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A RHETORICAL APPROACH TO CULTURAL LITERACIES ACROSS MEDIA

Randy Nichols

Clemson University, randyn@clemson.edu

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Randy D. Nichols
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Tharon Howard, Committee Chair
Cynthia Haynes
Constancio Nakuma
Clifton S.M. Egan

ABSTRACT

A Rhetorical Approach to Cultural Literacies Across Media finds exigency in the challenges presented to students and teachers by the growing emphasis on globalization, and by the increasing demands for literacy in new media. My research develops a theoretical model for a rhetorical reading of cultural "texts" in the context of cross-cultural learning experiences. This model is built on the metaphor of "stolons," those botanical strands that serve to propagate plants across wide areas into a single woven organism, i.e., a lawn. Approaching "culture" as a complex organic system of a multiplicity of sources, this model of literacies evaluates the cultural functions of texts across several impulses, namely through: *muthos* – stories, legends, histories; *nomos* – naming, labels, categorization; *ethnos* – self-identification of a societal group; *techne* – the artistic and industrial production of a group; and *archon* – the acts and artifacts "on display." This work focuses on the cultural composition, instantiation, reification and resistance that take place in various media from speech to performance acts to digital media. By means of a tropological analysis of cultural narratology across these various media, this "stoloniferous" model will serve as a tool for students and instructors to critically engage the interconnected web of cultural texts, and as a tool to express that engagement via multimodal compositions: writing, visual rhetoric, blogging, video and more.

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CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

Chapter 1
"It's a Small World After All":
Globalization, New Media and the Reason for this Work

"THIS book is a record of a pleasure trip….

Yet notwithstanding it is only a record of a pic-nic, it has a purpose…."

Mark Twain, *Innocents Abroad*

This work develops a theoretical model (Stolons) for a rhetorical reading of cultural "texts" in the context of cross-cultural learning experiences. Such a model is called for by the challenges presented to students and teachers via the growing emphasis on globalization, and by the increasing demands for literacies in new media. Indeed this research finds exigency in these challenges. These issues emerge in various forms in many departments, programs, and offices across the modern university. This researcher's experience provides enlightening exposure to a number of such emergences in the development of a single new program at Clemson University, "Cultural Literacies Across Media." By examining such emergences and challenges, this chapter will situate the research, frame the pertinent questions, and provide to the reader a "real world" scenario for the proposed theoretical model. We begin with a scenario akin to that of the researcher's.

A Scenario and Some Challenges

Imagine that you are an instructor in the Humanities at a modern university. You are tasked with enhancing your students' study abroad experiences by optimizing their engagement with the manifold media expressions of their host cultures, and with facilitating their production of multimodal critical reflections of this engagement. Such a task presents new challenges for you as an instructor, and for your students, on two fronts. On one hand, there is a "Globalization Challenge" to facilitate your students' engagement with new cultures and their development of critical cultural literacies. On the other hand, there is the "New Media Challenge" to facilitate your students' engagement with non-textual modes of communication and expression and their development of digital literacies. For teachers, there is a third challenge of situating these literacies in a suitable pedagogical framework, with appropriate methodologies and evaluative tools. These challenges, though significant, in no way make your situation unique. You are one of an ever-increasing number of educators who face such challenges.

The Globalization Challenge & The Incredible Shrinking World

First, the challenge of globalization means a smaller world. Travel technologies make citizens of the world closer, reducing separations of months and days to terms of hours and minutes. Communication technologies increase the speed of dissemination of information from the speed of ships or trains or horses to the near instantaneous speed of the digital "information superhighway."

The existing concerns of mutually beneficial trade continue to encourage engagement of other cultures. These and other impulses drive "globalization," a term that is defined manifold ways to fit manifold questions. In this research we are interested in the concept as it concerns the academic practices of the university, and the concomitant challenges for educators. One of the most visible areas of concern is that of cross-cultural studies, particularly Study Abroad programs.

In universities across the United States, Study Abroad programs are touted as a way for students to actively engage other cultures during their college educational experience. "American undergraduates are often enticed to study abroad by the promise that they will have the experience of a lifetime and the experience of the world" (Dolby 150). The underlying presumption is that "experiencing other cultures is good for students." However, in many cases, the students are neither prepared for, nor oriented toward, discovering how this experience is good for them, but left to negotiate this new experience bereft of any structure of guidance or intentionality. Indeed, in many cases, the students are unprepared to communicate the benefits of this new experience in a manner befitting the complex potentiality of this learning engagement, but rather are relegated to obligatory reporting formats borrowed from other classroom routines, i.e. the ubiquitous "What I did on my Summer Vacation" paper.

Is it enough to send students into such a potentially rich learning environment, and then to hope that they will be immersed in the host culture –

and to further hope that such immersion will result in a sort of undefined "osmosis of learning?" Sending students out as "innocents abroad" is likely to result in learning that is inarticulate, undefined or even dubious. (Indeed, Mark Twain's book, *Innocents Abroad*, a hilarious account of the foibles of the unprepared, culturally illiterate traveler, could only have been written by a man who had traveled broadly and understood the things of which "innocents" might be ignorant.) Jane Jackson notes that programs using "ethnographic methods to prepare foreign language students for long-term sojourns… in the target culture…had an extremely positive influence on the period abroad" (Jackson 81). This positive note should encourage educators to embrace this new research and compositional challenge, and to encourage their students toward an intentional, critical engagement with other cultures – rather than leave students to fend for themselves in this new academic frontier. Such sentiments also encourage the development of pedagogical approaches such as the one offered by the Stolons Model of this research, a model that provides a critical framework for teaching cultural literacies in a globalized setting.

The New Media Challenge & The Incredible Shrinking World

Second, the challenges of New Media raise questions hitherto unforeseeable. Does the rise of new communication technologies spell the end of old literacy practices? The despondent traditionalists in academia may resign themselves to the certain and dreadful impending demise of Western Civilization crying, "No one reads anymore – especially undergrads!" But, in fact, our current

undergrads may be reading more than undergrads have read in several decades. Nicholas Carr, in his provocative "Is Google Making us Stupid?" article in the *Atlantic*, observes that today's students are reading more, due to the ubiquity of text on the Internet and cell phones (via text messaging,) but also that they are reading differently.

In his article, Carr admits that, "For me, as for others, the Net is becoming a universal medium, the conduit for most of the information that flows through my eyes and ears and into my mind" (Carr). This article has generated much discussion on whether or not we are "in the midst of a sea change in the way we read and think," (Carr) and just what that means to academia and other fields. Carr's article is helpfully provocative towards thinking critically about composition and communication and the effects of new media realities on old media practices. In a sense, Carr echoes Walter Ong's sentiments: "Writing restructures consciousness" from his book, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (Ong 201). Ong recognized that the medium of writing afforded new ways of communication than did orality, and demanded literacy skills different than those befitting speaking. Richard Lanham points out that this "oral/literate distinction" is not one of slight variation, but of significant cultural change, and that the "print/electronic distinction" is similarly significant. Lanham points out that thirty years after Marshal McLuhan's *Gutenberg Galaxy* was published, such changes were only beginning to be understood (Lanham 285). (Indeed, another decade is likely to find us still sorting out the changes

brought about by the shift from book to screen.) Carr's Statement that "When the Net absorbs a medium, that medium is re-created in the Net's image" indicates that, in such a literacy shift, there is an inherent and dynamic problematizing of reliance on previous literacy standards (Carr). Student's engagement with the world, whether in the classroom or on the cross-cultural field, takes place through means and media radically different than those of only a few decades ago.

Kevin Kelly's *New York Times* piece, "Becoming Screen Literate" also brought widespread attention to this "sea change" by describing the effects of technology on communication as a "second Gutenberg shift":

> About 500 years ago, orality was overthrown by technology. Gutenberg's invention of metallic movable type elevated writing into a central position in the culture…. In the West, we became people of the book…. Now invention is again overthrowing the dominant media. A new distribution-and display technology is nudging the book aside and catapulting images, and especially moving images, to the center of the culture. We are becoming people of the screen. (Kelly)

Pedagogical approaches towards cultural literacies must make room for research, engagement and composition to take place through the technologies, and in the milieu, by which students (as global citizens) and their subjects are communicating, working and living.

"We're Not in Kansas Anymore": The New Digital World

The shedding of digital literacy passivity in favor of compositional activity is echoed by anthropologist Michael Wesch's presentation to the Library of Congress, "An Anthropological Introduction to YouTube" (Wesch). Wesch's presentation illustrates the explosive growth of "user-produced" materials through the social website YouTube. Whereas formerly, the means of production for moving images were available to scant few outside the large movie production companies and broadcast networks, the "new media" and new technologies democratized both the composition process and access to publication avenues for video. And though many educators have acknowledged that composition studies must change to accommodate this digital "second Gutenberg shift," there may be more basic work to be done than first imagined. Today's university students may be considered to be a generation of "digital natives" insomuch as they have learned and communicated, in both formal and informal ways, through non-print media. I suggest that these students possess what may be termed a "literacy of consumption" in the milieu of things digital and visual – that is they are at ease in engaging the offerings of digital media., but such competence in the digital environment is not equivalent to critical compositional literacy. A student may be able to easily navigate news websites, blogs, research databases, and search engines, but not be able to build a website, or construct a network of blogs. The traditional approach towards electronic media in the classroom has been that others produced media which students would only view. This "look, don't touch" (or read, don't write; consume, don't produce) approach has existed from the

time a/v carts rolled into classrooms delivering information in the forms of slides, filmstrips, 16mm film, and videotape to students who would never be instructed (or encouraged, or allowed) to compose in such media. Many educators in the field of composition have embraced the challenge of moving "digital natives" from simple "competence of consumption" toward a critical compositional literacy (i.e. production). Such an impetus that encourages students toward a literacy (of comprehension and composition) in non-print communication is needed for an effective cross-cultural experience, such as that offered by Study Abroad programs.

> In a world where communication between individuals and groups is both increasingly cross-cultural and digital, teachers of composition are beginning to sense the inadequacy of texts – and compositional instruction – that employs only one semiotic channel (the alphabetic) to convey meaning. (Selfe 270)

This quote is from Cynthia Selfe's *Multimodal Composition: Resources for Teachers,* a work that is both apologetic for, and evidentiary to, the shift in pedagogical approaches to composition. Multimodal composition presents many new possibilities for expressing cross-cultural engagement. How can teachers take full advantage of this new compositional potential in regards to cross-cultural experiences? Questions such as this one serve as provocative impetus for the proposed model presented in this work.

"We're Not in Kansas Anymore": The New Globalized World

Such cross-cultural investigations face peculiar challenges in the current

era of globalization in an increasingly digital world. In his book *Modernity at*

Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization, Arjun Appadurai notes the effect of

mass migration, electronic media and other forces on how "cultures" are viewed

(Appadurai 9-10). Appadurai sees these forces as eroding the previously held idea

that "national identities" serve as explanatory equivalents for "cultural

identities." Appadurai expands some of these ideas in "Globalization and the

Research Imagination," where he deals with "the relationship between

globalization and current forms of critical knowledge, especially as these forms

have come to be organized by the social sciences in the West" (Appadurai 4). The

attention to globalization emphasizes the shifting nature of "cultural identity."

Appadurai contends, as do I, that such dynamism in and among nation-states

and "cultures" demands new approaches. He calls for social scientists to realize

their

> ...need to make a decisive shift away from what we may call 'trait'
> geographies to what we could call 'process' geographies. Much
> traditional thinking about 'areas' has been driven by conceptions of
> geographical, civilizational and cultural coherence which rely on
> some sort of trait list...they all tend to see 'areas' as relatively
> immobile aggregates of traits, with more or less durable historical
> boundaries and with a unity composed of more or less enduring

properties…. In contrast, we need an architecture for area studies

which is based on process geographies, and sees significant areas of

human organization as precipitates of various kinds of action,

interaction and motion…. These geographies are necessarily large-

scale and shifting, and their changes highlight variable congeries of

language, history and material life. Put more simply, the large

regions that dominate our current maps for area studies are not

permanent geographical facts. They are problematic heuristic

devices for the study of global geographic and cultural processes.

(Appadurai 7)

I devote space to Appadurai's quote, not only for its cultural narratology value,

but also for its usefulness in laying the groundwork for the stoloniferous model

that is proposed in the subsequent chapters. In the next chapter, I will expand on

my ideas regarding the organic and dynamic nature of "culture" and how the

stoloniferous model serves the organic, dynamic nature of cultural engagement

and composition. In this sense, the model can be said to be "transdisciplinary," a

term that raises questions among educators. Appadurai asks pointedly the

question that resonates with every researcher working in transdisciplinary

approaches:

Are we prepared to move beyond a model of internationalizing

social science which is mainly concerned with improving how

others practise our precepts? Is there something for us to learn

from colleagues in other national and cultural settings whose work

is not characterized by a sharp line between social scientific and

humanistic styles of inquiry? (Appadurai 14)

It is just such questions that provoke the transdisciplinary impulse of this

research project. And we might expand Appadurai's query to ask, "Is there

something for us (in whichever discipline we find ourselves) to learn from other

disciplines?"

"We're Not in Kansas Anymore": New Literacies for New Realities

Today, not all "texts" are printed. Electronic "texts" may be images, video,

animation, words, or even interactions. Add these "texts" to the existing set of

"texts" such as art, architecture, performaces, ritual, etc. and the resulting library

is a complex, dynamic new "textual" landscape that requires dynamic new

literacies. Many educators are already diligently working to engage the literacy

challenges (opportunity) afforded (thrust upon them) by new media. Much work

done to this point has been on "reading," or critically analyzing, these new texts.

Much work is yet to be done towards developing compositional competencies in

these new media.

Additionally, the technologies that bring these new literacy challenges and

compositional opportunities are also at work in an area inseparable from the

compositional considerations. That is, these technologies are changing the world

in which these texts are read and created. Cynthia Selfe justifies the need for new,

multimodal literacies to account for a communication environment that is

"increasingly digital and cross-cultural."(Selfe 2) Globalization, a term oft used in university vision statements and promotional materials, is a dynamic that is changing how we view cultures, communication, national and personal identities, and literacy. Engaging these new literacy challenges must be done in the context of the forces that stir discussion of multiculturalism, globalism, and cross-cultural experiences.

While this work focuses on a theoretical model for cultural investigation, it will be readily apparent that such cultural focus cannot be divorced from the emerging digital environment in which such investigation takes place. In the next section, I will put forth a working description of "culture," delineating its parameters as a topic (area,) and describing its impulses as a tropic (process.) Throughout, I will seek to situate Multimodal Literacies in meaningful relation to Cultural Literacies in order to address the set of challenges that pertain to students and teachers engaging cultural literacies in the classroom.

Chapter 2
Culture Club:
The Chameleonic Nature of the T(r)opic

""*Culture is one of the two or three most complicated words in the English*

language" Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*

(Williams 87)

This section sets out to answer the question, "What subject does your

investigative model investigate?" And so, it falls upon me to describe what, in the

theoretical model that follows, I mean by the word "culture." I will set out to

describe briefly what it is *not*, and then to discuss what it *might be*, (were I to

consider culture to be a *topic*,) and then to define what it *is* as a *tropic* of study

for the stolons model. I will acknowledge definitions that are legitimate in other

approaches, pay respect to the definitions that most inform the stolons approach,

and explain the organic and dynamic nature of the impulses which the proposed

model will consider.

No, not THAT Culture: The Narrowness of "High Culture" Approach

Matthew Arnold's oft-quoted phrase has been long-considered by some to

be a "definition" of culture. Arnold wrote that culture is "the best which has been

thought and said in the world…" (Arnold) This definition would limit the

investigation of culture to exploring those things which the dominant group

within a society has determined to be good, valuable, honorable, etc. In fact, Arnold sees the transmission of "culture" as including a process of judging and sifting:

> The great men of culture are those who have had a passion for diffusing, for making prevail, for carrying from one end of society to the other, the best knowledge, the best ideas of their time; who have laboured to divest knowledge of all that was harsh, uncouth, difficult, abstract, professional, exclusive… (Arnold)

This exclusive sifting process produces, by exclusion, a category of "outlier" texts that are to be dismissed from consideration, regardless the ubiquity of such texts. A view that excludes such a great lot of meaning-making is insufficient for our consideration. A view that eliminates such a great lot of meaning-making will not serve as a sufficient foundation for our consideration. There are a few reasons for this rejection, among which are two outstanding and relevant shortcomings. First, as indicated already, the fact that this view of culture (as *haute couture*) considers only a limited set of acts and artifacts (the good, civilized, cultured) as "meaning-making" texts. Second, this approach pays too little attention to the dynamics of how this set of cultural texts is formed, and to the multifaceted environments and forces at play in the development of the standards by which the set is formed.

However, the study of what a society determines to be "high culture" is valuable to the stolons model of investigation. But the stolons approach finds the

study of a fixed "dictionary" of culture less interesting than the consideration of how such a dictionary is formed. Indeed, the stolons approach accepts that such a dictionary is dynamic and fluid, (the pace of fluidity sometimes being rapid, and sometimes gradual,) and explores the factors at play in the evolution of such dictionaries. To say that Western "culture" is formed by such things as Shakespeare and Mozart is important, to be sure – but not nearly so interesting as asking "Why Shakespeare and not Johnny Carson?" or "How did Mozart make the list, but not Billy Ray Cyrus?" These "how and why" questions are of key importance to the stolons approach to culture.

The acts and artifacts belonging to the "high culture" category can be situated into a larger discussion through a more complex critical approach such as is found in the work of Pierre Bourdieu. Bourdieu's treatment of cultural "tastes" goes beyond a list of things thought to be in "good taste" in a cultural setting, but considers the dynamics involved in such a list. Indeed, in his concept of *habitus*, Bourdieu describes the "relationship" between the situation and practices of a culture, as key in the formation of such ideas of what is considered tasteful or "cultured" (Bourdieu 613). Similarly, the stolons model will focus less on the "list" of texts of high culture, and more on the energies whereby such texts find their way onto (and off of) such lists.

Yes, THAT Culture (sorta): A Broader Approach to Meaning-Making

This chapter began with a quote from Raymond Williams that hints at a complex, comprehensive and critical approach to culture as a subject/topic of study. This more inclusive approach might be represented by Terry Eagleton's statement, "Culture can be loosely summarized as the complex of values, customs, beliefs and practices which constitute the way of life of a specific group" (Eagleton 34). Viewing this summary statement as a definition expands the scope of cultural investigation to include not only the "values, customs, beliefs and practices" that a social group may officially endorse, but also those cultural texts that are disapproved, marginalized or deemed so ordinary or utilitarian as to escape judgment as to their cultural value.

In *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture*, Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright refer to the "anthropological definition" which sees culture as "a whole way of life, meaning a broad range of activities geared toward classifying and communicating within a society" (Sturken and Cartwright 3). Sturken and Cartwright include art, literature, popular music, print media, sports, cooking and driving as valid cultural texts. Working from previous approaches to media by the aforementioned Raymond Williams and by cultural studies scholar Stuart Hall, Sturken and Cartwright define

> visual culture as the shared practices of a group, community or
> society through which meanings are made out of the visual, aural
> and textual world of representations and the ways that looking

practices are engaged in symbolic and communicative activities.

(Sturken and Cartwright 3)

There are two things in this definition that seem remedial for the previously mentioned narrow view of culture. First, this definition acknowledges as a valid cultural text any activity where meaning-making occurs. Second, this definition acknowledges the meaning-making role of the consumer/reader/viewer as opposed to an exclusive focus on the producer/writer/author. These elements will inform the working definition of culture in that our scope will comprise all observable acts and artifacts whereby meaning is made and conveyed.

And actually, THIS Culture: Beyond the Topic to the Tropics

For many disciplines, culture may rightly be considered a "topic" of study. That is to say, that the location, or *topos*, of a certain course in a certain field may be Culture. And indeed, that *topos* may be a particular kind of culture, such as Popular Culture; or the culture of a particular age, such as The Culture of Victorian England; or of a particular location, such as French Culture. A number of nations have official Ministries of Culture that serve to preserve and promote the "best" of their nation's art, literature, architecture, etc.[1] These practices, valid within their related discourse communities, and ranging in scope from specific to broad, approach culture as relatively static. Culture is a subject, a set of

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[1] In later discussion of the pedagogical application of the model, reference will be made to a student's examination of the French Ministry of Culture at
http://www.youtube.com/clemsonoia#p/a/u/2/mIaJOGLN8aE

information that can be examined, categorized, parsed, and analyzed. This view of culture may encompass a complex set of vocabulary, signs, symbols and practices, as a dictionary (or lexicon or map) of information that can be surveyed by the investigator. In such an approach, it is possible to become an "expert" in a particular "culture." This view of culture as a topic is pervasive, yet leaves room for other approaches.

When I mention to someone that I teach "Cultural Literacies" at the university, I am often asked, "Oh? What culture do you teach?" The expectation is that I will say something to the effect of "Pre-Exilic Hebrew Culture" or "Navajo Culture" or the like. My answer is that I don't teach "a" culture. This answer seems to the questioner as unexpected as if I were asked what my favorite color is, and I answered "14." This unexpected "turn" illustrates the difference between culture as a topic and culture as a tropic. The "Cultural Literacies Across Media" course does not teach a "what," (location, subject, dictionary, etc.) but a "how;" not a topic, but rather a tropic.

As mentioned, the word topic comes from the Greek word *topos*, meaning place or location. From this we understand that the topic of a conversation is the demarcated area of focus for the discussion. A topical medicine is to be applied to a specific place on the patient's body. In rhetoric, *topoi koine* are called "commonplaces," categories that work as a consistent standard for inventing or analyzing arguments. To be "off-topic" is to stray from the designated location of the conversation; you may even be "far afield" or even "out in right field." Culture

as a topic, is about a fixed location or set of information that defines the items of study.

But a tropic, being more about movement than about location, is more descriptive of the appropriate approach to culture as we are describing it. Tropic is from the Greek word *tropos*, which means turning. The Tropic of Cancer is not one fixed place, but rather the course of the summer solstice, i.e. a path that moves from east to west intersecting innumerable places around the globe. It is more about the turning, or movement, than it is about the fixed location. Is culture a fixed, located set of information? Or is culture a dynamic, organic flow of information? The shift from viewing culture as a topic to viewing culture as a tropic can be seen in the debate at the heart of a modern day "battle of the books."

Cultural Literacy and the Battle of the Books

That there is a decided shift away from seeing culture as a static set of facts and figures is illustrated by the conversation across three volumes that have to do with culture and cultural literacy. What follows is a brief discussion of relevant points from these three books, and commentary on their approaches.

Hirsch: The Shot Heard 'round the (Modern) World

During the Reagan years, a conversation (re)began with the publication of E.D. Hirsch's *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know*. Embraced by educational and cultural conservatives, Hirsch's approach was categorized as essentialist, modernist, and conservative – hinging on ideas of

fixity and universality, at least according to its detractors (Provenzo 16). Hirsch puts forth a working definition that may be seen as the starting point in the conversation. Hirsch characterizes cultural literacy by noting that: "To be culturally literate is to posses the basic information needed to thrive in the modern world" (Hirsch, Kett and Trefil xiii) and "...cultural literacy, namely, the network of information that all competent readers possess"(Hirsch, Kett and Trefil 2). This definition depends on "possession" of information as a means to interpret. In this sense, Hirsch's definition has interesting connections to the intercultural communication principles of "Schema Theory" as presented by Nishida and Garro (Nishida 753-777) (Garro 275-319). But for our purposes, we should note here that Hirsch's idea of cultural literacy delineates culture as a body of knowledge, a set of information, in which one can become "expert." These implications invited responses to the contrary, among which was that from a volume edited by Denise Murray.

Murray: The University Strikes Back

During the Clinton era, a collection edited by Denise Murray, *Diversity as Resource: Redefining Cultural Literacy*, served as a response to Hirsch's perceived monocultural, modernist and conservative view. Murray's collection moved the definition of cultural literacy toward diversity, post-modernism, and liberalism. In these writings, the definition of cultural literacy moved away from a fixity and toward a fluidity. That this work is a part of a discussion with the ideas of Hirsch is undeniable, as is explicitly stated in the introduction:

The publication of E.D. Hirsch's *Cultural Literacy* brought to public

consciousness the issue of the relationship between literacy and

culture. He views literacy as a monolithic, single notion and its

practice as academic or "cultured"...Hirsch's conception is

exclusionary and limiting. (Murray xiii-xiv)

In fact, in these articles pertaining to pedagogy in the United States,

"Cultural Literacy" (or as indicated in Murray's section headings – "Cultural

Literacies") may be seen to be represented by movement (tropic) rather than

location (topic.)

Provenzo: Nothing is Settled, and That's That

Moving ahead into the Post-Bush (Obama) era, we find Eugene F.

Provenzo's *Critical Literacy: What every American Ought to Know* further

establishing a view toward the dynamic nature of culture, by way of a renaming.

"Cultural Literacy" becomes "Critical Literacy" for Provenzo. Hirsch's Dictionary

of Cultural Literacy is replaced with Provenzo's list of critical literacy. Hirsch's

"Need to know" becomes Provenzo's "ought to know." And this renaming is done

with an explicit political motivation to continue the "undoing" of Hirsch's idea of

culture as a fixed set of knowledge (Provenzo 6-8).

Though this discussion advances the concept of culture as a tropic rather

than a topic, it falls short of a satisfactory definition for our model in a couple of

areas: First, the discussion is confined to a particular geographical locus and

focus (i.e. the culture of the United States.) And second, the scope of meaning-

making objects is limited to textual literacy and orality. Our working definition will need to remedy these shortcomings.

Is It Culture Yet? The Cultivating of Culture

As we moved closer to a working definition of culture, we have answered, without calling attention to, an important question about the nature of culture: Is culture something that exists in its own right, or is culture something that is constructed? An exclusively essentialist view, as is evident from the preceding discussion, is highly problematic in our current approach. In fact, Claude Lévi-Strauss, in *Myth and Meaning*, describes the formation of culture as impacted by forces both essentialist/functional (the desire for food, survival, sexual pleasure, safety) and constructivist/structuralist (the desire to know the world around) (Lévi-Strauss 54). Lévi-Strauss also borrows from the scientific approach to nature – in reductionist form it studies the particular, and in structuralist form it studies the connections of the particular with other things. He suggests that culture can be studied in the same way as nature can be studied, and points out that numerous artifacts, such as marriage rules, ceremonies, and myths, can seem disconnected if studied only in the particular – but can achieve (other) meaning through a structuralist approach (Lévi-Strauss 54).

In *Culture and the Evolutionary Process*, authors Robert Boyd and Peter Richerson, note that functionalist/essentialist forces shape cultural identities and behaviors, but also that these identities and behaviors take shape, and find expression, within (or under) a controlling social paradigm or atmosphere.

Working from a Darwinian perspective, Boyd and Richerson espouse a "Dual Inheritance" model that accounts for the effects of genetic and cultural forces on human behavior (Boyd and Richerson 331). This model explains that genetics influence how cultural practices and beliefs are formed, but also how cultural forces prescribe or proscribe the appearances of genetic traits in populations. In *Genes, Mind, and Culture: The Coevolutionary Process*, Charles Lumsden and Edward O. Wilson similarly note the relationship between nature and culture in what they describe as a "co-evolutionary" process that sees human nature as neither fully arbitrary nor fully predetermined (Lumsden and Wilson 428).

And so, our definition will reflect our adoption of a complex, inter-connected structuralist approach, allowing for influences of physical forces, and focusing on social forces.[2] This question is reiterated here to emphasize this inter-connectedness, and to draw attention to the element of **agency** in the making of culture. We will view culture, not as *ethea*, the wild and fecund field of nature; but rather as *nomos*, a categorized, organized garden of human construction. The wild field and the garden may share the same elements – but the garden is constructed, or cultivated, to "make meaning" of the elements by a human agent. In the following sections, I will discuss the meaning-making faculty of dominant discourses as agents of cultural formation. We will also explore the potential for meaning-making agency apart from the dominant cultures. But first, we will take a brief look at the basic principles of semiotics and meaning-making.

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[2] Please note that there is further discussion of essentialism and constructivism, in terms of *physis* and *nomos* and the making of knowledge, in the chapter on *Nomos*.

Signs and Wonders: Semiotics and Rhetoric in Culture Formation

The discussion of cultural formation that follows is based on the premise that cultural groups establish and transmit cultural values via communally-accepted, or communally-understood, ways of meaning-making and persuasion. The study of these meaning-making practices we will call Semiotics. The study of the persuasive practices we will call Rhetoric. (Of course, both the studies of Semiotics and Rhetoric/s are academic concerns that are more complex and textured than indicated by our usage here.) Indeed, to say that a shared understanding of basic ideas of Semiotics and Rhetoric will be helpful, and to set forth such concepts may be properly identified as performing a meta-critical semiotic/rhetorical move. And so, without further delay, here is the brief performance.

In the discussions that follow, "cultural texts" should be understood, in part, as semiotic devices. Ferdinand de Saussure says that semiotics, from the Greek word *semeion* (sign), "studies the role of signs as part of social life" (Saussure 16). Saussure's work in meaning-making and linguistics is seminal to academic approaches in these areas. His illustrations of the relationship among signs, signifiers and "signifieds" via the charts of horses and trees are so well-known that they approach iconic status. To avoid a parroting reiteration of established works, and verbose expansion to include the plethora of other approaches to semiotics, I offer the following illustration of how semiotics might be seen at work in our discussion:

Along a road in the United States, a young driver approaches a posted sign at an intersection. The sign is octagonal in shape, and has white upper-case letters on a red field. This is a "Stop Sign," and it *means* "stop." The driver applies the brakes and halts the movement of the vehicle. Someone might say of this illustration that "everyone knows what a stop sign means. The red octagon, the letters S-T-O-P – it is self-evident that the driver should apply his brakes and come to a standstill." Such an observation, while being hopelessly wrong, allows a discussion of semiotics as a cultural contract. The letters S-T-O-P only mean "stop" if the community agrees on such signified meaning. Indeed, in other countries, the letters P-A-R-E or A-L-T-O or S-T-A-D would mean "stop." Letters and words, and indeed language itself, has meaning only in the context of cultural agreement in a community. The red octagon has only meant "stop" among the community of U.S. drivers since the mid 1950's. Prior to that, the driving community would have expected a yellow octagon to convey the idea "stop." Prior to that, a white rectangular sign served as the signifier in this community. Even now, in various places around the world, circles are the shapes of signs by which communities send the message "stop." Signs, language, gestures and a whole range of cultural "texts" do not have intrinsic meaning, but rather have meaning only if the community agrees to accept the texts as signifiers. Our discussion of cultural texts builds upon this basic understanding of semiotics. But our stop sign is not only semiotic in nature; it also calls for a change in the behavior of the reader of this text. Therefore, it is also rhetorical in nature.

The goal of the stop sign is to persuade the reader to take a specific action: "stop." Like other cultural texts we will discuss, the stop sign may be said to be rhetorical. Most students of rhetoric are familiar with the oft-quoted definition of rhetoric, attributed to Aristotle: "...the ability, in each particular case, to see the available means of persuasion" (Aristotle and Kennedy 14). In this cursory sense, we can examine the "available means" of this composition at work. We can consider the rhetorical decisions regarding choice of color, size of sign, placement of sign, materials from which to compose the sign, etc. But much of the rhetorical power of the sign lies in the place of the sign in the values and creeds of the community. In the culture of drivers in the United States, the driver's handbook is a sort of religious text, studied by adolescents who are preparing to leave the non-mobility of childhood behind. The parent teaches the child the rules of the road, including the meaning and importance of signs such as the stop sign. Safety programs at schools and in public media reinforce the importance of obedience to these signs by legends and stories of what happens to violators of the signified code. The driver's test is a sort of rite of passage, allowing the candidate to be confirmed into the community of auto-mobility. The new member maintains membership in the community as long as the signs are obeyed. Violations of the signs and codes may lead to excommunication from the community of drivers via the penalty of a revoked license. The stop sign, as a cultural text, is embodied with signifying and persuasive power by a number of cultural forces.

This illustration should serve as a reminder that, in the following discussions, a critical understanding of semiotics and rhetoric is necessary for properly engaging the acts and artifacts of which culture consists. With these basic concepts understood, we proceed.

The Dominant Culture as Agents of Culture Formation

Working from the premise that meaning-making takes place via signs and symbols and codes agreed upon, or accepted by, the community – it is imperative that we explore how forces within a society establish and instantiate such signs and symbols and codes. A range of diverse opinions may exist within a cultural group, but the signs, symbols and codes that are held as a canon of commonality is heavily influenced by what may be called a dominant discourse. Appadurai notes that a society's dominant cultural discourse exercises rhetorical decisions that display the society's intentionality in meaning-making in "official" spaces such as those in museums, galleries, etc.

> ...as group pasts becoming increasingly parts of museums, exhibits, and collections, both in national and transnational spectacles, culture becomes less what Pierre Bourdieu would have called a habitus (a tacit realm of reproducible practices and dispositions) and more an arena for conscious choice, justification, and representation, the latter often to multiple and spatially dislocated audiences. (Appadurai 44)

These "spectacles" are useful, as examples, for describing the representational

meaning-making of the dominant discourse that takes place through the

rhetorics of display, archives, histories, etc. Appadurai's comment reminds us

that "culture" is a dynamic thing that involves the agency of the makers of

cultural texts. And much of this agency is the agency of the dominant discourse.

To this point, I have used several phrases interchangeably to describe the

mainstream cultural forces of a society. The following section describes how these

forces are discussed by various approaches. My concern is to track the

commonality of these approaches toward an inclusive definition of culture, and to

inform the theoretical approach of the proposed model. The thread throughout

much of the literature that informs this research is that cultural practices cannot

be understood without an understanding of the dominant cultural forces,

whether we call these forces *habitus*, ruling paradigms, controlling epistemes,

knowledge-making systems, or some other name. And so, what follows is a brief

discussion of the terms "contolling episteme," "master discourse," "habitus," and

"culture industry."

Controlling Episteme

In The *Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, Michel

Foucault describes the power of knowledge-making systems and meaning-

making taxonomies (Foucault 387). His description of these "controlling

epistemes" seem to me (and to Piaget) similar to Thomas Kuhn's idea of ruling

paradigms in the formal sciences (Kuhn 23). This concept also resonates with

Hayden White's idea of the effect of dominant discourses (White 287). Indeed,
Pierre Bourdieu's concept of *habitus*, which he describes as that "relationship"
between the situation and practices of a culture, may be harmonized here as well
(Bourdieu 613).

Master Discourse

Hayden White, in *Tropics of Discourse,* describes a "master discourse"
which is both interpretive and pre-interpretive. Such a discourse not only
interprets cultural texts, but also teaches how interpretation of such texts should
be done.

> A discourse... is both interpretive and preinterpretive; it is always as
> much about the nature of interpretation itself as it is about the
> subject matter which is the manifest occasion of its own
> elaboration.... every discourse is always as much about the
> discourse itself as it is about the objects that make up its subject
> matter. (White 4)

White sees the master discourse as shaping, not only specific meanings
with a culture, but the direction (trope) in which a culture will make meaning and
establish cultural knowledge.

Habitus

In *Culture's Consequences : Comparing Values, Behaviors, Institutions,
and Organizations Across Nations*, Geert Hofstede points out that an
individual's mental program (software of the mind) is shaped by the influences of

cultural values – what Bordieau calls a *habitus* "certain conditions of existence produce a habitus, a system of permanent and transferable tendencies… A habitus functions as the basis for practices and images…" (Hofstede 596) The idea of this cultural "programming" is elaborated in Hofstede's *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind* as resulting from several influences, including symbols, heroes, rituals, and values. (Hofstede 279)

The Culture Industry

A number of approaches, such as those from the Frankfurt School, describe the effect of social-economic forces on media and culture as a major cultural influence. We will here look a little more closely at "The Culture Industry" as an example of how dominant discourses operate in relation to cultural values and knowledge. Theodor Adorno & Max Horkheimer, in "The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception," describe the restrictive and prescriptive, if not dictatorial, power of the "culture industry," by which they mean, in the main, the broadcast medium of radio. This culture industry is the ubiquitous voice of an ideological system. They note that, in comparison to the telephone, broadcasting is notably less democratic:

> The step from the telephone to the radio has clearly distinguished the roles. The former still allowed the subscriber to play the role of subject, and was liberal. The latter is less democratic: it turns all participants into listeners and authoritatively subjects them to broadcast programs which are all exactly the same. No machinery

of rejoinder has been devised, and private broadcasters are denied

any freedom. (Adorno and Horkheimer) [3]

Adorno and Horkheimer see the culture industry as eliminating the individual (and individual choice) except as an illusion. Under such a system ""freedom to choose an ideology... everywhere proves to be freedom to choose what is always the same" (Adorno and Horkheimer).

Adorno elaborates on this idea in several ways in his "reconsideration" (Adorno and Rabinbach 12-19). One point elucidated in this second work is the "standardization" of cultural elements and stories, such as the "American Western." Particularly provocative is Adorno's statement that "...what its defenders imagine is preserved by the culture industry is in fact all the more thoroughly destroyed by it.... No homeland can survive being processed by the films which celebrate it..." (Adorno and Rabinbach 12-19). Such is the effect of the dominant discourse on shaping cultural codes by which knowledge and values are established.

Ubiquity: The Power Behind the Dominant Discourse

The effectiveness of the dominant ideology's medium depends on its ubiquity; the legends and stories must be widely and constantly delivered. A telling scene of the effectiveness of this commonality of stories occurs in the film Planes, Trains and Automobiles. On a long bus ride, Steve Martin's character

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[3] This point resonates not only in this area of cultural narratology, but also in the area of multimodal composition as it raises questions about the democratizing power of new media's 2.0-ness.

tries to rally the bus towards community by singing, but fails with his version of "3 Coins in a Fountain." John Candy's character saves the day by starting a song everyone knows: the theme from the "Flintstones." The fact that a generation can sing, from memory, a song about a "modern stone-age family" is testament to the power of repetition and ubiquity employed by the media machinery of the culture industry. Memes, tropes, catchphrases, and proverbs that exist in the "public consciousness" are the result of this culture industry media machinery.

At a glance, or from a distance, the influence of the dominant discourse on cultural texts seems total and complete. In a generalized view, the dominant ideology seems to exercise complete control on cultural formation. We hear echoes from A.J. Liebling who said, "Freedom of the press belongs to those who own the press." And perhaps more poignantly, we hear the voice of Theodor Adorno, who, when considering the univocality and ubiquity of broadcast media, lamented "No machinery of rejoinder has been devised…" But, as I said, that is only a general view.

"No machinery of rejoinder has been devised.": Ubiquity Provokes Resistant Agency

The control of the dominant discourse within a culture should not be assumed to be total or complete. Arjun Appadurai notes that, rather than provoking a uniformity of values and beliefs, "…the consumption of the mass media throughout the world often provokes resistance, irony, selectivity, and, in general, **agency**" (Appadurai 7) This resistant agency grants a certain cultural formation power to the outliers and dissenters in a society. I will identify here

some problematizing factors for the control of a dominant ideology's ruling paradigm in media, and some relevant illustrations of concomitant interruptions and subversions. Each of these "exceptions" finds its place as in the lawn of culture, interwoven with those expressions encouraged by the dominant discourse.

The Problem of Resistance in New Media Spaces

Rick Astley became a "pop star" by recording a song titled "Never Gonna Give You Up." This cultural product of the big record companies was made with the prescribed musical fashions of the day, and distributed in records and tapes in a very exclusive system to music stores across the country. The records were sent to radio stations owned by media conglomerates and played in prescribed rotation. The video version was produced with similar adherence to the choreography and clothing fashions of the day, and played in industry-prescribed rotations on broadcast media's new channels: MTV and VH1. The culture industry was able to effect, through its concentrated efforts, sales of over 1.2 million copies of "Never Gonna Give You Up." Then, when the culture industry decided to move on to something different, Rick Astley's song went away like a flock of seagulls.

Until... a digitized form of the music video of "Never Gonna Give You Up" was posted on a new media channel: YouTube. No broadcast company paid to have it placed there. No media conglomerate knew, or cared, that it was there. This new media channel had no cultural gatekeepers, no playlists, no

commercials, no rotations. The content was being posted without the approval of any fashion police, or arbiters of taste or talent. Rick Astley's video was just one of millions of postings in this wild west of democratized new media publishing.

Then, someone started sending electronic documents that contained a hyperlink to the song, but labeled as a hyperlink to something else: a spreadsheet, a news story, travel tips, etc. When the recipient of the document clicked on the link, they were treated to the smooth vocal stylings of Mr. Rick Astley, and his accompanying cheesy dance moves. The recipient would then be told, if she hadn't already figured out, she had been "Rick Roll'd." Rick Rollin' became a phenomenon. Then it became something previously unknown: an internet meme. Decades after "Never Gonna Give You Up" had disappeared from the culture industry's radar, the song has been downloaded on YouTube in various forms, over 30 million times.[4]

It would seem, Mr. Adorno, that at least SOME "machinery of rejoinder has been devised." The internet and new media is an example of a democratizing agent of interruption.

The Problem of Social Media

Iran had a sort of electronic "wall" around its country before its last elections. This was the mechanism of the dominant discourse to filter news coming in, and

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[4] Some uninformed critics from a rhetoric department at another university equated YouTube views with radio "listens." This is exactly wrong. Listening to a song on the radio is a fleeting temporal experience that grants the listener no agency whatsoever. Viewing a YouTube video is actually downloading the file to your own computer. You can then choose to keep the file, edit it, repurpose it, comment on it, repost it, etc. "It's the agency, stupid…"

going out, of Iran. However, citizens with "smart phones" (tiny computer screens and keyboards) with internet connections were able to disseminate to the outside world information that was not sanctioned by the ruling paradigm. Dr. Tharon Howard notes that current digital technologies have made space for cultural resistors to find expression under even the most oppressive dominant paradigms:

> Today, videos that used to require the resources of a television news crew to video, edit, produce and distribute can be created by an Iranian armed with a cellphone camera and a connection to YouTube. Indeed, that is precisely what the Iranian protesters did…. Mass media channels… ended up having to use… links to videos and images posted on Twitter by eyewitnesses in order to "report the news." (Howard 208)

The changing constellation of social networking creates space for many diverse strands of cultural expression outside the dominant discourse to be woven into the lawn of culture.

The Problem of the Evolutionary Nature of Culture

Tyler Cowen, in Creative Destruction: How Globalization is Changing the World's Cultures, speaks to the changing nature of "cultures" due to globalizing forces (Cowen 179). Cowen contends that economic conditions of globalization ensure that no culture is pristine or homogeneous. He describes how international and intercultural trade, and pursuant social interactions, can alter local cultural practices and forms. In a description that might be said to be

evolutionary or dialectic, Cowen holds that every new technology from within (or outside) a culture will change the traditional cultural canon. The "destruction" of existing cultural traditions gives way to the "creation" of new cultural forms which will then be overthrown by the next wave of new cultural forms (Cowen 179). Cowen adds a new strand to the conversation by suggesting that "preserving" other cultures is an elitist impulse, one that springs, not from the indigenous cultures at risk, but from Western voices that, wittingly or not, seek to pigeon-hole other cultures as static artifacts that will be frozen as a perpetual "Other" (Cowen 179). Such preservation, in Cowen's approach, is not much different than categorical totalizing. Such considerations are reflected in the stoloniferous model's view of culture as organic and ever-shifting.

The Problem of Intra-cultural Diversity

Lastly, total dictation of culture by the controlling episteme is problematized by intra-national diversity. This diversity causes a different set of cultural texts to be embraced, and a different set of cultural texts to be produced. The idea that national boundaries have more than a general explanatory value doesn't hold up well to international – or to national – travel and engagement. Consider:

- Do the Amish watch Seinfeld? Or would they know the theme song to Gilligan's Island?

- Do residents of Newark's Ironbound neighborhood recognize a typical southern breakfast of biscuits, grits and red-eye gravy?

- Do Floridians, as a rule, watch V-Desi Bollywood-style music videos on Saturdays?

Intra-national communities form subcultural groups that embrace a different library of cultural references from which to make meaning than the supposed "national" culture.

"All Generalizations Are False, Including This One"

What is our subject of study? What is culture? I have encouraged a broad definition that views culture as encompassing a wide range of acts and artifacts whereby a community makes meaning and communicates knowledge and values. I have acknowledged that culture is a tropic rather than a topic. That is, culture is cultivated, and is always being cultivated. (Indeed, we might say that it is always already being cultivated.) I have established that cultural values are communicated by what I often refer to as "cultural texts," by which I mean the wide range of acts and artifacts that include architecture, art, ritual, media, systems of knowledge, fashion, technology, etc. I have acknowledged the cultural formation power of the dominant discourse and dissenting discourses, and the cultural agency of the "authors" of cultural texts as well as of their "readers." I have emphasized the factors that problematize a consideration of culture as static.

And so, we arrive at a definition that views culture as a dynamic tropic, rather than a fixed topic; a moving, living thing that consists of many strands,

contributed from various sources in inexact and organic ways. For purposes of our discussion in this research, let culture be represented by metaphor:

Culture is a lawn. From afar, a cultural lawn may appear to be a solid mass, but upon closer inspection is found to consist of many interwoven stolons of grasses. From afar, a cultural lawn may appear to consist of only a single type of grass, but upon closer inspection is found to be heterogeneous, and perhaps even its stolons found to be variegated and chimeral. If asked about the lawn, the casual observer will be able to offer only the most superficial information, such as, "It's green – and covers that whole area." If the lawn is worth knowing more about at all – and it is to gardeners, homeowners, athletes, children, and anyone else who lives and works and plays in the lawn – then such an answer is inadequate. There should be a way to learn more about the living, dynamic thing that we call a lawn.

In real life, as in our metaphor, if asked about a particular culture or cultural group, an uncritical observer may respond with a shallow and uninformed answer, such as "Those people are loud (or unfriendly or generous or thrifty, etc.)" If the culture is worth knowing about at all – and it is to educators, community leaders, medical professionals, city planners, clergy, and anyone else who is engaged with that community – such an answer is unsatisfactory. There should be a way to learn more about the living, dynamic thing we call culture. I will suggest an approach I call the "stolons" model for investigating culture.

Chapter 3
Stolons: A Tropological Model of Culture

"No occupation is so delightful to me as the culture of the earth,

and no culture comparable to that of the garden." Thomas Jefferson[5]

This chapter introduces a model for cultural engagement and culturally-reflective composition that teachers can use to build curricula and develop research guides, and that researchers can use to investigate diverse cultural artifacts. I will here briefly explain the model and, in the chapters that follow, will describe in more detail five fundamental stolons of cultural narratology. In these subsequent chapters I will illustrate each of the stolons at work, and suggest possible applications of the model for the classroom.

Figure 3.1 - Stoloniferious Carpetgrass
(Hitchcock and Chase 178)

[5] From a personal letter, 1811 – quoted by Hugh H. Bennett. "Thomas Jefferson, Soil Conservationist." (1944): 3. Web.

In the previous chapter, we used the metaphor of a lawn of grass to illustrate our approach to culture. This agricultural model illustrates our broad approach to culture which acknowledges a wide range of acts and artifacts as both revealing of, and integral to, culture. The lawn metaphor also has explanatory capacity for the dynamic nature of culture that is, and is always being, cultivated. Additionally, the creeping nature of a stoloniferous lawn exemplifies the troping nature of culture. We pointed out that culture, like our grassy metaphor, might be explained in terms most unsatisfactory by an uncritical eye, offering a "reading" that generalizes, totalizes, and oversimplifies what lies before the observer. If culture matters at all, we contend, there should be a way to learn more about the living, dynamic thing that we call culture. It is to this end that I propose the Stolons Model.

Why the Stolons Model?

This model is built around the metaphor of "stolons." While it is true that a lawn – or by way of allegorical correlation, a culture – appears to be "one thing," it is, upon critical inspection, more complex. Hitchcock and Chase point out that "Perennial grasses may form a sod or mass of individuals by means of rhizomes or stolons…" (Hitchcock and Chase 7). The stolons model contends that a key to understanding the "sod or mass" of culture is to investigate the strands (stolons) which form these sods. The Stolons Model sees each stolon as a contributing source for the shaping, influencing, moving and making of cultural knowledge, values and semiotic systems. The Stolon Method indicates not only that cultures

consist of manifold contributing sources, but that the list of contributing sources is continually changing. "Besides the original root system at the base of the plant, secondary roots are often formed from nodes above the ground as in maize (prop roots), or from the nodes of creeping culms (rhizomes or stolons)" (Hitchcock and Chase 7). These "creeping culms" can be any observable acts, (such as religious festivals, sporting events, political expressions, etc.) or observable artifacts, (such as monuments, commercial packaging, furniture, etc.) By its organic accommodation of changing sources, the stoloniferous metaphor of "culture as lawn" emphasizes how unsatisfactory would be an approach with generalized, fixed, static categories. The Stolons Model is a way to learn more about the living, dynamic thing that we call culture.

What is the Stolons Model?

First, a stolon is "A stem that runs along the ground, forming roots and new plants at intervals along its length" (Miller) . The propagation strategy of a stoloniferous plant depends on the ability of its stolons to grow outward and, at each node, to plant new roots and send out more stolons. As the stolons from various offshoots cross and interweave, they form a single, but complex organism – such as a lawn of St. Augustine grass (Hitchcock and Chase 7). The stolon metaphor is suggested as a fitting model for cultural investigation for a number of reasons. Unlike the metaphor of a "fabric," it is an organic model; it echoes the fluid, shifting, and growing nature of cultures. Rather than a taxonomy of distinct "things," it is an interconnected model; it resists the strict (and contrived)

delineation that would fail to adequately account for the manifold connections of strands within a cultural discourse. It is, distinctive from the model of rhizomes, above ground and visible; it accounts for the observable texts whereby the rhetoric of display is at work in the narratives of cultures. Additionally, while rhizomes are generally described as clump-formation propagation systems, stolons propagate via mat-formation strategies. Rather than being located at a fixed point, the stolons model is a model of troping; it acknowledges that a "culture" may shift, relocate or disappear altogether. Unlike other closed, "definitive" systems, the stolon approach allows for, and in fact predicts, that other strands of meaning making will be found by future theoretical investigations.

Indeed, culture may be seen to be less like a tulip (a single identifiable, extractable "thing") than it is like a lawn (a complex web of inextricably interconnected strands). This analytical model will foster investigation of culture by examining the strands (stolons) through which a culture's narratology "lives."

Though a lawn may appear to uncritical eyes to be an independent, homogenous entity unto itself, it is actually a complex incorporation of varied contributing strands. Rather than attempting to comprehend culture as an impenetrable mass, the theory of stolons encourages investigation of individual "texts" (acts and artifacts) and how their connections with other cultural texts help form a discourse community that shares a meaning-making system. And so, secondly, the model will serve as an explanatory and exemplary heuristic device

towards identification of several impulses at play in these stoloniferous

connections – namely *nomos, muthos, ethnos, techne,* and *archon*[6] – as

illustrated in the labeling of the illustration in Figure 2. In other words, the model

serves as a classificatory guide for students' cultural reflections on observable

acts and artifacts, and the meaning-making impulses at work in their

connections.
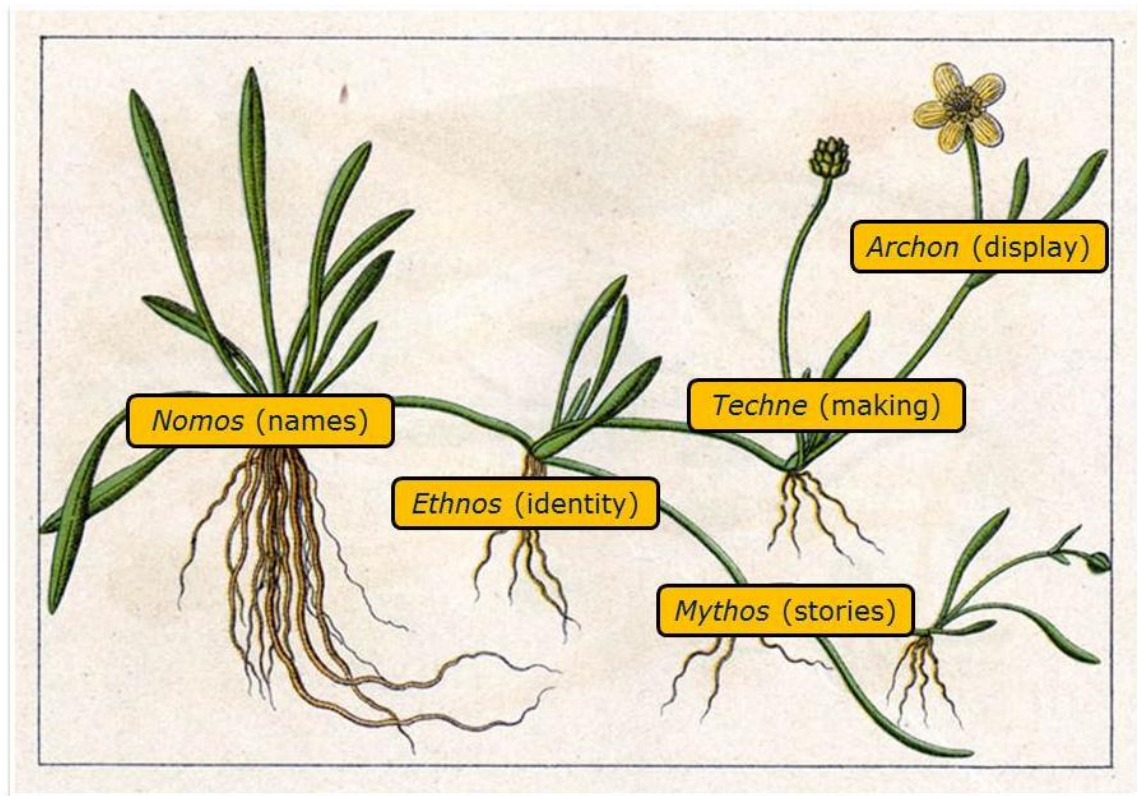
Figure 3.2: The Stolons Model – Illustration *Ranunculus Flammula* (Sturm) with labels by author.

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[6] Each of these stolons (ie. strands, impulses, channels of meaning-making) will be discussed in following chapters.

The following chapters offer descriptions of these cultural impulses, and illustrations of how the instructor can use the model to guide the student in research, and how the student-researcher can use the model to frame their cross-cultural reflections. But first, a few background comments of explanation.

Stolons and the Classificatory Mode of Discourse

Since our model serves as a heuristic device for tropological analysis, it can be considered to be classificatory/descriptive in its critique of the engagement of cultural "texts." In *A Theory of Discourse*, James Kinneavy described the classificatory "mode of discourse" as being concerned with the relationship of parts to a whole – which is fitting for the networks of "texts" that form the structure of cultural knowledge (Kinneavy). Kinneavy described the descriptive mode of discourse as being concerned with the relationship of the whole to the parts. This description is useful for explaining the emphasis on the inner-connectedness of culture and how the cultural atmosphere influences the practices within it. Reflecting this impulse, the stolons model facilitates examination of the strands or strings of the cultural story's web, as well as the connectedness in the web itself.

The Stolons Model serves the researcher in ways similar to other approaches that account for tropes of meaning-making, such as Arjun Appadurai's "Cultural Dimensions of Globalization," which uses the tropes of ethnoscapes, mediascapes, technoscapes, financescapes, and ideoscapes

(Appadurai 33). Indeed, Appadurai's explanation of his model of these tropes informs the sentiment of the Stolons Model at several points.

> The suffix -*scape* allows us to point to the fluid, irregular shapes of these landscapes.... terms with the common suffix -*scape* also indicate that these are not objectively given relations that look the same from every angle of vision but, rather that they are deeply perspectival constructs, inflected by the historical, linguistic and political situatedness of different sorts of actors. (Appadurai 33)

The stolons model also approaches the tropes of culture as "fluid" and "irregular," and acknowledges that the interpretation of, and application of, these tropes are influenced by the "historical, linguistic and political situatedness" of the researchers, subjects and environments of the cultural investigation.

The fluid nature of the stolons as tropes may be further illustrated by borrowing from inventive approaches such as Greg Ulmer's "mystory." Ulmer calls the threads that make up the story, but are not the story, "ficelles." Ulmer uses this figure, ficelle, to explain the connections among disparate objects the "carpet" of his "mystory" (Ulmer 338). I owe a debt of inspiration to Ulmer's playful labeling of these strands. On his visit to little Bighorn, Ulmer noted on the park Map/Legend the letters representing the troops with Custer that fateful day: C,E,F,I,L – which prompted him to think of "ce fil" (the filament), ficelle (the thread or string), and le fic (the figure). Ulmer's example is helpful in explaining that this research seeks not to impose sharply delineated categories for segments

of deconstructed cultural texts, but to allow stolons to be what Appadurai calls the "deeply perspectival constructs" (Appadurai 33).

And indeed, the idea that there can be any such things as a model or methodology for cultural study, is a perspectival construct in itself. In *Language as Symbolic Action*, Kenneth Burke describes humans as "goaded by the spirit of hierarchy," in constructing taxonomies and systems to explain and understand the world around us. (Burke 15) And so it is good to keep in mind that researchers, instructors and students are not only investigators of culture, but are also themselves "culture bearing animals(s)". (Burke 16) Burke's Pentad serves as a prime example of such circumspection in that his analytical model is not "scientistic," (concerned only with the discipline of naming and defining acts and artifacts,) but rather is "dramatistic," (seeing the process of taxonomy itself as worthy of study." (Burke 44) The stolons method is informed by such metacritical considerations as expressed by Burke. The stolons model may be considered a "self-aware" heuristic for tropological analysis, allowing for even the model itself as a valid subject of cultural analysis.

Meet The Stolons: Tools for Teaching and Learning

The chapters that follow will describe each of five stolons from the analytical model. The first stolon, *nomos*, will be treated in-depth, and the other stolons (*archon, muthos, ethnos, techne*) will be discussed along the lines established in the *nomos* chapter. Each chapter will follow this general outline:

- Discussion of the term and concept represented,

- Example of the impulse at work in making and revealing cultural knowledge,

- Description of the impulse employed by both dominant and dissenting discourses within a society, and

- Pedagogical applications and examples of student research.

These discussions will be situated against the course assignments for Cultural Literacies Across Media, the program from which the model derives.

It is important to note that the students were NOT directed to find, for example, *ethnos*, as an assignment unto itself. Students' assignments were broader and designed to help them compose major projects toward each of three purposes: personal reflection, professional development, and political/social issues of import. Students were directed and expected to examine how the cultural practices and attitudes of their host groups were shaped by the impulses identified as *ethnos, nomos, techne, archon* and *muthos*. Students identified and discussed these stolons in an organic framework of ongoing weekly reflections, analysis and in composition of major projects. For instance, there were no checklists for a set number of artifacts of *ethnos* (or *nomos,* etc.) to be identified each week. The stolons model informed the students' cultural observation skills and aided their analysis of cultural texts as they engaged the culture in their study abroad experience.

It is also important to note that students were aware that it should not be expected that any observed cultural act or artifact would make meaning by a

single stoloniferous impulse. This diagram indicates the connection of all the impulses to a specific site, Washington, D.C. (Washington will be used as a touchstone in the narrative that introduces each of the chapters that follow.)

While this chart shows an entire site (Washington,) any given observable act or artifact may, similarly, have connections to two or more of the stolons. Several instances of multiple meaning making will be mentioned in the upcoming chapters, but these mentions are by no means exhaustive of the multi-stoloniferous culture making power of the cultural texts in the examples. The following chapters will serve as samples of how instructors might use the model for a number of assignments. Examples in the chapters will illustrate how the

model might be applied as a guide for student research in the field and for instructor facilitation in the classroom, as well as a provocation for future theoretical research.

But First, a Word...

But first, I offer a few notes on underlying issues and concerns relevant to the environment in which the concepts were taught, and in which the student research and reporting was practiced. The chapters that follow will touch upon, and assume an understanding of, the fact that the application of the stolons method integrates these considerations: new media, cooperative learning, ex(oc)cluded meanings, hybridist nature of the tropes and allowance for invention/genesis of new tropes.

Stolons and New Media Realities

In application of the stolons method in situations like the Cultural Literacies Across Media course, students engage cultures in various media. Such engagement requires a new way of thinking about literacy. Stuart Selber and others argue for a place for "multiliteracies." The not-so-uncommon idea that new media is simply "using computers" leads to a philosophy that demands more money for more computers, more pieces of electronic media equipment, more software – without adequately addressing the need for altogether new cultural texts. Stuart Selber, in his *Multiliteracies for a Digital Age*, describes the extant gap between new media and critical literacies by which to engage new media. Selber points out that some programs, departments, or classes may

have access to impressive computer facilities but find themelves

operating in a culture that vastly underestimates what must be

learned to take advantage of technology and to understand its social

and pedagogical implications. (Selber 2)

Two multiliteracy "reading handbooks" that inform this research are *Practices of Looking: An Introduction to Visual Culture* by Marita Sturken and Lisa Cartwright (Sturken and Cartwright 486), and *Convergences: Themes, Texts and Images for Composition* by Robert Atwan (Atwan). These texts provide comprehensive treatments of visual literacies that occurs in print and digital media, referring to a wide range of contributing sources from Walter Benjamin's ideas on mechanical reproduction to Malcolm Gladwell's take on hunting "cool" stuff. Texts like these are evidence that, at least in some way, the call for attention to new media literacies is being heard. The stolons theory accommodates such approaches to new media literacies, and indeed, embraces new media as a compositional match for its flexible, shifting, organic approach to the tropes of cultural meaning-making.

Stolons and Cooperative Student Research

The new media environment also brings new complications for research, scholarship and issues of intellectual property. In 2005, the journal *Nature* published findings from a study that compared *Encyclopedia Brittanica's* online reference site with Wikipedia. The conclusion? The free-to-use Wikipedia site was shown to be as accurate as the site of the venerable *Encyclopedia Brittanica*

(Giles 900-901).[7] The stolons model recognizes that knowledge is formed by many streams, and instituted by a social validation process within the cultural community. A fitting view for incorporating new sources for cultural research, such as Wikipedia, is to recognize that these sites comprise many strands contributed by many sources (much the same way cultural knowledge is formed.) Wikipedia might be seen as invalid source among the cultural community of academia, but may be seen as a helpful "aggregator" of other resources deemed valid by the discourse community of the university. Application of the stolons method to the classroom would encourage a critical acceptance of this "communal knowledge building" through fostering use of aggregators (such as Wikipedia or theweek.com) and resource link sharing sites (such as delicious.com.) What Clay Shirkey calls "Cognitive Surplus"(Pink and Shirkey) happens constantly in formation of cultural knowledge, and can happen within the classroom community by the publishing of ongoing student work via a network of blogs open to the classroom community or beyond.[8]

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[7] In subsequent publications, the *Encyclopedia Britannica* rebutted the study's findings; the journal defended its findings with point by point explanations. Wikipedia remains one of the most-visited websites.

[8] It is fitting that, when using the stolons method, the instructor engages students in discussion of how different communities view "property." Discussion of copyright issues, and exemplary use of communally shared resources, such as those shared through "commons" licenses are appropriate. Such discussion could include examples such as the illustrations found in this chapter: the figure of carpetgrass in figure 1 is from a U.S. Government publication, and as such is expressly released into the public domain. The illustration of stolons in figure 2 is from a German botanical work published in 1796, and therefore considered to be in the public domain by U.S. copyright laws.

Stolons and Excluded Meanings

Because the stolons model understands culture as a complex systems of living and moving strands that form a thing different from the things of which it consists, it allows for some cultural meanings to be accepted as valid, even though the meanings may lack specific categorical location. Some cultural texts might be read as symbolic, (what Roland Barthes calls "the *studium*.") These denote the cultural, social, or political meaning of an artifact. But other texts may defy symbolic equivalence while maintaining powerful cultural cache. Artifacts that Barthes describes as "*punctum*" denotes the unsymbolized: the personal, uncanny connection with an artifact. In "The Third Meaning," Barthes sees visuals as having meaning in three ways:

1. The Informational Level – basic communication

2. The Symbolic Level (cf. *studium* above)

3. The Third Level – (cf. *punctum* above) the significant, a level which "transcends psychology, anecdote, function" (Barthes 43)

Barthes says that this Third Meaning is a "supplement my intellection cannot quite absorb, a meaning both persistent and fugitive, apparent and evasive" (Barthes 44). Barthes calls this "the obtuse meaning" (Barthes 44). The stolons method, being a method of *tropos* rather than *topos*, grants cultural validity to even liminal, or obtuse, observable acts and artifacts.

Stolons, Hybrids and New Stolons

Lastly, as we discuss how acts and artifacts might be "read" in light of the stolons model, we will, at several times admit that: some expressions correspond to more than one stolon description; some expressions may correspond to both a definable impulse and an obtuse affect; some expressions may correspond to a stoloniferous impulse yet to be named. Other researchers, teachers and students may discover stolons of cultural meaning making other than those listed in this work. It is not unlikely that those who approach culture via the stolons model would identify other important impulses, (e.g. *glossia* – regarding mechanics of spoken language, or *geos* – concerning topography, weather, etc.) The model is a beginning to helping all students engage culture in a holistic, connected way – not the end of the engagement. It begs for expansion by curious, critical minds.

Chapter 4
Nomos: The Naming of Things

"'Must a name mean something?' Alice asked doubtfully.

'Of course it must,' Humpty Dumpty said with a short laugh..."

Lewis Caroll, *Through the Looking Glass*

In the United States, there are 30 counties; a plethora of towns, including 6 townships in New Jersey alone; a bevy of parks, bridges and schools; one state; and one national capital – all sharing the same name: *Washington*. A person visiting the United States from another country who desired to understand the
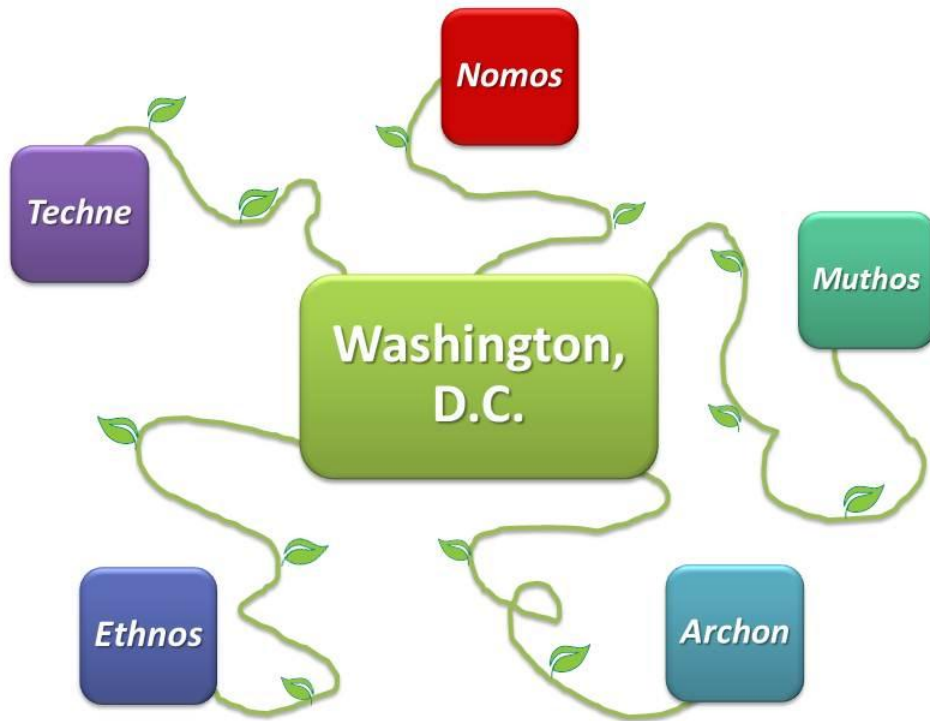
"American culture" could not, without risking a charge of negligence, let this phenomenon go unexplored. Even a cursory examination of this phenomenon opens historical, political and social windows of understanding on how culture is formed, and transformed, in the United States. This example speaks to the importance of *Nomos* as a strand in the stoloniferous approach to culture.

I will use the term *Nomos* to refer to that strand of culture-making that has to do with the impulse of **naming**. This stolon of *Nomos* provokes such culture-making practices as taxonomy, nomenclature, nomination, exnomination, and denomination. That is to say, *Nomos* is the strand of culture that pertains to how a cultural group differentiates, classifies, identifies and (de)values by way of its **naming of things**. In this chapter, I will briefly discuss treatments of *Nomos* by other discourses, and how *Nomos* is at work/play in cultural meaning-making in both dominant and resistant discourses in a society. This chapter will conclude with a discussion of how this concept of *Nomos* is helpful for investigating cultures by examining various texts, teaching cultural literacies and for composition across media.

Order & Law: Nomos in Society
Nomos is a term important to several discourse communities and academic disciplines. Of particular relevance to our discussion is the use of the term in Rhetorical Studies and in Social Sciences and Cultural Studies. In ancient Greek literature, an early philosophical discussion focuses on the dichotomy of

Physis (nature) and *Nomos* (convention.) In early epistemological treatments, the Sophists worked from the premise, broadly stated, that the *Physis* is that which is objectively true, whereas the *Nomos* is that which socially constructed (Kennedy 30). That is to say, *Physis* is that which *essentially is*, while *Nomos* is that which is *because a society says that it is*. These *nomoi*[9], embodied in the form of laws and polity – and in scientific knowledge, hold a position of substantial culture-making authority in society.

Order: Scientific Knowledge and Nomos

One might say that, generally, *nomos* is used in service of *physis* in the field of science (qua "Science,") where scientific knowledge has always existed through the energy of *Nomos* – the ability to identify, differentiate, and classify by naming things. Scientific knowledge, therefore, can be seen as a human invention, or a cultural construction, making use of the power of naming for epistemological purposes, i.e. to create a system of order for knowledge. One of the earliest accounts of zoological classification illustrates *Nomos* as human invention at work in the making of scientific knowledge:

> "Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. So the man gave names to all the

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[9] I find it helpful to think of *nomoi* as being both a society's laws and a society's law-makers, or "namers."

livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field." Genesis

2:20 (New International Version)

Whereas Genesis credits God with creation of all animals, it admits that the

classification and naming of animals was the responsibility of Adam, the human

agent. [10]

Law: Politics and Nomos

And *Nomos* is used, not only to speak of the ordering of knowledge by a

society, but of the ordering of society itself via society's laws. In this case, *nomos*

has a relationship other than that of servitude to *physis*. For the Sophists, *Nomos*

focused on laws and institutions, human inventions which could be established,

altered or abolished by the members of the society – or at least by the ruling class

of the society.[11] Callicle's speech in Plato's *Gorgias* is an early differentiation and

juxtaposition of justice by *Nomos* (convention) and justice according to *physis*

(nature). Callicles contends that "the people who institute our laws are the weak

and the many," and concluded that they constructed laws "with themselves and

their own advantage in mind," often against natural laws (Hamilton and Cairns

266). While recognizing laws and morals as imperfect human inventions,

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[10] The Biblical account of man's naming of the animals is part of the terministic screen of those who hold a Judeo-Christian world view. It also contributes to this culture by way of the stolon of *Muthos*, which will receive more treatment in the chapter by that title.

[11] In Plato's *Gorgias*, Callicles points out problems inherent in embracing laws that are based solely on *Nomos* (human labeling of good and bad) and hints that good laws find basis in natural law, one that finds impetus in *Physis* E. Hamilton and H. Cairns. *Plato: The Collected Dialogues.* Eds. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns., 1961. Print.

Callicles doesn't argue for discarding these conventions, but rather for the role of *nomos-creation* to be handled by a better ruling class. Laws were, after all, established towards the goal of a virtuous society – which, for the Greeks, meant one where people acted in ways that were (naturally) appropriate for their stations in the society. The nominative (i.e. legislative) action of the ruling class (the law-makers or *nomoi*) served to build culture by its meaning-making power to label things within a society as good or bad, fitting (*arete*) or inappropriate (*hamartia*).

The effect of this nominative power on the lives of the members of a society is so pervasive that, among many in the social sciences, *Nomos* is synonymous with "culture" itself. So pervasive is this effect that sociologist Geert Hofstede describes the patterned way of thinking that results from the "Law and Order" brought about by *Nomos* in his definition of culture as a "total programming of the mind" (Hofstede 9).

"Pay No Attention to the Man Behind the Curtain": Nomos and the Power of Culture-making

Since Nomos has the power to create knowledge and prescribe acceptable behavior within a society, it is only reasonable that a discussion of "power" be touched upon here. First, the recognition that those who do the naming are, in a sense, the ones who exercise a sort of ruling control in that society. And the idea of "ruling control" is key to understanding the atmosphere by which cultural practices are made and perpetuated. In *The Order of Things*, Michel Foucault states that there can be only one "controlling episteme" in any one culture at any

one time (Foucault 387). This controlling episteme defines the parameters of knowledge, values, acceptable conduct, etc. within the society it rules/controls.

To illustrate the arbitrariness that such power can exhibit, Foucault uses Borge's example from "a certain Chinese encyclopedia" that categorizes animals as follows:

> (a) belonging to the Emperor, (b) embalmed, (c) tame, (d) sucking pigs, (e) sirens, (f) fabulous, (g) stray dogs, (h) included in the present classification, (i) frenzied, (j) innumerable, (k) drawn with a very fine camelhair brush, (1) et cetera, (m) having just broken the water pitcher, (n) that from a long way off look like flies'. (Foucault 387)

Foucault observes that beholding such an "exotic" taxonomy can challenge an assumption of universal connection between natural law (*physis*) and social law (*nomos*.) By upsetting our idea of uniformity and fixedness, Foucault hopes to restore "to our silent and apparently immobile soil its rifts, its instability, its flaws" (Foucault 387). This "instability" can be a helpful move toward a state from which one can appreciate nomos at work in cultural settings different from our own.

Foucault sees the control of this "ruling episteme" as existing through the power of "taxinomia" – the ability to establish a code of selection and exclusion. This impulse, dubbed taxonomia by Foucault, finds resonance with Kenneth Burke's concept of "terministic screens," which Burke sees as the "nomenclature"

70

that "necessarily directs the attention into some channels rather than others" (Burke 45). For Burke, a terministic screen pre/determines the knowledge that is permitted, accepted and, at end, possible to those using the particular screen. To describe the knowledge-making power of terministic screens, Burke remediates the maxim of Christian Theologians ("Believe that you may understand") to read as:

> Pick some particular nomenclature, some one terministic screen (*then you*) may proceed to track down the kinds of observations implicit in the terminology you have chosen, whether your choice of terms was deliberate or spontaneous. (Burke 47)

Though such a terministic screen limits knowledge, it also enables communication of knowledge. Burke admits that the use of terministic screens is unavoidable, "We must use terministic screens, since we can't say anything without the use of terms; whatever terms we use, they necessarily constitute a corresponding kind of screen..." (Burke 50). Then, in a move that harkens back to the epistemological discussion of *Physis/Nomos*, Burke emphasizes the limitations of the relationship between essential reality and socially constructed knowledge that comes through the nomenclature of terministic screens: "Even if any given terminology is a reflection of reality, by its very nature as a terminology it must be a selection of reality; and to this extent it must function also as a deflection of reality" (Burke 45). The terministic screen that is shared by a

cultural group determines not only what a culture "thinks about" a given issue (the opinion,) but, indeed, what a culture thinks about (the topic.)

The effect of terminologies and nomenclature is so pivotal to cultural development that Foucault tends to describe "culture" itself as synonymous with the hierarchical taxonomy that serves as a grid for approving as "culturally acceptable" some beliefs and practices, while excluding others as unacceptable. Such a reduction of culture to the controlling episteme under which it exists is problematized by considerations to nominative resistors and outliers, but Foucault's concept of a single paradigm through which the dominant ideology functions as arbitrator of "knowledge" is significant and helpful to our discussion.

By George! An Example of Nomos in Service of the Dominant Discourse

A good example of culture-making by the ruling episteme is that to which we

Figure 4.1 – The United States Capitol Building in Washington, DC

alluded in the beginning of this chapter: the name "Washington."   What does a consideration of the name of places like Washington say about the culture-making power of Nomos? Examining place names as a cultural "text" involves looking both backward and forward from the event of naming.

Looking back before the naming leads toward an historical investigation that touches upon the myths, legends and stories whereby culture develops and exists. (Indeed, at this point, we notice that our stolon of *Nomos* intersects with the stolons of *Muthos* and *Archon*, which we will discuss later.) The knowledge of the biographical (and mythical) figure for whom these places are named is invaluable in understanding the culture of America. George Washington, the first President of the nation, the "father of our country," war hero, mythical symbolic character of integrity and virtue – this figure is integral to understanding the fabric of the American cultural "lawn." In this way, naming cities, parks, monuments and towns as "Washington" serves the rhetoric of the dominant discourse in this community by instantiating its history and praising a representative from the community's past. (In that the name "Washington" is displayed publicly, often along with commensurate statuary and other artistic representations, it is appropriate here to note the intersections of stolons of *Nomos* with stolons of *Archon*, which is addressed in a later chapter.)

Looking forward from the event of the naming to the subsequent appropriation and current usage of the name "Washington" reveals the completeness of the assimilation of the man and myth of George Washington into

the "mental programming" that is the American culture. In the August 18, 2010 edition of London's *The Guardian* newspaper, an AP article reports that Colombia's "Last year's agreement with *Washington* intensified frictions with neighbouring Venezuela, with President Hugo Chávez..." (emphasis mine) (Associated Press). Two presidents are mentioned in this quote, the living Chavez and the long deceased Washington. On face value, the article seems to imply that the Colombian government made an arrangement with the dead US president. Of course, we know that the name Washington can also refer to a city – in this case, Washington, D.C. – yet it is still unlikely that a South American country would make an military agreement with a single North American city. We understand that what is at play here is synecdoche. "Washington" the city, named after the man, has become a common way to refer to the nation as a whole. In this way, it might be said that the United States *is* Washington, bringing all the imagery and connotations of the man, the myths and the city into a cultural understanding of "America."

Exnomination: Culture Rides a Horse with No Name

The ruling episteme within a society creates culture by naming, *a la Washington*, but also instantiates cultural values by what Roland Barthes calls exnomination – whereby the dominant ideology remains "unnamed" while marginalizing those persons, ideas or conventions outside the societal "norm" by naming them (Barthes 158). Examples might be seen in (what are now seen as unacceptable) writing and speech practices that call attention to gender or race,

as in references to a "lady police officer," a "black CEO," a "male nurse," or a "white point guard." Such use of naming instantiates the societal norm by NOT naming the norm. Such terms reveal the "un-named" social norms: that police officers are male, that CEO's are white, that nurses are female, and that point guards are black. Attention to what is named, and to what is un-named, can give insight into the cultural values and mores of a community. In a subsequent chapter on *Ethnos*, we will treat the cultural meaning-making power exercised by the "nominated" group through the group's resistant self-identification and self-naming.

The Empire Takes it Back: Nomos in Course Correction

Exnomination can also be used as a tool to announce, and to effect, change in cultural views within a society. One example is the use of "ism." Naming a set of beliefs or values with a term ending in the "ism" suffix defines those beliefs as outside the dominant paradigm. By contrast, the adjusted beliefs of the dominant discourse, though never named, are defined as normal when juxtaposed against the ism-named aberrant discourse.

Figure 4.2 - Senator Joseph McCarthy (United Press)

One example is that of Senator Joe McCarthy. McCarthy led a movement that has come to be known

as the Red Scare, a movement which fostered an extreme (and widespread) suspicion of communist affiliation through the Senate's public investigations of those accused of communist ties. Senator McCarthy was part of the ruling paradigm, the legislative body of the United States, and garnered enough support to bring about legislation and investigations that would later be looked upon by the society with distaste. In the aftermath of the Red Scare, society's controlling episteme had need to announce new cultural standards regarding alleged Communist associations. This announcement came about by the use of exnomination. That is, there were no attempts to name the new cultural values, but rather to define the outdated values by naming the beliefs that were being replaced: "McCarthyism." The use of this term marginalized the former views and announced a new societal norm of "non-McCarthyism." The use of the "ism" label has been used similarly in fields philosophical, ecclesiastical, academic, economical, and scientific. In these cases, the dominant discourse need not specify what the new values, creeds, or beliefs are – but simply to say (by the marginalizing power of exnomination) what the new beliefs are NOT. A circumspect investigation of culture takes into account those things that are named by the dominant discourse within a society – and the things that are un-named.

And, no less importantly, a thoughtful cultural investigation would consider the things that are re-named; notable examples being Petrograd to Leningrad to St. Petersburg, and of course Istanbul (not Constantinople.) Such

re-namings by the controlling episteme of a society are fraught with revelations of rhetorical decisions that make visible the troping (dynamic, growing, shifting, evolutionary movement) of cultural meaning-making. But not all of this movement of cultural formation is controlled by the dominant discourse. Stolons of *Nomos* spring from elsewhere as well to form this lawn of culture.

Resistance is (not) Futile: Nomos of the Outsiders

While the dominant discourse re-names as a way to establish new cultural norms, voices outside the dominant discourse re-name variously to resist, interrupt, disrupt or otherwise respond to the dominant discourse. Cultural groups within the larger society may rename in order to establish a community identity for their sub-cultural group. (Again we see the stolon of *Nomos* here interweaving with the stolon of *Ethnos*, which will receive further treatment in a subsequent chapter.) Examples range from, as Tom Dalzell, says "Flappers 2 Rappers" and include the terminologies of jazz, jive, flower-children, valley-girl, computerese and hip-hop (Dalzell). Re-naming is part of developing an identifying vocabulary specific to a (sub)cultural group. The purpose of this new vocabulary is to help identify the particular group as a specific "discourse community." Tom Dalzell describes the *Nomos* as a way to establish *Ethnos* by noting:

> Slang's primary reason for being, to establish a sense of
> commonality among its speakers, further ensures its widespread
> use. When slang is used, there is a subtext to the primary message.

> That subtext speaks to the speaker's and listeners' membership in the same "tribe." (Dalzell)

These new vocabularies remain after their primary exigencies fade, leaving their contribution to the growing language of the larger culture in which these sub-cultural groups exist. Indeed, the English language is a fecund field for a growing vocabulary, being fed by a multiplicity of streams of nominative invention from various groups. In this sense, it is like the sprawling lawn of culture which consists of stolons from manifold sources.

The stolon of *nomos* runs throughout the lawn of culture, as in the examples above, and in provocatively mysterious place names that are rich with *Muthos* – such as Hungry Mother State Park. Nomos can also contain a history of commercial involvement in culture creation, as in places with names such as Truth or Consequences, NM (named to promote a radio program) or Google, KS (named to promote the massive internet search concern (*United States : 'Google Mania ' for Ultrafast Broadband Around One Hundred American Cities*NA))– or in the names of sports teams such as the Pittsburgh Steelers (named for the dominant industry) or the Green Bay Packers (named to promote The Indian Packing Company that purchased the team jerseys in 1919) ("Birth of a Team and a Legend.").

Pedagogy and Nomos

Educators can help students develop cultural literacies through the use of the Nomos strand of the stoloniferous model. By considering the rhetorical power of naming as it relates to "making culture," students exercise a more informed and complex reading of cultural texts. Indeed, the overriding objective for applying the stoloniferous approach is to encourage a more complex and informed cultural reading of the observable acts and artifacts whereby culture consists and self-reveals. As mentioned in the chapter on the Stolons model, no single cultural stolon exists as a clearly demarcated "island unto itself." However, students can be directed to observe the impulse of these stolons when applying the model to their cultural investigations and compositions.

Instruction, Objectives and Examples

In Clemson University's course "Cultural
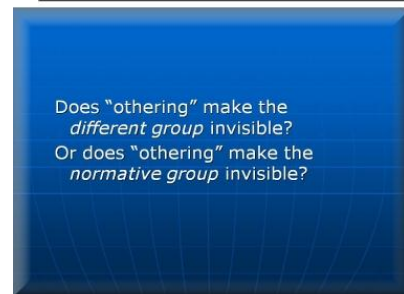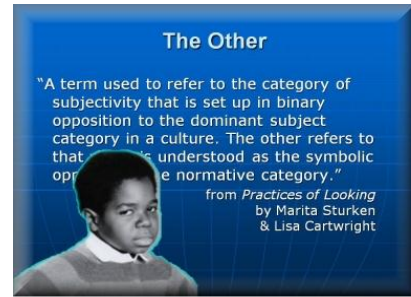
Figure 4.3 - Sample slides from the author's digital lecture materials on "Othering"

79

Literacies Across Media," students are introduced to a broad range of theoretical considerations regarding cultural engagement. Students watch video lectures, read articles, view videos, interact with websites, and discuss (via blogs) a number of topics (such as the issues that have been discussed in this chapter,) ranging from Said's treatment of "Othering" to the issue of rhetorical troping in media, and from Adorno's discussion of the "culture industry" to the remaking of symbols in cross-cultural migration. Some of the instructional material covers the theoretical basis for *nomos* (as contained in this chapter) as a tool for exploring and explicating culture.

Students are encouraged to apply their knowledge of these considerations to several specific projects throughout the term. (See the chapter on the Stolons Method for more on projects.) These specific projects direct the students to critically examine various media displays and performances in their host cultures for cultural implications. In that students will analyze television, magazines, museums, music, display advertisements, literature, etc., the objective of encouraging "cultural literacies" might better be framed as an objective to encourage "cultural mediacies." Recognizing the stoloniferous impact of nomos and the other strands is part and parcel (explicitly so) of the students' analyses of the cultural texts they engage.

To illustrate how these objectives might be demonstrated, and to suggest how students might apply this theoretical approach to their cultural

engagements, I will draw several examples from the "Cultural Literacies Across Media" pilot course, and from the subsequent international digital iteration of the course. These examples are taken from students work in various projects, and were delivered in various media, but all demonstrate the stolon of nomos running throughout the cultural acts and artifacts examined.

The Way of My People: Reflections of the Students' Host Cultures

Early in the course, students are instructed to examine their own cultural distinctions through a project called "The Way of My People." In this project, students are asked to consider what their host cultures might look like to a person who is entirely unfamiliar with the acts and artifacts that the students themselves may see as commonplace. A suggested scenario for the students is to imagine hosting an exchange student who has never been to the United States (or the deep South, or to New York City, or to the West Coast, etc.). This project encourages students to lay aside the idea of their own culture as the "default" or norm, and to see their culture as a result of many sources contributing to a complex and dynamic system of meaning-making by way of the impulses described in the stolons model. 12 By defamiliarizing the host culture, the students can analyze their own culture in a way that may serve as a scaffold for analysis of other cultures.

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[12] *Nomos, ethnos, archon, techne* and *muthos*

In one "Way of My People" project, a student reflects on her real experience of hosting an exchange student from Denmark. In describing various aspects of American culture and names, the student uncovers, or re-notices, the role Christianity and the Bible play in the cultural impact of naming within her southern host culture (See Fig. 4.3). While Christianity's influence can be traced through stolons of muthos and ethnos in the "Bible Belt," the nomos stolon is clearly revealed in the student's description of the names of Holidays and in the given names of individuals. The strands of nomos, ethnos and muthos come together in the student's anecdote of a child in her hometown:

> A family in my hometown conceived a child weeks before they found out the mother had breast cancer. This baby (4 years old at the time of posting) was born healthy as ever, even through his mothers' cancer treatments. They decided to name this little boy David--after David in the Bible who endured and won the fight with Goliath the giant. (Nichols)

> SATURDAY, JANUARY 30, 2010
>
> Hosting an Exchange student to Landrum, South Carolina..
>
> I attended a very small high school, with a graduating class of 97 students; therefore, "exchange student" was hardly in our vocabulary. However, my senior year of high school we had an exchange student, Anne Bergløv, from Copenhagen, Denmark. This was such an experience! Not only did Anne learn and experience a new culture, but through our interaction with her, we were able to learn and experience the Denmark culture.
> I remember Anne saying repeatedly that she was so amazed by everyone's friendliness. She stated that she felt welcome from the very beginning. She said that she loved the friendliness and and politeness you meet everywhere around South Carolina and that people always appear happy.
>
> As I was thinking about Anne's experience in Landrum, SC, my people and my culture, and what/how I would explain it to a foreign exchange student, I found the following examples of the 5 Strands/Roots of Culture that were discussed in last weeks lecture video:
> **Nomos** Religion is very important in the Southern part of the US. In fact, the south is often referred to as the "Bible Belt". The story of my culture and my people can be told through the significance of holiday names and people's names.
> Names of *holidays* we celebrate help tell the story of my people.
> *CHRISTmas-a holiday that commemorates the birth of Christ
> *THANKSgiving-a holiday to give thanks to God
> Names of *people* also help tell the story of my people. It is very common for children to purposely be named after Bible Characters (Rebecca, David, Matthew, Mark,Samuel, Luke, Paul, etc)
> *A family in my hometown conceived a child weeks before they found out the mother had breast cancer. This little baby (now 4 years old) was born healthy as ever, even through his mothers' cancer treatments. They decided to name this little boy David--after David in the Bible who endured and won the fight with Goliath the giant.

Figure 4.4 -Student's Clam Soup Blog entry describing religious influence on names in the culture in the southern United States. (Nichols)

In another blog entry, a student recognizes local place names that may seem particularly exotic to those outside the culture, but may go unnoticed by those within the culture due to (over) familiarity. (See Figure 4.4) The student refers to names such as Six Mile, Twelve Mile and Isaqueena, names which are used by local residents to refer to small communities and geographical locations, often with little thought to the meanings behind such names. However, as is

illustrated by our consideration of "Washington" earlier in this chapter, a close reading of such names as "cultural texts" holds significant potential for learning about social, political, natural and societal forces that shape the culture. Indeed, the student in question may find scant "factual" information on the etymology of these places, but the study of this incident of *nomos* may uncover rich anecdotal veins of *muthos* that grant cultural understanding.

> deeply immersed in the culture. I think that if an exchange student came to stay here, there would be a lot explaining to do. What a boiled peanut is, why Tigers hate Gamecocks, don't ever order a milkshake at Mac's Drive In, and use your Maams and Sirs. I might tell a foreigner about the mytho of Issaqueena, and why there is a town named Six Mile and a beach named Twelve Mile. After about five minutes in Clemson, I'm sure any visitor would become familiar with the archon of the Tiger Paw, and orange, orange, ORANGE.
>
> I think that two of Geert Hosteade's Cultural Dimensions would be important for a visitor to Clemson. The first is the Uncertainty Avoidance Index. I think that this is because the South is an area

Figure 4.5 - Student's reflection on place names from the Clam Soup Blogs (Nichols)

Strangers in Strangely-named Places: Blogs from Abroad

After considering the stolons of culture, particularly nomos, at work in their own culture, students can translate this analytical impulse to their host culture during their study abroad experience. The student may encounter similar

incidents of nomos abroad as they encountered at home, such as in the naming of places.

In a blog post assignment, one student explored the nomos of the town named Aberdeen in Scotland. (See Figure 4.6.) The student's investigation discusses not only the original naming of the town, but also hints at the evolution of the community. Name changes like this Aberdon/Aberdeen, and the aforementioned Petrograd/Leningrad/St. Petersburg, are clues to the history of a location – and often connect to other stolons of *muthos, techne* and *ethnos*. For example, the Aberdon/Aberdeen note reveals something about the movement of geographical boundaries of the community as influenced by population growth, industrial expansion and commercial considerations, such as desire to incorporate more waterway access. The student can use this as a launching point to additional research on how these concerns affect the cultural development of the community in terms of power structures, artistic and industrial invention (*techne),* and self-identification (*ethnos*) based on dominant occupational and commercial concerns. This subsequent research may serve as basis for other research activities, such as informing a set of interview questions related to the findings.

> **SATURDAY, JANUARY 23, 2010**
>
> ➲ **CLAM Post #3**
>
> I generally find the origin of names really interesting, so I explored a little bit of the "nomos" aspect of the Aberdeen's culture first. The origin of the name "Aberdeen" is purely geographic. The original name of the city was Aberdon, meaning "at the mouth of the Don," which was the main river at the time. Now that the city has expanded to also encompass the River Dee as well as the Don, the name expanded too; Aberdeen, meaning "between the rivers Dee and Don." These names helped people locate the city and lend a lot of information about the city's origins as a port, and now as an oil capitol.
>
> I think that Hirsh is correct in thinking that learning is combining old concepts with new ones, and I also believe that cultural literacy is the same. I believe that in order to understand more thoroughly another culture, you first must understand your own. Fortunately, we get that taken care of in grades K-12, and everyday outside the classroom too-just by living in our culture.
>
> You can take a classroom approach to becoming Culturally Literate: reading books, chatting online with people from other cultures, taking language and history classes. This is a really good base, learning facts, associating ideas with one-another ("culture is like grass, not tulips" after all). You can become very close to being very Culturally Literate this way, but I don't feel that you get the full effect until you can immerse yourself in a different culture: the nomos, ethnos, archon, mythos, and techne.

Figure 4.6 - Student's Clam Soup Blog post regarding the naming of Aberdeen (Nichols)

Encounters with strangely-named places can also be a good provocation for students to leverage digital research resources. A student engaging the culture of the Turkish people researched a place named "Maiden Tower," and in doing so, unpacked an interesting incidence of muthos in connection with her query on the nomos of the site. (See figure 4.7.) Such encounters provide targeted queries as

86

opportunities for students to use online research resources such as government websites, websites of universities within the host culture, or international compendiums such as Wikipedia – which was used by the student in this example.

I think that we express our culture mostly through mythos and techne.

I couldn't tell you exactly when I heard the story of the Maiden's Tower, but it is a story that probably all people who live in Istanbul know.

"According to the most popular Turkish legend, a sultan had a much beloved daughter. One day, an oracle prophesied that she would be stung to death by a venomous snake's bite on her 18th birthday. The sultan, in an effort to thwart his daughter's early demise by placing her away from land so as to keep her away from any snakes, had the tower built in the middle of the Bosphorus to protect his daughter until her 18th birthday. The princess was placed in the tower, where she was frequently visited only by her father.

On the 18th birthday of the princess, the sultan brought her a basket of exotic sumptuous fruits as a birthday gift, delighted that he was able to prevent the prophecy. Upon reaching into the basket, however, an asp that had been hiding amongst the fruits bites the young princess and she dies in her father's arms, just as the oracle had predicted. Hence the name Maiden's Tower."

Figure 4.7 - Student Wikipedia research examination of the *nomos* (and *muthos*) of Maiden's Tower. (Nichols)

Incidents and Accidents (Hints and Allegations)

A student who witnessed a protest in Louvain-la-Neuve was spurred to turn to the same popular internet resource as the student in the previous example – but in this case, to learn why people were protesting the "Bologna process." At

first blush for some visiting Americans, this protest might have been interpreted as a call for some reform of food-processing regulations pertaining to popular lunch meats. However, as her research revealed, the protests were about higher education and the demands of globalization and complex societal (cultural) issues – issues similar to those that form the exigent situation for the very course in which this investigation takes place. (See Figure 4.8.)

Figure 4.8 - Student Investigation spurred by demonstrations related to the "Bologna Process." (Nichols)

Students gave attention to the names of countries and nations and affiliations, as exemplified in a video project that explained the similarities and

differences among Great Britain, the United Kingdom and Scotland. (See Figure 4.9.) Because these video projects are published in a public international digital forum, namely YouTube, the learning value is not limited to the student's on-the-field research, or to the critical production of the video project. Rather, the "2.0-ness" of the publication allows for postings from any number of contributors with any number of opinions. It may not be uncommon for students outside this part of Europe area to conflate the United Kingdom with Great Britain, or to think that "country" is synonymous with "nation." The student's interview with a resident of Scotland is augmented, post-publication, by comments that serve as a continual source of learning. Several (purportedly Scottish) viewers responded to the video; some in favor of Scotland's continued membership in the United Kingdom, others in favor of a referendum for Scottish independence.
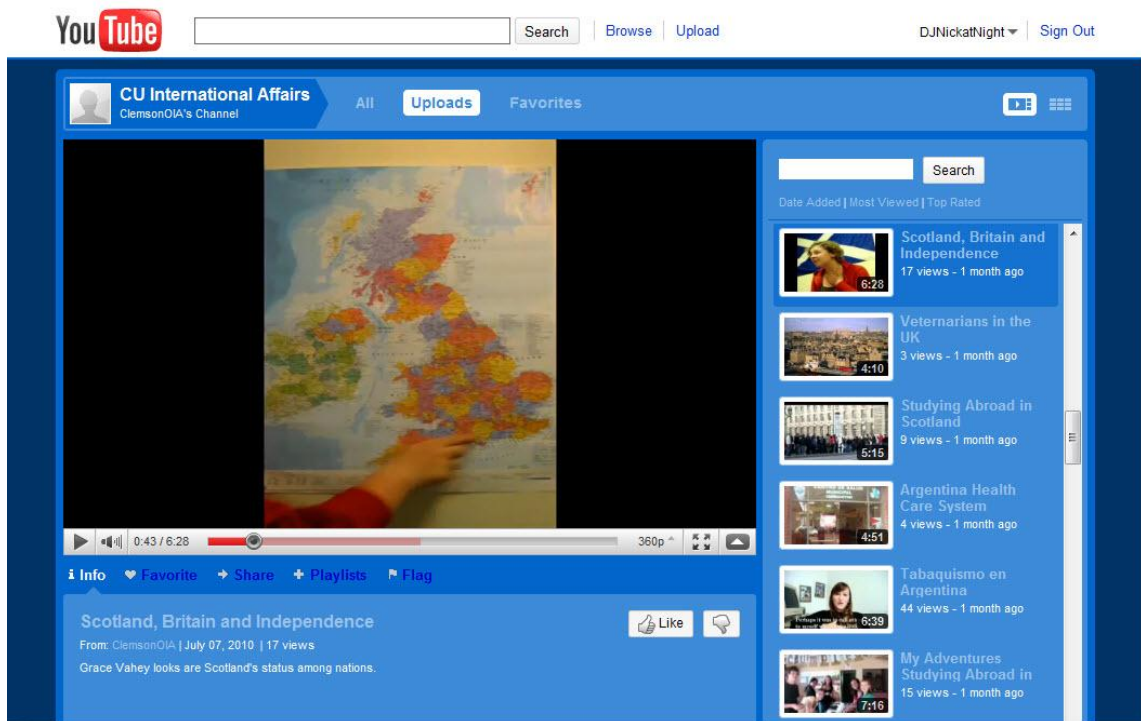
Figure 4.9 - Video project on Scotland, United Kingdom and Great Britain. (Nichols)

Not Wrapping Up Nomos

This chapter, as an introduction to the stolon of *nomos*, has described how this impulse of naming serves to constitute, reveal, resist and/or reify the "shared practices of a... community... through which meanings are made out of the visual, aural and textual world of representations..." (Sturken and Cartwright 3). This chapter illustrates this cultural "meaning-making" power in several ways, including:

- taxonomies as shared knowledge-making devices,

- nomos as agreed-upon social convention,

- exnomination as tool for reifying dominant discourses, and

- neologisms of sub-cultures as tools of resistance.

This brief treatment serves as a primer for the concept of nomos as part of the stoloniferous approach to investigating culture across media.

However, because culture is organic, dynamic, and interconnected, i.e. stoloniferous, I will not "wrap up" this section, but rather "open up" further the discussion of *nomos* by presaging its appearance in treatment of other stolons. For example, in the upcoming chapter on *ethnos*, we will examine one student's exploration of the area of Spain known as Cataluña, but it is appropriate here to foreshadow the project by acknowledging how the student focused on the role *nomos* plays in the stolon of *ethnos*. A segment of the narration from the student's Final Social Issues Project video posted on the Clam Soup blog notes how the naming of a prominent building reveals a resistance to the dominant cultural discourse, and therefore, a component of the unique culture of Catalans.

> Many Catalans believe that Madrid and the Spanish Parliament has no right to govern over them. At the legislative building in the *Placa de Juame 1* (named for a Catalan ruler and not a Spanish Monarch) the Catalan flag flies at the same height as the Spanish flag. (Nichols)

Other *nomos-ethnos* connections will be evident in a student's project that examines the *Suryani* in Turkish (and Turkish-American) cultural settings.

Students' experiences at institutions like the Thomas Green Clemson center in Brussels, or at the Universidad Blas Pascal in Argentina, open consideration for examining the *nomos-muthos* connections. And a *nomos-techne* connection can be seen in the following humorous blog post for one of the assignments. (See figure 4.10. This blog is also a fecund field for discussion on the effects of commercialism and American influence on cultural development in other countries.)

The student was the first student in the CLAM course to be studying in Scotland, and expressed his unique experience of researching an institution named "McDonald's" in his blog. (See Figure 4.10.):

> I think Randy Nichols (Instructor of our CLAM class-one of the reasons I am Blogging) did not realize that one of his students was in Scotland and that it is very hard to find a proper McDonald's in Scotland (Burger King's on the other hand are plentiful). Basically, I was instructed to go to McDonald's and compare it to McDonald's in America, so Scott (he decided he was bored) and I went. The first MacDonald's we came too had a much more homey environment than any McDonald's I had ever been in before. upon realizing that it did not, in fact, serve food Scott and I decided to continue our search. We walked into the heart(at least its the heart of the city in my opinion) of Glasgow otherwise known as Central Station. We

walked around inside the station but again the station was a fruitless search, just Burger Kings. We were finally rewarded upon walking around the outside of the station with what I thought was a true McDonald's. It wasn't till I bought an apple Danish that i realized the food was WAAAAY too good to be a classic American McDonald's. So I took my Apple pastry and walked out, then down the street, stunned that something called McDonald's could serve something so terribly delicious. It was after another minute of city trudging that Scott and I came upon those horrible golden arches... (Nichols)

Figure 4.10 - From student's blog response to the McDonald's Project. (Nichols)

In the United States, it is common practice for trademarked names of large commercial concerns to enter the language as everyday vocabulary. Americans may refer to a soft drink of any variety as a "Coke." To make a photo-static copy, students might say that they will "Xerox" a copy. To get this printed copy to

another university, students might say that they will "FedEx" it. Students within this dominant culture may take for granted the meaning-making power such terministic adoptions convey, until they, like our student in Scotland, have the cultural rhetoric made visible by the defamiliarization afforded by their critical analysis of *nomos* at work in other cultural contexts.

Conclusion

As is evident from the student artifacts included in the preceding section, attention to *nomos*, as it reveals and constitutes culture, came as part of larger projects for students. That is, no specific project was assigned that required students to focus exclusively on *nomos*. Rather, the students' comments on how naming shapes and discloses cultural knowledge are woven together with their comments on the cultural meaning-making of stories, or public displays, or productions of the culture of study. By incorporating *nomos* as one strand of an integrated stoloniferous model, students are not directed to look "for" some particular thing in their new cultural environment, but are rather encouraged to look "at" the acts, artifacts and practices that are before them. This more organic approach allows students to experience the culture as they encounter it, rather than encouraging them to rush past potentially informative cultural engagements in order to "find" a cultural artifact of a specific type.

But by attending to the possibility of cultural meaning-making through the stolons, including *nomos*, every cross-cultural experience is a potential source of learning. For example, without a critical readiness to observe the impulse of

nomos at work, students may have given little or no attention to the cultural significance of previously discussed place-names such as *Placa de Juame 1,* or religious connections in Biblically-derived names such as David. The stolon of *nomos*, as an analytical tool, helps students recognize the stolon of *nomos* doing its work as a maker of cultural meaning in the host culture. Instructors may find multiple other uses for the stolon model and the strand of *nomos* as tools of rhetorical analysis, in that it encourages critical reading of a wide range of texts.

Chapter 5
Archon: The Things We Keep (and Show)

"My lack of education hasn't hurt me none;

I can read the writing on the wall."

Paul Simon, "Kodachrome"

Let us return to a site from chapter 4, Washington, to "read the writing on the wall" as a way to approach culture. Again, let us suppose that a student new to the United States is in Washington to learn about the culture of America. Our hypothetical student has landed in a veritable jungle of official monuments, memorials and museums. Among this embarrassment of cultural riches are: the Washington Monument, the Lincoln Memorial, The Vietnam Memorial, Arlington Cemetery and the Tomb of the Unknowns, the National Archives, and a

Figure 5.1- Monument from Lincoln Steps (Nichols, J.)

plethora of other similarly important installations. It would be something approaching ironic if our fictitious student should walk blindly by these sites on the way to buy a book on American Culture & Thought at the Barnes and Noble on 12th

and E Streets (a block from Ford's Theater.) If we were observing such an action, we would surely intervene and begin to point out that clues to American history, values, beliefs, legends, laws, and more were all around, in the form of *archon*.
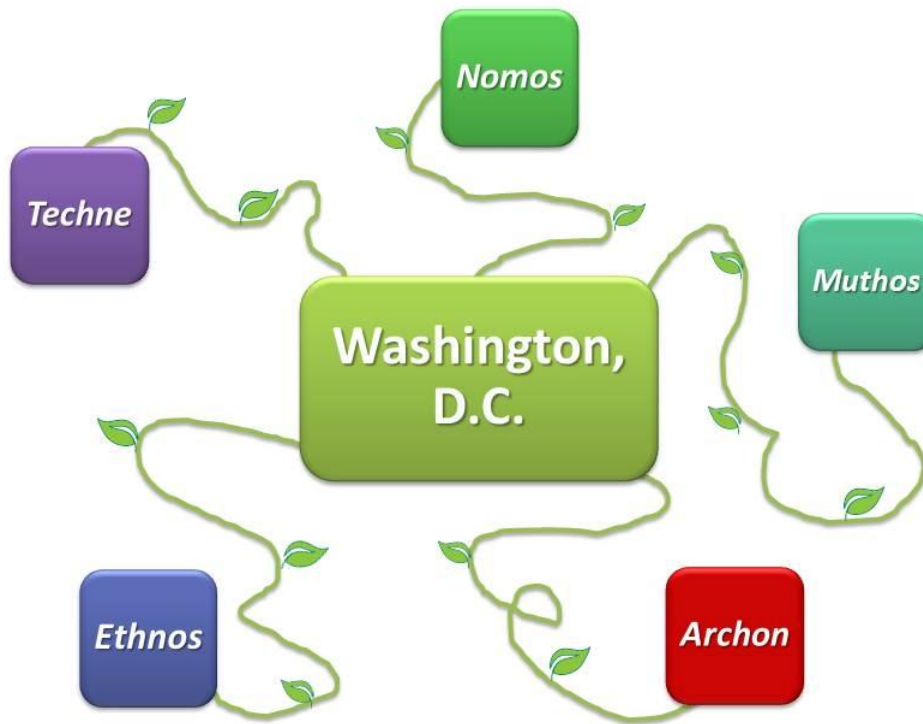
Archon at Work

Archon, in this sense, refers to that stoloniferous impulse of culture that preserves and displays artifacts and acts of tradition for the purpose of making meaning and establishing or reifying values and beliefs as socially legitimate. *Archon*, as a stolon, involves selection of acts and objects with significance to the cultural group, and the prominent display of these selections. Archon can make cultural meaning through repetition, as in holidays or festivals – such as

Passover, Christmas, Independence Day, or the Pledge of Allegiance. Archon

may likewise effect instantiation of, and preservation of, cultural values through

persistence, as in monuments, buildings or situated display – such as Mt.

Rushmore, flagpoles, totems, McDonald's golden arches, the Lincoln Memorial,

graffiti, inuksuit, Ebenezers, etc. In basic terms, if the cultural group has

preserved and displayed an object or practice to convey meaning, then Archon is

at work in a rhetorical sense. And so, it is prudent to consider the connections to

classic rhetoric and rhetorical power in the following brief discussions.

Archon and Epideictic Rhetoric

The Archon stolon is closely connected to the concept of epideictic

rhetoric. In its classical usage, references to epideictic rhetoric focused, in the

main, on oratory for ceremonies or other public occasions. Simplistic definitions

of epideictic rhetoric reduce it to speech that moves along the praise/blame

binary. On one hand, an epideictic oratory might be one of encomium, praising

the subject for its virtue. On the other hand, an epideictic oratory might be one of

vituperation (*psogos*), laying blame on the subject for its vice. Again, this is a

simple explanation, but it will serve as a starting point for this discussion, which I

will begin with a couple of observations about The Rhetorics of Display.

First, the impulse of *epideixis*, or what I will call Rhetorics of Display, is an

intricately present and important component of culture formation. At times, the

rhetorics of display may be used to support existing cultural values; at other

times, it may be used to question or problematize cultural practices; and on other occasions, it may be used to mediate or announce a shift in cultural norms.

Second, rhetorics of display are not limited to orality, but are manifest in visual, social and digital expressions. Epideictic rhetoric continued to be effectively used after the first Gutenberg shift from orality to literacy, and continues to be effectively used after what Kevin Kelly calls "the second Gutenberg shift" from print literacy to screen literacy (Kelly). In fact, Lawrence Prelli, in *Rhetorics of Display*, contends that, in our contemporary constellation of image/screen, rhetorics of display have become "nearly ubiquitous," and are the "dominant rhetoric of our time" (Prelli 2). Students should engage other cultures with an understanding that the expressions of culture are rhetorical, that this rhetoric functions across many impulses, such as those identified in the stolons model, and that these impulses are expressed through various media ranging from gestures to speech to architecture to digital media.

Archon and Dominant Discourses

The meaning making power of archon is such that, in his deconstructionist approach, Jacques Derrida addresses it this way: "Let us not begin at the beginning, nor even at the archive. But rather at the word 'archive'" (Derrida and Prenowitz 9). Derrida sees the archive as the displayed, external and persistant "memory-makers" of culture:

> There is no archive without a place of consignation, without a
>
> technique of repetition, and without a certain exteriority. No

archive without outside. Let us never forget this Greek distinction

between mneme or anamnesis on the one hand, and hypomnema

on the other. The archive is hypomnesic. (Derrida and Prenowitz

14)

Derrida ascribes to the "archontic" practices the power to make meaning by way

of hypmnema, i.e. a shared material memory, a publicly placed note of reminder.

He sees such a process as a form of political violence. He sees the functional

elements of the archive as

…at once an institutive and a conservative function: the violence of

a power (Gewalt) which at once posits and conserves the law….

What is at issue here, starting with the exergue, is the violence of

the archive itself, as archive, as archival violence. It is thus the first

figure of an archive, because every archive… is at once institutive

and conservative. Revolutionary and traditional. (Derrida and

Prenowitz 12)

It is interesting to note here that Derrida attributes utility (albeit a violent utility)

of the archive to both the dominant discourse (to conserve traditional ideas) and

to dissenting discourses (to institute new, "revolutionary" ideas.)

And this "cultural meaning-making by display" is everywhere. The observer

only needs a discerning, critical eye, which attention to the stolon of archon

provides. Lawrence J. Prelli, in explaining the ubiquity and dominance of these

visual displays in contemporary communication and culture, is operating under

the Burkean idea that all communication mediated by language is "inherently persuasive" (Prelli 12). He extends this charge to all communication mediated by visual display as well, acknowledging that tropes of visuality are influenced by rhetorical motives (Prelli 12). Prelli sees epideictic rhetoric, not as a display after rhetorical work is done, but as an important part of rhetoric itself. That is to say, that the decisions of what to keep and show, and how to show it, are paramount to the process of culture making. In sharing examples of how this impulse informs cultural investigation for classroom use, it is important to point out that these archon work both in ways that are permanent and in ways that are repetitive.

Located and Permanent – and Rhetorical Arrangement

Some artifacts of archon are located and permanent, such as monuments, statues, memorials or those artifacts that may be found in museums. While each artifact is a valid source for student research, students should also consider the rhetoric behind the construction, arrangement and placement of such artifacts. In fact, rhetorical work is done by both the composers of such artifacts, and by the researchers who compose the cultural findings. That is to say that in "framing" the objects of the archon, there is a "troping" at work – a directing of the viewers toward an intentional meaning. Likewise, the observer, in describing the cultural findings, will also "frame" the commentary and display in a way that directs the audience toward a particular meaning. In a sense, the ethnographer's

composition reveals knowledge about the culture of the subject of the investigation, but also reveals knowledge about the culture of the ethnographer.

In *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage*, Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett acknowledges that "Ethnographic artifacts are objects of ethnography" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 326). That is to say, objects may be used by an *ethnos* as narratological, enabling a culture to "tell a story" that can be studied. But also, these objects may be used by the ethnographer as narrative, enabling the ethnographer to "tell the story" of the research itself. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett gives attention to the shift in "meaning making" between encountering artifacts "in situ" and artifacts in secondary "intentional display," and opens the discussion for the rhetorical power of "framing" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 326). In Kirshenblatt-Gimblett's treatment, the ethnographer may be thought of as a "director" (a la museum director?) or as a composer. Corrine A. Kratz and Ivan Karp point to this malleability of museum as medium in "Museum Frictions: Public Cultures/Global Transformations" when they note that the "idea of the museum as a varied and often changing set of practices, processes and interactions" (Kratz and Karp 2). Karp and Kratz see the constant "frictions" (among various concerns, financial and political,) playing a significant part in how the ethnographer displays the ethnos of a target culture.

The need for the composer's critical consideration of troping and framing is evident in many other iterations of display and performance. Michelle Bloom, in *Fantasizing about History in the Wax Museum*, discusses wax figures, which

are, in themselves, "hypermimetic portraits" (Bloom 60). Bloom notes how wax figure displays show personages juxtaposed in proximity who could never have met in life, and recounts Dickens' comments on how this anachronistic element opens the way for history/ies to be made apart from accepted linear convention (Bloom 174). Because the display allows for editing of the *muthos*, wax museums may be considered "revisionist historians" (Bloom 175).

The malleability of the museum that Dickens noted can make room for commentary on the medium itself. Ivan Karp and Fred Wilson, in "Constructing the Spectacle of Culture in Museums," discuss Wilson's display "Mining the Museum," which delivers strong social commentary by making visible the rhetoric implicit in troping and framing (Karp and Wilson 487). Wilson often includes what would, conventionally, be excluded – for example, slave shackles in a display of colonial metalworking. He also used the archon of the museum to call attention to the racially-marginalizing *archon* already prevalent in the form of blackamoors, or Aunt Jemima figurines. Wilson's approach illustrates the capacity of displays to make cultural meaning for dominant discourses and dissenting discourses.

Temporary and Repetitive – Conservative and Revolutionary

Some instances of *archon* are not fixed and permanent, but rather temporal and repetitive. These repetitive celebrations, performances, and observable acts compliment the culture-making permanent objects of a society's museums and monuments. In *Essays on Performance Theory*, Richard

Schechner's Performance Theory approach helps situate these displays in context of investigating culture. Schechner addresses intentionally displayed rituals, such as those in the Tiwi tribe in North Australia, as "actuals" – impromptu performances which serve as a conveyance of cultural stories, cultural values, mores, etc. (Schechner 212). Schechner believes the "stages" for such performances must be *ad hoc* to accommodate the immediacy of such rituals: "space is used concretely and organically" (Schechner 212). These observable performances are rhetorically powerful ways to communicate and perpetuate cultural knowledge, and suggest that a culture can be "known," at least in part, by critical observation of its temporal, but repetitive displays.

Victor Turner, in "Social Dramas and Ritual Metaphors," suggests that even public displays that illustrate rifts within a social order can be culturally informative (Turner 230). Turner points to "social dramas" which may first manifest "as the breach of a norm, the infraction of a rule of morality, law, custom, or etiquette, in some public arena" (Turner 150) Even this "breach" of cultural norms serves to display the cultural norms, and may reveal an evolutionary (or revolutionary) change in cultural mores.

Turner defines Social Dramas as aharmonic or disharmonic social processes which breach cultural norms, break social rules, or violate culturally prescribed mores or manners (Turner 103). And yet, social dramas also imply, if not establish, new cultural norms by these breaches. At length, social dramas display and justify these new norms as ameliorated by the social drama.

Culture is affected by *archon* interruptions caused by outside forces using the rhetoric of display available in social dramas. The social drama of Gomez-Pena and Coco Fusco is a good example of social drama as interrupting cultural contributor. In order to create a breach from the existing culturally accepted stereotype of exotic tribespeople as "savages," Guillermo Gómez -Peña and Coco Fusco displayed themselves in a cage, posing as Amerindians from an imaginary island (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 220). However, this satire was taken by many observers to be authentic, and the performers of this social drama were taken to be "real savages." The existing theatrical marginalization of Amerindians proved to be a more complicated preconception to breach than the performers might have imagined. However, as is evidenced by the ensuing commentary, journal articles, documentary treatments, etc. – a breach was born. Such rhetorical displays of social drama can function to decenter meaning of ubiquitously displayed artifacts, and make way for instantiating new meaning. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, in her discussion of Gómez -Peña and Coco Fusco in the chapter "Undoing the Ethnographic," says that

> Techniques of defamiliarization override what Barthes calls gratuitous meaning, whether by severing the expected relations between signifieds and signifiers, refusing the logic of the narrative, or emptying the sign of obvious meaning. (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 235)

When this decentering takes place through the *archon* of such displays, a new cultural meaning is possible: one where it is not Amerindians who are marginalized, but rather where the stereotype of "Amerindians as savages" is marginalized. Such is the culture-making power of *archon*.

Archon in the Classroom

With these considerations in mind, let us turn to some examples of how the *archon* stolon informs, instructs and improves culturally situated multimodal composition. The idea of *archon* is helpful in framing instruction, as a guide for cultural investigation, and as prompts for composition projects.

In the Cultural Literacies Across Media program, students are supplied with a working definition of *archon*: "*Archon* is the cultural expression that takes place through the public display of artifacts, monuments and other markers of cultural significance." The impulse of *archon* is illustrated to the students through visual examples of how they might observe *archon* at work in their host cultures. (Indeed, even this pedagogical exercise is an example of *archon* and the rhetoric of display.) Examples are accompanied by descriptions and explanations. Many of the examples will already have some connection of familiarity with the students' knowledge of their home culture, and allow learning to take place via scaffolding.

Examples of Archon for Illustration

Students in the classroom are presented with examples of *archon* appearing in both familiar and non-familiar environments. This was done so that,

by scaffolding, students could relate known instances of *archon* with instances that presented themselves in the field. It is helpful here to refer back to previous discussion of assignments and to be reminded that there are no "archon" assignments that directed arbitrary "hunts" for particular impulses. Rather, the assignments were The instructional materials include images and discussion of a number of prominent displays, among which are the National Archives of the United States.

Figure 5.2 - The National Archives, Washington, D.C.(Nichols)

The instructional materials discuss the preservation and display of documents such as the Declaration of Independence, The Constitution, and the

Bill of Rights. Students are provoked to explore the rhetorical decisions implicit in the selection of object that made it into the catalog – as well as the rhetoric in the deselection of objects that are excluded from the collection. For examples, students might ask, "What cultural message is expressed by the prominence of the central documents (referred to as the 'Charters of Freedom' by archive literature) in the archive's physical display, website and printed matter?" Many students are familiar with the security at the National Archives, either from visiting the location, browsing the web site, or via fictional treatments such as the Nicolas Cage adventure, *National Treasure*. Students may discuss "Why are these documents valued far above most other federal holdings?" It would be natural for students to notice the archive's connection, not only with *archon*, but with *muthos* (the historical narrative supported by such artifacts,) as well as with *techne* (in that the John Hancock hand-written signature is still one of the "must see" sights for visitors to the archive,) and with *ethnos*, represented by the revolutionary phrase "We the People." Such discussion facilitates application of knowledge of the stolons and of the rhetorical moves inherent in any intentional "display." This example can serve as impetus for any number of topics ranging from Othering to discussing why the "we" in "we the people" only included white landowners. Nevertheless, practicing critical looking and analysis with a familiar cultural site helps students to prepare for critical engagement and culture analysis on the field.

Other examples are presented to students for discussion in groups, class discussion, or for analysis outside the class session. Depending on the make-up of the class, or the goals of the instructor, discussions on archon (as maker of cultural meaning) may vary in length and depth.

- Statues of "founding fathers" from the Constitution Center in Philadelphia, and wax figures from Madame Tussaud's in Manhattan – with discussion of the role of venerating heroes, celebrities and prominent leaders as an epideictic of praise for certain cultural values,

- The statue of Shakespeare in Central Park – with discussion of how a culture gives a nod to admired values from other cultures via *archon*,

- The statue of Bob Hartley/Bob Newhart at the Navy Pier in Chicago – with discussion of the lingering persistent impact of pop culture narratives,

- Bald Rock graffiti – with discussion of unofficial local populist archives,

- Classic Coca-Cola billboard – with discussion of the multi-layered rhetoric of display in play in some artifacts, including references to commercial, nostalgic, historical, and ethnic issues,

- Ruins of Gilded Age-era mansion on Cumberland Island in Georgia – with discussion of the rhetoric at work in the preservation, restoration, neglect or destruction of historic sites, and

- Various automobiles in the BMW museum in Greeville, SC and millstones at the Haygood Mill in Pickens, SC– with discussion of how "industrial" artifacts can speak through *techne* and *archon* simultaneously.

The broad and disparate set of *archon* illustrations maybe augmented with other local illustrations to represent even more possible cross-cultural instances of *archon* at work.

Examples of Archon in Student Work

Keeping in mind that students in Cultural Literacies Across Media were directed towards comprehensive projects reflecting personal cultural engagement, cross-cultural professional practice, and analysis of social issues within the host culture, the examples shared in this chapter (and parallel sections in other stolon chapters) are snapshots or threads of larger projects. Each instance is part of a larger body of work, which is fittingly a meta-commentary on the inter-connectivity of the theoretical model of stolons. One student explains this in his defense of one of his major projects:

> *Mythos, ethnos, nomos, archon,* and *techne* all just sort of fell into place. It was not that I was consciously identifying them in my initial storyboards, because they were subconsciously affecting the decisions I

was making in nearly every stage of the process. From all the practice I got blogging this semester, addressing these themes had become natural to me, as they fell into place within the story, and these techniques are self-evident in the projects themselves. (Nichols)

This sentiment is representative of the commentary, attitude and practices of other students in the course.

One example of student attention to archon as a meaningful part of their larger projects is the references to the Sagrada Familia (Church of the Holy Family) in Barcelona. Many students mentioned the site. A number of students photographed elements of the Sagrada Familia architecture. One student named her blog in honor of the architect of the church, Antonio Gaudi. Attention to this particular instance of *archon* became part of the fabric of the students' impressions of Barcelona, informing their compositions of public, personal and social projects.

Figure 5.3 - screen capture of student project on Barcelona.(Nichols)

Construction of the church was taken over by Barcelona's own icon of architecture, Antonio Gaudi, during the last years of his life. That the church is still under construction today, some 130 years after construction began, means Barcelona has not only been affected by the presence of this significant structure, but by its constant construction. One Student notes,

> The Sagrada Familia, which was designed by Gaudi is still in
>
> construction today, and is not scheduled to be completed for
>
> another twenty years even with the application of modern
>
> construction techniques. It is a marvel unto itself, and even though

incomplete is already revered the world around for its architectural

significance and has become a symbol of the city. (Nichols)

Though students noted the obvious meaning-making of the *archon* in its

portrayal of Christian figures and themes, such as in the Nativity Façade, they

also offered commentary on the structure's broader meaning to the culture of

Barcelona. One student closely connected Sagrada Familia (a blend of Gothic, Art

Nouveau, and Modernisme) with the diversity and activity of Barcelona.

Conclusion

Again, no student was assigned to do a project on the *archon* of Sagrada

Familia, though such a project might be an informative and rewarding project,

but rather included the *archon* of this particular piece of architecture as one

thread of many that comprise and reveal the rich tapestry that is the culture of

Barcelona. By giving attention to the stolon of *archon*, students were able to

develop a more textured, complex, nuanced picture of their host cultures. In

short, by way of attending to the stolon of *archon*, the student in our Barcelona

example engaged the history of an architectural site and came to understand the

importance of the legendary architect Antonio Gaudi to the Barcelona culture,

and the pride instilled by laying claim to Gaudi as one of their own. The student

was enabled by *archon* to understand that identification with symbols of the

Christian religion remains at the center of ethnic identification for people in this

cultural group. The student was able to integrate this learning into existing

knowledge and understanding about the culture of Barcelona.

The stolon of *archon* is useful in making visible the easily-overlooked narratives and rhetoric at work in a culture's epideictic displays. No circumspect instructor would assume that "Everyone knows…," especially about the meanings implicit in displayed acts or artifacts outside the student's normal cultural milieu. Using the stolon of *archon* as an intentional directive guide can equip students with a useful tool for critical reading of cultural texts in the cross-cultural experience. The stolon of *archon* can provoke the students' inquisitiveness toward discovery that may otherwise escape them. The stolon of *archon* is part of a strategy that equips student for research on the field, and "on the fly" in the study abroad experience. However, the savvy instructor could find multiplied other opportunities for applying the *archon* stolon, from analysis of books, film and video to compositional strategies that embrace visual literacies, and many spaces in between.

Chapter 6
Muthos: The Stories We Tell

"This field, this game: it's a part of our past, Ray.

It reminds us of all that once was good and could be again.

Oh... people will come, Ray. People will most definitely come."

Character of Terrence Mann, *Field of Dreams*

Let us visit again the fanciful international student of our hypothetical Washington D.C. story of previous chapters. In our last chapter, we noted the rich resources available to our student through Washington's *archon*, i.e. rhetorical displays, accessible by various official sites such as museums and monuments. We mentioned that, as omniscient onlookers, we might feel compelled to intervene to assist the student's engagement of the cultural texts all around. Suppose we followed through on our impulses, and came alongside the student to point out that *archon* reveals clues to the culture. As we pointed out specific acts and artifacts of archon, we would, in more cases than not, be led to relate a story or legend connected to American culture. The student's inquisitive attention to the cultural meaning-making found in the displays might elicit from you (their native companion) stories ranging from Boy George Washington chopping down the cherry tree, to the siege of Fort McHenry in the War of 1812, to the plot of "All in the Family," to the Civil War Battle at Gettysburg and President Lincoln's

memorial address there, to Martin Luther King, Jr.'s "I Have a Dream" speech, to the story of Vincent Van Gogh's madness and self-mutilation.

These stories, existing apart from – yet provocatively connected to – the statues and memorials, are interwoven in the national consciousness to form a network that shapes and reveals American cultural values, beliefs, worldviews, prejudices, and preferences. This is the work of *muthos*, that stoloniferous impulse of culture that serves to institute, conserve, propagate, and problematize cultural meaning through stories, legends and myths. *Muthos*, is often connected with *archon,* as our example illustrates, but *muthos* also works effectively without physical displays, as it does through songs, poetry, story-telling, and other oral traditions.
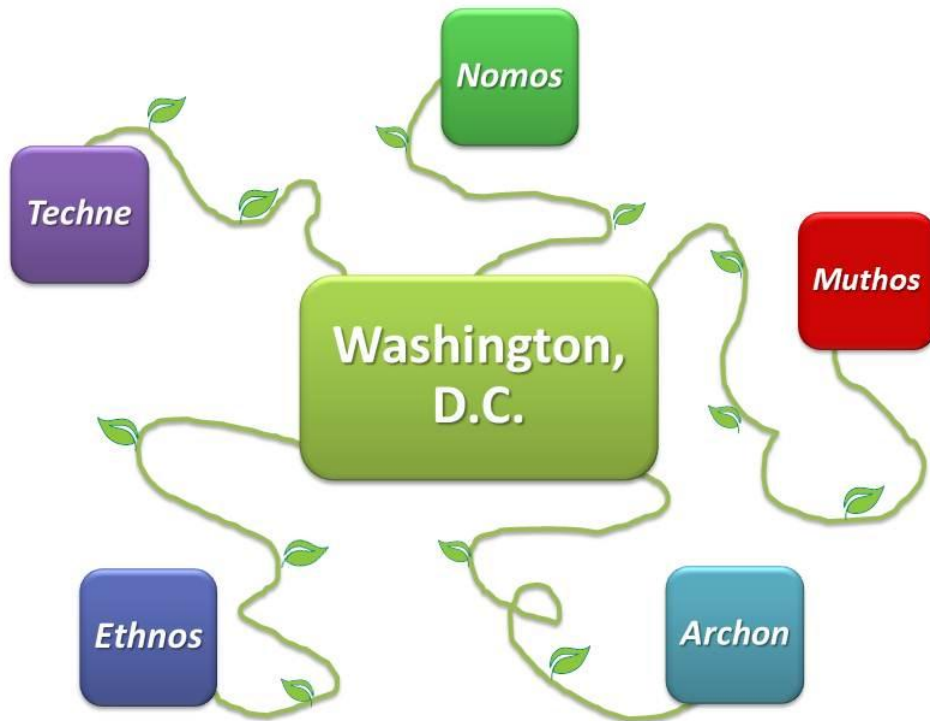
Muthos and Power: The Village as an Example of the Cultural Formation

"Don't let the bad color be seen. It attracts them." This simple statement explains how the color red is proscribed, in toto, from society. No clothing, plants, signs, art, architecture can ever contain the color red. Violating this rule would mean certain excommunication from the society. Of course, fans of M. Night Shyamalan will recognize this example as being taken from the fictitious "village" in his film, *The Village*. And, though fictitious, the example serves to raise questions about how a society's dominant ideology can, through *muthos*, shape the values, beliefs and cultural practices of that society's members.

The Village in this example is a very small, closed society – bereft of modern technologies and separated from contact with other societies, with rare exceptions of interactions for commerce with "the towns." This isolation allows the holders of the dominant ideology to influence the beliefs and practices of the community through using the available means of histories, legends and stories to limit the villagers' choices, and thereby proscribe any number of practices – such as use of the color red. These stories and legends form a woven *muthos* that differentiates the villagers from two sets of Others: the townspeople who are wicked, but accepted for simple interactions of trade; and the "monsters," (aka "those we don't speak of,") the ultimate Others who are bent on destroying those who stray from the bounds of prescribed cultural mores of the society.

The Village is a tightly constructed, and perhaps, incredible scenario – but it does serve as a sort of microcosmic model to see how dominant ideologies affect cultural practices and values. In their aptly titled "Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception," Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer describe the media controlled by a society's dominant ideology as a "culture industry" (Adorno and Horkheimer). They see these media as propagandistic in their utilitarian function, serving to "educate" the masses in the ways of the dominant ideology. These media shape the values and beliefs of the society at large by way of repeating an approved set of stories, histories and legends, i.e. *muthos*.

By offering the "illusion of choice" (where all the choices are actually the same,) even apparent agency does not allow individuals "outside the *muthos*." Adorno and Horkheimer see the reduction (or elimination) of the "individual" as a primary tactic of such media. With the reduction of individualism, the growth of collectivism allows for more pervasive control, and greater acceptance of the legends and histories which will be printed, broadcast, or otherwise instantiated.

Though Village-esque comparisons may easily be made here, Adorno and Horkheimer speak to the occasion of the media power utilized by Nazi Germany, and their comments are aimed mainly at the speeches of a dictator delivered via the broadcast medium of radio. However, the functional effect of the "culture industry" is the same influence on cultural values and practices as the influence of stories and legends via orality in *The Village*, and as the influence of film via the screen in America as described by Adorno in "Culture Industry Reconsidered" (Adorno and Rabinbach 12-19).

The society of *The Village* is controlled by a single episteme, whose dominant paradigm excludes views inconsistent with its own. One way the elders of the village accomplish this is by reducing technology. (It might have been polite to have said "Spoiler Alert" earlier, but it seems especially called for here, inasmuch as some rhetoric will be made visible, and such transparency will spoil your initial viewing of the film.) The elders have arbitrarily limited technology to that of a century ago, and have gone to extremes to insulate others from technology, notably by situating the village in a "no fly zone." This keeps

competing narratives on the "outside."[13] The primary mode of communication

seems to be oral story-telling, seemingly an available means, at least

mechanically, for competing ideas to find voice. But the medium of story-telling

in *The Village* depends on the strength of the *ethos* of the story-teller – a

commodity controlled by the elders. In fact, the story-telling itself does not only

deliver the cultural substance – it *is*, in part, the substance of the culture.

Additionally, the habitus of our village builds culture by way of *muthos* as

a unifying practice and as a collective "maker of meaning." This library of

common myths, stories, legends, etc. constructs an ethnic identity that is

reinforced by its contrast to the Others in the stories. But this common mythic

library also instantiates itself as authoritative, relevant, or true by means of its

pervasiveness. Let us refer back to our "Flintstones" example in chapter 2. By

means of ubiquity and repetition, the knowledge of the lyrics of the cartoon's

theme song is transferred to an entire cultural group; but the widespread

transmittal of the Flintstone lyrics also grants a certain validity (as pop culture)

to the song, the cartoon, and the means of transmittal (Saturday morning

television scheduling). So, in this case, not only does the broadcast medium of

television transmit cultural knowledge as data, the medium also endorses itself as

a valid oracle for such knowledge. Likewise, this cultural "meta-communication"

can be seen in our village scenario: story-telling tells the group what knowledge is

---

[13] Comparison might be made between the media of our village and the media of the villages
behind the "Iron Curtain" or the "Bamboo Curtain" of a half-century ago, or indeed the media
crackdowns of totalitarian regimes during the 2011 protests in Libya, Iran, Bahrain, Tunis, Syria
et al.

valid, while at the same time validating story-telling as the oracle of truth. This scenario epitomizes the control process of a dominant discourse, as discussed in chapter 2. In the face of such pervasive influence, Adorno's aforementioned quote may again be referenced: "No machinery of rejoinder has been devised…"

But, of course, "machinery of rejoinder" is constantly being devised within societies to accommodate new strands of cultural meaning-making in ways that bring about evolutionary, or revolutionary, cultural shifts. In our *Village* story, the shift takes places in a partial, but sudden way when medical necessity requires "making the rhetoric visible" for a villager normally outside the controlling group, putting at risk the mythic machinery of the Culture Industry at work in *The Village*. Of course, for the film's omniscient audience, the shift is revolutionary and complete.

The Village is a convenient illustration of a few basic principles of *muthos* as culture-builder:

1. Uniformity and collectivism has a correlative relationship with the ubiquity and acceptance of social myths, legends and histories.

2. The dominant discourse in a society will, in some measure, reward those who embrace the collective *muthos*, and punish those who shun the collective *muthos*.

3. In every cultural setting, *muthos* changes, shifts, moves – by way of breach, adulteration, amelioration, augmentation, diminishment, displacement or revolution.

The principles that are painted broad-brush in our cinematic allegory may be seen in more subtle strokes in the cross-cultural experience of the real-life contemporary student. What follows is a brief explanation of how the muthos stolon concepts are expressed in the classroom setting.

Muthos and Pedagogy

Students apply the concepts of muthos to their cultural analysis by viewing muthos as "The cultural expression that comes through stories, legends, histories that are part of the cultural group's identity."

Examples of Muthos for Instruction

In Cultural Literacies Across Media, illustrations of *muthos* are accompanied by discussion of their role in cultural expression and in instantiating or interrogating cultural beliefs or values. Here, as in the last chapter, I will expand somewhat on one of the examples used to illustrate *muthos*. This expansion can serve as a model for expanding discussion of any of the other examples listed later. For our prime example, I focus on an artifact of *muthos* that is both historical and fictional, the story from the book *Shoeless Joe* by W.P. Kinsella that was brought into the American minds and consciences by the Kevin Costner film, *Field of Dreams*.

Figure 6.1 - Field of Dreams, near Dyersville, Iowa. (JoeyBLS)

The story of *Field of Dreams* has reached a point of ubiquity in American culture such that the story can be recalled and referentially situated in conversations by the use of a simple catchphrase such as, "If you build it, he will come," or "Oh, people will come, Ray. People will most definitely come." The story is that of a midwest American farmer who is directed by an audible, though disembodied, voice to convert his cornfields into a baseball field. The purpose of this is revealed to be an opportunity for the late, disgraced baseball hero Joe Jackson to have another chance to play the game from which he was banned. At length, other purposes for this action are revealed, including the reuniting of the farmer with his late, estranged father. (The story is of a genre called magic realism, where the natural/possible and the supernatural/impossible function alongside each other.) In the telling of the story, several ideas and concepts are endorsed through an epideictic display of praise:

- The traditional American family unit, (Ray's roles as husband and father are shown as admirable and important,)

- America's agrarian roots, (the idea of owning and farming the land as honorable is painted in a flattering light from the first moments of the "golden hour" footage,)

- The counter-culture thought of the 60's, (the Terrence Mann character is a thinly-veiled representation of J.D. Salinger, who is shown in the light of an inspiring thinker and leader,)

- Baseball as an American pastime, (at one point, the Terrence Mann character says, "The one constant through all the years, Ray, has been baseball. America has rolled by like an army of steamrollers. It has been erased like a blackboard, rebuilt and erased again. But baseball has marked the time. This field, this game: it's a part of our past, Ray.")

- Altruism and sacrifice, (exemplified by Ray's sacrifice of his field for his dead hero, and Moonlight Graham's sacrifice of baseball to save a choking child,)

- Idealism, (Ray's extravagant actions, building the field, driving to Boston, etc. directed by an unseen voice,)

- Redemption, (Shoeless Joe Jackson, banished from baseball in the 1919 "Black Sox Scandal" is given a place to return to the game that he loved and lost,) and

- Justice (Ty Cobb, who was known as a most unsavory character, but never banned from baseball, is not allowed to come play with the other dead players. "Ty Cobb wanted to play, but none of us could stand the son-of-a-bitch when we were alive, so we told him to stick it! ")

This story embodies many cultural beliefs and values that are at once central to the American identity, and at the same time, unfashionable for discussion.

Because of this, there may be for many an approach-avoidance conflict between the resistance to maudlin sentimentality and the irresistible attraction to the idea of redemption the story offers. Therefore the story is embraced indirectly, first in the form of its magic realistic delivery, and then by unspoken homage. While accompanying students to an event at Iowa State University, I made a visit to the site of the filming of the film. After a long drive, past thousands of acres of farm land, I saw the mythic image rise out of the cornfields in a way that could only be described as cinematographic.

Figure 6.2 - Group at Field of Dreams, near Dyersville, Iowa. (Nichols)

Figure 6.3 - Author at Field of Dreams near Dyersville, Iowa. (Nichols)

The house, the bleachers, the field has all been preserved by the property owners. And without mass media advertising, the site was drawing people, by the intimate few, into a remote corner of Iowa. We strangers had come, as on a spiritual pilgrimage, to the field that embodied much of our cultural memory. The power of *muthos* to connect with our national memory, our sense of social values, our idea of cultural identity, is strongly illustrated by this significant American story. Muthos can be seen at work in many other places, including these examples which were offered students as other examples of *muthos* at work in cultural formation.

- Stories related to the "New World," including Christopher Columbus (who sailed the ocean blue in 1492,) and the pilgrims and Thanksgiving, etc.

- The stories surrounding the Berlin Wall, including the "freedom from fear" monument at the Franklin D. Roosevelt home in Hyde Park, and the speeches of Presidents Kennedy and Reagan,

- Pirate statues and movies and stories, (arrrr…)

- The Wild West and the B-western and singing cowboys,

- Fictional stories from popular culture, including *Field of Dreams* and its Dyersville, Iowa shrine; the Mayberry myth, including the phenomena of "Mayberry Days," TAGS fan clubs, and the town of Mount Airy, NC,

- Tribute bands to the Beatles, Neil Diamond and others,

- The shift in epideictic rhetoric (from blame to praise) as symbolized by UK statues of Tyndale and Wycliffe (once executed, now memorialized,) and the construction of Oscar Wilde Park in Reading, England (once jailed/gaoled, now memorialized,)

- Religious celebrations and ceremonies, including public water baptism in the South as a repetitive enactment of a story, and Catholic Festivals and Parades in New Jersey.

With these examples in mind, students are equipped to engage culture with attention to how values and practices are shaped by the stories a culture tells and hears.

Examples of Muthos in Student Work

Again, while no students were given assignments that expressly focused on the appearance of *muthos*, the discussion of this meaning-making *archon* entered into the student's treatment of broader issues of their major projects. One example is that of a Marketing major's look at the marketing of products in

Belgium. Her research included discussion of one of Belgium's most famous

products, chocolate. The project included site visits to Chocolate shops,

interviews and attention to the logo and identity of one of the best-known brands,

Côte d'Or.
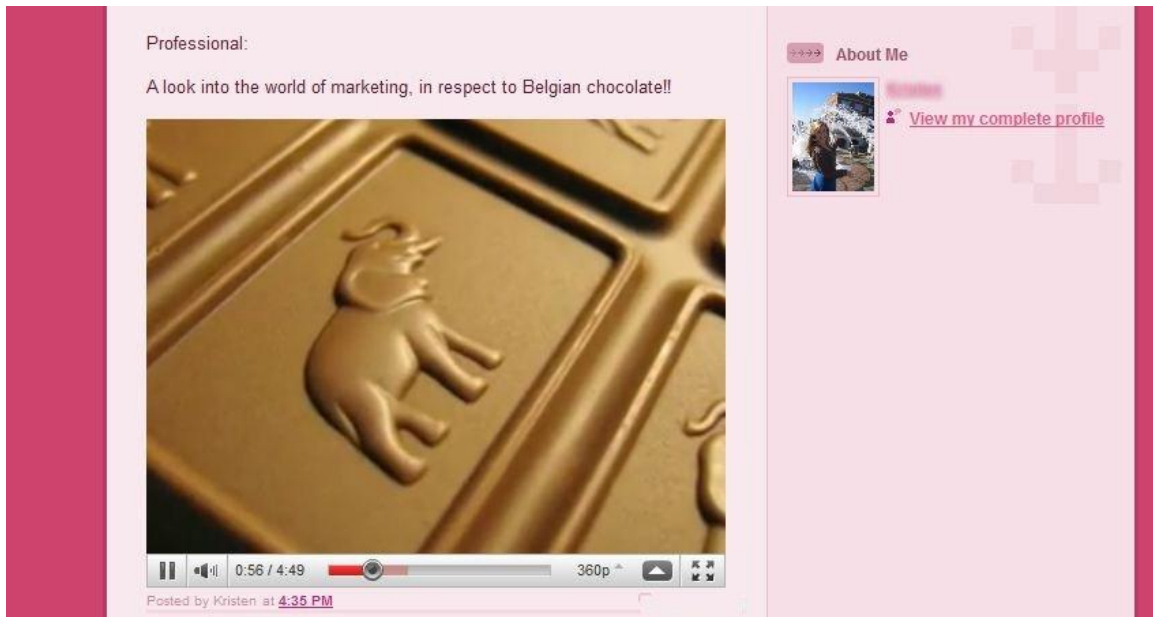
Figure 6.4 - Screen capture from student project in blog entry on marketing chocolate in Belgium.(Nichols)

The student's research revealed a history that informs the marketing of

this significant product. As she notes in her project's preparatory and analytical

writing,

> Charles Neuhaus opened a chocolate factory in Brussels in 1870,
>
> therefore beginning the love and obsession Belgium has with high
>
> class chocolate and small chocolate shops with handcrafted goods.
>
> Since the chocolate industry is consistently booming in Belgium, it's
>
> crucial to know the history and how it all began. (Nichols)

This student emphasized that "Knowing the history of Belgian chocolate and learning about how the love affair began in this culture..." is of great importance to marketers of this product. (Nichols)

Conclusion

In this project, the student, a marketing major, focused on understanding the culture of those involved in product marketing in Brussels. By attention given to *muthos*, she noted the prevalence of the Côte d'Or's logo in advertisements around Brussels, and gave attention to the logo's elephant symbol. (See figure 6.3 above.) The elephant symbol, and the name Côte d'Or, (*nomos* is at work here as well,) both connect to the *muthos* of the product by harkening back to the history of the exotic African origins of the cocoa beans produced in the "Gold Coast," which is present-day Ghana. Her attention to *muthos* as a tool for cultural analysis helped her understand the legends and histories of chocolate that inform the marketing practices of the company, as well as the cultural perception of this society's product. (And of course, *techne* is doing culture-building work here as well in the making of he product itself.) This student, by attending to the stolon of *muthos*, illuminated the connection with the "exotic" as a part of the valued vocabulary of the marketing community in Belgium. The use of *muthos*, as a tool of cultural analysis, has potential to inform research across a wide range of concerns, including, as we see here, those of future marketing professionals.

Instructors in many disciplines have understood and applied the concepts of narrative and story-telling in many creative and effective ways. Using *muthos*

as a tool for tropological analysis can enhance approaches already attending to narrative by provoking discovery of stories, legends and histories that are not explicitly delineated, but that are rather embedded in the living fabric of cultural artifacts and performances. The *muthos* stolon can help students uncover the meaning-making implicit in cultural texts of various types, and can reveal how narratives with a culture informs the beliefs, values and practices of that community. Such knowledge, which might go undiscovered, is brought to light by the attention to *muthos*.

Chapter 7
Ethnos: The Ways of Our People

"I am an American."

Speakers of people of many ages, races and religions,

Post-9/11 Public Service Announcement

from the Ad Council

Meanwhile, back in Washington, D.C. with our imagined international student, we continue our visit to sights in the area, looking for cultural insight. We have many instances of the Flag of the United States flying over government buildings such as the Post Office, the Capitol, the White House, etc. We noted the cultural significance of this prevalent use of *archon*. We have been to the National Museum of American History and have seen the Star-Spangled Banner that flew over Fort McHenry in 1814. The exhibits explained the powerful *muthos* behind the symbol. We even made note of the power of *nomos* connected with the flags monikers such as "Old Glory." But let us suppose that, in the evening, we add another piece of American culture to our itinerary – a baseball game at Nationals Park in southeast D.C. At the game, we again see the national flag, but before the game starts, thousands of people stand to their feet and face the flag and music begins. You begin to sing the words of the poem you had seen earlier in the Museum, "Oh, say can you see by the dawn's early light what so proudly we

hailed at the twilight's last gleaming?" Our international student friend is puzzled. There was no time to memorize the poem on the brief visit to the museum. The tune is not one she has heard on American Top 40 radio. Our international student is on the "outside" of a performance that we are on the inside of. What is at play here is the cultural stolon of *ethnos*.
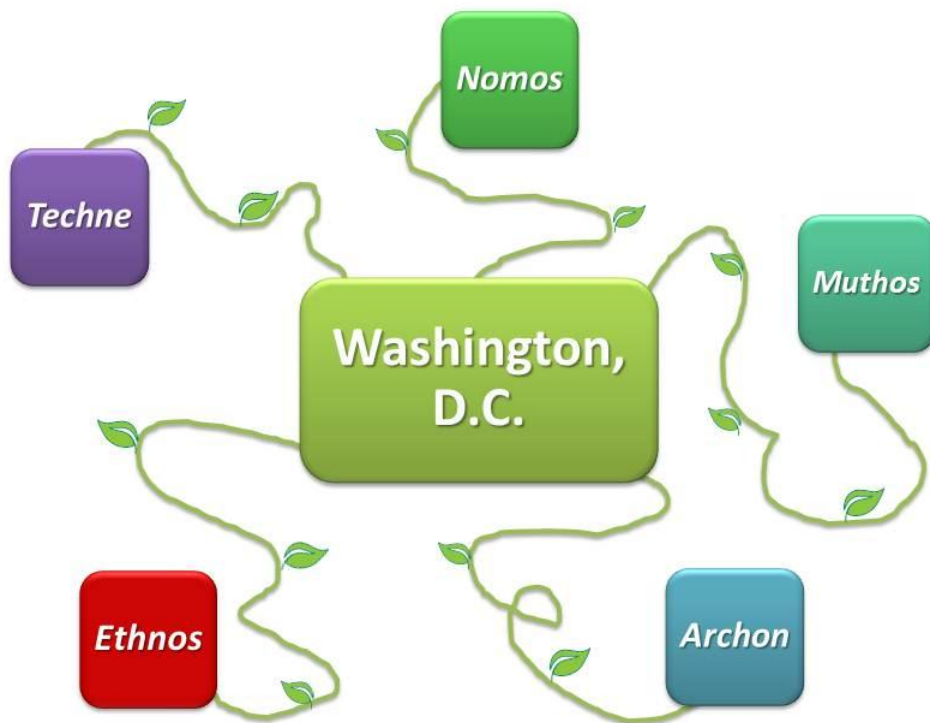
Ethnos is the stolon that describes how certain practices, acts, symbols and artifacts serve as self-identifying texts for members of a particular cultural group. Back at Nationals Stadium, our fictional international student observes that the act of singing, and identifying with the significance of, the Star Spangled Banner is a self-identifying act whereby we, his native companions, declare, "I am an

American." Our friend need not participate in the act of self-identification to gain cultural knowledge from the experience.

Self-Identification: Ethnos by Association

In opposition to practices that more closely resemble Othering or labeling or exnomination, the stolon of *ethnos* emphasizes the agency of the community members in their self-identification with the cultural group. This impulse finds an illustrative voice in M. Scott Momaday's "The Man Made of Words," in which Momaday, a Native American of Kiowa-Cherokee heritage, says that

> "An Indian is an idea which a given man has of himself. And it is a moral idea, for it accounts for the way in which he reacts to other men and to the world in general. And that idea, to be completely realized, has to be expressed." (Momaday 91)

Momaday's statement provokes several thoughts: first, that a cultural identity must be "owned" by the individual; also, that the cultural identity adopted by an individual affects the individual's interaction with the world; and additionally, that such a cultural identity must find expression. The pedagogical implications of Momaday's propositions are that these observable expressions and interactions can teach/reveal/disclose cultural knowledge to observers from other cultures. By understanding the stolon of ethnos at work, Study Abroad students are better able to approach the worldview of those in their host cultures.

Belonging: Ethnos by Display and Commemoration

Momaday notes that cultural identity is formed by myths, tales, legends through story-telling (oral traditions) to create a shared "racial memory" (Momaday 42). This shared memory grants the members of a group a sense of belonging. Tharon Howard, in his book on building community in social networks, *Design to Thrive*, sees the idea of belonging to be a key element in creating meaningful social communities. Howard explains that

> Belonging is, of course, the... mechanisms by which... members of the community develop the sense of "social presence," a sense that they belong in that community, that they identify with it, and that they share a bond with its other members. Belonging is created in a community through shared mythologies, shared stories of origin, shared symbols and the cultural codes imbedded in those symbols. (Howard 130)

It is just these mythologies, stories, symbols and codes that serve to disclose cultural knowledge to the critical observer of *ethnos* at work in the cross-cultural context. When an individual "self-identifies," that is, "belongs," to a community – not by labeling of outside powers, by rather by conscious agency, the myths, stories, symbols and codes of that community become part of the framework by which the individual constructs the set of beliefs and values that shape tastes and actions.

In fact, Victoria J. Gallagher, in "Displaying Race: Cultural Projection and Commemoration," notes how racial identities are tied, not only to static artifacts,

but to commemorative ideas (Gallagher 177). Gallagher compares and contrasts the rhetoric of display of Georgia's Stone Mountain monument and of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial in Atlanta. She explores how racial identity is affected by referring to Richard Merelman's definition of cultural projection: "the conscious or unconscious effort by a social group and its allies to place new images of itself before other social groups and before the general public" (Gallagher 177). In this sense, places of display can serve as extensions of the self-identification of *ethnos*. By cultural projection, cultural groups can define their identity by declaring, "THIS is who we are. THIS is what we stand for." This declaration may be in response to, or rebuttal of, attempts to define the group by those outside the group. Indeed, commemoration can also be seen as a compositional space of self-identity through the impulse of *ethnos*. Commemorations may also be declarations and definitions of ethnos offered in response to attempts to define the group from outside forces. Commemorations can be a way for those self-identified as an *ethnos* to say, "NO, THIS is what we believe. THIS is what we celebrate." Such ethnic declarations of self-definition can be rich cultural texts for the savvy observer.

Examples of Ethnos in the Classroom

With these considerations in mind, let us turn to some examples of how the *ethnos* stolon can be utilized towards cross-cultural research and critical analysis of cultural experiences. *Ethnos,* as a framing element for tropological

analysis, is helpful in situating classroom instruction, engagement in the cross-cultural field, and as a guide for expressive composition.

Students in the Cultural Literacies Across Media program are given a working definition of *ethnos*: "*Ethnos* is the cultural expression that takes place through a group's self-identification as a unique people, society, or community." *Ethnos* is illustrated to the students through familiar examples that serve as suggestive guides for their observations of their host cultures. Examples of *ethnos* used in instructional materials include discussion of a display of badges, buttons, and pins that self-identify wearers as members of a specific cultural group. The photographs below are of displays on *ethnos* and community-building in an exhibit titled, "The Ancient Americas" at the Field Museum in Chicago. Note how the display in the first photograph (figure 7.1) uses the term "Our People." Language can be one of the first observable identifiers of *ethnos* at work. All the individuals represented on these displays (all members of native American tribes, and many more than the ones shown in this photograph,) spoke of "our people" in a way that self-identified the individual as part of the social community that shared values, beliefs and meaning-making practices through aural, visual and textual ways of communication, even if the "textual" turn was more graphic than alphabetic.

Figure 7.1 - Voices of Our People display at the Field Museum in Chicago. (Nichols)

The second photo (figure 7.2) extrapolates from the society-building practices of Southwestern puebloan communities universal principles of community-building. This display particularly focuses on visual cues and markers as voluntary identification with a specific group. Note the examples in the display include identifiers of various community sharing concerns:

- Political, such as the democrat and republican buttons,

- Military or para-military, as in the patches and pins of the boy and girl scouts,

- Religious, as in the cross, star of David, and crescent pins,

- Social, such as the "I love alpha tau omega" button,

- Lifestyle, such as the La Leche League button,

- National identification, such as the "It's tough being German" button, and others.

Figure 7.2 - "Badges of My People" from the Field Museum in Chicago. (Nichols)

Students are encouraged to examine their own self-identifying signs of *ethnos*, and to notice practices of others around them. These *ethnos* artifacts might include bumper stickers, decals, t-shirts, jewelry, choice of clothing, etc. Students are encouraged to discuss such questions as, "How does my identification with my cultural group(s) affect my views, values, and beliefs?" and "By what

rhetorical moves do I express my connection to my cultural groups?" and "By what observable acts or artifacts could those outside my group understand my membership in this group, and understand the values or beliefs around which 'our people' maintain our community?"

Other examples of *ethnos* given in course instructional materials may be analyzed similarly, and include:

- Shared practices such as "ethnic" customs and dances,

- Foods closely identified with a particular social group, and claimed by that group as belonging to them, such as soul food, BBQ (whether Texas brisket, North Carolina vinegar-based or Low-country mustard-based,) or hot dogs (whether Chicago dogs with veggies, or New Jersey "Texas Weiners" or New York City "dirty water dogs,")

- The cheers, mottos, patches, chants, handshakes, colors, banners, fight songs, and symbols of sports teams and their fan community, (such as the Iptay community of Clemson University fans – the C-L-E-M-S-O-N cheer, solid orange, Tiger Rag, paws, etc.) and

- Shared mythologies of loss and suffering, such as Jets fans, Red Sox fans (until of late,) or ethnic groups that commemorate injustices or hardships as a shared community memory.

Students may themselves question the usefulness of any items on this list, and even add their own example to the list as they discuss *ethnos* and its cultural significance.

Examples of Ethnos in Student Work

In the process of their ongoing cultural research and in preparing the composition of their major projects, Cultural Literacies Across Media students comment on the appearance of *ethnos* in various ways in their analyses. As we mentioned in earlier chapters, assignments did not require a focus on any particular strand (*ethnos* included,) but rather included discussion of the stolons incidentally and organically their cultural investigations warranted. One particularly engaging example of *ethnos* in student work was done in a project focusing on the Turkish Suryani community in northeast New Jersey.

The priest reading from the Bible. Singing is prominent during the Assyrian service. In fact, there were hardly any spoken words during the service. Everybody "talked" in a singing manner.

Figure 7.3 - Assyrian church photo and comments from student blog.

The student was of Turkish nationality, but had very little knowledge of the minority Suryani culture. Her daily engagement with this community influenced her approach in all of the major projects, and therefore the frequent references to *ethnos* was a natural development of her research.

This picture, I wanted to capture another tradition that infused into the Assyrian culture, that is the separation of men and women. In this church, the women sit on the right side of the isle while the men sit on the left. Here is a shot of the front of the church from the right side, behind a woman with a head scarf.

Figure 7.4 - Assyrian church photo and comments from student blog.

The student, a member of the dominant Turkish culture, explained her focus on what is a distinct minority culture in Turkey: "I decided on the Suryanis because, I have to admit, with a little embarrassment that I knew very little about our long-time family friend..." who is a member of the Suryani community. The student's engagement with the Syriac culture revealed several observations pertaining to *ethnos*:

- The Suryani culture involves a holistic sense of a non-compartmentalized life where there is no separation between nationality, religion and tradition. In one of the major video projects, the student says, ""I asked (my friend) what it means to be a Suryani. How would you describe it? The word Suryani describes everything about them. It is their nationality, their tradition, their religion, faith, culture, their identity..." (Nichols)

Here the girls are singing. I took this picture from the second row between the two women because I wanted to show the prominence of the head scarf tradition. The friend who came with me to the church that day is also Turkish and she also doesn't know anything about Assyrians. Her comment after we left was, "They [the congregation] were like Muslims in a church!" No kidding. The infusion of both religions is uncanny.

Figure 7.5 - Assyrian church photo and comments from student blog. (Nichols)

- The Suryani do not view international issues as do most other countries, as our student's project explains, ""Suryanis do not have a country of their own, nor do they want one, they truly believe that their true land and kingdom is in heaven,"

- The Suryani have a close and valued connection to the past, exemplified by the fact that they observe religious services in Aramaic (which, our student points out, was the language of Jesus,) and they celebrate the Eucharist via the Holy Quorbono (the oldest liturgy still in use,)

- The Suryani community is very close, due to their long history of persecution and harsh treatment, and to their perpetual minority status as the student explains, "One aspect of the Suryani community that probably cannot escape anybody's attention is the fact that the Suryani community

is very tight-knit. This is because the Suryani population in the world is very small. It is estimated to be about 5 million in total. They face the threat of being assimilated into their host countries."(Nichols) This means that Suryanis tend to live together, worship together, and conduct commerce together in tight communities.

ur friend, is in the middle (gray suit). This gesture of "shaking hands" is the gesture of "giving of peace." People shake hands with others around them then rubbing their hands to their face. This is yet another Islamic tradition. During the daily prayer, Muslims open up the palms of their hands to the heavens and after the prayer, rub their hands to their faces as if to rub in the blessing from Allah to themselves. Speaking of Allah, Assyrians do not address God as God but they use the word Allah. This was the most interesting part for me. In Turkish, we have two words to describe "the creator," if you will. Allah is used as the one and only creator, while the use of God is in a more general term as if to say a deity. For example, in Turkish, we would call Venus a God because she is the Goddess of love, beauty and natural productivity. We wouldn't call her the Allah of Love. I hope I am explaining this right... Please ask me if you get confused.

Figure 7.6 - Assyrian church photo and comments from student blog. (Nichols)

Conclusion

The student's research identified many observable practices whereby members self-identify as Suryani, including language, practice of frequent religious fasting, trade practices and more. Because of attention to _ethnos_, this student learned

about the centrality of devout religious practice for the Syriac community. The student learned that the Suryani do not compartmentalize their lives into home, work, religion, etc. The attention to *ethnos* revealed to the student that the act of self-identifying as Suryani would mean a shift in relationships with the rest of the world, in that Suryani maintain such close ties and shun national allegiances. Engaging the Suryani community with the analytical idea of *ethnos* in mind helped the student to understand the shared histories and stories, (stories from scripture and from their history of persecution,) that are important to members of the community. This student's projects reveal a pervasive effect of self-identifying *ethnos* on every aspect of cultural values, beliefs and practices.

Instructors will find the stolon of *ethnos* a helpful device for analysis in areas other than cultural engagement. Teachers of communication or criticism can find *ethnos* to be a valuable instrument for analyzing and provoking discussion of standpoint theory. Teachers of rhetoric can use *ethnos* as a guide to identifying audience and *kairos* in the rhetorical situation. Using the stolon of *ethnos* as a tool of tropological analysis can help students uncover important knowledge that may be overlooked, especially the fact that people act the way they do for more than personal reasons or exigencies of circumstance. In many instances, people's decisions, beliefs and actions are greatly influenced by their self-identification with a particular cultural community and its set of shared values.

Chapter 8
## *Techne*: The Ways of Our People

"We shape our tools and thereafter our tools shape us."

Marshall McLuhan (McLuhan 16)

Meanwhile, back in our fictional Washington scenario, as we continue to explore the National Mall with our international student friend we realize we must grab a bite for lunch, so we head up 12th Street towards Federal Triangle to swing right on Pennsylvania Avenue. We pass massive buildings housing such entities as the Internal Revenue Service, the Environmental Protection Agency, the Department of Justice and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. Our friend observes, "So many buildings with so many employees… so many restaurants, but so few residences. Where do all these people live?" At this point we begin to explain the idea of "suburbs," and to broach the subject of the "daily commute." To illustrate how people get to aand from work in the city, we board the Metro train at the Archives-Navy Memorial Station and catch the orange line towards George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia. The colorful Metro Map, the swooshing automatic doors, the hard plastic seats, the jolt of the train as it leaves the station, all these are part of the experience of the D.C. train commuter, and our friend has opportunity to engage this culture in a very tactile manner.

Figure 8.1 - the Metro train from Archives/Navy Memorial station (ShuminWeb)

When a culture produces things such as Metro trains, subways, automobiles, buses, and roads, it reveals something about the cultural values of the makers. Additionally, such inventions not only express the practices and habits and thoughts of the makers, it is also true that these inventions will dictate, mold, mend, and shape the practices and beliefs of their makers. This is the stolon of *techne* at work, shaping the thoughts and habits of the culture.
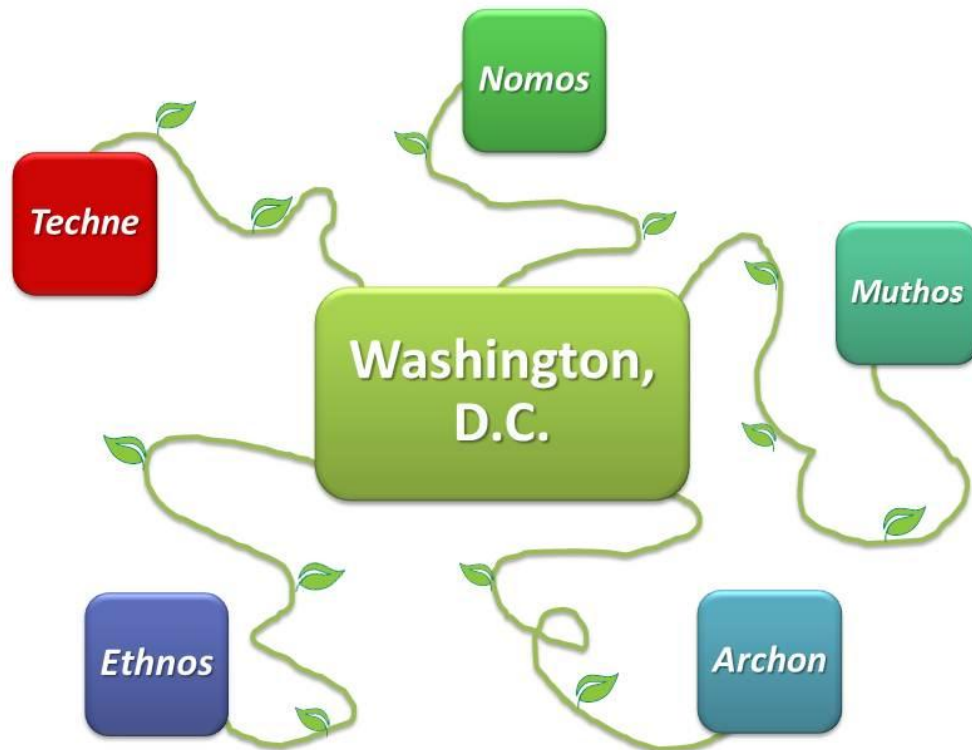
Techne is the stolon that describes how a community's productions (whether industrial or artistic) reveals and shapes its cultural values, beliefs and practices. Riding the Metro to Fairfax, Virginia aboard a Metro Bus is one opportunity for our friend to experience techne as both expressive and compositional to the culture of those who work in Washington D.C. Our friend may intuit that Americans value mobility and speed, and therefore constructed transportation to reflect those values. He would be right. Or our friend might think that Americans value mobility and speed because these are the values encouraged by the existing transportation. And he would be right. Techne works

to both purposes in things that are "made," including furniture, portraits, televisions, buildings, cities, computers, printed material, plastic and cars.

Techne: Who's the Boss?

We began this chapter with a teaser quote from Marshall McLuhan: "We shape our tools and thereafter our tools shape us." (McLuhan 16) As we consider how culture can be better understood through the stolon of *techne*, we will pay attention to both agencies at work in McLuhan's statement: the shaping, or making, a society does – and the shaping of cultural practices that is done by the things made. It would be fair to say that, in general, the things a cultural group invents, makes, builds, or produces are made because of desire. For example, primitive objects such as arrowheads and spearheads were made because hunters desired a more efficient way of securing food for survival. And culinary enhancements, such as hollandaise sauce and ketchup were made because chefs and their clientele desired that the food taste better. Photostatic copiers were made because we desired efficiency in the workplace. Toccatas and fugues were made because we desired auditory pleasure. The telegraph was made because we desired to communicate across long distances quickly. Automobiles were made because we desired independent mobility. Each of these products of *techne* can inform the observer about the culture that produced them. Questions such as "What kind of music? How tall are the buildings, and of what are they constructed? How is this machine used, and by whom?" are all likely to shed light on the culture of study.

Techne and the Automobile

It is an oft-repeated yarn that Henry Ford said his customer could have their Model A automobiles in any color they wished, so long as it was black. This hints at the utilitarian nature of the automobile as product. That is to say, from a basic utilitarian point of view, the culture produced automobiles out of a desire to meet transportation needs of a growing population that was spread out over great distances. However, the technical invention of the assembly line was utilized because Mr. Ford desired greater efficiency to the ends of selling more cars and making more money. And indeed, the "one color fits all" thinking of Ford would not last, as customers were offered more choices to answer their desire for aesthetic pleasure as well as utilitarian mobility.

In 2010, the High Museum of Art in Atlanta hosted an exhibit titled "The Allure of the Automobile." The exhibit featured singular cars that were examples of innovations in performance, engineering and style.

Figure 8.2 - "The Tucker" taken at the High Museum in Atlanta. (Nichols)

Of course, style – remember that this is an art museum. The objet d'art presented

was a collection ranging from the 1933 Pierce Arrow to the 1961 Aston Martin.

These productions answered a desire different from that of mere transportation

utility. The automobiles of this period answered the desire for aesthetics and

invention and speed, and to some extent, safety. One particularly interesting

piece on display was the 1948 Tucker Model 48 Torpedo. The innovation that

went into such an automobile, with features like a swiveling center headlight and

futuristic styling, was inspiration for a Francis Ford Coppola film about the

inventor of this car. We can rightfully consider the Tucker as an artifact of *techne*

that tells us about the culture of post-WWII America. We might discover the same desires and cultural values in play that were the impetus for the Googie movement in design, for the production of *The Jetsons*, or for the building of Disneyland. The automobile is, indeed, a proper object of study for the *techne stolon*.

And yet, not only does this invention display the cultural values and desires of the society of focus; this invention also shapes the values and desires of that society. On closer inspection of the photograph of the Tucker on display, we see a quote from Marshall McLuahn, "The car has become an article of dress without which we feel uncertain, unclad, and incomplete in the urban compound." (McLuhan 21) Cars, far from being an answer to a perceived need or desire, had become, according to McLuhan, a necessity. It seems a shift had taken place from the automobile working for humans, to humans working for automobiles – improving them, accessorizing them, beautifying them, building them, marketing them, saving for them, selling them, buying them, sacrificing for them. (At this point, other voices that ring out warnings of the machine gone awry come to mind, including Nicholas Carr and his "Is Google Making Us Stupid?" article or *The Shallows* book, Samuel Butler's "Book of the Machines" in *Erewhon*, the cautionary tale of Skynet in the *Terminator* movies, or Kittler's comments on how the typewriter changed Nietzsche's writing style, etc.)

"The car has become an article of dress without which we feel uncertain, unclad, and incomplete."
—Marshall McLuhan, poet and father of media theory
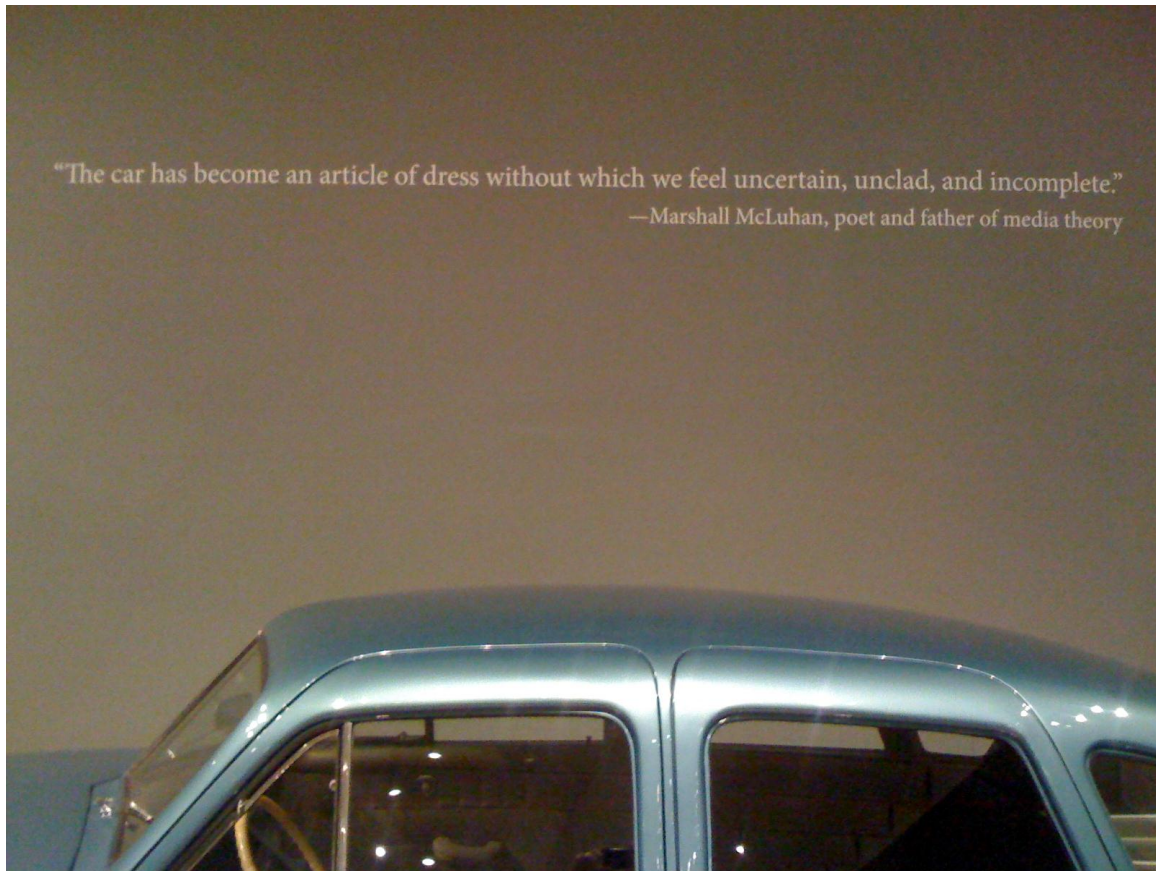
Figure 8.3 - The Tucker: up close.(Nichols)

It may be fair to say that post-WWII era Americans made cars, but it is equally fair to say that cars made American culture. Recall that Walter Ong said, "Writing restructures consciousness," meaning that inventions or technologies significantly affect how a culture thinks and acts (Ong 201). It is important to the student of culture to have an awareness that *techne* works both ways – and the automobile is a prime example. Americans made cars, to be sure, but in many ways, car made America: the rise of Detroit as an international industrial power, marketing and financing issues in the retail sale of automobiles, the development

and growth of the UAW, increased domestic travel, etc. All of these are pertinent

issues for those who would wish to know more about a cultural group.

Examples of Techne in the Classroom

Techne, as a framing element for tropological analysis, is helpful in

situating classroom instruction, engagement in the cross-cultural field, and as a

guide for expressive composition. Students are encouraged to consider both how

the cultural group shapes their products, and how the products shape the cultural

group.

Cultural Literacies Across Media students work from the following

definition of *techne*: "*Techne* is the cultural expression through production and

products of the arts and industry by the community of focus." Students are shown

familiar examples of *techne* to illustrate how they might observe this impulse in

their host cultures. The prime example would be the discussion of the automobile

as described above, supplemented with clips of marketing films such as found on

archive.org. (Current students view a clip that advertises the "Motoramic

Chevrolet with Turbofire V8 Engine.")

Other examples of *techne* used in instructional materials include:

- Formal art, such as Winslow Homer's fishermen in boat,

- Folk art such as that of the Rev. Howard Finster,

- Regional architecture – log cabins, northwest lodges, arts and crafts

  to express local cultural values – and the incorporation of foreign

elements to confer approval or value of the principles of other cultures,

- The architecture of the city (New York City, for instance) with a discussion of the functional and aesthetic desires revealed,

- Particular elements of *techne* with a city, such as the Chrysler Building, Empire State Building, pubic parks (such as Central Park,) stained glass windows, ornamental furniture, and

- Fashion, fabric made by factories, work of craftsmen, welders, painters, etc.

Examples of Techne in Student Work

Techne, in and of itself, was not the focus of projects for students in the Cultural Literacies Across Media course, however their other major projects were informed by their attention to *techne* at work in their host cultures. One such example is the public issues project of a Study Abroad student in Brussells, Belgium. This student's project focused on the place of public transportation in the Belgian culture. In his storyboarding notes, the student observes,

> Since living in Belgium, I have constantly been bombarded with advertisements everywhere promoting the public transportation systems. *(Belgian advertising)* strongly encourages its residents to stop wasting gas and help save the environment by packing out the metros, therefore creating 'a high returns to scale' (meaning the

more people using public transportation, the greater the economic

benefit). They have many, many, *many* print media advertisements

all around the city and underground promoting the metro, and

several different types of advertising campaigns. (Nichols)

Already, we see how the techne of the public transportation is the impetus for the

dominant discourse of that culture to endorse and solicit certain actions and ways

of thinking from the members of that cultural group. As the students video

describes it, the ubiquitous advertising encourages Belgians to "Stop driving and

start riding!"(Nichols)

Figure 8.4 - Screen capture of student video project on Belgian public transportation. (Nichols)

The student gained insight into the culture by attention to this instance of *techne*. The project noted how this technology affects culture on the whole, as evidenced by a quote from the professor the student interviewed, "Europe, generally, is a public transportation culture, and in America it is all about the car" (Nichols).

This cultural difference, in one sense, is dictated by the particular topographical and geographical demands of the location of the culture. Again, from the student's interview in the project: "In Europe, distances are so much smaller; in the United States, distances are so much greater. In the United States, you could drive for a hundred miles and still be in the same state. That's not true for Europe" (Nichols). This echoes the old saying, "In America a hundred years is a long time; in England a hundred miles is a long way," and reflects, through *techne,* how a culture approaches solving problems and addressing the needs of the members of the society.

Yet, on the other hand, cultural differences may be caused by the solutions that a culture develops in response to a need. In the student's video project, the interview subject describes how that, in the U.S. shoppers may have many bags after a trip to the grocery store, (which would not be practical for riders of public transportation,) but in Europe, shoppers visit the grocer more frequently and make smaller purchases each time. The *techne* of public transportation dictates shopping habits, or as the interviewee in the video says, "It is a different way of organizing your activities" (Nichols). The student researcher's work raises a question, "Do Belgians shop more often because their means of transport require

it? Or because they desire the constant interactionwith the grocer? Do Americans buy more and make less trips because we drive Canyonero-sized automobiles? Or because we prefer more time at home away from the marketplace?" The cultural implications are significant.

Conclusion

Attention to *techne*, as in this example, facilitates the student's understanding of the cultural meaning-making that goes on when a culture "shapes its tools," and also of the cultural formation at work when the "tools shape the culture." This student learned that the *techne* of Belgium shaped the buying habits and weekly schedules of members of that cultural group. The dominance of public transportation meant shorter lists and more frequent visits to the grocer, habits that may have escaped critical notice without attention to this stolon. (The knowledge of these habits may illuminate study into other areas of the Belgian culture.) The student describes the persistent effort on the part of the dominant media to solicit more compliance to the behavior lauded as consistent with community values. In doing so, the rhetorical *techne* of the dominant discourse is made visible in both its transportation system, and in its use of pervasive media tools. This student learned that, in the eyes of those who live in Brussels, they are a "public transportation culture." This illustrates showing how the stolon of techne can also aid understanding of the self-concept of a group. The findings from this stolon can also inform critical looks into other stolons at work, such as *ethnos* and *archon*.

Instructors in a number of fields already take into account some of the knowledge made possible by attention to the concerns of *techne*. For example, anthropologists learn from the tools and other artifacts made by ancient people groups, and literary theorists give attention to the means of production and its effect on literary expression. (It is unlikely that anyone would consider discussions of Dickens or Twain to be complete without attention to the printing and distribution technologies of their times.) Incorporating the stolon of *techne* as a guide for analysis and composition can augment teaching strategies in areas other than cross-cultural engagement. Savvy teachers can use the stolon of *techne* to provoke discussion on how technology advancement affects story-telling in movies, or retail commerce. Teachers of rhetoric and composition can use *techne* to launch a discussion on "the available means" for digital or multimodal compositions. *Techne* can help instructors in the Humanities explore connections between the production of music or movies or digital games and cultural values among specific people groups or/and particular periods in history. *Techne* is a flexible concept that can serve any instructor whose studies involve human society

Chapter 9
A Final Word:
Why Bother with a Model for Cultural Investigation?

"You don't know me without you have read a book by…

Mr. Mark Twain, and he told the truth, mainly…

with some stretchers…."

Huck Finn

Actually, we only get to know Huck in a general way in Mr. Twain's book, *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer*; we get to know him much better in Huck's own book, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. The first story, *Tom Sawyer*, is told by an outsider; the second story, *Huck Finn*, is told by Huck himself. The former is written in the language of writers; the latter in the language of the natives. In the first book, there is a section titled "Conclusion;" in the second book, the hero simply "lights out for the Territory." You don't know Huck without you have read a book, but I suggest that Huck's book (written BY Huck) is a necessary complement to Mr. Twain's book (written ABOUT Huck.)

College students involved in cross-cultural experiences, such as those made possible by Study Abroad programs, are positioned for the adventures of encountering new people, new cultures, and new ways of thinking. The best programs display a thoughtful intentionality to the process of preparing students for the experience. The worst ones seem to operate under the impression that cross-cultural engagement is business as usual. In the situation of working and studying in a new cultural

environment, it may seem that the new school, the new professor, the new city, or the new colleague is speaking clearly to the arriving student, "You don't know me." Navigating strange new worlds, negotiating new transportation systems in new languages, conversing in new idioms, communicating with attention to new social conventions – all these concerns can make the most gregarious student withdraw into an "All-American" bubble – away from the very adventure sought and promised by the experience.

"You don't know me without you have read a book...."

The Office of International Affairs at my university does an admirable job of orienting the students and informing them of crucial information. Those who have never seen these people at work would be surprised at the mastery of knowledge required to guide students through the planning necessary for the cross-cultural experience. They would also be surprised at the amount of forms, papers, reminders and digital resources provided to the students by the International Affairs folks. Likewise, the instructors who teach students languages and national cultures provide students with quality tutelage, as well as libraries of materials on histories and customs and political analyses. And yet, with all this preparation, there may still be the echo from the student's new host culture, "You don't know me...."

"He told the truth, mainly... with some stretchers...."

We could imagine that a sort of mirrored experience might happen to our fictitious international student upon arrival in the United States for the first time. He has had quality instruction in English. He has taken a survey course of American history

and culture. He has researched international professional communication practices. He knows, from his study of Geert Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions, that:

> The high Individualism (IDV) ranking for the United States indicates a society with a more individualistic attitude and relatively loose bonds with others. The populace is more self-reliant and looks out for themselves and their close family members.
>
> ...the country experiences a higher degree of gender differentiation of roles. The male dominates a significant portion of the society and power structure. This situation generates a female population that becomes more assertive and competitive...
>
> ...the Long Term Orientation ... is the lowest Dimension for the US ... indicative of the societies' belief in meeting its obligations and tends to reflect an appreciation for cultural traditions.
>
> The next lowest ranking Dimension for the United States is Power Distance... indicative of a greater equality between societal levels, including government, organizations, and even within families.
>
> ...A low ranking in the Uncertainty Avoidance Dimension is indicative of a society that has fewer rules and does not attempt to control all outcomes and results. It also has a greater level of tolerance for a variety of ideas, thoughts, and beliefs. (Hofstede)

He knows these things, in addition to what he knows from American movies like *Inception* and the *Twilight* Saga, and from American television shows like "Glee" and "Desperate Housewives." Except for the fact that not all Americans are mind-bending,

singing, adulterous Vampires, our fictitious student may have some idea of how to function in America.

But our student will not live and study in America. He will live and study in Boston. Or Boise. Or Biloxi. Or Brooklyn. Or Bird in Hand. Books and studies on other cultures are often very good at providing information about countries or regions, but students live and study and engage culture on a local level. When we part company with our fictitious student friend, his boots-on-the-ground cross-cultural engagement will be radically different if he goes to Boise rather than to Brooklyn, or if he goes to Boston rather than to Biloxi. And if he goes to Bird in Hand to live with a host family during his stay, he would have an altogether different experience.

Give me one good reason… or two.

One of the reasons for the development of the Stolons Model is to equip students with a supplementary stratagem that facilitates cultural engagement on a local level, a scheme that aids in reading cultural clues on the fly, as it were. The organic nature of real cultural situations means that the cultural texts encountered will rarely be organized according to categories in the text books or in charts. (In real life, nations are pretty sloppy about letting arts, cuisine, language, traditions, social activities, religion, entertainment, museums, and political events all run together all willy-nilly into a sort of soup of cultural experiences. The cultural newcomer is often left to sort it all out for themselves to make meaning of the experiences.) The Stolons Model is intended to match the unfiltered and unorganized stream of cultural acts and artifacts that present themselves to study abroad students in the cross-cultural setting.

Note that the Stolons Model is intended as a guide for tropological analysis towards composition goals. It is not intended to duplicate or replace formal language or

cultural studies. It makes no claim to be able to handle passport and visa issues. It is intended as a tool, for student and faculty, to make the most of daily engagement in a cross-cultural setting, to provoke student inquiry and expressive reflection. It is designed to complement the other resources, and should itself be informed by the student's knowledge from their other areas of study and preparation. It is designed to equip the mind of the student to see what might normally pass by without note. This is one of the reasons for Stolons.

The other reason for the model is to de-mystify the role of cultural observer and to disabuse the student ethnographer of notions (or pretensions) of being a professional critic. Smithsonian Magazine featured the work of photographer Shelby Lee Adams in the March 2010 issue. Adams' specialty is photographing "mountain people" who live in what is generally referred to as the Appalachian subculture. In this issue, Adams discussed what is perhaps his most recognized photograph, Home Funeral. Home Funeral is a photograph of a wake for a departed woman called Mamaw by her family. At the far right of the photograph is the deceased's granddaughter who was affectionately called Nay Bug (because she was afraid of lady bugs when she was young.)

Eighteen years after the photograph was taken, Nay Bug relates her memory of the photograph:

> And when a man with a camera came and asked to take her picture, she said she wanted to lay a rose across her grandmother's chest. "He said, 'Sure, if it's what you want to do,' " Nay Bug recalls. Then he took the picture. *Home Funeral* would become one of Shelby Lee Adams' best-known portraits of Appalachian life. (Tucker)

Figure 9.1 - "Home Funeral" by Shelby Lee Adams, as featured in Smithsonian Magazine. (Tucker)

Adams has a close relationship with his subjects, respects their culture, and is mindful of their concerns. When asked why his photographs look "posed" or "staged," Adams explained that mountain people were suspicious of photographers because of their past experiences of being portrayed mockingly in photographs. To accommodate their concerns, Adams first shoots a Polaroid print to show them what he will photograph with his camera, then he shoots the picture with his subjects as they were in the Polaroid. (Adams)

In spite of his sensitivities to the concerns of his subjects, Adams has faced criticism of his work. Amy Tucker, in the Smithsonian article in question, relates the controversy:

His portraits of "the mountain people," as he calls them, are intimate, direct and sometimes bleak. Some critics—including those featured in *The True Meaning of Pictures*, a 2002 documentary film about Adams' work— say he exploits a region already saddled with stereotypes involving poverty and violence. Adams says he's capturing a fading culture—home wakes, for instance, are now less common in the mountains—and the faces of old friends. "When [critics] are taken out of their middle-class comfort zone, they are confronted with another person's humanity," he says. "And they blame the photographer."(Tucker)

This story embodies the ideals we wish students to embrace (an engaged critical approach) and the pattern we wish students to avoid (that of the disengaged critic.) The second reason for the Stolons Model is to equip students with a "way of looking" that removes them from the role of detached critic and allows them to confront "another person's humanity."

"You don't know me without you have read a book by...ME."

Because, when it all comes down to brass tacks, culture is all about the human experience. The proper role of the student ethnographer is not to label, but to understand. Soren Kierkegaard's maxim is appropriately applied here: "Once you label me, you negate me" (Vriend and Dyer 31-36). The Stolons Model can help students move past the labels (poor, uneducated, fanatical, dirty, strange) that negate their ethnographic subjects. The Stolons Model, by its inquisitive nature, can help direct students away from the privileged seat of judgment and Othering, away from a grid of authority and superiority towards an understanding of how cultural groups develop and

practice the shared practices, values and beliefs that serve as the basis for communal meaning-making. The Stolons Model can help students lay aside troublesome prejudices without the necessity of emptying the students of their own sets of values, morals and ethics. The Stolons Model does not demand that students embrace or endorse the cultural practices of their host cultures, but by equipping them to understand, it encourages understanding. The Stolons Model, properly applied, can help students produce compositions across media that are circumspect and sensitive, yet critical and expressive. It does so by helping the students listen as people tell their cultural stories through *ethnos, muthos, archon, nomos* and *techne*. And if the Stolons Model can save one student from being a critic, then I will have been "doing God's work."

"Within the shadows lie the depth and beauty of human beings...."

Shelby Lee Adams, photographer (Tucker)

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