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Winning, Losing, and Changing the Rules: The Rhetoric of Poetry Contest and Competition

by Marc Pietrzykowski

Under the Direction of Dr. George Pullman

ABSTRACT

This dissertation attempts to trace the shifting relationship between the fields of Rhetoric and Poetry in Western culture by focusing on poetry contests and competitions during several different historical eras. In order to examine how the distinction between the two fields is contingent on a variety of local factors, this study makes use of research in contemporary cognitive neuroscience, particularly work in categorization and cognitive linguistics, to emphasize the provisional nature of conceptual thought; that is, on the type of mental activity that gives rise to conceptualizations such as "Rhetoric" and "Poetry." The final portions of the research attempt to use some modeling techniques derived from cognitive linguistics as invention strategies for producing stylistically idiosyncratic academic knowledge, and for examining the relationship between the stylistic markers we associate with each of the two aforementioned fields.

INDEX WORDS: Dissertation, Rhetoric, Composition, Poetry, Poetics, Contest, Debate, Competition, Stylistics, Cognitive Linguistics, Conceptual Blending, Cognitive Science, Categorization, History.

Winning, Losing, and Changing the Rules: The Rhetoric of Poetry Contest and Competition

by

Marc Pietrzykowski

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

In the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2007

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Marc Pietrzykowski

2007

Winning, Losing, and Changing the Rules: The Rhetoric of Poetry Contest and Competition

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August 2007

This dissertation is dedicated to my wife.

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Preface

In reviewing some other recent dissertations published in the field of Rhetoric and Composition (Boozer, Ferstle, Kemp, Marquez, Stahlnecker, Vie, et. al.), I found that most of them began with a story of some kind. These stories were sometimes personal (Boozer, Ferstle, Marquez, Stahlnecker), sometimes cited from other sources (Kemp) and still others were journalistic (Vie), but all appeared to serve the same function: to set the "scene" for the reader, much as playwright might describe the setting of a scene before the characters are introduced, except that the "characters" in a dissertation are ideas. And as is the case with a play, if the scene is not well-established before the action begins, the audience will struggle to understand why the characters are speaking and behaving the way they are. So, my own story begins this way: I am a student in the PhD program at Georgia State University in Atlanta, GA, I have written a dissertation, and I would like to introduce the audience to its main characters.

Rhetoric and Poetics

My first goal in writing a dissertation is to prove a mastery of the sort of scholarly tools a successful PhD candidate will use: research, writing, analysis and interpretation, and knowledge of the discipline. The discipline I am part of, Rhetoric and Composition, is a comparatively new one, having only existed formally since the first meeting of the Conference of College

Composition and Communication in 1949[1], but which also has established itself as part of the significantly longer tradition of the discipline of Rhetoric. Part of the ongoing process of disciplinary definition thus involves doing historical research, and my dissertation is, for the most part, a historical study of the field. I have chosen to study a particular aspect of this history that is, I believe, largely under-examined at this point: the shifting role played by Poetics, which was considered one of the sub-disciplines of Rhetoric until fairly recently. Part of the process of disciplinary definition that Rhetoric and Composition has undergone within English Departments has included avoiding subject matter that other English scholars address, such as Literature and, to a lesser extent, Creative Writing[2]. Given departmental politics and the general need to get along with co-workers, keeping to one's scholarly "turf" makes a great deal of sense, but it also can lead to scholarship that is specialized to the point of solipsism; also, in as much as Rhetoric and Composition is concerned with writing, disallowing research into a significant aspect of written production—that is, the production of poetic effect in writing—does a disservice to the subject, to the discipline, and, as I hope to argue, to English Studies in general. Each of the different disciplinary areas within English studies brings different ways of constructing knowledge to the field, and I believe that increased collaboration between all three is necessary if English studies is to thrive and not be reduced to a service department for other disciplines.

In my dissertation, then, I hope to explore some of the ways that the relationship between Rhetoric and Poetics has been conceptualized in the Western tradition, and I also hope to illustrate how different stylistic and organizational strategies in academic research can affect the way knowledge is constructed by using some of these strategies in my research. For example, the

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[1] Formal authorization occurred during the National Council of Teachers of English conference that year.
[2] See Bishop, Bizzarro, Ingham, Mayers et. al. Also, Maureen Goggin has written a useful bibliography on the tangled origins of the various sub-disciplines of English.

overall organization of the chapters will include an introductory block quote that is *not* then explicitly discussed, as is the norm, in order to let the quote set a "scene" that the reader will help build by establishing her own connections between the quote and what follows. I discuss these chapter-level organizational strategies in greater detail in the introductory chapter. For the overall organization of the dissertation, I have chosen "paired" chapters, the first four of which are analyses of historical periods that were chosen because they present different, though related, aspects of the relationship between Poetics and Rhetoric: of language as ornamental display, as public performance and contest, as civic discourse, and as explicit argumentation. To help further focus this inquiry, I examine how poetic conventions changed during the Homeric era of Ancient Greece, the Roman Second Sophistic, the British Augustan age, and the German/British Romantic period by considering the way each period approached poetic contest—rule-based, explicit contestation using poetry—and competition, which I define as the implicit struggle for success among competing poets and poetic conventions.

Contest and Competition

In the final two chapters, I hope to offer a combination of analysis and illustration, discussing some reasons that the disciplines of Creative Writing and Rhetoric and Composition might approach the way they construct and present knowledge differently, and then providing an illustrative example for each. In the final chapter, for instance, I will compose a *haibun*, which is a Japanese form of travelogue that includes both prose and haiku, that "travels" to several research areas. I have chosen to approach the final chapters in this way because I am convinced

that the discipline of Rhetoric and Composition has the best chance of helping English studies survive[3], but this can only happen if a significant amount of energy is devoted to producing scholarship that engages a more general audience, scholarship that follows in the tradition of Isocrates by trying to help shape civic attitudes even as it makes its scholarly arguments. Considered within the context of recent writing on the "gap" between theory and practice in Rhetoric and Composition scholarship[4], it seems to me the Isocratean model is one of two good ways to approach this problem. The more common way to address the problem is by calling for theory that emerges more closely from classroom practices and outcomes; when Alice Calderonello wrote, in 1991, that "[t]he professionalization of composition studies in relation to other disciplines has created a drive for standardization (in response to the need to be distinctive from other fields)" (1), hers was one of a chorus of voices calling for increased attention to pedagogy, and this chorus, while somewhat more muted, has continued to make the case for an increased focus on pedagogy. But the first part of the quoted sentence bothers me—making research more "standardized," presenting a unified front to distinguish Rhetoric and Composition from other fields, would make more sense if we were chemists, or even economists, but my understanding of the rhetorical tradition is that we are studying all the available means of persuasion, and so our research should, by definition, be various in terms of subject matter, methodology, and style. A second way, then, to address the gap between theory and practice is by practicing good, influential writing that tries to make its arguments to an audience outside of

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[3] (Regarding the ongoing (self-perpetuating?) crisis in English Studies, see Cain, Guy and Small, and Reid for a view from the Lit side of the aisle, and Bloom, Crowley, Jarrett, and Olson from the Rhet/Comp side. These are simply the books or articles I have on the table in front of me; cataloguing all the literature on this topic, even from the last decade, would be a dissertation in itself)

[4] Again, the essays and whole books that focus on this "gap" almost constitute a sub-field themselves, but looking at the Carnegie Reports on the future of higher education are good, general place to start, and recent books by Ede and Spellmeyer (both discussed later in this dissertation) discuss the issue within the context of Rhet/Comp. Also: recent articles by Amare (technical writing), Hendricks (composition studies), and Schilb (issues of self-definition).

the academy. To accomplish the second goal, however, we must first gain the assent of a wider audience, which in turn means studying a variety of poetic effects, effects that will engage the everyday reader (or even non-reader); discovering these effects involves, among other things, looking at how different stylistic conventions are in competition with one another and how we can enter this competition without sacrificing what we value about academic discourse. Also implicit in the Isocratean model is the idea that broadening and exploring different conventions for academic discourse involves widening the space available in the discipline where these conventions can compete among themselves, and I think that is really what I hope to accomplish with my dissertation: I am not so bold as to think I can change academic conventions with a dissertation, nor that I am reaching a wider audience than more mainstream academic writing might, but I am, I hope, exploring some of the ways I might eventually work toward this goal, clearing out a little brush so I can begin offering models of scholarly writing that compete with more standard forms.

Competition and contest are not, as Robert Connors has maintained, opposed to cooperation; the agonistic and the irenic, to use Connors' terminology, are aspects of the same process of knowledge-building. When I offer a different "take" on a subject, a different set of conventions for poetry, or a stylistically idiosyncratic academic essay, I do so in order for my idea to compete with others, and in the hopes that my idea will "win," that is, succeed and gain adherents. But I also do so to help cooperate in the ongoing production of knowledge, and to help the game—whatever it may be—prosper and draw interest from others. Walter Ong's *Fighting for Life*, while in many ways a fascinating book, has had the unfortunate effect of gendering competition, making contest masculine and cooperation feminine, the same distinction

that Connors later picked up on and which has been thoroughly discredited by anthropologists. In many ways, what I hope my dissertation illustrates is the way that competing and cooperation are very much interdependent—and certainly gender-neutral—aspects of the same phenomenon.

Cognitive Linguistics

Throughout the dissertation, I have chosen to use—or "poach," as one of my advisors has said—some of the modeling techniques and explanatory apparatus of the field of Cognitive Linguistics, particularly the idea of "conceptual blending" developed by Giles Fauconnier and Mark Turner. I have poached in this particular forest because of the many sympathies I see between the ways that Rhetoric and Composition and Cognitive Linguistics approach knowledge construction. Mark Turner has made this same connection more explicit in his essay "Toward the Founding of Cognitive Social Science,":

> There was once (and in pale reduction still is) a discipline of historical influence and prestige whose defining focus was just this convergence of social science around the topic of mental events. Greek rhetoricians took a complex view of cognition, in which individual human beings are equipped with large toolkits of powerful and generative cognitive operations and conceptual structures, to be used for understanding, judgment, decision, and persuasion, including self-persuasion. The rhetorician strives for conscious awareness of those cognitive operations and conceptual structures, in the hope of discovering ways in which to manipulate them. The effectiveness of the manipulations

> depends on the shared nature of the cognitive operations and conceptual structures -- they are part of the backstage cognition of the members of the audience. It is in virtue of that backstage cognition that the rhetorician can prompt the audience in one way or another. The rhetorician, in effect, invites the members of the audience to recruit from their background cognitive resources and to use those recruitments for some purpose. (Turner, 11)

While the "pale reduction" comment smarts, it also speaks to many of the issues I have raised in this preface, and will continue to raise throughout the dissertation. Turner's description of a rhetorician is closer to my understanding of the term than many others I have read that came from the field of Rhetoric and Composition, even if he does not quite go far enough and extend the definition beyond the Aristotelian study of "ways in which to manipulate" cognitive operations to the Isocratean practice of, well, manipulating them in the greater public sphere. Nonetheless, I think the sympathies between Cognitive Linguistics and Rhetoric and Composition are quite strong, and while I have seen a few other scholars begin to plumb this connection (Turner, Oakely), I do anticipate this area of study "catching on" in Rhetoric and Composition at some point in the near future exactly because these sympathies are so clear. In my dissertation, I try to both explore and integrate some of the conclusions and techniques associated with Cognitive Linguistics and conceptual blending throughout the text, even as I come to recognize some of the limitations of these same conclusions.

Professionalization

All of these characters are meant to help satisfy my primary goal for this dissertation, the goal I stated near the beginning of this preface: satisfying the requirements for a PhD in Rhetoric and Composition. I am trying to become a professional teacher and scholar, one who has been sanctioned by a group of individuals acting as representatives of an institution of higher education. I am also, perhaps unwisely, trying to shape the definition of "professional" in a way that fits the kind of scholar I am, and the kind of teacher I am, by producing a dissertation that is, at times, not very representative of the kind of dissertations produced in the discipline, such as choosing poetry contests and competition as a research focus, for example. One of my advisors warned me that this kind of "swimming upstream" before I even had a job, let alone acquired tenure, was very risky, a warning that I appreciate and understand. And yet, I know that swimming downstream would not make me happy, either in the doing of such work or in the effect it might have on the discipline I am part of. One way to think about this choice, in light of recent work on professionalization in Rhetoric and Composition[5], is that I am choosing—at least for the present—to develop a professional identity that will allow me to remain constructively marginalized, to use anthropologist Janet Bennett's phrase. Typically, marginality is conceptualized as a powerless, painful place that one tries to escape from, moving toward the more comfortable center, but there is power at the margins as well—particularly the freedom to experiment unfettered by the pressure to adhere to academic conventions. Were I seeking a career at a Research-1 University and a cabinet full of accolades and awards, then I would

[5] See, for small slice of what is, again, a very substantial topic in the field: Brown, Roen, and Enos; Marshall; Olson; Peirce and Enos; Phelps; Smit; also, Andrea Muldoon's dissertation on the subject is well worth reading.

certainly try to work more within the conventions of traditional Rhetoric and Composition scholarship. But I am not, for the simple reason that I know such a path would not make me happy.

In the context of some of the issues raised earlier in this preface, such as the relative dearth of scholarly work in Rhetoric and Composition that embodies the Isocratean tradition and the ossifying effect of disciplinary boundaries in English studies, and in as much as I have announced my intention to explore them at greater length in the dissertation to follow, I hope that I have made clear that the decision to write my dissertation as I have, and the sort of professional space that it helps establish for me, is a conscious, well-informed one. If we can consider, for a moment, that decisions about one's position within a profession involve trying to ascertain the *kairos* of the situation, to figure out what is the best and most appropriate time to act discursively—and how to do so—in order to attain a specific outcome, then I would suggest that I am trying to shape the conditions of the kairotic moment to some degree. I have always felt that defining kairos as knowing what to say when is a bit too passive, because one can also recognize when the kairotic moment is malleable: when the right thing to say changes the conditions of its reception.

In other words, the dissertation to follow is a bit non-traditional, is fairly (and perhaps puzzlingly) interdisciplinary, and which plays with the form of the dissertation to create an appetite in its audience that the form can satisfy, to paraphrase Kenneth Burke. That this audience is limited should be clear, I hope, but I don't think such an audience doesn't exist; I would like to think of myself as that singular a thinker, but I have had enough conversations with others in the discipline to know such is not the case. And, rather than overstate the strangeness of

the dissertation to follow, I should point out that much of it is quite conventional; I have not, like the character Jim Ignitowski on the television show *Taxi*, written my dissertation in finger paint. Perhaps later I will dabble in that medium, but for now, I will let the characters listed above[6] begin their conversations.

[6] As well as other, "minor" characters who will no doubt enter the action as well.

Introduction

How many of the things which constantly come into our purview must be deemed monstrous or miraculous if we apply such terms to anything which outstrips our reason! If we consider that we have to grope through a fog even to understand the very things we hold in our hands, then we will certainly find that it is not knowledge but habit which takes away their strangeness.

--Montaigne, "That it is madness to judge the true and the false from our own capacities"

Writing, like reading, is a function of the human body. The ability to manipulate symbols and construct meaning, whether as writer or reader, is among the most significant attributes that defines us as a species, and we possess this ability because of the way our physiology has evolved. Since our ability to manipulate symbols is a physical function, the way we use symbols is deeply rooted in our physical state, both in terms of semantics and in terms of the technology we use to inscribe symbols. Consider how much of our everyday language is based on what George Lakoff and Mark Johnson call "orientational metaphors":

> HAPPY IS UP; SAD IS DOWN. I'm feeling up. That boosted my spirits. My spirits rose. you're in high spirits. Thinking about her always gives me a lift. I'm feeling down. I'm

> depressed. He's really low these days. I fell into a depression. My spirits sank. Physical basis: Drooping Posture typically goes along with sadness and depression, erect posture with a positive emotional state. (*Metaphors We Live By,* 21*)*

Naturally, the content of these orientational metaphors is cultural, but every culture has orientational metaphors that relate to bodily orientation; for example, in nearly every culture that has been studied, the future is expressed as being in front and the past as behind, but the Aymara people of the Andes region of South America express time the opposite way—for them, the past lies in front, while the future is behind. Nonetheless, their symbolic expression of their perception of time is based on physiology because, as Rafeal Nunez argues, the Aymara express time as they do because "[they] place a great deal of significance on whether an event or action has been seen or not seen by the speaker"("Backs to the Future"), to the extent that unqualified statements like "the Magna Carta was issued in 1215" can only be made in Aymara by also saying whether the event was witnessed by the speaker or is hearsay. Thus, for the Aymara, the physical distinction between seen and unseen is the basis for the distinction between past and future, and between the known and the unknown as well.

The technology we use to inscribe symbols is also physically determined, based on such characteristics as the number and type of photoreceptors in our eyes and our ability to manipulate tools in a very sophisticated way with our hands; even such baffling writing systems as the Inca *quipu*, which consists of an array of colored, knotted threads, is predicated on possession of the same physiological apparatus that I am using to type on a laptop computer. And the symbols themselves, be they logographic, syllabic, alphabetic, or featural, are functions of our bodies as surely as the scent rising off a rose is a function of its physiology.

Doug Hesse, during his Chair's address to the Conference on College Composition and Communication in 2005, worried that "the word "writing" may frame our work in ways that aren't always desirable. The term seems neutral enough, but it may well carry the sense of inscribing words on paper; that is, it may focus attention on the physical act of graphemic production, separate from thinking, with all the focus on correctness" (345). The idea that the physical act of writing implies a focus on correctness is wrong-headed in a number of illuminating ways: in addition to revealing the continued influence of the mind/body dualism endemic to the Western intellectual tradition since Descartes[7](and the attendant downgrading of physical activity vis-à-vis mental activity) it illustrates how far the discipline of Rhetoric and Composition has wandered, in its quest for identity, from the concerns that have historically been the province of rhetoricians. Given the inability of Rhet/Comp and Communications departments to establish some common agenda, writing is what scholars in Rhetoric and Composition have to work with, and so the study of the interdependency of writing and thought is our share of the legacy of rhetoric—and writing, as I have said, is a function of the body, so in a very real sense, our task is to study the way our bodies manipulate symbols and the technology of symbols in order to affect other bodies.

To wit: I am hungry, so I go to the freezer and get an ice cream bar. I bought the ice cream bar because the symbols printed on it caused a specific kind of meaning to emerge in my mind, and it is now satisfying my hunger (and my sweet tooth) in more or less the way its symbols told me it would. What does this experience have to do with rhetoric? For a start, it has revitalized my body a bit and given me the energy to continue assembling and dissembling the set of symbols I am working with as I write, symbols that include artifacts verified as

[7] Though whether this was really Descartes' fault or not is disputable—but that is another tale.

historically authentic by people with expertise in such things, symbols and concepts stored in my own internal lexicon, and so forth. But the effect of eating on graphemic production is not exactly the point, despite how it might affect what I write and thus what is read; more salient to my inquiry is the reasons I chose to buy these particular ice cream bars. Product packaging is a kind of symbolic manipulation and so is a part of the history of rhetoric, as is all advertising, and the advertising on the ice cream bar had an unintended effect on me: I noticed that it was trying to persuade me, perhaps because I have been working on this book, perhaps because I naturally recoil at attempts to manipulate my attention. The product in question promised "English Toffee Temptation," which caused the concepts "England" and "toffee" to emerge in my mind, but rather than coupling effectively with "temptation" (a word I simply ignored), these two concepts cued a skeptical reaction involving the likelihood of any of this product being made in the United Kingdom. By resisting this attempt at creating specific meaning in my mind, my attention was drawn to it, and a quick perusal of the "small type" revealed that in fact the ice cream bars were made entirely in New Jersey; nonetheless, I now had the product in my hand, and toffee flavor did sound enticing, never mind the forged pedigree, so I bought them despite—indeed, because of—my initial resistance to the rhetorical act made by the packaging.

This awareness of a the way that a rhetorical act is causing meaning to emerge in the mind need not be based on resistance, of course, nor is it necessary for a rhetorical act to make the first step of toward successful persuasion. Any symbolic act that causes meaning to gain "presence," to use Perelman's term--"the displaying of certain elements in which the speaker wishes to center attention in order that they may occupy the foreground of the bearer's consciousness (131)"--possesses rhetorical intent, it exists to cause meaning to emerge in the

minds of an audience, and the classical model of the successful rhetorical act is one which begins, following Jeffrey Walker (who is in turn following Hesiod), by "deflect[ing] or 'turn[ing] aside' the listener's mind from its current state or path" (4). According to Walker, the same step is a necessary precursor to causing "poetic" meaning to emerge, and if we follow this definition, then "English Toffee Temptation" caused poetic meaning to emerge—albeit unintentionally--as it turned my mind aside from its path.

This might seem demeaning to the widely accepted conception of poetry as "elevated" language, but poetic meaning can emerge from within any rhetorical context, be it epideictic or pragmatic; "poetry" is simply the name we give to the genre of expression whose main rhetorical goal is causing poetic meaning to emerge. In effect, poetry is a ritualized symbolic activity during which the reader expects, or at least hopes, to experience the sustained creation of poetic expression. As Walker acknowledges, those acts that simply reify the mind's current state or path can are also examples of rhetorical effectiveness, and so sometimes we read a poem—most of the time, perhaps—and think it pleasant, or well-crafted, or vulgar, according to what we expect from a poem; had I gone looking for ice cream bars, then the rhetorical act caused by "English Toffee Temptation" would be rhetorically effective but not poetic, because it would not have turned my mind aside. A rhetorical act causes poetic meaning to emerge when it turns aside the mind of the audience and causes it to *focus on the act of meaning-making* that is taking place in audience's mind, so that the audience is simultaneously aware of and helpless to oppose the meaning that is emerging in the mind. I should qualify how I mean "aware" here, since being "swept away" by the hypnagogic spell of poetry is exactly what I am talking about: when one is swept away by a rhetorical act that has caused poetic meaning to emerge, the mind is so

completely aware of the act of meaning making that "self"—the self constructed of a lifetime of meaning-making--recedes and the process of meaning-making itself comes to the fore, something like the Buddhist concept of "mindfulness." The fact that we think we are being swept away by the words (or voice) of the poet is an example of the Eliza effect, which involves compressing the meaning our minds create and the objects that our senses receive: when I look at an ice cream bar, my mind builds a representation of it, but this representation and the ice cream bar itself are not the same thing. To put it another way: if the subjective self is what protrudes between the symbolic lattices that constitute knowledge, if "[…] the presence of you is the feeling of what happens when your being is modified by the act of apprehending something" (Damasio, 10), then the poetic is what we designate a rhetorical act that makes you aware of the processes that create "self" precisely because this self is changing into something else, and so we are entirely focused on the cognitive processes that are affecting that change. I bought an ice cream bar because its packaging caused my mind to turn away and focus on the meaning that was emerging in my mind and so, however briefly and in a very minor key, what the language was doing in my mind was my identity.

I have intentionally chosen this rather mundane example of the poetic to illustrate how the same essential rhetorical effect that poets strive for is present everywhere. The phrase "English Toffee Temptation" creates emergent meaning in my mind, and the cognitive process I used is framed by my knowledge of advertising language, and the rows and rows of similarly packaged goods ("Hazelnut Crunch," "Cappuccino Nut Cluster") represent a set of advertising conventions that I dislike, yet nonetheless expect, and in fact barely notice. The conventions of poetry are, of course, quite different, and so when I come to the end of Wallace Stevens'

"Sunday Morning" and read "death is the mother of beauty," I am captivated by the way the language causes meaning to emerge in my mind, despite the fact that the meaning is fairly pedestrian: "death is beauty's mother" sounds somewhat worse, and "death makes life precious" even worse. The point here is that "English Toffee Temptation" and "death is the mother of beauty" use similar conceptual structures—one is a tripartite nominal compound, the other what cognitive linguists call an "XYZ phrase"--to make meaning emerge, and while both expressions have the potential to be poetic (as does all expression) one can be said to have high poetic potential because of its rhetorical context, and one has very low poetic potential for the same reason, and so the effect in the latter case is correspondingly weak and short-lived.

Why Rhetoric and Poetics?

If rhetoric becomes poetic when the subject is aware of itself being altered, why the distinction? Why not simply place the poetic aspect of rhetoric at the top of a hierarchy of effects and continue calling it rhetoric? The answer to these questions have to do with habit, and with rhythm, and with our bodily habit of making distinctions between things. Historically, poetry has been considered a species of rhetoric, as it should be, and as a species its main purpose is to create the poetic effect I have been describing, where an audience is captivated by language, is aware of the way language was captivating them, and is nonetheless unable to resist. The fact that any other rhetorical act may also cause poetic meaning to emerge does not mean other rhetorical acts can be considered poetry, only that poetry exists to foster an environment where the poetic effect can take place. Plato understood poetry to be a hypnagogic species of rhetoric,

and despised both, but countless millions have experienced the effect of poetic meaning emerging in their minds upon reading the allegory of the cave. Aristotle's hierarchies of knowledge might seem decidedly non-poetic, but certainly there exist among us some strange eggs who find Book 2 of the *Rhetoric* captivating… the distinction we have historically made between rhetoric and poetry is really more of a set and subset relationship, whereas the distinction between rhetoric and poetics is more recent and certainly far more unstable.

The stability of a distinction between categories like "rhetoric" and "poetic" is dependant on context, of course; every distinction is an ad hoc distinction, made to help us index our interpretations of the world and thus exchange them with others. Making a distinction, on the other hand, is *not* ad hoc, but rather is part of how our bodies function—we are evolutionarily predisposed to making distinctions between concepts, and to blending concepts together. When James Berlin, in *Rhetoric and Reality*, broke rhetoric and poetics into separate categories, he did so because he claimed their epistemic focus was different: rhetoric, for Berlin, makes knowledge through production, and poetic through interpretation. The context of his distinction was both historical (see Todorov, Burke, Baldwin) and political, because he wanted to help shape the ongoing process of self-fashioning that has defined the field of Rhetoric and Composition, a field whose institutional identity unfortunately continues to depend on distinguishing itself from the field of Literary Criticism. Berlin wanted to show that English departments had formed to teach freshman composition, and that scholars in the 19th century had purposely made the same distinction Berlin makes, between rhetoric and poetics, in order to devalue rhetoric and elevate the status of poetic texts; according to Evelyn Wright, his goal was to "[…] rewrite the history of English departments in order to legitimize more balanced emphasis in the studies of rhetoric

(public discourse) and poetics" (613), which seems like a fine enough goal, if in fact the goal is to better to explore the relationship between the two and, eventually, to show that the web of relationships between them is sufficient to cause the distinction to melt away, and allow dialectical synthesis to occur.

Berlin's distinction was really between two kinds of texts, however, rather than between "production" and "interpretation"; his interest was curricular, which is to say political, and so his distinction is conceptualized within several frames, frames that include Academic Turf, Marxist Dialectic, and Intellectual Genealogy (which, to my mind, is somewhat different from the frame "History"). At the root of his distinction is the idea that distinguishing between two things makes the identity of each more secure because they can help define each other, but because Berlin's categories rely so heavily on one another, he cannot synthesize them, instead offering only that "[…] rhetoric always implies a corresponding poetics and poetics a corresponding rhetoric" (531), which seems not far from simply collapsing the two and claiming that every symbolic expression is rhetorical and also has the capability of becoming poetic, which in fact Berlin does say elsewhere in the essay.

It seems a bit odd that Berlin would try to keep this distinction in place, while claiming it is the cause of so much trouble, but if we collapsed the categories as Berlin had defined them, how would we decide who studied what, and who got grant money, and the office with a window? Luckily, that is not a problem I am much worried about, and I will address some of the same historical sources Berlin bases his distinction on later in this book. I the meantime, I will briefly explore what may well be a middle path between the school of thought Berlin and others have been grouped into—the Social Constructionists—and the approach to Rhetoric and

Composition that is often placed in opposition to the Social Constructionists, the "Cognitive Rhetoricians," typified by Janet Emig and Linda Flower.

Cognitive Rhetoric and Cognitive Linguistics

The school of thought and practice called Cognitive Linguistics is

> […] best described as a 'movement' or an 'enterprise', precisely because it does not constitute a single closely articulated theory. Instead, it is an approach that has adopted a common set of core commitments and guiding principles, which have led to a diverse range of complementary, overlapping, (and at times) competing theories (Evans et al, 3).

Scholars working in the field of Rhetoric and Composition will likely see their own 'movement' reflected in this description, and the similarities extend in many other directions, as a description of the cognitive linguistics 'enterprise' should demonstrate.

Like rhetoric, cognitive linguistics focuses on the interdependence of human language, the human mind, and the cultural experience of human beings. It began, in the 1970's, as a reaction to the dominant linguistic, and to lesser degree, philosophical approaches to language, and drew on work exploring human categorization and conceptualization that had been done in the field of cognitive psychology, as well on scientific studies of the neural underpinnings of language and cognition. During the 1980's and 1990's, advances in the technology available to study neural activity allowed researchers to begin making testable predictions about where language use

occurred in the brain, including the use of functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging and Magnetoencephalography. The sort of maps that this new technology provides do not explain how meaning occurs, however, and so cognitive science still faces the "binding problem," the gap between the evidence of language activity and use and any principled way for explaining how this evidence produces meaning and consciousness.

The binding problem is as old as human cognition, of course; recent attempts to address the problem of how meaning occurs include George Miller's concept of mental representations, as well as work by John McCarthy and others in the field of Artificial Intelligence. Others have chosen to set the question aside, as with B.F. Skinner's behaviorism, which holds that consciousness is not even an appropriate subject for scientific study, and Noam Chomsky's generative grammar, which challenged behaviorism by positing the existence of linguistic universals in human syntax, located in a kind of "language module" in the brain, while carefully avoiding the question of how meaning might arise from such a module. The idea that the mind is composed of modules devoted to certain tasks is still dominant in contemporary linguistics, which separates syntax, semantics, phonology, morphology, and so forth into distinct areas of study; even psycholinguistics, which is devoted to understanding the psychological and neurobiological factors that allow humans to use language, is primarily concerned with describing how the brain process language, rather than with how it makes meaning emerge.

More recent theories of cognitive science have challenged the modularity model and instead have posited that what makes human consciousness distinct is the "cognitive fluidity" of the human brain, to use Stephen Mithen's term. Instead of modules, there are centers of activity that interact in a variety of ways with other centers, so that one center of activity might serve many

different functions depending on what other centers it interacts with. Instead of language use emerging in one area of the brain, it emerges in several different areas, in subtly different "mappings" according to what sort of linguistic artifact is being processed. One way to conceptualize this fluidity is by examining our visual system. In his book *Phantoms in the Brain,* neurobiologist V. S. Ramachandran discusses the case of a young woman who suffers a form of blindness as the result of brain damage. After the accident that caused this damage, she could only make out strong colors and textures of objects that were places in front of her, but not the objects themselves—she was still receiving some visual data, but her visual world was essentially an indistinguishable wash. A doctor who specialized in brain injury cases met with her and asked her what he was holding in his hand, and held up a pencil. She became frustrated since she could not tell what the object was, and grabbed it from his hand for a better look. Further tests involved vision dependant motor-skills tasks such as putting a piece of mail in a slot that was alternately horizontally or vertically aligned, despite the fact that she could not tell a vertical line from a straight line.

Visual perception of objects involves the concerted effort of at least thirty different areas of the brain and two distinct but interrelated visual pathways. Information is captured by photoreceptors in the eye and then is bifurcated along the two pathways to be distributed to different areas of the brain. One of these two pathways is phylogenetically much older than the other; according to Ramachandran:

> The "older" pathway goes from the eye straight down to a structure called the superior colliculus, and from there it eventually gets to the higher cortical areas, especially in the

> parietal lobes. The "newer" pathway, on the other hand, travels from the eyes to a cluster of cells called the lateral geniculate nucleus, which is a relay station en route to the primary visual cortex. From there, visual information is transmitted to the thirty or so other visual areas for further processing. (73)

In Ramachandran's view, the older visual pathway is more evolutionarily primitive and is largely concerned with "orienting behavior," that is, with causing the human body to respond to broad changes in the visual field, as when a large object suddenly looms up in the corner of your eye—or when a mail slot is turned sideways, or someone holds up a pencil in front of you. Because the damage to the young woman's brain affected the newer visual pathway, information continued to flow along the older pathway, but once it reached the higher cortical areas, the concert of processes involved in distinguishing form could not proceed correctly, a bit like a string quartet that tries to play after the strings had been removed from their instruments.

The shift in cognitive science from a modular model to a more fluid one has been accompanied by a shift away from the physical symbol system hypothesis, developed by Artificial Intelligence researchers Allen Newell and Herbert Simon, which is responsible for the claim that intelligence involves taking the physical patterns we call symbols and combining them new structures. This hypothesis is, by and large, still the popular view of cognitive science, the view that describes the brain as a machine very much like a computer, and it is the view that is generally attributed to the early work of Janet Emig and Linda Flower under the heading "Cognitive Rhetoric." But the physical symbol system hypothesis has proven unable to produce anything that resembles human cognitive function; it works fine for programming a computer to

play chess, but cannot model even the most basic functions of the human mind. The mind is decidedly *not* like computer because it processes stimuli and symbols in patterns that give rise to *meaning*.

Hubert Dreyfus has called this older paradigm of cognition "GOFAI," an acronym for "Good Old-Fashioned Artificial Intelligence":

> GOFAI is based in the Cartesian idea that all understanding consists of forming and using appropriate symbolic representation. For Descartes, these representations were complex descriptions built up out of private ideas of elements. Kant added the important idea that all concepts are rules for relating such elements, and Frege showed that the rules could be formalized so that they could be manipulated without intuition or interpretation. (qtd. in Oakely, 95)

That this popular model of cognition is regularly used to characterize the work of Emig and Flower is rather unfortunate; by drawing on this paradigm in their scholarly work, they have helped associate Cognitive Rhetoric, within the field of rhetoric and Composition, with an outmoded approach, reducing the concept to little more than another marker to help subsequent generations trace the genealogy of the field, that process by which composition workers-begat-expressivism-begat-cognitive rhet-begat-process-begat-social constructivism… and thereby helping reiterate the condensed, overly simplistic image of ourselves that we paint on such cave walls as the "Brief History of Rhetoric and Composition" which opens the *Bedford Bibliography For Teachers of Writing.* Then again, compressing a series of events that occurred over time into

a single conceptual space, into what poststructuralists are wont to call "grand narratives," is a fairly typical—and fairly effective—example of the way our minds manipulate form to allow meaning-making to occur. According to Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner, "[f]orm does not present meaning but instead picks out the regularities that run throughout meanings. Form prompts meaning and must be suited to the task […] but having the form—and indeed even the intricate transformations of form (all those 1s and 0s)--is never having the meaning to which the form has been suited" (5). As blunt as the sound-byte history of Rhetoric and Composition might be, it is a conceptualization the field requires in order to have an identity, and an important part of that identity is redefining the concept again and again.

Conceptual Blending

As I suppose is apparent, part of my desire in writing these chapters is to steer Rhet/Comp's ongoing process of redefinition toward some of the new theories emerging from Cognitive Linguistics. One particularly promising avenue of cognitive linguistic inquiry is the one alluded to at the end of the previous section, the theory of cognition developed by Fauconnier and Turner called "conceptual blending." Conceptual blending attempts to model how meaning emerges from the interplay of three essential cognitive operations: identity, which is the recognition of sameness, difference, opposition, and so forth, and which are not cognitive givens, but in fact are the finished products of cognitive activity; integration, which involves discovering and combining aspects of identity and which is operationally constrained by our physiology; and imagination, which is the ability to construct mental simulations and thereby

conceptualize identity and integration, even in the absence of external stimuli. One important distinction that conceptual blending insists on is that the concerted use of these three mental operations is very different from the way formal approaches, such as generative grammar, algebra, and syllogism, try to model thought and symbolic manipulation. These systems prompt our brains to construct meaning, but they do not address the so-called "binding problem," that is, how is the meaning that emerges from these cues bound to them? For Fauconnier and Turner, the answer lies in the way we use identity, integration, and imagination:

> Consider, for example, a logical formula like $\forall x, p(x) \Rightarrow q(x)$. This logical form sets up a schema, according to which anything with the property *p* has the property *q*. A human being who understands the formula can then use it to discover particular truths by instantiating the properties *p* and *q* for a specific thing or individual. How does the human being know that the same individual who has property *p* also has property *q*? He knows it because the identical letter *x* has been used in the formula. But the formal identity itself is not itself a binding; it is only a prompt for the real binding to occur in the mind of the interpreter of the form. What the real binding allows a real brain to do is to apply the general schema behind the logical formula to particular things and individuals and to keep track of when they count as the same and when they count as different. 'Choose a point in the plane such that x = 1' asks us to lump together, for the purpose of the direction, an entire set of points as equivalent. By binding all these points, we create an integrated object: the line. The lumping together of points as the 'same' is a mental achievement that creates an integrated object. (12)

Many readers will instinctively object that what the authors describe is just another formal approach, that terms like "identity" and "meaning" are just signifiers like any other, formal identifiers for a prescribed range of meanings that exist within the formal system our brains create. This objection is actually an example of why the distinction is important: formal descriptions cannot prompt for meaning without doing cognitive work that eludes their formal constraints. Another way to think of how identity, integration, and imagination works is to imagine a word—'dog', for instance—as the tip of a cone. The cone widens downwards, and its bottom is not clearly delineated but instead melts into the landscape. Within the cone are all the possible meanings that the signifier 'dog' can cue in a given reader. When you combine the noun with an adjective—'bad dog'—the two cones intersect below the tips, which remain distinct; each cone thus limits their range of potential meanings to those allowed while the two words are contiguous. In this description, 'identity' is the cognitive faculty that allows us to understand that words are symbols and distinguish between them, 'integration' is the function by which we are able to assign meanings to symbols, and to combine these symbols and concepts and limit (or expand) their meanings accordingly, and 'imagination' is our ability to use identity and integration together in order to create a scenario where we 'picture' the cones and thus bind representation with meaning. The fact that the cones do not touch the landscape but instead melt into them is crucial, because the landscape allows all these processes to occur; the landscape represents those parts of the brain involved in things like body image, the regulation of chemical activity in various organs, and so forth.

So, while conceptual blending is still not an empirical *answer* to the binding problem, any more than Darwin's theory of evolution was an answer to the question of how new species

emerge, it is a way to model brain activity—especially that activity that involves the manipulation of symbols—that points the way toward new ways of researching how we live, just as the theory of evolution did[8]. That we can identify symbols, integrate them with meaning, and then combine them to make new meaning is difficult to dispute, and the work of 'proof'—identifying the way neurons and synapses manifest electrochemical processes when meaning making occurs—is still very rough going, though we have improved in our ability to measure such phenomena drastically in the last few decades. Nonetheless, conceptual blending is a cohesive, plausible, and remarkably expansive theory that holds great practical potential for scholars of rhetoric.

Consider, for example, that conceptual blending is a kind of structuralism that allows for explorations of cultural relativism. Literary scholars, particularly in Europe and Great Britain, have begun exploring this idea; according to F. Elizabeth Hart, cognitive linguistics is characterized by

> a nostalgia for the good old days of formalism, when one could safely assume that a text was grounded by its language (and that the language, of course, was successfully meaningful for those who had acquired the right kind of "competence")—as well as a willingness to take seriously the postmodern problematics of interpretation, even to push the epistemological project of postmodernism further to its horizons. (227)

[8] This is not so exaggerated a comparison as it might seem; both theories assembled findings from large bodies of work done by others into coherent wholes, and both made their claims before the long work of assembling falsifiable had been done. I am not comparing the effect the theories have had or will have on human history, but rather their methods of composition and presentation.

It is for these reasons, she posits, that cognitive linguistics in general (and conceptual blending in particular) should be the 'next big thing' in literary studies; to my view, the 'next big thing' in literary studies needs to be predicated on a commitment to working across the various sub-fields of English--if the field of English is to survive[9]--and certainly cognitive linguistics requires the sort of contextualized view of cultural production that the study of rhetoric provides. It is fine to talk about figurative language as blends of concepts that arise because of our cognitive architecture, but this architecture is still largely conditioned by culture—the conceptual apparatus present at birth underpins adult thought, and so the meaning that emerges from this apparatus is simultaneously learned and inherent.

The relationship between figures of speech, culture, and thought have been the province of rhetorical study since Ancient Greece, and while the authors of the *Rhetorica Ad Herenium* seem to have been more interested in simply recording linguistic schema for classroom use than they were in theorizing the relationship between these schema and brain function as it occurs within the context of a given culture, these handbooks are nonetheless evidence that such theorizing was a foundational part of the field of rhetoric. Fauconnier and Turner have noticed and explored the similarities between their work and that of classical rhetoricians; for example, they observed "[…] a certain optimality principle leading to the tightening of metonymies under certain conditions […] the explicit statement of the metonymy-tightening principle has as one of its specific corollaries the rhetorical figure *metalepsis*" (4), while both Brain Vickers and Jeanne Fahnestock, among others, have argued that classical rhetorical figures were part of an attempt to

[9] "In our colleges and universities, the last thirty years have seen steadily declining enrollments while the number of majors has doubled, even tripled, in business programs, information sciences, and other fields […] instead of addressing these problems, our humanists have divided into warring camps over issues that are largely symbolic—and misconceived" (Spellmeyer, 3).

define of the link between form and function, between the shapes of human thought and the ways these shapes could be used to produce specific effects. That the study of figuration—poorly pursued in the West from the Middle Ages onward—should be 'rediscovered' by modern cognitive scientists seems to me reason enough for scholars in Rhetoric and Composition to begin exploring cognitive linguistics, rather than continuing to subsist on the Cultural Studies and Theory scraps left by literary critics. In fact, cognitive linguistics is but one of many avenues of inquiry that rhetoricians might find more fruitful than the ones that have left literary studies unable to respond to the kind of changes Western culture is undergoing as we move from late modernism to technological humanism, as it is both interdisciplinary and profoundly rhetorical, providing scholars with the tools to shift from empirical study to interpretive reflection to pedagogical explication quickly and even necessarily … but that, too, is another story.

Methodology and Synopses

To continue this story, it would be best to outline briefly how I plan to use conceptual blending to explore the relationship between language, cognition, and culture. Since much of the work of conceptual blending entails analyzing how concepts are formed through the selective combining of other concepts within specific contexts, I need a set of concepts and a set of contexts. It should, I hope, be clear from the subjects addressed in this chapter that I am interested in the how the poetic dimension of a rhetorical act is produced, and as poetry is the discursive genre whose goal is the production of this dimension, my study should focus on this genre. A genre is a set of rules of production, conventions that allow the ritual act of sustained

poetic expression to take place, and these rules emerge from specific cultural contexts, so I will further emphasize the ritual aspect of poetic production by distinguishing between a poetry *contest* and *competition* between poets. Both concepts are aspects of the production of poetry, but for my immediate purposes, a *contest* is explicitly public, and is a situation where the rules for production are known by all and are likely to be highly formalized in some way, whereas *competition* involves individual acquiring ethos—reputation as a poet of renown--and the rules for doing so are likely hidden, implicit, or self-generated. The explicitness of a poetry contest might be manifest as two poets standing in front of each other, trading couplets, where stepping outside of the established form will cause one or the other to 'lose'—and in fact neither poet is likely to step outside the rules, since doing so would be proof that you were not even a bad poet, but no poet at all. The same poets are involved in a competition for prestige, and one of the ways to acquire prestige is to win poetry contests, but many other factors come into play as well, and in sociohistorical situations where access to public poetic contest is restricted, discovering the means of 'winning' this competition can become very tricky indeed.

By exploring the relationship between these two aspects of poetic production, then, I hope to shed some light on the how the poetic dimension of rhetorical activity has occurred in several different, related sociohistorical contexts. In the first chapter, I examine Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey* in terms of recent scholarship on the collaborative nature of the authorship of these works, and of the figure of Homer himself. The rhapsodic contests which took place at various Olympic games are the most high-profile examples of the way the epics were gradually authored by numerous poets competing for prestige and wealth, and Derek Collins' work extends this idea to the pre-literate form of contest known as "capping." By modeling a few of the more well-

known conceptual blends at work in the Homeric epics, I introduce this strategy as a means for understanding collaborative authorship, and then apply it to the rhetorical figure *irony*, as well to the poetic competition between Pindar and Bacchylides.

In chapter 2, I consider some of the genres of Roman poetry and how they emerged as part of the ongoing process of poetic competition. Focusing on the ill-defined period known as the Second Sophistic. I also begin to explore the spatial framework on which histories are built, and on the way that language necessarily compresses external reality into understandable cues for meaning construction. Focusing on the "showpiece orators" who performed historically-grounded speeches in public contests during the Second Sophistic, I consider how these contests were aspects of identity creation for Greeks living under Roman rule, and also how ideas and theories follow a similar model of identity creation, becoming "characters" in the dramatistic theater of historical knowledge. Once a given genre of writing achieves the status of a character, I argue, it is then a fit subject for satire--and the emergence of satire is one of the indicators that a genre has "come of age," so to speak.

Chapter 3 leaps forward to the Augustan period of post-Renaissance England, the last era of western literary history that explicitly described poetry as a tool for public debate and for the Isocratean shaping of civic attitudes. While surveying this period, I continue exploring the concept of history as a spatial, dramatistic narrative, which allows me to indulge in a bit of exposition on the neural chemistry of the brain. This discussion leads to a description of the Augustan struggle to define English-language poetic meter using the classical metrical system of Greece and Rome, a struggle that acquired new historical framing during the period. Finally, I discuss some of the “proto-Romantic” poets of the Augustan period, and the way their work

prefaced the shift away from poetry as public contestation to poetry as a privately enacted competition that would burst forth so virally in England with the poetry and prose of Wordsworth and Coleridge.

The surprising—to me, at least—success of the prose arguments that the English Romantic poets used to support their poetics is the central subject of chapter 4; much of our modern distinction between rhetoric and poetics emerges from the manifestos of Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Shelley, among others, and the self-conscious historization of their roles as poetic seers is a key element to understanding how this distinction has persisted for so long. I then contrast their historization with a historical experiment of my own, wherein I imagine presenting Richard Whately with a copy of Keats' "Ode to a Grecian Urn" and discussing its contents in terms of effective eyewitness testimony. Finally, I settle into a slight digression on Cartesian duality, which I believe is central to both Romantic identity and its continued influence over contemporary thought.

Chapters 5 and 6 are, like the other chapters in this book, meant as something of a matched pair; in each, I try to provide an example of how conceptual blending can be used as a strategy for invention, while continuing my analysis of the relationship between rhetoric and poetics. Chapter 5 begins with a discussion of long and short term memory, and then shifts to an exploration of how both kinds of memory are involved in transmitting, receiving, and constructing poetic genealogies within MFA programs. In the absence of public engagement and contest, I argue, the narrative history of poetic competition that apprentice poets receive in Creative Writing programs has become severely limited and even self-parodic. To emphasize this state of affairs, I then use conceptual blending to discover a useful (and, I hope, entertaining)

analogue for Creative Writing programs in the world of professional wrestling. After a brief discussion of the construction of history as grounded in spatial relations, I conclude the chapter by surveying a few examples of contemporary poetic contest that exist outside of the academic model, including my own attempt to create an online journal devoted to written poetic contest.

Chapter 6 turns to the field of Rhetoric and Composition, which seems to be suffering from problems similar to those facing Creative Writing programs: an increasingly limited sense of audience, of who the written work of scholars in the field should address; the attendant homogenizing pressure of academic professionalization; and a mistaken belief that enough history, enough theorizing, will eventually prove us right. My suggestion for addressing these problems involves encouraging a more Isocratean approach to our audience as scholars, and to expanding the scope of the sort of knowledge we value—including knowledge generated by poetic language. While public rhetorical contest seems an unlikely direction for the field to head towards, changing the rules of the implicit competition between scholars, and more importantly, between the kinds of knowledge that scholars can explore as members of the field, certainly does seem possible. To that end, I begin with a fairly established form—the creative non-fiction narrative—and then use conceptual blending to create a form that blends the contemporary "review of literature" academic form with a Japanese non-fiction travelogue called a haibun. The chapter concludes in a fairly traditional manner, with a consideration of what kind of scholar and teacher I hope to be once my degree is complete.

Coda

Each chapter begins with a quote and ends with a "coda." I do not explore the quotes directly, but rather have placed them at the beginning of the chapters to suggest certain links and patterns that will follow. I chose "coda" rather than conclusion because a coda is, in musical composition, a more or less independent passage introduced at the end of the piece to bring it to a satisfactory close. A coda typically employs some of the same thematic elements as the rest of the composition, but rearranges them in a novel, but consistent fashion. Both of these devices are meant to help provide a kind of coherence to a work that is more exploratory than it is explicitly argumentative, more impressionistic than it is thesis driven. Which is not to say that the former elements are not present in this dissertation, but rather that they are of secondary importance to my own goals, and to the more general case I hope to make: that there are many different ways to construct academic knowledge within the field of Rhetoric and Composition, and that the book which follows is, I hope, an example of one of them.

Chapter 1: Poetic Contest and Competition in Ancient Greece

So you wish to conquer in the Olympic games, my friend? And I too, by the Gods, and a fine thing it would be! But first mark the conditions and the consequences, and then set to work. You will have to put yourself under discipline; to eat by rule, to avoid cakes and sweetmeats; to take exercise at the appointed hour whether you like it or no, in cold and heat; to abstain from cold drinks and from wine at your will; in a word, to give yourself over to the trainer as to a physician. Then in the conflict itself you are likely enough to dislocate your wrist or twist your ankle, to swallow a great deal of dust, or to be severely thrashed, and, after all these things, to be defeated.

--Epictetus

In many ways—in perhaps too many ways for the conventions of contemporary scholarship—this book is the narrative of my own struggle to assimilate rhetoric, history, poetry, and cognitive linguistics in some meaningful way. Since these pages are also meant to satisfy the requirements for receiving a PhD in English, I am supposed to show mastery of my subject, and if not of my subject, of my methodology. But the active struggle with both subject and methodology are part of my methodology, and may well be part of my subject, so I would rather not pretend otherwise; learning that is presented as smooth and effortless presents an inadequate portrait of the process, and real mastery depends on acknowledging the profound limits on our capacity for understanding the world.

So, when, for example, I reach back through the stack of books littering my dining room and select one of the Ur-texts of western culture, Homer's *Iliad*, I also select as many books written about the *Iliad* that I think I can read and assimilate before beginning the process of struggling with them and with all the other books I have read that might have some bearing on the subject. I always choose too many books, but that is beside the point. The process of consulting other texts, both primary and secondary, and blending them into your own text is one of the ways we define scholarship; the other major definition involves gathering data by observing, testing, and analyzing non-textual external phenomenon, although this process also depends on the socialization of experiment protocols, technology, and the like[10]. Both means of producing knowledge are sound because both methods are more complex extensions of the process by which we learn symbolization as babies, and, according to Fauconnier and Turner, the process by which the human species gradually developed language from our ability to blend different ideas together.

It surely will seem highly reductive to claim that language, and in fact that ability to produce knowledge, came about from the ability to blend elements of two ideas into a third, but it is also very hard to escape, once you being to explore how many of our deep-seated concepts are in fact other, highly compressed concepts that have become habit. External objects and the representation in my mind of the same objects are very highly correlated, but are not the same thing; my idea of a cup is not a cup, but the cup is the cause of the representation, and so—perhaps for the sake of survival—my mind compresses the cause and effect into a single concept. My idea of the *Iliad* is the process of many blends, including my reading of the Robert Fagles

[10] Which is not to say that empirical methods are "just another text"; this critique of the scientific method is not really a critique at all, but a highly compressed burst of jealous nonsense from people who's brains are more familiar with other patterns, and who should really know better.

translation, which is a blend of myself and the text, my reading of other texts pertaining to the Fagles text, and so forth, and the fact that I can accomplish any of these blends is dependant on a long and incredibly complex series of blends back through cultural time to the final, scriptural edition of the *Iliad* that was the basis of the text I have before me.

There are rules to blending, and different kinds of blends as well, some of which I will begin to describe momentarily, but for now the idea that the process of blending concepts together is rather like a fractal, "[…] a rough or fragmented geometric shape that can be subdivided in parts, each of which is (at least approximately) a reduced/size copy of the whole" (Mandelbrot, 26), is important to keep in mind. That is why the same basic structure that allows us to form a nominative compound like *epi oinopa pontoon*-- "wine-colored sea"—allows us to conceptualize our self as a unified thing, even if that conceptualization claims the self is fragmentary. In a very real sense, only a unified concept of self is capable of conceptualizing itself as fragmentary, and doing so is a kind of mimesis, to use what Gregory Nagy calls the "[…] primary meaning of the word […] 're-enactment, impersonation'"(54). Mimesis is performance, a performance of conceptual blending, and it is the way we develop personal as well as cultural identities, and how we blend the two together.

Finding Homer

One important way that we participate in the development of cultural identities is through public rituals. In Ancient Greece, the rhapsodic contests that took place during the Panthenaic games were one such ritual, and were also essential to the process of "fixing" the texts of

Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey.* Even though the function of poetry in pre-literate societies is notoriously hard to analyze due to the lack of written records, once a culture begins transcribing oral poems, the potential for analysis is rich since these poems are dense repositories of cultural knowledge as well as examples of poetic meaning creation, and so the first rhetoricians looked to examples from poetry to illustrate their analysis of the human mind. When a culture begins this shift from orality to textuality, stages of transition exist whereby the oral and the textual exist side-by-side; Gregory Nagy, in his book *Homeric Responses,* has delineated the "Five Ages of Homer" to describe the transitional stages that occurred as the Ancient Greeks moved from orality to textuality:

> 1. A relatively fluid period, with no written texts, extending from the early second millennium b.c.e. into the middle of the eighth century;
> 2. A more formative or "pan-Hellenic" period, still with no written texts, from the middle of the eighth century to the middle of the sixth;
> 3. A definitive period, centralized in Athens, with potential texts in the sense of *transcripts*, at any or several points from the middle of the sixth century b.c.e. to the later part of the fourth; this period starts with the reform of Homeric performance traditions in Athens during the regime of the Peisistratidai;
> 4. A standardizing period, with texts in the sense of transcripts of even *scripts*, from the later part of the fourth century to the middle of the second; this period starts with the reform of Homeric performance traditions in Athens during the regime of Demetrius of Phalerum, which lasted from 316 to 307 b.c.e.;

5. The relatively most rigid period, with texts as *scripture,* from the middle of the second century onward; this period starts with the completion of Aristarchus' editorial work on the Homeric texts, not long after 150 b.c.e or so, which is the date that also marks the general disappearance of the so-called eccentric papyri (2-3).

This schema, a refinement of the basic orality-to-textuality historical shift described by Eric Havelock and Walter Ong, refines the distinction between strictly oral and strictly literate phases of Greek culture, describing instead a series of historical cycles that recursively contribute to the fixed form and meaning of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* while avoiding the tendency, described by George Kennedy as *letteriturizazione,* to posit this shift as a change from rhetoric (and poetry) as persuasion to poetry (and rhetoric) as style. The rhapsodic contests were dialogic performances whose form was determined by interaction with an audience and with other poets, even after Hipparkos, son of Peistratus, ordered the rhapsodes to perform sections of the epics in a fixed sequence (Plato, *Hipparchus* 228b-c). Ordering the fixing of sequences is evidence of the epics' progress toward "scriptural" status, a recognition that the rhapsodes were participating in the ongoing construction of Greek cultural identity.

Nagy concludes his schema by emphasizing "[…] the point of reference in setting up a scheme of five periods of Homeric tradition is the dimension of performance, not of text" (3), and this performative aspect of the Homeric tradition—indeed, of all poetry—is crucial to understanding how the conceptual blending of poetic expression and reception is predicated on the identities of the rhapsodes, the audience, and the cultural identity they share. The shift to a primarily literate society began the process of sublimating the dialogic, performative aspect of

poetic creation, as well as the associated art of memory, and recast both as more diffuse, but still recognizable, aspects of poetic composition and expression; this shift also began the process of changing from a poetry of public contest to that of private competition, and the character of the resulting "scriptural" texts, where figures of speech and thought contain the mnemonic shadow of their origins, lends credence to the view that cognitive linguistic patterns such as metaphor and metonymy are inherent and elemental modes of thought.

The process Nagy describes began in prehistory and came to center, as I mentioned at the start of the section, around the rhapsodic recitation contests that occurred at the Panathenaic games[11]. These contests occurred in other cities and towns, of course, but those at Athens were preeminent (Neils, 73). As the story goes, Hipparkhos first brought the poets Anakreon of Teos and Simonides to Athens to participate in a rhapsodic contest, as part of the Panathenaic games, sometime between 528 and 514 b.c. As Hipparkhos had decreed the poets recite their episodes in a fixed order, each poet most likely drew a particular scene or event, and then were judged according to certain rules that are now lost but must have included criteria such as how well they satisfied the expectations of the audience and judges, as well as on how well they "responded" to the poets who recited before them. This procedure is similar in character, if not in form, to an archaic poetic practice called 'capping," described by Derek Collins in *Master of the Game: Competition and Performance in Greek Poetry*:

[11] According to Mark Griffith, "[…] it is hardly an exaggeration to say that most Greek poetry, from the time of Homer and Hesiod to that of Euripedes, was composed for performance in an explicitly or implicitly agonistic context. In this respect it is fundamentally different from most Roman, and most later European, poetry" (188). I would counter that the relationship between explicit and implicit agonism shifts toward the latter in Roman and European poetry, but that such a shift does not change the fundamental character of the competitive context.

> […] a pervasive competitive performance technique common to tragic and comic stichomythia, dramatic representations of lament, forms of Platonic dialectic and dialogue, the sympotic performance of elegy, *skolia* and related verse games, as well as the rhapsodic performance of epic. Capping can be defined as follows: usually between two but sometimes more speakers or singers, one participant sets a topic or theme in speech or verse to which another responds by varying, punning, riddling, or clearly modifying the topic or theme. Sometimes antithesis of thought and/or diction results, sometimes complimentarity and continuation. The speakers and singers continue the response pattern until one opponent is outmatched. (ix)

Collins is careful to make clear that no direct formal connection can be drawn between capping and the performance of Homeric rhapsodes, but that even "[…] epic hexameters, stichomythia, and dramatic lament all share the specific structural feature of participial enjambment. This suggests that we are dealing with a wider-spread, inherited form of poetic gaming that is not restricted to an one poetic or performance genre" (x). The rhapsodes performing their sections "in order" at the Panathenaic games, then, were participating in a contest that involved, as I mentioned earlier, manipulating the form and content of their performances in response to the performances of previous rhapsodes, as well as in anticipation of the criteria used by the judge or group of judges; in addition, the *rhapsode* had to ascertain what would please the crowd gathered to watch the performance, as the crowd's reaction was almost certainly an important factor in the judging. What determined success, even, presumably, during Nagy's final, scriptural period, was the ability of the *rhapsode* to improvise within the confines of the competition. According to

Collins, "[…] improvisation and innovation within the tradition is attested for rhapsodes as early as the mention of Cynaethus, sometime in the late sixth century BCE […] at a later stage of the Homeric performance tradition, rhapsodes […] continue to display improvisational skills during performances that may be reflected in the 'eccentric' Ptolemaic papyri of Homer" (177). The copy of the *Iliad* that sits on the table in front of me, then represents the culmination of centuries' worth of poetic contest and dialogue, and we can ascertain something of the criteria used to judge the winners of these competitions—the ongoing rhetorical situation that produced these texts--by examining what patterns of speech, figures of thought, and conceptual blends have become part of the 'fixed' text.

Homeric Epithets

Perhaps the most well-known evidence of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey's* oral origins is the repetitive use of epithets. The Ancient Greek *epitithenai* means "to impose" or "to add to," and so the *leukôlenê Hera* imposes the phrase "white-armed" on the goddess Hera. Epithets are adjective-noun compounds, and as such are prototypical conceptual blends; the mental space "Hera" is blended with "white-armed" so that the resultant concept compresses Hera's divine identity with the suggestive characteristic of having white arms. The repetition of certain epithets in Homer indicates that these phrases were important both as mnemonic markers and as conceptual building blocks that helped develop the characters, and also to help set the physical scene: *Rhododaktulos êôs*, for example, often translated as 'rosy-fingered dawn,' occurs twenty-seven times in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, while *epi oinopa pontoon,* 'the wine-colored sea,' occurs

fourteen times between both works. Rosy-fingered dawn is cited by Aristotle in the *Rhetoric* as an example of proper visual metaphor: "[m]etaphors […] should be derived from what is beautiful either in sound, or in signification, or to sight, or to some other sense. For it does make a difference, for instance, whether one says 'rosy-fingered morn,' rather than 'purple-fingered,' or, what is still worse, 'red-fingered'" (223). But why, exactly, does it make a difference? Certainly part of the explanation is that accretion of formal meaning, the process by which successful rhapsodic poets passed their most crowd-pleasing material down through the process of transcription, helped establish the conventional understanding that one is better than the other, but even the contemporary reader will find it difficult to argue that 'rosy' is preferable to 'red' when describing the dawn under most circumstances, and that a 'wine-colored' sea is much more evocative than a 'red' sea. Even the process of translating and retranslating the works of Homer, of granting privilege to 'rosy-fingered' or 'wine-dark' contributes to the idea that there is something more significant in the conjunction of these adjectives and their objects than might be explained via analysis of the artistic prejudices of Ancient Greek culture. The archeolinguistic evidence certainly points to a trans-cultural explanation. The idea that Homeric epithets are part of a common linguistic tradition, that they are proto-poetic devices, is well established; John Curtis Franklin, building on the work of A. Kuhn, has recently argued that the

> Greek *kleos aphthiton* and Sanskrit *srava(s) aksitam*, both meaning "imperishable fame"—were, in terms of historical linguistics, equivalent in phonology, accentuation, and quantity (syllable lengths). In other words, they are descendants from a fragment of poetic diction which was handed down in parallel over many centuries, in continually

> diverging forms, by generations of singers whose ultimate ancestors shared an archetypal repertoire of poetic formulae and narrative themes (4).

In addition to the syllabic similarity between these epithets, so crucially mnemonic in an improvised, sung performance—and the analogy with contemporary jazz musicians using a melodic phrase as a framing element for improvisation is apt here—the structure of meaning inherent to these phrases appears fundamental. Each of the epithets blends aspects of meaning from two distinct conceptual domains to create a third, emergent meaning, and the act of blending occurs in the minds of the gathered audience, helping establish character and scene and thus helping establish the conditions for a sustained poetic experience.

Typically, conceptual blending models involve at least two conceptual spaces—the inputs—as well as a generic "third" space that includes common, generalized aspects both input spaces share. A mental space is defined as "[…] small conceptual packets constructed as we think and talk, for purposes of local understanding and action […] mental spaces are connected to long term schematic knowledge called 'frames,' such as the frame of *walking along a path*, and to long-term specific knowledge" (Fauconnier and Turner, 40). The two input spaces are selectively combined to produce a third, blended space, and following the work of Langacker and Brandt, I will also include a "ground" space, which represents the physical area where the blend is taking place as well as the people involved in transmission. The relationships between the spaces are dependant on a variety of factors, but many particular types of relationships have been identified, such as Cause-Effect, where we compress the cause (a cup) and its effect (our mental representation of a cup) into a single mental space. In the epithet "wine-colored sea," we

process the blend by starting with mental spaces for 'wine-colored' and 'sea.' The first input, 'wine-colored,' our translation of *oinopa,* is itself blend, since it combines the concept of wine with the frame of color; this type of blend is called a *simplex* blend, as it has one input containing a biological frame—color—and another containing a substance that has an element that fits the frame, in this case a particular color. The relationships between the two inputs is called Part-to-Whole (also called metonymy), since the frame is blended with an object that possesses a certain color without taking other aspects of the identity of the object that posses the color—wine—into the blend, and this Part-to-Whole relationship is compressed into a Property in the resulting blend. According to Fauconnier and Turner, other animals may have access to simplex blending since they can blend together a particular stimulus with a particular outcome, but only humans have the capacity for more complex blends.

The blend characteristic of human cognition is the *double-space* network, which "[…] has inputs with different (and often clashing) organizing frames as well as an organizing frame for the blend that includes parts of each of those frames and has emergent structure of its own" (Fauconnier and Turner, 131). The epithet "wine-colored sea" is a double-scope blend because the adjectival input has the frame "things with the property 'red'" and the noun input has the frame "water." The generic space contains generalizations like "things that have color," and the ground, if we assume this epithet is being spoken at in performance at the Panathenaic games, includes "ancient Athens," "Poet," and "Judges." Here is a diagram of the blend:

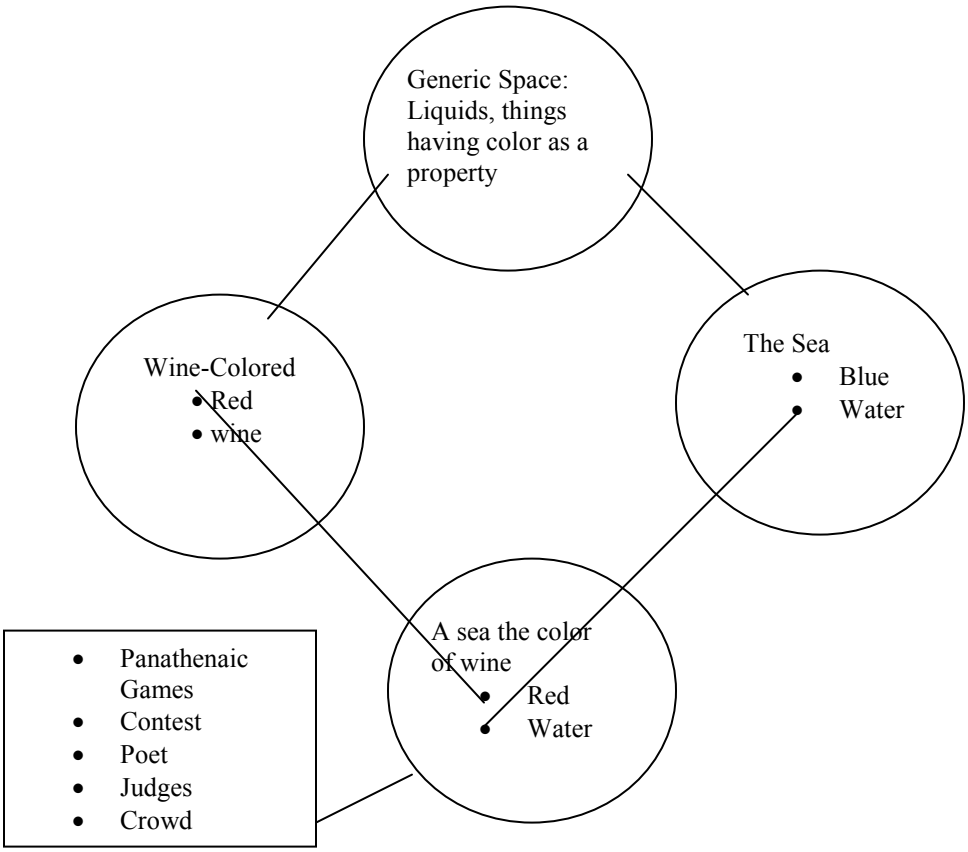


Fig. 1: The Wine-Dark Sea

This blend is so evocative because the frames clash and cause us to create the mental space "red water," which is not naturally occurring; one certainly does not generally think of the sea as red, and because the phrase is so tightly compressed[12], processing it the first time takes some work, and doing the work in the context of a poetic performance may well cause audience members to become aware of this work, which is how I have defined an act of poetic expression. The relationship between the two inputs is one of Property that is compressed into Analogy in the

[12] The compression is due in part to metrical necessity, of course—the rhapsode could not say "the sea is the color of wine," for example--but that does not mean metrical effectiveness is the sole reason this epithet appears with such frequency.

blended space, and so the ground, which represents the conditions for the possibility of poetic expression, encourages the audience to elaborate on the analogous relationship established in the blend: because of the clash between the two inputs, the work of blending them may evoke any number of characteristics that were not, strictly speaking, included in the blend. The adjectival input does not describe something that tastes like wine, nor does it contain any implications that its object possesses the smell of wine or anything other than the visual resemblance, but the final, blended space can evoke, for us as for the Ancient Greeks, the concepts of drunkenness, grapes, celebration, disorderliness, anger, joy, high spirits, and so forth, because the phrase "wine-colored" is quite conspicuously the product of a blend. The input 'sea' evokes, among other things, the concepts water, depth, horizon, mystery, and its contrast with the earth and, hence, with the race of humans that makes their home on earth. Additionally, part of what makes "wine-colored" an appropriate adjective to blend with "sea" is the disanalogous relationship it has with a clear, blue sea, which is a calm sea, and the analogy of the calm body of water with a peaceful life and an orderly populace occurs frequently in Ancient Greek thought[13]. The seas that the characters in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* traverse are emblematic of chaos, displacement, and the mysteries of fate, thus a blue sea would be inappropriate to the dramatic situation of the poems.

All of this activity is conditioned by the grounding space; because the situation is poetic, the phrase "wine-colored sea" has the potential to evoke life as a journey across treacherous waters: we go to war and leave our families, the gods toy with us in ways we cannot understand, and even if we should survive, we cannot find our way home and so find ourselves wandering a dangerous world. Use of the phrase is conditioned by metrical necessity, but also by the demands

[13] See Solon, one the Seven Sages, for example: "The sea is stirred by the winds; if someone does not move it, it is the justest of all things" (Vlastos, 34).

of a public contest. By all accounts, speed of delivery was a virtue for rhapsodes, and as the cognitive work necessary to process this epithet is—at least the first time--considerable, the rhapsode had to choose which epithet to use based not only on metrical virtue, but also through the response of the audience. Overuse or misuse of a particular epithet would be seen as a gaff, and lessen your chance of winning the contest, and as the epithets were meant to help the audience "remember: as well, by setting the scene and establishing character, not using enough epithets could leave your audience bereft of loci to orient their engagement with the story.

In the case of *rhododaktulos êôs,* the "rosy-fingered dawn," we have another double-scope blend where one input space is also a conspicuous product of blending. The mental space designated by "rosy-fingered" is created by blending "rosy," which contains the concepts of the rose, allure, beauty, freshness, and the new, for old roses are browned or blackened, and rosy flesh is that which saturated with blood. Blending this input with the mental space "fingered" yields a vague, almost incoherent meaning; "fingered" is derived from human physiology, and so evokes concepts of the human form, manipulation, and a quality of distinctness from animals. Without "dawn" to help define it, "rosy-fingered" could mean someone whose fingers are stained a similar color, or a rose seller, but even these meanings are hazy without additional contextualization, whereas "wine-colored" is fairly immediate. The input "dawn" contains the elements birth and rebirth, freshness, the new, the rising sun, passage from night, and for the Ancient Greeks, the goddess *êôs* who embodied all these characteristics. Within the general frame of life as a treacherous journey established by, among other things, the use of "wine-colored sea," the rosy-fingered dawn serves as a kind of resolution, a new beginning after the travails of night. The phrase inevitably occurs after some conflict or sojourn, and where both

Achilles and Hector (among many others) are swallowed, so to speak, by the wine-colored sea, Odysseus arrives home to witness another rosy-fingered dawn extending toward him—at least until, significantly, he must leave and sail the wine-colored sea once more.

The process of blending concepts is not restricted to the relationships between the concepts prompted by words; when we hear and enjoy music, we use the same process, and our blend comes about by first categorizing what we are hearing as music (in the same way that we categorize what we are hearing as language), then mapping what is appropriate from one mental space to another to create the blended, conceptualized experience of hearing music. We cannot hear music without first conceptualizing music, and the ability to associate a series of sounds with the concept of form (and, thus, with feelings of pleasure--or pain) is the first such conceptualization. The fact that we cannot talk about music without making some sort of metaphor or other conceptual blend is evidence of this process; according to philosopher and music theorist Roger Scruton,

> [t]here lies, in our most basic apprehension of music, a complex system of metaphor, which is the true description of no material fact, not even a fact about sounds, judged as secondary objects. The metaphor cannot be eliminated from the description of music, because it defines the intentional object of the musical experience. Take the metaphor away, and you cease to describe the experience of music (*The Aesthetics of Music*, 92).

So the way we hear music, too, is a blend, as is the ongoing process of constructing our identities, as is the ongoing process of participating in the construction of cultural identities, as is

the reciprocal relationship between both processes. The professional identity of the rhapsode—his ethos—depends on such things as success in contests, and success in rhapsodic contests depends on the individual's ability to respond to the reaction of the judges and the audience to whatever variations the rhapsode employs while performing, and to then making knowledge of these reactions into conceptual frames. Because the performance is public, and verbal, and copious (at least by today's standards), because it is a contest, the rhapsode must also be flexible, able to select elements from his lexicon quickly and appropriately. Specific forms of rhapsodic knowledge—such as the epithetic lexicon—were passed on, taught from generation to generation, and so, presumably, were more general strategies for assessing audience reaction, just as such strategies are foundational to the handbook tradition in rhetoric. But the process of learning to integrate specific knowledge within the shifting requirements of public performance is also on that old bugaboo "talent," which I this case is a facility for the process I have just described. This facility, considered as a process of blending as it might occur during a poetic contest, would look something like this:

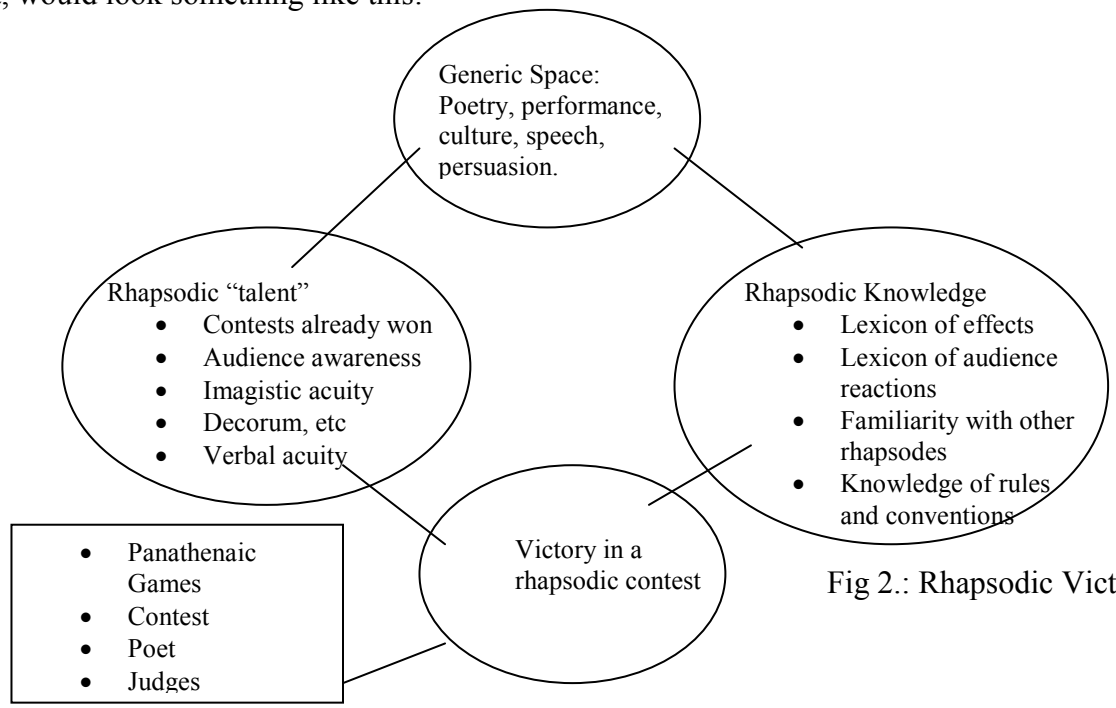


Fig 2.: Rhapsodic Victory

This diagram is really more of an overview of the many smaller acts of blending that would take place as the rhapsode hones his art and develops a successful reputation participating in public contests than it is a specific model of blending; it is an illustration of the way I am understanding these concepts as much as anything. The same very general process occurred as the epics began to be transcribed, and as the transcriptions became scriptural, they became much more elaborately structured, resulting in what Cedric Whitman calls the "ring structure" of the epics. Struggles with a new technology, in this case with the technology of writing, often results in a shift in structural conventions because the frames clash; the blend above is called a mirror network, because all the elements share the same organizing frame: poetic performance. Writing is a different frame, and transcribing the process above involves more than just changing the elements in the grounding frame, although that occurs as well—one must add writing as a third input, an input that causes a clash of frames, which in turn, as we saw in the example of "wine-dark sea," causes the person experiencing the clash to work harder to make the frames blend, and also to elaborate on the resultant blend than they might have otherwise. Additionally, the blend depends on learning what not to do as well, and since an unfavorable response on the part of the audience/judge is the disanalogy that supports the process of learning what to do in a poetic contest, unfavorable responses to transcriptions of the Homeric epics must have had the same effect on the final, fixed form, and from this we can infer that the elaborate structuring of elements within the scenes, the careful deployment of epithets, and self-consciously historical details were considered valuable as the process of transcription was taking place, while things like straightforward narrative were not.

In Homer's epics, the basic musical element is a "stich," a unit of meter which, in all Greek epic, consists of six syllables. The syllables vary in length rather than stress, as is the case with English, and the characterization of the Homeric unit as a "stich" does not depend on the number of feet it possesses, although its characterization as an epic hexameter does; it is more properly analogous to a bar of music than to the syntactic measure used in English prosody. Stichs too seem to be decidedly archaic units of thought, as John Curtis Franklin points out:

> The dactylic hexameter of ancient Greek epic verse, as well as other Hellenic metrical forms, shares with the Serbo-Croatian *deseterac*, the ten-syllable heroic metre, the property of being 'stichic', whereby a finite metrical grouping is repeated indefinitely. A further specification of stichic poetry can be 'isosyllabism', when a metrical grouping consists of the same number of syllables in each repetition or 'line' (the line per se, of course, results from writing down such oral forms). Stichic repetition and isosyllabism are found in the Vedic poems which are the earliest examples of Indic poetry, dating back to the middle of the second millennium BC, when these poems assumed their present, 'static' form (6).

Thus we have more evidence of the deeply archaic roots of form and meaning in many of these Homeric epithets—in their "phonology, accentuation, and quantity"—and so in the music of the line, in the stichic quality of repetition of certain tones sung by the *rhapsode*. But not all Ancient

Greek poetry was sung; for example, "[i]t is said that Hesiod too was ruled out of the [Pythian] competition, not having learned to play the kithara along with his singing" (Pausanius); nonetheless, it seems that the roots of our own distinction between rhetoric and poetry may relate to the difference between someone who sings before a crowd and someone who speaks. Certainly our common use of the word "lyric"—derived from the word "lyre," a type of archaic harp--to designate shorter, non-hexameter poems further clouds the issue, and like many of our misconceptions about Ancient Greece, the use of the term lyric" to describe Greek *melos* poetry was first applied by Alexandrian literary critics (Walker, 155). Singing a line of poetry is still an attempted act of persuasion, however, and since both spoken and sung persuasion involve on the same process of conceptual blending, this distinction does not constitute grounds for removing poetry from the domain of rhetoric.

For the moment, I will use Jeffrey Walker's characterization of *lyric*, that is, "[…] a relatively short poem that is comparable in scope to, and typically can be delivered as, a single 'speech' within a particular occasion. A 'lyric' is, in effect, a versified or sung oration, a variety of epideictic discourse" (155). Within this definition, then, we can identify many of the models from which Aristotle derived his definition of "epideictic" and its focus on "praise" and "blame," which includes everything from funereal elegies to satirical attacks on rivals; the same *rhapsodes* that competed by reciting Homer, for example, also recited the acid verses of Archilochus, said to be the inventor of iambic poetry much as Homer was said to invented epic, and in as much as Archilochus is also thought to be a "constructed" figure, the process of transcribing his poems was likely similar to that of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*: generations of poets constructing and reconstructing both poems and authorial legend in public performances, with

transcribers gradually "fixing" the text. This compound authoring resulted in the kind of all-purpose verse invective we see in the Strassburg fragment, wherein the poet attacks a former friend who has just embarked on a sea journey, begging that the Gods wreck his ship and cause his friend to be

> tossed by the waves and naked that the savage Thracians may receive him with their kindly hospitality, and there may he have his fill of suffering and eat the bread of slavery. Shivering with cold, covered with filth washed up by the sea, with chattering teeth like a dog, may he lie helplessly on his face at the edge of the strand amidst the breakers—this is my wish to see him suffer, who has trodden his oaths under foot, him who was once my friend (trans Hendrickson, 97A)

Strong words indeed; one wonders how his life-long enemies fared. The use of irony in describing the Thracian's "kindly hospitality" is a primary tool of invective, and Archilochus' use of it here is a form irony that Venerable Bede would later call *sarcasmus,* that is, deliberate understatement meant as bitter invective. This use of irony draws interesting parallels with the irony practiced by Socrates throughout Plato's dialogues, where Socrates feigns naiveté repeatedly, presenting himself as one who knows only his own complete lack of knowledge. Often Socrates' habitual irony turns into the sort of *sarcasmus* Archilochus displays, as at the beginning of the dialogue *Hippias Major*, when Socrates ask Hippias why "those men of old whose names are called great in respect to wisdom--Pittacus, and Bias, and the Milesian Thales with his followers and also the later ones, down to Anaxagoras, are all, or most of them, found to

refrain from affairs of state?" (281c). Certainly Socrates knew that the Seven Sages and other members of the sophistic tradition were deeply involved—one might even say "defined by"—their participation in civic affairs, and so his comment appears intended to ironically insult the civic activities of the Seven by characterizing those activities as no activities at all.

In both cases, the use of irony for invective is a form of misdirection based on stating the disanalogous case that supports the literal meaning as though it were the literal meaning, and the result is a blend of the two meanings. In the case of Socrates, his audience would construct meaning from his use of irony by blending their knowledge of the Seven Sages as civic figures with the disanalogous statement that they were not. The example from Archilochus is similar: the concept of savage, inhospitable Thracians is blended with the concept of kind, hospitable Thracians, and processing both examples requires an understanding of the concept of irony, which is, in this case, part of the cultural frame of both exchanges, that is, a knowledgeable individual who states something that is plainly false must be acting ironically (or is insane). A good man would not resort to subterfuge, of course, and so stating something that is plainly untrue calls attention to the act and makes it appear less like deception. This is consistent with the characterization of irony as a form of amplification, and as recent clinical studies (Giora, 425) indicate that processing ironic statements takes longer than processing direct statements, it would seem that the act of calling attention to itself as an utterance is what amplifies the act of meaning construction. Calling attention to the act of meaning construction this way helps the persuasive act of cultural identity construction by reinforcing the attitudes of those members of the audience who "get" the meaning and separating them from those who don't; Raymond Gibbs and Christin Izett suggest that

> irony divides its audience in two ways, distinguishing between those who recognize the irony ("wolves") and those who do not ("sheep") and between those who agree with the intended meaning ("confederates") and those who do not ("victims") […] the ironist always has the objective of increasing the number of wolves/confederates and decreasing the number of sheep / confederates (people who are intended to but fail to understand the ironic intent) (138).

Blending the literal meaning with its opposite is thus an act of preserving social solidarity, one that is dependant on social exclusion; it is, like many forms of amplification, an attempt at creating poetic meaning in the mind of an audience, no matter in what genre it is encountered.

Other kinds of amplification, such as *climax*, seem to act by causing the audience to react *without* drawing attention to the utterance, by causing the listener to be "swept away"; this feeling of being carried away by the words of a rhetor or *rhapsode* is what Plato famously militated against, and is frequently the ultimate criterion for determining poetic and rhetorical reputations. But being "swept away" is in fact the state of being aware of the act of meaning making, so aware that the act of *analyzing* the language effect is postponed. Irony slows an audience down, climax speeds an audience up, and both are dependant on conceptual blending, with the distinction that irony tends to blend a particular concept with its opposite while climax tends to blend a series of similarly framed concepts together while increasing the size—physically and conceptually--and importance of the concepts being blended. That the Ancient Greeks valued figures like climax in some rhetorical situations while favoring figures like irony or *litotes* (deliberate self-effacement used to amplify one's ethos) in others is evident in the way

the poetic reputations of Pindar and Bacchylides were established. Both poets composed choral odes to the winners of various Olympic contests (*epinikia*) and, if we are to believe the anecdotal evidence, spent a fair amount of time disparaging each other to their various patrons; the two men composed in an era in which writing was already an established technology, and their works were composed for choruses to perform at festivals and other such rituals, but they did not participate in face-to-face public contests—or if they did, any mention of it is lost. Instead, they were involved in an ongoing competition for reputation and commissions, and as the "rules" for such competitions are largely unstated, "winning" depends in part on discovering the rules and satisfying them without letting your opponent know what the rules are.

Such competition is, if the poets in question acquire sufficient reputation, broadly historical. Already in pseudo-Longinus' treatise *On the Sublime* the reputations of the two poets are established: "in lyric poetry would you prefer to be Bacchylides rather than Pindar?" (33.5), to which the begged answer is "of course not," because Pindar uses climax and other forms of amplification—including the general strategy of cramming as many rhetorical figures into his odes as decorum would allow--to swell the reader's emotions. These rhetorical strategies have been praised and scorned by critics ever since, depending on the poetic conventions of their socio-historical moment, but a preference for Pindar's work is nearly unanimous despite the contextual nature of poetic value. In Pindar's best known work, the 8th Pythian Ode, he uses the occasion of the triumph of Aristomenes of Aegina in a wrestling competition to laud himself, create a personal God (Hesychia), and then finish with a spectacular flourish:

> And you fell from above on the bodies of four opponents, with grim intent; to them no cheerful homecoming was allotted, as it was to you, at the Pythian festival; nor, when they returned to their mothers, did sweet laughter awaken joy. They slink along the back-streets, away from their enemies, bitten by misfortune. But he who has gained some fine new thing in his great opulence flies beyond hope on the wings of his manliness, with ambitions that are greater than wealth. But the delight of mortals grows in a short time, and then it falls to the ground, shaken by an adverse thought. Creatures of a day. What is someone? What is no one? Man is the dream of a shadow. But when the brilliance given by Zeus comes, a shining light is on man, and a gentle lifetime. Dear mother Aegina, convey this city on her voyage of freedom, with the blessing of Zeus, and the ruler Aeacus, and Peleus, and good Telamon, and Achilles. (Pindar)

This passage is both explicitly argumentative and explicitly an act of civic discourse; Pindar is not only using amplification to blend the sweetness of Aristomenes' victory with a more general concept of the vicissitudes of life and thus argue for the glory of the victor in relation to the "wine-colored sea" of daily existence, but he does so in order further his own success, in a public place, for monetary reward, by helping reinforce the attitudes of his elite audience. Jeffrey Walker points out "[t]hat Pindar was not a rhetorical idiot, and that he fulfilled his commissions with great skill and satisfaction for the families and cities that hired him, is evidenced by the simple facts that they continued to hire him and that he was very highly paid" (191). His success derived from his ability to amplify his subject while blending the local with the mythic, much as

the Homeric *rhapsodes* blended their received subject-matter with local rules for improvisation and audience reaction.

Perhaps the most famous *gnomen* in the Eight Pythian ode is the phrase "man is the dream of a shadow," which is an example of the prototypical conceptual blend called an "XYZ phrase[14]" that I discussed briefly in the introduction. This type of blend can, as can all blends, prompt for a variety of meanings, from simplex to double-scope and beyond. An XYZ phrase such as "Bob is the winner of the contest" is a simplex blend because one input space has the elements "Bob" and "winner" but no organizing frame, and the so the organizing frame "contest" in the second input is blended with the first to give the statement meaning. "Man is the dream of a shadow" is a double-scope blend, and a very evocative one at that; its meaning is framed by the same pre-Socratic conception of man as servant of the gods and slave to fate that frames the Homeric epics.

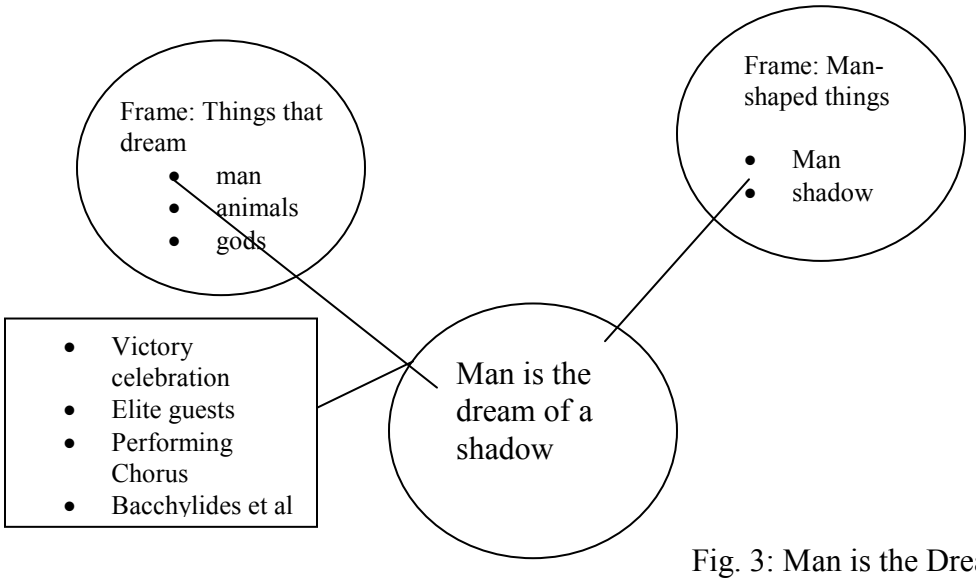


Fig. 3: Man is the Dream of a Shadow

[14] This holds also for the original Greek "*skias onar anthrôpos,*" which translates more literally as "a shadow's dream is man."

The phrase occurs at the end of the poem, after Pindar has established suitable presence in the minds of his audience of wealthy elites; for Helmut Müller-Sievers, Pindar's compositional strategy involves

> a subtle yet programmatic interweaving of opposing strategies that, most broadly, can be identified as mythic digression and gnomic condensation. This weaving—Pindar's *poikilia*—presupposes a fundamental belief in the materiality and divisibility of language, in the elemental and contingent emergence of poetic meaning. Epinicean poems are themselves documents of the victory over the divergence of the poetic material. (216)

Weaving together the mythic and the gnomic, the local and the mythic, would have no doubt delighted a wealthy and educated audience in Ancient Greece, one schooled in rhetoric and cognizant that the role of the epideictic poet working in the *epinikian* form encourages this sort of wildly see-sawing approach to climax; the phrase "man is the shadow of a dream" encapsulates this approach by creating a blend that falls back in on itself, where man is only the dream of an effect that man causes, a shadow. Other rhetorical situations would of course might call for smoothness, or a very deliberate logical order, but in the case of a celebratory choral ode, decorum is not as important as conveying a sense of splendor, which is one of the implicit "rules" for the competition for commissions occurring between Pindar and Bacchylides.

Bacchylides loses the competition, ultimately, not because he fails to use amplification to try and carry away his audience, but because he chooses to eschew the grand amplification of

Pindar in favor of a quiet, careful voice that avoids the wild swings between local and mythic, one that has a retains a sense of decorum:

> Yet of all that Hellas holds,
> None, Hiero vivid in praise,
> Could claim that a man
> Outgave you in gold to Appollo.
> All but the men fed fat with envy
> Hail you high, you the commander
> Loved by gods, adept horseman
> Sceptred under the Lord of Laws;
> You share in the verve of the violet Muse,
> And brandished once a warrior's fist;
> Though now you look on the luck
> Of a moment calmly,
> Knowing the life
> Of man is brief. (9)

Pindar's Eighth Ode carries the force of what Mark Turner chooses to call 'parable'; his definition derives from the Greek root, *parabole*, which meant tossing or projecting one thing alongside another, "[…] staking one thing to another, even tossing fodder to a horse, tossing dice alongside each other, or turning one's eyes to the side" (*The Literary Mind*, 7). Turner's

definition is a bit more narrow than the Greek, but more broad than our contemporary use of the word: "[*p*]*arable is the projection of story.* Parable, defined this way, refers to a general and indispensable instrument of everyday thought that shows up everywhere, from telling time to reading Proust" (7). In other words, Pindar projects upon the story of Aristomenes' victory another story, a more general story of human life, fate, and victory, one that addresses his elite audience in such a way that it manages to reinforce their belief in the vicissitudes of life ("man is the dream of a shadow) *and* their own privileged position in society ("but when the brilliance given by Zeus comes, a shining light is on man"), whereas Bacchylides refrains from such complex effects, preferring to focus, in the quoted selection, on quiet humility. As such, Bacchylides would be considered part of the grounding space if we were to model Pindar's process of acquiring poetic reputation, since many of Pindar's stylistic decisions were informed by the need to distinguish his style from those of other poet's, a process that continued as he and Bacchylides developed their reputations and poetic styles, just as Homeric rhapsodes needed to learn how to distinguish themselves from other poets and how to maintain these distinctions.

Pindar's skill in building climax affects "[…] a psychagogic 'transport' of his audience into the layered scene he has invoked […] he deflects the thinking of the listener, who may well be inebriated, from the quotidian present into a conflated and somewhat disoriented place and time that will provide the frame and context for the argument of the poem" (Walker, 200). In Bacchylides' defense, striving to remain well within the bounds of decorum was certainly considered a virtue in Ancient Greece, and surely he was preferred by people of certain casts of mind (Plato would seem emblematic of this cast, but he never mentions Bacchylides), but Pindar

was the more successful during their lives, and the judgment of critics since then has helped enforce this poetic preference for the dazzling over the decorous.

Coda

Blends inside of blends inside of blends… can this apparently simple idea really be the basis of so much of how humans experience and communicate the world? My own learned bias toward complexity and "form approaches"—explanations that posit form as meaning, rather than as prompts for meaning—makes me question this comprehensive view of blending at every step, and yet I remain compelled by the idea that our physiological ability to blend concepts, largely unconscious though it may be, conditions everything from grammatical constructions to the building of cathedrals. The sort of knowledge I am relying upon as I work through this problem, the translations and historical work of other scholars, can quite easily be represented as the product of the conceptual blending; certainly a translation involves many blends, from incommensurate word negotiation to thematic decisions based on historical knowledge, and the work of history, too, involves blending archival information with disciplinary knowledge to produce a blended history of events. But this makes it seem like all blends are the same, which they are and are not at the same time; local conditions help determine how different organizing frames become established, and also what elements are selected from different inputs for blending, so even though the blend is omnipresent, the meaning the blend prompts for varies wildly.

By looking as how the blends cause meaning to emerge locally, then, we can explore the rhetorical conditions that condition the production of persuasive expression. I have tried to set the stage, in this chapter, for subsequent explorations of this sort by establishing my own set of organizing frames: contest and competition, poetry as a species of rhetoric, my definition of poetic expression, and of course conceptual blending as a tool for modeling the creation of meaning. But I also must keep in mind that all these frames are blends created for the sake of my arguments, and that each is nested in a larger, more general frame (distinguishing between different things, for example) and that the structural source of all these frames—my physiology--is, at this point, unknowable without framing itself. So I will have to content myself with the idea that I can hold concepts provisionally distinct while accepting that at some level they also seep into one another, which is very much in keeping with the way I have understood the relationship between rhetoric and poetry in Ancient Greece (and throughout Western history): the network of meanings available to each word are so deeply connected as to be a blur, and while one can force apart different aspects of each concept, in defining poetry as words in a particular meter or rhetoric as the art of persuading a jury or council, the separation is never anything more than partial, and the shared aspects of the two arts remain shared, and in fact the shared aspects of each concept are so integral that without them, neither art could exist. At the same time, the distinction is useful for any number of reasons, not the least of which involves making the transmission of received ideas about each genre, lessons about how to move an audience, how to sing and bewitch and persuade, more effective—and it is more effective to transmit knowledge this way because that is how our brains are structured. Homer's *Iliad*, for example, is the result of generations of rhapsodes teaching each other how to build a scene, a single frame, and then let

characters interact within that scene, while the *Odyssey* is about how to make a single compelling character and then build a narrative that has this character wander through a variety of scenes. Elizabeth Spelke, a cognitive psychologist working in early childhood development has suggested, in opposition to Piaget's model of early childhood development, that children are born with preexisting conceptual apparatus, and that her experiments show "[…] a link between processes of perceiving objects and processes of reasoning about the physical world" (51). We are born with the capacity for conceptualization and then knowledge accretes according to how our perceptual and conceptual systems interact; among other conclusions Spelke derives from her observations of childhood behavior include the idea that newborn children quickly infer that objects in the world cohere ("All parts of an object move on connected paths over space and time" (49)) and are bounded ("Two objects cannot occupy the same place at the same time" (49)). Babies also quickly understand the difference between objects, which do not move unless acted upon, and animate agents, which can move of their own volition. These three concepts—boundedness, coherence, and the difference between objects and animate agents—are necessary precursors to our concepts of space and identity, scene and character. They are the conditions that allow us to create "[…] a character [that] can stay essentially the same over widely different frames, and a frame [that] can stay essentially the same when populated by wildly different characters" (Fauconnier and Turner, 250). In addition, because we can blend concepts, characters can become frames, narrators can become characters, and frames can become characters, an idea I will explore in the next chapter.

Chapter 2: Poetic Contest in the Second Sophistic

We fancy, that were we brought on a sudden into this world, we could at first have inferred that one billiard-ball would communicate motion to another upon impulse; and that we needed not to have waited for the event, in order to pronounce with certainty concerning it. Such is the influence of custom, that, where it is strongest, it not only covers our natural ignorance, but even conceals itself, and seems not to take place, merely because it is found in the highest degree.

--David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*.

History is a made thing. To make a very compressed version of the history of Greece from the 5th century b.c., when Pindar and Bacchylides were active, through the Hellenistic period of the 1st-3rd century a.d., during which Greece was part of the Roman Empire, I might compose something like this:

Philip made a kingdom and a son,
The son made an empire and died,
The darling of Hellas was occluded,
And the Western cloud did rise.

Obviously, a great deal more happened in the Mediterranean during the centuries covered by this hastily composed quatrain; in fact, many more things occurred than could ever be described by

the field of history, let alone by a single historian. All history is metonymic; just as you cannot produce a map of the world that is 1:1 scale, you cannot use human cognitive apparatus to describe historical events without compressing them into representations. What is compressed, and how, are the province of professional historians, trained to interpret artifactual evidence and draw conclusions based in probability. I am not a professional historian, so I must rely to a large degree on the judgments of others, and who I trust depends on their credentials and reputation as scholars, because that is how professional ethos is established in the 21st century, just as it was in the 4th. Certainly the credentialing process was different in 4th century Greece; family counted for much more, for example, and so a significant part of Flavius Philostratus' ethos came from his membership in the family Philostrati. The fact that his *Lives of the Sophists* reads like a Hedda Hopper gossip column would seem to support the idea that the sort of quasi-meritocratic institutional credentialing process modern scholars go through produces "better" knowledge, but one only need read anything written by Stanley Fish in the last fifteen years to understand the degree to which our contemporary process of building scholarly ethos encourages abuse.

But that, as they say, is a tale for another time, and what I am concerned with at present is setting the scene for an analysis of some textual artifacts from the so-called Second Sophistic period. Expanding to my brief quatrain, then, which begins after the Peloponnesian War between Athens and Sparta when Philip of Macedon was asked by the Thebans to join in their fight against the Phocians. Philip used this as a means to begin his conquest of Greece, announced plans to invade Persia, and was assassinated, after which his son Alexander conquered not only Persia but Egypt, Syria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and most of the Mediterranean, before dieing himself in 323 b.c.e. The empire he forged helped spread Greek culture far and wide, despite

collapsing as a functioning empire fairly quickly. As a result, the Hellenistic period was one of Greek cultural dominance, where Greek language became the lingua franca for elites educated in Greek system of education, whether they were citizens of Egypt, Persia, or Bactria. Philip the V, the "darling of Hellas," tried to revive the empire during the 3rd-2nd centuries b.c.e., largely because of the "cloud gathering in the West"—that is, the growing power of Rome. Philip lost his battle and Rome conquered Macedon and, in effect, all of Greece, although the struggle would continue until 27 b.c.e, when the Roman emperor Augustus annexed Greece as the province of Achaea.

This more detailed history of the period leading up to the Second Sophistic is built on our ability to map characters and identities and to compress time and space into representations that fit with our cognitive apparatus—time, for example, is very much conceptually intertwined with our knowledge of how bodies (especially our own) move across space. The events described above occur across time and space, and are compressed, via a metonymic relationship between characters and events, into a narrative. Saying that Philip the V "tried to revive the Empire," for example, compresses all the machinations and motivations involved in trying to revive an Empire into the character of Philip; the Empire is made into a character that can be "revived," which invokes the idea that it is only unconscious; and the relationship between revival and unconsciousness evokes the cognitive primitive concept of movement along a path: the Empire was awake at point A, was rendered unconscious at point B, and then Philip the V tried to revive it at point C. Thus, the passage of time is mapped onto movement across space, compressing it into the narrative above:

> We have a conception of time as simply a long ordered succession of events separated by 'time distances', such that what happened long ago is less and less accessible. That conception of time, which is not unlike the scientific conception of time, has no obvious place for compressions. Yet we have seen again and again that compression of time is conceptually valuable and one of the human imagination's favorite tools. We suggest that there is a fundamental neural basis for these time compressions: The human brain does not for the most part organize events according to the sequence in which they happened or were recorded. Human memory is not a tape that we must rewind to get back to the desired spot […] just as physical space is suffused by culture and memory with blend-prompting powers, our brains, in a very different sense but with equal powers, give us imaginative compressions of things we know are far apart in time or space (Fauconnier and Turner, 317).

Mapping historical time onto spatial relations means that historical periods can now "rise and fall," and epic can "sweep across" the imagination. The best historians are attuned to the spatiality of their subject matter, and use this to focus their style, while always paying close attention to probability: Carlo Ginzburg, for example, uses Aristotle's definition of *pistis* to describe the way that historians publicly negotiate the most probable interpretations of historical events. The necessity of such negotiation also shapes stylistic concerns, and a clear, relatively unembellished style has been the hallmark of good historical writing since antiquity. Antonius, in book 2 of Cicero's *De Oratore*, splits historiography into *monumenta*, which translates as something like "content," and *ornamenta*, which is style—but a style that grows naturally from

the subject, rather than a prescribed formula. The rhetor's goal, then (and Antonius is quite explicit in stating that the rhetor is the one who should write history) is to discover the correct *ornamenta* for his chosen *monumenta*, and of course to then make sure that both work together to please an audience (Antonius does make a general recommendation that history should be slow and fluid, in contrast to legal prose). According to A.J. Woodman, the Ciceronian idea of historiography "was not essentially different from poetry: each was a branch of rhetoric and therefore historiography, like poetry, employs the same concepts associated with, and relies upon the expectations generated by, a rhetorical genre" (37).

As with poets, then, historians offer competing accounts, and their competition is judged by according to the dictates of their audience. An historical novel is judged according to different set of conventions from a popular history, which in turn has a different audience from a scholarly work; this fact may go some way to explaining the often hostile view contemporary historians have to Philostratus' historical biography *The Lives of the Sophists*, and particularly to his characterization of the 1st and 2nd centuries a.d. as a "second sophistic": "[…] the sophistic that followed [the first sophistic], we must not call 'new,' for it is old, but rather 'second,' [and it] sketched the types of the poor man and the rich, of princes and tyrants, and handled arguments that are concerned with definite and special themes for which history shows the way" (7). Philostratus' book is not in competition with other histories; in the introduction to Loeb Classical edition, Wilmer Cave Wright notes that "Philostratus in writing the *Lives* evidently avoided the conventional style and alphabetical sequence used by grammarians for biographies, for he had no desire to be classed with grammarians" (xii). Instead, *The Lives of the Sophists* is a book of biographical gossip meant to excite the reader into adoration of the orators he describes, sort of a

4th century version of *People* magazine, albeit written by someone who appears to believe quite deeply in the power of celebrity—which may be read as a testament to the author's skill.

By willfully ignoring the conventions established for biography by the grammarians, Philostratus created a blend of genres that combined historical research—or at least the collection of historical reportage—with his version of the sophistic approach to persuasive meaning construction, an understanding of rhetoric

> […] conceived in broad, Isocratean/sophistic terms as a general *logôn technê* that applies not only to pragmatic discourse but to all varieties of writing, speech, and thought and that is centered on the epideictic genres of poetry, history, philosophy, panegyric, and declamation—for indeed, this was the persistent and finally prevailing view from early to late antiquity—[and] we can just as well and just as persuasively say that 'rhetoric' revived, flourished, enjoyed a great renaissance. (Walker, 128)

In allowing his *ornamenta* to grow from his *monumenta*, Philostratus produced a work that celebrates individual characters, reinforcing the idea that the ethos of these orators was essential to appreciation of their declamations, that the public personas of each were frames that helped the audience construct meaning during a performance. In the quote above, Walker is responding to the still fairly common interpretation of the Second Sophistic as a period of decline for rhetoric, or at the very least a retreat akin to George Kennedy's process of *letteriturizazione*; indeed, the trope of cultural decline was already well established in Cicero's day, and has proved a remarkably flexible device for speaking to power, as it were. Recognizing it as a trope has

proved a problem, as many a historian has chosen to accept this model of rhetorical decline at face value, rather than interpreting a celebration of the past as an oblique critique of the present. The same critique applies to the prominence of the "showpiece orator" characterization, the establishment of romantic, even legendary identities for the purveyors of improvised declamations: imitation is not the same as replication, and instead what the orators of the Second Sophistic offered were examples of what Cultural Studies scholars have termed "cultural appropriation," wherein the culture appropriated was their own history.

Polemo of Smyrna

The idea of cultural appropriation is only provisionally useful, as it requires that we isolate cultures and conceptualize them as individual entities, which seems to me part and parcel of what Philostratus and the orators of the Second Sophistic were trying to do: cordon off a heterogeneous cultural identity by establishing a pantheon of public practitioners. But such cordoning off is ultimately impossible to sustain, as is the idea of cultural appropriation, and so instead of appropriating their own history and asserting a public representation of Greekness, we are left with a blend of cultural practices, selective misreadings of cultural histories, and a lot of difficult to appreciate textual evidence. The extant transcriptions of declamations given by Polemo of Smyrna are a case in point, of which only two remain. The speeches argue opposing sides of a single theme, which was a characteristic means of displaying rhetorical skill during the Second Sophistic. In his prooemium, Polemo states that "[s]ince at Athens there is a custom that the father of the one who died most bravely in battle should speak the funeral oration, the fathers

of Callimachus and Cynegirus plead their cases" (99). Polemo's task, then, is to declaim convincingly two examples of prosopoeia—personification—using the fathers of these two historical figures.

Polemo's audience would, of course, know the historical situation through their education in the *paideia*: Callimachus and Cynegirus were both iconic figures in Greek history, heroes of the Battle of Marathon, in which a small (12,000) force of Greek soldiers defeated the much larger armies of Darius, the Persian king, in 490 b.c. In brief, the Greeks attacked the Persians as they were reboarding their ships to land on a different part of the coast and thoroughly routed them; Callimachus was one of the generals leading the troops, and died from arrow and spear wounds, while Cynegirus was known for having his hand chopped off as he gripped one of the Persian boats with it. As the battle grew in mythic stature, the two men became paradigms of bravery, with Cynegirus losing sometimes one, sometimes both hands, yet fighting bravely on, while Callimachus was stuck with so many arrows and spears that his body would not fall over.

Polemo uses these images again and again in his declamations, playing the roles of the men's fathers while still managing to celebrate his own skill as an orator. He begins playing the father of Cynegirus:

> Since above all it is necessary for the one who will speak the oration over those who lie dead to be related to them, I assert in this regard that the oration should above all belong to me, since I am Cynegirus' father and out of my own physical being I have contributed to the city the most noteworthy of all the deeds of daring at Marathon, a man who fought with one member after the other of the barbarians (101).

While introducing the side of Callimachus' father, Polemo takes a somewhat different tack, while maintaining the conventions of declamatory introduction:

> I applaud the custom of the city which adorns the grave of the brave men also with a speech. For after deeds are well done, words spoken eloquently are an honor. Inasmuch as, on account of his prominence, the valor of my son Callimachus lasted longer than his soul,-- if the manly bravery of the sons is to be decided by the honors accorded to the fathers—I will show that the speech should fittingly belong to me (131).

In both instances, Polemo pays Athens a compliment and also divides the topic (who gets to give the funerary oration) according to what line of argument he will pursue. In the speech of Cynegirus' father, Polemo argues that he, the father, has in effect sacrificed part of his own body, his offspring, to the glory of Athens, while Callimachus' father's speech proposes that his son's valor in battle was equal to that of Cynegirus, and since he was Cynegirus' superior (in rank) during life, so should he be in death. There is much hyperbole to the speeches, of course, and a boatload of rhetorical figures to sort through, some of which will be outlined below. One aspect of this very general description of Polemo's declamation worth noting, however, is how he uses the two heroes as visual figures on which to build his declamations. Cynegirus represents a kind of synecdoche, since part of him—his hand—was given in battle, and thus his father's declamation focuses on the relationship of a part of him—his son—to the whole, that is, himself and, by extension, all of Greece. Callimachus, on the other hand (no pun intended), is a visual

metaphor for the cultural coherence of the Greek people, since he remains upright even after death, and so Polemo build that declamation around metaphors of immovable things surrounded by turbulence.

Polemo has Cynegirus' father mention hands early and often: “It is on the one hand then fair to say something about the fight of Callimachus... though in terms of valor he was among those in second place. But on the other hand...” (101) His main point of contention is quite literally the amputated hand, since Cynegirus died doing something—holding the ship—whereas Callimachus died from arrows and spears and hence his symbolic power is passive. Polemo discusses Callimachus' passivity in various ways, always contrasting it with his own son's active nature: “Constraint of office brought Callimachus to Marathon as general-in-chief though without his wishing toward off the landing of the barbarians. Cynegirus, on the other hand, motivated by valor and courage, as a volunteer, when he was quite young, almost even before adulthood, took part in the expedition” (103); “While law put Callimachus in the battle, highmindedness put Cynegirus there” (109), and so forth. Also stressed is Cynegirus' youth, as in the former passage, to thereby move the audience to pity; once again, this characteristic is contrasted with Callimachus': “Since Callimachus was also older, so that he had more strength and more experience, and since he was likely to be unconcerned about a shorter life expectancy, he had many things helping him in the fight, it was no wonder if he dared to take risks. Cynegirus, however, inasmuch as he marched forth as a boy, overlooked the longer life expectancy because of more bigheartedness, and the inexperience of youth” (109). Polemo amplifies the hand motif, in concert with the passivity of Callimachus' fate, as well as Cynegirus' youth, building the hyperbole into a sort of incantation:

> O hands of great wonder! You praise the one who stood, the unbending one, the dead one, the one who differs in no way from a tombstone; but I praise the one who fought as a soldier, the one who fought as a sailor, the one who fought everywhere, the one who became great little by little, the one who fought against many. O Marathonian hands, precious hands and reared by these hands of mine. O saviours of all Greece. O champions of the Athenians. O hands stronger than whole soldiers. O glory of Marathon. O sweet right hand which the earth brought forth for the Greeks. O right hand more forceful than winds; for you held fast a ship trying to put to sea. (119)

After the incantatory section, Polemo continues, in a more subdued tone, to riff on the same themes, dropping in famous lines of poetry, emphasizing the action of one and the passivity of the other. He turns, at his conclusion, to address the jury and restate his own synecdochal relationship to the slain hero: “Don't you jurors dishonor me. I stretch out my hands to you like the ones lying severed on your behalf. I lay claim to the speech, I take hold of the grave. I am not withdrawing from the mass grave and going out, since I am the father of Cynegirus. I am putting my hands on the body—let the one who wishes cut these off too” (129).

As the father of Callimachus, Polemo tries, perhaps less successfully, to build an argument from the ideas of steadfastness and superior station. Unlike his approach in the previous declamation, Polemo cannot attack his opponent's strongest point through comparison, since activity is more favorable than passivity—attacking Cynegirus' active nature would be foolish. He does compare the two heroes, but more subtly, focusing on Callimachus' superior rank:

> My own son led the entire force hither, both because he was general-in-chief in accordance with the law and because he had a personal zeal that was burning to produce great and wondrous deeds in battle. And Cynegirus, since he was one among the many, was being urged forward. And while no one was blameworthy when they clashed with the barbarians, by his deeds Callimachus showed them he was general-in chief (133).

Thus does the second declamation proceed, somewhat defensively, to follow the same general arrangement as the first, even turning incantatory at nearly the same point ("O valor of Callimachus and his fear-inspiring corpse. O valor of a soldier more long-lived than Fate alloted" (137) etc.). Only much later in the speech does Polemo begin to explicitly attack Cynegirus by comparing him with Callimachus, presumably because a certain amount of ethos must be developed before attacking from a weaker position.

In many ways, the second declamation is much more subtle, and it reads better than the first, but the first, with its relentless spinning of variations on the metonymic force of Cynegirus' hand, almost certainly would perform better before a crowd. Callimachus' declamation also relies much more heavily on quotes from famous poets and on pity, both of which could be used to move a crowd, but not as effectively when the subject is valor. Polemo concludes the second oration, interestingly, not by addressing the jury but by addressing his opponent, as though conceding: "Accordingly, O Eupherion [Cynegirus' father], may the first thing at the funeral ceremonies be to honor my son and solemnly to recite the victory hymn. And you sing the dirge for your son afterward if the judges assent" (183).

Of great significance is the way Polemo manages to fit praise of his own abilities as an orator into his prosopoeia. Obviously, the sheer amount and number of rhetorical figures he employs are meant to impress his audience, but Polemo also references his own skill using the voice of his narrators: "We were leading: we will speak. We were equipped for war: we will give the laudation. From us were the signals for battle: let also the eulogies be from us" (141); "[...] it is necessary for the speaker to come forward for the funeral speech not on the basis of office but on the basis of valor. Come then, let us make our choice based upon these criteria, since you see both the other generals-in-chief and their fathers maintaining silence" (109). Certainly Polemo is trying to make his narrator into the best figure he can, but just as certainly was he conscious of how his creation of these narrators would enhance his reputation. The relationship between Polemo and his narrators, between performer and speech, is not the same as that of an actor and a script, and the ultimate goal of these impromptu declamations—increased prestige—was never far from the sophists' minds. By personifying himself within speeches of mythic personification, Polemo makes his reputation as an orator into a rhetorical figure, as this reputation is part of the frame within which the audience will construct meaning and, if they are made aware of the process of meaning creation[15]—if the discursive performance becomes poetic, in other words--judge Polemo's performance a good one.

[15] Being made aware of the process of meaning creation also involves other processes receding—analysis of the poetic expression, for example, occurs only *after* the poetic experience occurs.

Poetic and Rhetoric Blended

Polemo and other orators of the Second Sophistic participated in both contest and competition, and were judged according to their ability to move a crowd—to cause poetic meaning to emerge in the minds of the audience. The conventions used to judge the winner of a public oratorical contest were consistent with the conventions used to judge rhapsodic contests centuries earlier, with the exception of the use of strict meter. The cultural significance of these contests was also consistent; for Bruno Gentili, "[t]he importance of these [rhapsodic] contests and the prestige of the rhapsodes themselves were in direct proportion not only to the pleasure provided by the spectacle but also to its educational and political utility" (156). Consistency of form and significance does not, again, equate with replication, as we can see from quickly sketching the spaces that are blended to create the role of orator in the Second Sophistic.

In one space, we have the idealized concept of the orator in pre-Roman Greece, containing such significant elements as persuasion, cultural prestige, authority, educator, un-metered speech, and civilizing force. In another space, we have the role of the rhapsodic poet in the same period, containing elements like entertainer, magician, creator, metered speech, and intoxication. Both spaces are attached to the generic space containing the concept of spoken public performance as enacted in Classical Greece, but the orator's space contains the frame of un-metered, spoken speech while the poet's contains the frame of sung, metered speech. The result is a double-scope blend (since the input spaces have different frames) that compresses the relations of identity and, crucially, time, into the emergent space:

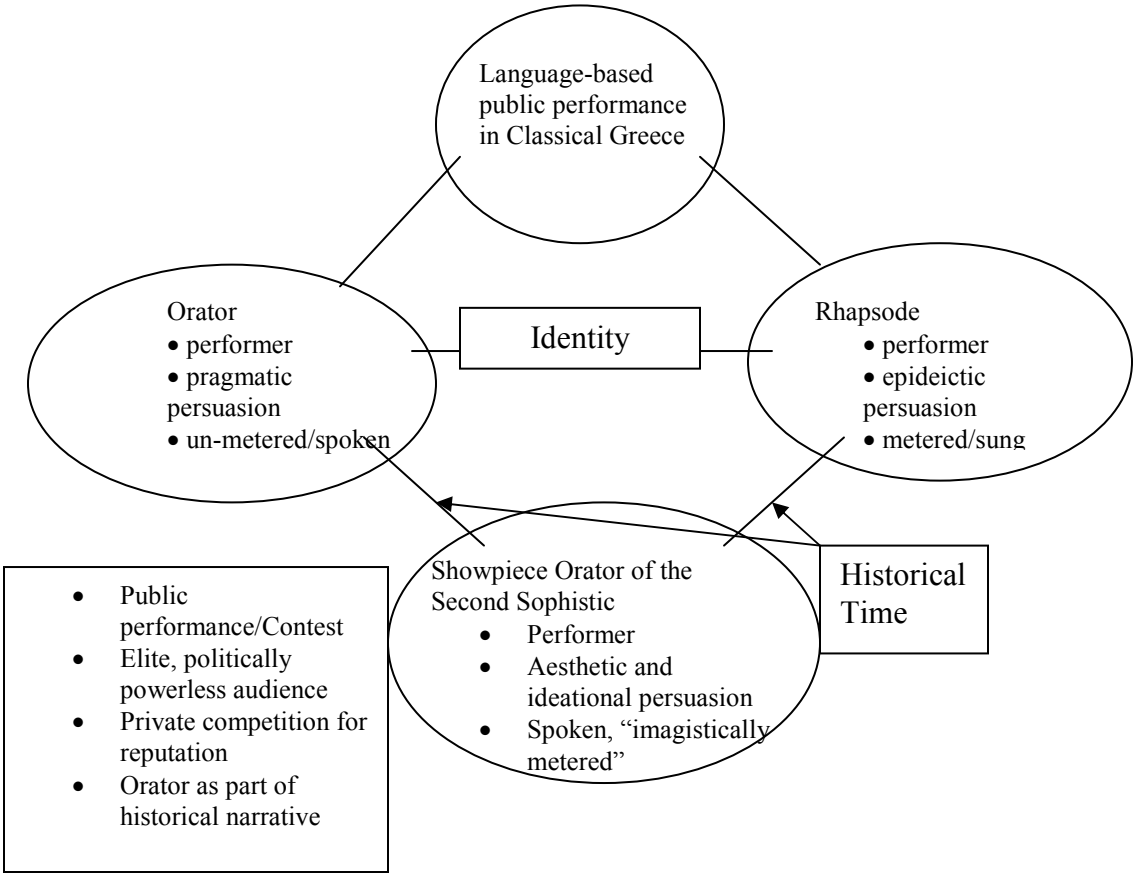


Fig. 4: The Showpiece Orator

As the historical roles "orator" and "rhapsode" are integrated to yield the role of "Showpiece Orator of the Second Sophistic," the process of integration compresses the time differences into a composite historical identity, one that uses Classical themes and even language (Attic Greek) to accomplish a variety of goals within a very different sociohistorical context. Lacking serious access to political decision making, the orators of the Second Sophistic were able nonetheless to shape both Greek and Roman culture by creating a cultural role that blended the hypnogogic power of the rhapsode with the more pragmatically suasive power of the orator; even the disparity between the grammatical forms of each genre were fused into a speech form

that uses repetition at the level of figure, periodicity, and image to achieve an effect analogous to the metered repetition of poetry, as seen in the example from Polemo.

Under the cultural duress caused by the shift from orality to literacy, the transcribers of Homer created a fixed, complexly organized set of texts; stretched out behind the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are the ghosts of all the other versions of the texts that were performed and transcribed, and the historical compression of these ghosts into the final, fixed text was conditioned by a changing set of discursive practices. Under the cultural duress caused by their political inferiority as a conquered people, the orators of the Second Sophistic created a role that conspicuously blended poetic and rhetorical conventions by selectively compressing the historical distance between Classical Sophists and themselves, effectively making themselves characters in the historical narrative that they were authoring. Stretched out behind the declamations of these orators were the ghosts of the orators and rhapsodes that had come before them, and the process of historical compression that yields a showpiece orator involved the orator inserting themselves into history, making themselves both contemporary and historical, both ghost and living being.

The sort of self-conscious, ongoing historical narrative these orators were creating and participating in was framed by public performance for a variety of reasons: the orality of the historical period they were evoking, the need to present a body for the public to position in the "space" of the historical narrative, and to make their declamations appear to be acts of resistance to the occupying culture, Imperial Rome. But to characterize the works of the showpiece orators of the Second Sophistic as acts of cultural resistance is also too simple; imitation is not the same as replication, and the trope of a declining culture is a way to speak to power, and yet the Second Sophistic was very much bankrolled by Imperial Rome, which supported the activities of the

declaimers and schools of rhetoric both monetarily and in terms of prestige. As Richard Enos describes it,

> [T]he evidence indicates that Imperial patronage had a critical effect upon the educational climate of the Second Sophistic in Athens. The parallel rise and decline of the Athenian Second Sophistic with the Roman Empire is not fortuitous, but causal. Contrary to the notion that the rhetorical tradition of the Athenian Second Sophistic was more or less autonomous from the Latin West, […] endowments for individual sophists and cultural building programs by Roman patrons reveal that rhetorical studies flourished during the Athenian Second Sophistic as a direct effect of Roman sponsorship. Unable to sustain itself when support was removed, the Athenian Second Sophistic degenerated to a local function until its eventual termination (9)

In effect, the acts of historical appropriation and cultural resistance that the orators of the Second Sophistic were engaged in could not have occurred without the support of the culture they were resisting, and while this relationship might bring to mind Bhaktinian sort of "carnival" in this relationship, wherein the dominant power gives the oppressed people a (highly conventionalized) time and place to blow off steam and poke fun at their rulers, the actual relationship between Greek and Roman cultures during this period is far more complex, certainly too complex to describe in satisfactory detail. In very broad terms, Greeks were Romans and Romans Greek; an elite citizen of Athens was also a citizen of the Roman Empire, and much of his daily bread was made from Roman flour, while an elite Roman citizen—while not in any

formal way a citizen of Greece—learned not only table manners from Greek (or at least Greek-modeled) schools, but also how to cut the bread, what sorts of butter or jam were best for different loaves, and even what to look for in hiring a good cook.

To characterize this cultural interdependence as being constitutive a kind of "double" identity—the orator trailing the ghosts of Homer and Demosthenes behind him, giving forth to a crowd of Greeks, each with their own Roman ghosts behind *them,* supported by a Roman aristocracy educated in the *paideia*—is an accurate metonymy, given the Greek reliance on the cognitive frame of duality as well as on the educational paradigm of *mimēsis*, of learning through imitation. As Tim Whitmarsh puts it, in Roman Greece, "[…] *mimēsis* is constructed as a strategy of 'self-making'. In manifold ways, the process of education in Roman Greece is intrinsically connected with the shaping of identity through the repetition of models of paradigms, usually drawn from the literature of the fourth and fifth centuries" (92). The educated elite of Roman Greece, and indeed of Roman Egypt, and Roman Rome, had identities formed in part by their participation in a system of education that was based on the performance—often enough the contested performance—of models of discursive elegance. That such an audience would delight in observing very skilled performers replicating these scholastic tasks might seem odd to contemporary readers, but the declamatory performances of Polemo, Favorinus, Aelius Aristides and the like were roughly analogous in popularity to college athletics today.

A Potentially Ruinous Digression

The paragraph that precedes this section was meant to lead toward an illustration of the way Greek and Roman identities were built through a blend of imitation and duality, but I find I must step away for a moment and look at this project with a wider lens. Every time I use the conceptual blending model to illustrate something on this journey, I am aware of two contrasting, though not contradictory, forces at play: first, the explicative power of the model, a comprehensiveness for exploring human behavior that I have barely begun to explore; and second, the knowledge that no matter how comprehensive the model might be, I am forever establishing a metonymic relationship to whatever it is I am trying to describe, that I can only show a facet or two of the phenomenon under consideration. Yes, Greek culture under Imperial Rome had certain well-defined characteristics, and I can confidently assert that, for example, Greek "self-fashioning" involved a creative, selective blend of cultural characteristics, but at the core of my inquiry are human beings, and I can never hope to understand, let alone describe, the manifold influences that were involved in this process; in fact, I cannot even do so for my own identity, and so I ride the textual evidence toward an indistinct horizon and trust that where I arrive, I might find something interesting.

This state of affairs does not bother me, however; as I said, asserting the veracity of a model knowledge while remaining cognizant of its metonymic relationship with the amount of knowledge it is trying to describe is not contradictory, but is perhaps something more akin to Keats' "negative capability": keeping aware of the fact that while our species has managed to reach the moon, we are still very much babies banging into table legs as we crawl across the

floor. This kind of awareness should, I think, lie at the heart of education, and perhaps it does, but perhaps a greater emphasis on humility would work toward shifting the paradigm described by TimWhitmarsh:

> [p]edagogy creates identity, in a dual sense. First […] it seeks to engender a 'sameness', replicating the values and preoccupations of the teacher. There is a 'narcissistic desire at the heart of most teaching, a desire upon which the authority of educational institutions depends.' At the same time, however, teaching empowers students by furnishing them with an adult identity, the status of a mature, active, decision-making subject […] learning involves the enculturation of certain habits, signs, and semiotic modes. In the words of Bourdieu and Passeron, teaching is a mode of 'reproduction': by controlling the routes to empowered, elite, adult identity, it ensures the perpetuation of social hierarchies (94).

The fact that Whitmarsh can shift without hesitation from describing the educational system of Roman Greece to contemporary practice is telling, but what really interest me about this passage is the way that Whitmarsh is himself performing the process of replication he describes, citing fashionable philosophers while invoking models of identity creation easily understandable to anyone who has taken advanced classes in the humanities in the last 30 years or so. The process of 'reproduction' that Whitmarsh (and Bourdieu and Passeron) describes is both more and less than what is really going on; certainly much more is involved in forming identities and perpetuating social hierarchies than what happens in the classroom, and the process

of enculturation is significantly more creative, from the individual on up, than simple 'reproduction' can encapsulate, but reproduction is a facet of these processes, and it occurs much more comprehensively than Whitmarsh describes, given that his own scholarship involves the reproduction not only of what he has been taught when he was a student, but of the sort of intellectual conventions that will be helpful in getting his work published.

Learning to reproduce intellectually fashionable models of knowledge is probably useful thing to learn, but I do worry the cost of such a lesson is exactly the sort of narcissism Whitmarsh describes, as well as the sort of intractable conventionality that it seems to engender. That post-modernism's challenge to monolithic ways of knowing became monolithic itself should be enough to give us pause, to encourage humility and a willingness to entertain new and even discredited kinds of knowledge, and the nascent period of technological humanism we seem to be entering may encourage this attitude, but the force of habit is strong indeed. An example: I was recently looking through a freshman composition textbook and was chagrined to discover a section on "deconstructing binaries." I will not bother tracing the genealogy of this idea back to Derrida, since it is ubiquitous enough in the humanities, though I would think it interesting to hear what Derrida thought of his idea transformed into a tabular worksheet for freshman to replicate… instead, I would simply like to state that binary oppositions are more properly taught as a rhetorical figure, a discursive act meant to place an opponent on the defensive ("you are either with us or against us"), and that despite the comprehensiveness of Derrida's exploration of this figure, responding to this challenge with "no, the situation is more complicated than that" is hopelessly inadequate, never mind letting fly with a speech on the virtue of deconstruction. In other words, cultural habit has helped give a rhetorical figure the weight of an analytical tool,

despite the fact that our tendency to conceptualize things in terms of binaries may well be indicative of our physiology: our sensory array is contained within a bipedal body that has a right and left side, so many of our first spatial concepts involve distinguishing between right and left; right-and-left perception is what cognitive scientists call an "image-schema," and according to Jean Matter Mandler,

> [a] function of image-schemas is to create the representational base onto which language can be mapped. The capacity of image-schemas to represent relations of various sorts is particularly important in understanding how the relational aspects of language, such as propositions and modal verbs, are learned […] these image-schemas represent events in a simple, abstract, spatial form. They create the meanings that supply the foundations of the conceptual system and allow language to be learned […] this kind of analogical learning, ubiquitous in human life, begins in infancy. It also enables the later metaphorical extension of infants' concepts about space to social and metaphysical realms (118-119).

Suggesting that the basis for binary opposition in conceptualization is to the nature of our perceptual system means that it is not solely a tool for ideology, and that deconstructing an opposition is not an effective means to resist ideology, but rather a way to understand how ideologies are dependant on common patterns of rhetorical figuration. In recent pedagogical practice, "deconstructing binaries" has to some degree followed the path of reproduction that

Whitmarsh outlined earlier, and so the idea of *mimēsis* persists, acquiring its own trail of ghosts in the process.

Just the same, I cannot make my own pedagogical attitude a representation without asserting its inadequacy, but asserting its inadequacy is representative of the attitude I believe pedagogy should be founded on. Were I more fashionably outfitted, I might say that our knowledge is always "partial," that knowing is forever "provisional," but I am not even comfortable with that concept, as it necessarily invokes the counterfactual concept: that there is indeed a complete thing to know, a whole knowledge that we are somehow prevented from understanding. Rather than asserting partiality, then, I must rely on the multiplicity of viewpoints available from interaction with other humans to help me explore and explode models of knowledge, and try with whatever meager resources I have—including a tendency to launch into tangential discursions--to resist the force of habit.

Satire and the Second Sophistic

One of the most entertaining ways of exploring and exploding ways of knowing, of challenging cultural formations while retaining the cultural framing that allows the challenge to take place, is through satire. It is also the genre most closely identified with Roman literary culture; Quintilian laid claim to satire as a Roman invention in his *Institutio Oratoria* (*satira quidem tota nostra est*, "satire, however, is totally ours") (10.1.93), and the etymology of the word has been traced to *lanx satura*, "full dish," that is, any dish that involves stuffing, such as a fowl or a sausage. Given the "double" nature of Roman and Greek identities discussed earlier, characterizing satire as emblematic of the process of self-fashioning seems an obvious step to

take: it is a genre that critiques as it reifies, that avoids becoming invective through the use of humor, and that affects poetic expression by caricaturing aspects of familiar characters in familiar settings—unlike, for example, the choral works of Pindar, which exaggerates the way the mind can leap from mode to mode to defamiliarize the audience before returning to a towering familiarity that connects man and gods. The approach to poetic expression Pindar takes can be satirized itself if that approach is familiar enough to the audience, but it cannot emerge *from* satire, as satire is, by definition, dependant on other genres for affecting its particular blend. On the other hand, the tradition of "low" poetry that extends back to Archilochus, Hipponax, and Aristophenes might be classified as satirical, despite Quintilian's insistence; as Tim Whitmarsh has it, Quintilian's bid to seize satire for the Romans "[…] has a clear agenda, performing a cultural-political double bind (a bid for freedom from 'the tyranny of the Greek' that simultaneously reinforces it)" (Whitmarsh, 249), but the assertion that satire attained a cultural prominence in the Roman Empire it never held in Classical is widely accepted.

Among many reasons for the prominence of satire in Roman literary culture[16] in comparison with Classical Greece is the influence of the comparatively widespread practice of reading. Fixing a number to the availability of literacy is impossible, of course; the presence of linguistic graffiti and various advertisements on archeological deposits suggest that even the plebs had access to some literacy, but as Bryan Ward-Perkins notes,

> Evidence such as this (graffito on the walls of Pompeii) has led to an intense debate over the extent to which the people of Roman times could read and write , the importance of the written word in their society. In the absence of statistical evidence, the issue will

[16] See Anderson, Elliot, Goldhill, Jones, and Whitmarsh for more on the rise of satire in Roman culture.

> always be open to discussion, since it will never be possible to come up with reliable figures for the number of people comfortable with literacy, let alone provide a nuanced view of what level of literacy they had attained (172).

Nonetheless, we can deduce that the practices of reading and writing were much more widespread in Roman culture than in Classical Greece from the above evidence as well as from the way that certain genres—such as satire—became "fixed" without recourse to metrical fixation, as was the case in the oral culture of Greece. The clash between oral (Greek) and written (Roman) culture was personified in an anecdote told by Musonius Rufus in which the Emperor Nero, confronted with an Epirote singer who apparently did not know the first rule of competition with Nero (that is, do not win) and so sang his best, had is actors brutalize the Epirote's throat with folded writing tablets (Dillon, 49). Writing, as Isocrates well knew, allows those of a weaker voice to compete with orators, and in fact creates another, parallel agora, with its own rules and its own conventions.

In Roman Greece, then, we have a situation where competing communication technologies framed both the way contest was enacted and the relationship between contest and competition itself, since these opposing arenas for poetic contest affected the competition for prestige in different ways. Satire is contest in as much as it represents a direct challenge to its object, but it does so in a public space that is recreated individually by different readers. This "fixing" of retrievable textual examples of different genres, in concert with a system of education that taught imitation of these genres (and thus genre-based literary conceptualization) began the process of personifying new genres, making them into recognizable characters that could be lampooned.

Once a genre has acquired a pattern of conventions fixed enough to consider that genre a character in the "literary agora," then performances of that genre acquire—in this case, within the scene constructed by the written word--the status of ritual[17]. For Fauconnier and Turner, "[r]ituals integrate cause and effect, so that any aspect of the performance can be experienced simultaneously as a cause and effect in the blend" (85), which is very nearly a restating of the ideal of *mimēsis:* by ritualizing an activity, the scene, characters, and actions are prescribed in such a way that observers and participants will draw an extremely tight correlation between the representation and the activity represented. That is why rituals have long been used for predictive divination, to decide courses of action, and so forth. In a "space" built from the written word and fixed genre, then, we have an example of what Fauconnier and Turner call a ritual "trial": "[e]lements of the blend are left undecided in the script, to be determined by acting out the ritual. Trial by water is a ritual in which guilt or innocence is left unscripted" (86). In the case of the ritual performance of a written literary genre, the unscripted element is the value of the performance, the decision as to whether or not the specific performance fulfills the ritual activity in such a way that poetic expression is created in the mind of the reader.

Satire, then, is dependant on a context where performance of a given character—be it a character that blends identity with a well-known person, a literary genre, an institution, or any other type of character the mind might create—is fixed in such a way in the minds of an audience to the degree that they have become overly familiar, that the ritual has lost its ability to effectively create poetic meaning. The genre of fictional letters, for example, popular in the Roman Empire during the first centuries of the millennium, were familiar enough to the reading

[17] Contests between genre personifications were known in Classical Greece as well, as the one between Homer and Hesiod often performed at Panathenaic games.

public that satirical versions, such as the letters of Alciphron, began to emerge. The satirical nature of these letters was not recognized until fairly recently, in part because the transmission of the texts caused their order to become jumbled, and in part because satire is so reliant on familiar local context[18], but their satirical quality is made evident through their exaggeration of certain conventions of the genre, much as Lucian's satirical caricatures of sophists exaggerated conventional characteristics bound to their generic, composite identity.

Alciphron's letters are all written from the point of view of one of four social groups: farmers, fishermen, parasites, and courtesans. There appear to be other thematic links between individual letters, but as mentioned earlier, their original arrangement has been lost. The first hint that the letters are satires of the genre lies in the names of the senders and recipients: from "Jack Briny to Jim Salt" (47), Dick Olive to Harry Harvestman" (80), and so forth. Some of the courtesans' letters are attributed to famous courtesans of Hellenistic Athens, and their lovers, who occasionally write back, are often also well-known figures, such as Menander the poet. In fact, keeping with the mores of the Second Sophistic, the writers of all the letters are citizens of Classical Athens; in the view of Thomas Schmitz,

> Alciphron's letters are not only sophistic in the sense that they employ a number of devices and topoi that are typical for writers of the Second Sophistic, but also because they are highly self-conscious about this aspect […] by drawing attention to their own cultural context, the letters explore and destabilize the status of sophistic writing, thus providing a metacommentary on sophistic declamations and identity that is comparable to

[18] Additionally, Richard Bentley's attack on the entire genre of Roman fictional letters in 1699 retarded scholarly inquiry for a century and a half.

> Lucian's dialogues (90).

Unlike Schmitz, I do not think that the letters of Alciphron, or the works of Lucian, for that matter, "destabilize the status of sophistic writing"; in fact, it seems to me that satire strengthens the status of its object by giving that object even more presence, helping personify, in this case, "sophistic writing" by further outlining its limits—a character recognizable by a few quick strokes is surely more present in the mind of an audience than one which requires more fleshing out. Satire extends the role of the satirized even as it makes fun of the way this role is enacted, and in this way it is wholly dependant on the existence of the satirized object, much as Greek "resistance" to Roman rule was wholly dependant on Roman patronage.

Nevertheless, it is easy to see how Schmitz arrived at his conclusion, as Alciphron's letters not only satirize the fictional letter genre, but in fact the characters and conventions of sophistic declamations. The letter writers are ridiculously erudite given their professions, thus poking fun at the idea that everyone in Classical Athens was a well-schooled philosopher or golden-throated orator, and in fact of the idolatry of the period in general. Other characters in the nostalgic scene created by the sophists are mocked as well, as in the following letter from the courtesan Thaïs to Euthydemus:

> Ever since you started studying philosophy you have put on airs, with your eyebrows raised to the top of your head. You pace solemnly to the Academy in your gown with a book in your hand and pass by my house as though you had never seen it before. You are mad, Euthydemus; or perhaps you do not know what sort of man that supercilious teacher

of your is, for all his wonderful discourses. Why, he has been pestering me—you cannot imagine how long—for a rendezvous, and he is infatuated over Herpyllis, Megara's maid. I never would have anything to do with him in the past, for I preferred to sleep in your arms than have all the gold that your professors could offer. But since it seems that he is turning you away from my society I will accept his proposals, and if you like I will show you that your misogynist tutor requires a little more than the usual pleasures of a night to satisfy *him*. His talk is just stuff and nonsense, you silly boy, meant to take in young fools. Do you suppose that a professor is any different from a courtesan? Only so far as regards our methods of persuasion; the end we both propose to ourselves is the same—money. But how much better and more religious are we! We do not deny the existence of the gods; we believe our lover's oaths of fidelity. So far from allowing men to have intercourse with their sisters, or mothers, we prohibit them another man's wife. Perhaps we do not know about the origin of clouds and the nature of atoms, but for all that we are just as good as your professors. I have talked to many of them and spent hours with them. No one in a courtesan's company dreams of tyranny or stirs up faction in the commonwealth: no, he takes a pint of neat wine for his breakfast and stays in bed until nine or ten o'clock. As for teaching young men, we do that quite as well as they. Compare a courtesan like Aspasia with a sophists like Socrates, and consider which produced the better pupils: the woman trained Pericles, the man Critias. My own love, Euthydemus, put aside this displeasing folly—such eyes as yours should never look stern—and come to your faithful mistress as you used to come from the Lyceum, wiping the sweat off your brow. We will have a bottle or two first and then we will discourse one

> to another on the purpose of life—which is pleasure. You will find that I am philosopher enough to convince you. Fortune does not give us long to live: do not waste your time heedlessly on riddles and nonsense. Goodbye (175-177).

The objects of Alciphron's satire are many, both general and specific. The character Euthydemus appears twice in Socratic literature, once in a dialogue named for him and once in Book IV of the *Memorabilia* as the object of Critias' passion. In the dialogue *Euthydemus*, Socrates ridicules Euthydemos and his brother for being too doctrinaire, too rigidly indifferent to the goals of philosophy and too committed to eristic dialogue; it is noteworthy that he does so by offering a sort of mock encomium for these virtues. In the *Memorabilia*, Euthydemus is mentioned as the object of Critias the sophists' passion, a passion that Socrates ridicules as unbefitting a man "beautiful in body and mind"; the implication is that Critias' lust has got the better of his reason. It is entirely possible that Alciphron is referencing both mentions of Euthydemus, given his jibes at both Socrates (that sophist) and Critias, whom Socrates trained, and who later became one of the Thirty Tyrants. Tying Critias to Socrates this way also explicitly satirizes the idealization of Classical Athens, pointing out that all was not rosy and democratic in that cities' history, and in fact that the philosophical tradition embodied by Socrates led to the tyrant Critias. This also can be read as a critique of Greek education, a point of view supported by the more general satirization of professors as prostitutes interested only in their own fortunes. But the maid Herpyllis is likely a reference to Aristotle's "concubine," as Eunapius calls her (143), the wife that Aristotle took after the death of his first wife, Pythias, and so the Aristotle may be the ultimate personification of academic values and intellect that Thaïs is competing with, thereby

reifying the struggle between Epicureanism[19] and Platonism, between love and study, that would later reappear in the *Lai D'Aristotle*, a tale by the 13th century Norman poet Henri d'Andeli that recounts Herphyllis' seduction of Aristotle[20].

Coda

The conceptualization of satire as an agonistic response to Greek cultural influence is dependant on Quintillian's essentially fraudulent claim that the genre originated with the Romans, but rather than weakening that case, Quintilian's misappropriation actually strengthens it: if it was a simple misreading of history, then Quintilian's claim can be seen as typifying the latent desire to throw off shackles of Greek cultural influence; if it were an intentional skewing of history, as is likely the case, given Quintilian's erudition, then his claim is explicitly agonistic. Either case helps exemplify the Second Sophistic as a period of competition between communication technologies (and therefore between physical and "virtual" agoras), between individual sophists and poets, and between different readings of history, and therefore between ideas of what counted when constructing individual and cultural identities. The potential for poetic expression was to some degree determined by the frame of contest, for if there was no struggle, there could be no victory, and so poetic ethos continued to be conditioned by explicit and implicit agonism; we also see a proliferation of new literary genres and their subsequent personification as characters in a literary scene, and thus an accompanying struggle between genres for supremacy. Virgil, to cite one example, challenged the minimalist poetic genre

[19] It is worth noting that the Garden, Epicurus' school of philosophy, welcomed courtesans as members.
[20] During which she makes Aristotle get on all fours and then rides him like a horse around the garden…

established by Callimachus by reincarnating the epic as a genre.

Immersing myself in so many different modes of contest and competition, characterization and scene, has, predictably enough, caused me to see these concepts everywhere, and my digression in the middle of this chapter is thus a challenge to a specific contemporary model—deconstruction of binary opposition—and a challenge to academic form, as breaking into an historical exploration to rant about contemporary practice may well be read as inconsistent and insufficiently "rigorous," and then there is the danger that such digressions become their own form of habit. But in a sense, I am also willfully misreading history by characterizing academic prose this way, since there are ample examples of this kind of digression throughout the history of scholarship—including the paragraph by Tim Whitmarsh cited in that passage. As a result, I think I must find a new way to conceptualize "misreading" history, since, in a sense, all history is a misreading, a blend of artifactual evidence and individual interpretation, and the authority of a given blend is determined by competition between readings, an idea I will explore further in the next chapters.

Chapter 3: Poetic Contest and the Augustan Age

I am thrown into nature, and that nature appears not only as outside me, in objects devoid of history, but it is also discernable at the center of subjectivity. Theoretical and practical decisions of personal life may well lay hold, from a distance, upon my past and future, and bestow upon my past and my future, and bestow upon my past, with all its fortuitous events, a definite significance, by following it up with a future which will be seen after the event as foreshadowed by it, thus introducing historicity into my life. Yet these sequences always have something artificial about them.

--Maurice Merleau Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*

Rather than considering history as the "misreading" of texts, perhaps I should start by considering it as a type of composition, one that overlays spatial image-schemas with a probabalistic interpretation of events that occurred over time. As such, histories should share certain basic patterns of meaning construction with other types of rhetorical acts; for example, I have composed the title of this chapter based on the assumption that the reader will compose meaning from the cues it provides in very specific ways. I assume that "poetic contest" will be recognized as an idea that has gained the status of a "theme," that is, a concept repeated often enough to be recognized as a character in the semantic space delineated by the book's pages. That this character changes somewhat from chapter to chapter does not make it less stable but

more so, compressing various aspects of identity—what "public space" means in the sentence "contest occurs in a public space," for example—into the signifier "poetic contest." The conjunction "and" signals that this concept will, in the chapter to follow, be blended with the next concept in the title, and the article "the" is combined with "Augustan Age" to give the latter concept greater specificity, to underscore the notion that it is a generally accepted historical period, and so is a character in the historical space we share as participants in Western culture. This general image schema, *characters in a scene*, is thus enacted by combining the words of the title according to the rules of English grammar. The source of these rules is still a matter of some debate among linguists, as is their function; the most widely accepted theory posits a set of fixed meanings for each word called "word senses" that are selected according to the way words are combined. For cognitive linguists, "[e]ach word can activate alternative meaning subnetworks, [which] are themselves linked to other circuits representing the semantics of words and frames that are active in the current context […] the meaning of a word in context is captured by the joint activity of *all* the relevant circuitry: contextual, immediate, and associated." (Feldman, 287). To put it another way: the words in the title—and the words that comprise a given history--are combined in an as much as the network of meanings they can trigger resonate together to produce a compound meaning drawn from the context of their interpretation, the immediate act of interpreting them, and meanings evoked in the mind of the interpreter. Each aspect of meaning-creation conditions the others; only a finite amount of linguistically mediated meaning can be created at once, for example, so that sentences which are overly long will lose their meaning as the reader struggles to keep all the networks of meaning active, while what is meant

by "too long" will be determined by the sort of conventions regarding sentence length the reader has learned.

Once a particular grammatical figure has caused meaning to be created in the brain, the pattern of neurons that fired in the act of creation lingers briefly, and repeated firing of similar patterns strengthens these patterns, a process called *Residual Pattern Activation*. According to Jerome Feldman, "[…] residual activation of the circuits for one grammatical form gives that form competitive advantage in structuring the output sentence" (92). This strengthening occurs because specific neural connections gain "weight," that is, the number of positive ions transmitting across the synaptic cleft outweighs the number of negative ions by a significant number.

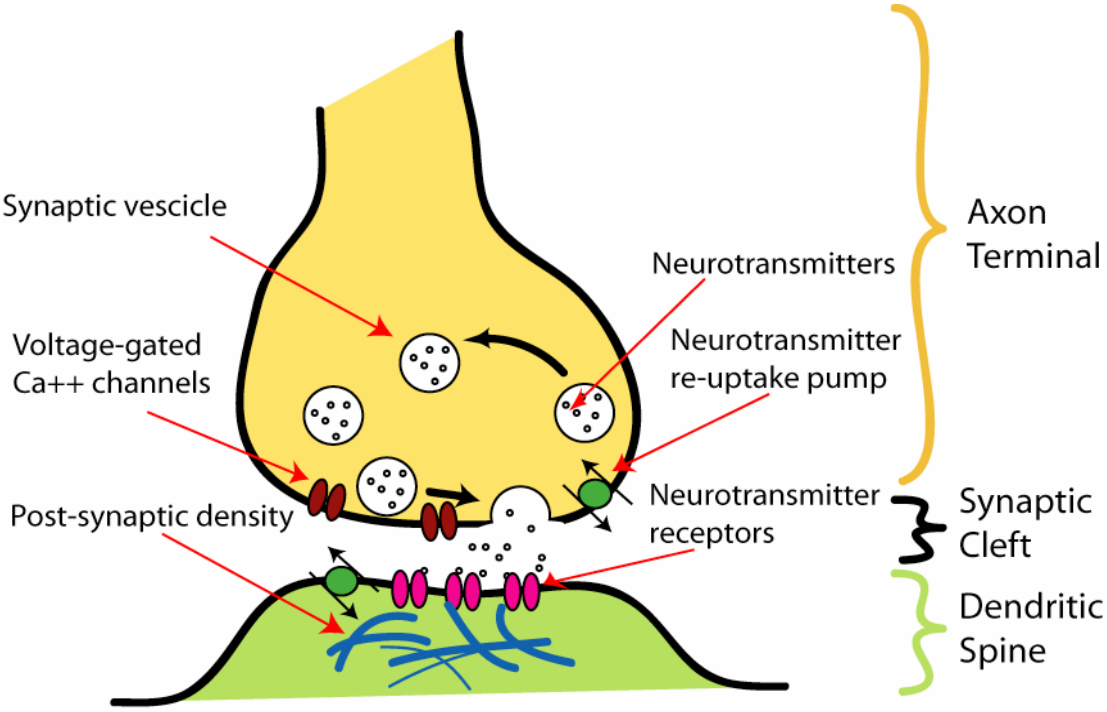


Fig. 5: A Neural Circuit

There are trillions of these synapses in the brain; when one is activated, a signal travels down the axon to the axon terminal via a chain reaction of sodium ions opening: a sodium ion of sufficient charge will open to allow the charge to flow through to the next ion in the chain until the electrical charge reaches the terminal, where it affects a chemical reaction that releases neurotransmitters through the Ca++ channels. These transmitters are expelled through the membrane of the axon into the synaptic cleft, where some of them will connect with the receptor molecules in the dendritic spine. The transmitters move about in the synaptic cleft randomly when they are expelled, so the whole process is fairly fragile, but repeated firing of the neural connections strengthens the flow of positive ions and thus the number of neurotransmitters, thereby giving certain connections greater weight and, as specific patterns across millions of these connections grow very strong, allowing us to learn.

These neural patterns are the basis for the modeling of semantic spaces and thus for the models of conceptual blending presented in the first chapters. Grammatical patterns are also semantic spaces, and residual pattern activation causes certain of these patterns to be dominant, but the patterns themselves—as with all mental activity—establish dominance through the interaction of individual minds with other minds and with the external world. As such, grammatical forms are both universal and contested; the rules of a given grammar are not genetically specified, but the capacity for grammar is. Grammatical rules and the ideational forms they help structure change over time through competition, and so any extant set of grammar rules is the result of a process of conceptual blending whereby “traditional” rules compete with other rules for dominance, assimilating some aspects of other grammars while

resisting others. The struggle over "correct" poetic meter during the Augustan age is an example of this sort of competition.

Accent, Syllable, and Rhyme

The Augustan period of English literary history is so called because King George I, who reigned from 1714-1727 a.d., saw fit to use "Augustus" as one of his honorifics. He was referencing Caesar Augustus, of course, and the line of Roman emperors that descended from him and also used this title; this act of titular appropriation has since been expanded to define the literary output of the late 17th and early-to-mid 18th century because the authors of the period—especially the poets—based much of their poetic identities on a similar appropriation of the works of classical authors in general, including those of the first Augustan period. The genres of the classical period were recast for the Enlightenment; Milton's epics *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained,* for example, foreshadowed the Augustan period, while William Cowper's *The Task* may well have been its last gasp, and both blend conspicuous formal aspects of the Homeric epics with contemporary concerns. To cite the most obvious (or at least most immediate) use of the Homeric model, each begins, after an invocation of the muses, *in media res:*

> Rage—Goddess, sing the rage of Peleus' son Achilles,
> murderous, doomed, that cost the Acheans countless losses,
> hurling down to the House of Death so many sturdy souls,

great fighters' souls, but made their bodies carrion,

feasts for the dogs and birds,

and the will of Zeus was moving towards its end.

Begin, Muse, when the two first broke and clashed,

Agamemnon lord of men and brilliant Achilles.

(*Iliad*, 7-8)

Launch out on his story, Muse, daughter of Zeus,

start from where you will—sing for our time too.

By now,

all the survivors, all who escaped headlong death,

were safe at home, escaped the wars and waves.

(*Odyssey*, 11-15)

Sing Heav'nly Muse, that on the secret top

Of OREB, or of SINAI, didst inspire

That Shepherd, who first taught the chosen Seed,

In the Beginning how the Heav'ns and Earth

Rose out of CHAOS: Or if SION Hill

Delight thee more, and SILOA'S Brook that flow'd

Fast by the Oracle of God; I thence

Invoke thy aid to my adventurous Song,

(*Paradise Lost,* 6-13)

Thou Spirit, who led'st this glorious Eremite

Into the desert, his victorious field

Against the spiritual foe, and brought'st him thence

By proof the undoubted Son of God, inspire,

As thou art wont, my prompted song, else mute,

And bear through height or depth of Nature's bounds,

With prosperous wing full summed, to tell of deeds

Above heroic, though in secret done,

And unrecorded left through many an age:

Worthy to have not remained so long unsung.

(*Paradise Regained,* 8-10)

I sing the Sofa. I who lately sang

Truth, Hope, and Charity,[1] and touch'd with awe

The solemn chords, and with a trembling hand,

Escaped with pain from that adventurous flight,

Now seek repose upon an humbler theme;

The theme though humble, yet august and proud

The occasion—for the Fair commands the song.

Time was, when clothing sumptuous or for use,

Save their own painted skins, our sires had none.

(*The Task,* 1-9)[21]

The blending of the classical and the contemporary—part of the "revival of letters," as Dr. Johnson called the Renaissance (58)--was not restricted to the formal aspects of literary genres; indeed, this sort of blending was far less difficult (and contentious) than the struggle to integrate classical Greek and Roman metrical schemes, based on syllabic languages, with English, which is accentual—in fact, the struggle is ongoing, but I will return to that later.

As the education of the Augustan Englishman was based on contemporary interpretations of Quintilian's curricula, Ciceronian rhetoric, and a mastery of Latin, the desire to fuse the metrical formalism of Latin and Greek verse with the English vernacular tradition was strong indeed. This desire was symptomatic of certain of the general cultural frames that also emerged from their educational system, including perspicuity of style, correctness, and theoretical comprehensiveness. Poetry was meant to delight and instruct, certainly, and it had value as a mnemonic teaching device for Greek and Latin language instruction, but poetic meaning could only emerge, could only be valued and appreciated, if it fit a Belletristic ideal that was metrically impossible to achieve because of the incompatibility of Latin and English; the result was a verse line that was accentual but was glossed as syllabic, thus making the critical assessment of "numbers" into one of the prime tools for poetic contest.

[21] Notably, Cowper's invocation is to himself, that is, the muse is within him, and so *The Task* compresses the subjective and classical strands of literary expression that competed during the Augustan period into a single semantic space.

This blessed rage for order, manifest as an overwhelming need to blend the Classical with the contemporary, also found voice in such developments as the Francis Bacon's faculty psychology, the Port Royal Logic developed by Arnauld and Nicole, John Locke's attempts at codifying epistemology, and of course Descartes' morphing of Platonic universals into empirically verifiable subjective truth. One standard explanation for the coalescing of such a wide variety of intellectual endeavors around what Stephen Toulmin calls "the Quest for Certainty" (*Cosmopolis*, 26) is that the system-building bug emerged from the sprawling, superstitious mess of Scholasticism that still dominated the Renaissance period, encouraged by the comparatively peaceful, prosperous condition of nascent European nation-states (Cassirer); another holds that the split between the theoretical and the practical that characterized the Age of Reason and the Enlightenment arose from exhaustion with the Thirty Year's War and a concomitant desire to elude relativism once and for all (Toulmin). Both explanations seem correct, though the former champions the Enlightenment as a leap forward out of the inductive goo, while the latter claims

> the formal doctrines that underpinned human thought were practiced from 1700 on followed a trajectory with the shape of an Omega, i.e. after 300 years we are back close to our starting point. Natural scientists no longer separate the "observer" from the "world observed", as they did in the heyday of classical physics; sovereign nation-states find their independence circumscribed; and Descartes' foundations ambitions are discredited, taking philosophy back to the skepticism of Montaigne (*Cosmopolis*, 32),

and thus that the Enlightenment was a grand side-track that went nowhere and left us back where we started, albeit with much better dental care. Both are correct because absolutism and relativism are not paradoxical, exclusive categories, but rather are cues for interdependent processes of meaning creation which have the same goal: bringing phenomenon into human scale.

The Age of Reason and the Enlightenment do not exist, just as absolutism and relativism do not exist, but the meaning that these cues bring about does exist, and this meaning is infinitely malleable (given infinite time, of course), which is not the same thing as saying that the external world does not exist, or that the internal world is merely a construct of external cues. Meaning is both the recognition of a pattern and the physiological reaction to that pattern, which is why all humans use grammar and syntax, for example, to cause meaning-creation; at the same time, language is not the only pattern that causes meaning. As Antonio Damasio would have it,

> Language--that is, words and sentences—is a translation of something else, a conversion from nonlinguistic images which stand for entities, relationships, and inferences. If language operates for the self and the consciousness the same way it operates for everything else, that is, by symbolizing in words and sentences what exists first in a nonverbal form, then there must be a nonverbal self and a nonverbal knowing for which the words "I" or "me" or the phrase "I know" are the appropriate translations, in any language. I believe it is legitimate to take the phrase "I know" and deduce from it the presence of a nonverbal image of knowing centered on a self that precedes and motivates that verbal phrase (107-108).

The way these images—"schemas" for cognitive linguists—are related, combined, and so forth, is through grammar and syntax, which must therefore precede language, and the rules of a given grammar are both physiologically determined and widely variable due to the cultural and physical contexts that help determine what neural patterns will gain weight. The learning of language (of any knowledge) is an ongoing process of residual pattern activation, a process which is aided by identifying and repeating various vocal sounds, as is the case with poetic meter and the employment of other kinds of rhetorical figures.

Poetic meaning, then, occurs when some sort of linguistically-cued residual pattern is activated, and the act of meaning creation that inheres to the pattern is noticed by the mind creating it. Analysis, judgments of value, and so forth happen after the meaning occurs, and so the struggle to determine, for example, how English vernacular and Classical Latin might be fused into a single metrical system is a struggle over what sort of entrenched neural networks will be established (through education) to allow poetic meaning to emerge. This struggle over the "line," over what should be considered a formal poetic unit, also had roots in the 16th and early 17th century competition between the Cavalier poets, epitomized by the work of Ben Johnson and Robert Herrick, and the Metaphysical poets, the group identified with John Donne and George Herbert, among others; indeed, the contrast between the stylistic approaches of these two very heterogeneous groups, one of which tended toward smoothness and ease of understanding, the other toward syncopation and knotty metaphors, is another example of the human cognitive tendency to make distinctions that reflect, in form, the bilateral symmetry of our bodies and

sensory apparatus. Likewise, during the Augustan period, the champions of classical versification lined up on one side, and those who favored vernacular on the other.

Among the main points of contention were the use of rhyme, which was not used in Classical Greek and Roman poetry but was very much a part of the English vernacular tradition. This struggle was delineated as early as 1583, In Philip Sidney's *Defense of Poesie*:

> Now, of the versifying there are two sorts, the one Ancient, the other Moderne; the Ancient marked by the quantitie of each syllable, and according to that framed his verse; the Moderne observing onely number (with some regard of the accente). the chiefe life of it, standeth in that like sounding of the words, which we call Rime. Whether of these be the more excellent, would bear many speeches, the ancient no doubt more fit for Musicke, both words and time observing quantitie, and more fit, lively to expresse divers passions by the low or loftie sound of the well-wayed sillable. The latter likewise with his rime striketh a certaine Musicke to the ear: and in fine, since it dooth delight, though by an other way, it obtaineth the same purpose, there being in either sweetnesse, and wanting in neither, majestie. (41)

The debate over rhyme would reach a fever pitch "[…] at the turn of the seventeenth century, [and would be] dominated by tendentious historical valuations of the status of rhyme" (Bradford, 154). Milton was the champion of proponents of blank (unrhymed) verse--those advocating for the "Ancient"—who would consistently argue that rhyme warped the syntactic flow of a given poem, causing the poet to worry about sound at the expense of sense. These arguments often

compressed "rhyme" with roles derived from physical states like "bondage" and spiritual ones like "sin," while casting unrhymed blank verse as redemptive and liberating[22]; as such, the clear implication is that poetry based on Classical meters represents forward progress, and that a poetic line that closest resembled those produced by the model civilizations of Greece and Rome represented a sort of upward mobility out of the more flighty, debased, and feminine warping of rhyme.

Those who favored the "Moderne" generally abandoned the use of classical measure (or at least the terminology thereof) entirely, eschewing spondees and dactyls for a more "natural" emphasis on stress and the number, rather than the quantity, of syllables. Rhyme was, for its practitioners, a means for producing harmonic linguistic order that, by virtue of its being "native," was the English equivalent of Classical meter. The struggle to define what was considered "natural," then, was in one sense a struggle between genealogies; in another, it was a struggle between what sort of reading habits counted as "natural," as the ear trained to recognize Classical meters was in truth more of an eye: scansion of a poetic line is far easier to prove using written symbols, whereas reading the same lines out loud produces great variation in English, and so the space created by the printed word and by private reading gave those who favored Classical meter a more secure place to make their case, notwithstanding the fact that these metrical schemes had emerged from Oral poetic practice.

For both sides of the debate, then, defining the space in which the debate took place was central, and was certainly indicative of the Enlightenment imperative to make sure that man ruled over a natural world that had, of course, anointed him ruler:

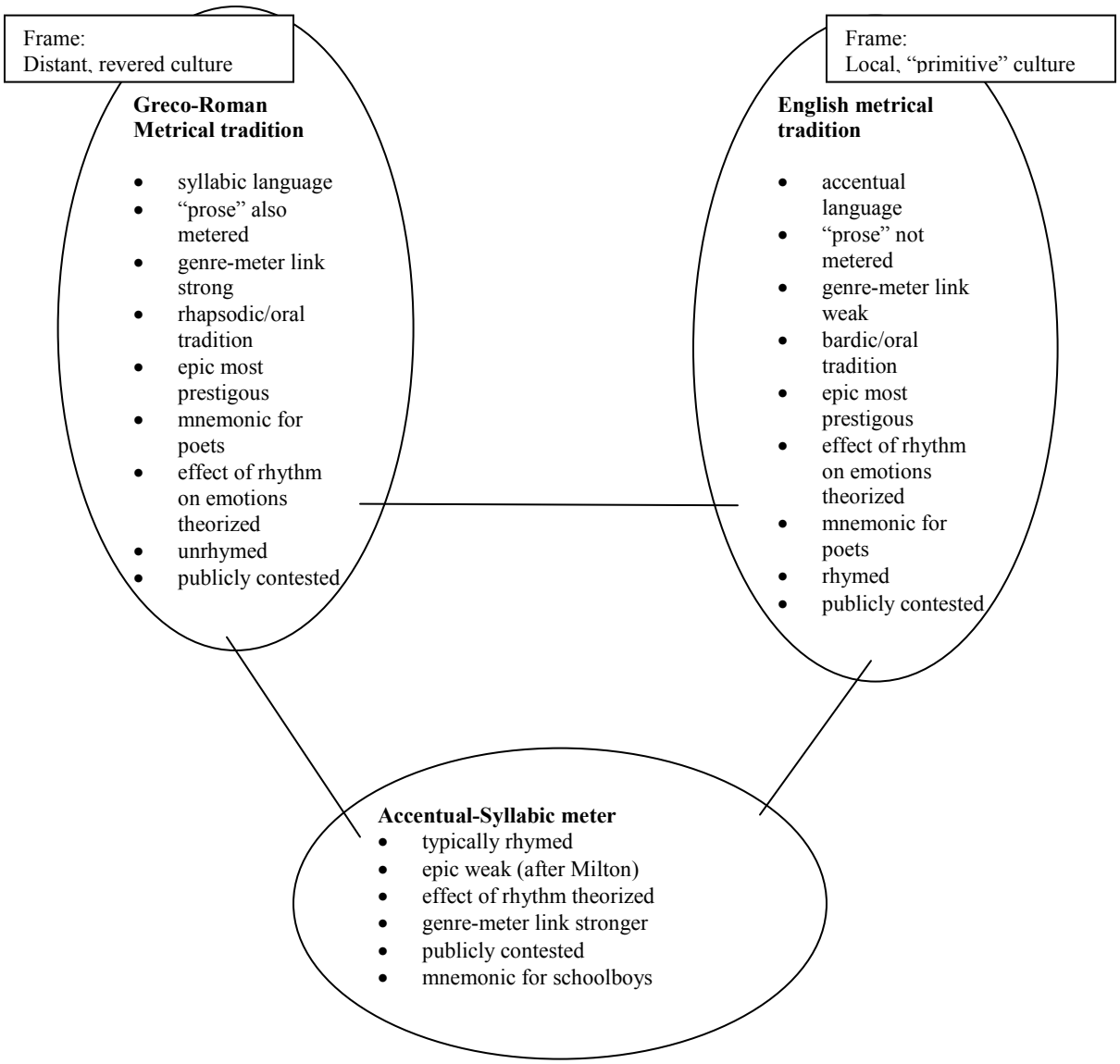
---

[22] For Henry Felton, Miltonian blank verse would have "[…] freed us from the Bondage of Rime, but like Sinners, and like Lovers, we hug our Chain, and are pleased in being Slaves" (*Dissertation on Reading the Classics*, 257).

Some, to whom Heav'n in wit has been profuse,
Want as much more to turn it to its use;
For Wit and Judgment often are at strife,
Tho' meant each other's aid, like man and wife.
"Tis more to guide than spur the Muse's steed,
Restrain his fury than provoke his speed:
The winged courser, like a gen'rous horse,
Shows most true mettle when you check his course.
Those rules of old, discover'd, not devised,
Are Nature still, but Nature methodized;
Nature, like Liberty, is but restrain'd
By the same laws which first herself ordain'd.

(Pope, *Essay on Criticism*, 80-91)

The passage above is written from within the dominant blended space produced by the 17th century debate over meter and rhyme: the Heroic couplet, a line whose value was determined by how well it manipulated the both the rhythms of the five-stress line and the compulsory every-two-lines rhyme scheme:



shared frame: poetry

Fig. 6: Accentual-Syllabic Meter

In both style and content, then, the passage from Pope's *Essay on Criticism* advocates control and regularity, a taming of the public and political world that is a reflection of the natural world, and which is best carried out through the technology of print, since print is fixed, rigid, and invariable. This was the poetry of the broadsides, of the news dailies, where poets met in contest to gain fame and reputation, and also to debate matters of the day within the agreed-upon formal compromise of the Heroic couplet and, both in order to avoid the potentially libelous direct attack on a known person and in imitation of the Classical, using satire rather than invective: "With whate'er gall thou sett'st thy self to write, / Thy inoffensive Satyrs never bite. / In thy felonious heart, though Venom lies, / It does but touch thy Irish pen, and dyes" (Dryden, 200).

To teach this mode of poetic debate, authors like John Gay even composed pedantic satires for children, as with these lines from his *Fables*, which lampoon "Yon minister so gay and proud" for the moral edification of the young:

> See him, mad and drunk with power,
> Stand tott'ring on ambition's tower:
> Sometimes, in speeches vain and proud,
> His boasts insult the nether crowd;
> Now, seiz'd with giddiness and fear,
> He trembles lest his fall is near.
>
> (155-120)

As the Augustan poets extended their debates from questions of formal and aesthetic value into the spheres of politics, religion, education, and so forth, they needed to maintain the printed, public space that allowed such debates, both by attacking press censorship and by asserting the correctness of the Heroic couplet. But the aphoristic rigidity of the couplet, in concert with the intimidating example of Pope's manipulation of the form, quickly began to chafe against both poets and readers of poetry, and so the stage was set for the next struggle over the rules of poetic competition.

Mirror Neurons and Proto-Romantics

That Augustan poets saw the form of their verse as mimetic is not much disputed; as Margaret Doody puts it, "[t]he Augustans are always interested in the mind's power to transform what is exterior into a reflection of the mind" (207). The canonical reading of the Romantic reaction to Augustan verse, the one attached to M. H. Abrams, involves a transition from a mimetic understanding of the human mind to one that is productive, from the mirror of transformation to the lamp of individual expression. Abrams traces this shift in metaphors back to Ancient Greece, where "Plato was the main source of the philosophical archetype of the reflector, [and] Plotinus was the chief begetter of the archetype of the projector" (59) and then forward to continental philosophy, where Kant helped establish the idea of an active imagination in the minds of the educated elite. A quick glance at certain "proto-Romantics" such as Thomas Gray and William Collins, however, is enough to make this narrative seem a bit wobbly, based as it is on a definition of mimesis that stands in opposition to imagination.

Mimesis (μίμησις) was held by Plato in opposition to diegesis (διήγησις) (*Republic,* 392e1-395c5), which is personal, eyewitness testimony of an event or state of being; from this odd distinction we derive the writing workshop cliché, "show, don't tell"—that is, use mimesis, not diegesis. The distinction rests on the idea that mimesis involves, through invocation of the muses, the removal or submergence of the reasoning aspect of mind, the *nous*, which in turn leaves the rhapsode open to inhabitation by any number of ignoble muses, and thus to the spoiling of the soul and of civil society. Diegesis, on the other hand, was supposed to involve speaking what one believes directly from the *nous*, and so goodness can always be pursued with the full strength of one's character—and if not, then you are a reprobate who cannot blame the muses for corrupting you. Aristotle, in the *Poetics*, argued for the cathartic potential of mimesis, since the artist could create an imitation that would in turn allow the ignoble feelings of the audience a fairly harmless means of escape, but retained Plato's use of the word as an imitation of something natural as well as its distinction from diegesis. The distinction is odd because it seems to be rooted in a struggle to come to terms with literacy (as opposed to orality), and with a conception of the technology of writing as somehow more artificial than speech; as such, the distinction is easily refutable from a position that favors orality or literacy: one could easily write in the voice of a character and claim that it was eyewitness account, or speak from the heart while mimicking—consciously or unconsciously—the words of another person or fictional character, and in both cases, the communicative action is the result of mimesis. We learn by recreating things received by stimulus from our environment; as Merlin Donald describes it,

> Mimesis is a nonverbal representational skill rooted in kinematic imagination—that is, in an ability to model the whole body, including all its voluntary action-systems, in three dimensional space. This ability underlies a variety of distinctively human capabilities, including imitation, pantomime, iconic gesture, imaginative play, and the rehearsal of skill […] mimesis led to the first fully intentional representations of early hominid evolution, and set the stage for the later evolution of language (49).

One of the watershed moments in the brief history of cognitive linguistics occurred sometime during the mid-1980's in Parma, Italy, where researchers led by Giacomo Rizzolatti were measuring the neural activity of macaque monkeys engaged in a variety of activities. One such activity involved picking up a target object, during which the researchers mapped what neurons were involved in the process of grasping and lifting; when the target object fell out of the monkey's reach, a researcher picked it up within the monkey's field of vision—and the same neural map was activated. This was the discovery of "mirror neurons," neurons which fire when an action is performed and when the same action is performed by another agent. Indeed, there is some evidence that "action words" are enough to activate mirror-neuron networks in humans; Pulvermueller, for example, "compared EEG activations while subjects listened to face- and leg-related action verbs ('walking' versus 'talking') [and] found that words describing leg actions evoked stronger in-going current at dorsal sites, close to the cortical leg-area, whereas those of the 'talking' type elicited the stronger currents at inferior sites, next to the motor representation of the face and mouth" (qtd. in Rizzolatti and Craighero, 187). If this research continues to reveal the connections between mirror neurons and linguistic behavior—and if our

brain mapping technology improves to the point at which mirror neurons can be individually identified in humans, which seems imminent (see Arbib, Keysers and Gazzola, etc.)—then we must acknowledge that the Classical thinkers who developed the idea of mimesis were more correct than many of us have previously supposed, but also that Plato's distinction between mimesis and diegesis is really only suited to distinguishing between literary genres, not between epistemologies.

As may well have been Plato's intent in making the distinction, but what is more significant to my inquiry is the way his distinction was recreated as a transition from Augustan to Romantic sensibilities, where mimesis "gave way" to the diegesis of the Romantic spirit. This interpretation involves two categories which seem oppositional but in fact share a common set of frames: history as forward motion, language as communication, and the artist as "different," and also on the fundamental spatial operation of an object changing its appearance as it moves across space and time. In fact, each of these frames seems also attached to that fundamental operation: history as forward motion is a conceptualization of time as what happens to an object as it moves across space (it changes) and of forward motion as exploration, discovery, and the pursuit of novelty; language as communication describes objects that "carry" sensory knowledge across space; and the artist as "different" accounts for the change in state of a subject who encounters a sentient object who is capable of altering the subject, in this case by issuing objects that carry sensory information. Reducing phenomena to objects in a field is only part of the explanation, however, since this basic structure is capable of producing the incredible variety of meanings evidenced in human culture.

Human attitudes toward death are a case in point. The experience of other human bodies changing from self-mobile, sentient subjects to inert objects is common to all people, although the experience itself is unknowable, or at least incommunicable. Our sensory input for this phenomenon, then, is of an object changing states. During the time I have working on this chapter, two members of my family have died, an Aunt and a Grandfather. In the former case, the casket was closed, and so the "experience" of her inert body was, for everyone gathered, actually the experience of a casket, which stood in metonymic relationship to her actual body because that body was too badly damaged to show. Naturally, the substitution of the casket for the body only further imprinted the state of the body on those gathered for the funeral, since a body cannot change into a casket, although it can change into a dead body, as was the case with my Grandfather. In both instances, the funereal ritual is meant to give the living a "material anchor" for the unknowable experience of death, thereby allowing them to blend their own, living experience with that of the corpse, to map their position as a body moving through space to a body that has moved so far along its path that it changed into something else. "Man is the measure of all things," as Protagoras noted, and so when I placed my hand on my Aunt's casket and my Grandfather's forehead, I was trying to measure my own state at least as much as theirs. The development of funereal practices has long served as a kind of archeological shorthand for the advent of modern humans; for Turner and Fauconnier, funereal practices are evidence of the development of double scope blending:

> The archeological record suggests that […] treatment of "the dead" arose roughly 50,000 years ago. In the network for "the dead," one input space has the person when alive, and

> the other input mental space has the remains, typically looking as much as possible like the living person just before death. Some burial practices are meant to ensure the remains have this appearance [… and] many vital relations connect the input space with the person and the input space with the remains: the person and the remains are causally related; they are also related by physical change; and they cannot be related by disanalogy—for example, the person moves, but the corpse does not. The body is a part of the person in the input with the living person, so there is a physical relation of change between body-as-part in one input and the corpse in the other […] the outer-space disanalogy connector between the inputs—the person was vital but the remains are not—it compressed into *absence* (204-205)

In the authors' explanation of the evolution of human language, such blending could not take place within a single frame. For example, other animals might register that a previously living body is now dead, and they may even mourn the change in states if the corpse was a mate, sibling, or child, but they also may well eat the body shortly thereafter because they do not have the capacity to blend across frames—they move from a social frame (my mate is not alive) to a food gathering frame (here is sustenance for me and my children) without blending concepts from different frames together in such a way that would make them enact funereal rites, which depend on blending the inanimate body with the memories of the animate being, since animate and inanimate objects are conceptual "primitives," primary frames in which other, more abstract frames nest.

The human capacity for metonymy and metaphor, then, allow us to blend elements that have different frames together letting one thing—a grave, a tombstone, a casket—stand for another. What was at stake during the Augustan age was the degree to which this "artifice" was acknowledged and accepted, which in turn conditioned the public space of a poem and thus the formal rules that encourages either poetic contest or poetic competition. In the public space dominated by Pope and his "Scribbler's Circle," the space of the newspapers, of broadsides and weekly magazines, artifice was accepted and "wit" was the successful manipulation of artifice, and poetic meaning-making occurred when a poet manipulated the expectations of wit in an especially successful way. For so-called "graveyard poets" like Thomas Gray, such artifice was conditionally accepted, but was seen as another mortal vanity that would vanish with the extinction of the poetic subject, so poetic meaning-making occurred by simultaneously manipulating and subverting wit. In both cases, the characteristic rhetorical figure employed was "pathopoeia," described by 17th century rhetorician Richard Sherry as a figure "[w]hereby the passions of mind, such as anger and hope, are personified" (64), and which is also a kind of mimesis, an imitation of an emotional state that blends that state with a mythological being, a famous personality, or a physical object. If the goal of the poet is wit, this characteristic figure is a means of control, of rendering a passion manipulatable; if the goal is melancholic meditation, then the figure is a means of naming what is uncontrollable in order to prove that it is beyond human control—the better to manipulate the reader into finding pleasure in both wit and the emptiness of wit.

The audience for the graveyard poet's personification of Death was also conditioned by the "[…] proliferation of manuals dealing with the art of meditation" (Thorpe, 58) during the 17th

century, and also by the rise of the middle-class and the affordability of books. The fashion for meditation and for private reading lent ethos to first-person narratives, which first appeared as versions of the Virgilian *Eclogues,* and typically were examples of what Platonian diegesis, narratives in the voice of another character. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's poem *Six Town Eclogues*, for example, runs through the voices of several types of character before finishing with "Saturday. The Small-pox. Flavia," a poem written in the voice of a posh Lady who has discovered she has small-pox and bids the world an extended good bye before going off the die in exile—hence the reference to Flavia Domitilla, a Roman saint who also died in exile. Her narrative, while an extended mediation on death, is rife with Augustan wit; she chides the foolish doctors who cannot cure the pox ("'Ye cruel Chymists, what with-held your aid? / Could no pomatums save a trembling maid?" (65-66)) chastises the "meaner beauties" (55) that will fill her place in society, and finishes with a dramatic flourish: "Ye, operas, circles, I no more must view! / My toilette, patches, all the world adieu!" (95-96). As "patches" are a personification of the pox itself--men and women both would plug flattened bits of lead, decorated with felt or silk, into their small-pox lesions when they first appeared—she manages to say farewell to the disease that kills her and the sign of her shame at the same time.

Lady Montagu also composed *Verses on Self-Murder* ("Yet one short moment would at once explain / What all philosophy sought in vain" (17-18)), a brief flirtation with ending it all that ends, not surprisingly, with the narrator's decision to live on "in chains and darkness wherefore I should stay, / And mourn in prison, while I keep the key" (26-27). Her decision to take comfort in the thought of death, or at least in the idea that she could choose death at any

time, hints at the sort of attitude the graveyard poets would strike, and in fact led the editor to chastise "the Lady" in a note attached to the piece when it was published:

> As it is to be suppos'd that we often differ from the sentiments of our correspondents, and sometimes disapprove them; so here we think this lady has suggested very immoral and pernicious advice; that she has not duly weighed that inimitable soliloquy of *Hamlet, To be, or not to be,*--nor the many excellent Tracts that have been published against *Self-murder*; and, what is worse, seems to have forgot her Maker and her Christianity (qtd. in Farrier and Gerard, 191).

Attributing any hint of romance to the idea of Death was thus immoral and unchristian; in fact, any prolonged personification of Death was highly questionable, as it was simply another part of the natural order. Death was personified as an aspect of life that helped give life meaning, and so treatments of it, for the Augustans, tended to focus on what passions were aroused by the death of another, or on the deeds of the departed, in imitation of Classical elegies. Johnathan Swift's *Verses on the Death of Dr. Swift, D.S.P.D.,* to cite one example, sways between the mock-elegaic and a more somber critique of the vanity of human aspirations that also prefigures the graveyard poets, but avoids any personification of Death itself, preferring to dwell on the musings of his friends and relatives at his wake.

Thomas Gray's somber "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard" offers a very different sort of adieu, one rife with the vengeful implications of the "death-as-leveler" topos and largely devoid of wit or diegesis. Death is both personified and that which personifies, a stronger force

than the mind which not only cannot apprehend it but is permanently marked by knowledge of—well, of nothing, actually, and nothing is personified in a variety of ways: Death as the source of loneliness:

> The curfew tolls the knell of parting day,
> The lowing herd wind slowly o'er the lea
> The plowman homeward plods his weary way,
> And leaves the world to darkness and to me. (1-4)

As the leveler of all:

> The boast of heraldry, the pomp of pow'r,
> And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,
> Awaits alike th' inevitable hour.
> The paths of glory lead but to the grave. (33-36)

As mocker of human toil:

> Can storied urn or animated bust
> Back to its mansion call the fleeting breath?
> Can Honour's voice provoke the silent dust,
> Or Flatt'ry soothe the dull cold ear of Death? (41-44)

And, ultimately, as the mother of beauty:

> On some fond breast the parting soul relies,
> Some pious drops the closing eye requires;
> Ev'n from the tomb the voice of Nature cries,
> Ev'n in our ashes live their wonted fires. (89-92)

Gray's decision to use quatrains rather than heroic couplets, the relentless inwardness of the narrative voice (even when transcribing the voice of the "rustic" who speaks in the latter half of the poem), and his repositioning of pastoral elegy from a landscape of natural beauty to one of tombs, gravestones, and darkness all represent an incredibly prescient anticipation of the *kairos* for publication, for his poem was wildly popular upon publication in 1751, spawning a slew of imitators. Gray was an odd figure to enter the public space of Augustan poetry; shy, almost hermetic, even when his reputation soared, he chose to remain out of the spotlight, and he quit writing poetry altogether at age 40, shortly after declining the Poet Laureateship of England. To borrow yet another scientific metaphor, we might consider Gray an example of a peripheral isolate:

> A new species can arise when a small segment of the ancestral population is isolated at the periphery of the ancestral range. Large, stable central populations exert a strong homogenizing influence. New and favorable mutations are diluted by the sheer bulk of

> the population through which they must spread. They may build slowly in frequency, but changing environments usually cancel their selective value long before they reach fixation […]. But small, peripherally isolated groups are cut off from their parental stock. They live as tiny populations in geographic corners of the ancestral range. Selective pressures are usually intense because peripheries mark the edge of ecological tolerance for ancestral forms. Favorable variations spread quickly. Small peripheral isolates are a laboratory of evolutionary change (Gould, 183).

In the narrative of poetic history, Gray's isolation from the rough-and-tumble of the London literary world, from active contestation with other poets, led him to create a novel blend of Augustan verse and first-person voice, and the comparative novelty of Gray's approach began the process of changing the public space of poetry from one built for contest to one built for competition; to the brick and mortar of reason, he added cushions, shades, and mood lighting. To affect this change, he had first to enter the public space, just as peripheral isolates reenter large, stable populations when geographical conditions change and thereby cause a shift in the conditions of evolution. He offered a new version of mimesis, one that changed audience expectations for the creation of poetic meaning and set the stage for the Romantic movement.

Coda

It is from within this newly outfitted poetic space that Romanticism would, with a substantial bit of prodding from German philosophers and the spectacle of the French

Revolution, eventually emerge, in a variety of guises. Very generally, the focus of mimesis would shift from understanding the effect the poet had on the world to the effect the world had on the poet. Mimesis is one of the most important means we have to create what cognitive researchers call a "theory of mind," that is, an ability to understand how other people act and thereby predict their behavior; we do so by observing, and by imitating their behavior and then observing the way our mimesis of their actions makes us feel. The Augustan debate over how to apply classical meter to English verse is an example of mimesis, and of the Augustan desire to develop a theory of mind that blended Classical order with Enlightenment insights. In writing about the death of my family members in this chapter, I also have affected a kind of mimesis by replaying my experience through narration and by linking it to the personification of Death in Augustan poetry. This is not, I think, bad scholarship; the process of writing history is, again, a local phenomenon, an attempt to compress the inexpressibly various into something expressible, a story with a human scale. We cannot escape reductionism; we could not live if we did not compress sensory data into outlines of the things we are sensing; nor is the way we reduce data arbitrary.

Consider, for example, color. The human retina has 100 million color detectors, but only 1 million fibers going to the color processing areas of the brain, a reduction ratio of 100 to 1. We compress the data from a variety of light patterns and categorize them, linguistically, as red, green, blue, and so forth; all English-speaking people of the same sex[23] will, with a quite amazing degree of uniformity, choose a the same specific "central color" to epitomize the word "green," thus leading researchers to isolate eleven basic English color terms: red, blue, yellow,

[23] People of different sexes choose somewhat different central colors; as Jerome Feldman notes quite emphatically, "Do not argue with someone of the opposite gender over whether something looks blue or green" (102).

green, brown, orange, purple, pink, grey, white, and black. Russian and Turkish, however, have twelve such terms, and the New Guinean language Dani has but two. Nevertheless, the categories that Russian, Turkish, and Dani use to describe color are organized around the same central colors that English speakers identify. The two central color terms used by speakers of Dani translate roughly as "light/warm" and "cool/dark," but when pressed for distinctions between different types of warm/light and cool/dark, the categories fall neatly into the same central categories English speakers use; in experiments where Dani speakers tried to learn both the English color system and one based on arbitrary central colors, the English system was learned quickly, the arbitrary one not at all (Rosch).

As so much of our experience is predicated on the human scale, on our experience as physical entities moving through space, the construction of an historical account is similar to placing dolls in a doll house, or having puppet show, or playing a game of chess. For some literary historians, Thomas Gray is the genealogical link between Augustan Pope and Romantic Wordsworth, for others he connects the Classicism of Milton with the full-bore lyricism of Keats. Both accounts are correct, for both add to the richness of a portrait whose actual richness is beyond our means, and the goal of the rhetorician—my goal—is not to prove the veracity of one or the other, or even the contextual effectiveness of either account, but to reveal some of the intersecting strategies for invention involved in laying one map upon another and isolating certain features, omitting others… and perhaps finding out, if for a moment, where I am standing.

Chapter 4: The Romantic Movement in English Poetry, or, Is There Any Good Way to Argue Against Self-Love?

Regardless of the degree of biological presetting of the emotional machinery, development and culture have much to say regarding the final product. In all probability, development and culture superpose the following influences on the preset devices: first, they shape what constitutes an adequate inducer of a given emotion; second, they shape some aspects of the expression of emotion; and third, they shape cognition and behavior which follows the deployment of emotion. It is also important to note that while the biological machinery for emotions is largely preset, the inducers are not part of the machinery, they are external to it.

--Antonio Damasio, *The Feeling Of What Happens*

As my collection of readings begins to teeter into the Romantic era proper, an era which I believe that continues to define both rhetoric and poetry and the relationship between the two, I find myself growing a bit self-conscious about the purpose of my research. Since this collection of words is intended to satisfy the requirements for my PhD in Rhetoric and Composition, one kind of reader might wonder at the absence of a sustained inquiry into the history of rhetoric, since the persuasive cobbling together of texts from the canon of rhetorical theorists is often a substantial part of such documents. But treating the history of rhetoric as a discrete genealogy, one that stands at a remove from other kinds of discursive history is certainly not the only type of

history available to us; I would assign our contemporary tendency to enact this sort of disciplinary taxidermy to the inferiority complex that pervades the field of Rhetoric and Composition (and the associated need to "prove" to people who aren't listening that we do, in fact, have value as a field), but then again, the recounting of rhetorical history has been a habit among rhetoricians since the first sophists anointed Corax and Tisias progenitors. It may be that our modern habit is simply another iteration of the ancient one—they did it, and so must we—but for my purposes, this habit simply hasn't been essential to what I am trying to learn about and persuade my readers of: that poetics and rhetoric are inseparable except as a generic convenience, and that strict distinctions between the genres is a matter of historical context, so that examining different types of poetic contest and competition *constitute* rhetorical inquiry. During historical periods when rhetoric and poetics have been pried apart with more force, then—as was the case during the Romantic period, which I believe is the period we still occupy--my goal is to look at the effects of the separation on poetic contest and competition, rather than constructing a sustained inquiry into what the rhetoricians of the period were doing.

That said, the claim--put forth by Coleridge and repeated by everyone from Thomas DeQuincey to Charles Baldwin to Harold Bloom--that the Romantic period initiated a fierce separation of poetics from rhetoric strikes me as a bit odd, not because various writers and scholars of the period did not stake claims to such separation, but rather because anyone took them seriously, and all the more so that the Western tradition has continued to take their arguments seriously. The received wisdom goes something like this: Wordsworth and Coleridge, inspired by German philosophers like Schelling, Fichte, and August Schlegel, and also by Goethe's *Sorrows of Young Werther* (which was, in turn, inspired by James McPherson's *Ossian*

poems) manufactured a break from the Enlightenment tradition embodied by Pope and the Augustan poets by divorcing the poet from the need to persuade an audience, focusing instead on the revelation of personal feelings; this "new" attitude toward poetic production is often illustrated by John Stuart Mills' aphorism: "eloquence is *heard*, poetry is *over*heard" (27). Rhetoricians of the period did little to challenge this claim directly, although they did continue attending to literature in general in their scholarly works, but neither did many accept the poet's claims of independence from their audience; instead, most rhetoricians were focused on epistemology and psychology, and so it seems that the two camps simply diverged, blending different aspects of the historical record together with different elements of contemporary paradigms of science, politics, and pedagogy.

Greater scrutiny of the period that began in the late 18th century and continues, in my estimation, to this day, reveals a much more complicated picture; there have been various "waves" of Romantic poetry, for example, while the rejection of the *topoi* and syllogism in the work of Campbell, Blair, and Sheridan reveals that an interest in the workings of the human mind was common to both rhetoricians and poets of the 18th and 19th centuries, even as their means of analysis were somewhat different. George Campbell's moral reasoning, for example, would appear, at first glance, to be just the sort of model that Romantic poets sought to reject decades after the publication of *The Philosophy of Rhetoric:*

> The last consideration I mentioned, is that which the speaker ought to have of himself. By this we are to understand, not that estimate of himself which is derived directly from consciousness or self-acquaintance, but that which is obtained reflexively from the

> opinion entertained of him by the hearers, or the character which he bears with them. Sympathy is one main engine by which the orator operates on the passions. (129)

Campbell is describing part of a theory of mind, which, as I mentioned in the previous chapter, is an ability to understand how other people act and thereby predict their behavior, and which is also the fundamental goal of rhetoric, if I might be permitted a grand generalization. Developing a theory of mind allows a writer to predict what rhetorical strategies will cause his audience to create certain kinds of meaning out of his words, and Campbell recognized that the time for using classical organizational schemes, tropes, syllogisms, and other hallmarks of the Augustan rhetorical blend had passed, and that loosely organized bundles of aphorism appealed at least as much to a general audience as did appeals which "disdain all assistance whatever from the fancy" (88). In Campbell's formulation, this latter kind of appeal address solely to the intellect, and so it can be used to instruct but not argue.

William Wordsworth seems to have taken Campbell's ideas to heart, at least in terms of prose style; his "Preface" to the *Lyrical Ballads* is a jumble of aphoristic assertions and associational leaps intended to move the passions of his readership and convince them that the poet's role in society had changed, and that this new role was the correct blend of ancient and modern wisdom:

> Wherever life and nature are described as operated upon by the creative or abstracting virtue of the imagination; wherever the instinctive wisdom of antiquity and her heroic passions uniting, in the heart of the poet, with the meditative wisdom of later ages, have

> produced that accord of sublimated humanity, which is at once a history of the remotest past and a prophetic enunciation of the remotest future, *there*, the poet must reconcile himself for a season to few and scattered hearers (83).

What is particularly striking about Wordsworth's proposed theory of mind, and about Coleridge's as well ("[b]ut where there exists that degree of genius and talent which entitles a writer to aim at the honors of a poet, the very act of poetic composition itself is, and is allowed to imply and to produce, an unusual state of excitement, which of course justifies and demands a correspondent difference of language, as truly, though not perhaps in as marked a degree, as the excitement of love, fear, rage, or jealousy" (*Biographia*, 188) and of Shelley's ("Poets are the hierophants of an unapprehended inspiration, the mirrors of the gigantic shadows which futurity casts upon the present, the words which express what they understand not, the trumpets which sing to battle and feel not what they inspire: the influence which is moved not, but moves."("Defense of Poetry," 341) and of Keats' ("[…] with a great poet the sense of Beauty overcomes every other consideration, or rather obliterates all consideration" (63)), is that their argumentative strategies seem to leap wholly formed from chapter 7 of Campbell's *Philosophy of Rhetoric* or lecture 14 from Hugh Blair's *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres,* and also that they use these conventional rhetorical strategies to deny that they have any theory of mind at all, or at least that there can be no theory of mind other than one's own. Also, by proposing the poet as the fulcrum upon which history turns, they make a claim for exactly the sort of universality that Campbell seeks in describing the faculties of the mind; what need is there for a theory of mind when you possess mystical insight into all minds, past and present? Well, because

the poet's eyewitness testimony must still be measured and validated, a task which, following the circular reasoning of the Romantic poets, must fall on those best equipped to measure the ineffable: the poets themselves.

That poets would be the best judges of poetry's efficacy is not in itself a difficult assertion to come to terms with, though it is rather dubious; more pernicious is the assertion that poets are, by their very nature, better tuned to poetic meaning than their audience, never mind if that audience rejects their judgments. Certainly this was an edifying rationale for those poets whose visions of poetic meaning were at odds with what the reading public was ready to accept—as was the case with Wordsworth was at the start of his career—but it also has the effect of removing poetry from the public role it had during the Augustan period, and of shifting from an Isocratean capacity for shaping attitudes through contestation about social and political issues to a competition between poet's "visions" of the ineffable. This retreat from overt public contest, coupled with a Cartesian duality that split body and mind, public space and private imagination, and which also largely eliminated casuist reasoning in favor of universal theorizing, led the Romantic poets to construct a theory of mind that lionized eyewitness testimony of human nature as the only path to truth: the only authentic mimesis was that which attended to one's own sensations. Or so they said….

History, Human Nature, and the Theory of Mind

In retrospect, The most surprising effect that the Romantic poet's claim to independence from their audience was that anyone took them seriously. The idea that poets are simply talking

to themselves and the audience is overhearing their beautiful words would have more force if Wordsworth, Blake, Keats, and all the rest did not try to publish their work, and did not worry obsessively about the reception of their work, and did not do their best to savage other poets in their competition for reputation. Nevertheless, their effect on the construction of public poetic space has been immense, if not quite revolutionary. Wordsworth and Coleridge both used contemporary rhetorical techniques in their polemics, and the poetry that emerged from the Romantic movement blended figurative elements of Augustan pastoralism and the self-obsessed loneliness of the Graveyard school with an interest in folk poetry and song, often grafting the first two conceptual elements directly onto narrative forms transcribed in rural pubs and other "natural" sites. Walter Scott was particularly adept at repurposing folk poems for an elite readership's consumption; his books of poetry far outsold those of his contemporaries, and when he ran out of steam poetically, he turned to novels and sold even more. His success was at least partly due to the fact that he "approache[d] publishing as calculated self-presentation" (Murphy, 141), that is, he was masterful at marketing himself and his works to a contemporary audience—and yet he is largely forgotten, while Wordsworth continues to dominate literary history.

Some of the conclusions we might draw from the rising and falling canonical fortunes of Wordsworth and Scott is that Wordsworth's poetry was in fact better than Scott's, and that he was right to whine about reconciling himself "for a season to few and scattered hearers" (Murphy, 153), or that Wordsworth and the rest of the Romantics were expert polemicists who changed the rules of poetic competition to favor their own product, or that literary historians ever since have been swept away by the combination of polemic and poetry and have thus bought into the shamanic pretense of the Romantic project. Another explanation is that these three factors—

the contentious value of Wordsworth's (and the rest of the Romantic's) poetry, the force of their polemics, and the accretion of literary history—are Trinitarian, each helping to explain how the confused mess of Romantic contradiction and obscurity came to rebuild poetry's public space as a series of monastic cells, each with a window on some glorious landscape. Eyewitness testimony becomes its own sort of Cartesian universal, the surge of emotions not only inviolate, but separate from such unpoetical concerns as reason, science, psychology, and rhetoric, and the whole story gets replayed as each successive literary historian builds a theory of mind, of human nature, from the assorted texts lying about on his table.

The texts on my table, too, are meant to help build genealogies that will in turn frame the ongoing project called "human nature," and I too am limited by what others have said about and through these texts, but I am also free—as many other forgotten readers have been—to blend these texts in imaginative ways. I can, for example, look at Richard Whately's rules for validating witness testimony and wonder how he might have used them to validate the eyewitness testimony of, say, Keats' "Ode to a Grecian Urn"? The trope of imagining how a historical figure would behave in a fictive sociohistorical context is a canonical example of conceptual blending, as well as a common strategy in academic prose; according to Fauconnier and Turner, this trope is a key example of blending because

> [t]here is emergent structure through composition: We have two people talking [or writing] in the same place at the same time. There is emergent structure through completion: Two people talking in the same place at the same time evoke the cultural frame of a conversation, a debate, or an argument […] and there is emergent structure

> through elaboration "Running the blend" in this case is a matter of elaborating questions and answers, retorts and concessions… (61)

Having Richard Whately analyze Keats' poem is both a mirror network blend, in that it takes concepts that share a single frame (eyewitness testimony) and a double scope blend, since it also blends these concepts from within different frames: that of my imagined, contemporary, academic scenario and the historical texts that sit on the table before me.

WWWD? (What Would Whately Do?)

For the purposes of this dialogue, I will assume that Keats' only contribution is the text of the poem itself, the full text of which I will include in the appendices. In my imagined scenario, Richard Whately has risen from the dead and is sitting across from me, looking over "Ode to a Grecian Urn," mumbling a bit about Aristotle and wondering why the "scholar's" house in which he sits does not reek of tallow. My understanding of Whately's analysis of different types of witness testimony is that it blends the Protestant ideal of a personal relationship with God and Aristotle's discussion of "signs" in the *Rhetoric*, where he describes them as one of the two materials used for an enthymeme (a proposition is the other), and thus as a form of evidence. For Whately, witness testimony—especially testimony of revealed truth--is a kind of sign:

> Of these last [signs which infer a condition], one species is the Argument from Testimony: the premiss being the existence of the Testimony; the Conclusion, the truth of

> what is attested; which is considered as a "Condition" of the Testimony having been given: since it is evident that so far only as this is allowed (i.e., so far only as it is allowed, that the Testimony would not have been given, had it not been true), can this Argument have any force. Testimony is of various kinds; and may possess various degrees of force, not only in reference to its own intrinsic character, but in reference also to the kind of conclusion it is brought to support (*Elements of Rhetoric,* 116)

The usefulness of witness testimony, in other words, depends on the degree to which a witness (or someone arguing from witness testimony) can create the conditions which allow the audience to move from premise (testimony) to conclusion (conviction that the testimony is true). Whately outlines the following kinds of testimonial signs: the testimony of adversaries; that derived from cross-examination; incidentally derived adversarial testimony; negative testimony; concurrent testimony; testimony that relies on the character of things attested; improbable testimony; testimony by witness who do not understand or believe what they are testifying about; and testimony that argues via the omission, absence, and so forth, of various things.

So, in my imagined scene, I have given Richard Whately a copy of Keats' "Ode on a Grecian Urn" and asked him to assess its value as an example of witness testimony. Luckily, he speaks 20th century American English:

> Whately: I know this poem, one of the Cockney School poets, right?

Pietrzykowski: Right, well, he was associated with them in the early 19th century, but his reputation has grown considerably since then. Few people remember the Cockney School, but many know Keats.

Whately: Ah. Why?

Pietrzykowski: Well, he is considered one of the best Romantic poets, one who epitomizes their approach, which involves poetic rhapsodizing—

Whately: I can see that he would claim rhapsody. He is looking at a funereal urn? That is what he is witnessing?

Pietrzykowski: Yes, and I believe that his testimony is that his feelings for the urn are more strong, are the result of a greater sensitivity to sensory experience than non-poets have. So, his testimony is that his testimony is an example of a special experience.

Whately: And he is trying to convince his audience of this? I seem to recall the Cockney poets were laughed at by many people, and this is surely of a piece with their style, much foppery and play-acting.

Pietrzykowski: Yes, they did strain at being lofty; Percy Shelley was also considered one of them—but they were called "Cockney" for political reasons: some critics wanted to

stick to the couplet, and they said these poets were low-born fools whose poetry only rhymed if spoken with a Cockney accent.

Whately: Well, I don't know about that, but this does seem a trifle forced."Thou still unravish'd bride of quietness, / Thou foster-child of Silence and slow Time," (1-2) seems a very unnatural way to begin offering testimony about a revelatory experience. Were he truly enraptured, would he not be more humble about his experience?

Pietrzykowski: Yes, perhaps; I think he is trying to make his testimony match the experience itself, or else create the same experience in the reader.

Whately: And who is the reader? This might convince a child, but I would never give this to a child to read. In fact, this poem looks very much like an exercise written by a composition student given a poor subject, a boy forced to walk across a stage dressed in the garb of an old magician.

Pietrzykowski: So you would not judge this a useful testimony?

Whatley: No, I would judge it a very useful testimony for the opposition, an incidental testimony that gives strength through implication to the argument that this poem is *not* the transcription of a revelation. If you will look in my book please… yes, there: "In any testimony (whether oral or written) that is unwillingly borne, it will more frequently

consist in something *incidentally applied*, than in a distinct statement. For instance, the generality of men, who are accustomed to cry up Common sense as preferable to Systems of Art, have been brought to witness, collectively, on the opposite side; inasmuch as each of them gives the preference to the latter, in the subject […] in which he is most conversant" (117). As Mr. Keats' testimony is made in the argument of claiming special sight, it must be unwillingly born, as no one would willingly choose such a cripplingly alienating burden. And since he claims this special gift, we would expect his words to be the natural outpouring of one so endowed, whereas this poem is quite clearly art. However, since you tell me that Mr. Keats is now famous as a "Romantic" poet, perhaps the concurrent testimony of other witnesses has helped convince the critics of your day that his testimony is valid.

Pietrzykowski: That certainly could be the case, yes.

Whately: And since it seems impossible that the characters on the urn are moving about the way he describes them—"Who are these coming to the sacrifice? / To what green altar, O mysterious priest," (31-32) and so forth—then we must assume his imagination is the culprit in their mobility, which further weakens his credibility. We can, however, accept that Mr. Keats fully believed that his imagination was of sufficient breadth to impart a sense of its operation to his audience, but not that the activity of the imagination is itself constitutes a revelatory experience. Only God can provide revelation, and were

Mr. Keats to change the word "beauty" in his closing chiasmus[24] to "God," then perhaps we could begin to believe his testimony. But I do not think he wants to be believed, I think he wants to be observed.

(I thank Mr. Whately and offer him a beverage.)

There are many more direction in which to take this dialogue, but I do not want to overuse the device, and the point is adequately made, I think: in *my* imagination, Richard Whately would not find much value in Keats, and the trope of putting historical figures in dialogue with ones' self (or with other figures) is a way of making explicit the kind of blending that comprises history. Keats' poem is another example of this trope, except that his "figure" is an Attic Greek urn painted with the scene he describes (or invents). Foppish it may be, but "Ode on a Grecian Urn" is also an example of the shift from explicit poetic contestation to implicit competition, and indeed of one the most common forms this competition takes: offering a vision of the poet's place in a history *built by the poet's vision*, one of many competing accounts in a fashion show of genealogies.

Theory As Character

Having an imagined conversation with an historical figure in which one speaks both parts might, in some quarters, be seen as verging on solipsism, or at least narcissism. But I am

[24] 'Beauty is truth, truth beauty,—that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.' (XX)

composing a rather obscure academic treatise, which is narcissistic almost by definition, and solipsistic by long educational habit—modern scholarship in the humanities does not *deny* the experience of an objective reality, but it does support a hierarchy in which theoretical abstraction and discursive "remove" from one's subject is valorized, and practice is seen as the outcome of work in the more lofty climes. We are Romantics, in other words, trying, as all humans do, to make sense of patterns by bringing them into human scale, but our concept of scale is governed by a Cartesian theater that lords over all. If I were to assert that all knowledge is dialogic, for example, I do not mean that knowledge emits from my mouth and intermingles with other knowledge's "out there" to form more knowledge, but that we swap knowledge and reconstruct it on the stage of our minds, of our imaginations. And it may well have always been so; the Augustans conceived of public dialogic space with a literalism that we would like to evade, personifying thoughts and emotions as characters announced by Capital Letters, and they did so in imitation of what they thought the Greeks and Romans were up to with *their* personifications… as did, in their way, the Romantics, building histories upon the widening gulf between mind and body, reason and primitive emotion. Thomas Gray and the rest of the graveyard poets helped shift the public space of poetry by offering a new twist on the pastoral tradition, setting the stage for the addition of whole wings to the Cartesian theater (or at least the addition of a snack bar and balcony seating), loosening the grip of one theory of mind so that another could develop:

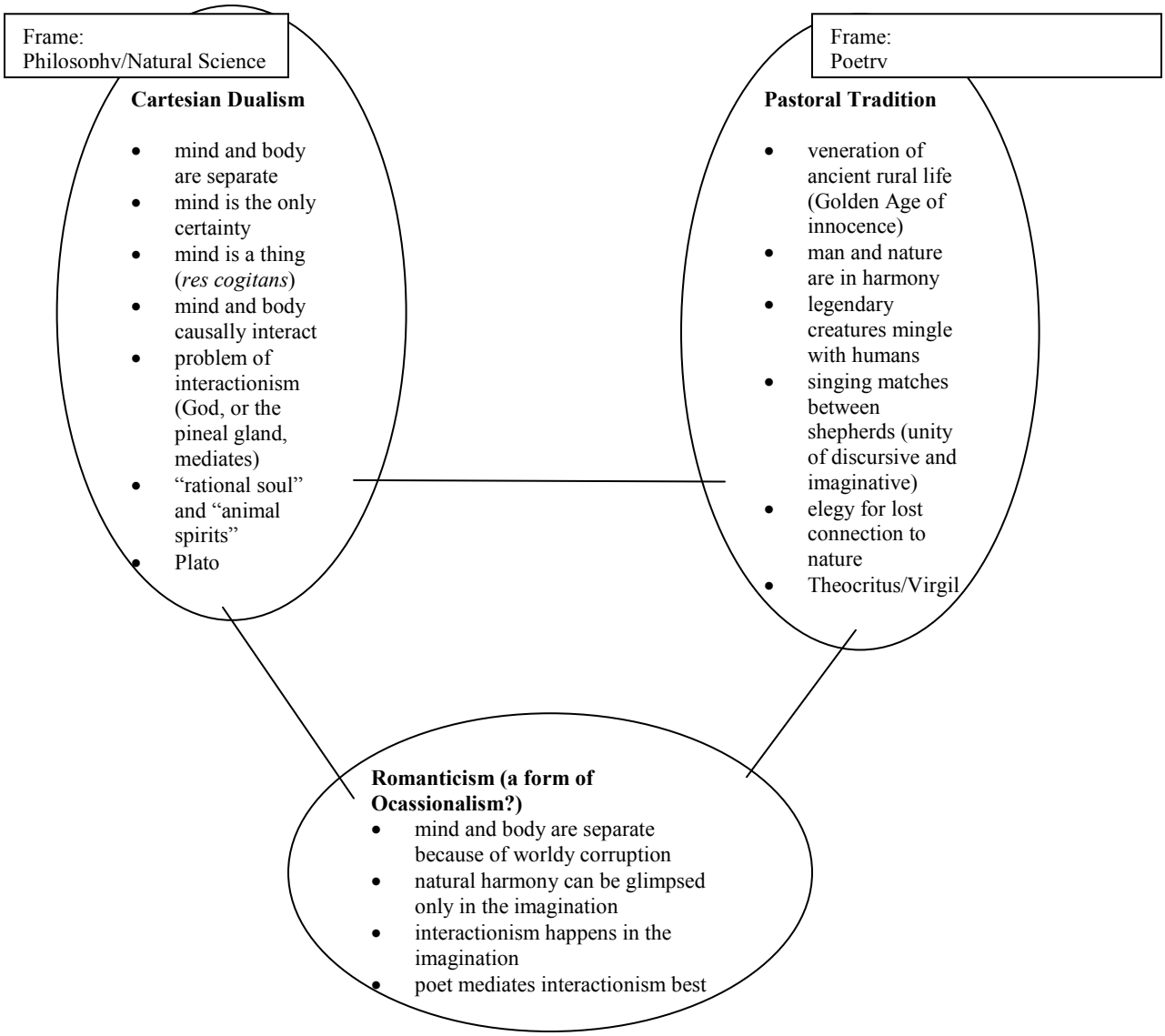


Fig. 7: Romanticism as a Blend

The weakening of the monolithic force of Medieval Christianity has often been cited as the first crack that let flow the waters of the Enlightenment, while Stephen Toulmin, among others, has suggested that the physical and moral exhaustion following the Thirty Years' War was responsible for replacing an already very sectarian Christianity with a monolithic desire for a universal theory of human nature. In any case, most histories agree that without the

Enlightenment (indeed, without the Renaissance, without the Middle Ages, etc), there could be no Romanticism, no "movement" delineated by

> certain organizing principles: that the universe revealed to science was a moral universe; that a creative and benign power expressed itself in and through nature and was manifest to the imagination of man; that as an 'inmate' of this moral universe man was naturally good and perfectible, though at present corrupted by his society and education. Perhaps the most important of these principles, because it underlay the others, was the conviction that the imagination rather than the 'discursive' reason was the source of knowledge. The imagination assumed a religious function like the 'inner light' of the Puritans […] (Bostetter, 4)

No matter how episodic these events, no matter to what degree we would try to escape "grand narratives," we have texts that contain both explicit and implicit evidence that each succeeding generation of poets, of scholars, builds a new narrative from the texts that came before it, and any question about the validity of our motivations for doing so—is this history ideological? Is that one reductive?—arises from our need to situate historical evidence somewhere in our human scale, to further our shape theory of mind.

I have been using "theory of mind" and "human nature" more or less interchangeably because I think they are more or less interchangeable. We develop a theory of mind by watching how others behave and learning to predict their behavior[25], and we use this knowledge to

[25] There are, of course, many competing Theories of Mind in developmental psychology and cognitive studies, including the Adjacent Possible Theory, the Behavioral Investment Theory, the Hedonic Tone Theory, the

develop—in concert with our theories of self—to develop theories of human nature, be they empirical or folk psychology. The major problem with enacting this process within a Cartesian frame that separates mind from body is that it tends to make both predictions of behavior and the predictive function itself (the self, in other words) into more characters in the Cartesian theater, rather than allowing for a variety of theaters, a variety of spaces, each one originating from the way the input and self interact. Romantic poetry's rejection of explicit public contest is founded on the Cartesian emphasis on the separation of mind from body, and the subsequent inward turn that elevated the poet's imagination far above its tawdry roots in the body. Grey's "Elegy" is a marker on our historical map, one that serves as both an example of an existing generic tradition, as Amy Louise Reed's *The Background of Grey's "Elegy"* illustrates quite effectively, and as an epistemic trend toward a poetics entranced by the movements of the mind, one in which "[t]he transformation of something outside the mind into something inside is facilitated by the poet's having momentarily lost, in the darkness surrounding him, the tenuous conviction of his embodied being that delimits outside and inside: as the world fades out, the body vanishes" (Rzepka, 3). Once this shift had occurred, then, subsequent genealogies can revise history to it seem inevitable and new conventions acquire the ethos of natural history, one that is "[…] at once a history of the remotest past and a prophetic enunciation of the remotest future [where] the poet must reconcile himself for a season to few and scattered hearers" (Wordsworth, 83). Without a widening Cartesian duality, the whole solipsistic turn in poetic contest would seem silly; a muse that inhabits the imagination is divine and inviolate, whereas one that inhabits the body might just be gas.

Perceptual Control Theory, the Multidimensional Model of Emotion, the Global Workspace Theory, the Fuzzy Logical Model of Perception, and the Opponent-Process Theory, to name a few.

Coda

There are many other ways to view the relationship between mind and body aside from dualism, of course, and most modern philosophers operate from a position of reductive or non-reductive physicalism. Philosopher Herbert Feigl's "identity theory," for example, posits that "[c]ertain neurophysiological terms denote (refer to) the very same events that are also denoted (referred to) by certain phenomenal terms" (315), (which is a philosopher's way of saying that mental states are physical events), but dualism—as manifest in the widespread belief in an ineffable soul, for example--is still firmly entrenched in our Western folk psychology. In any case, Feigl's brand of scientific monism is years away from being proven, just as conceptual blending and cognitive linguistics in general are years away from drawing explicit connections between neural maps and the subjective experience of thought. What conceptual blending does provide is a way out of the Romantic definition of creativity—the solitary poet whose imagination is lit by the muse—by showing that creativity is in fact an everyday occurrence, a combining and recombining of conceptual domains that produce new concepts and new ways of being.

The conceptual blending model, as I have used it here, seems to resemble Hegelian dialectic, as it involves examining history as a process of concepts joining to form new concepts, but unlike the Hegelian model, blending does not require that concepts are opposed, and history is not marching toward some inexorable final synthesis. Actually, the result of a conceptual blend is not the same thing as a synthesis, since the concept that is formed contains some elements that are not blended and in fact are available for further blends; also, the "concepts"

involved in blending are never more than partial entities, and there is no truth-value hierarchy among them, as there is with Hegel's model. As such, conceptual blending is much more flexible, and can help us understand, for example, how Fichte's terminology (thesis, antitheses, synthesis) was grafted onto Hegel's idea (Hegel rarely used these terms), so that Hegelian dialectic is, except for the most scrupulous philosophers, a blend of Fichte's and Hegel's ideas.

Fichte, who argued that consciousness has no grounding in the phenomenal world, was a significant influence on the English Romantics, as were Novalis, Schlegel, and Schelling, largely through the translation and plagiarism of their works by Samuel Coleridge. What all of these authors had in common was an interest in locating some faculty of the mind that would elude the rationalism of the Enlightenment, just as Gray and the graveyard poets sought to elude the raucous public space of Augustan poetry, and then elevating this faculty above the limitations of rational thought and empiricism. The unfortunate outcome of this project on poetic contest was a shift away from poetry that contested publicly about a variety of issues and toward poetry that competed for prestige by its example, not through direct dialogue, but by announcing itself as an accurate reflection of the only "truth" available to anyone, knowledge which emerged from the imagination like Athena from Zeus' head. These poets competed for fame and glory just as surely as the rhapsodes of Ancient Greece, but in the absence of a space in which to actively contest, their competition occurred through the marketing of individual poets as examples of the Romantic ideal (see Lord Byron, et. al.) and through backroom wheeling and dealing (see Wordsworth's pursuit of the laureateship). Contemporary poetry is still, for the most part, stuck in this model, and as with any paradigm that has outlived its usefulness, the model has become—

as I hope to show in the next satire—impressively self-parodic, an unintentional satire of public poetic contest reenacted as a battle between “schools” of poetic convention.

Chapter 5: Jackals Snarling Over a Dried-up Well, or, Contemporary Poetry in the U.S.

There is a widespread notion in the public mind that poetic inspiration has something mysterious and translunar about it, something that altogether escapes human analysis, which it would be almost sacrilege for analysis to touch. The Romans spoke of the poet's divine afflatus, the Elizabethans of his fine frenzy. And even in our own day critics, and poets themselves, are not lacking who take this affair quite seriously. Our critics and poets are themselves largely responsible for this—they are a sentimental lot, even when the most discerning, and cannot help indulging, on the one hand, in a reverential attitude toward the art, and on the other, in a reverential attitude toward themselves.

--Conrad Aiken, "The Mechanism of Poetic Inspiration"

Once, when I was a child, my mother spoke gibberish to me and told me that she was speaking a foreign language, that I too could speak a foreign language by simply making up nonsense sounds. It was fun to do, and so, on the first day of second grade when the teacher asked if anyone in the class spoke a foreign language, I raised my hand. I spoke in gibberish, and was startled by the teacher's response: she told me I was a liar, and not to lie in her class any more. The other students may have snickered, or laughed out loud, or said nothing; at various times I have remembered their reactions in different ways. But I always remember the teacher's

reaction the same way, and I also remember feeling betrayed, feeling that my mother had lied to me and caused me to be placed in this terrible situation. I did not tell my mother the scene until years later, and to this day she emphatically denies that she ever told me such a thing.

I trust my memory of the event as much as I trust the existence of the external world, just as I'm sure my mother trusts her memory, which tells her she never told me that gibberish and "foreign language" were the same thing. In both cases, our memories are operating the same way: our brains are reconstructing an incident, establishing neural patterns that resemble the patterns which fired when the events in question first occurred. Because these events created very strong connections in my mind for a variety of reasons (an authority figure dressed me down publicly, I applied the role of "liar" to both myself and my mother, etc.), and created very weak connections in her mind (she did not know the effect on me of what had likely been, for her, another in a series of silly games meant to occupy a child), we "remember" them differently. Long-term memories like these are not like tape recordings, they are not "stored" somewhere in the brain; rather, they are "[…] known to be based on structural changes in the synaptic connections between neurons. Such permanent changes require constructing new protein molecules and establishing them in the membranes of the synapses connecting neurons, and this can take several hours" (Feldman, 78-79). Short-term memory, on the other hand, lasts seconds, and is largely dependant on long-term memory structures (often called "frames"). Once again, Jerome Feldman demonstrates the distinction quite well:

> [s]hort-term memory is known to have a different biological basis from long-term memory of either facts or skills. To illustrate this: at the end of this very sentence, close

> your eyes and see how much of the exact wording you can remember. After you come back to the text, try it again and compare how well you recall the first sentence. We now know that this kind of short-term memory depends on ongoing electrical activity in the brain. You can keep something in mind by rehearsing it, but this interferes with your thinking about anything else. Should you try to recall the first sentence of this chapter, you would probably come up with nothing at all, despite the manifest brilliance of the prose (78).

We construct meaning while reading words on a page, and store these immediate meanings in short-term memory. As these meanings accumulate, we conceptualize the meaning of whole sentences, paragraphs, books, fields of study, and so forth, eventually constructing long-term knowledge frames. To read a sentence, we must first learn to recognize patterns, then to recognize letters as distinct kinds of patterns, then to recognize how we put these letters in sequences as words, then as sentences… so, each step involves the building of a long-term frame in which the short term construction of meaning can occur.

The construction of historical narratives is a topos which transmits great ethos, as it provides a long-term frame for the ongoing construction of what Antonio Damasio calls "the autobiographical self," the narrative which each of us lives and creates and which emerges from the universal situation of being a member of the species *homo sapiens*. The universal situation does not, as I hope I have shown in previous chapters, dictate *how* the autobiographical self will be constructed within the parameters of our physiological constraints, and nor does the topos of genealogy play the same role in the construction of self from culture to culture, from individual

to individual. In terms of image-schema, the construction of genealogies involves different variants of the PATHS scheme, such as LINKED PATHS and SOURCE-PATH-GOAL. Image-schemas, which I have described briefly in previous chapters, are conceptual primitives we derive from our analysis of external space; as Jean Mandler puts it, "[p]erceptual meaning analysis redescribes the spatial and movement structure of perceptual displays" (79). Our understanding of time is largely a function of our understanding of movement through space, and the construction of genealogies is a way to put our autobiographical selves on a linked path with other characters and events, or to place them outside the dominant (that is, the learned) path, "opposing" this genealogy by committing ourselves to another, or to none at all.

The need to oppose the dominant genealogy drove the prosaic work of the Romantics, if not their poetry; their approach to poetic competition was to fuse their orphic genealogy with historiography in such a way that "the instinctive wisdom of antiquity and her heroic passions uniting, in the heart of the poet, with the meditative wisdom of later ages" (Wordsworth, 83), a move that, as I said at the end of the previous chapter, was not revolutionary but highly conservative. Formally, imagistically, and rhetorically, the Romantic poets were very much like their forbearers, but they managed to synthesize a variety of influences in a way that suited the historical moment, both philosophically and politically—they claimed to make a revolution just when many readers of poetry wanted, or expected, a revolution, and they accompanied this modestly different poetry with bold proclamations that gave the whole affair the veneer of novelty. This is the model of history-making that has dominated the history of English-language poetry—and, more recently, the history of Rhetoric and Composition--ever since: each new model of convention, each new proposal for shaping the genre of discourse whose goal is the

creation of poetic meaning, must appear as a revolution, an opposition to some other poetics that exist or have recently existed, a new genealogy of poetry that finally lays bare the truth about how we should approach language that calls itself "poetic." Unfortunately, the model that worked so well for the Romantics has not worked as well for subsequent generations of poets, if we measure success by audience interest and cultural prestige, because the Romantics acted at a moment of kairos and, for all their shamanistic muddle, were rhetorically minded. Poets since then have continued to pretend the audience was secondary to poetic inspiration and have repeated the maxims of the Romantics to no avail: Ezra Pound's "go in fear of abstractions" (63) and William Carlos Williams' "no ideas but in things" (122), two canonical bits of advice for the modern poet, are echoes of the Romantics rejection of Augustan poetic philosophizing and didacticism, and while they might seem like pieces of rhetorical strategy addressing what a given audience might enjoy, they are invoked within a Romantic frame that reduces the "audience" to an abstract, trans-historical measure of greatness.

As a result, apprentice poets—both in the academy and in the years prior to MFA programs—inevitably learn to build genealogies with which to arm themselves for the ongoing competition for fame and prestige; T.S. Eliot, for example, made a career out of transferring his genealogies into pastiches of poetic style like "The Waste Land." Not all poets are so direct about their family trees, of course; in any case, when building one's lineage, there are three structural rules to follow:

Rule 1: There is No Beginning

The first rule of creating a revolutionary poetic genealogy is that it cannot start anywhere; instead it must emerge from the deep mists of cave painting and thunder gods, that unassailable prehistory that functions, in genealogical terms, much like that which precedes Brahman in the *Rig-Veda:*

> Who verily knows and who can here declare it, whence it was born and whence comes this creation? The Gods are later than this world's production. Who knows then whence it first came into being?
>
> He the first origin of this creation, whether he formed it all or did not form it, whose eye controls this world in highest heaven, he verily knows it, or perhaps he knows it not (ed. Doniger, 35).

By positing an ambiguous origin, the poet can construct a genealogy that emerges from universality.

Rule 2: There is No End

The second rule of creating a revolutionary poetic genealogy is that the future is as boundless and eternal as the past, but only if *the reader heeds the warnings of the poet*. For Ralph Waldo Emerson, the poet was the Romantic, orphic oracle, to be sure, but he was also an educator, the figure most capable of saving the "Aboriginal self," the "[…] spirit of the true

America: the long-suppressed (under 'feudalism') and like wise presently dormant (or dulled and smothered) 'deific' sensibility that is common to us all, but needs to be awakened, exercised, and cultured by the sacerdotal literatus to a fine state of acuity" (Walker, *Bardic Ethos*, 16). More than 150 years later, critic Robert McDowell would end his essay "Poetry and the Audience" with a similar, though certainly less lofty, set of vague prescriptives:

> If American culture is ever to grow out of its prolonged adolescence, we must learn to value poetry and nurture it. In order for this to occur, publishers and book store owners must wake up, becoming more imaginative and flexible. Poets must rejoin the world and accept responsibility, as many through the centuries have, for telling its stories. Methods of teaching poetry in our schools must undergo radical improvement. If all of this takes place, we will find the climate for poetry merging harmoniously with the weather of our everyday lives. Then the need to discuss enlarging poetry's audience will be unnecessary (141).

Notably, McDowell's echoing of Emerson posits poetry as the only savior of American culture but also worries that poetry itself is in danger: the only way for America to save itself from ruination is by saving poetry from ruination. Fretting about poetry's reduced cultural profile has been a well-worn commonplace during the last decades of the 20th and start of the 21st century, and yoking the future of poetry to the future of the U.S. is typically part of the figure.

Rule 3: There Is Only One Middle, and You Are Standing On It

The SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema is defined by the source and goal, the path is what gets one from point A to point B. A genealogy that includes multiple paths has little ethos, as the idea is to establish the inevitability of one's position as ruler. Any regime that seeks to establish the legitimacy of its leaders uses history this way, tracing a line from the Gods to Caesar, with no time for bastard children or fuzzy parentage. Challenges to the legitimacy of such regimes, of course, often use these genealogical faults to their own advantage, revealing to a worried audience that the current dire state of affairs is the result of decadent leadership, rulers who do not deserve their thrones because the do not have the proper parentage. T.S. Eliot, in "Tradition and the Individual Talent," refined this kind of attack for a more scientistic age:

> No poet, no artist of any art, has his complete meaning alone. His significance, his appreciation is the appreciation of his relation to the dead poets and artists. You cannot value him alone; you must set him, for contrast and comparison, among the dead. I mean this as a principle of æsthetic, not merely historical, criticism. The necessity that he shall conform, that he shall cohere, is not one-sided; what happens when a new work of art is created is something that happens simultaneously to all the works of art which preceded it. The existing monuments form an ideal order among themselves, which is modified by the introduction of the new (the really new) work of art among them. The existing order is complete before the new work arrives; for order to persist after the supervention of novelty, the whole existing order must be, if ever so slightly, altered; and so the relations,

> proportions, values of each work of art toward the whole are readjusted; and this is conformity between the old and the new. Whoever has approved this idea of order, of the form of European, of English literature, will not find it preposterous that the past should be altered by the present as much as the present is directed by the past. And the poet who is aware of this will be aware of great difficulties and responsibilities (44)

The poet "earns" his place in the canon by recognizing his genealogy, like a prince whose identity was kept secret even from himself until her was prepared to assume the throne, and then can begin his own poetic revolution which, by a neat twist, is also a reification of the eternal, unchanging order.

Yet Again, the Revolution

The Romantic trope of revolutionary historization first assigned the role of revolutionary to individual poets: Lord Byron, for example, was at least as famous for his exploits as for his poetry, and later 19th century readers delighted to stories of Lord Tennyson maundering about Lincolnshire in a black cape and funny hat. In the U.S., Walt Whitman made poems that blended the prosaic speech patterns of itinerant preachers with the classical epic form, and yet was known at least as much for his challenges to Puritan morality as for the poems that make up *Leaves of Grass*. More importantly, Whitman represents the beginning of an alternate genealogy for U.S. poets, one that, characteristically, leaps from Whitman back to the misty dawns of shamanism, thus fulfilling rule #1. Other U.S. poets have emphasized the continuity of English language

poetry, tracing their genealogies back to Britain; still others, seeking to embody the immigrant experience so central to U.S. cultural identity, have traced their parentage back to their countries of origin, or built genealogies that emphasized the cultures formed by voluntary and involuntary immigration.

The trope of building a poetic genealogy is one the most important endeavors that 20th century American poets learn as part of their poetic training, a condition greatly magnified by the post-WWII spread of MFA programs. The rhapsodes of Ancient Greece learned to recite the history of a people and their gods, and to compete in making art of this history, while the Augustans learned their art as part of a rhetorical—and therefore civic—education; the poets of the 20th and 21st centuries, on the other hand, learned that poetry was always, as the Romantics had led them to believe, about the poet, first and foremost, and then about poetry as a whole. As poetry's influence waned, this fiction became more and more difficult to sustain and the competition for resources became more nepotistic, and the trope of making yet another poetic revolution pop out of thin air, of expressing one's place in the tradition by making one's genealogy lead, inevitably, to something new, something novel—but not so novel that everyone schooled in the trope would not recognize the marks of royalty. Van Wyck Brooks re-sounded the call in 1918:

> [u]nhappily, the spiritual welfare of this country depends altogether on the fate of its creative minds. If they cannot grow and ripen, where are we going to get new ideals, the finer attitudes, that we must get if we are ever to emerge from our existing travesty of a civilization? The present is a void, and the American writer floats in that void because the

> past that survives in the common mind of the present is a past without living value… If we need another past so badly, is it inconceivable that we might discover one, that we might invent one? (339)

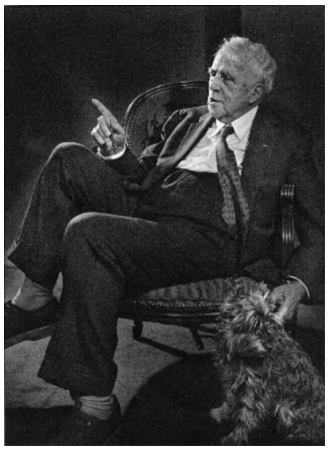
Part and parcel of enacting the frame of revolution and counter-revolution is building a new history, one that leads toward your own vision of poetry; repetition of this trope had the effect of making the trope itself into a genre. Once the genre became—after the poets were given sustenance by MFA programs and asked to conform, pedagogically, to what the rest of the English department was doing--an academic commonplace, the bedtime story that poet-teachers tell poet-students, then the genre became a parody of itself, a self-replicating mythos of archetypal characters intended to manufacture Significant Cultural Moments, or at least the iconography of such moments—Che Guevara t-shirts standing in for real revolution. Of course, as with Guevara, the "real" revolution was nothing of the sort, but that historization made it so.

That the schools and iconic figures of these historical narratives are characters in the drama we tell apprentice poets is clear, and the frame of revolution and counter-revolution makes the implicit *competition* between poets (for prestige) seem, in the retelling, much like actual poetic *contest*, but the battle is a only a simulation, a skirmish between archetypes, and the real struggle for dominance goes on behind the scenes, and takes place among a few strong actors: the owners of the various wrestling "leagues," on the one had, and the poets who judge University sponsored book "contests" on the other. In both cases, historical narratives are used to validate the power of these strong actors, placing them at the head of a lineage that legitimates their archetypal status.

The genealogy must be appropriately heroic, of course, and when I began thinking about how to illustrate the way the historiography of MFA programs makes archetypes, I realized that "heroic" meant, for poets following the Romantic model, embodying extremes of human behavior, of being both hero and villain, saint and monster. This meaning of the word "heroic" is blended with the idea of competitive struggle with other poets to make the genealogy more persuasive, since it validates the idea that T.S. Eliot, for example, is revered because his poetry won out over others by virtue of its superior aesthetic value. Such circular reasoning conditions how the poems are read by apprentice poets, and in thus how they create their own poetic personas, their own ideas about what constitutes good poetry and about what uses of poetic meaning.

Another institution that blends larger-than-life archetypal characters with simulated competitive struggle in the process of making genealogies is professional wrestling. It is striking how much the various narratives and plot twists detailed on websites like "Obsessed With Wrestling" (www.obsessedwithwrestling.com) and the WWE hall of fame (www.wwe.com) resemble those discussed in Samuel Johnson's *The Lives of the Poets* and David Perkins' *A History of Modern Poetry;* here, for example, are some icons of 20th century poetry, and their analogues from the world of professional wrestling:

Robert Frost



A.K.A.: The Yankee Farmer-Poet

Archetypes: Kindly, if Curmudgeonly, Skeptic; later, a "monster of egotism" (Vendler, XX)

Trained by: Shakespeare, Wordsworth, Dickinson, Emerson, Pound, Edward Thomas

Notable Feuds: Yates (WB Yeats), Wallace Stevens, "bellyachers"

Signature moves: Iambic pentameter, understated diction, snide remarks in interviews

Haystacks Calhoun

A.K.A: William Dee Calhoun

Archetypes: Good natured, Simple-Minded Hick; later, an Evil, Simple-Minded Hick

Trained by: Bobby Heenan, Tony Garea

Notable Feuds:Dick the Bruiser, Happy Humphrey, Big Bill Miller, Lumberjack Luke

Signature Moves: Sitting on opponents, the Powerslam, hitting opponents with a horseshoe

Career Highlights:

- Published first book, *A Boy's Will*, in 1913
- Held Pulitzer Prize title 4 times
- Composed and recited poem "The Gift Outright" at John F. Kennedy's inaugaration

Career Highlights

- WWWF Tag Team title w/Tony Garea, defeated Mr. Fuji & Toru Tanaka
- Brief appearance in 1962 film *Requiem For a Heavweight*, starring Anthony Quinn

T.S. Eliot

A.K.A.: Prufrock

Archetypes: Impeccable Technician of Emptiness; later, Pinched Anti-Semite

Trained by: Dante, Irving Babbit, George Santayana, Jules Laforgue, Ezra Pound

"Classy" Freddy Blassie

A.K.A.: The Vampire, El Rubio, the Hollywood Fashion Plate

Archetypes: Vicious Heel; later, All-American Good Guy; later, as a manager, Foppish, Loud-Moutherd Heel; still later, named "Legend of the Industry"

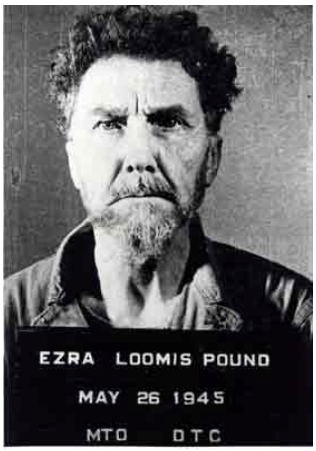
Notable Feuds: Bertrand Russell, Vivien Eliot, Modern Life

Signature moves: Pastiche, the Sanskrit Slam, objective correlative

Career Highlights:

- Published first book, *Prufrock and Other Observations*, in 1917
- "The Waste Land"
- Founded journal *Criterion*
- Nobel and Pulitzer prizes
- Director of Faber and Faber publishers, 1925-1965
- *Cats*

Ezra Pound



Trained by: Billy Hanson

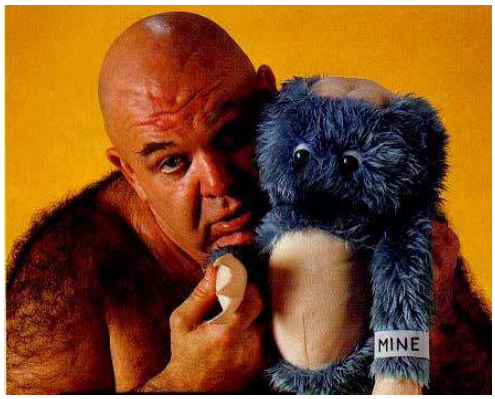
Notable Feuds: Haystack Calhoun, Killer Kowalski, Gorgeous George

Signature moves: Stomach Claw, Southern Neckbreaker

Career Highlights:

- Held countless titles as a wrestler
- Started careers of Hulk Hogan, Jesse "The Body" Ventura, George "The Animal" Steele, and many others
- Credited with popularizing the phrase "pencil-necked geek"

George "The Animal" Steele



A.K.A.: The Student (was previously

A.K.A.: Ol' Ez

Archetypes: Wild-Man of Modernism; later, Disheveled Fascist Lunatic

Trained by: Troubadours of Provence, Dante, Rabelais, Villon, Browning, the voices in his head

Notable Feuds: Abstract language, bankers, Jews, Roosevelt and Churchill

Signature moves: The Manifesto, the Big Idea, spelling "your" as "yr."

Career Highlights:

- First book, *A Lume Spento*, published in 1908
- Founded both Imagism and Vorticism
- Won first Bollingen Prize
- Propagandist for Mussolini during WW II
- Was released from St. Elizabeth's

a H.S. teacher)

Archetypes: Brutal, Scary Wild-Man; later, Goofy, Likeable Wild-Man

Trained by: His students, during his time as a teacher; Classie Freddy Blassie.

Notable Feuds: Hulk Hogan, Roddy Piper, Andre the Giant, Gorilla Monsoon

Signature moves: Arm bite, eating the turnbuckle

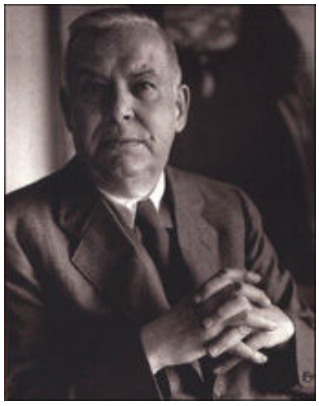
Career Highlights:

- Won Detroit League Tag Team title with Frankie Lane.
- Dyed tongue green and carried puppet "Mine" (pictured above) into the ring as a mascot
- Had lead in role in Tim Burton's movie *Ed Wood*
- In retirement, became a motivational speaker lecturing on

asylum in 1958

Christianity, dyslexia, and Chrone's disease

Wallace Stevens



A.K.A.: Peter Parasol

Archetypes: Romantic Fop; Grey-Suited Insurance Executive

Trained by: Percy Shelley, Paul Verlaine, Florida, his navel

Notable Feuds: Gwendolyn Brooks, Ernest Hemingway, the crudeness of American Culture

Signature moves: Studied Incoherence, Color Symbolism, the Groaning Thesaurus

Gorgeous George

A.K.A.: The Human Orchid

Archetypes: The Effeminate Heel; later, the Godfather of All Heels

Trained by: The Nebraska Public Education System, Lord Patrick Lansdowne

Notable Feuds: Don Eagle, Lou Thesz, Bruno Sammartino, macho men everywhere

Signature moves: The Big Entrance, the Perfume Spritz, Cheating

Career Highlights:

- First book, *Harmonium*, published in 1923
- Vice President of Hartford Accident and Indemnity Company
- Won the Bollingen Prize in 1949
- Won the Pulitzer prize in 1955
- Converted to Catholicism on his deathbed by Fr. Arthur Hanley, 1955

Career Highlights:

- Won AWA title from Don Eagle, 1950
- Held titles in 5 other leagues
- Credited with changing the narrative structure of televised wrestling
- Flamboyant style had acknowledged influence on James Brown and Muhammed Ali
- Retired in 1953 to raise turkeys

I have cobbled together this piece of satire, however silly it may be, as an example of an alternate way to construct rhetorical knowledge, one that is "creative" within an academic frame in terms of its idiosyncratic form and use of extended analogy. There are many other, better ways to make this point, I am sure, but as I am deeply concerned that the fields of Creative Writing *and* Rhetoric and Composition have, in the pursuit of professionalization, abandoned the Isocratean model of rhetor as shaper of public attitudes via performance of stylistically captivating language in favor of increasingly self-oriented, stylistically fixed scholarly "dialogue." The rhetors distrust any style that smacks of literature, while the creative writers distrust literature that smacks of civic intent, and as I will address this problem more thoroughly in chapter 6, I plan to use the

remainder of this chapter to explore some alternatives to the academic model of poetic suasion, poetic competition, and poetic identity.

Poetic Contest Persists

A further tilting toward written, as opposed to spoken, performance has compounded the effects of a narrowly prescribed historization and professionalization on poetic conventions in general and poetic contest in particular. With the advent of radio, cinema, television, and the popular music industry, public readings of poetry—of any kind of literature—continued to wane in both number and cultural significance. Very famous poets could still attract large crowds; T.S. Eliot, W.H. Auden, Dylan Thomas, and Robert Lowell would routinely read their work before fairly sizable audiences. These events were inevitably strict recitations of already published written works, however; Auden was famous, for example, for reading a strictly prescribed number of works and then remaining absolutely silent between each poem for a length of three minutes, which he timed with a stop watch. Improvisation and contestation were simply not part of such readings, nor are they part of most poetry readings today. Revivals of poetic performance that do encourage improvisation and contestation have occurred, by and large, outside of an increasingly ossified academic mainstream and as such have typically been conceptualized as opposing this mainstream, thereby reifying the Romantic revolution/counter-revolution narrative. More recently, revivals of public poetic performance—from "performance poetry" to freestyle hip-hop battles to poetry slams—have managed, thus far, to evade this kind

of historization and avoid the fate of the Dadaists and Beats, to cite two of the most well-known "movements" that have been absorbed by the academic narrative.

This process of historical absorption is, as with all history, predicated on spatial image schemas. According to Jerome Feldman,

> a universal set of image schemas do seem to support spatial relations in all languages. Some of these schemas are directly related to our sensing of the physical world, for example, up/down, which is based on gravity. The English word *above* is based on this schema. Many image schemas are expressed in terms of a reference object (*landmark*) and a usually smaller object (*trajector*) that is moving or located with respect to the landmark. Other related schemas include physical contact and support. The most basic meaning of the English word *on* involves all three of these schemas—the pen (trajector) is above the table (landmark), it is in contact with it, and is supported by it (137).

The building of genealogies involves placing the poet or school of poetry (the trajector) in a path established by other poets and schools of poetry (landmarks), and the points of contact are the "influences" found in the work of the individual poet or school. Placing a school of poetry in opposition to the genealogical path is a way to put it in contact with that path, and as one moves further away from a point of oppositional contact, it appears less like a vigorous critique arising from local circumstances and more like the another instance of the natural, inevitable order of history. Practitioners of the artistic movement known as Dadaism, for example, proclaimed their products "anti-art," and their oppositional stance was taken seriously; Hans Richter describes

quotes the editorial response of *American Art News*, for example, which called Dada "[t]he sickest, most paralyzing and most destructive thing that has ever originated from the brain of man" (380). Dada poets recited nonsense verse, fired guns during readings, invaded other poets readings and disrupted them, and generally made a nuisance of themselves; Tristan Tzara's "TO MAKE A DADAIST POEM" instructs poets to:

> Take a newspaper.
>
> Take some scissors.
>
> Choose from this paper an article of the length you want to make your poem.
>
> Cut out the article.
>
> Next carefully cut out each of the words that makes up this article and put them all in a bag.
>
> Shake Gently.
>
> Next take out each cutting one after the other.
>
> Copy conscientiously in the order in which they left the bag.
>
> The poem will resemble you.
>
> And there you are—an infinitely original author of charming sensibility, even though unappreciated by the vulgar herd. (qtd. in Forcer, 88)

Contemporary poetic history characterizes Dada as a father-figure (forgive the pun), the patriarch of a specific lineage that has intermarried with mainstream poetics to produce Futurism, Modernism, Surrealism, (both its pre-WWII and post-1960's variants), Beat poetry, Objectivism,

Deep Image poetry, Post-Structuralism and, most recently, Language poetry. Each of these movements has offered itself as a challenge to the prevailing poetic style, and each has been absorbed by the dominant historical narrative to the point at which the challenge to the prevailing style represented by each school is seen as determined by the narrative. Language poetry, which emerged in the U.S. during the early 1970's, may well be the first "revolution" in poetics to emerge wholly from this historical narrative, offering nonsense verse very similar to what the Dadaists produced but larded with utterly humorless academic literary theory:

> So-called Language Writing distinguishes itself:
>
> First,
>
> by challenging the transitive ideal of communicating, of the direct immediate broadcast,
>
> of the Truth with a capital T (you pompous fool) —
>
> by challenging the usual generic architecture of signification,
>
> of the unrequited or unrequitable sign.
>
> Second,
>
> by foregrounding in a pretty drastic way the materiality (and social materiality) of the
>
> reading surface, down to its tiniest markers.
>
> (Even punctuation. Remember: Russia, the 1905 revolution –
>
> the first soviet was formed in St Petersburg in order to coordinate a print-workers strike
>
> called to demand payment for typesetting punctuation marks and not just 'letters')
>
> (Andrews, "The Poetics OF L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E").

And here is a section from a poem by Andrews:

Creationist ruby slippers

Pajama tequila zombie flambe

Hi-tech fingerpointing -- nice little casualties

Schmuck thrall pack the kook

Flirt with persecution, any schmaltz will do

Nosecone crapshoot -- whatever isn't pleasant

Nervy as in wallet

Sapiens-alias disconfidence

A rental holocaust

Muzzle retro chiquita helps

Bilingual, bilabial

Boning-upsmanship

Welcome to torpedo world

Papa-ooo-maumau

(“Mistaken Identity”)

Language poetry is as much an experiment in modern marketing techniques as it is an experiment in poetics, so the fact that a group called the “New Formalists”—dedicated to a return to poetry written in “traditional” meters and forms--would spawn themselves soon after

the Language poets began to gain prominence is not surprising, nor is the fact that the leading lights of each movement are securely ensconced in both the academy (Upenn, Berkeley, U Buffalo) and the U.S. Government (Dana Gioia, marketing whiz behind the New Formalists, is currently the head of the National Endowment of the Arts). As with professional wrestling, the contest between contemporary schools of (academically sanctioned) poetry is theater, and the audience knows all the archetypes by heart.

And yet, there is a subculture of backyard wrestlers, fans who put on fights in their garages and backyards using the techniques and moves of professional wrestling. When the movement began, the participants did not even bother to fake the violence, but after a participant was killed in 2000 (cbsnews.com), many of the fan groups began to organize themselves, establish safety rules and guidelines and most importantly, learn how to choreograph wrestling moves rather than actually trying to do harm to their opponents[26], but they still offer a far more gruesome theatrical experience than the slickly marketed pro wrestling that represents the dominant mainstream of the "sport." The backyard wrestlers of contemporary poetry are performance poets, the hip-hop battlers, and the slam poets.

Performance Poetry

"Performance poetry" refers to poetry composed for public performance, rather than for private reading, and to the "school" of poets who began performing this kind of work in the U.S. during the 1980's. This approach to poetic meaning creation flourished in several cites simultaneously, each with a slightly different set of conventions; the Babarians, for example, performed in Café

[26] For an example of an organized backyarder's league, see http://worldofwrestling.us/xbw/.

Babar in San Francisco and integrated street- theatre conventions like flame-eating and juggling with their performances, while performance poets in New York City were known as more "classically" avant-garde, playing with the conventions of poetic genealogy by mixing studious references with pop culture and improvisational techniques derived from jazz.

Because performance poetry emerged in various geographies, it never really coalesced into it a recognizable "movement," and so was never absorbed by the academic poetic mainstream. Another factor that prevented this absorption is the absence of funding for performance poetry; the National Endowment for the Arts has traditionally categorized performance art as purview of the visual arts judging panels, but in the 1980's it chose to place performance poetry within the category of literature. Since many performance poets did "publish" in the traditional manner, their classification as makers of literature made them ineligible for the NEA fellowship funding or recognition. Their audio cassettes were not considered acceptable sample material for literature grant consideration, and their performance poems translated into text on paper could not compete with poetry written for print publication. Their influence on other poets, however, has been significant, helping reveal an audience for publicly performed poetry and inspiring efforts such as Russell Simmons' wildly successful *Def Poetry Jam.*

Hip-Hop Battles

The aforementioned *Def Poetry Jam* began as a showcase for African-American and Latino/a poets working in as spoken word poets, most of whom cut their teeth in the Nuyorican café scene of the late 80's and early 90's. The series was started by hip-hop entrepreneur Russell Simmons

and has featured many rap artists as hosts and performers, but has more in common, in terms of style, contestation, and suasive convention, with the performance poets of the 1980's than with rap performers. The most obvious difference between rap and spoken word poetry is that most, though certainly not all, rap performances, are accompanied by music. A more significant distinction, at least for my purposes, is the presence of explicit contest between rap artists, whereas spoken word artists, by and large, produce works that participate in implicit competition. Rap artists build their genealogies just as diligently as their academic counterparts, and a canonical part of this genealogy are the urban traditions of street corner rhyming and playing the dozens.

Engaging in poetic contest by swapping insults and bragging about one's superior ability is quite common, from the "capping" game mentioned in chapter one of this work to the "flytings" of Norse and Scottish poetry. For author Ward Parks,

> far from a mere oddity of antiquated literary forms, heroic flyting is one of the most universal of all speech genres. An extraordinary range of human conflicts are preceded by rhetorical volleys of essentially this kind; even animal combat frequently arises out of a semiotic exchange whose root significations seem to fall into a flyting pattern (184-185).

In hip-hop culture, these contests are commonly enacted as "freestyle battles," performed both with or without musical accompaniment, involving two or more parties who improvise raps until one or the other party is declared the winner, usually determined by audience response. Participants in freestyle battles are typically newcomers to the culture, unknown rappers looking

to make a name for themselves, as illustrated by the battle scene in the movie *8mile*. Contestation between rappers on recordings often takes place between established rappers and less-known artists looking to secure more ethos, as was the case in the dispute between KRS-One and Marly Marl's Juice Crew in the late 1980's, which established KRS-One's reputation as he successfully "dissed" the Juice Crew with a series of recordings that not only insulted Marly Marl with more panache, but were more popular in dance clubs, and which subsequently sold many more copies. Before this beef began, KRS-One was an unknown, and Marly Marl was the established rapper; today, KRS-One is a canonical figure in rap history, and Marly Marl is best known as the rapper KRS-One defeated (*Beef*).

Beefs are not only a means to build one's ethos by taking down a more successful rival, they are also a well-worn marketing strategy for the industry as a whole, but with the advent of "gangster rap" I the early 1990's, the artists and shapers of hip-hop culture lost control of the rules of contestation. The dispute between Tupac Shakur and Biggie Smalls during the 1990's, for example, was pitched in magazines like *Vibe* and *Yo!* as a metonymy of the "East Coast vs. West Coast" rivalry, and ended with both men shot to death; more recently, disputes between 50-Cent and the G-Unit have led to gunfire and stabbings, although no deaths as yet. The shift from simulated, linguistic violence to real violence occurred as the linguistic landscape of rap was changing, from KRS-One's insult of Marly Marl's "whack Puma sneakers" ("The Bridge is Over") to Tupac Shakur rapping "Grab your glocks when you see 2pac / Call the cops when you see 2pac, Uhh / Who shot me, / But, your punks didn't finish" ("Hit'em Up") in response to Biggie Smalls, months after he was shot several times. This lyrical shift mirrored shifts in the physical space of U.S. inner cities, where "welfare reform," the spread of crack cocaine, the

loosening of guns laws, and a failed "war on drugs" that has seen incarceration rates for black males rise 27% from 1990 to 2000 (Harrison and Beck); the linguistic space available to rappers became cluttered with guns, drugs, murder, and the sort of machismo that so often develops in cultures struggling with restricted access to political and economic power, one where authenticity is the most important currency, and which must be acquired through demonstrations of violence.

Despite the real violence suffusing the lyrical battles of the hip-hop community, it would be wrong to suggest that even those beefs which end in violence are not predicated on play; rather, it is play that blends the rules of poetic contest and the rules of macho street culture. As Russell Simmons put it in *Beef,* "[t]he problem is everyone has to have a crew, and everyone's crew is folks you grew up with, and all these guys just out of prison started joining these crews and they didn't rap, they didn't DJ, they had nothing to contribute but being thugs" (*Beef*). The competition, at this point, is between rappers who adhere to the thug aesthetic and those who perform "conscious" rap, like Kanye West or Common, and as with the competition between the Romantic poets and their Augustan predecessors, it is a struggle over the rules of the game: what counts as success, what styles dominate, and what the public space available for contestation looks like. It is not, however, a struggle within the "tradition," the academic narrative history of poetics, to change the rules of that game, as is the case with Language poetry, Beat poetry, and the rest of the "movements" absorbed by the narrative. Not yet, anyway.

Poetry Slams

Slam poetry began as Chicago's variant of the performance poetry scene. In 1986, poet Marc Smith started a reading series at the Green Mill jazz club that featured an open mic period, guest performers, and then a competition between poets who recited their work from memory. According to the *Complete Idiot's Guide to Slam Poetry*,

> [slam] poets must follow a series of rules: the poems must be of each poet's own construction, the poet may not use props, costumes, or musical instruments, and if the poet goes over the time limit (three minutes plus a 10-second grace period), points are deducted from his or her score. Judges, who are encouraged to factor both content and performance into their evaluations, judge each poet on a 0.0 to 10.0 scale. The high score and low score are dropped, and the middle three scores become the score for that particular poet. To insure that the entire audience is involved, the host encourages the audience to respond to the poet in any way they see fit, be it impassioned cheering or lusty booing. The judges, in turn, are encouraged to remain consistent with themselves and not let the audience influence them (11).

The judges—there are typically 5 of them--are selected at random from the crowd before the contest begins, and a tournament structure is followed: in each "round," a few poets make it to the next round until a winner emerges from the finalist round. Poetry Slam, International is the non-profit organization that sanctions these competitions, and while anyone is free to hold a

slam, competitors cannot go on to national competitions unless their venue is sanctioned by PSI. Their are national competitions for individual poets and for teams, and the prizes generally include a trophy and cash.

The conventions for the creation of poetic meaning in slam poetry are fairly prescribed. Each poet has a set time limit, normally three minutes, so speed of delivery is important, as is intelligibility. Anaphora and epistrophe (the repetition of words or phrases at the beginning and end of a line, respectively), internal rhyming, and especially climax—often 2 or three times in a given poem—are the most common rhetorical figures used, which makes sense given that each of these figures communicates meaning verbally through repetition and amplification of voice. Slam poets also use a prescribed gestural vocabulary, one that draws heavily on hip-hop and show tunes and which features exaggerated, sweeping arm movements, head bobbing, open handed "pointing" that simulates a dj scratching a record album, and other kinds of simulated activity that has become part of our common gestural vocabulary: performing "air guitar" or other air instruments, writing a letter, and so forth. In team competitions, the gestures are usually synchronized, as are the words of the poems.

The influence of the hip-hop style, which involves "flowing" from topic to topic quickly and suddenly--on slam poetry is strong, but most performers retain either a narrative organizational structure or one of the figures of repetition mentioned earlier. Critique of the violence and misogyny of contemporary rap music is a frequent topic of performers, as is critique of the more restrictive aspects of modern life in general: ranting about the insidious effects of advertising, consumer culture, and global corporations are very common and tend to elicit a good response from the audience. While this critique is no doubt earnest and is

occasionally insightful, it does seem to clash with the corporate marketing model that Poetry Slam International follows, and in fact with the very narrowly prescribed conventions for the communication of poetic meaning that the poets themselves adhere to. Performing poems that will win is the goal of the poets, of course, and so possessing rhetorical awareness of the judge's (and audience's) preferences is crucial to success in slams, but poetic contestation that is focused more on winning at the expense of challenging and poetic convention seems likely to ossify—as seems to be the case with the slam poetry phenomenon: it has become professionalized, and as a result, it has become highly repetitive[27]. Fortunately, there seems to be enough interest and enough new practitioners taking up slam poetry that many of its conventions may slowly be broadening—or, the influx of potential fame and even money might narrow them even further. In 1996, Joseph Zitt, a poster to the epoetics listserv, noted that

> there's seeming to be less in-your-face assault of late and more personal material. As necessitated by the rules, the best of the performances are very focused, some toward audience assault, and some much quieter material. In fact, the older-style assault poetry is getting lower scores of late, and everyone seems to be getting tired of the endless array of Maggie Estep clones. This is leading to a wider range of styles (poetics.archives).

[27] Though it is certainly a bit early to proclaim slam poetry "the death of art," as critic Harold Bloom did in the *Paris Review* (Weiss, 23)

Nine years later, Ryan Fitzpatrick, a poet writing in Alberta, Canada, posted a blog entry about a very different slam experience:

> After the reading, I chatted with one of the gentlemen who was a judge for the slam. He said that my writing, while good, was too subtle, and if I was going to keep writing spoken word I'd have to play to the audience. My only response was that I didn't write "spoken word", I wrote *POETRY*. His comments bugged me a bit. Is the big difference between poetry and spoken word is not a question of accessibility or populism, but of audience appeal. Does spoken word view poetry not as a social fulcrum to enact change (something traditional oratory could be accused of) but as a product to fill a niche market? I'm not sure (processdouments.blogspot.com)

It seems obvious that the spoken word poets, the poets taught the academic narrative, and the hip-hop artists have much to teach one another, and could revitalize each other's poetics with sustained collaboration and experimentation. The world wide web is one tool for such collaboration; the non-profit group Citizens for Global Solutions, for example, has set up a "virtual slam contest" website (www.virtualpoetryslam.net) that allows people to upload video of themselves performing poems that are then judged by visitors to the site, and while much of the poetry indexed there follows the slam style all too closely, some performers are trying to stretch the conventions of the style.

In terms of blending, all three of the approaches to poetic meaning I have discussed suffer from a similar affliction: the "marketplace" frame that continues to dominate so much of public

discourse. Rappers reciting lists of the "bling" that they own are one obvious symptom of viewing natural systems in economic terms, as is the corporate branding model of Poetry Slam International. Academic poetry, too, suffers under this frame; the wildly corrupt system of book contests by which most "legitimate" poets earn their reputations has been exposed repeatedly, most recently by the authors of Foetry.com, who have tracked some of the most egregious offenders and the poetic "resources" they hand out to cronies not so valuable in terms of their use-value (they provide the credentials necessary to attain academic creative writing jobs). Even *Poetry* magazine, once a neo-revolutionary modernist broadside, has been turned—thanks to a 100 million dollar gift from its founding editor—into a marketing machine headed by an investment banker (and erstwhile poet), John Barr, who "leans heavily on his dual background when speaking to reporters, whose fawning stories always seem to run under half-clever headlines like 'A Passion for Poetry, and Profits,' or 'Invested in Poetic Currency,' or 'Dollars and Sense,' or 'Poetry and Investment Banking: It's All About Risk,'" in the words of author Steve Evans (*Baffler,* 17). Then again, Barr made his name as the head of Dynegy, a competitor of Enron's that followed the model of using questionable business practices in a deregulated market to cause stock shares to plummet 90% before going bankrupt, so perhaps he is not the worst choice to lead *Poetry* to world domination. In any case, the "marketplace" frame has the effect of distorting poetic conventions into strategies for winning market share, which is a version of the Isocratean model of the rhetor as shaper of cultural attitudes, but it is a unidirectional version, one that can only recognize revolutionary changes in attitude when they fit into its own historical narrative: that is, when it these changes change nothing. As a result, rhetoricians—and I mean this in the broadest possible sense, encompassing poets, advertising

executives, street corner prophets, and anyone else who tries to persuade others--who have put their faith in this frame will be unlikely to recognize when change in attitude significant enough to push the marketplace aside occurs, and a new model of conceptual organization begins to rewrite history once again. In fact, I doubt most of us will even notice.

Coda

From September 2004 through April 2005, I tried an experiment in poetic competition, publishing an on-line magazine called *Vs.*. Published monthly, *Vs.* had three sections: a section devoted to satirical, political, and otherwise critical poems; a section where poets I invited to participate submitted a poem that was written in answer to a question; and a section where poets could compete by insulting one another using a fixed number of lines for each "weight class": two lines was superheavyweight class, 8 lines was lightweight, and so forth. For both of the active contest sections, anyone who browsed the page could vote for a winner, and voters were restricted to one vote per day (from a given i.p. address) for each section. The winner of the poems written in response to that month's question got to pick the next question, and to invite anyone they wanted to participate in the next round.

I discovered several things over the course of this experiment: that running your own web server from your home computer was fairly cheap and easy, at least until your computer dies; that many contemporary poets find contest distasteful (one person emailed a response to my invitation to participate that claimed I was trying to "murder language," whatever that means); and perhaps most glaringly, that poets who write (as distinct from performing) poetry from

within the received historical narrative that dominates creative writing instruction often have a profoundly narrow sense of audience, an audience that includes other poets, their teachers, and "posterity." I hope that I have explored enough of the reasons for this state of affairs in the paragraphs above, and the sample data I managed to acquire during my experiment was certainly limited, but the results were nonetheless troubling. Certainly some interesting poems were written in response to various questions, but none of the poets seemed able to actually answer the question, choosing instead to use the questions as thematic prompts to launch into explorations of their own stylistic personas. For example, here is the poem that won the contest for responding to the question "What aspect of some other culture do you wish was part of yours,"

None

I miss the chicken livers that my Truly Jewish secretary served up
every second Sunday in the spring of 82, but not as much as Ali
who could nail a radix as I fought to place my signature within
the closing couplet. Being mainly Norwegian hasn't compensated
with a talent and desire for living (or relating) epic tales of rapine
and adventure, such as, say, Gudding's classic How I Caught My Cold
or even the bewildered Banderas as 13th Warrior. Of Asian blood
I haven't a drop (so says my mother, anyway), though I admit to lust
for methodical ambition and perfect cuticles. Since Jefferson's
indiscretions came to light, I've wondered if my somewhat

flattened nose implies a disposition to dance, and undeserved
earthiness. Probably not in the cards, awash as I am in my whiteness
of liberal cause and metrosex, the holes in my home's geography
waiting for another Ikean innovation, as if I never wandered
through MOMA or saw Fight Club. I'm frustrated
by the spread of Pho, the way Toni got the Nobel, I mean the whole
pale curtain dropping over rap, like Ella doing duets with Sinatra
and the way that espresso becomes expresso. My culture is caught
in a web of empathy, which is good, I suppose, but also
the flip-side of Resistance is Futile, spoken to us all
through metal helmets. When I was twenty-one, I read about
the Kalahari Bushmen, and how they didn't know
a thing. Digging tubers out of dry, dark sand and slaughtering
the occasional gemsbok in place to keep the blood within its skin.
I was pleased that they were there and I was half a world away
in Anthro 101, and not in Spago's eating Tubers a la Puck.
I need my wan, dumb canvass of a culture, to see
the strangeness. My foil. My backdrop for startlement.

(*Bahr*)

Not a terrible poem, and it is very generally about other cultures, but it also is quite clearly the work of an author who believes he is speaking to a very small room full of other poets, and that

his goal in producing this poem is not to shape their attitudes about cultural awareness, but to persuade them that his poetics are valuable, that his style is interesting—which is fine if you want to stay in the small room, surrounded by friends, ignoring the world outside.

One common suggestion offered to the teachers and administrators of creative writing in response to the perpetually dwindling audience for literature is that they need to "theorize" better, as though having a comprehensive set of principles about the writer's "profession" would somehow make them better able to widen their audience, and since it worked so well for literary theory, many conscientious writers have taken this advice to heart:

> [f]or poets whose relation to tradition is what modernity has rendered problematic, making one's writing answerable to and for some past may be precisely what's needed for that writing to count. This task can seem overwhelming, for it demands nothing less than the full acknowledgment of the nightmare history threatens to become. To the extent that Creative Writing protects present poets from this nightmare, it obscures obstacles to practice and lulls poetry into continued sleeping (Berry, 73).

This author has learned his literary theory well, since the passage ultimately makes very little sense, while evoking desperation and important intellectual struggle. I believe what he means to say is that history is something a poet should learn, and that the need to learn such history is both practical, the way Michael Oakeshott might phrase it, and definitional, as Foucault might asserts—that learning history is a way to "capture the exact essence of things" (142). How this is supposed to help poets enlarge their audience, or encourage them to embrace a more rhetorical

approach to their art, is difficult to see. What does seem clear is that the field of Rhetoric and Composition is suffering from a very similar set of problems: a limited sense of audience, of who the written work of scholars in the field should address; the attendant homogenizing pressure of academic professionalization; and a mistaken belief that enough history, enough theorizing, will eventually prove us right.

Chapter 6: The Narrow Road to Nowhere, or, My Journey Across A Kitchen Table Full of Rhetoric and Composition

Well, different strokes for different folks. Considering both the brevity of life and its richness, I normally choose not to labor through obscure texts that could be more accessible without losing their intellectual complexity. If your purpose is to inform, then you should do everything possible to make your text more accessible. However, in the current literary climate, accessibility is devalued, regardless of purpose. And such will be the case with composition.

--W. Ross Winterowd, "Home Base"

If I am correct, and contemporary poetry would be well served by engaging in more explicit contestation, if MFA programs would benefit from taking a more rhetorical approach to teaching their students about writing poetry—focusing on persuasion and on the Isocratean function of shaping attitudes--then perhaps I am also correct that Rhetoric and Composition programs would benefit from an increased attention to poetics, to the way poetic meaning can be created from many kinds of discourse, and to widening the focus of scholarship to include a much wider range of approaches to knowledge creation. I cannot quite see how the production of knowledge in Rhet/Comp might become more explicitly contestual, but certainly the competitive conventions of the field—the rules about what approaches to knowledge creation are allowed--could use a bit of expanding, if only to help assert what once was the rule: the study of Rhetoric is the study of

all forms of persuasion. Limiting ourselves to the texts produced by the freshman composition industry does not seem like a recipe for success, recent gains in the job market notwithstanding.

To help explore these claims, I would like to begin the final chapter of this book with a story. Like many people, I was inspired to pursue a degree in Rhetoric and Composition through a love for teaching and for my students, and also by the freedom of inquiry promised by the title "Rhetoric and Composition," which suggests that pretty much anything from bird calls (Kennedy) to Tibetan Buddhist legal debate (Perdue) was open to the enterprising scholar. In one sense, a personal sense, this freedom of inquiry does exist, but in terms of disciplinarity and career aspirations, in terms of what "counts" as scholarship in the Rhet/Comp community, it does not—but I shall return to this point later. The story I wanted to tell is about very specific moment of inspiration, which came while reading a passage from Mike Rose's book *Lives on the Boundary*. I am certainly not alone in drawing inspiration from Mr. Rose's book, and there are countless passages where I had the experience of constructing poetic meaning from the words he offered, but the following paragraph is one that changed my thinking a great deal, that shifted the frame in which I was developing an understanding of the relationship between poetry and rhetoric. A little background first: Rose is recounting the time he spent teaching a class on poetry via the "Learning Line," a precursor to online classes that involved teleconferencing and trunk lines. At his request, his students have begun sending him poems they enjoy reading, or that they had written themselves:

> These [poems] threw me. They were sentimental as could be, and the rhymes were strained, and the diction archaic. They were the kinds of poems all my schooling had trained me to dismiss. But the intentions and feelings behind the poems were present now, couldn't be discounted, a clashing of aesthetics and human need. I wasn't quite sure what to do. I rehearsed several critical responses to the blank console. They didn't feel right—at all. The solution came indirectly. My mother called me one night to ask if a card she bought for her doctor was okay. She read me the Hallmark rhyme, and I was about to tell her what I thought when it hit me. Addie and Ernest and the rest weren't sending the poems on for criticism; they just wanted to pass on a gift or show off a little—they wanted to participate in some fuller way. I didn't need to be the critic. *There are times when its simply better to let all that schooling slide* [emphasis added]. So I simply Xeroxed their poems and sent them to everyone along with my own selections. What followed was a nice surprise. The participants ended up liking both, but for different reasons: they liked the rhymes in the poems they had selected and liked the feeling of the ones I picked. And that opened the door for us to not only share the associations and memories the poems evoked, but to talk a little about technique as well (163).

"There are times when its simply better to let all that schooling slide." Or, all that schooling is misdirected… anyone who has taught a creative writing workshop has had a similar experience, and if they believe the story they have been taught about poetic value, then they will respond arhetorically, that is, they will try teach the students to conform to the notion of aesthetic value

they themselves have learned as students rather than exploring the sort of values the students bring to the classroom.

What Rose ended up doing was responding rhetorically, grasping the means of persuasion that would allow him to blend the knowledge he felt was important—and which his students had paid for—with the knowledge the students brought to the class. In essence, he used casuistic reasoning, using a paradigmatic case (his mother and the greeting card) to reach an ethical conclusion, one that would not apply if, for example, the class was composed of graduate-level Creative Writing students. The case did not exist, as with medieval casuistry or contemporary jurisprudence, as one of a stock of cases or precedents that one would refer to when reasoning a case, but the case did exist in Rose's experience, and so it emerged from the local concerns of the situation to become paradigmatic, both for Rose and for me. I started reading about casuistry a bit later, but immediately recognized the passage above as an example of this kind of thinking, an example that was necessitated by the failure of Rose's "theory," that is, his academic training. For Stephen Toulmin, casuistic reasoning *is* rhetorical reasoning:

> [t]hose who take a *rhetorical* view of moral reasoning see general rules and principles as bearing on limited classes of problems and cases alone. They do not assume that moral reasoning relies for its force on single chains of unbreakable deductions which link present cases back to some common starting point. Rather (they believe), this strength comes from accumulating many parallel, complementary considerations, which have to do with the current circumstances of the human individuals and communities involved

> and lend strength to our conclusions, not like links to a chain but like the strands to a rope or roots of a tree (*The Abuse of Casuistry*, 294).

The fact that Rose's response to his problem was creative, and came about not because of a theory or theories but despite them, further strengthened my conviction that Rhet/Comp was field of inquiry that would allow me to indulge in a wide variety of methods of inquiry, into a wide variety of subjects, and to explore the relationship between though, language, and experience in a manner that relied as much on intuition as on scholarly agenda. What I didn't know was that Rhet/Comp had reached a point where the fusion of professionalization and recycled literary theory had made such inquiry quite difficult, if not impossible, to base a scholarly career on, and that this fusion had produced, on the one hand, a gap between theory and practice, between teaching and scholarship, and on the other, a conformity of prose style that is self-limiting to the point of being arhetorical[28]—and that the two hands were busily washing each other.

Walking is Good For Digestion

I am not trying to be unkind to Rhet/Comp scholars, who I find to be, in my limited experience, very egalitarian and open-minded, and I have read a great deal of interesting and useful scholarship in the course of my studies. Reading through a selection of issues of *College Composition and Communication* or *College English* from each historical "period" does, however give me the distinct impression that the means of persuasion available to rhet/comp scholars have become fewer and fewer, or at the very least isolated into small "sub-fields"; that

[28] Consider: what Rhet/Comp journal would, in the present day, accept an article by Kenneth Burke?

the professionalization via publication model has given rise to a kind of faddishness, where a given suasory vocabulary will dominate for a few months or years before fading away in the shadow of the next big thing[29]; and that the imagined gap between theory and practice has grown real to many people. If I were to use the standard, humanities-based approach to proving this claim, I would likely begin to cite, probably chronologically, examples from each of the periods and journals to which I refer, thereby building a genealogy for my idea and establishing my ethos. Persuasion is more than fulfilling the audience's expectations, however; it also means challenging that same audience to see things anew, but discussing *how* this challenge might be enacted is just another empty gesture at this point, demanding that others "see […] the existence of multiple viewpoints" (Royster and Williams, 565), as though witnesses for maintaining the existence of a single viewpoint were everywhere, staring savagely down from the cliff tops. Indeed, these demands for plurality are always accompanied by the unspoken assumption that they will be enacted within the conventions of the discipline, and so I will resist the urge to produce a genealogy of Rhet/Comp journals and will, instead, go for a walk.

I do mean "walk" metaphorically, of course, but I intend my metaphor to be organizational and stylistic in scope, and will try to show through my use of this metaphor, as I hope I have shown throughout this document, that style of presentation, organization, arrangement, and even memory and delivery, are cooperative aspects of meaning creation, and that the restriction of any of these canons inhibits the exploration of our ways of knowing; essentially, I located the form my argument will take by using a kind of casuistic reasoning, considering the case that had presented itself before me—that is, the final chapter of my dissertation—and trying to figure out

[29] Today's flavor might be multimodality, or it might be something more retro—dialogism repackaged seems to be gaining cachet.

a different way of approaching this case, reasoning outward from the conditions of my case toward some analogous case, one that furthered my overall goal of "accumulating many parallel, complementary considerations" (Toulmin, 294). I also used conceptual blending as an invention strategy, fusing one genre (the academic essay) with another, analogous one: a non-fiction literary form called a *haibun*. The *haibun* is a Japanese genre of travelogue made famous by the haiku poet Matsuo Basho in works such as *The Narrow Road to the Great North* and *The Records of a Weather-Worn Skeleton*. In essence, Basho went on a series of journeys around Japan, visiting friends, historical sites, and natural wonders, punctuating his prose descriptions of the journey with haiku. My journey will be much smaller—from book to book, no further than the top of the table in front of me—but it is a journey nonetheless, and unlike Basho, I have absolutely no idea where it will end, or if it will.

Heading to Town

Having swept and closed my small home, crooked and musty as it was, I set off to look for places I had not been, words that have helped shape my attitude toward poetry, poetics, rhetoric, composition, and the life of a scholar. My home is an awkward construction, rooms added at a whim, sprawling out into my little yard, begging as inspector to come and ask for my building permit, if only to witness the comedy that would ensue. I do not know when I will return, or if I will, and so I leave a poem taped to the threshold:

Months, years; how many times

has the wisteria bloomed

while I studied?[30]

As I set off down the narrow road to town, I wondered what parts of my home I would bring with me on my visits. Would I try and prove, as Art Young has for many years, the particular utility of poetry writing across the curriculum? Or would my belief in the creative function of contest lead me to try and develop some kind of scheme for written (as distinct from spoken) rhetorical contest, a debate series for writers? All I can be sure of is that my journey of discovery will proceed both outward, toward the world, and inward, toward myself, and that this is no paradox.

On the first day, I arrived at a large, impressive building made of brick and marble, ringed at the top with an ornate cornice and fronted with marble steps. As I climbed the steps, I noticed that the impressive façade of the place had shifted my attention from the worn state of the steps, the shaggy, untended ivy that scaled the walls, and the occasional cracked window panes. Above the door was the inscription "Department of Historical Records," and I passed through the door into a small, quiet atrium lined with statues of Corax and Tisias, Aristotle, Isocrates, Cicero, and many others. The statues were a bit cramped, as there were far too many for such a small space, and many had not been dusted in quite a while. While looking at a bust of Hyperides, I heard a distant shout, and then, my attention refocused, what sounded like a rather raucous party. I followed the noise down a dimly lit hallway at the north side of the atrium until I found the door

[30] Most readers know the traditional haiku form of 5-7-5 syllables, but I have chosen to stick to a more flexible scheme, using 15-20 syllables, with no fixed line length. The traditional scheme has been stretched in a variety of ways during the history of Japanese poetry, and my use of this looser form (as well as the absence of the "season word" requirement) should not be seen as particularly idiosyncratic.

that had failed to muffle the hoots and hollers; slightly chipped letters on the frosted glass announced the entrance to "Burke's Parlor," and I stepped inside.

The noise subsided somewhat as I entered, but most of the people in the room continued talking, more quietly, and with an eye toward me. Some of the conversers were nearly transparent, and I quickly realized that they were ghosts, but as this seemed not to bother the more corporeal persons in the room, I did not startle. More peculiar than the ghosts was the fact that words being spoken were emerging from mouths as sound but also as a variety of physical objects: credit cards, small Greek pillars, oranges… their words seem to have become personified, and after dancing about in the air for a bit, they fell to the floor and dissolved. I remembered Kenneth Burke's description, from *The Philosophy of Literary Form*:

> Imagine that you enter a parlor. You come late. When you arrive, others have long preceded you, and they are engaged in a heated discussion, a discussion too heated for them to pause and tell you exactly what it is about. In fact, the discussion had already begun long before any of them got there, so that no one present is qualified to retrace for you all the steps that had gone before. You listen for a while, until you decide that you have caught the tenor of the argument; then you put in your oar. Someone answers; you answer him; another comes to your defense; another aligns himself against you, to either the embarrassment or gratification of your opponent, depending upon the quality of your ally's assistance. However, the discussion is interminable. The hour grows late, you must depart. And you do depart, with the discussion still vigorously in progress (110-111).

This particular metaphor has become a guiding model for scholarship in Rhetoric and Composition; indeed, one of the first things an aspiring researcher must prove is that she has been following the conversation, that she knows what everyone is discussing and how to join in seamlessly, without derailing the flow of words. To do so, the aspirant must learn not only what has been said and what is worth saying but, more importantly, how to say it: what key words and rhetorical figures help constitute the frame of current scholarship, what symbols help form the terministic screen of disciplinary identity. Unfortunately, the by personifying the "conversation" to this degree, by giving it the identity of a gatekeeper, the frame begins to define the conversation in uncomfortable ways. I am not the only one to feel this uneasiness, of course; in fact, criticizing the gatekeeping function of the conventions of the conversation has become one of the common voices within it. As one commenter noted in a 1991 issue of the *Rhetoric Review's* "Burkean Parlor,"

> I find it interesting that this article[31], written as a criticism of the "academic-discourse language game," which, it says, favors the "dominant class," and the traditional "sex/gender value system," itself displays many of the most objectionable features of academic discourse. Here again we find a prose that is ungainly, abstract, and tangled, that pretends to a detachment and disinterest […] I don't presume to know with any certainty why so much of the writing in rhetoric and composition has become so inaccessible to all but a few specialists. I don't believe it's simply that the ideas have become more complex, that the "conversation" has become increasingly sophisticated

[31] Kreamer, JAC 315

> such that long, winding, highly modified sentences filled with jargon and abstractions piled on top of each other are crucial for meaning to be made (T.S., 177).

What is so heart-wrenching about this article is that the author feels terrible about not being part of the conversation, he feels excluded by the terministic screen that one must absorb and work within to be heard. I'm sure that is not the intent of the majority of scholars in Rhet/comp; much attention is paid, in fact, to the way that power relations have helped silence the voices of women and minorities, but this attention is so frequently invoked from within the terministic screen in question that one wonders who exactly is the audience for these appeals, who it is that we are trying to convince.

I did not see Mr. Burke's ghost anywhere in the room, so I did not get a chance to thank him for inspiring me to ignore much of disciplinary convention and let my interests wander; for describing terministic screens, which resemble cognitive-linguistic frames in some very interesting ways; and for writing the following passage, despite holding quite dearly to a definition of poetry that I heartily disagree with, that of language that exists for itself:

> I would propose to view the relation between Rhetoric and Poetics thus: The two fields readily become more confused, because there is a large area they share in common. Also, though some works lend themselves more readily to treatment in terms of Rhetoric than in terms of Poetics, or vice versa, even a work of pure science can be shown to have some Rhetorical or Poetic ingredients (*Language as Symbolic Action,* 302)

The very muddiness of this passage, the hesitancy, led Burke to provide an illustration of his point—and indeed, the illustration is muddy too. Nonetheless, it inspired me to try and find a way out of the haze that he isolated, to rethink how poetic meaning was created, and try to illustrate myself the many ways that the categories "Rhetoric" and "Poetics" fail not only to oppose one another, but to exist as distinct categories at all.

I stepped back out into the hall and the noise from within grew louder. Puzzled, I opened the door again, and the noise lessened; once more I closed the door, and it grew louder. How strange, I thought, that the conversation seems to much more vigorous from the hallway. I wrote this poem and thumb tacked it next to the door of the parlor:

Light rain in spring—
I leave my home and greet
other wet fools walking.

Heading west again on the road, I came upon a beggar asleep in front of his begging cup. Around his neck was a sign: "Grammarian." I left him some coins and this poem:

Clouds move across the sky
and syntax across the tongue.
Are you a bird?

I continued on, past groves of pine interspersed with small houses and the occasional convenience store. Soon, I reached the corner of a brick wall, higher than my head and topped with decorative black metal spikes. Further along the wall was a gate, and beside it, a keypad with an intercom system. I typed in the numbers "1949[32]" into the keypad, which caused a buzzer to sound and the gate to swing open. Inside the gate stood rows of neat, modestly appointed houses fronted by well-kept yards (some of which had sprinklers spinning in their centers), and bright, uncracked sidewalks that bordered empty streets. The scene was very peaceful and seemed to stretch on forever, but there were also no people anywhere, which seemed strange to me. I walked up to a house at random, a smallish blue house with a light lemon trim, and rang the bell.

A woman answered, smiled, introduced herself as Lisa Ede, and led me inside to the living room. I accepted her offer of tea, and while she was in the kitchen, I looked on the mantle at the many small, stand-up picture frames arranged upon it, each holding a single word or short phrase: "problematic," "situated," "post-," "paradigm shift," "multiply constituted," and "materially grounded" One even held a small poem: "reflection / selection / deflection." I recognized it as being the work of Kenneth Burke, and I also realized that the way Dr. Ede discusses the passage in her book *Situating Composition: Composition Studies and the Politics of Location* does not jibe with my own interpretation. According to Ede, Burke means that

> [a]ny given method or 'terminology is a *reflection* of reality, by its nature as a terminology it must be a *selection* of reality; and to this extent it must function as a

[32] Not to be too cryptic, but that is the year of the formation of the Conference on College Composition and Communication

> *deflection* of reality.' In *Situating Composition*, I attempt to provide multiple perspectives on—and reflections about—composition's current scholarly and pedagogical enterprise […] [i]n chapter 5, for instance, I consider some of the differences between the practice of theory and the practice of teaching and argue that scholars would do well to attend more carefully than we currently do to these differences—especially when represent the work of both teachers and students (6)

It is not clear at all that Burke meant for terministic screens to equate with methods, as Ede uses the phrase; it seems that a given method may well utilize a standard terminology, such that "[…] any nomenclature necessarily directs the attention into some channels rather than others" (Burke, 45), but different methods can be used with different terminologies, and vice versa. In any case, the pithy, internal triple rhyme of this passage makes it seem more clearly stated than it really is (do vocabularies really reflect the reality of their use?), and have also made it a canonical passage in Rhet/Comp, exactly because it is so pliable, because it can be used to support, for example, the idea that one should strive to provide "multiple perspectives."

Terministic screens resemble, as I mentioned earlier, the cognitive linguistic concept of "frames," conceptual formations stored in long-term memory that help shape how we process information. Mentioning "Kenneth Burke" invokes a particular frame, be it the absence of recognition or the "father-figure," and the phrase "terministic screen" also invokes certain frames. The phrase is also part of Rhet/Comp's terministic screen, as is the conceit that one individual can provide "multiple perspectives"—if indeed Ede is following Burke's prescription, then her perspective only ever be singular, since her production of text, no matter if she is

recording the words of other people, is always a selection of reality. "Exploring the issue from many angles" might be a better way to phrase it, but in terms of triggering the correct frames, of using the right terministic screen, then "providing multiple perspectives" is going to be more effective for the audience Ede wants to reach.

Predictably enough—and I should note that predictability in this kind of prose is a virtue—Ede's "multiple perspectives" are the works of other Rhet/Comp scholars, which she surfs through, giving kudos to some and critiquing others, all the while maintaining that "'theory' is an overdetermined term whose precise meaning cannot be legislated" (147). Despite the terministic screen that insists on indeterminacy (no pun intended) of this kind, what Ede ultimately provides is a New Critical close reading of a slew of texts, probing each for coherence and unity (without, of course, ever using theses terms) while relying on ghost of Cartesian duality, this time conjured as the split between theory (mind) and practice (body). She ends the chapter, also predictably, not with more careful attention to the "differences" she has just explored, but with more questions: "Why have scholars in composition, many of whom are grounded in the rhetorical tradition, not done a better job of asking this question [*When, where, and under what conditions has this statement been true?*]? How can we rethink our scholarly practices so that in the future we are more likely to do so?" (156). To answer her, I wrote these poems and left them on her coffee table, beneath a box of tissues:

The horse stares at the well.

The well stares at the horse.

An old koan, but useful.

Ideas form, the rose
gives off scent, but bees
do not flock to my head.

Your home is lovely,
thank you for the tea.
I could not live here.

I left quietly, and began walking down the center of the street, back toward the gate. I heard a low, rumbling noise, and moved to let a moving truck by. It stopped a few houses in front of me and some movers descended and began loading boxes into the back, watched by a tall, thin man. I introduced myself and asked why he was moving. He told me that he had bought a house on the far side of this community, one that had more room, a flowing brook, and that sat on a small hill, and that "[t]o pursue attunement, to renew emotional coherences, is not simply to challenge the existing order, but to help fashion an alternative" (Spellmeyer, 142). "Ah," I thought, "but you are still inside the same walls!" I did not say so, however, because he seemed a bit on edge and I did not want to upset him.

Kurt Spellmeyer's *The Arts of Living: Reinventing the Humanities for the Twenty-First Century* is a jarring experience. His critique of professionalization is interesting, and the first-person narrative which chronicles his discovery, use, and eventual disillusionment with capital-t "theory" is graceful and compelling. When he asks

> [w]hether the venue is an essay by Judith Butler or an advertisement for Guess jeans, isn't the logic unnervingly similar? Each encounter with the text underscores the reader's lack, the learner's insufficiency—his mistaken belief in personal agency, her failure to be thin and tall enough. And this failure, this lack, initiates an ordeal of involuntary change that never leads us back to the still point in the turning world, but only, once again, to a sense of insufficiency. As the philosopher Susan Bordo maintains, social power in our time often operates by colonizing the self, first evacuating and then reconstructing it […] (140)

it is hard not shout "hell, yes!," at least until one realizes that he is, in effect, criticizing the way academics are critical, which puts a far greater onus on his proposed solution, since his critique must have a far greater truth value than, say, the work of Judith Butler. This solution is the most jarring aspect of his critique, since he proposes basing Humanities curricula on being sensitive to human emotion and, at a lack for an appropriate model on which to base such curricula, he turns to New Age religious movements, from critique to "interpretation, […] a faith in the possibility of elective affinities, noncoercive connections to the world and to other people, which are actually expression of love" (214). The ride from searing critique to Deepak Chopra is disappointing exactly because Spellmeyer's *critique* appears to be an act of love, or at least motivated by love, while his unconvincing "interpretations" of New Age mysticism seem acts of desperation, pleas from a man whose love is not reciprocated: "Does it seem credible that the millions of years of evolution that have brought forth humankind's marvelous intelligence have

now come to their full flower in our disenchanted age? Was it all for *this?*" (198). Looking back at the home be built with this book, I see why cannot stay there any longer[33], and I find myself thinking, without intending to, "I'm so sorry." I wish him well, and slip these poems into a packing box when he disappears into the house:

> The squirrel by the elm tree
> stands perfectly still:
> empty paws, early spring.
>
> It was good to sit with you,
> though you'd misplaced your brush
> and your hand was shaking.

Reaching the gate, I stood for a moment at the corner of Computers and Composition street and History of Rhet avenue. The people here were friendly and kind, and there seemed to be many houses unoccupied. I left a poem beside the gate and walked out to the road:

> I will visit again,
> but leaving friends
> always makes me shake,
> the first breeze of winter.

[33] Spellmeyer is, according to his web page at Rutgers, working on a new book called *World without End: Saving the Humanities in an Age of Specialization,* so apparently he is having another go at the same problem.

After a few miles, it began to grow dark, so I stopped at a hotel. A sign near the elevator said there was a poetry reading going on in the ballroom, so I put away my clothes and went down to listen. The room was dimly lit, with small lamps at each of the several tables that faced a small stage. A waiter in a red tuxedo jacket circled the room, taking drink orders. I smiled and ordered a beer when he asked me what I'd have, but continued standing. Soon, a tall, extraordinarily well-groomed man in a very expensive suit stepped up to the microphone and began to read:

> De gentleman, he produce his próduce
> like a corporate salami, and she hers,
> like a surgery scar still angry red wid healing.
> Den he settle his equipment in de lady's outback
> an' he spud de well (*Barr,* "Grace" 43)

There were murmurs of polite recognition from the crowd, and I took my beer and left. I had thought perhaps I could engage some of the poets gathered in a couplet swapping contest, similar to the ones Virgil had written in the *Eclogues*, but this was obviously not the place for such shenanigans. Once upon a time, I wrote and published essays that were meant

> to help foster a conception of contemporary poetry as intimately connected with the sort of greater culture poets so often feel isolated from, a culture that, to a rather alarming degree, is suffering from the delusion that everything human is reducible to the

> economics of self-interest. Certainly, there are few more apt forms of discourse with which to combat this sort of economic determinism than poetry; we only need to apply our skills in new directions (Pietrzykowski, 4).

But, as it turns out, the very economic determinists I was struggling with—people like Dana Gioia and John Barr, whose poem is cited above—were also working to give poetry higher visibility, but were doing so by fusing it with the rational choice, neoconservative economic model. As I sat in the lobby, sipping my beer, I picked up a brochure titled "A Role for Poetry in Consumer Research," which had a picture of a smiling woman in a business suit leaning over a smiling man in a business suit, a sheaf of papers on their desk. Inside the brochure, I read:

> Consumer researchers are wrestling with the crisis of representation that has challenged contiguous disciplines over the past decade. Traditional or conventional prose articles seem increasingly insufficient as vessels for representing our understandings and experiences. In this article, we demonstrate how poetry contributes to the research enterprise. We use our own experiences as researcher-poets to illustrate how the writing and close reading of poetry can take us directly to the heart of consumption […] (Sherry and Schouten, 218).

I put the brochure down and went up to my room. I wondered if perhaps it was better that poetry had a small audience, that poems should only exist to argue for their own beauty and nothing else; certainly that must be preferable to "poetry that can take us to the heart of consumption"?

But I knew I was only trying to convince myself of something. As I fell asleep, someone began banging rhythmically on the wall opposite my bed, so I wrote this poem on the back of the hotel's "comment card":

> Other people making love
> loudly, in the room next to mine…
> Hotels! Always the same.

The next morning, I began walking west once again. Soon, the houses grew further apart, the groves of trees and empty lots more straggly. I was leaving town. As the sun was near its zenith, I heard a car slowing next to me, and turned to see that it was in fact a pickup truck. The back of the truck was full of people talking loudly but too fast for me to catch much of their conversation; the driver gestured for me to jump in back with them, so I did.

As we sped along, I began to acclimate myself to the speed with which the group was speaking. They were scholars, from a variety of different disciplines, and they were on their way to set up a laboratory where they all could contribute to a common body of knowledge, cognitive linguistics. The way they described their common area of study made it sound very much like the study of rhetoric, as it had manifested itself over the course of recorded history: a study of how to persuade others using language, of how to understand the many ways the human mind created meaning from verbal and written cues, and how to use our knowledge of these cues to produce a desired, persuasive, effect. They did not seem to care so much about persuasion, or about how to use the ideas they had generated to explore moral and ethical concerns—they just wanted to

know how the mind, as part of the physical world, made language work, and what the whole process told us about the mind:

> Language is only the tip of a spectacular cognitive iceberg, and when we engage in any language activity, be it mundane or artistically creative, we draw unconsciously on vast cognitive resources, call up innumerable models and frames, set up multiple connections, coordinate large arrays of information, and engage in creative mappings, transfers, and elaborations. This is what language is about and what language is for. Backstage cognition includes viewpoints and reference points, figure-ground / profile-base / landmark-trajector organization, metaphorical, analogical, and other mappings, idealized models, framing, construal, mental spaces, counterpart connections, roles, prototypes, metonymy, polysemy, conceptual blending, fictive motion, force dynamics (Fauconnier, 2)

They used their knowledge to try and make moral and ethical points and influence public policy (Coulsen, Lakoff, Turner), but had not as yet decided to explore how—if—moral and ethical concerns emerged from the same kind of perceptual and conceptual structures that language and symbol use were built upon. I was, nonetheless, delighted at the fact that the models they used could be both universal, part of how all human bodies function, and also wildly contextual, since these models and the linguistic primitives they gave rise to were, I their rhetorical expression, infinitely malleable. We all see color more or less the same way (along gender lines), for example, but the way we *express* what we see varies widely from culture to culture. Their

conceptual blending model seemed particularly useful for describing creativity—especially in a classroom—and I asked what a blend of the Japanese travelogue form called a "haibun" and an academic essay might look like; in response, one of them sketched this diagram for me:

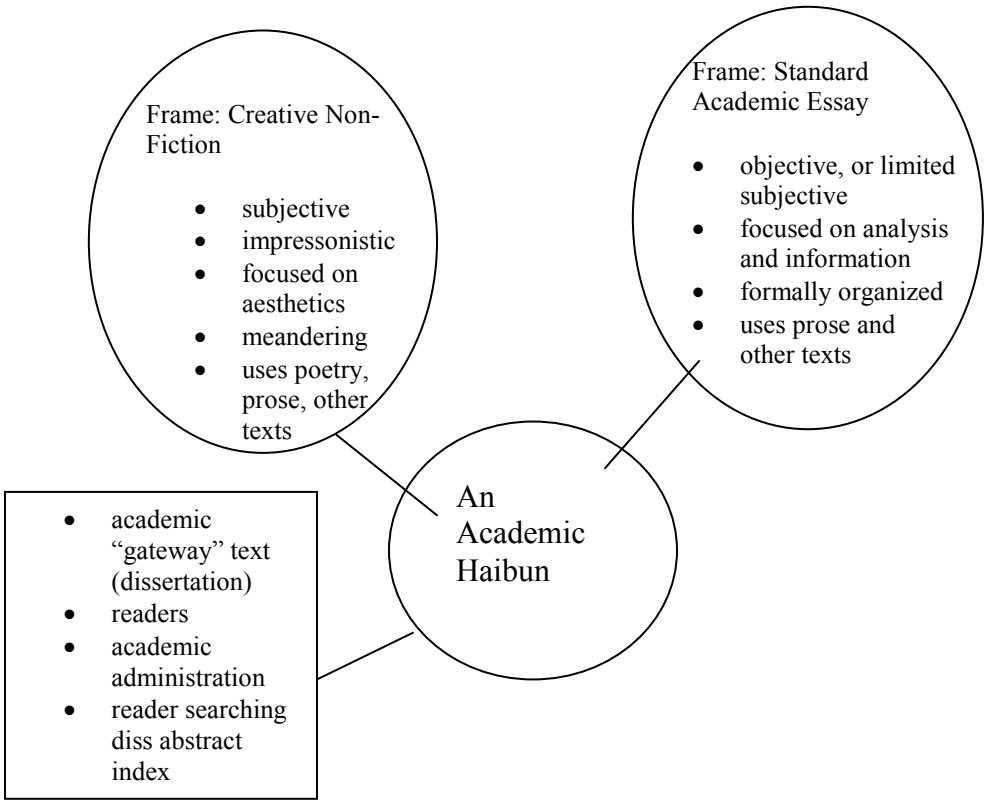


Fig. 8: An Academic Haibun

But what about the blend of Japanese and English poetic forms? I thought, or any of the many other blending activities that were taking place, or the layers of frames within frames that defined the whole process… we talked and talked as we sped along, and the more we talked, the more I realized that they could not really call cognitive linguistics a science yet, that there was simply far too much work to do before any principled, empirical means for conducting an experiment

that, say, identified when a given cognitive frame had been invoked. They had many pictures of brain activity that seemed to point toward a link between neural activity and meaning creation, but pointing is not proving, especially for scientists. Still, I need not believe to use their models for myself, and when I teach others, and perhaps that is all I can ask for—to be convinced of the usefulness of the cognitive linguistic enterprise without necessarily believing that it is the true and proper way to understand language. I am a doubter, and told them so when they began to ask me to join them at the laboratory. They let me off by the side of the road, and as I descended, I handed the driver this poem:

> If I could talk to birds
> I would ask them:
> do humans ever
> seem interesting?

As they drove off, I looked up and down the road. It stretched as far as the horizon in both directions, and I could no longer see the town behind me, nor anything ahead. I sat down beside the road and tried to remember why I had left my comfortable home in the first place, what yearning had come upon me and pushed my body out onto the road. I could have spent my days listening to rain fall, watching the moon wax and wane… or I could have stopped at the department of historical records and filled out a job application, or taken up refuge in one of the neat little houses in the gated community. I could at least have stayed at the hotel for a few days

and watched cable television, or joined the crew in the pickup truck on their adventure, but I chose not to. And now I was nowhere.

There was a forest behind me, dense and green, and I rose and walked toward it, away from the road. The forest floor gave off rich perfumes, and a path seemed to open up before me. After a few minutes of hiking, I turned back and could no longer see the road. I laughed, and continued on, coming at last to a small house, crooked and musty, and as I slid the key into the door, I noticed that the windows were all somehow larger, that the holes in the roof had been patched, and that chimes now echoed from a balcony above the entranceway, a balcony I don't recall being there before. I set my things down in the hall and went up to the balcony and looked out at the forest, and wrote a last poem, which I rolled up and stuck in a crook of one of the eaves:

The familiar echoes
of my feet in the hall,
coming home,
setting out again.

Coda

I recently read a review of a book by the late Susan Sontag, though I do not much care for her writing; I do, however, admire her commitment to writing and to "knowledge work," to use Peter Drucker's term, to being

> [a]n independent writer attached to no institution or department [who] retained her right to speak out on what mattered to her in the manner of her choosing. And though, of course, the reality of being a public intellectual has its own constraints, they may be fewer and less inhibiting than speaking from an academic platform. She did not have to acknowledge the passing parade of theory and countertheory or choose sides. To what extent this is sticking with, or being stuck, depends, very likely, on your perspective on the academy (Diski, 11).

My position is that the academy is a fine model for the rest of the world, and I wish that more institutions were as committed to inquiry and to sharing knowledge and to rewarding people for living this way, but I also understand the constraints, and would like to find a place for myself somewhere between Sontag's perch outside and the snug confines of a "conversation" that can, at times, dangerously warp all the aspects of scholarly life and teaching that I so admire. As I was reading some of the research on dissertation writing, I came across this description:

> [c]onsistent with a genre-as-social-action perspective, the dissertation writing involved a whole series of social and political negotiations with the Graduate School and departmental rules, advisors, committee members, T.A. teaching demands, peers, families, and the potential job market. Focusing simply on textual or rhetorical aspects of dissertation writing does not capture the ways in which participation in these different systems served to constitute the challenges associated with dissertation writing as a genre

> of social action. To successfully complete their dissertation, participants needed to learn various practices for operating in these different systems (Lundell and Beach, 491).

The authors are trying to use the currently fashionable activity/genre theory to explain that writing a dissertation can be a very complicated process, and that people's lives are filled with many different demands and responsibilities, and that dissertation writers thus need to figure out how to write what they want to write and what the readers want them to write while continuing to live their lives. The snippets of interviews that the authors include are interesting, and made me feel a bit less isolated, but the author's purposeful display of scholarly distance did more than leave me cold, it made me angry. Calling a graduate school a "system" denies what is essential about it, what is essential about any institution: it is made up of *people*, not instances of social action, not sites for linguistic inscription, not shared participants in genre building, but human beings. System building is fine as long as your system continues to recognize that fact, and very few of them do. The same logic allows corporations to resist culpability for harmful decisions, since everyone is just doing their job, participating in a system that they have no personal responsibility for; the same goes for the criminal who blames the system for corrupting her. We cannot be *only* socially constructed or *only* Romantic individuals, we are always both and much more. I was once lucky enough to see this inscription on a statue of the Italian poet Petrarch in Florence, and I wrote it down and stuck it in my wallet:

> *Et cosi aven che l'animo caiscuna*
>
> *Sua passion sotto et contrario manto*

Ricopre, con la vista hor' chiara hor bruna

(And so does the mind cloak
every passion with its opposite,
our faces showing now joy, now sadness)

Something worth remembering, I think, as we go about building our systems, striving for excellence, trying to persuade others because it feels so good to win, to succeed, to build a model of what or minds look like… I had thought, when I began this project, that poetry was a kind of rhetoric, and I still do believe that, but I also think that rhetoric is a striving for the poetic, for the feeling that comes when a phrase or an idea or a gust of wind or an ash tree glittering so occupies your mind that your self recedes, and your mind making meaning from it is the most dazzling thing in the universe.

At least that's what I think right now.

Post Script

The standard endpiece for a dissertation in the field of Rhetoric and Composition is a discussion of the implications my findings might have for the field. I have thought a great deal about how the ideas I have explored--the characters in the story--might eventually have an influence on the discipline, and even more about the implications they could have in a document that people might actually read, but I'm not sure that the dissertation itself should have much of an affect on the field. If the other recently published dissertations that I have read are any guide, the point of discussing the implications your dissertation has for the field is really a matter of discussing what your work might *someday* mean for the field, and for discussing where the field might be headed in a general sense, and where the individual author might fit in. Like many a graduate student, completing the work of writing the dissertation felt more like a door shutting—on the story of my apprenticeship, on the project I had set out to do--than one opening. I will, of course, revise some parts of the dissertation and try to publish them in journals like *Writing On the Edge* or *Janus Head*, but the ultimate goal of a dissertation is getting committee signatures and then putting the document away, in this case onto a compact disc that will then be electronically indexed via the abstract and keywords in the front matter. In theory, then, my dissertation will be available to anyone on the planet who is willing to pay ProQuest for access to the whole document (non-subscribers can only read the first 24 pages), and I plan to also make it available for free as a self-archived document[34], so even that even more frugal or economically limited readers can access it.

I think I have discussed the relationship of this dissertation to my own professional goals in sufficient depth elsewhere, and I think my reasons for, to cite one example, encouraging a greater

[34] Per the guidelines of the Budapest Open Access Initiative < http://www.soros.org/openaccess>

variety of approaches to scholarship in Rhetoric and Composition have also been adequately explored. If, through some peculiar shift in the tectonics of academic discourse, this widening of our disciplinary boundaries comes to pass in the near future, I think that the oppositional, standardizing strategy of disciplinary formation implicit in Alice Calderonello's statement, cited in the preface, would reveal itself to be inadequate to its task. "The professionalization of composition studies in relation to other disciplines has created a drive for standardization (in response to the need to be distinctive from other fields)" (1), she wrote in 1991, and it certainly appears that this tendency toward standardization has grown stronger, but that does not mean that standards cannot be changed, that conventions are inured to active competition. The first burst of scholarship in Computers and Writing, for example, had a wild and wooly quality about them, and shifting technology is but one factor that might be ridden into the arena of competing ideas about the form and nature of scholarship. A similar standardization has been occurring in Creative Writing for some time now, and while I worry that bringing the fields of Rhetoric and Composition and Creative writing closer together, increasing the dialogue between them, might only worsen the tendency toward standardization, I cannot think of any reason that this tendency would arise *from* the dialogue[35]; instead, the desire for standardization would come from where it has come already: a desire to claim disciplinary space by insisting to other disciplines that we, like they, have a coherent set of practices, methodologies, theories, and conventions.

What does puzzle me is why disciplines in general, not only English Studies disciplines like Rhet/Comp and Creative Writing but also social sciences and even the hard sciences, feel the

[35] In fact, there is good reason to think that more creative, interdisciplinary dissertations and scholarship will appear in the near future exactly because of this dialogue; the MFA-to-Rhet/Comp PhD path of professionalization has become quite common, and I have seen a fair number of jobs posted on the MLA job list specifically requesting this kind of scholarly mix.

need to present this kind of unified front to other disciplines. In Theoretical Physics, for example, string theory is presented as the dominant, unifying theory of the field, and the methodologies for studying string theory are supposed to be the same methodologies the whole field uses, but it only takes a minimum of searching before a much messier, controversial picture emerges, complete with a host of competing theories, methodologies, and motivations[36]. Wouldn't a great deal more interdisciplinary conversation, honest conversation about the successes and failings of the ways we build knowledge, help alleviate some of the pressure to present an "orderly house" to our peers in other fields? Perhaps I am being too naïve about the politics of the academy, and I am certainly not proposing that my dissertation will do anything to help encourage this kind of conversation, but it is a naiveté that I hope to preserve as I continue my own research and teaching—in a sense, all hope is naïve, in as much as "naïve" comes from the Latin *nativus*, meaning "not artificial, innate, natural." If I were using theory lingo from the 1980's and 90's, I might say that hope is "always already" a condition of being, and that my hope for the discipline of Rhetoric and Composition, for English Studies and higher education in general, is far greater than my hope that the dissertation I have written will effect the kind of changes that I hope will someday occur. It is, after all, just the beginning. (I hope).

The implications of research that blends Cognitive Linguistics and more "traditional" Rhet/Comp are more straightforward, for all the reasons discussed in this dissertation: both fields are primarily concerned with how language and meaning are produced and distributed by human beings. The lingering disdain many Rhet/Comp scholars have for "cognitive" rhetoric is unfortunate (and lazy), but the sympathies between the two fields are so strong that I cannot imagine this bias will persist for long; many a Rhet/Comp scholars use terminology borrowed

[36]See Lee Smolin's *The Trouble With Physics*, for example.

from Cognitive Linguistics already anyway (the idea of broad cognitive "frames," for example), and at least 3 presentations at the 2007 Conference on College Composition and Communication dealt with some aspect of cognitive linguistics. My only fear is that this fruitful relationship will be simply one more fashionable theory, the latest academic novelty that will occupy our minds for a few years before giving way to something "sexier." It often seems that "schools" of thought in Rhet/Comp come and go simply to give everyone something to do; should we divorce ourselves from Rhetoric and simply be Composition? Are we process or post-process? What of the abolitionists? None of these questions are without merit, but none of them seem to have a great deal of bearing on what actually happens in the classroom, or in other fields that use writing (i.e. all of them), or in the minds of people making decisions about how our educational system should be shaped, let alone in the great mass of people who could benefit from a more rhetorical understanding of the world. The "conversation," I fear, the scholarly essays and conference presentations and lore that comprises our field, has become almost entirely self-obsessed, and no one really wants to listen to someone else talk about themselves all day long—even if they really are fascinating, and most of us are not. But still, I have hope that we might see more of a turn away from self-obsession and toward more civic engagement, more aesthetic engagement, more attracting and shaping new audiences for the principles of our work and less attempting to satisfy the same crowd with the same songs. Cognitive Linguistics has only begun to fulfill its research agenda, and as brain scan technology gets better, new results will challenge old conclusions, and new methodologies will be developed. I wonder: rather than asking what the implications of work in Cognitive Linguistics might be for Rhet/Comp, if perhaps we should ask what Rhet/Comp can offer Cognitive Linguistics, what the implications of

work in *our* field are for work in theirs… or for any field, for that matter. Perhaps, instead of being poachers in other fields, we can be more like merchants, exchanging something of value that we have for what other fields have, or even becoming the facilitators of exchanges between different fields. First, of course, we would have to spend some time asking ourselves a difficult question: what sort of knowledge does the discipline of Rhetoric and Composition have that other fields might find useful?

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