back up again. This highlights part of the seeming magic of metaphorical transference: instead of the player experiencing a familiar term that is suddenly challenged by an unfamiliar one (cf. I. A. Richard's "tenor" and "vehicle"), the player solves the task at hand and is contextually prepared for the next.

Additionally, cut scenes could also be read as enacting Burke's theory of repetitive form, which is "the consistent maintaining of a principle under new guises" (*Counter-Statement* 125). Thus, during cut scenes, though the information is "new" it recalls all prior information and in recalling, reemphasizes it. Thus, overhearing a German announcement that "there may be an infiltrator" repeats and reinforces the importance of a covert operation while reestablishing the threat of being "behind enemy lines." The cut-scenes that begin each new mission enact the same mechanism by

reminding a player of the high stakes, the enormous risks, and the importance of the mission to the cause.

Fortunately, one need not pick one dominant kind of form over another, as “progressive, repetitive, and conventional and minor forms necessarily overlap” as well as conflict (128). Instead, “[t]he important thing is not to confine the explanation to one principle, but to formulate sufficient principles to make an explanation possible” (129). Answering the question of which form best explains cut-scenes, or gameplay, or the relationship between the two would enact the same reduction of a pentadic analysis that settled on one term within one ratio as a way to understand a whole text. This kind of perfection, while comfortable, does not edify: “[A]ny complete statement about motives will offer some kind of answer to these five questions: what was done (act), when or where it was done (scene), who did it (agent), how he did it (agency), and why (purpose)” (*Grammar xv*).

Conclusion

What does it mean to see one thing in terms of another? What is the effect of the transference of meaning from one plane to another? Manovich concerns himself with the transformation from old to new media, with how the coding of media by a computer necessitates the transcoding of content to conform to a computer’s cosmogony. These two main principles, coding and transcoding, impact human communication in ways difficult to see. Burke concerns himself with the metaphor of human language as drama, as symbolic action. He has written, “To call a man a murderer is to propose a hanging,” and in this as in other places he maintains that any use of language, insofar as it is chosen

and a type of incipient language, is hortatory. Humans have a “naïve verbal realism” that makes them believe that the word for a thing *is that thing*, that the story of a war *is that war*. Burke would counter that every word, insofar as it cannot be the thing it purports to represent, is a metaphor.

To experience new media poetics is to constantly have experience mediated by partially or wholly obscured interfaces: veiled metaphors. It is to be presented with data that may be experienced as a “real” cultural object (a digital image of D-Day) and may simultaneously be experienced as a “real” set of numbers (binary code); however, the reverse process occurs—the computer level is the engine that creates the culture layer. Insofar as users typically neither see nor interact with the computer layer directly, the “naïve verbal realism” (*Rhetoric of Religion* 18) that Burke uses to characterize a shared human fallacy about language may appropriately be expanded to the “naïve media realism.” One explanation for this can be found in the equalizing effect of the interface: “And in contrast to cinema where most ‘users’ are able to understand cinematic language but not speak it (i.e., make films), all computer users can speak the language of the interface” (Manovich 79). Once a user starts speaking “the language of the interface” the ground of that interface, its code, falls from view: a transference occurs and somehow the user sees the interface *as the code*.

A speaker speaks and confuses her terms for the things they represent, and in so doing, she perfects a transference of meaning that allow her to be indisputably correct. This translation, once executed, paves a road for others. A viewer with a hazy attitude about World War II watches *Saving Private Ryan* and confuses the film with its historical counterpart; thereafter he adopts a newer and much clearer attitude about WWII, which

leads to further generalizations about the value of war. A gamer solves *Medal of Honor: Frontline* after 40 hours of gameplay and feels a firsthand emotional connection to the experience of fighting in war; he knows that the game is not real, but he values the game nonetheless for an undeniable and satisfying experience. None of them believes any single simulacrum creates or even contributes to their sense of “the value of war”; however, each missed translation, skipped transference, and hidden transcoding—each instance of metaphor—creates identifications that link war with particular values. In other words, through new media poetics whole sets of audience experiences resolve into attitudes.

CHAPTER THREE: MEMORY IN ENTHYMEMES, MEMORY IN METAPHOR

As discussed in chapter two, though a poetics sufficient to understand new media has yet to be articulated, one does exist that shapes meaning, and this dissertation seeks to give voice to how that shaping occurs. Whereas chapter one laid out the history of poetics and theorized how new poetics have been formed in the past, chapter two, in interrogating two new media objects, offered the foundational principle of new media poetics: that metaphor is the engine behind meaning-making. This chapter seeks to explicate how memory works in both the enthymeme and in metaphor (representative of rhetoric and poetics, respectively) and argues a second principle of new media poetics: that unmediated memory practice is inconvenient and should be discarded. To put this another way, instead of commanding users to forget, new media objects consistently invite users not to remember.²³

This approach of finding the rhetorical in the poetic can be helpful in a chapter that comes close on the heels of one about metaphor. If a nontraditional new poetics—one that needed no herald or manifesto—is currently dominating new media (by making knowledge), and if one important engine to drive that meaning-making is metaphor, then because metaphor relies as it does on memory, memory can be seen as the engine behind metaphor. This chapter, then, examines how memory has functioned in rhetoric (enthymeme) and poetics (metaphor) in order to create knowledge; such an understanding is necessary before I continue, in chapter four, an examination of the place of memory in a poetics of new media.

²³ For example, when I purposely misspell “remember” by typing “remeber” *MS-Word* automatically corrects my error and does it so quickly that I can miss witnessing the change. With the Autocorrect feature activated, I literally cannot forget to correctly spell “remember” because I am never invited to recognize my error in the first place.

The Enthymeme in Rhetoric

In IX.ix of *The Ethics of Aristotle*, a chapter concerning the happiness of humans, Aristotle asserts that “Man is a social animal, and the need for company is in the blood” (277).²⁴ In his *Politics*, Aristotle states a similar idea: “Hence it is evident that the state is a creation of nature, and that man is by nature a political animal” (1253a2-3). Lastly, in his *Rhetoric*, Aristotle admits that “rhetoric is a certain kind of offshoot [*paraphues*]²⁵ of dialectic and of ethical studies (which it is just to call politics)” (*On Rhetoric*, 39). The enthymeme unites these three statements in that the enthymeme enacts political persuasion by uniting speaker and audience, and also by uniting audience with memory. However much Aristotle may have believed in the power of rationality, one does not find him defining humanity by it.

As George Kennedy points out in his translation *On Rhetoric*, “Aristotle’s inclusion of emotion as a mode of persuasion...is a recognition that among human beings judgment is not entirely a rational act” (39, fn. 45). Additionally, Aristotle does not consign the enthymeme to a lowly suasive trick, but instead, places it at the height of efficacy: “[the enthymeme] is, generally speaking, the strongest of the *pisteis*” (1355a.11). His very organization of the *Rhetoric* avows that humans are persuaded by enthymemes, best reached through the *topoi*. Insofar as the use of enthymemes in the

²⁴ Throughout this chapter I have indicated works from the *Corpus Aristotelicum* with Bekker numbers when given. In this case, the translation does not supply them, and so I have included the page number here.

²⁵ In the first sentence of this text Aristotle characterizes the relationship differently: “Rhetoric is a counterpart of Dialectic” (Freese 354a.1). Here Freese expands on the Greek *antistrophos*: “Not an exact copy, but making a kind of pair with it and corresponding to it as the *antistrophe* to the strophe in a choral ode” (fn. a). Such a link to poetry may clarify Walker’s familial characterization of *antistrophos*: “The enthymeme...is to the syllogism...as rhetoric is to dialectic...not merely its counterpart...but its *antistrophos*, its differing sister” (*Rhetoric* 176).

ancient Greek world relied on the personal memory of the audience, completing an enthymeme was an internal, personally logical, and autonomous process. At worst, the enthymeme was a way to fool the ignorant (by appealing to prior knowledge in order to dictate future understanding), and at best, a rhetorical finesse move.

Now, indeed, new media practices prove Aristotle's point: new media practices are profoundly social and political, and the persuasion they effect is not necessarily achieved by formal reasoning, but in the poetic, in the ability of the audience to enthymematically and metaphorically complete texts and experiences. However, as I will continue arguing in subsequent chapters, memory itself is displacing personhood. The externalization of data in mechanical computers (punch cards) has initiated a corresponding externalization of data in digital computers. Though punch cards could and did record vast amounts of data (see Black), their modern equivalent, databases, have streamlined the organizing, sorting, and retrieving process to such a degree—and with such apparent accuracy—that computer users can (through interfaces) ask a computer to remember almost anything for them. This memory wraps its arms around the most personal and most public data, the sublime and the mundane; for example databases are able to house nearly anything, from data on fossil rat urine (see Plummer et al.) to the history of European dance (see Jones). As I pursue in chapter five, the computer does not differentiate—unless they are instructed to do so.

Plato famously warned against another form of externalized data, the new technology of writing. It hinders memory, he argued, and text in not verbally responding to its reader proves dumb—an actor's dull monologue instead of the enlivening dialogue of another human interlocutor. I would agree with Plato that this early externalization of

data did not seem to serve the flourishing climate of philosophical disputation of the day, though as I pointed out in chapter one, one contradiction of Plato is that despite this condemnation of writing, it is the only way his thoughts came down in history.²⁶ This precedent of a new technology altering discursive practice by impacting memory proves suggestive when considering new media objects, which go well beyond one alphabet and can be made to include not only all alphabets, but also, according to Manovich's first principle, any thing that may be expressed formally. When considering cell phone memory, email archives, browser cookies, databases, and so forth, the ability for modern audiences to directly complete enthymemes and metaphors is severely hindered, if not made impossible.²⁷ In externalizing memory, human beings carelessly forfeit a share of their direct unmediated memory practice. This forfeiture, as I argue in chapter four, is historically unique and at turns both detrimental and advantageous. To what extent does memory define human experience? What are human beings if memories—or at least a growing portion of them, are data that need a computer to be accessed? In short, to what extent does the poetics of new media refashion its users into cyborgs?

Memory and the Enthymeme

Writing about memory in the history of rhetoric, William West argues that

²⁶ This coming down in history, and the attendant conversation it inspires, Burke termed “the Parlor,” the place “where...drama gets its materials” (*Philosophy* 110).

²⁷ One may argue that a computer user who follows a hyperlink is enacting the modern enthymeme, but as Manovich argues, the appearance of participation or co-authoring of a hyperlinked narrative is illusory: “[H]yperlinking...objectifies the process of association.... Before, we would look at an image and mentally follow our own private associations to other images. Now interactive computer media asks us instead to click on an image in order to go to another image.... [W]e are asked to follow pre-programmed, objectively existing associations” (61). Moreover, the popularity of hyperlinking, he argues “exemplifies the decline of the field of rhetoric in the modern era...[evidenced by Jakobson’s] radical reduction of rhetoric to just two figures—metaphor and metonymy” (77).

[t]he study of memory encompasses not just ideas of memory at a particular historical moment, but entire regimes of memory, ways of privileging certain types of knowledge, certain values, certain ideas, beliefs, symbols—in short, an entire cultural ethnography coalesces around the apparently innocuous ability to remember the past. (483)

Within Aristotle's theory of rhetoric, the ability to remember the past is central. Because speakers deliver orations in particular situations in order to bring about the desired outcome from a contingency, they should know their audience, which is to say they should know what their audience knows and values.²⁸ Aristotle offers a pragmatic system of rules governing civic persuasion whereby rhetors may employ several heuristics in order to persuade a group of uneducated men. As previously discussed, at the heart of Aristotle's rhetorical theory lay invention, specifically "the ability, in each case, to see the available means of persuasion": by "each case" he indicates the three kinds of civic oratory: judicial, epideictic, and deliberative. The artistic (or "created") *pisteis* (proofs) of ethos, logos, and pathos separate, for the speaker, specific strategies related to manner, rationality, and emotion, respectively. Rhetors must look to the *topoi*, or common "places," to invent appropriate enthymemes. The success of these enthymemes will depend on how well the rhetor understands the audience. Thus, invention is primary to his rhetorical theory and occupies two of the three books of his *Rhetoric*. Book three deals with *taxis*, *lexis*, and *hypokrisis* (arrangement, style, and delivery, respectively), and

²⁸ In I.ix.30 Aristotle writes "We ought also to consider in whose presence we praise, for, as Socrates said, it is not difficult to praise Athenians among Athenians" (Freese). Freese points out that the source for this quote is *Menexenus* 235d, which parodies the funeral oration of Pericles. Socrates asserts "Had the orator to praise Athenians among Peloponnesians, or Peloponnesians among Athenians, he must be a good rhetorician" ("From *Menexenus*" 61). Here the rhetorician proves good by overcoming the prejudices of memory.

its brevity suggests that Aristotle saw these remaining canons as less central to the task. Memory—the canon so crucial to later Roman orators and early Byzantines—is not specifically addressed as a canon of rhetoric in Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*.²⁹

In the received history of the narrative of the enthymeme, it is usually aligned with an inferior, Sophistic understanding of persuasion and contrasted to its superior philosophical counterpart, the syllogism. Johnstone, in his version of this narrative, maintains that since its inception, “[rhetoric’s] central preoccupation has been persuasion.” Sophists, early teachers of this art, “emphasized appeals to common belief, argument from probability, and the arousal of audience emotion”; on the other hand, Plato and Socrates rejected these means and demanded “rigorous deductive argument grounded in the absolute and unchanging nature of things” (247). Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*, argues Johnstone and others (see Corbett xiii; Kennedy ix) can be read as a compromise position that takes the deduction of philosophical disputation (dialectic), or its semblance, and applies it to a different end: whereas dialectic “is employed in examining problems of a general issue” via “dialectical syllogisms” that follow a general order of (1) major premise, (2) minor premise, and (3) conclusion, rhetoric is “an ability, in each case, to see the available means of persuasion” by way of enthymemes tailored for a specific audience (Johnstone 248; Aristotle, *On Rhetoric* 1355a). Unlike Aristotle’s formal “dialectical syllogisms,” “rhetorical syllogisms”—or enthymemes—because they seek to motivate a particular audience “among such listeners as are not able to see many things altogether or to reason from a distant starting point” (Aristotle, *On Rhetoric* 1357a), rely

²⁹ Aristotle’s places the subject under Physics and covers it in *The Parva Naturalia*.

on common opinion, or endoxa.³⁰ In other words, to the hoi polloi gathered in the Assembly for the expressed purpose of being persuaded to resolve a particular civic exigence of the day—to the uneducated men of Athens—emotion, specifically the emotion of filling in for themselves the suppressed premises of enthymemes gathered from shared endoxa, more than logic could be trusted upon to effect persuasion. In the words of Johnstone, “[T]he enthymeme is a deductive argument in which the audience itself helps construct the proofs by which it is persuaded” (249).

Unfortunately, Aristotle’s definition of the enthymeme came down from antiquity a burdened animal misnamed. In textbooks, the enthymeme has been taught as a truncated syllogism, a flawed mechanism of logic, and this disservice to its rich complexity has rightly been corrected by the scholarship of Jeffery Walker, who uses etymology to simplify the notion of “syllogism” and to complicate the notion of “enthymeme.” Walker finds that “‘Syllogism’ in Ancient Greek seems to be nothing more than ordinary, informal reasoning” that includes informal inference making of everyday life. Additionally, “the root of the word *thymema* is *thymos*, ‘heart’” and from this Walker excavates many lost layers of the word (*Rhetoric and Poetics* 48). A persuasive argument that is completed in the heart elicits passion in its listener; that the audience must use any of its own systems of reasoning to complete an argument suggests that the enthymeme was used epistemically in group meaning-making.³¹ Finally, Walker maintains that the enthymeme in exetastic discourse could through systems of

³⁰ Rys translates it thusly: “The duty of rhetoric is to deal with such matters as we deliberate upon without arts or systems to guide us, in the hearing of persons who cannot take in at a glance a complicated argument, or follow a long chain of reasoning” (*The Rhetoric and the Poetics of Aristotle*).

³¹ And this scheme strongly recalls Aristotle’s earlier quotation: “Man is a social animal, and the need for company is in the blood.” Humans satisfy their social needs through discourse, a type of exercise that combines body and mind.

oppositions create tension and suspense, and then be capped by one final enthymeme to create an argumentative flourish. This is how one reaches the heart of an audience, by allowing them to complete and turn the enthymemes set up in speech.

I begin and end by examining the enthymeme in action. To continue the trajectory set in motion in Plato, this can be seen directly in politics, specifically in the difficulty of persuading an audience whose views may be diametrically opposed to one's own. In quoting the *Menexenus*, Aristotle underscores that the rhetor's difficulty may be gauged by the spans that his enthymemes must traverse. Also, as pointed out by Kennedy, "[i]n calling rhetoric an antistrophos of dialectic in 1.1.1, and an offshoot of dialectic and ethical studies here... Aristotle avoids use of the formal categories of genus and species" (39 fn. 46). Rhetoric is neither the genus of dialectic nor the species of it; rather, rhetoric can be seen as a kind of admixture of dialectic and ethics. Ethics can be seen as a branch of politics, because "the science of politics" is "that study which has most authority and control over the rest" (*The Ethics* 26). In this chapter I will first review the mythic origins of Memory and the Muses, a history that argues powerfully for a broadened understanding of poetics; next, a close look at how both rhetoric and poetics find enthymemes in order to borrow back and forth from each other; then, I will examine three instances of what I term 'new media enthymemes.' At first glance my three examples—one from the political thriller *The Manchurian Candidate*, the second gathered from news coverage of Bill Clinton's successful 1996 presidential campaign, and the third from Trent Lott's casual birthday remarks that severely tarnished his political career—seem like traditional enthymemes. However, these enthymemes occur within new media objects like DVDs, web pages containing digital news sources, and digital TV coverage.

Recalling Manovich's first principle of "numeric representation," that "a new media object can be described formally (mathematically)," I here draw attention to the enthymematic differences between traditional enthymemes and 'new media enthymemes' (27). All three enthymemes in their new media guises demonstrate—as in the ancient examples—the ways in which audiences fill in missing information in order to complete enthymemes that will credential or decredential speakers; however, the changing nature of memory—the externalization of memory and its attended displacement of personhood—lends new media enthymemes great power through their ubiquitous presentism.

Memory and Muses, Passion and Persuasion

Mnemosyne, a daughter of Coelus and Terra, mother of the nine Muses, by Jupiter.... The word Mnemosyne signifies memory, and therefore the poets have rightly called memory the mother of the Muses, because it is to that mental endowment that mankind are indebted for their progress in science. (Lempriere 420)

For it is through the Muses and far-shooting Apollo that there are singers and harpers upon the earth; but princes are of Zeus, and happy is he whom the Muses love: sweet flows speech from his mouth. (Hesiod ll. 75-103)

Oblivion, the daughter of Eris.... She gave her name to the river of Oblivion in the Underworld. The dead drank from it to make them forget

their earthly life.... Near the oracle of Trophonius at Lebadeia there were two springs which those consulting the oracle had to drink—the spring of forgetfulness (Lethe) and the spring of memory (Mnemosyne). (Grimal 243-44)

In Greek myth the Titaness Mnemosyne lay for nine nights with Zeus, bearing nine daughters who, according to Hesiod were “all of one mind, whose hearts are set upon song and their spirit free from care” who “sing the laws of all and the goodly ways of the immortals” (ll. 53-74). Zeus, grandson of the castrated and usurped Uranus (by his father, the infanticidal Cronus), had just won control of the universe in the War of the Titans, and he needed a mechanism through which his might, and the new order that his might had instilled, could be locked up, made beautiful, and disseminated throughout the world. In order to accomplish so great a thing Zeus the Father, Protector of Travelers, and Scourge of the Heavens enters Memory herself. This myth educates its listeners about the nature of both knowledge and law in its implicit questions: What are great deeds that go unsung? What value lies in the spilt blood of Gods? What price does one pay for order? Through implicit statements it teaches further: Great deeds on their own will fail, the mother of inspiration must be memory, whatever would be eternal would need through some technology to replicate itself. Power, in seeking increase, turns inward to Memory and multiplies; Memory, in turn, turns inward and gives birth the Inspiration, to the Muses. Memory is the grandmother of poetry, which travels the world in the form of songs not just of celebration, but of law.

This cluster of associations from Hesiod—singers, princes, sweet speech—receives close scholarly attention in Jeffery Walker’s *Rhetoric and Poetics in Antiquity*;

in fact, Walker uses the *Theogony* as the first example for his argument. In a nutshell, Walker refutes the received account of the rhetorical tradition, which holds that rhetoric was originally “an art of practical civic oratory” that emerged in the law courts and political assemblies of ancient Greece and Rome and that the poetic and epideictic is a display of formal eloquence, suspect for its powers of diversion (vii-xii). Walker posits that rhetoric derives from the poetic. Through examination of “rhetorical poetics”—mainly archaic Greek lyric poetry—this can be shown.

For example, Walker reads Hesiod’s hymn to the Muses as “probably the earliest account on record, at least in the West, of the relationship between the eloquence of prince and bard, or what many in academia may think of now as ‘rhetoric’ and ‘poetry’” (3). Walker observes that in Hesiod’s time, “the words ‘poetry’ and ‘rhetoric’ do not exist.... For Hesiod, there are only the ‘song’ (*aoide*) or the ‘hymns’ (*hymnoi*) of the ‘singer’ (*aoidos*) and the eloquent ‘words’ (*epea*) of the wise prince (*basileus*) speaking in the assembly” (4). Unlike a current understanding of rhetoric and poetry as separated by a fundamentally different disciplinarity, “Hesiod considers both the *aoidos* and the good *basileus* to be engaged in essentially the same activity. Both acquire their gift of eloquence from the Muses, and both are gifted with the power of persuasion” (4). To these two matching triads of singer/*aoidos*/poetic and wise prince/*basileus*/rhetoric Walker will add a later understanding of rhetorical theory: the epideictic (*epideiktikon*) and the pragmatic (*pragmatikon*): The pragmatic agreed with Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* and included what he would have termed deliberative and judicial types of rhetoric, and the epideictic—in contrast to Aristotle—included “discourse delivered outside judicial and legislative forums.... *Epideiktikon*, in sum, came to include everything that modernity has

tended to describe as ‘literature’” (7). The two types of language use can be differentiated by their audiences and forums (8), and in Walker’s view, “‘epideictic’ appears as that which shapes and cultivates those basic codes of value and belief by which a society or culture lives” (9). Given all of this, Walker succinctly switches the traditional account of rhetoric and poetic: “[T]he *epideiktikon* is the rhetoric of belief and desire; the *pragmatikon* the rhetoric of practical civic business.... The poetic/epideictic discourse of the *aoidos* is, in sum, what might be called the ‘primary’ form of ‘rhetoric’ in [Hesiod’s] world, while the pragmatic discourse of the *basileus* is an applied, ‘secondary’ projection” (10).

Walker’s project of illuminating a “rhetorical poetics” informs my project of discerning a dominant poetics of new media because it looks for persuasion where none appears to be, where no overt rhetoric proclaims itself. Just as the Muses—symbols of poetic inspiration—can be seen as the children of Power and Memory, the metaphors that operate within and shape new media poetics can be seen as having a genealogy as well. If metaphors create meaning, then the engine behind metaphor is memory, the mechanism, if you will, that links singer and song, the thing that connects eloquent words and wise princes.

Enthymemes and the Borrowing Back and Forth

For, as I was saying just now, this is not an art in you, whereby you speak well on Homer, but a divine power, which moves you like that in the stone which Euripides named a magnet.... For this stone not only attracts iron rings, but also imparts to them a power whereby they in turn are able to do

the very same thing as the stone, and attract other rings; so that sometimes there is formed quite a long chain of bits of iron and rings, suspended one from another; and they all depend for this power on that one stone. In the same manner also the Muse inspires men herself, and then by means of these inspired persons the inspiration spreads to others, and holds them in a connected chain. For all the good epic poets utter all those fine poems not from art, but as inspired and possessed.... For a poet is a light and winged and sacred thing, and is unable ever to indite until he has been inspired and put out of his senses, and his mind is no longer in him: every man, whilst he retains possession of that, is powerless to indite a verse or chant an oracle. (Plato, *Ion* 533d-534c)

The notion that true poets must undergo a divine madness, and that madness creates poetry that inspires others in a long chain, as discussed in chapter one, reveals half of a contradictory poetics of Plato. Here I look closely at two examples of enthymemes at work in Aristotle's *Rhetoric*—one enthymeme from Homer's *Iliad* and another from Pericles' Funeral Oration—in order to demonstrate how traditional enthymemes functioned in discourse. This functioning—*the internal, personally logical, and autonomous process*—occurs in both examples. Such a demonstration is necessary to contrast with new media enthymemes, which are external, empirically logical, and dependent.

In Book One, Chapter Seven of his *Rhetoric*, Aristotle instructs his readers in the Koinon of Degree of Magnitude as it relates to deliberative rhetoric, and to do it he offers

dozens of examples, and from all of these, I find two that inform this discussion of the memory that serves to connect audiences and inspiration.

In the first example, Aristotle writes simply, “And what is self-generated [is greater] than what is acquired. Thus, the poet, too, says, ‘But I am self-taught’” (*On Rhetoric* 1365a.33). Here, to a 21st-century reader in the US, even one familiar enough to recognize Homer as “the poet,” the reference is not clear. It is worth repeating Walker’s notion of the ways in which the *epideiktikon*—here that agreed upon literature of Homer—and how it could have served the *pragmatikon*—here a handbook on a form of argument to be used when persuading the assembly on a course of action. The quoted example is obviously an enthymeme, but without a shared set of beliefs and assumptions—with no common memory—the thrust of the enthymeme gets lost.

Kennedy explains in footnote 146 that the veiled enthymeme actually refers to the bard Phemius from Homer’s *Odyssey*, but he does not mention Phemius’ story. Briefly told, Odysseus, having fought for ten years in the *Iliad* and then wandered for ten years, has finally returned to Ithaca and his rightful son, wife, and home. The time for all disguises has past, and at the point in the story where Phemius appears, Odysseus is pitilessly slaying the suitors. Just prior to this line of Phemios offering his defense, the false seer Leodes unsuccessfully begs for mercy and is beheaded (*Odyssey* 22.350-370). Homer turns his attention to the second supplicant Phemios:

He stood now with his harp, holy and clear,
 In the wall’s recess, under the window, wondering
 If he should flee that way to the courtyard altar,
 Sanctuary of Zeus, the Enclosure of God.

Thighbones in hundreds had been offered there
 by Laertes and Odysseus. No, he thought;
 the more direct way would be best—to go
 humbly to his lord. But first to save
 his murmuring instrument he laid it down
 carefully between the winebowl and a chair,
 then he betook himself to Lord Odysseus,
 clung hard to his knees, and said:

“Mercy,

Mercy on a suppliant, Odysseus!

My gift is song for men and for the gods undying.

My death will be remorse for you hereafter.

No one taught me: deep in my mind a god

Shaped all the various ways of life in song.” (22.371-391)

Here Homer offers up a primer on ethos, and one that Aristotle misses and instead uses in a lesson about the value of autodidactic persistence. In the narrative, Homer has two back-to-back supplicants in a gory battle, and he has moments to choose whom to spare, whom to slay. The first, the false-priest Leodes, had actually been the first during the contest to try and string the bow; because the disguised Odysseus witnessed it, Leodes dies right off. But Phemios the bard stands in the midst of the gore, pondering the just course. Phemios puts his lord before himself; Phemios saves his instrument before himself. And this is the lesson: Phemios is a true bard, and thus a true innocent, because no one taught him. Forecasting the “inspired-madness” poetics of Plato, Phemios “is

unable ever to indite until he has been inspired and put out of his senses.” Phemios works for the Muses—not the suitors, though they compelled him to sing—and it is through the Muses that “all the various ways of life” become song. Homer teaches the reader: When overwhelmed by deception, trust the uninstructed.

This example demonstrates the great degree of familiarity Aristotle’s audience must have held with Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey*: in order to make the connection between the *koinon* of magnitude and the privileging of self-generation over mere acquisition, this enthymeme would have to be completed internally and validated autonomously by personal logic.³² The audience first must connect the quotation to Phemios, and next to that point in the *Odyssey* by remembering the bloodied floor and the moment of revenge. Aristotle does not have to retell this portion of the narrative, nor does he offer a synopsis, because it must exist already intact in his audience. By revisiting their private memories, his listeners relive a riveting moment inside of a slaughter: they recall the false seer whose disingenuousness earns him a beheading, and contrast this to the true singer whose devotion wins his life. The resulting logic brings about the conclusion: natural talent wins over artifice. This example demonstrates how Aristotle states a premise (“And what is self-generated [is greater] than what is acquired”) and then, all at once, offers a conclusion that forces the audience to roam back, through memory, to that revenge scene and remember Leodes (what is acquired) and Phemios (what is self-generated). Surely such a rush of evocative identifications occurring in the heart of his listener—the instantly supplied and affirmed missing premises—must have created a profound sense of persuasion.

³² The poet referenced literally summons up Phemios, but it could also be a stand in for Homer himself, the singer of songs.

The enthymeme, however, is not always as successful as the above; often, the very autonomous nature of the enthymeme's needing to be completed by the listener may derail it: If a listener supplies the intended premises, the enthymeme will likely work as intended; if not, the enthymeme may work against the speaker's purpose. In another example of his *koinon*, Aristotle writes that "the greatest part of the great [is greater]; for example, Pericles said in the Funeral Oration that the youth had been taken from the city 'as if the spring had been taken from the year'" (*On Rhetoric* 1365a.34). Just a few observations about this example. The brackets surrounding "is greater" reveal that, just as throughout the entire *On Rhetoric*, Aristotle has made an enthymeme or, as Kennedy has it, "(brackets) within the translated text supplies the Greek term used by Aristotle or words and phrases implied but not stated in the text" (23). For the reader of Greek, Aristotle in this section keeps leaving out "is greater" and the reader must supply it from what came before.

When a casual reader hears this evocative simile, "as if the spring had been taken from the year" she may experience an interesting transference, one that underscores the variable nature of enthymeme completion, if the reader attributes it to the wrong speech. As Kennedy points out, "This celebrated quote...does not appear in the Funeral Oration attributed to Pericles in Thucydides 2.35-46. Memory of it may have been otherwise transmitted from the speech on that occasion (431 BCE), or Pericles may have given more than one funeral oration" (*On Rhetoric* 1365a.33, fn. 147). Indeed, a close examination reveals nothing like the Aristotle quote; the nearest the Thucydides text comes is an admonition to the current youth of Athens to avoid competing with the dead: "As to you, the sons and brothers of these men, I foresee that you will have a formidable task... You

see, envy for the living derives from competition, but those who are no longer with us are honored with an unchallengeable good will” (Thucydides 2.45, 76). In fact, it is hard to imagine, given the rhetorical purpose of this speech, that any leader, let alone Pericles, would include any such aphoristic slip that so directly underscored the poignant loss of Athens’ first dead. I read Pericles as underscoring just the opposite.

Upon close examination, at least two authorities affirm that this quote does refer to another speech: “[W]e we must go back eight years to the other recorded funeral speech of Thucydides, for those who fell while crushing the Samian Revolt. That was a celebrated oration, commemorated somewhat critically by Ion of Chios and Stesimbrotus of Thasos.” And, in footnote 12: “The striking metaphor reported by Aristotle (Rhet. 1.1365a31-3, 3.1411a 2-4) probably comes from this oration” (Bosworth 3). Additionally, Frank E. Adcock writes in *The Greek and Macedonian Art of War* that “I can remember no phrase more poignant than Pericles’ words of the young men who perished in Samos: ‘It was as if the Spring had been taken from the year’” (9).

The Athens oration can be seen by historians as an invention of Thucydides: “it is in essence Thucydides’ own composition, written to express the policies and thought of the city’s leader at the acme of her power” (Bosworth 1). However, Bosworth continues, the great number of people in the audience, who could later supplement the memory of Thucydides, argues for the veracity of this speech (2). Bosworth concurs that the two speeches—the prior oration, given at Samos, and the latter one, given at Athens—are opposites: Whereas the Samos oration revealed a Pericles “[e]xultant and triumphal” whose speech “so eulogized the fallen that when he left the rostrum, he was mobbed by the women present,” for the Athens oration Pericles makes a strict call for moderation

and a somber tone (3). In a fascinating final turn, Thucydides has Pericles state in his official and recorded Funeral Oration: “We need no more, not a Homer to sing our praises nor any other poet to please us with verses whose plots and fictions are hobbled by the truth” (2.41). Rhetoric and the poetic borrow back and forth from each other in a dizzying set of face-paced transferences, from singer to wise prince, from Memory to Muse, from law to literature: Phemios the Bard borrowed from Homer by Aristotle (*epideiktikon* in the service of *pragmatikon*), the Phantom Spring Simile Funeral Oration borrowed from Pericles by Aristotle (*pragmatikon*), and Homer refuted by Pericles in the words of Thucydides (*epideiktikon*’s disservice to *pragmatikon*).

Though Aristotle mentions only “the Funeral Oration”—he identifies neither the Samian nor Athenian—this instance of an enthymeme reveals much about the power of memory. For though Thucydides cemented, to what is imagined to be a great deal of accuracy, the Funeral Oration of Pericles, and though it is this oration that gets canonized, one simile from the earlier oration clearly gets more recognition in Aristotle, writing some 100 years later. And further, in an ironic twist, any subsequent reader of Aristotle’s *Rhetoric* who had also read Thucydides but not Ion or Stesimbrotus would make what might be seen as a natural transference, moving the Samos simile to the Athens oration, effectively undoing its purpose. It is necessary to revisit these two examples of enthymemes-in-the-making to demonstrate that it is the autonomous nature of the enthymeme that allows for success (in the Phemios example), and possible failure (in the Pericles example). Unlike new media enthymemes, as I argue in the final section, traditional enthymemes were completed internally, in the hearts of their audiences as Walker might say. This was all made possible by the autonomous nature of traditional

enthymeme completion—anyone within hearing distance could participate. Once completed the traditional enthymemes were made valid or invalid by a personal logic—by how the audience understood the connection they had formed. And this ability of audiences to form connections can be seen not in new media enthymemes, but in contemporary poetry.

Memory in Metaphor

[T]he most successful poem is an expression of formally heightened emotion that seeks to establish an intimate relationship with the reader in part by making the reader a participant in the creative process. (Dobyns 12)

In the previous section I argue that rhetoric and poetics constantly borrow back and forth from each other, and that in rhetoric specifically it is the enthymeme—and the audience’s ability to supply missing information from common endoxa—that can come to persuade a group of people. Here I’d like to pause for a moment and consider a similar function in poetry, namely the ways in which the reader may, as in the case of the enthymeme, participate directly in meaning-making. Recalling Johnstone’s notion that “the audience itself helps construct the proofs by which it is persuaded,” I find in contemporary poet Steven Dobyns a similar situation in the completion of metaphor (249).

In chapter two of his book *Best Words, Best Order* Dobyns continually stresses how the relationship between reader and writer may be strengthened, and this strength can be enacted through the mental process of a reader experiencing a metaphor. Dobyns

argues that each metaphor has two parts, “[a] metaphor consists of an object half and the image half” and to illustrate he contrasts a stale or dead metaphor with one that effects the type of intimacy achieved via participation: “Compare, for example, the stale metaphor ‘as quiet as a mouse’ with:

Quiet

Like a house where the witch

has just stopped dancing. (14)

Dobyns, along a parallel line as I. A. Richards, identifies the object (tenor) and the image (vehicle) as two necessary parts of a metaphor. His example takes an ordinary object—“quiet”—and offers up what he terms “an open-ended image...[that] allows it to become to some degree mysterious”: the house of a dancing witch (14). One quality of such open-endedness is that it cannot be easily encompassed by the mind of the reader; the image creates mystery that is answered by the mind jumping in to solve the problem of reconciling object and image (of answering the question: “how are they alike?”). For Dobyns, “The more we think about the potentially frightening qualities of the witch’s dance, think what makes the house so silent when the dance is over and of the fear implied by that silence, then the more we draw understanding from the entire metaphor” (14). This notion, that the metaphor can be seen as ‘entire’ event, offers a powerful analogy to what Aristotle describes in his *Rhetoric* as an audience’s experience of enthymematic completion.

For Dobyns, the purpose of metaphor is to heighten our sense of the object: the open-ended quality of the image allows an entry-point for the reader to “test” the “riddle” of the metaphor by first feeling (in an unconscious and non-language way) the

“correctness” of the comparison and *then* by understanding (consciously, through logic and language) (12-16). Dobyns titles this second chapter “Memory and the Authenticating Act of Metaphor”; for him, the process of remembering, through the progression outlined above, authenticates knowledge. The reader pauses and imagines, which is to say that the reader dips her toe in the surface of memory to test the logic and truth in the comparison.

To paraphrase Dobyns, then, a poet seeks to establish the relationship in order to force the reader to become increasingly aware of her relationship with the self. A poem achieves this by showing the reader how she sees the world: in defining the relationship between object and image—in the activity and struggle in which defining takes place—the reader comes to know something previously unknown, and this new knowledge arrives by way of metaphor, by way of transference: “This...gives the reader knowledge about something unknown or only partly known by making it analogous to something he or she can imagine.” And this act of imagining increases the reader’s participation by forcing him or her to draw on memory to authenticate the metaphor (17). Thus, a successful metaphor confronts one part of the mind with another, and the result is a heightening of the reader’s relationship to herself.

What is an example of one’s confrontation with a metaphor that cannot be authenticated, and what might be the implications of this? Dobyn’s very definition of art is defined by its function: “a work of art, such as a poem, seeks to communicate with a reader. If that communication does not take place, then the work of art has failed” (11). He disagrees with the position of the French Symbolists—that a poem is like a bright light, something for a reader to experience—and sides with Dr. Johnson, who maintains

that “[b]y the common sense of readers uncorrupted with literary prejudices, after all the refinements of subtlety and the dogmatism of learning, must be finally decided all claim to poetic honors” (qtd. in Dobyns 11). The notion strongly parallels Aristotle’s enthymeme: unrefined people may use common sense in order to judge the communicative efficacy of a communication. As in the enthymeme, if there are not enough stated premises—or if they are too cryptic or unknown to their audience—the completion of the poetics metaphor will fail, a fault of either reader, or writer, or both. Dead or stale metaphors fail to communicate new meaning to their readers through overuse. Symbolist Mallarme “said that to name is to destroy and to suggest is to create” though Dobyns disagrees: “Suggestion won’t work until the reader has enough information to brood about,” which is to say, until the reader enters the mystery (34).

Mediated Enthymemes

Modern enthymemes are mediated, which is to say that the modern instance of the enthymeme occupies an ontological limbo of the perpetual present.³³ This proves especially powerful in politics, with its two-fold valuation of time: Those who are elected to office and who seek reelection understand the unending campaigning that marks their speech. The politician threads the discursive needle of speaking in the present while knowing that her remarks are being strenuously documented, often times well enough to resurrect them *in toto* in the future. Thus political discourse in its nature contains not only Richard’s “interanimation of words,” but also reanimation.

³³ Contrariwise one could argue that that, in replaying the past in the present, new media enthymemes bring about a perpetual past, or a kind of past-in-present, which strongly recalls the first of St. Augustine’s three forms of ‘the present’: “The present of past things is the memory” (Augustine, *Confessions* 269).

Because an essential aspect of narrative is plot, and because plot requires chronology, narrative in any meaningful sense is directly tied to time: namely, the time it takes the story to unfold for an audience (and secondarily, in its salutation to the supremacy of time—no narrative sequence without it). Unlike Classical enthymemes, which were spoken or written to an immediate audience, new media enthymemes exist in a plurality of forms including the digital form. New media enthymemes are computer files that can be replayed, for infinite audiences, infinitely. And though it is true that the same might be said of earlier media—especially photography, and film—these media were bound up in material expressions guaranteed to decay: the photographic negative, the reel of celluloid film. What is more, the materiality of the media demanded a corresponding and prohibitively expensive materiality of production (the camera, the motion picture camera) and consumption (the art gallery, the local cinema). Before the digital computer no multipurpose multimedia machine existed that allowed its users to create, develop, manipulate, and distribute media. Also, and the larger point here: never before have media objects been created, replicated, and disseminated worldwide in such a short amount of time. Consider, for example, the first instantiation of the MyDoom worm of January 26, 2005: “[A]ccording to antivirus firm F-Secure, during its first day the worm generated more than 100 million e-mails, ‘a major part of all e-mail traffic globally’” (Kotadia). As humans, we value time as a limited quantity, namely the limitation of a lifetime, or the number of breaths a human can take. Time is our mortality.

However, to revisit Manovich’s principle of transcoding, a computer shares no such understanding or valuation of time (and therefore of plot, causation, or narrative). Each replaying of Howard Dean’s famous “Dean Scream” summons the past of 2004 and

plays it re-contextually in the perpetual present, which is to say that one minute that occurred in 2004 gets recontextualized in the present: a minute from the past takes a minute of the present, and because the future is excluded from our experience, these domains of past and present cohere in the present. In fact, the “Dean Scream” proves a helpful analogy for new media enthymemes. At an “Ethics Institute[] at Washington and Lee University” a producer brought two clips of the famous scream. In the first, “The candidate filled the screen, no supporters were visible. Crowd noise was silenced by the microphone he held, which deadened ambient sounds. You saw only him and heard only his inexplicable screaming,” and in the second, “The place was packed. The noise was deafening. Dean was on the podium, but you couldn’t hear him. The roar from his supporters was drowning him out” (Wasserman). For the reporter this technically created phantom faux pas illustrates the worst in modern journalism: “It takes a man who in context was acting reasonably, and by stripping away that context transforms him into a lunatic” (Wasserman). In a similar fashion, modern enthymemes in their replaying get recontextualized in the perpetual present, and the hermeneutic consequences prove unpredictable.³⁴

In fact, in order to understand the notion of the perpetual present one must turn to stories of either divinity or machinery, things beyond a human understanding. Two cases of this potentiality of a perpetual present come to mind: omnipresence (divinity or enlightenment) and monopresence (non-consciousness or inanimacy). In the case of omnipresence, Prometheus’s punishment for disobeying Zeus and giving fire to man was

³⁴ A different study should isolate those particular new media objects that, in getting replayed most often (the flag of Iwo Jima, the MLK “I Have a Dream” speech, JFK junior’s salute, the planes slamming into the twin towers), insist on this recontextualization and how that insistence may be read rhetorically against the particular exigencies of the day.

Zeus's divine reprimand to dole out, and he did this by chaining the Titan to a rock and have his regenerating liver eaten anew each day—a creator with the power to 'remember' and punish ad infinitum in a scene that forecasts the Christian Hell. In the case of monopresence, gears and wires exist only where they are and do only what the laws of nature permit them under their circumstances—consider Ohm's Law or mechanical advantage. Humans are in a kind of liminal state between the two, neither fully omnipresent nor fully monopresent. In isolating how human beings move between these states—through metaphor, through memory, through enthymeme—one arrives at the question: in what ways are humans in a state of transpresence, and how might this transpresence be articulated when a computer remembers?

The Manchurian Candidate

The 1962 political thriller *The Manchurian Candidate* provides an interesting study on the political enthymeme and its relationship to memory. According to ardent film summarist Michael Daly, writing in the Internet Movie Database (IMDB), the film exists at the intersection of geopolitics and family:

In Korea in 1952, a US Army patrol is ambushed by Communist soldiers. A year later the squad, having escaped, returns to the US, where Staff Sergeant Raymond Shaw is to receive the Medal of Honor for single-handedly saving the lives of the squad. Shaw is the son of Elanor Iselin, wife of US Senator John Yerkes Iselin, and Mrs. Iselin turns the return of Raymond into a political rally that brings out building hostility between son and mother over the ambitions of Johnny Iselin.... [T]he nightmares

of a US Army officer, Bennett Marco, leads to investigation of Raymond that unlocks a stunning political conspiracy that sweeps up Johnny and Elanor Iselin, and which only Bennett Marco can possibly stop. (Daly)

In one telling scene from this film, which is perhaps the greatest explication of political rhetoric in film, the flunky Senator Iselin interrupts a televised meeting to proclaim, a la McCarthy, that there are 207 communists in the Defense Department. Follow-up questions reveal that the actual number is 104, then 275.

Later, when Iselin asks his puppeteer wife to solidify the number so that he might avoid public humiliation, she gives him a lesson on the enthymeme: “Who are they writing about all over this country and what are they saying? Are they saying ‘Are there any communists in the Defense Department’? Of course not. They’re saying ‘*How many* communists are there in the Defense Department?’” This is extraordinary, in that she uses enthymemes to explain a master enthymeme. Her first question—Who are they writing about all over this country?—is itself an answer: Journalists are writing about Senator Iselin. This acts enthymematically by implying several premises and a conclusion:

Journalists are writing about Senator Iselin all over the country.

Senators with ambitions to become president need votes.

Media exposure proves them most powerful tool in getting votes.

Senator Iselin needs maximum media exposure to become president.

The second question—What are they saying?—reveals the power of controlling discourse. Here, it is accomplished by a variation of the logical fallacy begging the question, wherein what looks like a premise is actually a restatement of a conclusion. In

the example, were we to go with the original statement of 207 communist, the enthymeme looks like this:

A Senator claims that there are 207 Communists in the Defense
Department.

Senators are respected civil servants who serve the country.

Communism threatens the American way of life everywhere.

Communism in high levels of government is the most dangerous form to
Americans.

We must find and eradicate these 207 Communists for the good of the
country.

But when we follow the discourse as it is being directed—207 communists, then “absolutely” 104 communists, then 275 “card carrying” communists—as Kenneth Burke wrote, “the arrows of our attention” get turned away from the original question of whether there are communists in the Defense Department at all. The Senator’s wife understands that in a world that venerates the law of noncontradiction, redirecting public discourse is a matter of using deft enthymemes.

Despite this knowledge, however, as a tool of the Manchuria Corporation, Mrs. Iselin’s master-plan, to plot “with the Russians and Chinese to use the Red Scare of ‘Iselinism’ to get him into office, where she will run things from behind the scenes” ultimately fails because of the failure of the false memories instilled by the Pavlov Institute (Ebert). In a compelling relation to the discussion earlier—inspiration over instruction, Memory as true—the viewer of this film watches the protagonist Captain Marco relive through nightmares his actual memory of the brainwashing. When Marco

finds that another of his unit that has the same nightmare, he is spurred to uncover the master plot.

To the 1962 audience, *The Manchurian Candidate* surely was a direct satire on McCarthyism and the Red Scare that had dominated political discourse for the previous ten years, and in this way the film may be read as the value placed on that period—the film offers a way of remembering, or storing McCarthy in the common imagination. As Roger Ebert points out, “Frankenheimer says on the commentary track that he is proudest that the film hammered McCarthyism; there’s a scene where the hard-drinking Senator Iselin can not decide how many communists he thinks are in the State Department, and settles on 57 after studying a ketchup bottle” (Ebert). The multiple ironies of a bellicose anticommunist senator, who is actually the principle tool required for an imminent communist takeover of the US , not only missing his wife’s powerful lesson on redirecting public discourse but doing so via a patriotic and red symbol of US capitalism—these ironies offer a suggestive analogue to a poetics of new media.

How does the film support this argument? First, the film’s implicit argument suggests that the purpose of political discourse is to hoodwink its audience, through a type of verbal prestidigitation that uses an overt and heavy-handed speech, from a hidden and sinister agenda. This type of rhetorical apparatus, referred to in chapter two as Brummett’s “exigent function,” concerns readily-identifiable events and obvious purposes that may obscure the less obvious levels of meaning-making, such as the “implicative function” that governs what can be taken for granted. Within the film, one “exigent function” may be seen as the buffoon Senator Iselin; one “implicative function” may be seen as Mrs. Iselin.

A second way that the film supports this argument relates to the way the Communists try to control behavior by programming the soldier's minds with false memories and implanting the subconscious triggering device of the queen of diamonds in Raymond Shaw's mind. Though initially effective, the memories are revealed as false through the persistence of dreams. Despite the psychological mastery of the doctors in the Pavlov institute, memory returns first to Captain Marco, and then to Raymond Shaw, making a strong echo to the koinon of magnitude of degree as illustrated by the bard Phemios: once again, what is self-generated (the "true" memories of the actual events) is greater than what is acquired (the "false" memories implanted by the Communists). The most persuaded character is neither the brainwashed Captain Marco nor Raymond Shaw, nor the mastermind Mrs. Iselin: in other words, the most persuaded were neither the receivers of false memories nor the indoctrinators of false memories, but the one with no real knowledge at all—Senator Iselin, the buffoon. This speaks to the power of a dominant poetics operating, as Brummett writes, at the fringe of perception.

Political Enthymeme in the 1996 Presidential Campaign

One commonality between the success—evidenced by its persistence in memory, if not in documentation—of Pericles' Samian Funeral Oration and of Bill Clinton's successful presidential bid can be seen in their common ability to identify with women. Many have argued that in 1996, women carried Clinton into a second term in office; to discern the cause, one thorough piece of political analysis considered "111 Democratic and 79 Republican speeches and 56 Democratic and 31 Republican ads" appearing between conventions and election day. It concluded that Clinton was able to avoid the

usual accusations against the Democrats—for big government, against “family values”—by arguing “that he had used government to protect women’s rights, health, and children” from Republican assaults (Jamieson 13). The mechanism that allowed Clinton to successfully do this was the enthymeme, and the pattern of women successfully completing enthymemes that resonated with issues important to them resulted, for this source, in his election.

By isolating issues of more moment to women than men, such as minimum wage, Medicare, and reproductive rights, Clinton was able to heighten the contrast between opposing platforms. Additionally, the Clinton focus on family was hammered home by repeated certain words; in both speeches and ads, Clinton referenced children more than twice as often as Dole. Though subtle, this constant association worked to connect “family” with “Clinton,” and specific examples only strengthened Clinton’s case. Alternatively, “Dole’s allusions [to children] most often occurred within discussions of his proposed tax cut,” but this alignment of kids and money posed problems. Dole once referred to children as living tax credits: ““Bring those three babies up here.... There’s 2,000 in credits right there”” (14). Unfortunately for Dole, the missing major premise for this enthymeme—every taxpayer would like a lighter tax burden—is supplied by the audience only after equating their flesh and blood with money. Alternatively, when Clinton discussed a similar theme—money and adoption—he painted a more human picture: “[T]here are a lot of children out there who need a good home today. I hope this helps more of them find it”” (15). No such uncomfortable enthymematic participation hurts Clinton here; in fact, his pronouns *this*, *them*, and *it* allow his audience to supply their clear antecedents: *legislation*, *adoptees*, and *a good home*. Clinton emphasizes the

emotional need of children and how he might alleviate that; Dole hammers home the economical preference of taxpayers who happen to be women. The dearth of successful Dole enthymemes, in combination with the overpowering number of successful Clinton enthymemes, cemented an implicit argument, one that not only combined Clinton's name with women's causes in the minds of the female voters, but also answered the traditional charges against the Democratic Party.

Political Gaffe as Enthymeme Gone Awry

If enthymemes can make a candidate, they can just as easily break one. Ten days after it occurred, *The New York Times* reported on the growing controversy surrounding incoming majority leader Trent Lott's gaffe: "Addressing a 100th birthday party for Mr. Thurmond on Dec. 5, Mr. Lott, a lifelong Mississippian, declared of his state: 'When Strom Thurmond ran for president, we voted for him. We're proud of it. And if the rest of the country had followed our lead, we wouldn't have had all these problems over all these years, either'" (Toner, par. 12).

This brief quotation resulted in a political tumult such that a Nexis-Lexus search on Trent Lott, restricted to one year after the remark, yields over 3,000 hits. It took Jesse Jackson three days to publically call for Lott's resignation: As reported by the late Tim Russert, "Jesse Jackson called NBC News this morning and said Trent Lott is a Confederate, and he should resign as majority leader" (Bazinet). It took fifteen days for Lott to resign as Senate Republican Leader, and though he stayed on as the Senator from Mississippi until 2007, until he chose to resign, the controversy speaks to the continuing

power of enthymemes in political discourse, and it speaks most bluntly to the power of new media poetics.

In the moment it was spoken, a moment calling for a type of speech which Aristotle might identify as epideictic, the Lott gaffe was an enthymeme. It was spoken by an up-and-coming Republican leader paying homage to a retiring senior Republican. This was an enthymeme that hinged on pronouns—to those in the audience, Trent Lott was giving codes and clues, subtly using pronouns to delineate a political heritage:

When Strom Thurmond ran for president	In 1948, the Dixiecrat nominee, a splinter Democratic group
We Voted for Him	Mississippi voted for Thurmond
We're proud of it	Mississippi (Republicans) consider this racist history part of a community-defining culture that we embrace
And if the rest of the country	The majority that elected Truman, the “traditional” democrat
Had followed our lead	The Dixiecrat, anti-civil rights platform that evolved into the very conservative faction of the Republican party today
We wouldn't have had all these problems over all these years	(Republicans and) Americans would have avoided the political strife of the civil rights movement, affirmative action, welfare, and a host of other race-based issues.

In the moment, this short speech acted as an enthymeme in a complicated way: Lott was pronouncing and affirming some life-long and well-documented prejudices of not only Thurmond, but of Lott himself, as well as a group of citizens in Mississippi, the South, and the United States. The pronoun “we” evolves from Mississippians, to Dixiecrats, to Republicans, and finally to an indefinite “we” that could mean any and all of the aforementioned, but which in actuality means the United States. By isolating the historical mistake of not electing Thurmond, Lott both praises him as a politician and assuages the fear and anxiety of Lott’s conservative audience by invoking a more agreeable image of America today. It is the image that Thurmond (and others, including Lott) fought for and failed to create, one that clearly haunts them.

The trouble came, of course, when this story was reported and the enthymeme— itself dependent on a whole set of historical connections likely not shared by the average reader—was explained in step-by-step fashion. The titles of news coverage reveal how the constituency of the offended swelled: “Muslims Call on Sen. Trent Lott To Resign; MAS Says Incoming Majority Leader Disqualified By ‘Nostalgia For Bigotry’,” “Hip-Hop Summit Action Network Opposes Trent Lott,” “Lott makes 2nd round of apologies” (see Welch and Drinkard). Like a joke, once an enthymeme gets explained, it fails in its purpose and becomes something else. Explanations remove the activity of “getting it” or “not getting it”: all becomes syllogism. Once informed that Lott’s little speech could be read as a racist syllogism, an accusation spread that Lott could not have imagined: As reported in the *Buffalo News* the Family Research Council in a statement warned that “Republicans ought to ask themselves if they really want their party to continue to be represented by Trent Lott” (“Trent Lott’s Tribute to Racism” par. 8). Here the gaffe

proved politically lethal: “Even if, in some perversion of the ideals of democracy, Lott needs to play to the racist element in his state, the Senate does not. American government cannot” (par. 9). Lott’s best-case scenario admits complicity of politically expedient racism; his worst-case scenario finds him speaking directly for the Republican party, of which he is the majority leader. In an ironic twist, Lott’s calculated and subtle use of pronouns—the very indicators of whom and of what he was praising and blaming in his enthymeme—come back as unambiguous references to racists in the Republican party.

The Manchurian Candidate’s lesson on the political applications of the enthymeme is this: control discourse by the kairotic power of deft enthymemes. This strategy served Clinton well throughout his first term and may have helped secure a second. An enthymeme invites its audience to participate and thereby to complete its meaning; that the meaning is fluid and up for grabs feels autonomous to the audience, and to the extent that the completed enthymeme verifies existing value statements, it will be a success. Clinton confounded the traditional Republican accusations against Democrats by locating “big government programs” in specific issues important to women, and he did it through a long string of thematically linked enthymemes. Dole infrequently used enthymemes; when he employed them, he often missed or contradicted the shared values of his audience. Trent Lott reminds the politician of today that the line between a brilliant enthymeme and a career-ending gaffe can be microscopic. The Lott enthymeme—itsself a fluid and open exercise in meaning-making for his immediate audience—became through media dissemination a racist syllogism and the ultimate political gaffe.

The ancients might explain Lott’s ruin with a famous line from the *Iliad*, “The war god is impartial” (18.309). This acted as the rallying cry of an outnumbered force to

go and fight: The enemy outnumbers us, but you should fight anyway, because Ares is impartial to sides in war (because the God of War wants war, not victory, which brings peace). In fact, it behooves Ares to privilege opposing sides. In politics, one could argue “The enthymeme god is impartial”; such a god would exist in the indeterminate spaces between what, having been said, instantly exploits an exigency just waiting for an utterance and what, having been said, immediately exposes a belief that had striven, for years, to remain unexamined.

Conclusion

The key difference between traditional enthymemes and new media enthymemes is that new media offer two positions with regard to memory: in the first, users are consistently invited to not remember, and in the second, users are told to remember through the syllogistic laying out of argument and evidence in the perpetual present. A reader of the Amazon electronic book reader Kindle “closes” the “book” and turns off the device; upon reactivation, the reader “remembers” the last page read and displays it.³⁵ Each time Microsoft word automatically corrects a misspelling, its user’s direct memory practice gets subverted. With each replaying of the Dean Scream, however rational a man Howard Dean may be, he becomes a lunatic in the present. Whatever may or may not have been meant by Trent Lott in his birthday remarks, in the perpetual present of a mediated enthymeme, he is a racist, and no amount of apology can undo that.

³⁵ Along with the other 199 books that can be stored in the Kindle’s 256 MB of internal memory. In this way the bookmark melts from view and becomes absorbed in the text: the Kindle remembers your page and in remembering, constantly invites you to forget.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE FORFEITURE OF DIRECT MEMORY AND THE CYBORG DREAM

My term “The Cyborg Dream” borrows from Donna Haraway’s use of “cyborg” as a metaphor for a new type of feminism that embraces fracture and disjunction. Haraway’s cyborg blurs classical binaries, and this blurring or combinatory strategy can serve as a model for a feminism that rejects essentialism and naturalism. To use her notion of “boundary breakdowns,” the cyborg erases lines between human and animal: “The cyborg appears in myth precisely where the boundary between human and animal is transgressed” (152); between human/animal and machine: “Late twentieth-century machines have made thoroughly ambiguous the difference between natural and artificial” (152); and between physical and non-physical: “Modern machines are quintessentially microelectronic devices: they are everywhere and they are invisible” (153). Thus Haraway rejects a unified feminist identity and claims through the cyborg metaphor the value of “Hybridity.” My project of articulating a poetics of new media differs from Haraway’s: Whereas Haraway wants to re-envision a rigorous and politically robust feminism within a critique of capitalism, I want to investigate how current discursive practices dominated by new media poetics come to shape meaning. Both projects, however, benefit from a metaphor that combines seemingly incompatible modalities.

My previous three chapters harnessed a rhetorical-poetics method in order to accomplish the following objectives:

- (1) To review the history of traditional poetics in order to theorize how they arise—an answer to the question *What is poetics, and what is a poetics for*;

- (2) To postulate the foundational principle of new media poetics, that *metaphor is the engine of meaning*—an investigation into the ways in which new media encourages associations;
- (3) To suggest the second principle, that *memory is the engine of metaphor*—an inquiry into the ways in which new media discourages direct memory practice.

This chapter, then, continues this trajectory of combining rhetoric and poetics to posit a third principle of new media poetics:

- (4) *The forfeiture of direct memory displaces personhood.*

Important to new media poetics here is the subtle transfer of meaning-making ability from direct human memory practice³⁶ to mediated computer memory practice.³⁷ Achieving this new memory practice remains a necessary step in order to achieve what I term *the Cyborg dream*: the futurist vision that humans may transcend their limitations by merging with machines. And here I ask the questions, “How might the Cyborg dream—the human desire for fusion with machines—be encouraged by new media?” and “How might the forfeiture of direct memory practice impact a human ability to make meaning?”

I first examine one prominent and bestselling futurist, Ray Kurzweil, and his notion of the Singularity, which I see as a manifesto of the Cyborg dream, specifically in its translation of the human into the computer. Next, I examine one new media object, the SanDisk flash drive, which I interpret as the *par excellence* example of how new media poetics is able to subtly and cunningly fashion meaning, in this case of the superiority of

³⁶ Here I refer to the examples in chapter three of the audience’s ability, in Classical rhetoric, to complete enthymemes and thereby to make meaning.

³⁷ Here to the example, also in chapter three, of new media enthymeme’s and their syllogistic rigidity ably camouflaged by a veneer of participation.

computer memory over frail human memory. Continuing, I return to classical rhetoric's valuation of canonical memory and contrast this to the modern desuetude of the study of this canon in rhetoric and composition, despite renewed interest in classical rhetoric and memory studies. Finally, I examine the curricular reform of Peter Ramus in order to suggest some possible seeds of the Cyborg dream generally, and a new media devaluation of memory specifically.

The Cyborg Dream

[T]he boy began to delight in his daring flight, and abandoning his guide, drawn by desire for the heavens, soared higher. His nearness to the devouring sun softened the fragrant wax that held the wings: and the wax melted: he flailed with bare arms, but...could not ride the air. Even as his mouth was crying his father's name, it vanished into the dark blue sea, the Icarian Sea, called after him. The unhappy father, now no longer a father...caught sight of the feathers on the waves, and cursed his inventions. (Ovid, *Metamorphosis*)

And they said one to another, "Go to, let us build a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven; and let us make us a name, lest we be scattered abroad upon the face of the earth..." And the Lord said, "Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language...and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do." (King James, Gen 11: 4-6)

The desire to transcend limitations marks human beings, as the quotation from Ovid demonstrates; young Icarus did not take the middle course, neither too high nor too low, and in his excess flew too high to the sun. His father, the master-crafter Daedalus, fashioned wings for their escape from Crete and its tyrannical ruler, King Minos. This myth speaks to the intersection of human limitation, technology, and the transcendence that it makes possible, but also to the pressing need for vigilance in the exercise of that new power. The Tower of Babel gets built through the technology of a common language, through massive participation; when God recognizes the human pride motivating it, he destroys the Tower, the universal language, the concord. New media poetics, as I argue in this chapter, currently may be viewed neither in the detached wings fashioned by Daedalus nor in the ruin of the waves; neither in the participation of building the city nor in the discord that follows: new media poetics shapes a “desire for heaven” in the form of unlimited memory, a necessary component of the Cyborg dream.³⁸ Haraway’s work resonates with this intersection of The Tower of Babel and the cyborg, and she anticipates the next chapter’s discussion of the labyrinth with she writes, “Cyborg imagery can suggest a way out of the maze of dualisms in which we have explained our bodies and our tools to ourselves. This is a dream not of a common language, but of a powerful infidel heteroglossia” (181).

Briefly stated, the Cyborg dream is this: Human beings understand their mortality and have dreamed of easing their struggles by using machines (1) to lessen their physical and mental labor and (2) to circumvent physical death by joining with machines, by

³⁸ Here Haraway’s notion of the cyborg—and the dream it brings about—echoes this cluster of cooperation, universal language, and transcendence: “This is a dream not of a common language, but of a powerful infidel heteroglossia” (181). In other words, the cyborg embraces what Burke may term the “impieties” of many voices.

becoming cybernetic organisms. In this section I argue that one modern example of the Cyborg dream—futurist Ray Kurzweil’s notion of the Singularity—can be seen as the *reductio ad absurdum* of the *clavis universalis*, the universal key to knowledge, discussed later in the chapter.³⁹ Though the entirety of chapter two was dedicated to a demonstration of how metaphor operates to create knowledge within new media, this ability does not extend forever, and as any good poet knows, every metaphor eventually falls apart. This metaphor, “man, the machine,” recalls a cluster of associations pertaining to memory that I briefly review here.

Origins of Automata in Myth

In “‘Breathe Upon Us an Even Flame’: Hephaestus, History, and the Body of Rhetoric,” Jay Dolmage locates one early instance of our idea of an automaton in Greek myth: “[Hephaestus] builds two voice-activated tripods, what we would call robots, to help him with his work” (127). In addition to fashioning mechanical helpers, “He also builds a bronze man, or perhaps a bronze bull, another archetypal robot” (129). Dolmage explores the nature of disability as represented in the divine, and for him the tripods represent the metis implicit in a lame God of Metallurgy. This reference comes from the *Iliad*: “[H]e was working on twenty tripods/which were to stand against the wall of his strong-founded dwelling./And he had set golden wheels underneath the base of each one/so that of their own motion they could wheel into the immortal gathering, and return

³⁹ Though I am a stern critic of Kurzweil in the instance of his Singularity, I must remark here my admiration for the inventor of a database matching students to colleges (named Select), speech recognition software (now ScanSoft), as well as the OCR software that made LexisNexis possible. Kurzweil has furnished some of the very terms of computer culture, and though I am in disagreement with him about the Singularity, I admire the optimism and inventions that have marked his career.

to his house: a wonder to look at” (18.372-77).⁴⁰ Presumably a portion of the wonder of looking at these tripods’ return lay in their embodied and magical ability to remember.

The tripods here, if robots as Dolmage suggests, more resemble programmable tables.⁴¹

The second example references Hephaestus’ gift to King Minos, Talos.⁴² Unlike the tripods, Talos more resembles a Golem, a magical guardian from the Jewish mystical tradition, than a modern automaton: “Talos was indefatigably vigilant.... Each day he walked fully armed three times around the island [of Crete], preventing strangers from entering it and the inhabitants from leaving it without Minos’ permission.”⁴³ His favorite weapons were large stones for hurling, though “if anyone got through...Talos would leap into a fire, make himself red-hot, embrace his victims, and burn them” (“Talos” 413).

These early imaginings of automated tables and golem-like beings with varying amounts of autonomy suggests some early values of automation: among the divine, automata magically serve and facilitate graceful entertainment; among mortals, they diligently protect and serve elite rulers. If anything, these two examples strongly imply the danger of mixing realms—automata are creations of the god, programmed to serve

⁴⁰ Homer only includes the details of mechanical wheels and volition; while technically not robots, these early automata served a robotic function, whether or not the power that compelled them was divine or mechanical.

⁴¹ In an interesting link to new media, ‘tripod’ becomes an early name for Visual Basic: “VB 1.0 was introduced in 1991. The drag and drop design for creating the user interface is derived from a prototype form generator developed by Alan Cooper and his company called Tripod. Microsoft contracted with Cooper and his associates to develop Tripod into a programmable form system for Windows 3.0 (“Visual Basic”).

⁴² Talos also shared the name of an object-orientated operating system by the company Taligent: “Taligent spent much of its first two years developing their operating system (sometimes referred to as TalOS)” (“Taligent”).

⁴³ The Golem offers a vision of the powerful nexus of language, divinity, and labor: “[I]n many tales the Golem is inscribed with magic or religious words that keep it animated. Writing one of the names of God on its forehead, a slip of paper in its mouth, or enscribed on its body, or writing the word *Emet* (אמת, “truth” in the Hebrew language) on its forehead are examples of such words. By erasing the first letter aleph in *Emet* to form *Met* (מת, “dead” in Hebrew) the golem could be deactivated” (“Golem”).

divine interests and only secondarily the interests of powerful lords like Minos.⁴⁴ It is suggestive that in the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, memoria is painted as a *guardian* of all parts of rhetoric; the Latin word given is *custodem* ([Cicero] III.xvi.28). In this myth, Talos guards Crete while simultaneously imprisons disloyal Cretans—when automata may be seen as memory personified, their lack of reason serves the interests of the divine programmer. Both examples of automata speak directly to a new media poetics that seeks to discount direct memory practice; in both examples (tripods and Talos), immortal gods and mortal rulers program memory, and the result is automation and its rewards. New media objects, to recall Manovich’s third principle, are in their very constitutions defined by automation. I wonder here: “How might new media objects, and the automation they invite, displace direct memory practice?”

From Human to the Posthuman: Information Loses Its Body

In her book *How We Became Posthuman* Katherine Hayles in effect supports the lesson implied by the *Iliad*—the danger to humans of mixing realms—when she explores the contemporary shift from “human” to “posthuman” and finds a forfeiture of bodily experience, one that supports my notion of the forfeiture of direct memory practice.

Hayles unites a three-part narrative that culminates in human estrangement:

The first [story] centers on how information lost its body.... The second story concerns how the Cyborg was created as a technological artifact and cultural icon.... [T]he third... is the unfolding story of how a historically

⁴⁴ Within computer culture, software programs are collections of “commands” and “statements” that define appropriate actions, and these are not unlike the laws set out by rulers and gods.

specific construction called the human is giving way to a different construction called the posthuman. (2)

In other words, the very nature of what it means to be a human being has for Hayles undergone a radical change, from human to posthuman.⁴⁵ Most relevant to this discussion is Hayles' assertion that "the posthuman view configures human being so that it can be seamlessly articulate with intelligent machines" (3).

Before proceeding it is important to pause here to differentiate among many thinkers who might be called *futurists*. The term contains a spectrum of differing thinkers and positions; for example, Filippo Tommaso Marinetti, the leader of the early 20th-century "literary, artistic, and political movement" of futurism, wrote in *The Futurist Manifesto* that "[t]o admire an old picture is to pour our sensibility into a funeral urn instead of casting it forward with violent spurts of creation and action" ("Marinetti"; *Futurist Manifesto*). Such a position is very different from one like science fiction writer Arthur C. Clarke, for example, or Philip K. Dick. Futurists may be ideologues and iconoclastic poets like Marinetti, speculative writers like Clarke and Dick, academics like Hayles, and a multitude of other things. Like poetics generally, futurists are invested in what may be or what may come to be.

Returning to Hayles, she traces the construction of information as disembodied media to the Macy Conferences on Cybernetics, which resulted, via John von Neumann and Norbert Wiener in "the triumph of information over materiality" (51). Thus meaning—rooted deeply in material existence—got lost in the dominant theory of information: "Shannon's theory defines information as a probability function with no dimensions, no materiality, and no necessary connection with meaning. It is a pattern, not

a presence” (18). Once this conception of the nature of information itself gets acceptance and gains ground, the implications are profound: “[a]bstracting information from a material base meant that information could become free-floating, unaffected by context” (19). In other words, once information becomes dissociated from material circumstance—once it no longer needs a body—it may travel from one place to a completely different place *unaffected by this change* because in its essence it lacks meaning. Donna Haraway echoes this notion: “Information is just that kind of quantifiable element (unit, basis of unity) which allows universal translation, and so unhindered instrumental power (called effective communication)” (164).

Consider the tradition of television: An analog television broadcast captures *information*, encodes the signal “using NTSC, PAL or SECAM...and then modulate[s] this signal onto a VHF or UHF carrier. An analog television picture is ‘drawn’ on the screen an entire frame each time.... [L]ike all other motion picture systems, [Analog television] exploits the properties of the human eye to create the illusion of moving images” (“Analog”). Thus an episode of *Days of Our Lives* may traverse time and space, and the illusion of movement allows it to be experienced in living rooms around the globe. That viewers may experience meaning is incidental to the theory of information.

Hayles attacks the very nature of the metaphor (that information is merely pattern) to implicitly assert: the mind-body split, as it is currently being discussed, is “a nightmare” that has led to the belief, held by Hans Moravec, Kurzweil, and others, that “it will soon be possible to download human consciousness into a computer” (1). Were such a download possible, humans could for the first time permanently transcend their ultimate limitation, death. This impulse to transcend, through technology, marks human

beings, as the myths of Icarus and Babel show; however, the totality of this new transcendence marks a significant shift, one I argue, that would not be possible without a reevaluation of memory in new media.

Kurzweil and the Cyborg Dream

This is the most extreme example of Cyborg dream, discussed in detail in Ray Kurzweil's *The Singularity is Near: When Humans Transcend Biology*. In a section titled "Uploading the Human Brain," Kurzweil discusses just how consciousness can enter a computer: "Uploading a human brain means scanning all of its salient details and then reinstantiating those details into a suitably powerful computational substrate. This process would capture a person's entire personality, memory, skills, and history" (199). It seems apparent that two potential problems arise with Kurzweil's plan: (1) melding human consciousness (dependent as it is on chemical processes) with a computer would result in a new and potentially unrecognizable consciousness, and (2) to borrow Hayles' argument, consciousness needs a body because they are expressions of each other. One wonders as well, what would human consciousness do without the ability to forget or to sleep?⁴⁶

Kurzweil defends his plan based on a technological determinism: "The key idea underlying the impending Singularity is that the pace of change in our human-created technology is accelerating and its powers are expanding at an exponential pace.... It starts out almost imperceptibly and then explodes" (8-9). Because computational growth is exponential and in earlier stages can easily be mistaken for linear growth, one cannot see

⁴⁶ One recent title suggests that in human terms, the inability to forget may form a kind of living hell of constant memory and its attendant emotional reliving: *The Woman Who Can't Forget*.

this enormous leap in computing power until it is near. Kurzweil quotes von Neumann as saying “the ever-accelerating progress of technology...gives the appearance of approaching some essential singularity in the history of the race beyond which human affairs, as we know them, could not continue” (qtd. in Kurzweil 10). Because of exponential growth, some day “in the 2020s” humankind will hit the Singularity, a prediction made possible by generalizing Moore’s Law, which holds that the number of transistors placed on an integrated circuit doubles every two years. During this time, “the technology of the Singularity will provide practical and accessible means for humans to evolve into something greater, so we will no longer need to rationalize death as a primary means of giving meaning to life” (326).

Kurzweil appeals to a longtime Platonic dream of human transcendence over death itself and the attendant reuniting with divine knowledge. In fact, as West writes Platonic thought puts memory squarely at the center of epistemology:

Plato’s philosophy is deeply connected to memory through the doctrine of anamnesis, the recollection of knowledge of the time before their incarnation that every soul preserves more or less imperfectly....
[A]namnesis underlies any capacity we have to grasp what is true and good in this world, for without at least some dim memory of what we are looking for, it is impossible that we could ever find it. (484)

Neither is this ardent wish confined to the philosophical tradition: the New Testament writer equates speech with God when he writes “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1.1-3). As given in a note, “The Word (Greek “logos”) of God is more than speech; it is God in action,

creating...revealing...redeeming” (125 NT). The heaven of the New Testament is likened to a house, summoning the architectural metaphor of memory: “In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places” (John 14.2); “And everyone who has left houses...for my name’s sake, will receive a hundred-fold, and will inherit eternal life” (Matt. 19-29). Christian salvation, like Platonic anamnesis, is a type of memory. If Platonists will be reunited with the world of Ideas, and Christians will be reunited with their God—both forms of absolute knowledge—what will Kurzweil unite with in his utopist Singularity? Put straightforwardly, Kurzweil does not seek spiritual return, but in a literal way wants to manifest the Cyborg dream by “evolving” the human body. In chapter five I will discuss this in terms of the Archive, but here I’d like to close this section with some thoughts on the nature of memory and metaphor in creating this dream.

Human Memory is Not Computer Memory

Kurzweil’s dream could not have occurred without the gradual externalization of memory and the persistent metaphor that human memory is or can become computer information. As discussed earlier, Hayles cites the body/mind disjuncture at the heart of the dominant and accepted theory of information and argues against the separation of material and meaning. I agree with this point, and would like to point out that futurists like Kurzweil err when they overextend this metaphor, that human memory can become computer information. This error not only contributes to the body/mind disjuncture, but in atrophying direct memory practices, it effectively displaces personhood. This idea finds support in Florian Brody, who writes that “books and technological media have always served as memory technologies.... But every external memory technology bears

the risks of diminishing the individual's ability to develop their own 'internal' memory systems" (143). I do not intend here to predict a horrible future when human beings have no direct access to their own knowledge, but I do wish to observe that the casual erosion of direct memory access—and the hordes of industries and commodities that have sprung up to invite that forfeiture—can be seen as another exercise in Ramism; another reconsignment of invention, arrangement, and memory; another reform, but this time of a canon not recognized as rhetoric.

Store Your World in Ours®

One telling example of both the continued power of the Cyborg dream and the forfeiture of memory can be seen in the SanDisk corporation, "the world's largest supplier of innovative flash memory data storage products" and their recent collaboration with The Alzheimer's Association's "Take Action against Alzheimer's" campaign.⁴⁷ For each consumer who purchases either the 2GB Ultra II SD card or the 2GB Ultra Cruzer Micro USB 2.0 Flash Drive (MSRP \$44.99 and \$39.99, respectively) a \$1 donation will be made to the campaign, up to \$1 million ("SanDisk Takes Action").

⁴⁷ I do not intend here to demean the experience of the roughly 26 million people who have this degenerative and terminal disease; I analyze this particular new media object because it most concisely speaks to the nature of my project in this chapter, which involves how direct human memory is being forfeited in new media memory practice. As someone who lost a grandfather to Alzheimer's, I've seen firsthand the rages and humiliations it can exert on the human mind, the ways in which it teaches families that without reliable memory, there is little reliable personhood.



Figure 2: SanDisk SD Card and Cruzer Micro Flash Drive

It might be seen as a cynical step for SanDisk to rebrand itself by adopting the Alzheimer’s Foundation’s trademark color purple and conflating a consumer purchase with medically-related fundraising,⁴⁸ especially with such a low percentage of the purchase price donated (2.5%), such a low ceiling on the total donation (1 million USD, or 0.5% of the total raised to date by AA), and plethora of other, cheaper memory cards and drives currently on the market. However, it would take another project to investigate the current marketing conditions that produce color-based social justice branding practices.⁴⁹

The corporation’s motto “Store your world in ours” suggests the nearly-infinite capacity of its products, but it also reifies “the triumph of information over materiality,” first cemented at the Macy Conferences on Cybernetics.⁵⁰ Objects like photographs, documents, music, and books—some of the very forms that make a world—become new

⁴⁸ Vice President at the Alzheimer’s Association Angela Geiger admits that the money raised is not earmarked for one specific goal; it seems that instead it will enter a general fund at the Alzheimer’s Association: “In addition, SanDisk will be raising much-needed funds for our education, care and support, and research programs” (“SanDisk Takes Action”).

⁴⁹ Here I am thinking of the PRODUCT (RED)TM campaign and the Pampers® Tetanus Vaccination Campaign.

⁵⁰ SanDisk omits its registered trademark in the packaging for both SD card and flash drive.

media objects when they turn into information that not only may be carried outside of the body, but may also be so contained as to appear small juxtaposed to the limit of these media. According Greg Rhine, senior vice president and general manager of the Consumer Products Division, “SanDisk as a company is dedicated to preserving digital memories, so it’s appropriate for us to do what we can to help stop a disease that attacks human memory” (“SanDisk Takes Action”). And here a transference of meaning takes place, from “human memory” itself, to “digital memories”: implicit in Rhine’s statement is the idea that human memories are at least equal to digital memories, perhaps because of the distributed term. SanDisk, in “preserving digital memories” in effect allows for the displacement not only of the material objects like photographic film and paper documents that in the past would have been necessary to preserve memory, but also for the displacement of what those objects index: human memories themselves. Thus, carrying a 2GB flash drive loaded with preserved digital memory may be read as a code for a portion of personhood allocated to that drive.

Moreover, SanDisk in aligning with the Alzheimer’s Association suggests more about the linkages between human memory and computer memory, namely that Alzheimer’s—a disease marked by *dementia*, “intellectual impairment...from forgetfulness to total disability” and *delirium*, the sudden “misinterpretation of reality, false ideas, or hallucinations”—can be likened to erased or lost computer memory (Mace and Rabins, 9-10; 504). If human memory is like computer memory, the metaphor states, then the failure of human memory—*dementia*—is like the failure of computer memory. More cynical than the business pragmatics of SanDisk’s campaign is the notion that computer memory by comparison is superior to human memory: purchase superior

computer memory to finance the cure of frail human memory, the implication rings out. The use of a special purple SanDisk flash drive may be seen to provide a virtual cure to the lesser dementia encountered by those not currently living with Alzheimer's.

In a "highest ranked" comment on the web site <http://www.engadget.com>, a user named Tom asks "does anyone else find it ironic that the first product to brand itself in support of Alzheimer's research is portable memory?" (Patel). It is not enough to observe the echoes of Greg Rhine and Ray Kurzweil in this quote—that Tom has simply reified the transference of meaning that the SanDisk corporation articulated in this campaign—or to return to Hayles' assertion information has lost its body. I stop here to consider: How is it that direct human memory practice, which was once considered an art in the history of rhetoric, could grow so devalued? What historical and disciplinary factors may have led to a situation where new media users could so easily adopt first the equation of computer memory and human memory, and then surpass this to adopt the superiority of computer memory over human memory? When I consider the translation of human memory from an art to an absence, the reification of information its confusion with human memory, and the persistence of the Cyborg dream, it can not be irony—the discordant implication of contrast—and must instead be amplification, another of McLuhan's "extensions of man." In order to investigate the shift from human-memory-as-art to human-memory-as-absence (or, computer-memory-as-default), it is necessary to revisit the discipline of rhetoric, central as it has been to the creation, analysis, and dissemination of meaning.

The Rhetorical Canon of Memory

Memoria also signifies the process by which a work of literature becomes institutionalized—internalized within the language and pedagogy of a group. (Carruthers 9)

A given rhetorical system may concentrate on one or more of the canons and virtually ignore the others. During the Middle Ages, for example, rhetoricians were interested primarily in style. And since literacy is now relatively widespread in the West, contemporary rhetorical theorists are not so concerned with memory as classical rhetoricians were. (Crowley 1)

Perhaps because of the vagueness of its role in rhetoric, the arts of memory have a particularly rich history as the subject of speculation and fantasy. (West 483)

As discussed in chapter three, though Aristotle's 4th BCE *Rhetoric* becomes foundational for the creation and study of discourse, he discusses only the three of elements that eventually came to found the Western rhetorical canon in substantial detail, namely invention, style, and arrangement. James Murphy reviews an ongoing debate wherein "some scholars have argued that each of the five parts can be found in Aristotle's *Rhetoric*" however, in the end Murphy maintains that the five-part rhetorical canon "is a strictly Roman" creation (Murphy et al. 133). It is not until the pseudo-Ciceronian *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, written circa 85 BCE, that memory finds an officially recognized place in the canon: "Oportet igitur esse in oratore inventionem, dispositionem,

elocutionem, memoriam, pronuntiationem” ([Cicero] I.ii.3).⁵¹ A few lines later, the author says that memory is the vessel containing invention, arrangement, and style: “*Memoria est firma animi rerum et verborum et dispositionis perceptio*” (I.ii.3).⁵² Memory was divided into two distinct types: “In Classical texts, memory was said to have two parts, natural and artificial” (Calendrillo 435). According to Ochs, “Natural memory was inherent.... Artistic memory, on the other hand, used a system of backgrounding or foregrounding images onto which an orator would mentally place parts of a speech” (Ochs 640). One key difference between the two occurs in their teachability: “Natural memory existed in a set quantity...[and] could not be altered.... Artificial memory was the trainable function, the teachable side or faculty that could be developed” (Calendrillo 435). Thus “natural memory could be supplemented by the techniques of *artificial memory*...[which] enabled their user to remember more clearly, more completely, more systematically, or simply *more* than his natural memory would allow” (West 483). For Cicero, memory is highly important, something he calls in *De Oratore* “the keenest of all our senses” (qtd. in Covino et al. 67). By 1 CE, memory has grown to such stature that Quintilian can assert, “For our whole education depends upon memory.... Indeed it is not without good reason that memory has been called the treasure-house of eloquence” (xi.ii.i-ii). Thus, in the roughly four and a half centuries between Aristotle and Quintilian, memory undergoes the transformation from a principle implied but not formally included in the canon, to a human sense, to the ultimate part of the codified canon.

⁵¹ “The speaker, then, should possess the faculties of Invention, Arrangement, Style, Memory, and Delivery.” Though few today would recognize Cicero as the author of the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, the Loeb edition, first published in 1954, places brackets around the name to indicate the historical assumption of Ciceronian authorship.

⁵² “Memory is the firm retention in the mind of [a speech’s] details, words, and arrangement.”

Contrast this height of memory-as-canon to the current state of the canon of memory within the field of rhetoric and composition: “In composition studies, the first three canons—*invention*, *arrangement*, and *style*—are used to organize the materials presented in the vast majority of the textbooks, but the last two—*memory* and *delivery*—are typically ignored or, worse, deleted” (Reynolds 3). Crowley locates this discounting in a misunderstanding of memory’s heuristic powers: “Until the modern period, memory held a central place within rhetorical theory...memory was not only a system of recollection for ancient and medieval peoples; it was a means of invention” (“Modern Rhetoric” 35). Virginia Allen indicts any rhetoric that omits memory: “A rhetorical theory that dismisses problems of the nature of mind as uninteresting or that presupposes the workings of memory to be unproblematic is a truncated theory” (46). Despite these scholars’ close attention to memory, the subject remains understudied in the field of rhetoric and composition. Even in texts that reveal a resurgence of interest in classical rhetoric, such as Corbett and Connors’ *Classical Rhetoric for the Modern Student*, memory is given a quick treatment: after acknowledging that “[o]f all the five parts of rhetoric, *memoria* was the one that received the least attention in the rhetoric books” the authors proceed to grant it the least attention of the five (23).

It remains provocative that within new media poetics, the kind of direct memory practice so powerful to Quintilian grows ever fainter; at the same time, the modern field of rhetoric and composition consistently undervalues and underexplores the ability of memory’s role in meaning-making. In order to seek some possible explanations for memory’s near-disappearance from the rhetorical canon, it is important to understand

some ways that Greco-Romans conceived of memory, and this can be achieved by closely examining the metaphors that came to dominate their characterization of it.

Two Memory Metaphors: Wax Tablet and Aviary

When reading different characterizations of memory in the classical imagination, two figurations stand out:

Ancient scholars employed two metaphors to describe the way knowledge is retained in memory. This first was that of memory as a blank wax tablet upon which images are imprinted. The second saw memory as a storage room that kept all the memorized images in an ordered configuration.

From this storage room, images could be called forth by using the appropriate associations. (Covino et al. 66)

In the first metaphor, memory is relatively static,⁵³ its efficacy dependant, as Plato discusses below, on the caliber of the mind forming sense-perceptions and inscribing them, as on a page; in the second metaphor, memory becomes dynamic, as birds within an aviary. It is possible that this early notion of memory-as-aviary opened the door for what became the architectural memory systems: memory having the parts of a house including door, rooms, floors, and windows:

In preparing the artificial memory for use, a large space, such as a house or a portico, is first constructed in the mind...the structure is in turn subdivided into a series of rooms or spaces...[which were] filled with

⁵³ I write “relatively” because the physical wax tablets that held words and images—the object that may have inspired this metaphor—could easily be erased by applying a warm plate to them. In this way, though the metaphor is static (memory holds the image of what was pressed into it) it may be changed in the way that actual tablets could be changed: it may be erased.

symbols or images that triggered particular memories. In using the architectural system, one moved from place to place in the imaginary structure. (West 485-86)

Thus an aspiring speaker might imagine walking through the entryway where there are statues of Romulus and Remus guarding the door, which reminds her to speak of the ancients. Next she walks into the foyer, where she see stained glass windows representing the gods, which reminds her that even the ancients owed their gifts to being far greater than themselves. Next she enter the drawing room, where there is a couch reminding her that her opponent has been lazy and slothful. The room also contains a roaring fire, reminding her that her opponent also has a fiery temper that makes him reckless in making decisions, and so forth throughout the house and the speech.

In direct parallels to new media poetics, two dominant new media metaphors for how knowledge comes into being can be seen in the interface for *Microsoft Word* (a representation of a page, an updated wax tablet) and the operating system *Microsoft Windows* (an image of windows containing individual applications that can be opened or close, minimized or maximized).⁵⁴ Indeed, as I type this dissertation, when I turn my head to the screen I am looking through a virtual window at a virtual page: In new media poetics, the ancient metaphors for memory combine. A closer look at the formation of each metaphor as it arose in the classical imagination will reveal two very different valuations of memory and therefore knowledge formation.

⁵⁴ Lev Manovich interprets the window as another form of the page: “In 1984, Apple introduced a graphical user interface that presented information in overlapping windows stacked behind one another—essentially, a set of pages” (74).

The Waxen Block of Memory

In his *Theaetetus*, Plato's late treatment on epistemology, Plato first likens memory to impressions on a waxen block, and from there discusses how the caliber of wax in the soul correlates with memory and thus learning:

When the wax in the soul of any one is deep and abundant, and smooth and perfectly tempered, then the impressions which pass through the senses and sink into the heart of the soul...these...are lasting.... But when the heart of any one is shaggy...or muddy and of impure wax, or very soft, or very hard, then there is a corresponding defect in the mind—the soft are good at learning, but apt to forget. (63-64)

Thus Plato outlines one problem central to any theory of knowledge, what Copi in his introduction terms “problems that arise in connection with error, as in dreams or illusion”—here Plato makes the case against sense perception as the sole arbiter of knowledge because of the varying ability of individual souls to form similar sense impressions (vii). Memory not only is a two-dimensional surface that must be primed to receive, but it also has width and depth that form an area of memory. Also, learning requires a type of rare purity accompanied by a transparency—senses pass through human beings on their way to the soul, where they are recorded. This would come to later correspond to natural memory.

Aristotle continues this primary metaphor—memory as writing on the heart or on the soul—in his book *De Memoria et Reminiscentia* (*On Memory and Reminiscence*):

[W]e must conceive that which is generated through sense-perception in the sentient soul, and in the part of the body which is its seat...to be some

such thing as a picture. The process of movement [sensory stimulation] involved in the act of perception stamps in, as it were, a sort of impression of the percept, just as persons do who make an impression with a seal.

(450a29-450b1)

Aristotle locates the part of the body which is the seat of memory, like Plato, in the soul: “[I]n the case of [the soft youth] the presented image [though imprinted] does not remain in the soul” (450b10-13).⁵⁵ In addition to affirming Plato’s waxen-seal-in-the-soul metaphor, Aristotle pontificates, through his likeness of memory to a picture, an early theory of semiotics: “A picture on a panel is at once a picture and a likeness.... In so far as it is regarded in itself, it is only an object of contemplation, or a presentation; but when considered as relative to something else, e.g., as its likeness, it is also a mnemonic token” (451b21-30).

The Aviary of Memory

The second dominant metaphor of memory—that memory is a kind of room—also finds an early expression in Plato’s *Theaetetus*: “Once more, then, as in what preceded we made a sort of waxen figment in the mind, so let us now suppose that in the mind of each man there is an aviary of all sorts of birds.... We may suppose that the birds are kinds of knowledge” (66). In order to illustrate the paradox of having knowledge one may not access, Socrates imagines pursuing doves in the aviary of memory: “[W]hen a man has learned and known something long ago, he may resume and get hold of the knowledge which he has long possessed, but has not at hand in his mind” (69). However,

⁵⁵ Recall Walker’s argument in chapter three for a pre-rhetorical poetics that used enthymemes in order to persuade listeners “in the heart.”

that this search may yield incorrect knowledge is evidence that though “a man cannot not possess that which he possesses; and, therefore, in no case can a man not know that which he knows” he may get a false opinion about it, as “when the various numbers and forms of knowledge are flying about in the aviary” he takes the wrong one: “he got hold of the ringdove which he had in his mind, when he wanted the pigeon” (69). Socrates expands the architectural nature of the metaphor and makes the case that the larger difficulties arise when the mind looks in on the forms of knowledge contained within it, the “birds in the aviary”: “And yet I fear that a greater difficulty is looking in at the window” (70). This passing note appears to suggest that Aristotle anticipated the self-reflexive turn in modern scholarship that has become known as postmodernism.⁵⁶

The architectural model evolves further when memory is seen not only as a house, but as a thesauri or treasure-house. In the *Rhetorica ad Herennium* the author writes, “Nunc ad thesaurum inventorum atque ad omnium partium rhetoricae custodem, memoriam, transeamus” (III.xvi.28).⁵⁷ Cicero, who was “in Philosophy a Platonist” abstracts the treasure-house further into a collective house: “What need to speak of that universal treasure-house the memory?” (Yates 20; *De Oratore* I.v). Further, Augustine sees in memory a path to God; the architectural grows into “ubi sunt thesauri innumerabilium imaginum” (“Liber Decimus”) “a storehouse for countless images of all kinds” (*Confessions* X.viii). This progression—from aviary, to treasure-house, to universal treasure-house, to infinite treasure-house—speaks to the mysticism of memory

⁵⁶ Manovich links “the endless recycling and quoting of past media content” to Jameson’s characterization of the postmodern condition: “postmodern cultural production ‘can no longer look directly out of its eyes at the real word [sic] but must, as in Plato’s cave, trace its mental images of the world on its confining walls’” (131).

⁵⁷ “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 recalls the Akashic records in the Hindu tradition: the ultimate archive. As I write in chapter five, the archive and its new media instantiation, the database, come to act as cultural forms of their own.

It is not surprising that the metaphor of memory-as-inscription, where sense perception gets inscribed on the wax tablet of the soul, should become associated with natural memory, and that the metaphor of memory-as-house, where created associations get placed in the house of memory, should become associated with artificial memory. Despite the differences between the metaphors, it should be noted here that both metaphors connect memory to a personal, indwelling, and unmediated practice within the body: within the soul, within the heart, within the mind. This *internal* art of memory, then, served as a canon of rhetoric, a pedagogy which became fully codified with Quintilian's *Institutio oratoria*, "a book that not only presented a complete survey of rhetorical theory but also described in full detail the Roman school system that was to dominate European education for the next eighteen hundred years" (Murphy 581).

Memory Displaced

Ramus abolished memory as a part of rhetoric, and with it he abolished the artificial memory.... [O]ne of the chief aims of the Ramist movement for the reform and simplification of education was to provide a new and better way of memorizing all subjects. This was to be done by a new method whereby every subject was to be arranged in 'dialectical order'. ...in schematic form in which the 'general' or inclusive aspects of the subject

came first, descending thence through a series of dichotomized classifications to the ‘specials’ or individual aspects. (Yates 232)

Though others had disagreed with the number, order, or disciplinary placement of the tenacious five-part rhetorical canon, none so profoundly rocked the boat as Peter Ramus in the 16th century. Ramus proves a good case study because not only did his reform of rhetoric echo down from his time all the way to the “current-traditionalism” of modern composition theory but also the echo of Ramus can still be heard in current new media poetics, which plainly discourage direct memory practice in favor of computer memory. This omission offers serious insight into a power shift currently taking place, one that proves extremely nuanced and difficult to see.

Compared to Agricola’s reduction of rhetoric “to supply ornamentation and emotional color” only, Ramus’s ideas were more extreme: “Believing redundancy dissolute, his text *Dialecticae institutiones* (Training in Dialectic; 1543) assigned invention, arrangement, and memory to dialectic, leaving to rhetoric style and delivery” (Moss 688-89). Simply put, Ramus sought to cleave disciplines that had wrongfully become entwined.

Among rhetoricians there is much opprobrium for Ramus’s influence, much of it concentrated on how it dissolves rhetoric into style.⁵⁸ Absent from such indictments is that Ramus’s challenge to the canon—perhaps the loudest and certainly the most

⁵⁸ “Ramus’s identification of rhetoric with style launched a vilification of invention that lasted for centuries” (Covino et al. 60-61); “[Rhetoric] was changed almost beyond recognition...[Ramus], obsessed as he was with method in his *Dialectique* (1543), for instance, reduced rhetoric to a sort of universal topical logic, everywhere trying to simplify and come down to essentials” (Uhlir 354).

disseminated⁵⁹ and longest-lasting⁶⁰—in banishing memory sets in motion a Hermetic ideal only now coming to fruition in the form of the Cyborg dream.

Ramus can be seen as sparing the reader—through his schemes of division—both the burden of invention and the provocation of memory: “Ramist texts often featured pages of printed Ramist trees demonstrating the proper division of their subject; because they eliminated the sensual and provocative images of the older arts of memory, they were much favored by Protestant writers” (West 491). Ramus excises memory, but because it remains a personal, indwelling, and physically interior practice, Ramus cuts off his audience from direct memory practice. Manovich argues that a similar reduction-to-style is occurring in new media objects. Because “the law of all new media [is] selection from a menu of choices,” the concept of ‘authorship’ has changed: “An author puts together an object from elements that he or she did not create. The creative energy of the author goes into the selection and sequencing of elements rather than into original design” (128-30). Thus when interacting with new media objects what at first appears to be invention can be seen instead as style.

Ramus and Current-Traditionalism

As demonstrated, Ramus influences much following his attacks on Aristotle, Cicero, and Quintilian, and the repercussions of his thought can be seen in the evolution of “current-traditionalism” of rhetoric and composition. Citing this example of a

⁵⁹ As reported by Walter Ong, “There are over 750 separately published editions (including some adaptations) of single or collected works by Ramus or his collaborator Omer Talon.... Counting separately each of the works in these 750-odd volumes, some of which include more than one item, one gets a total of around 1100 separate printings of individual works. All but a few of these fall in the century roughly between 1550 and 1650” (5).

⁶⁰ Yates characterized Ramus as “the most prominent” and “the most self-advertised” of the sixteenth-century educational reformers (231).

continuing Ramistic influence is necessary to my argument about new media because it provides a strong parallel for how the rearrangement of the rhetorical canons, specifically the revaluation of memory, had direct consequences on how meaning-making got taught.

Ramus's reorganization continues to influence the creation and study of writing today. As pointed out by Christopher Burnham, Sharon Crowley traces the origin of current-traditionalism "to Ramus splitting of logic from rhetoric" which resulted in writing teachers who "undervalue the role of the writer and language in shaping knowledge" (23). If rhetoric consists of the two canons style and delivery, then it must concern knowledge already in the mind, in this case the mind of the student. Whatever invention might exist in such a system must fly under the identifying flag of style, and this new emphasis on style ushers in a new focus on correctness:

Current-traditional teaching emphasized academic writing in standard forms and 'correct' grammar.... Berlin critiques current-traditional rhetoric for its static, empirically based epistemology that holds that all knowledge can be found in concrete reality...that language is an uncomplicated medium for communicating already existing knowledge.
(Burnham 22)

Covino agrees, and he observes that Ramus "enfranchise[ed] a pedagogy focused on clarity and correctness judged apart from intention, audience, and purpose" (44).

One proven conveyance for wide distribution is the textbook, and it is possible that Ramus elevated this medium to a new level. According to Robert J. Connors, the term "current-traditionalism" indicates "both the outmoded nature and the continuing power of older textbook-based writing pedagogies" (4). Ong makes the link between

Ramus's profound visual slant—a new emphasis that will further take away speech from dialectic—and the ability of publishers to profitably disseminate ideas through the textbook. In fact, this conclusion marks, for Ong, the unique contribution of Ramus, or more accurately, of the movement that became known as Ramism: “Ramist dialectic represented a drive toward thinking not only of the universe but of thought itself in terms of spatial models apprehended by sight.... Dialogue itself will drop more than ever out of dialectic” (9). This sight-centered method lent itself to the textbook tradition: “Ramus’ influence is in school or university textbooks” and stays alive because it is rewritten in each generation (9). Covino writes that “[w]hat happened in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries especially concerns the development of ‘current-traditional rhetoric’ ... [which] generates textbooks that emphasize four modes of discourse—narration, description, exposition, and argumentation” (44). Crowley argues that “By the middle years of the nineteenth century, the new rhetoric had given way to its American variant in the most popular textbooks.... [T]his variant—now called current-traditional” was set to dominate into the twentieth century (13).

What parallels exist between Ramus's reform of rhetoric—with particular attention to the canon of memory—and a new media poetics? How might Ramus be part of the Hermetic tradition, and to what extent can this be linked to one aspect of new media, the posthuman?

Ramus, the Hermetic Tradition, and the Cyborg Dream

Walter Ong, Paolo Rossi, and Frances Yates have written that memory in Ramism was not so much excised from rhetoric as it was swallowed up by logic, and this suggests

a reversal: instead of devaluating memory as a rhetorical canon, Ramus repurposed memory as part of a new logical method. According to Ong,

Memory, the fifth part of the traditional rhetoric, is unconvincingly identified by Ramus with judgment on the score that judging properly about things facilitates recall. But the real reason why Ramus can dispense with memory is that his whole scheme of arts, based on a topically conceived logic, is a system of local memory. Memory is everywhere, its ‘places’ or ‘rooms’ being the mental space which Ramus’ arts all fill.

(280)

Thus Ramus—through the secondary metaphor of memory-as-house, as defined by Plato and Aristotle, and as propagated by the medieval arts of memory—in transferring memory from rhetorical canon to logical method, summons his pretend rival Aristotle, who also wants to position recollection with logic and reason: “[T]he act of remembering differs from that of recollecting...[in that] recollection is, as it were, a mode of inference. For he who endeavours to recollect infers that he formerly saw, or heard, or had some such experiences” (*De Memoria et Reminiscentia*, 453a6-13). Rossi underscores a similar point: “For Ramus, memoria had a very specific task: it was *an instrument for introducing order* into both understanding and discourse” and as such “it seems significant that memory was identified with the doctrine of judgment (*iudicium*) which belonged to dialectic or logic” (100). This legacy continues for centuries: “Bacon and Descartes (and, much later, Gottfried Leibniz), followed Ramus’s lead by attempting to absorb the art of memory into the more general field of logic and method” (102).

Yates takes this idea much further when she combines the work of Raymond Lull with that of Ramus and sees “the connections of the art of memory with Lullism and Ramism and the emergence of ‘method’” (xiii). Though his dialectical method appears to venerate rationality, in it Yates sees a mystical turn: “Ramus conceives it as his mission to restore the dialectical art to its ‘natural’ form, its pre-Aristotelian, Socratic and pristine nature. This natural dialectic is the image of the *mens* of the eternal divine light”; supporting examples of this mission culled from *Aristotelicae animadversiones* and *Dialecticae institutiones* include Prometheus, Socrates, Homer’s “golden chain from heaven to earth” as well as the true dialectic, which is likened to “a kind of Neoplatonic mystery” (240). Looking through the visual and cold divisions of Ramus Yates sees a fire of mysticism; Combining Ramus and Lull yields a new method that leads to modern science, and the powers that modern science exercise may be seen as a new pair of wings for Icarus, another Tower hungry for the sky: a new media.

Clavis Universalis (The Universal Key)

[U]sed in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to designate a method or general science which would enable man to see beyond the veil of phenomenal appearances, or the ‘shadow of ideas’, and grasp the ideal and essential structure of reality. Deciphering the alphabet of the world; ...constructing a perfect language capable of eliminating all equivocations and putting us in direct contact with things and essences rather than signs; the construction of total encyclopedias and ordered classifications...these were the objectives of the numerous defenders , apologists and expositors

of Lullism and artificial memory between the fourteenth and seventeenth centuries. (Rossi xv).

This notion of a new method that would fill in the blanks of human ignorance, a “universal key” that would unlock all knowledge, simultaneously suggests the mystic dream of ultimate transcendence and the scientific quest to rationally unbolt the secrets of nature. Lull was a Platonist who, after “an illuminative experience on Mount Randa...in which he saw the attributes of God...infusing the whole creation” saw the possibility “that an Art founded on those attributes might be constructed which would be universally valid because based on reality” (Yates 174).⁶¹ The result was a memory art based not on the classical art of memory but instead on Neoplatonic notions and “claims to know first causes...or ‘Dignities of God’” and serve as the basis for the art (175). Unique to Lull is his introduction of movement to memory: the letters B-K, along with simple shapes of triangles, circles, and squares, all get combined to produce infinite combinations, which prove “revolutionary in their attempt to represent movement in the psyche” (177-82). In citing the Spanish Cabala Yates points out the novelty of Lull’s Art to the Western tradition: “As far as I know, the practice of meditating on combinations of letters was, before Lull, an exclusively Jewish phenomenon” (188). This association of Jewish mysticism, memory, and combinations recalls the discussion, in chapter one, of the unique authorial familiarity, in Longinus, with Judaism, specifically of rapturous language that results in the experience of the sublime or the interaction with the ineffable.

⁶¹ Like Ramus, Lull “included logic in memory” and included a “classification of matter in an order descending from ‘generals’ to ‘specials’”; however, Ramism pales in comparison to Lullism: it is “child’s play compared to the subtleties of Lullism with its attempt to base logic and memory on the structure of the universe” (238).

It also recalls Golem folklore, wherein by writing one of the Names of God on the Golem's forehead, one activated it.

Thus what begins as a missionary tool “to bring Christianity to Jews and Muslims” (West 490) ends up providing the obverse side of Ramus's new method—where Ramism demanded “division and analysis” Lull offered “an art of synthesis [wherein] a finite number of elements were combined according to a fixed set of rules; when all possible combinations were exhausted...the truth was revealed” (West 490). In making “machines” that illustrate the possible combinations, Yates classes Lull as a proto-scientist: “Lullism, with its algebraic notations, break[s] up the static schemata [of the great mediaeval encyclopedia schemes] into new combinations on its revolving wheels” (176). In the seventeenth century, Leibniz “affords by far the most remarkable example of the survival of influences from the art of memory and from Lullism” (379). According to Yates not only was Leibniz familiar with the medieval art of memory, but he was specifically intrigued by Lull and his Art, writing “*De arte combinatorial* based on adaptations of Lullism” (379-80). He sought to invent “a universal calculus using combinations of significant signs”; however, “the significant signs or characters...were mathematical symbols, and their logical combinations were to produce the invention of the infinitesimal calculus” (Yates 380).⁶² I agree with Yates' assertion that Leibniz was able to posit infinitesimal calculus aided in part by Lull's notion of the universal art, but I would add that he did this by recognizing the epistemological limits of metaphor; in a

⁶² It would require another dissertation to explore this issue of the invention of infinitesimal calculus. It is evocative to consider the Archimedes Palimpsest in this discussion of new media poetics and the nature of memory, because continuing scholarship reveals the Palimpsest to be a great treasure-house of lost knowledge that modern scholars may access through new media objects. One astounding discovery from the Palimpsest: “the discovery made in 2001. In proposition 14 of the Method, it turns out, as Archimedes is measuring the volume of a cylindrical segment, he makes systematic reference—which previous readers could not decipher, in part because this was so unexpected—to actual infinity itself. This pushes the mathematical use of actual infinity nearly some 2,000 years back in time” (Netz par. 8).

parallel, Kurzweil is able to posit eternal life aided in part by Ramus's notion that memory does not properly belong to rhetoric.⁶³ In other words, Leibniz recognized the utility of Lull's machines—the possibility of combination—and in exchanging mystical symbols for mathematical ones, brought about a new transference of meaning. Kurzweil merely extends the “man is like a machine” simile into the “man, the machine” metaphor.

My argument here is that as part of Ramus's keeping only style and delivery in the realm of rhetoric, memory gets enfolded into logic, and this results in the mystification of memory via Ramus's affinities with Neoplatonism. Lullism and Ramism both point to a method of arriving at knowledge, and in the sixteenth and seventeenth century this notion of the *clavis universalis*—first that there exists a repository of all knowledge, second, that it may be accessible to human beings—foreshadows the modern database.

⁶³ I know of no other scholars who have published on this link between Ramus and Kurzweil.

**CHAPTER FIVE: INTO THE LABYRINTH AND BACK OUT AGAIN:
ALPHABET, ARCHIVE, DATABASE**

Future researchers will wonder why the theoreticians, who had plenty of experience analyzing older cultural forms...didn't attempt to construct a similar genealogy for the language of computer media at the moment when it was just coming into being, that is, when the elements of previous cultural forms shaping it were still clearly visible and recognizable, before melting into a coherent language? (Manovich 7)

[Babylonians] revere the judgments of fate, they deliver to them their lives, their hopes, their panic, but it does not occur to them to investigate fate's labyrinthine laws nor the gyratory spheres which reveal it. (Borges, "The Lottery of Babylon" 33)

[I]t is a long time now since historians uncovered, described, and analysed structures, without ever having occasion to wonder whether they were not allowing the living, fragile, pulsating 'history' to slip through their fingers. (Foucault 11)

Once a thing is done, the fool sees it.⁶⁴ (*Iliad* 17.32)

⁶⁴ This shows up in the *Adages* as "*Factum stultus cognoscit.*" It recurs in Euripides, Virgil, Demosthenes, and Pliny, and two others stand out: (1) The Greek Maxim "A man learns wisdom as he learns regret," and (2) "Fabian, in Livy...It is not the outcome, the teacher of fools, which teaches this...but reason" (Erasmus 78).

This dissertation seeks to erase, or at the very least soften, the dark lines separating what may be seen as strictly autonomous academic disciplines—rhetoric and poetics, mythology and anthropology, traditional and media studies, and film studies and game studies. A similar effect, of separation through association, can be seen in projects as diverse as Burke’s Pentad, Walker’s rhetorical poetics, Foucault’s notion of the statement, and Schiappa’s origin-of-*rhetorike*-thesis, all thinkers with projects that challenge the felicities produced by symmetrical oppositions, neat distinctions, and untroublesome omissions that oftentimes characterize the historian of ideas.

Manovich through his *Language of New Media* essentially disagrees with Foucault’s exploration and elevation of the idea that the proper study of history lay in fracture; for Manovich, the ‘new’ in new media is very much the ‘old’ in traditional media: cinema. His project seeks to understand new media by way of the most recent dominant media of cinema; as Burke might have said, Manovich sees new media *in terms of* cinema, which is to say that Manovich has created the ratio cinema: new media, where cinema becomes absorbed into new media.

The remaining two quotations, from Borges and Homer, respectively, speak directly to the alternative methodologies of Manovich and Foucault and also to an intellectual impulse to not be the fool—to see a thing as it forms, to grasp it in nascent form, in Burke’s alembic,⁶⁵ before it becomes history, a “thing that has been” and while it contains the possibility of “a kind of thing that might be.” One can argue that Foucault in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* sought to articulate a poetics of history in his

⁶⁵ In *A Grammar of Motives* Burke writes, “At every point where the field covered by any one of these terms [of the Pentad] overlaps upon the field of covered by another, there is an alchemic opportunity, whereby we can put one philosophy or doctrine of motivation into the alembic, make the appropriate passes, and take out another. From the central moltenness, where all the elements are fused into one togetherness....” (xix).

understanding of the relationship between ‘statements’ and ‘discursive formations’: To understand not only the things said in themselves, but also to discover the governing body of implicit rules that allow for its utterance, to ‘read’ power. In like manner, this dissertation seeks to articulate those principles that govern over new media poetics—principles just at the edge of understanding, hiding in plain sight, ordering not only possible discourse but also channeling human ways of making meaning.⁶⁶ This channeling resembles what biologists term ‘neuroplasticity’: the ability of the brain to adapt biologically, over time, to new situations and experience, and to move function to different areas of the brain. Neuroplasticity literally refers to the brain’s ability to mould itself, and in a parallel, new media poetics represent those new situations and experiences currently in global operation.⁶⁷ Put another way this conjures McLuhan’s refrain, “The Medium is the message...[in that] the ‘message of any medium or technology is the change of scale or pace or pattern that it introduces to human affairs” (8). Exploring the large pattern changes that new media have brought about is the subject of this work.

New media poetics is currently shaping ways of making meaning, and here I offer a brief synopsis of my argument before finishing my analysis. In chapter one I theorized the previous ways that poetics emerged in particular cultures in precise times and served specific ends that articulated the relationship between discourse and culture—the Platonic, the Aristotelian, the Horacian, and the Longinian. Chapter two set forward the foundational principle of new media poetics—that metaphor is the engine behind meaning-making—and then tested that principle via a Burkean analysis of two new

⁶⁶ Recall in chapter four Manovich’s claim that once-technical actions like cut, past, and copy become naturalized in new media applications to the extent that they shape human understanding.

⁶⁷ Too many to list: typing a letter instead of writing one by hand, internet videoconferencing instead of telephone conference call, reading the *New York Times* on Amazon’s Kindle instead of on newsprint, watching an unreleased film online instead of waiting in line for its premier, and so on.

media objects, *Saving Private Ryan* and *Medal of Honor*. In chapter three, by harnessing the ‘rhetorical poetics’ of Walker, I explored how memory works in both the enthymeme and in metaphor (representative of rhetoric and poetics) in order to articulate the second principle: new media objects discount human memory. In chapter four I collided rhetorics and poetics in looking at their respective valuations of memory, both in the rhetorical canon and in its reform by Peter Ramus. Chapter four also recursively reaches back to chapters one and two when it analyzes how dominant metaphors shaped dominant meaning systems; its conclusion finds dual notions of the universal key to all knowledge and ‘the cyborg dream’ of human transcendence. Taken together, then, thus far the poetics of new media begins in a human desired to shape meaning through creating associations; it progresses through memory’s ability to authenticate or inauthenticate knowledge; memory itself becomes externalized and can be seen to displace personhood; finally, the externalization of memory (in the form of computer data) suggests an ultimate merging with that data: instead of spiritual return, futurists and others in the field of transhuman studies seek a ‘return’ to the machine.

My final chapter explores both the human motivations behind what Manovich terms “the database complex”; that is, my final chapter (1) traces the historical formation of the modern database, (2) explores the database as a unique cultural object, finding in the myth of the labyrinth a strong metaphor for the current dominant expression of data organization, and (3) suggests two of many possible evolving worldviews encouraged by the database.

The Formation of the Modern Database

Over dinner one night at the posh Potomac Boat Club, Director of Vital Statistics, John Billings, quipped to [nineteen-year-old Herman] Hollerith, ‘There ought to be a machine for doing the purely mechanical work of tabulating population and similar statistics.’ (Black 25)

A library, a museum—in fact, any large collection of cultural data—is replaced by a computer database. At the same time, a computer database becomes a new metaphor that we use to conceptualize individual and collective cultural memory, a collection of documents or objects, and other phenomena and experiences. (Manovich 214)

The word ‘database’ as I use it refers potentially to three things:

1. A collection of objects: for example, a *traditional database*
2. One of several database models, (hierarchical, network, relational, object, and so on): for example, a *relational database*
3. The cultural form that has taken shape as a result of (2); a way of representing the world: for example the *database form*

Traditionally, a database could be almost any collection of things, objects, or experiences: a film could be seen as a database of still images, the Tanakh as a database of Hebrew custom, a novel as a database of words, and so on. However, the database marks for Manovich one half of the equation for all new media: “creating works in new media can be understood as either constructing the right interface to a multi-media database or as defining navigation methods through spatial representations” (215). In

other words, and to return to the transcoding principle, in order to create a new media object, one needs two layers: the cultural (interface) level, and the computer (database) level. In a way, the formation of the modern database can be seen as experiments in reaching just this conclusion.

The rise of the database as “a cultural form of its own” speaks directly to a poetics of new media in that it offers up a fascinating and new potentiality for human understanding. Recall the discussion in chapter three of the perpetual present and two forms achieved by the polar opposites of the divine and the machine: omnipresence and monopresence. Gods exist beyond human understanding, beyond time, everywhere and nowhere; machines exist only where they are, here and only here. Humans live between these extremes in what I term *transpresence*. I leave the desire for spiritual unity with the divine to the mystics; in chapter four I challenged what I term ‘the Cyborg dream’ of uniting with machines. Here, the database offers up a modality for the human wish for *transpresence*: through it, humans can wring thousands of hours of labor out of a few algorithms, compress time, explode memory, and create new knowledge. As I argue in the next section, this ability gives rise to at least two and possibly many other dominant patterns of thought, two database imaginations. Before examining these, however, it is necessary to revisit how the database came about.

The Database and the Problem of the Census

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, as US and world populations continued to rise, governments struggled to complete their censuses—the amount of time it took to count the population was taking longer than the interval in between censuses, posing an

information lag that could seriously hinder any government's abilities. The implications of a government unable to count its citizens were large, and largely negative. As Manovich writes,

In 1887, the U.S. Census Bureau was still interpreting figures from the 1880 census. For the 1890 census, the Census Bureau adopted electronic tabulating machines design by Herman Hollerith. The data collected on every person was punched into cards; 46,804 enumerators completed forms for a total population of 62,979,766. (23-24)

This generous account stands in stark contrast to the one painted by Edwin Black, who argues that a prodigious young engineer, Herman Hollerith, took up the computational challenge set forward by Director Billings after witnessing “a train conductor punch tickets in a special pattern to record physical characteristics such as height, hair color, size of nose, and clothing—as sort of ‘punched photograph.’ Other conductors could read the code and then catch anyone re-using the ticket of the original passenger” (25). Through standardization and punched holes on uniform cards, the conductor could identify a single person from the masses of passengers; Hollerith combined the observation with “French looms, simple music boxes, and player pianos” that also used punched holes. Whereas these earlier machines used the holes to program various media, Hollerith's punch cards would become the first standardized punch cards to count and sort human beings. After punched with demographic data, “the card would then be fed into a ‘reader.’ By virtue of easily adjustable spring mechanisms and brief electrical brush contacts sensing for the holes, the cards could be ‘read’ as they raced through a mechanical feeder. The processed cards could then be sorted into stacks based

on a specified series of holes” (Black 25). Mechanical tabulation, then, consisted of creating a traditional database (in the form of uniform punchcards that acted as unique records) and then subjecting that data to multiple sorting operations in order to achieve the desired result.

Manovich does not record the monomaniacal business practices that would come to mark Hollerith, or that his first overseas and second census customer was Czar Nicolas II. Black, in writing to uncover a longtime conspiracy between IBM and the Third Reich, observes felicities between Hitler and the amoral Thomas J. Watson. Watson was the business force that re-imagined the consolidation of Hollerith’s Tabulating Machine Company, International Time Recording Company, Computing Scale Company, and Bundy Manufacturing first into the Computing-Tabulating-Recording Company (CTR) and finally rebranded the whole into IBM, provider of custom business solutions to companies and governments.

Hollerith first came to the aid of the US government when it literally could not count its citizens, but due to the raw processing power, many other applications of his Tabulating machines became apparent: “it served for the 1890 and 200 censuses and also...for the New York Central Railroad accounts from 1891, as also for many insurance companies” (Ifrah 183). Because the cards were counted electrically “whereby the passage of current through the perforation moved the needle of a counter up by one point” the process was also very fast: “Millions of cards could be sorted and resorted.... [I]t was nothing less than a nineteenth-century bar code for human beings” (Ifrah 180-81; Black 25). For example, Black writes that workers at Dehomag—the IBM New York controlled German subsidiary—were instructed that “Column 22 RELIGION was to be

punched at hole 1 for Protestant, hole 2 for Catholic, or hole 3 for Jew. Columns 23 and 24 NATIONALITY were to be coded in row 10 for Polish speakers.” By sorting twice, Polish Jews (*OstJuden*) could be identified (57-59). The solution to a mechanical challenge, the problem of accurate census-taking, gives birth to high-speed and very accurate processing first of human information, and then of any information.

The Computer Database

[Charles Bachman’s] early papers show that his aim was to make more effective use of the new direct access storage devices becoming available: until then, data processing had been based on punched cards and magnetic tape, so that serial processing was the dominant activity. (“Database”)

Unlike Hollerith’s punch cards, which were limited by their number of available holes (determined by their number of columns) and the sorting time (determined by their company protocols for accuracy as well as the limitation of human labor), the computer database offers nearly unlimited data storage and nearly instant retrieval. A database “is a structured collection of records of data...[that requires software] to model the database structure,” and the result is a type of model: the hierarchic database model, the networked database model, the relational database model, the object-oriented database model, and so on (“Database”).⁶⁸

Two early database models, the hierarchical and the network, organized data as their names suggest: hierarchical databases recall Ramus’ diagrams, discussed in chapter

⁶⁸ Once one chooses a particular database—let’s say a relational database, in this case the Microsoft Jet Database Engine—one needs a Database Management System (DBMS), which is “the software that is used to organize and maintain” that specific database—for example, the DBMS for Microsoft is ACCESS, which uses a graphical user interface (GUI).

four, in that they organize data “into an inverted tree-like structure, implying a multiple downward link in each node to describe the nesting, and a sort field to keep the records in a particular order in each same-level list” (“Database”). In a network database, “any record (called an owner record) can hold data that is common to a set of other records (called member records), and it is possible to access all records in the set starting from the owner (Illingworth et al. 250). Put another way, network databases store data with links to other data.

These two early models dominated the marketplace: “CODASYL developed the network model based on Bachman’s ideas, and (apparently independently) the hierarchical model was used in a system developed by North American Rockwell later adopted by IBM as the cornerstone of their IMS product” (“Database”). As Lev Manovich writes, these ways of structuring computer data can be seen as ways of constructing a worldview:

By organizing data in particular ways, they privilege particular models of the world and the human subject. For instance, the two key ways to organize computer data commonly used today—a hierarchal file system...and a ‘flat,’ nonhierarchical file system assumes that the world can be reduced to a logical and hierarchical order, where every object has the same importance as any other, and that everything is, or can be, connected to everything else. (16)

Thus a particular collection of Hollerith’s punch cards (an early form of a traditional database) evolves—just as Hollerith’s Tabulating Machine Company evolves

to eventually become IBM—into International Business Machine’s Information Management Software, the dominant hierarchical database of the 1960s.

In 1970, E. F. Codd proposed the relational model, which “permits the definition of (a) data structures, (b) storage and retrieval operations on them, (c) integrity constraints.... The common data structure (the relation) may be thought of as a table, in which each row of values (tuple) corresponds to a logical record, and the column headings are the names of the fields” (Illingworth et al. 320). In other words, a relational database “maintains a set of separate, related files (tables), but combines data elements from the files for queries and reports when required” (“Relational”). This new model “is currently the most popular, as older hierarchical data management systems, such as IMS, the information management system produced by IBM, are being replaced by relational database management systems” (“Database”). In fact, “most every business database management system (DBMS), including Oracle, DB2, SQL Server, MySQL, etc., is a relational DBMS (RDBMS) (“Relational”).

So if Manovich is correct when he writes that these database models not only organize data but also organize and may be said to condition certain ways of seeing the world, how might the current popularity of the relational model organize the world? If one explanation for the relational model’s success is in its ability to produce ad hoc queries (by way of some dialect of Structured Query Language, or SQL), how might this influence a particular worldview?

Labyrinth: Archive, Alphabet

The archive is first the law of what can be said, the system that governs the appearance of statements as unique events.... The archive is not that which...safeguards the event of the statement...it is that which, at the very root of the statement-event, and in that which embodies it, defines at the outset *the system of its enunciability*. (Foucault 129)

[D]o you imagine that I would take so much trouble and so much pleasure in writing...if I were not preparing—with a rather shaky hand—a labyrinth into which I can venture, in which I can move my discourse...in which I can lose myself and appear at last to eyes that I will never have to meet again. (Foucault 17)

This chapter concerns one final object, the archive (which may be likened to all three definitions of database above), and also to Foucault's notion that discourse constitutes the archive, and that statements constitute discourse. All three terms are marked, Foucault argues, not by the continuity and accord but instead by discontinuity and rupture. Put another way, the "unities" that comprise the history of ideas—the way that the unities are created, disseminated, agreed upon, and solidified—are fictions that obscure a much more fractured set of rules that allow for discourse to be spoken. Foucault in *The Archaeology of Knowledge* does not pursue meaning, or interpretation, or truth; instead he wants to discover the conditions that allow for meaning to occur at all.

Such a complicated thinker is instructive in a section that seeks to revisit the myth of the Labyrinth in order to

- (1) Revisit the Labyrinth as a unique archive, one akin to displaced memory;
- (2) Articulate how archaeologists and academics reinforce Foucault's notion of "unities";
- (3) Re-imagine the Labyrinth as language itself.

In order to accomplish these goals, I begin with the Greek myth of the Labyrinth, then I cross to the anthropological record of the Palace at Knossos, and I end at the basic units of meaning, the alphabet. The metaphor of archive-as-labyrinth suggests much about the ambiguities implicit in isolating particular meaning for preservation. This tripartite metaphor informs the rest of the chapter, which offers the final principle of new media poetics: if memory is the machine of metaphor, and memory in its externalization effectively displaces personhood, then the archive becomes the mixed symbol of that knowledge valued enough for preservation as well as that knowledge wholly mediated—*archives aggregate forfeited memory*. They enact Aristotle's paradox of having knowledge without having it in hand: what a community values most becomes through the archival process inaccessible or far less accessible to it.⁶⁹ This recalls Kurzweil's observation regarding the difficulty of accessing archival records: "Ironically the ease of approaching this information is inversely proportional to the level of advancement of the technology used to create it" (327). Because of the difficulty in accessing computer files in nonexisting platforms, Kurzweil concludes that "[i]nformation lasts only so long as someone cares about it" (329).

⁶⁹ Writing in *Archive Fever*, Derrida underscores what he terms the violence of the archive: "What is at issue here, starting with the exergue, is the violence of the archive itself, as archive, as archival violence.... [E]very archive...is at once institutive and conservative" (7). Derrida calls attention to the way in which every archive exists at cross purposes—by selecting certain documents, the archive forbids others, a process reminiscent of Burke's notion of the "terministic screen."

The Maze of Deviance

Following this notion, that human care may make information last, I wonder now what happens when I return to an under-cared-for subject like Greek mythology. When I summon the image of Leibniz sitting before a makeshift version of one of Lull's combinatory machines about to cross out the mystical symbols for mathematical ones, I stop.⁷⁰ I stop and imagine what would happen if I were to exchange Lull's mystical symbols for mythic ones: Aphrodite, Paris, Zeus, Minos, Poseidon, Minotaur, Daedalus. The following section attempts just such a re-combination in the hope of yielding a new perspective on the labyrinth, one that will help me to get out of the maze.

If one looks at the word *hermaphrodite*, one can easily separate it and see Hermes and Aphrodite compounded: Hermes, the cunning male messenger of Zeus; Aphrodite, the female god of love, both of them conjoined in one entity, the hermaphrodite. The compound hints at the enormous blessing and curse: while popular in the pantheon, Hermes was not only a messenger, but a thief—the winged sandals offer a metaphor for his duplicity; and while Aphrodite may have been the beguiler of gods and men alike, her sultry promises prompted Paris to give her the Golden Apple, beginning the feud in Olympus and on earth that was the Trojan war. To be a hermaphrodite, then, is not to merely possess the combined attributes of male and female; it is to live as paradox.⁷¹

⁷⁰ In 1275, “In his *Ars compendiosa inveniendi veritatem*, Ramon Lull suggested a scheme of ‘syllogistic mechanics’, a sort of combinatorial instrument... which consisted in his own words of ‘a universal method destined to prove the truths of faith’” (Ifrah 256).

⁷¹ According to Haraway, “Monsters have always defined the limits of community in Western imaginations ... Unseparated twins and hermaphrodites were the confused human material in early modern France who grounded discourse on the natural and supernatural, medical and legal, portents and diseases—all crucial to establishing modern identity” (180).

Other words require more background: to see *aborigine* is to see the Latin ablative *ab* (from) joined to the *origine* (the beginning). Aborigines were there from the beginning, like the *arche*, like Lull's names for God.⁷² One such name, the Latin name for Zeus (Jupiter), does not look related until one learns that the Greeks called him Zeus the Father, Zeus Pater, Jupiter. When the ancient Roman looked to the sky and named the biggest planet, he named it Jupiter, God of the Sky, Jupiter Optimus Maximus. The myth of the labyrinth begins by linking Zeus and the powerful mortal king Minos. One tradition holds that Minos is actually a son of Zeus: “[near Crete] Zeus became an eagle and ravished Europa...She bore him...Minos” (Graves 195). If not a son, then Minos joins with Zeus in dealing with law: “Minos’ laws were thought to have been inspired by Zeus: every nine years Minos consulted Zeus in the cave on Ida” (Grimal 276).⁷³ Further links between Zeus and Minos circle around both homosexuality and bestiality.

Concerning the former, Zeus is said to have so desired the beautiful youth Ganymedes that he assumed the shape of an eagle and abducted the boy. “The Zeus-Ganymedes myth gained popularity in Greece and Rome because it afforded religious justification for grown man’s passionate love of a boy” (Graves 116-17). Plato, though fully exploiting this “new field of homosexual romance” denounced it as “against nature, and called the myth of Zeus’s indulgence in it ‘a wicked Cretan invention’.” Graves finds

⁷² Also like Borges’ short story “Library of Babel”: “No one can articulate a syllable which is not filled with tenderness and fear, which is not, in one of these languages, the powerful name of a god” (57). This also summons the image, from chapter four, of the Golem: “Writing one of the names of God on its forehead” would activate the Golem, and “by erasing the first letter aleph in *Emet* to form *Met*” the Golem would be deactivated.

⁷³ This linkage recalls the discussion in chapter three of Walker’s rhetorical poetics and the link between singer and song.

support for this in Stephanus of Byzantium, who argues that it was King Minos who abducted Ganymedes “having received the laws from Zeus” (qtd. in Graves 117).⁷⁴

Concerning the latter, the myth of the Minotaur in its complex layers offers an instructive lens for viewing the power and ambiguity embedded in the dominant new media poetics: the digital archive.

King Minos inaugurates his reign of Crete by intimating his divine connection:

[A]fter boast[ing] that the gods would answer whatever prayer he offered them...he then prayed that a bull might emerge from the sea. At once, a dazzlingly white bull swam ashore, but Minos was so struck by its beauty that he sent it to join his own herds, and slaughtered another instead...Poseidon, to avenge the affront...made [Minos' wife] Pasiphae fall in love with the white bull. (Graves 293)⁷⁵

Pasiphae enlisted Daedalus, who built “a hollow wooden cow...so that Pasiphae had all her desire, and later gave birth to the Minotaur, a monster with a bull’s head and a human body.” Minos appealed to the Oracle, who advised reenlisting Daedalus to build “the inextricable maze called the Labyrinth” (293-94). Here “[i]n requital for the death of [Minos’ son Androgeus]” the Minotaur “usually devoured the chosen young men and maidens, whom the tyranny of Minos yearly exacted from the Athenians” (Graves 337; Lempriere 416).⁷⁶ Attic hero Theseus “was glimpsed by Ariadne, one of Minos’

⁷⁴ It is through this interesting cluster around Zeus, Ganymedes, Minos, law, and beauty that Grimal can plainly write, “Minos is also said to have been the originator of homosexuality” (276).

⁷⁵ The bull has a longstanding association with ritual sacrifice and is well documented in Homer. The word *hecatomb* suggests great animal sacrifice of 100 animals (see *Iliad* IV.102).

⁷⁶ In a related story Aegeus, the king of Athens and father of Theseus, grows so jealous of Androgeus’ superior wrestling, that he “sent him to fight the bull of Marathon, which kills him” (Grimal 43).

daughters; she fell in love with him, and gave him a ball of thread so that he would not lose his way in the Labyrinth” (Grimal 432).

Thus a son of Zeus and tyrant of Crete, receiver of Hephaestus’ robot Talos⁷⁷ and purported inventor of homosexuality, King Minos exists at the intersection of a powerful cluster of ideas—civic law, divine sacrifice, marital fidelity, and sexual deviance—but more central to this discussion is in the Labyrinth that he commissioned. A white bull came as the literal answer to his prayers; another bull gores his son Androgeus, a curse; the architect who engineered the artificial bull for Pasiphae is the same architect who fashions the mechanism that will hide her monstrous issue: Minotaur is clearly a compound of Minos and Taurus, and, like hermaphrodite blends a story of curse and awe, creating a murderous freak. The wife’s bestial romance results in the Minotaur; the Minotaur eats Athenian youth to exact revenge for the gored son; the Minotaur is slain by Theseus, the son of the King who had another King’s son gored. The Labyrinth in its twists and turns, in its crooks and crannies resembles a human brain.⁷⁸ It tests memory, patience, and sanity—the Labyrinth remains a provocative myth because it obscures while it reveals. Not only that, but these expressions of deviance—of homosexuality and of bestiality—prove the full scope of indeterminacy demanded by the Labyrinth: all certainty must be suspended in order to enter the Labyrinth.

Knossos

Partly due to the imaginations of early archaeologists and academics, and partly, I

⁷⁷ Recall from chapter three.

⁷⁸ Also Michelangelo’s “Creation of Man”

argue, due to the lasting power of what Foucault termed historical “unities,” there has been an almost zealous desire to connect the Labyrinth of myth with the archaeological record.⁷⁹

According to art historian William H. Matthews, “The earliest labyrinths of which mention is made by classical writers are those of Egypt and Crete” (4). Thucydides supports an account of a historical Minos, who colonized the Cyclades Island via his naval power: “We know through oral tradition that Minos was the earliest man to build a navy, and that he controlled most of what is now called the Greek sea” (I.iv). Sir Arthur Evans, the fanciful British archaeologist, began excavation of Knossos in 1900 and “brought to light an entire civilization...confirm[ing] the traditions of a great king with a large navy, ruling in Crete” which he named Minoan (Amos and Lang 12-13). This wealth and power suggests that what Evans found was not a Labyrinth, nor a necropolis as suggested by Castleden, “but a tremendous palace” (Kagan 10).

Examination of frescos and statuary reveal the recurrent themes of double axes and bulls: “The most interesting features were the frequent occurrence of the sign of the double axe...[and] evidence concerning the cult of the bull” (Matthews 31). According to one early account, the palace is dominated by images of bulls, suggesting a divine connection: “huge figures of bulls in painting and plaster occupied conspicuous positions” (“The Labyrinth” 126). Evans discovered frescos of daily life, “including what appears to be the extremely dangerous activity of bull-leaping, in which youths and girls caught hold of the horns of a charging bull and somersaulted along its back” (Amos and Lang 13). The double ax “is engraved on the principal blocks, such as the corner stones

⁷⁹ It would require another project to investigate, by using Foucault, this interesting cluster of overlapping terms—unities, archaeology, myth, especially as they intersect in early writings on the discoveries at Knossos.

and door jambs throughout the building, and recurs as a sign of dedication on every side of every block of a sacred pillar that forms the center of what seems to have been the inmost shrine of an aniconic cult” (“The Labyrinth” 126). Kagan observes “how legend can preserve a kernel of truth” when he writes that “The Greek word for *double axe* is *labrys*...this word, used to describe a common sign on a huge building, might...take on its present meaning” (10). Kagan also interprets the Athenian tribute historically: “[It] may indicate that once upon a time Athens...was under strong Cretan influence” (10). It is easy to connect the archaeological record with the myth: a powerful king housed in an elaborate maze of a palace, the worship of bulls as symbols of divinity, the translation of the bull’s horns into the abstracted double axe, a symbol of power and reverence. As I argue, this can be seen as enacting one such of Foucault’s “unities.” However, the more evocative connection lies in the connection between the place name and language itself.

Alphabet

[Y]ou can see a vermilion tattoo on my stomach. It is the second symbol,
Beth....it subordinates me to the men of Aleph...In the half light of dawn,
in a cellar, I have cut the jugular vein of sacred bulls before a black stone.

(Borges, “The Lottery in Babylon” 30)

Having considered the mythological and archaeological versions of the Labyrinth, I now turn to the linguistic. On the history of the Greek alphabet, Herodotus claims that “[t]hese Phoenicians...brought many useful skills into Greece—especially writing...At first, the writing was the same as that used by Phoenicians everywhere, but with the passage of time, the shape of the letters changed along with the sounds of words” (131).

Though Plato agreed to their Phoenician origin, he located a different source “among the Egyptians, and attributed the invention to their god Thoth.” As Drucker points out, “the two themes—of cross-cultural borrowing and of divine origin, dominate the history of alphabet studies up through the 19th century” (22). It seems appropriate that to the historian, a factual cross-cultural borrowing makes the most sense, and to a philosopher, a divine creator wins out. This difference may be linked to the title of this dissertation: Recall that in Aristotle’s *Poetics*, history is “the thing that has been” and poetry “a kind of thing that might be” (141b.5).

It seems incongruous that the English word ‘alphabet’ was not used by the Greeks but instead by an early father of the church: “The word alphabet, from the first two letters of the Greek alphabet—*alpha* and *beta*—was first used, in its Latin form, *alphabetum*, by Tertullian (2nd–3rd century AD. The classical Greeks customarily used the plural of *to gramma* (“the letter”))” (“Alphabet”). As reported by Alfred Kallir, “Alpha-Beta, the names of the first two Greek characters, became the name of all similar script systems” (19). The first Greek letters are *alpha* and *beta*, and in the parent language of Phoenician—itself a northern Semitic language—the first letters are *aleph* and *beth*. Kallir argues that “our letters are decayed pictures” and notes that the progression from the Semitic letters *aleph* and *beth* to *alpha* and *beta* affords a unique understanding of language (1). He points out that the Semitic meaning of *aleph* was primarily ox—“a castrated bull as a beast of burden”—and through the labor-saving device of stylization, “the stylized ox-head eventually becomes a triangle, the head proper, with two protrusions, the horns” (Halley 9; Kallir 25). Christina von Braun agrees, and notes “In the Semitic languages the word Aleph means ‘bull’ or ‘ox’...The character ‘A’, or Alpha,

represents the bull” (63). Von Braun underscores how the “vertical line refers to the yoke and thus the castrated ox...and it is not coincidence that today the Hebrew word ‘eleph’ means ‘domesticated, tame’” (64).⁸⁰ Continuing, Kallir notes that “in the Semitic tongue [the letter b] means ‘house’” (85). One meaning, then, of alphabet, can be ox-house, or House of the Bull. Many scholars jumped at the link between the etymology of the word *labrys* and the physical relics of axes found in Minoan Crete—evidence that they had found the Labyrinth of mythology—however, it is more illustrative to think of the alphabet as *the house of the bull: alphabet, the labyrinth*.

Archive Revisited

[Comprising] three peach baskets and one cardboard box of notes and data... The *Inquiry*...is an attempt to learn why my father hanged himself...the data I collect is biased, and it’s partly for that reason that even in 1937 I kept one peach basket reserved for notes on myself... The nature of my purpose...renders the *Inquiry* interminable... It doesn’t follow that because a goal is unattainable, one shouldn’t work toward its attainment. To learn all that can be learned about my fathers life...[I must read] all the books that I know my father read. (Barth 217-19)

In the vast Library there are no two identical books....the Library is total...and its shelves register all the possible combinations of the twenty-

⁸⁰ Von Braun also draws attention to the “hierarchy of characters, the so-called *Akrokratie*” implicit in the order of characters, and sees the primacy of “A” in the typographic symbol for “at”: “It is not a mere coincidence that this reappears in the @, the logo of modern writing and memory systems” (63).

odd orthographical symbols...in other words, all that it is given to express, in all languages. (Borges, “The Library of Babel” 54)

Upon [my father’s] untimely death at the age of fifty-eight in 1970, I inherited his archives...dozens of aging boxes...along with my father’s boxes I have several hundred boxes of my own.... I have dreamed of taking these hundreds of thousands of records and scanning them into a massive personal database.⁸¹ (Kurzweil 326-28)

What is an archive, then, if not the labyrinthine alphabet of what a culture values; a son’s symbolic confrontation and merging with his father’s absence, his library; the mystical dream of a universal key that unlocks not only that knowledge from without, but also that unlocks Aristotle’s window within and speaks to the “greater difficulty” of “looking in” at our own minds? (*De Memoria* 70). There is a price for this admission: this association of bulls with mazes, the minotaur in the Labyrinth can represent many things: getting lost in the maze, the terror of loneliness, the abomination of paradox, simple revenge, bloodlust, howling despair, old age, war (what consumes youth), dual consciousness, demagoguery, and demigods. The Labyrinth is a house that houses a monster, which is the terrible fear of memory when it fails.⁸²

⁸¹ Here I recognize the database impulse that Kurzweil mentions because I have a similar impulse—I made my first database out of all of the academy award data supplied by the AMPAS; subsequent databases tracked manuscript submissions to literary magazines, as well as the submission process for *The Rhetoric Review*.

⁸² This association of failing memory and fear recalls the discussion, in chapter four, of Alzheimer’s.

The Monstrous Imagination: “[C]alculated and determined with the help of our tabulating machine”⁸³

Statistics has become invaluable for the Reich, and the Reich has given statistics new tasks in peace and in war.... German statistics has not only become the registering witness...but also the co-conspirator of the great events of time. (Friedrich Zahn, qtd. in Black 49)

[I]n a computer age the database comes to function as a cultural form in its own right. It offers a particular model of the world and of the human experience. (Manovich 37)

When a young Edwin Black, whose parents are Holocaust survivors, went to the United States Holocaust Museum, he saw “an IBM Hollerith D-11 card sorting machine” and stared at it for a long while—he knew that even before the start of World War II “[t]he Germans always had the lists of Jewish names...but [he wondered] how did they get the lists?” (10). For his answer, he discovered how “IBM Germany invented the racial census—listing not just religious affiliation, but bloodlines going back generations. This was the Nazi data lust. Not just to count the Jews—but to *identify* them” (9-11).⁸⁴ His book *IBM and the Holocaust: The Strategic Alliance Between Nazi Germany and America’s Most Powerful Corporation* meticulously documents the ways in which IBM

⁸³ Willy Heidinger, the ceremonial head of IBM’s Germany subsidiary Dehomag, in a speech to Nazi officials: “The physician examines the human body and determines whether...all organs are working to the benefit of the entire organism.... We are very much like the physician, in that we dissect, cell by cell, the German cultural body. We report every individual characteristic...on a little card...sorted at a rate of 25,000 per hour according to certain characteristics [which] are grouped like the organs of our cultural body, and they will be calculated and determined with the help of our tabulating machine” (qtd. in Black 50).

⁸⁴ Johannes Muller, writing in the *Allgemeines Statistisches Archiv*: “[o]ne [ideological problem] is race politics, and this problem must be viewed in a statistical light” (Johannes Muller, qtd. in Black 48).

entered into a long and profitable business partnership with the Nazis, one that led directly to technological improvements of its punch card technology.

Important to observe here is that the Nazi agenda—of identifying the Jews and other “undesirables” quickly and accurately in order to deport, to ghettoize, to enslave, to experiment on, and to work—required the power of a computer database in 1933, before SQL and RDBMS. The digital computer had been theorized but not yet invented; it is arguable that one candidate for the earliest digital computer is Konrad Zuse in 1941: “Zuse’s computer was the first working digital computer” (Manovich 25).

Absent a working digital computer, the Nazis were successful in articulating what I call the monstrous imagination—having a defined goal in mind, working backward they tailored machines and cards to produce the answers that they needed. For example, because “the amount of data that could be stored on a card was a function of the number of holes and columns...Dehomag abandoned its standard 45-column cards and moved to a 60-column format... [I]t was willing to move to an 80-column format for [the long-delayed German] census” (56-57). In the example from the first section, the Polish Jews could be identified with two sortings, and they in fact were identified just this way—according to Black they were the first: “The so-called *OstJuden*, or Eastern Jews, primarily from Poland, would be the first to go” (59).

I recall Manovich’s premise, that the way a computer sees the world is fundamentally different from the way humans see it, and this example makes me think: There are temporal and spatial limits on the human acquisition of knowledge. There are questions that one simply can not ask, and there are other question, if asked, could never

be answered through human efforts alone. If you have a monstrous question—you ask a computer. More accurately, you design a database in order to ask the question of it.

Black alleges that “IBM and the Nazis jointly designed...technological solutions that enabled Hitler to accelerate and in many ways automate” the Nazi agenda. The IBM punch card—the medium used to store data later supplanted by magnetic tape—evolved and was greatly advanced by the Nazi demand for efficiency. The punch card machine gave way to computers and the next generation of memory recording, tabulation, and computing: the modern database.

The Emergent Imagination: Data Mining

Databases today can range in size into the terabytes—more than 1,000,000,000,000 bytes of data. Within these masses of data lies hidden information of strategic importance. (Two Crows 1).

It turns out that ‘mining’ is not a very good metaphor.... [it] implies extracting precious nuggets of ore from otherwise worthless rock. If data mining really followed this metaphor, it would mean that people were discovering new factoids within their inventory databases.... Instead, data mining applications tend to be (semi)automated discovery of trends and patterns across very large datasets.... (Hearst 1)

This monstrous imagination can be seen to sit in opposition to a powerful alternative: the practice of knowledge discovery called data mining, which may be defined as “the nontrivial extraction of implicit, previously unknown, and potentially

useful information from data” (“Data Mining”). The trick is to gather a huge data set or sets, and apply sophisticated algorithms in order to find patterns that translate raw data into knowledge. Corporations like Two Crows sell data mining products to businesses, writing that “it can be used to control costs as well as contribute to revenue increases” (5); thinkers like Marti Hearst explore the possibilities of data mining practices “to discover or derive new information from data, finding patterns across datasets, and/or separating signal from noise” (2). Here I focus on data mining as knowledge creation, or knowledge discovery in databases (KDD). In a link to the labyrinth-archive cluster, Herbert Simon, in his forward to *Handbook of Data Mining and Knowledge Discovery*, writes that “[i]nspiration’ and ‘intuition’ are no longer eternal mysteries. They are now known to be produced by recognizing patterns in the things that strike our senses and by searching patiently through great labyrinths of possibility” (xvii). The large data sets, with their great ellipses and inhuman depth and breath of information, are likened to capacious labyrinths full of possibility and promise. In this way, the emergent database imagination sits in opposition to the monstrous imagination in that it, like Kurzweil’s fantastical inventions, place great stock in hope, in possibility, and in the human ability to find meaning by forging associations.⁸⁵

Hearst explains the possibility of knowledge creation embedded in textual data mining: “Don Swanson has eloquently argued why it is plausible to expect new information to be derivable from text collections: experts can only read a small subset of what is published in their fields and are often unaware of developments in related fields.

⁸⁵ In his prologue, entitled “The Power of Ideas,” Kurzweil embraces this optimism: “To this day, I remain convinced of this basic philosophy: no matter what quandaries we face...there is an idea that can enable us to prevail. Furthermore, we can find that idea. And when we find it, we need to implement it.... This, then, was the religion that I was raised with: veneration for human creativity and the power of ideas” (2).

Thus it should be possible to find useful linkages between information in related literatures” (5). When performing this type of text data mining (TDM) on biomedical literature in order to investigate the causes of migraines, Hearst recounts how Swanson selected several pieces of evidence, such as (1) stress is associated with migraines and can lead to loss of magnesium, (2) calcium channel blockers prevent some migraines, (3) magnesium is a natural calcium channel blocker, and others (5). Altogether, these suggested to Swanson an important link between magnesium deficiency and migraines, a hypothesis that Swanson, who is not a medical doctor, could put forward. That the hypothesis “did not exist in the literature at the time” and that “subsequent study found support” for the hypothesis speaks to the great potential of data mining (5). In his paper Hearst underscores that “we do not need fully artificial intelligent text analysis” to accomplish worthy things in this field, “rather, a mixture of computationally-driven and user guided analysis”: in other words, a collaboration of intelligent human users applying complicated algorithms to large datasets in order to discover new information (10).

In this light, the data that accumulates in numerous databases—from US political speeches (American Rhetoric⁸⁶), to an archive of handwritten letters (The Adams Electronic Archive⁸⁷), to massive image/movie databases (YouTube⁸⁸), to the fundamental question of our shared humanity, the Genome Database (in support of the Human Genome Project⁸⁹)—can all be seen as examples not only of the shift to computer culture, but also to the possibilities of being a human with digital memory. Already many

⁸⁶ <http://www.americanrhetoric.com>

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<http://thomasjeffersonpapers.org/digitaladams/aea/cfm/doc.cfm?id=L18001102ja&numrecs=3&archive=all&hi=on&mode=&query=November%201800&queryid=&rec=1&start=1&tag=text>

⁸⁸ <http://www.youtube.com/>

⁸⁹ <http://www.genome.gov/10001772>

case studies in KDD reveal many types of knowledge discovery, including detecting cell phone fraud (see Fawcett), predicting telecommunication equipment failures (see Weiss), exploring document archives (see Merkl), using the Internet (see Meggs), and controlling hospital infections (see Brossette and Moser). *In this way, the data in databases may be seen as memory that waits for its own discovery.*

Implications for a New Media Poetics

The first chapter of this dissertation gave voice to four dominant theories of poetics and discussed how they came about as systems that could reveal cultural values. The poetics of Plato stressed the inherent dangers in discourse: because it engages emotion at the cost of dulling rationality, poetics threatens the state itself. To an extent, Aristotle rescues poetics with the claim that individual transformative emotion—brought about by discourse—actually improves the state through purgative, educative experience of watching form. Horace isolates a lost acme of discursive accomplishment for extensive study and repetition, a magical past that at best might be resurrected in the present. Longinus returns somewhat to Aristotle’s position in valuing transformative emotion, but he elevates this transformation to a near-mystical sublime. All of these poetics placed a premium on textual, canonical writings. To refer to my introduction and my first chapter, departments of Literature, aided by such personages as E. D. Hirsh, have worked to in some ways cement poetics into something that does not change.

Today, however, with the rise of new media, poetics no longer strictly applies to a narrow definition of texts and the literary canon; in fact, today computer users worldwide experience very complicated discourse in the form of computer games, internet telephony

(VoIP), instant messaging (IM), email, chat, text messaging (SMS), internet research, videoconferencing, podcasts, online collaborative environments, virtual worlds (MMORPGs), and many more. The very terms that could earlier in time be taken for granted—text, author, page, scan, note, read—in a new media context offer up multiple meanings.

One current difficulty, given these two situations, is the absence of a current theory of new media poetics, which is to say the absence of a system that explains (1) how meaning-making occurs in computer culture, and (2) the value of discourse both to the individual and to the state. Such a system, I argue, must currently be in operation, but as Foucault writes about the archive, “It is not possible for us to describe our own archive, for it is from within these rules that we speak” (130). The great challenge, then, is to seek out clues and subtle signs of these rules—these new media principles—that hover just at the edge of understanding.

The remaining four chapters of this dissertation, then, investigate both new media objects and traditional media objects in order to posit the following four principles of new media poetics:

1. Metaphor is the engine of meaning
2. Memory is the engine of metaphor
3. The forfeiture of direct memory displaces personhood
4. Databases aggregate forfeited memory; the database form currently shapes worldviews

My first two principles speak to a great hope, an optimistic investment, in the

power of ordinary people to form unique associations; my last two principles speak to a darkening fear, a clouded suspicion, in the power of corporations (and others who own large databases) to mediate meaning-making. If new media is as revolutionary a phenomenon as enthusiasts like Johnson and Jenkins maintain, surely these last two principles reveal how new media more resemble old media: the power of the first pair (the ability of individuals to form associations through discourse) gets recognized and exploited by those who would profit from particular associations (the power of the second pair).⁹⁰ This point gets articulated in chapter two, when a Pentadic analysis of *Medal of Honor: Frontline* reveals a particular version not only of the US involvement in WWII, but of the very terms “war,” “US,” “flag,” “patriotism,” and “hero.” In this way, there is little to nothing new in new media.

The implications for a new media poetics are serious and largely unexplored, in part because of the shroud of excitement that attends a term like “new media,” which is currently experiencing an academic vogue, and in part because, as discussed in chapter one, the types of associations engendered by new media poetics resemble the most subtle type of rhetorical function that Barry Brummett discusses: the implicative function, which is next to invisible because it includes those meanings popularly taken for granted.

Implications for Composition Pedagogy

The discussion, begun in chapter one, of the *Phaedrus* as an example of some of Plato’s thoughts on memory and the new technology of writing serves as a guide for some implications of new media poetics for composition. Perhaps the biggest implication

⁹⁰ Recall from chapter one that Johnson argues for “The Sleeper Curve” whereby media increases intelligence, and Jenkins for the power of “Convergence Culture” whereby consumers become producers.

for the composition classroom is that the habits and tools students bring to the writing classroom are changing. To return to the *Phaedrus*, early in the dialogue Socrates chides Phaedrus for hiding the speech he purports to have memorized: “Yes, my dear, when you have first shown me what you have in your left hand, under your cloak” (139). In the modern version of this tale, a student opens a laptop or cell phone in the middle of class.⁹¹ Students who grew up steeped in computer culture often prove very familiar with the tools and may not see improprieties in their classroom use.

What is more, due to the creation of the ADA, to a lessened social stigma surrounding disability, to the increase of students with both learning and physical disabilities, and to adaptive technologies, the students themselves reveal a spectrum of ability. Instructors—especially ones who lead small writing workshops—may be expected to accommodate students through a range of new media practices.

More specific to the last chapter, due to university’s partnering with online plagiarism monitoring services like <http://www.turnitin.com> and in-house student referral services, the writing instructor’s role has greatly expanded to include the policing of student work (by joining the panopticon, a real break of trust) and by supplementing or replacing portions of the university dedicated to student support.

Implications for Scholarship

Manovich’s assertion that “[a] library, a museum—in fact, any large collection of cultural data—is replaced by a computer database” gains veracity when one considers that current projects that are racing to digitize books. At this time of this writing, there are

⁹¹ In the same honors class mentioned in chapter one, I had a student who on the very first day opened his laptop—annoyed, I asked him to close it, but he looked perplexed and told me that he had always taken notes this way.

several projects competing to gather the largest database of digitized books: The open-access Internet Archive project currently houses 442,798 electronic texts; Google Book Search will not disclose the number of books in its database, but “[i]n its quest to scan every one of the tens of millions of books ever published, Google has already digitized one million volumes” (Hafner); Microsoft recently dropped out of this field after having “scanned 750,000 books and indexed 80 million journal articles” (Siddiqui). Add to this the ability, within Amazon.com, to preview books via their “Search inside this book” feature, and a strange new possibility unfolds: *keyword scholarship*. This occurs whereby a given scholar may perform a keyword search in a search engine like Google, feed the results into a book search like the Internet Archive, extract the desired evidence, and through cut and paste, assemble the separate markers of correct citation (author, title, city, publisher, and date of publication). This recalls the principle, in chapter three, of the forfeiture of direct memory. Through keyword scholarship, writers may represent with accuracy evidence they have not read, do not understand, and could not reproduce. Strictly speaking, keyword scholarship is a kind of textual data mining, but possibly one of the worst and most cynical types. Instead of endeavoring to create new knowledge, keyword scholarship recycles old knowledge in a confusing way, an academic prestidigitation that carries the concept of mediation to an extreme.⁹²

⁹² I first discovered keyword scholarship when conferencing with a student about some very troubling and confusion evidence use. The student described the panic of needing more sources without having the time to properly research her topic—the series of shortcuts in scholarship produced some obvious lapses in her writing.

Consumer Implications

As an extension of the second pair of new media principles—that the forfeiture of direct memory displaces personhood, and that databases aggregate forfeited memory—there is currently a compelling transference underway where consumers in the name of convenience and speed participate in a new culture of automation that forces a donation of labor. The unpleasant and stuffy bank lobby gives way to the open-air ATM; instead of the bank paying an incentive to the customer, the customer incurs a fee. Long grocery lines stand in contrast to short or empty self-checkout stations, but the price of food for both customers is the same. An airline passenger goes through the complicated process of comparison shopping, choosing a flight, seats, and (more rarely) a meal; the customer donates this labor along with all the labor of checking oneself in, and checking one's own bags. Within a poetics of new media, to “do it by yourself” increasingly translates to “do it for someone else” with the expectation not only of donating labor, but of paying a fee.⁹³ As these practices become more frequent, they grow naturalized, until one does not notice the absence of choice in a given pull-down menu, the absence of an incentive to supply one's own labor, the lack of time saved by detouring down paths of automation.

This situation recalls Burke's discussion of Dewey's concept “occupational psychosis”: “[A] society's environment in the historical sense is synonymous with the society's method of production.... Thus a tribe which lives by the hunt may be expected to reveal a corresponding hunt pattern in its marriage rites” (*Permanence and Change* 38-39). Or, as McLuhan puts it, “Newton, in an age of clocks, managed to present the

⁹³ In the case of labor that costs money to donate, the implications for a new occupational psychosis are considerable. It is worth noting that all the examples above can be seen as new media practices; moreover, the customer calling a corporation's 1-800 customer service line is likely to encounter a computer running speech-recognition software, a relation of an Kurzweil invention: “Kurzweil released speech recognition software that is the direct ancestor of today's robot customer service agents” (Wolf).

physical universe in the image of a clock” (24).⁹⁴ If Burke’s occupational psychosis refers to the way the dominant means of production spill over into all areas of life (his example is the hunt), and if McLuhan refers to a similar way in which the objects of an age come to determine it (his example is the clock), then what similar psychosis or object of this age comes to define it and comes to spill over into all areas of life? One looming implication not only for consumers, but for others as well is not automation, per se, but the way in which automation compresses time. New media objects, then, are like Mark Twain’s lies: “A lie can travel halfway around the world while the truth is putting on its shoes.” Today, a new media object like a Trojan horse can be created, travel the world a hundred times over, and systematically create havoc on each system it infects—all in a matter of hours.

Time’s compression systematically refigures each understanding of time’s function and value. This new understanding of time—of the day, the hour, the minute, the second, the allowable refresh rate, the processing speed, the upload/download speed, the frames per second—has serious implications for patience, for excellence, for waiting, for planning, for pace, for deciding what is worth pursuing and what is simply not.

Perspective by Incongruity as Corrective

One significant corrective to the second pair of the poetics of new media as I have outlined them is for people to forge new associations, and in order to do this they must have the allowable space to violate traditional or commonly-held associations. In chapter three I discuss this at length when I write about “mediated enthymemes,” those

⁹⁴ McLuhan next contrasts Newton with Blake, whose “counterstrategy for his age was to meet mechanism with organic myth”; in Burkean terms, Blake embraced “impieties” particular to his day.

enthymemes which, through the ability of new media objects to be recontextualized in the perpetual present, seem to involve direct participation in enthymematic completion, but which actually dictate passive acceptance of a syllogistic argument. Part of the tyranny of new media objects is that they facilitate these types of transference easily, almost effortlessly, in casual moments of discursivity unmarked by formality: in chats, in game play, in email, in online instruction manuals, in preselected menu items, ad infinitum. Strictly adhering to the choices in a given interface may, over time, naturalize predetermined associations (ones which, presumably, benefit their producers). Breaking that tyranny involves first recognizing that limited options masquerading as choice is one very limited species of freedom; it secondly requires the ability to disrupt the limitations through erasure, through reorganization, through redefinition, through deletion, through expansion, through manipulation, in short through a new perspective.

Burke writes about the concept of “Perspective by Incongruity,” which is “the extending the use of a term by taking it from the context in which it was habitually used and applying it to another” (89). Doing such a thing recalls Dobyn’s two-part metaphor, discussed in chapter three, and the surprise and knowledge that it creates: Burke cites the examples “decadent athleticism” and “Arabian Puritanism,” as examples of attaining such a perspective. It is “established...by violating the ‘proprieties’ of the word in its previous linkages” (*Permanence and Change* 89-90). Burke borrows from a leader of the French Symbolists, de Gourmont, who maintains that one can accept old associations, create new associations, or if very skilled create new dissociations (which would signal the mark of a free intelligence). Burke sees that de Gourmont, in emphasizing divorce and separation is actually demonstrating identification—in this case, the breaking of

identifications. This recalls Foucault's interrogation of the "unities" of history by examining its fractures as well as the basic motion needed for metaphorical transference. All three of these thinkers, Burke, de Gourmont, and Foucault, seem interested in the ways in which identifications or unities or associations are created and maintained, but also invested in the ways those same things may be destroyed, altered, and transformed.

The difficulty, as the second pair of new media principles illustrates, is that in a culture marked by what Manovich terms "the database complex," "[t]he amount of labor in constructing reality from scratch on a computer makes it hard to resist the temptation to utilize preassembled, standardized objects, characters, and behaviors readily provided by software manufacturers" (197). In other words, a graphic designer first shops the predelivered new media objects available to her before fully accessing her own imagination and making a design from scratch. The process gets repeated each time a user accepts the multitude of choices in a given interface as the freedom *to choose* and does not register that she lacks the freedom *to create*.

If as I argue in this dissertation new media poetics may be represented by the following four principles—(1) Metaphor is the engine of meaning, (2) Memory is the engine of metaphor, (3) The forfeiture of direct memory displaces personhood, and (4) Databases aggregate forfeited memory—and if these may be split into a promising first pair and a suspicious second pair, then it seems that consumers of new media are doomed to squander their direct memory practice and also to participate unknowingly and through unrelenting data collection in the future commodification of their lived experience, which they will in some way come to consume.

One way to find the actual “new” in “new media” is to alter it by first identifying what Burke would call its ‘proprieties’ and then breaking them. To find the new in new media is to break open cases and hack away; it is to refashion and repurpose devices to unintended and unimagined ends; it is to reject the ease of the pre-selected, the pre-loaded bundle, and the pre-order; to find the new in new media, one must accept an increased labor and adopt the corrective view of a perspective by incongruity: a technologic barbarism, a pragmatic aestheticism, a wholly undivided disunity, a metaphoric literalism.⁹⁵

⁹⁵ Haraway articulates her understanding of the cyborg dream in a similar fashion: “This is a dream not of a common language, but of a powerful infidel heteroglossia. It is an imagination of a feminist speaking in tongues to strike fear into the circuits of the supersavers of the new right. It means both building and destroying machines, identities, categories, relationships, space stories” (181).

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