

2012

Rhetorical memory: investigating the changing means from commonplaces to databases

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Rhetorical Memory:
Investigating the Changing Means from Commonplaces to Databases

A Thesis
Presented To
Eastern Washington University
Cheney, Washington

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree
Master of Arts
By
Maggie Ulmer
Spring 2012

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Chapter 1

Introduction

[Polydamas, a Trojan:]

If mighty Zeus, thundering up on high, is bent
on wiping out the Argives, down to the last man,
if he longs to back our Trojan forces to the hilt,
by heaven I hope the Father works his will at once
and the Argives die here, their memory blotted out,
a world away from Argos!

[Idomeneus, a Greek:]

No, this is the pleasure of overweening Zeus, it seems--
to kill the Achaeans here, our memory blotted out
a world away from Argos.¹

Homer reminds us that there was a time when memory was powerful. In this example from *Iliad*, both men clearly voice the same sentiment about memory. The Greeks may be blotted out of memory, their actions undocumented, unrecorded, unspoken and unpreserved--not because of their defeat on the battlefield of Troy, but because of their absence from their city-states, polis, and communities. If every Greek who sailed with Agamemnon died in Troy, then every story never told died there with them.

Before video recording, photography, and even writing, there was memory. Many modern people might overlook the significance of these men's remarks about blotting people from memory. Most modern people don't often memorize many things that can be

¹ (Homer, 1990, book 12, lines 81-86 and book 13, lines 268-270.)

easily looked up again later. Most modern people record events via cell phone video camera and upload them to YouTube to share with friends and strangers. Many modern people can probably recall a politician remarking that “history will be the judge” of this matter or that.

Before there was technology to easily record and share across wide media, to afford easy access to stored information, or to even write at all, there was memory. Memory provided the only history. There was no documented, much less objective, record, so any “let history judge” rhetoric in a time of memory would have been an almost sycophantic appeal to an audience. I say sycophantic because such a statement would boldly assume that the issue, and presumably also the orator arguing it, would make history in the first place. Without so much as the technology to write, only memory informed history. The only way memories and histories were shared, over both space and time, were through speech. Even if the issue and/or orator were remembered in history, the orator was sycophantic for assuming that history would judge kindly (if the orator did, in fact, assume so). History, made up of memories shared through discourse, was as subject to revisions and reinterpretations as the memories comprising it.

Memory was critical not only to history and anyone threatened with being blotted out of it, but also to classical Aristotelian rhetoric. It was highly regarded by classical rhetors and rhetoricians alike, considered “the noblest of the canons, the basis for the rest” (Carruthers, 1990, p. 9). Memory was one of five original canons: memory, invention, arrangement, style, and delivery. It comprised 20 percent of rhetoric.

As a canon, memory was not a storehouse of information but a mental process of remembering to gain insight and understanding (Allen, 1993; Carruthers, 1990; Crowley, 1990, 1993; Jarratt, 2002; Middleton, 1993; Reynolds, 1993; Ryan, 2004; Swadley, 2008; Welch, 1993, 1999; Yates, 1966), and to invent (Crowley, 1990, 1993; Middleton, 1993; Reynolds, 1993; Swadley, 2008). Remembering could involve re-imagining and reinterpreting memories as well as comparing understandings of memories with other people.

The classical uses of memory relied heavily on community, commonplaces, and discourse. Homer's Greeks demonstrate this relationship well. To be remembered, their actions must be known to others in the community first. The only way a communal memory could be informed was by the interactions and discourse of people who shared it. This communal memory was a commonplace. The term commonplace has a semantic range large enough to warrant clarification. I do not use the term in its adjectival form, to mean everyday, though that connotation is relevant to my use. Instead, I use the nounal form to invoke images of a physical place where people interacted and discoursed to share information and make meaning out of experiences and memories. Commonplaces are more than physical places, though; they are agreements about intangible ideas. Shared ideology, history, culture, and communal memory are all examples of commonplaces.

Commonplaces, and their significance to memory, have been discussed at length by both classical and modern rhetoricians such as Aristotle (2007), Bacon (1620), Booth (1974) Burke (1950), Foucault (1969), Perelman (1969), and Richards (1936). Such

rhetoricians located commonplaces as the sites of using rhetoric and language to establish and communicate reality, and to decide truths.

Through interacting, ancient people were educated in their culture's commonplaces (Carruthers, 1990). Such an education was necessary not just for community, but for citizenry: "Persons were citizens of their cultures by virtue of their knowledge about that culture and its history, stored in memory" (Crowley, 1993, p. 36). In other words, people relied on communal memory as a commonplace accessible to and shared by all who participated in creating and refining that same commonplace. Accessing, creating, and refining commonplaces were all accomplished through discourse. Working from a commonplace, a classical rhetor's task was then to "compare statements about what was known or agreed upon [the commonplace] with statements about which there was disagreement" (Crowley, 1990, p. 3). Importantly, commonplaces required action of their participants. People had to be engaged with others in order to achieve insight and understanding, share information, dispute claims, or determine the validity of arguments. People could not passively partake of commonplaces; they had to engage and invest in making meaning together.

By the Middle Ages, memory and commonplaces were beginning to change. As a canon, memory was shifting from a mental process of remembering to gain understanding to a capacity for memory, or memory as a storehouse of information. People d/evolved memory from an active thought process to an inanimate storage facility. Ivan Illich and Barry Sanders described this change in their book *ABC: The Alphabetization of the Popular Mind* (1988):

Only after it had become possible to fix the flow of speech in phonetic transcription did the idea emerge that knowledge--information--could be held in the mind as in a store. Today, we take this idea so completely for granted that it is hard for us to reconstruct an age when recollection was not conceived as a trip into the cellar to pick up stores, or a look into a ledger to verify an entry. Since the 4th century B.C., memory has been conceived as such a deposit that can be opened, searched, and used. (p. 15)

With writing technology and recorded information, the Middle Ages marked many important shifts in canonical memory and also commonplaces: memory changed from a way of knowing the world to stores of information, and commonplaces changed from sites of community consensus and authority to a veritable sea of recorded information.

Commonplaces in the early Middle Ages were still the critical sites of exchanges and access to communal memory. Commonplaces had authority over written documents, so documents served as reminders rather than purveyors of absolute information (Carruthers, 1990). By the end of the Middle Ages, the first libraries were giving rise to the first indexes, taxonomies, and concordances (Illich & Sanders, 1988; Ramsay, 2004) to help navigate them. These collections of printed information came to create a type of commonplace of their own. Rather than relying on community and memory for their existence, they needed only technology and authority.

Today, technology is ever more ubiquitous and authoritative. Libraries have evolved from physical collections to online stores that are virtually accessible. Indexes, taxonomies, and concordances have evolved into complex databases to assist people in searching this vast expanse of information. Authority has shifted from people and commonplaces to writing technologies (such as documents and databases) in determining the validity of information. Information conveyed by writing technologies is not typically

scrutinized and compared with existing commonplaces by the people who would use that information (Crowley, 1990). Instead, the information presented via writing technologies is treated as autonomous and authoritative, and is passively received when compared with the activity required of exchanges in commonplaces. Critics such as Jean-Francois Lyotard have suggested that a problematic issue of databases is one of authority. In *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (1984), Lyotard questioned who decides what information is stored in databases, who has access to databases, and how such decisions are made.

These changes make sense when viewed historically. Memory, as a canon of rhetoric, was arguably the canon foundational to the rest. It was an important mental faculty, not simply to remember, but to make sense of the world. It was an important aspect of commonplaces, culture, and communicating with others. When memory changed in the early Middle Ages with the increasing ubiquity of the first writing technologies, it was from a mental process to a mental storehouse. Once memory was conceived this way, it didn't take long to recognize that technology proved a more reliable and expansive storehouse: the capacity for memory was restricted only by the available means of recording, and once recorded, that information didn't change. By the 20th century, canonical memory had been reduced to the likes of rote memorization and mnemonic devices. Soon after, it was cut from the classical canon and forgotten altogether in composition textbooks, though not necessarily in practice.²

² While some simple tools of memory, such as memorization and mnemonic devices, were demoted from rhetoric, the original uses of the canon did survive in composition texts under various guises. In later chapters, several scholars' works on memory demonstrate how many important aspects of the canon survive as critical components of composition pedagogy.

This cut is critical not just to memory but to the entire concept of classical Aristotelian rhetoric. All of the canons functioned interdependently: to change even one canon would change the whole of rhetoric. A classical Greek concept conveyed by the words *melos* and *meros*, as explained by Dana Elder in his article *The Members of Rhetoric* (2008), might better describe the nature of the relationship of these canons of rhetoric:

[W]hile often translated as “a part” and often not differentiated in the noble art of translation, a *melos* is not a *meros* [a replaceable part]. A *melos* is an integral part, the changing or loss of which changes the whole. The English word member approaches the meaning of *melos*, as in one’s arm is a “member” of one’s body (Liddell and Scott 496). So the word organ also does begin to do the term justice. (p. 328)

The canons, as Aristotle presented them, were *melistic*, intended to function as integral parts. If any of rhetoric’s *melistic* canons were changed or lost, then, by this definition, the whole of rhetoric would be changed.

With memory lost, commonplaces have similarly lost their significance to epistemology and invention. Invention, sometimes called discovery, is the content of rhetorical arguments. Only after inventing or discovering an argument can one refine and communicate it through the remaining (truncated) canons of arrangement, style, and delivery. Composition textbooks have described invention variously as “discovering the possibilities for your subject” (Axelrod & Cooper, 1988, p. 88 cited in Reynolds, 1993, p. 10) and as a “process of thinking as we compose” (Axelrod & Cooper, 2010, p. 8). Commonplaces were the sites of invention when classical memory was practiced. Invention in this schema involved deciding upon which information to compare against which commonplace information. After memory was cut from the canons of rhetoric,

invention was relocated along the spectrum from commonplaces to personal experience and external information that could be mined for discoveries.

Because modern composers have personal experience and external information and the technology to mine it, they require no interactions with other people whatsoever: they can research, invent, and deliver with the aid of technology. Rather than interacting with other people, they need only interact with information. Recorded information, while originally composed by a person or people, is still only recorded information: interacting with records is not the same as interacting with their author/s. While a classical rhetor's task was to compare new, unknown information against commonplaces, a modern rhetor can instead rely on databases for the "serendipitous apprehension of relationships" (Ramsay, 2004, *Databases and the Humanist* section, par. 3) to invent.

Some scholars herald database technologies as a positive means of invention. Stephen Ramsay is one such scholar. In his chapter of *Digital Humanities* titled *Databases* (2004), he pointed out that databases are not new and traced their history to the Middle Ages (e.g. indexes, taxonomies, and concordances). Ramsay focused on the positive outcomes of dynamic databases for use by humanist scholars: because data comes from so many sources, "the logical statements that would flow from that ontology would necessarily exceed the knowledge of any one individual. The power of relational databases to enable the serendipitous apprehension of relationships would be that much more increased" (*Databases and the Humanist* section, par. 3). These are indeed valid and positive merits of database systems. Databases offer an incredible potential for invention, making information readily accessible across time and space while sidestepping the need

for people to directly communicate in order to exchange that information. In other words, the material from which to invent in the database model seems infinite when compared with the material from which to invent in the commonplace model. Yet this separation of information from people can prove problematic to invention, just as the positioning of commonplaces and databases as interchangeable means of invention is problematic.

As databases negate the need for commonplaces and ultimately people, they complicate canonical memory and the commonplaces that were critical to memory. How is one to compare the unknown against the known when there are no longer such neat categories as “known” and “unknown” but instead seemingly endless amounts of information? How is one to discern or project authority without commonplaces and consensus involved, but with information that, lacking pre-existing social hierarchies, is all as authoritative as the rest? How is one to remain epistemologically dependent on information that can change without notice via eerily Orwellian updates³?

Writing technologies first enabled the storage of memory outside of the human mind. This led to the pervasive concept of memory as a store and to the more efficient storage of memories in documents, or external technologies. Documents took the place of the storage of memory. Databases that search and return results from such expanses of information, or external memory, are taking the place of the processes of classical memory.

Recent technology advancements, like Apple’s Siri technology, even further complicate the tensions between databases and commonplaces by seeming to marry them.

³ Content management systems, a technology of databases, are capable of such updates or changes to information without any notifications about these changes. These systems, and their potentially fragmentary effects, will be clarified in later chapters.

One need not remember anything, because Siri can do the remembering instead. One need not rely on commonplaces for information, because Siri can produce it instead. If one were tempted to return to commonplaces to interact with other people and make meaning of the world, one need not: Siri can interact instead, and its information might suffice for making meaning of the world ⁴.

Externalizing memory in databases like Siri creates revolutionary schema for invention and at the same time fragments memory's origins from its communal foundations. In the following chapters, I examine this issue of memory and invention, and more specifically, commonplaces and databases and invention. In Chapter 2, I explore classical memory and invention in commonplaces in order to establish a starting point for this trajectory and to reconstruct invention using only commonplaces, before databases or other technologies were available. In Chapter 3, I explore memory and invention in the Middle Ages. This historical point is important because it marks turning points in the larger canon of memory as invention changed from happening only in commonplaces to also happening with technology (the same technology that ultimately gave rise to databases). Technology in the Middle Ages brought about changes in authority from people to documents, and changes in invention from privileging community and consensus to individual composers and personal experiences. In Chapter 4, I explore modern memory and invention that relies on commonplaces and/or databases. This is important because it establishes some problems of both commonplaces and databases in modern use and their impacts on invention. In Chapter 5, I analyze Siri as an artifact

⁴ People began anthropomorphizing information by granting it authority in the Middle Ages. Making technology seem like people, as in the case of Siri, mainstreams a significant advancement of this anthropomorphization.

representative of databases, and explore some potential improvements for Siri as an inventional tool. Finally, in Chapter 6, I focus on composition pedagogy and suggest some productive uses of commonplaces and databases for invention in the composition classroom, and indicate areas for further research of this topic.

Chapter 2

Classical Memory

Writing...[Plato said] is inhuman, pretending to establish outside the mind what in reality can be only in the mind. It is a thing, a manufactured product. Secondly... writing destroys memory. Those who use writing will become forgetful, relying on an external resource for what they lack in internal resources. Writing weakens the mind.⁵

In his famous *Phaedrus* rally against writing technologies--and writing at all-- Plato (1954) adumbrated that writing and record keeping would destroy the faculties of memory by rendering them unnecessary. He also cautioned against the loss of context in communication, which he claimed gives rise to memories that inform dialogue. For Plato, living in a time when writing was just becoming available for the first time, writing could only be a bad thing for memory. From a modern perspective in which writing is taken for granted and memory is conceived as a store of information, his objections might seem quaint and misguided. At the time Plato was adumbrating about writing, however, memory was not a store at all, but a mental process imperative to epistemology, invention, and community. In this chapter, I will investigate what this classical memory looked like in practice, especially invention and its reliance on commonplaces. This will be useful for comparing points in the trajectory of memory and corresponding points from commonplaces to databases, and how these changes impact invention.

⁵ (Ong, 1982, p. 78.)

The original conception of memory in ancient Greece is summed briefly as: A mental process in which one accesses the stores of one's memory to engage in remembering in order to achieve insight and understanding (Allen, 1993; Carruthers, 1990; Crowley, 1990, 1993; Jarratt, 2002; Middleton, 1993; Reynolds, 1993; Ryan, 2004; Swadley, 2008; Welch, 1993, 1999; Yates, 1966). It is here, in this paradigm of memory, that invention was classically conceived (Carruthers, 1990; Crowley, 1990, 1993; Middleton, 1993; Reynolds, 1993; Swadley, 2008).

Mary Carruthers's work *The Book of Memory: A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture* (1990) reconstructs classical memory and its trajectory through the medieval period. Carruthers's work favors memory by explaining it as a way of thinking, of framing and interpreting the world. Carruthers (1990) defined invention from memory this way:

[Invention is a] wholly material process of searching one's memory. It involves recollection primarily, and occurs with postures and in settings that are also signals of *mediatio*; indeed, it is best to think of invention as a meditational activity. (p. 194)

In a study of classical memory and the slow change from community-based authority to individual authority, Sharon Crowley (1993) further explained how commonplace knowledge aided invention. By having commonplace knowledge ready in memory, ancient people could "invent arguments for use on any occasion simply by combining and expanding on the appropriate variations" (p. 37) of commonplace knowledge.

Invention from memory was nearly without limits, as inventors from memory had at their disposal not only their personal and communal memories, but also other options comprising the canon of memory, such as re-imagining and reinterpreting memories.

With commonplace knowledge stored in memory, ancient people had ready material to insert at any point in arguments (Crowley, 1993). Recall that within classical rhetoric, memory was highly regarded by classical rhetors and rhetoricians alike, considered “the noblest of the canons, the basis for the rest” (Carruthers, 1990, p. 9).

Frances Yates’s *The Art of Memory* (1966) is perhaps the seminal work unpacking all of the original faculties and uses of memory. Yates examined memory from its canonical inception through medieval times, then through the Renaissance and finally in the “theatre memory systems.” Yates’s work demonstrates the adaptability of classical memory to different situations. Yates (1966) provided a detailed listing of all that comprised classical memory: improving the memory, imprinting on the memory, memorizing in order, making memorable, holding in memory, retrieving from memory, delivering from memory, and preserving in memory (Yates, 1966, p. 2-45).

Cultural Commonplaces

Cultural commonplaces are specific to particular cultural groups, and members of the same cultural groups share cultural commonplaces. Aristotle (2007) spoke of commonplaces or *koinoi topoi* of arguments in *On Rhetoric*. While he meant the term almost literally--that the *topoi* are places in the mind where argument structures are kept-- I am using the term to apply to cultural commonplaces. Communal memory largely provided the means of cultural commonplaces: it was communal memory that contextualized culture by providing temporality and history; it was participation in communal memory that made cultural commonplaces.

The classical conception of memory played “a crucial role to a notion of [commonplaces] accessed by an individual through education” (Carruthers, 1990, p. 24). Through interacting with other community members, ancient people were educated in the ways of commonplaces. Commonplaces were agreements about intangible ideas, arrived at through discourse. They provided templates for making arguments and boilerplate material that could be inserted where appropriate into various arguments. They held the only memory available outside of one’s own mental reserves; history was not otherwise available. It is important to remember that the only way to access this communal memory was through interactions with people, as this was oral, preliterate society.

Commonplace education was necessary for cultural participation: “Persons were citizens of their cultures by virtue of their knowledge about that culture and its history, stored in memory” (Crowley, 1993, p. 36). Commonplace memory, besides providing cultural continuity, was also authoritative because it reflected the consensus of the community.

In an earlier book, *The Methodical Memory: Invention in Current-Traditional Rhetoric* (1990), Crowley analyzed both classical memory and invention in light of various historical pedagogical paradigms. Her work ultimately found that memory provides the richest grounds for invention: subjective, individual voices are privileged when they invent from memory. Working from cultural commonplaces, ancient inventors could “compare statements about what was known or agreed upon [commonplaces] with statements about which there was disagreement” (Crowley, 1990, p. 3). The influence of commonplaces situated rhetors and audiences alike squarely within community--with a

well defined body of knowledge, rhetors would be advantaged by knowing their landscape so they might situate themselves most beneficially within it.

Appeals especially to *ethos* and *pathos* were also contingent upon commonplaces. “The ways in which [emotional states] could be roused or quelled” (Crowley, 1990, p. 4) was of rhetorical import to classical rhetors, and a knowledge of community and commonplaces was prerequisite to knowing how and when to use such emotional tactics effectively as rhetorical tools. For example *ethos*, by definition, requires the invocation of the rhetor’s character; if the rhetor is unknown to the community she addresses, she must at least be familiar with communal knowledge of *ethos* so she might portray herself accordingly. If she is already part of the community, then a conception of her *ethos* might already be present in that cultural commonplace. If she inserts the appropriate commonplace template or boilerplate into her argument, her *ethos* will increase.

The larger canon of memory was multifaceted and did not rely exclusively on commonplaces. There were many aspects that did not require any interaction with other people, such as improving and imprinting on the memory, for example. At the same time, many issues were already framed by cultural commonplaces, which of course relied heavily on communal memory for their substance. For example, commonplaces framed history, so one’s understanding of this history was already bound by what constituted history. The Greeks who feared being blotted out of memory in Homer’s *Iliad*, for example, would not have become any part of history had they all died on the battlefield at Troy. Their adventures since sailing with Agamemnon, despite having happened historically, would not be remembered in history. They would never be assimilated into

the commonplaces. As a social construction whose conventions changed in response to social needs, commonplaces framed important issues from how people expected to interact to what arguments people could invent.

Commonplaces were also the site of debates about truth, rhetoric, and the relationship between them. This relationship is critical to invention: it provides the framework that determines what can be invented. Of course, such a relationship need not even exist for each to be valid on its own merits: truth need not rely upon a means of persuasion; and rhetoric can be effective in persuading with no regard for the truthfulness of what speakers persuade audiences to believe or do. Yet this relationship is the source of centuries-long debate because truth is socially constructed in cultural commonplaces rather than living autonomously in the physical world, and rhetoric an important means of that construction. To better understand invention in this complex dynamic of an interdependent relationship of truth and rhetoric and the commonplaces where they were decided, it is necessary first to discuss rhetoricians' understanding of truth as the relationship between language and reality.

Establishing reality. Many rhetoricians begin with shared experiences (Aristotle, 2007; Bacon, 1620; Booth, 1974; Burke, 1950; Foucault, 1969; Perelman, 1969; Richards, 1936) as a starting place for establishing commonplaces and determining invention schema. As Aristotle proclaimed the province of rhetoric those things which are in doubt, we can deduce (à la Aristotle and Burke, among many other rhetoricians) that some things are not in doubt. This logic reduces to: experience = not in doubt, or, expressed positively, experience = belief, or, less subtly, experience = reality. Yet socially

constructed reality and personal experience do not always validate each other (e.g. Bacon, 1620; Foucault, 1969; Locke, 1690), so this is an oversimplification of a complex relationship. Perhaps the relationship is best conceptualized as an inventional spectrum, with commonplaces at one end and individual experience at the other, discourse being the tool that negotiates placement along the spectrum.

Communicating reality. Thus, a common vocabulary is platonically all that is necessary to communicate reality, belief, indeed our experiences, and create commonplaces. Booth (1974) posited that it was these common experiences that served as social tests for truth, and that they were necessary before language or understanding--even invention--were possible. In other words, experience is the raw material necessary before and out of which products--language, understanding, rhetoric, invention--can be made. Perelman (1969) also suggested the notion of experiences as social tests for truth when he asserted that writers will imagine audiences and try to predict their reactions (through Burkean identification) before and/or while composing. The basis of commonplaces, then, is shared experience.

Clearly, this is not to say that experiences are objective or the sum total of all that is necessary for understanding. To assume so would be to commit a sin analogous to what Locke (1690) identified as one of the abuses of language, a time when words fail: when the same sign is used for different ideas. Such logical fallacies are easily recognized, but point to more problematic issues of resolving subjectivity in shared experiences in order to create commonplaces. As Vico (1709) remarked, it is an orator's responsibility to "master a multiple, diversified, almost boundless domain of culture" (p. 868) in order to

appeal to an audience. In other words, rhetors must appropriate rules of commonplaces when inventing. Varied understandings of subjects or “truths” can impede resolving subjectivity and negotiating reality even in an audience from the same commonplace. As Vico (1709) put it, audiences can have: “the fool, the astute ignoramus, the learned man destitute of prudence, and the sage” (p. 869). Vico’s (1709) description of varying audience understanding is an example of Burkean terministic screens, or what Richards (1936) termed veils. These screens or veils are essentially filters through which we see the world, our subjectivity composed of past experiences, ideologies, levels of understanding, etc. Bacon (1620) also posited this idea when he said that interpretation and perception cannot be objective because man mingles the nature of himself with the nature of things. If experiences cannot be objective, as so many (such as Bacon, 1620; Burke, 1950, 1966, 1969; Perelman, 1969; Richards, 1936; Vico, 1709) posit, then reality must be agreed upon just as cultural conventions are. Commonplaces were both the sites and products of such agreements.

Using rhetoric. Exchanges within commonplaces that serve to clarify shared experiences and negotiate reality can mark the shift from information-sharing only to rhetorical in nature (e.g. Aristotle, 2007; Burke, 1969; Perelman, 1969; Vico, 1709; Whately, 1828). Campbell (1776) noted that knowledge is born of subjective experiences, so rhetoric functions platonically to shape invention to arguments to be incontestable in commonplaces. Whately’s (1828) conception of rhetoric was born of logic, with inventions in arguments serving similarly to put (Burkean) attention revealed or absolute truths. For Whately (1828), the aims of rhetorical invention themselves were to refine

already established truths within commonplaces. Rhetorical invention, then, in this paradigm, was not concerned with discovery but with argument.

In cases of discovery, rhetoricians would say that rhetoric becomes a variable in the equation when people stretch commonplaces by communicating about unshared experiences (e.g Bacon, 1620; Burke, 1966; Campbell, 1776; Foucault, 1969; Perelman, 1969) and that sharing and constructing this knowledge constitute the aims of rhetorical invention. Foucault's (1969) discursive formation, for example, posited that knowledge and discursive practices are inseparable, so discursive formation takes the place of *episteme*.

Using language. Although scholars disagree about at exactly what point rhetoric enters communication, they are generally concerned with the role of language in mitigating personal experiences and commonplaces. Both Burke (1950) and Locke (1690), for example, plainly acknowledged that language and experience are interdependent. This becomes tautologically problematic when language is the means by which personal experiences are negotiated into commonplaces, yet language and personal experiences are recursive. Burke (1966) further complicated this issue by declaring language and thought to be modes of action rather than simply a means of conveying information, which problematizes one's ability to act socially depending on language abilities. Locke (1690), on the other hand, identified the role of language as recording and communicating thought filtered through invention, though he similarly problematized this use of language, going so far as to insist that eloquence be avoided on the grounds that it abuses language by obscuring the things it names. For both Bacon (1620) and Locke, the

greatest detriment of language is its imprecision. In his discussion of Idols of the Marketplace, Bacon maintained that words plainly force and overrule understanding, leading to empty controversies and idle fancies. Because words fail, according to Bacon, individual instances or shared experiences are necessary for real understanding and creating commonplaces.

Blair (1783) built on Locke's idea of the role of language to include improving thought, though he encouraged eloquence by touting taste as the power of getting pleasure from beautiful things, ultimately the ability to recognize genius. It was Blair (1783) who famously said of invention that words clothe thought, and he specifically said that eloquence aids understanding by presenting thoughts in different ways, such as via metaphor. Whereas Burke's (1750) and Locke's (1690) place for language problematized participation because of its dependence on language, Blair (1783) effectively democratized audiences by empowering individuals to hone their own tastes and ultimately criticism, the application of good taste. Many (Burke, 1750; Perelman, 1969; Richards, 1936; Vico, 1709) stand with Blair in disagreeing with Locke's and Bacon's (1620) cautions against eloquence. Vico (1709), for example, thought eloquence was a necessary part of creating commonplaces for its appeals to memory and imagination, and for its common invocation in discourses. Richards (1936) added that oversimplifications of meaning create false problems that interfere with closer comparisons, much the way Burke (1750) positively identified ambiguity as the place for rhetorical attention, especially within established commonplaces.

Deciding truths. Truth, then, signifies the relationship between language and reality, and commonplaces mark one end of the reality spectrum, opposite experience. The problem inherent in this model is its tautology: language is the means of negotiation from personal, subjective experience to commonplaces, though both personal experience and commonplaces are forms of reality. One is personal, the other cultural. Another problem is the recursive relationship between language and reality. To return to Homer's Greeks in *Iliad*, none of their experiences would have been true--let alone constituted history--had they not been negotiated via language into the commonplaces. Because of these issues, the construction of truth is responsible for some problems of commonplaces.

Marginalizing experiences. One potential problem of truth that leads to problems with commonplaces is its placement of experience as pre-truth. If, indeed, private, subjective experiences must be negotiated through language and discourse to become part of a socially shared reality or commonplace, and truth is the relationship between that commonplace and language, then personal experiences are valid only insofar as they inform the commonplace. Some experiences do not become part of commonplaces and are therefore barred from ever constituting truth, despite their validity as lived experiences. This is problematic for invention as well, because un-validated personal experiences will likely not fit any intentional schema born of commonplaces.

Perelman (1969) addressed this issue when he claimed the construction of reality is contextual and doubles as the criterion for judging appearances. Appearances are then granted or denied value based on this contextual construction of reality. Rationality itself, according to Perelman, cannot be defined independent of context. In other words, if

claims seem irrational, they are. Richards (1936) similarly stated that word meanings depend on their immediate environment, identifying the sentence or whole utterance, rather than words, as context. Words are interanimated and abridge context. If this is the case and words do stand in for context, then this problematizes issues of language and its role in mediating personal experiences and commonplaces. Bacon (1620) took the same problematizing stance from a different angle when he claimed words impose idols on understanding, such as when they name things that don't exist or poorly name things that do. In this case, words complicate understanding, so any movement along the spectrum from personal experience to commonplace is inherently subject to complications.

As Perelman, Richards, and Bacon have described context and its import to reality, and therefore truth, those with rhetorical prowess and command of language will be significantly empowered to participate in constructing commonplaces and inventional schema while those who lack these skills will not. Yet rhetoric is as often heralded as a means of empowerment and peaceably disrupting power as it is chastised for its role in marginalizing people.

Deciding social values. Just as some rhetoricians say reality, and therefore truth, hinge on context, it is widely conceded that values do, also. When it comes to constructing values, scholars agree that there must be some commonplace first. Bacon (1620) cautioned against permitting idols from dogmas of philosophies and from living among systems to immigrate to people's very minds, because these idols distort commonplaces and reality. To avoid these problems and establish commonplaces, Burke (1950) advocated identification and consubstantiality, much the same way Cicero (55

BCE) advocated speakers be branded with the emotions they want their audiences to experience, or what Blair (1783) called pathetic eloquence.

Booth (1974) discussed how values and intentions--what Burke (1950, 1969) would call motives--aren't considered part of knowledge or commonplaces, but become consubstantially one via delivered or realized intent. Booth (1974) maintained that rhetoric is more than logic alone, and to demote tools of rhetoric like *ethos* and *pathos* to artistic proofs effectively divorces intention from knowledge and limits the ways we can know, the commonplaces we can create, and the boundaries of inventional schema, to strictly logical and scientific ways. Lyotard (1984) expressed a similar idea in his discussion of scientific knowledge marginalizing other types of knowledge, such as through narrative. But reality is composed of more than scientific proofs, and it is here where intentions are inferred, according to Booth, that value is created. Perelman (1969) posited that presence--what Burke would call attention--implicitly sets value, and that an appeal to reason must be identified not as an appeal to a single truth or reality, but an appeal for the adherence of an audience--essentially a small-scale version of constructing reality and commonplaces.

Using this synthetic definition of social values, then the role for truth to play is to express a disconnect between commonplaces and social values. Because both commonplaces and social values are socially constructed according to the rhetorical theories examined here (Aristotle, 2007; Bacon, 1620; Booth, 1974; Burke, 1950, 1969; Foucault, 1969; Perelman, 1969; Richards), reconciling these differences is a matter of

renegotiating commonplaces from individual experiences, then values from reality, all accomplished through language and rhetoric.

Conclusion

While commonplaces could be problematic for their roles in deciding truths, marginalizing personal experience, and deciding social values, they were still foundational to community, canonical memory, and invention. All of these activities in commonplaces were just that: active. People had to be active in these settings to participate in constructing, sharing, and deciding upon knowledge. As early as the Middle Ages, the conception of memory was being restricted to include only some functions of memory (e.g. memorization), and the authority of community consensus in commonplaces drifted toward autonomous information. The resulting possibilities for invention were augmented by increased access to information without an imperative need of commonplaces, and at the same reduced by increased generic conventions.

Chapter 3

Medieval Memory

[I]t is now clear that a purely oral tradition knows no division between recollecting and doing. The pre-alphabetic bard does not, like his medieval counterpart, draw on a storehouse of memories to compose a poem. Rather, he dips into a grab bag of phrases and adjectives and, driven by the rhythms of the lyre, spins the yarn of a tale.⁶

Ivan Illich and Barry Sanders in their book *ABC: The Alphabetization of the Popular Mind* (1988) quoted above, reconstructed the historical progression of the advent and use of the alphabet. Positing that the alphabet and its use were analogous to larger cultural and epistemological changes, Illich and Sanders demonstrated how writing technologies have shifted knowledge and reason themselves from being stored in the mind and gaining life through discourse to being stored in records, such as writing. The medieval period was the site of this change, and many others. Early medieval people's uses of memory are significant to the historical progression from commonplaces to databases because they occurred in a time when classical memory and commonplaces were first meeting external memory and databases. In this chapter, I explore these issues in order to better establish the trajectory of memory and with it commonplaces and databases as means of invention. By reconstructing epistemological changes that occurred during this time, I will be better able to establish the modern positioning of

⁶ (Illich & Sanders, 1988, p. 15)

databases and their information as authoritative by tracing this idea back to its roots in medieval technologies.

In the early Middle Ages, memory remained polyvalent to rhetoric and inventional schemas. Yates's (1966) reconstruction of the canon applies to the early Middle Ages as well as oral, preliterate culture: the canon was composed of improving the memory, imprinting on the memory, memorizing in order, making memorable, holding in memory, retrieving from memory, delivering from memory, and preserving in memory (p. 2-45).

Of the canons, Yates maintained, memory was particularly adaptable to different situations. Community and commonplaces were still the sites of memory for early medieval people. Though texts were becoming ubiquitous, they would only just begin to resemble a database-like system as books were collected and libraries born (e.g. indexes, taxonomies, concordances) (Illich & Sanders, 1988; Ramsay, 2004). The canons, which "do not wither with the growing dominance of writing; rather, they change form" (Welch, 1993, p. 19) were all adapting well to increasing texts.

Though writing was becoming more common during the early Middle Ages, people still used memory much the way preliterate cultures had. Mary Carruthers's *The Book of Memory* (1990) explores the relationship between memory and text during this time. Rather than texts taking the place of commonplaces for access to information and memory, people still practiced memory as a way of thought and commonplaces as a means of invention from memory. Memory was still very separate from texts: instead of externalizing memory, written texts acted more like reminders or memory aids. Texts

were truly unique; they were handmade, so even texts serving to document the same information were far from uniform. Memory was superior to texts, and necessary for providing accurate accounts using these documents as memory aids. Memory, not the written texts, was both the authority in discerning and home to real knowledge, ideas, etc. (Carruthers, 1990).

In the early Middle Ages, commonplaces were still the sites of invention from memory, and consensus by the community determined the rules of invention (Crowley, 1993). Medieval people used commonplaces the same way ancient people had: as a way to access communal memory and participate in culture. Commonplaces still determined the templates of information that people adapted to fit various invention topics. They remained the sites where people established and communicated reality, using rhetoric and language to decide truths. They remained potentially problematic because of the inherent complications of deciding social values, even if doing so meant marginalizing personal experience in favor of consensus in the community.

In *Oral Memory and the Teaching of Literacy* (1993), Joyce Middleton posited that oral memory (à la Ong [1982]) is critical to temporal and cultural continuity. She analyzed *Song of Solomon* for its depiction of both generational and cultural conflicts arising from a more modern loss of oral memory. For Middleton, oral memory is necessary for internalizing culture, and thus for developing voice and identity, whereas writing externalizes culture. Middleton championed orality as part of memory for its uses in both inner and outer speech. Besides these features, Illich and Sanders (1998) maintained that “a purely oral tradition knows no division between recollecting and

doing” (p. 15). In other words, preliterate cultures engaged memory as a process that reinforced cultural identity, rather than a storehouse that reinforced individual identity.

Late Middle Ages

By the end of the Middle Ages, however, changes to commonplaces and memory were being realized. As writing became more common and standardized, authority began to shift from commonplaces to technology.

The first phase of this evolution was the externalization of memory. Illich and Sanders (1988) demonstrated how writing technologies shifted knowledge and reason themselves from occurring in the mind and gaining life through discourse in commonplaces to occurring in records, such as writing: “The alphabetic scribe carries what is spoken from the ever-passing moment and sets down what he has heard in the permanent space of language. Only with this act can knowledge, separate from speech, be born” (p. 7-8). Externalizing information and knowledge was the first step to externalizing memory. Illich and Sanders identified the memory-as-store schema as the prototype for external memory. Once information could be autonomous, as it was in documents, then the concept of memory began to shift from a mental process dependent on community to simply a means of storing information.

Once memory was conceived this way, as a store to be “opened, searched, and used,” (Illich & Sanders, 1988, p. 15), this schema was replicated with external technologies, such as writing. If documents contained autonomous information, then memory could be easily externalized, presumably freeing the mind to pursue other developments when suddenly relieved of the processes of memory.

Crowley (1993) pinpointed a significant change corresponding with autonomous, external knowledge: from community-based authority to individual authority. This occurred as texts became considered reliable sources of information and personal experience became privileged over community consensus for invention. By the end of the Middle Ages, external information was consubstantial with commonplaces, effectively freeing people from their reliance on commonplaces as inventional schema and replacing them with texts. Inventing from commonplaces involved deciding upon which known thing/s to compare with which unknown thing/s. The known things were known in the commonplaces, so invention always necessarily relied on other people's agreements about what was known, the very borders of the commonplaces. Inventing from texts and personal experience, on the other hand, was a matter of discovering information in texts and personal experience upon which to expand or to otherwise respond.

The terms invention and delivery are often used interchangeably. Compare the *Oxford English Dictionary's* (*OED*) definition of rhetorical invention: "The finding out or selection of topics to be treated, or arguments to be used" with the *OED's* definition of the discovery method (of education): "a method of instruction in which pupils are encouraged to acquire knowledge actively by their own investigations, rather than passively by listening and reading." The semantic shift from invention to discovery, referring to the same canon, is telling in its change from selecting to finding. When the value of personal experience at last rivaled that of commonplaces, the problems of commonplaces that could marginalize personal experiences in favor of consensus were

effectively bypassed. Now the individual was privileged with authority over the community.

As technology improved one shortcoming of commonplaces, it complicated participation in ways commonplaces had not. In commonplaces, consensus by the community had determined the rules of invention. In the technology paradigm, technology itself determined these rules (Crowley, 1993). To participate in commonplaces, one had platonically only to interact by speaking and listening. To participate in writing technologies, one had to be able to read. In order to compose and deliver with technology, one had to be able to write and have access to appropriate writing supplies--the physical means to record information.

Technology also changed its stores of information differently than commonplaces had. Commonplaces were living bodies of information, recursively informing and being informed by the people who summoned them. Commonplaces could change as quickly as people could share information through discourse. Writing technology, on the other hand, worked in linear processes that could happen in vacuums, since writing removed the need for context from information (Braun, 2001, p. 145). Similarly, once information was recorded, the record did not change as commonplace information did.

When authority changed, invention changed with it. A rhetor's task was becoming less to "compare statements about what was known or agreed upon [commonplaces] with statements about which there was disagreement" (Crowley, 1990, p. 3) because commonplaces were being replaced with information. Instead, rhetors' tasks were becoming more to invent from personal experience and from documented information

without regard for what was known or about what there was disagreement in the community. Community mattered less and writing mattered more. With writing came the loss of context about which Plato (1956) had worried aloud. For the first time, information could be delivered even in the absence of people, via documents. The entire rhetorical process, from invention to delivery, could be accomplished even in the absence of people, via documents (Crowley, 1990).

The *OED*'s etymological notes about the word authority add another significant layer to this change. *Autorite* was a book or quotation--both externalized information--that settled arguments. This seems analogous to classical memory and commonplaces: community consensus decided what experiences and memories constituted cultural commonplaces, and then commonplaces settled arguments. When authority was located in documents, however, community and consensus were not always necessary for memory anymore.

As recorded information began to edge out commonplaces, epistemology changed with the environment. Because recorded information was as credible and in some ways more reliable than commonplaces, recorded information became a site of learning and making sense of the world (Carruthers, 1990; Crowley, 1990, 1993; Illich & Sanders, 1998; Yates, 1966). This new schema is credited with increasing access to information and overcoming the space and time restrictions imposed by interactions in commonplaces. To do so, it exchanged the immediacy of those interactions with other people in commonplaces for potentially contextless information (Crowley, 1990; Illich & Sanders, 1988).

Conclusion

By the end of the Middle Ages, documented information was authoritative, and there was more documented information than could possibly be held in memory.

Conceptually, memory was already reduced to a store, and documents proved more expansive stores than mental ones. In response to these changes brought on by writing technologies, the conception and practice of canonical rhetorical memory had undergone significant transformations⁷:

Ancient Greek Memory

Memory (Invention) (Arrangement) (Style) (Delivery)

- improving the memory ...
- imprinting on the memory
- making memorable
- holding in memory
- re-conceiving memory
- delivering from memory
- preserving in memory
- memorizing in order
- retrieving from memory

Memory at the end of the Middle Ages

Memorization (Invention) (Arrangement) (Style) (Delivery)

- retrieving from memory ...
- delivering from memory

With memory thus transformed to such a shallow and narrow canon, it could lose its foundational, *melistic* relationship to the other canons. Regardless of memory's future, cultural commonplaces so significant to the canon had already changed, too. They began as the only cultural tool of memory, so important to community, epistemology, and

⁷ (Crowley, 1990; Yates, 1966)

invention. They evolved to represent not the only such cultural tool, but one end of a spectrum. At the other end were writing and information technologies, such as documents and databases.

Writing technology changed the conception of memory from a mental process to a storehouse of information. Once memory was only a storehouse, documents served as even better, external storehouses. They were capable of holding apparently infinite information and worked in linear processes that did not change: while commonplace history and information changed with the interactions of its members, recorded information did not. Documents assumed the authority that commonplaces had in the past. For these reasons, technology and its external information storehouse entirely transformed classical memory.

By the end of the Middle Ages, the technology of taxonomies, indexes, and concordances that navigated the body of external information performed the functions once performed by people in using memory and engaging in commonplaces. Memories were now externalized in documents, and the processes of classical memory were being assigned to these new search technologies. The technology of taxonomies, indexes, and concordances has evolved further into databases.

Chapter 4

Modern Memory

...Americans were now supposed to make their own sense of the world. There was no dependable authority left to turn to, no life raft in the increasingly perilous informational sea. This coincided with an age when Americans needed to understand more of the world than ever before. A factory worker in suburban Ohio now needed to understand the cultures of places like Bangalore and Beijing to understand why he had lost his job. Which, incidentally, he probably had. Now broke, or under severe financial pressure, with no community leaders, no community, no news he can trust, Joe American has to turn on the Internet and tell himself a story that makes sense to him.

What story is he going to tell?⁸

Matt Taibbi's *The Great Derangement* (2009), quoted here, is the report of a fragmented society whose members have only an illusion of authority in government and in negotiating reality. Sadly and endearingly desperate, the characters Taibbi conveyed searched vainly for answers and meaning in "the increasingly perilous informational sea" (p. 189). This grim picture is certainly only one perspective, but one (among many) that can be understood in terms of modern people's treatment and uses of classical memory and commonplaces.

By the 20th century, memory was no longer considered a rhetorical canon in composition textbooks (Crowley, 1990; Reynolds, 1993; Welch, 1993). John Frederick Reynolds, in his article *Memory Issues in Composition Studies* (1993), documented all the canons' evolutions through languages (i.e. from Greek to Latin) and pedagogical

⁸ (Taibbi, 2009, p. 189)

practices, calling particular attention to the reduction and/or deletion of certain canons, such as memory. Memory was first demoted from a mental process critical to community, commonplaces, invention, and epistemology to mere memorization and mnemonic tricks (e.g. Crowley, 1990, 1993; Reynolds, 1993; Welch, 1993). Memorization and mnemonic tricks were of diminishing importance and practical use as information was increasingly stored in external documents (Crowley, 1990, 1993; Illich & Sanders, 1988). The shift from orality to literacy de-emphasized the immediacy of community and commonplaces and led to the loss of classical memory, in turn leading invention to become a matter of conforming to generic constraints (Crowley, 1990; Lyotard, 1984; Reynolds, 1993). Consequently, the canon, already changed from memory to memorization, was cut. Many of the classical uses of memory, however, are still in practice, and the shift from literacy to multiliteracy claims to re-emphasize community and offer new means of invention.

Canonical Memory

In *The Faculty of Memory*, Virginia Allen (1993) demonstrated how classical conceptions of memory were critical to modern 20th-century developments in communication, human development, and psychology. Allen examined how memory is “not a perception or conception but a process subsequent to both” (p. 50) in addition to the types of reasoning that comprised the classical canon.

Classical memory is still relevant to rhetoric and composition studies, as well. In *Sappho’s Memory*, Susan Jarratt (2002) presented a gendered construction of memory by tracing practices of memory from 6th-century Lesbos poets Sappho and Alcaeus to classical Greek and Roman rhetoricians. Memory is presented as a polyvalent issue in

this context for ancient and modern conceptions, calling attention not only to gender but to forgetting (i.e. what is forgotten is equally important as what is remembered); memory as a social practice and fundamental to shared culture; and memory as a potential beta version of rhetoric itself.

Jarratt's research is in keeping with Booth's (1974) position that rhetoric and the uses of memory are more than logic--they determine the ways we can know, the commonplaces we can create, and the boundaries of inventional schema. As a social practice, invention from memory can create community and commonplaces by communicating about unshared experiences (e.g. Bacon, 1620; Burke, 1666; Campbell, 1776; Foucault, 1969; Perelman, 1969), and sharing and constructing that knowledge constitute the aims of rhetorical invention.

Jarratt is not the only scholar to point out signs of memory's survival in various forms. Kathleen Ryan, in *Memory, Literacy, and Invention* (1993), specifically detailed applications of classical memory. With what she called rememored knowing, Ryan argued for the original canon of memory to be restored in composition pedagogy. Rememored knowing has four dimensions: memory material, or the actual contents of one's memory; imagination and interpretation, or the process by which one interprets and makes meanings of memories; context and subjectivity, or what, why, and how one remembers; and transformation, or the resulting new knowledge from memory material—and the imperative to share and act upon this new knowledge. Ryan documented some activities for incorporating rememored knowing into writing classrooms (specifically in the personal essay) such that memory material is not something to be simply replicated

and transcribed, but cultivated and used to better understand oneself and one's personal history, including larger social contexts and subjectivity.

Ryan's re-appropriation of memory echoes Crowley's (1990) sentiments about invention from classical memory. The comparison of statements about what was known and "about which there was disagreement" (p. 3) privileged individuals in invention. Relatively free of generic constraints in their comparisons, rhetors could invent by drawing from personal and/or communal memory and/or clever interpretations of memory.

Kathleen Welch demonstrated in her article, *Reconfiguring Writing and Delivery in Secondary Orality* (1993), that the rhetorical canons are highly adaptable to changing situations. Welch tracked each of the canons' historical progression from oral to literate cultures, and then again to the current culture of secondary orality, or multiliteracy. To track these changes, Welch examined writing textbooks that first diminished the capacities of some classical canons, such as memory, before ultimately eliminating them from their content. Welch insisted that these canons "do not wither with the growing dominance of writing; rather, they change form" (p. 19). She examined a modern news broadcast and compared its rhetorical functions to those of Homer's *Odyssey* to showcase how the rhetorical canons have changed form to fit various environments and technologies.

The multiliteracy comprising the required skill sets of the 21st century emphasizes community as a foundational, *melistic*, component of participation in communicative and rhetorical practices. Not only is this emphasis strikingly like the

original canon of memory, one might also argue it brings the social context of rhetorical practices full-circle, back to commonplaces. In other words, the collaborative nature of multimodal communications could be viewed as a kind of return to community-based commonplaces. These new commonplaces occur as people actively communicate via technologies rather than in person, or in virtual communities.

For contemporary composition pedagogy and practical applications in writing classrooms, cultural and personal memory become valuable tools for instructors (Crowley, 1990, 1993; Jarratt, Mack, Sartor, & Watson, 2009; Ryan, 2004; Welch, 1993, 1999). For example, what is remembered of one's composition courses effects how one perceives her writing skills, processes, and the rest of her writing coursework (Jarratt, Mack, Sartor, & Watson, 2009). Instructors might employ classical memory more proactively by encouraging students to use a memory as a starting point for writing and understanding a personal memory within a larger social context (Ryan, 2004). By virtue of being opposite, forgetting is also associated with memory, and what one forgets might be as important as what one remembers (Jarratt, 2002), including how a person might forget some part of an experience in order to better categorize that experience elsewhere (Achugar, 2008; Jarratt, Mack, Sartor, & Watson, 2009; Ryan, 2004). In order to engage the classical concept of memory in current pedagogy, it is necessary to first situate the contemporary concept of memory in a context of community and multiliteracy.

It should be clarified that cultural memory and classical communal memory are essentially the same issue, on different scales. They are both types of cultural commonplaces. Cultural memory is large-scale and applies to an entire culture, while

communal memory is small-scale and applies only to specific communities. Cultural memory refers to the shared history of a group of people, as, for example, national events become part of cultural memory. Those memories are subject to cultural frameworks and interpretations, are shared and shaped through discourse, become commonplaces, and are mediated outside of individuals--i.e. one person's different interpretation of events will not be included in the cultural memory (Achugar, 2008). This mirrors ancient and medieval practices where some experiences were not included in classical commonplaces in favor of community consensus (Crowley, 1990, 1993).

Another branch of cultural memory is constructed by the very act of remembering. Reflecting on experiences can become culturally significant when people recall experiences in connection to other experiences and create meanings from the relationships among different experiences, including those of other people (Achugar, 2008; Jarratt, Mack, Sartor, & Watson, 2009). Similarly, this reflective process can change how a person views experiences as they are recalled from different perspectives (Ryan, 2004).

The implications and potential applications of memory and cultural commonplaces in the present time are far-reaching, from how histories are understood (Achugar, 2008) to usability and expectations of how things work (Reynolds, 1993), to name a few. The semantic range of community has shifted over time from a group of people physically interacting with and helping sustain each other to the more current online-community metaphor. Clearly, communities are still critical and compositionists studying Web 2.0 and multiliteracy are quick to point out the emphasis on community

and collaboration inherent in modern technology (Clark, 2010; Purdy, 2010; Ryan, 2004; Selber, 2004; Sorapure, 2010).

The contemporary literature shows a consistent imperative that students not simply engage in recollection as though idly passing the time but use the processes of memory and remembering to examine experiences and create new meanings; once one has created new meanings, she should contribute her insight to the larger discourse community (Achugar, 2008; Jarratt, 2002; Jarratt, Mack, Sartor, & Watson, 2009; Ryan, 2004). This contribution is analogous to participation in commonplaces to debate truth, rhetoric, and the relationship between them and invention (e.g. Aristotle, 2007; Bacon, 1620; Booth, 1974; Burke, 1950; Foucault, 1969; Perelman, 1969; Richards, 1936).

With the ubiquity of Web 2.0 technology and multiliteracy, contributing insight is, in some ways, easier than ever (Clark, 2010; Purdy, 2010; Sorapure, 2010). Web 2.0 platforms support interactive applications—everything from product reviews to social networking to Wikipedia and information visualization tools even require interaction in order to be fully effective (Purdy, 2010; Sorapure, 2010).

Along with strongly encouraging interaction and sharing knowledge, technology is impacting the ways students invent in significant ways. Recent conversations in academic discourse champion new instructional methods for teaching research and writing. Some (e.g. Purdy, 2010) have argued that new technology already integrates the two conceptually and spatially, reflecting the recursive nature of commonplaces and flouting the linearity of traditional print media. Other tools for presenting information are

now widely available and still underutilized (Sorapure, 2010); and students are now contributing very publicly in order to participate in online communities (Clark, 2010).

Modern Databases

Modern people have many options for interactions and invention. They can interact with other people, share communal memory, and invent in commonplaces. Or, they can interact virtually with other people or only with autonomous information, access stored information in place of memory, and invent using only technology without the need for people. Database technologies that navigate expansive collections of external information perform the functions once performed by people in using memory and engaging in commonplaces. What is a Google search, after all, but a trip to access stores of memory, held in autonomous, external information (e.g. Illich & Sanders, 1988)? The Google technology sifts through information and presents it according to algorithmic relevance (Carr, 2008)--arguably a task similar to a classical rhetor's of comparing "statements about what was known or agreed upon [commonplaces] with statements about which there was disagreement" (Crowley, 1990, p. 3).

In composition studies, a consistent critique of the database model has regarded invention. This invention issue has been identified concisely as the juxtaposition of "the unique character of particular acts of writing versus the conventions of language, genre, and social occasion that make that act understandable to others" (Faigley, 1986, p. 537). If genre now subsumes language choices and is a direct response to social situations, then the issue is more precisely: the unique character of writing versus genre conventions, or, invention (e.g. Lyotard, 1984).

In her book, *Electric Rhetoric: Classical Rhetoric, Oralism, and a New Literacy* (1999), Kathleen Welch complicated this issue of constraints and invention. According to Welch, the current multiliterate culture is a type of oral culture which is better suited to many facets of classical memory than literate culture was. Commonplaces as common templates of arguments were not so well suited to literacy and should be “redeployed...retheorized with recent theory” (p. 117). The loss of these common templates occurred because “the artifact of the text overwhelm[ed] us with its importance, permanence, and authority, [so] *topoi* appear[ed] to be cliched, superficial, and incapable of providing the kind of depth that has been prized” (p. 116). However, with argument templates thus redundant and unnecessary, invention was not broadened but reduced to the generic constraints of technology.

At best, invention is stifled by generic conventions, and at worst, invention has been replaced with formulaic, prescriptive approaches to generic conventions (Connors, 1993; Crowley, 1990, 1993; Faigley, 1986; Lyotard, 1984; Welch, 1999). This is in sharp contrast to classical rhetoric, when “the process of invention was separate from and prior to generic considerations” (Crowley, 1990, p. 98). In classical commonplaces, the only such generic constraints to invention, platonically, were to have a language in common with others. Common argument templates were tools of orators, not requirements (Crowley, 1993; Welch, 1999). Nobody was prevented from participating in commonplaces because of not having access to pen and paper, so to speak. In the database model, however, invention has been so streamlined by technology that many constraints arise, such as access to the appropriate technology, knowledge of how to best

apply that technology, and a myriad of other constraints that result in consistency, which makes information readily useful to other people. Some of these constraints include arrangement and presentation of information.

Of the canons of rhetoric, even in modern rather than classical terms (though perhaps not in reality), invention has always denoted the creation of an argument, and delivery its deployment. Yet when invention has been reduced to following conventions, the difference between invention and delivery is hard to pinpoint. Consider the following from *Actio: A Rhetoric of Written Delivery* (my emphasis):

Beyond the mere conventions of delivery there are many options, as speakers have always known. Writers, on the other hand, have tended to cling desperately to the letter of their handbook laws, never bestirring themselves to investigate whether the standard manuscript format they use is the most effective. That question of effectiveness has to do with ethical appeal, for the realm of *actio* [delivery] is the realm of *ethos*... (Connors, 1993, p. 66)

The connection of delivery and *ethos* is worth some consideration, especially when delivery, as presented in this instance, sounds strikingly like the current practice of invention. Rhetors in classical commonplaces conveyed *ethos* by their actions, which were assimilated into commonplace knowledge (Crowley, 1990). If one's *ethos* was not already established, then one must have some knowledge of *ethos* according to particular cultural commonplaces to portray oneself accordingly. In the database model, one must rely on strict adherence to conventions of delivery in order to portray *ethos* (Connors, 1993).

Classical invention relied solely on commonplaces and interactions with other people. Modern invention relies ever more on databases to aid in discovering information and can be effectively executed without ever engaging other people. Many have argued

commonplaces had more potential for inspiring creativity and encouraging innovative solutions to invention problems because the generic constraints of invention were more pliable. In addition, ancient rhetors had at their disposal their personal and communal memories, plus whatever their interpretations of those memories might provide (Welch, 1993). For modern rhetors relying on databases, personal and communal memories have been externalized, and their recollection and interpretation are increasingly outsourced to database technologies.

Compare the evolution of *The St. Martin's Guide's* definition of invention in light of this discussion. "*The St. Martin's Guide*, for example, defines invention as 'Searching your memory and discovering the possibilities for your subject'" (Axelrod & Cooper, 1988, p. 88 as cited in Reynolds, 1993, p. 10). Reynolds cited the 1988 publication of the composition textbook. The 2010 publication reads:

Invention is the word used since the time of Plato and Aristotle to describe the process of thinking as we compose. Invention includes deciding on your purpose in writing to a particular audience and figuring out how best to achieve your purpose; analyzing and questioning other people's ideas as well as your own; assimilating information from different sources; and organizing it logically (Axelrod & Cooper, 2010, p. 8).

Searching one's memory has slipped to mean assimilating information from different sources. When memories are externalized in documents and technology, the means of searching them also changes to those appropriate for an externalized technology.

The processes of memory and invention are passive in this technology model. Rather than people actively engaging other people to purposefully make sense of their worlds (as in the commonplace model), people can now passively receive information from databases. Jean-Francois Lyotard pointed to further complications and fragmenting

of invention in *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (1984) with what he called the mercantilization, or commodification, of knowledge:

Knowledge is and will be produced in order to be sold, it is and will be consumed in order to be valorized in a new production: in both cases, the goal is exchange. Knowledge ceases to be an end in itself, it loses its “use value.” (p. 4-5)

According to Lyotard, information is a commodity to be bought and sold, its value derived from its usefulness toward some other ends, toward creating something new. When information is commodified this way, people use it passively. Knowledge is not constructed, decided upon, invested in; rather, it is bought prepackaged and used for another end. If knowledge has been thus commodified, then the issues of its production are necessarily complicated. Who determines the value of information, how is it paid for, and who has access to the marketplaces of information? These issues seriously fragment invention in the database model where people are removed from the process, information is understood as a commodity, and people don't often question who is selling them information or why.

Database proponents such as Ramsay (2004) are quick to point out “[t]he power of relational databases to enable the serendipitous apprehension of relationships would be... much more increased” (Databases and the Humanist section, par. 3) because databases far exceed individual knowledge. Invention can certainly be aided by the circumstances databases provide. No longer bound by the in-person constraints of classical commonplaces, smart and clever people can engage each other and ideas across space and even time through print and electronic media (Carr, 2008; Crowley, 1990, 1993; Ramsay, 2004).

However, a dislocating aspect of databases is this same loss of context, this further disconnect between information and the people who create and interpret it. Epistemology in the database model is complicated compared to classical commonplaces. Rather than having neat categories of known and unknown that require a comparison and a decision about their validity, as in commonplaces, databases offer seemingly infinite information, each piece as authoritative as the others (Carr, 2008; Crowley, 1990, Illich & Sanders, 1988). While people can interact with other people using communication technology, they can also interact with documents alone, having no need for knowledge of or interaction with the document's original author/s. It is the confusion of these two actions that proves problematic. The fact that interacting with a document is in no way like interacting with a person is often overlooked. Context becomes even more important with the commodification of knowledge that Lyotard (1984) has posited. If information is a commodity that is bought and sold, that is a very important layer for contextualizing information.

Richards (1936) maintained that words are interanimated and abridge context--in other words, words stand in for context, so communication does not occur in vacuums, even when communication is removed from context. Words simply take the place of context. Noted compositionist Peter Elbow, however, maintained that no matter what context within which one works, it is critical to remember that communication is more than text: "Insofar as we consider language purely through the text lens, it is disembodied language; no one is speaking to anyone" (2007, p. 175). Elbow described a change from writing primarily for work or school that was addressed to "a judging authority who knew

more about writing or the topic than the writer” to the ubiquity of online writing “for *strangers!*” (Elbow, 2007, p. 171 [original emphasis]). Writing for strangers without context contrasts sharply with the commonplace model of discourse. Yet this for-strangers model is increasingly prescribed (e.g. Ramsay, 2004).

Elbow’s (2007) argument, interpreted in this discussion of commonplaces and databases, favors commonplaces because they are created and shared by people, giving context to information and invention. In other words, the process is an active one. Elbow’s choice of words is telling, in that he is not concerned with people writing to strangers, but for them. One might write to a stranger about a job, for example, but there is still an identifiable rhetorical situation, including composer and audience. Writing for strangers, on the other hand, shifts the rhetorical situation so that to whom one writes is unclear, and therefore the entire situation is, also.

Another complication of the database model is the Orwellian potential of content management systems to further fragment people’s knowledge and experience of information and epistemology. Ironically, Orwell’s novels became the subjects of such a real-life controversy when Amazon.com remotely deleted copies of *1984* and *Animal Farm* from customers’ Kindles. Brad Stone reported in *The New York Times* that another company, not Amazon, used the Kindle store’s self-service function to add the novels to the marketplace, but did not have the rights to them. When the rights holder notified Amazon, Amazon remotely deleted those unlicensed editions from the Kindles of people who had bought them and refunded the purchase price. Stone remarked of this practice:

Retailers of physical goods cannot, of course, force their way into a customer's home to take back a purchase, no matter how bootlegged it turns out to be. Yet Amazon appears to maintain a unique tether to the digital content it sells for the Kindle. (Stone, 2009)

The problem goes beyond tethers between sellers and their products. If information is a commodity, as Lyotard (1984) maintained, then why wouldn't vendors be able not only to determine what information is available in the marketplace, but also update already-sold products? Besides information disappearing like these novels did, information can also change in the same way, without people's knowledge or consent.

A special-edition series of articles from 2001 detailed many aspects of content management systems. This ancillary database technology is essentially capable of performing find-and-replace functions within databases. This technology is helpful, for example, when a company needs to update a part number in all of its records. No employee will be tasked with manual updates in every document from product catalogs to billing invoices, because the technology can accomplish the task more efficiently (Boiko, Warren, Kartchner, & Emery, 2001). The potential problems of this content-management technology are its fragmentary effects when updates are not noted. Changes can be of any scale, so one might be certain of reading about X when now the same literature is about Y. The potential misuse of such systems, as in Orwell's *1984*, is another cause of concern, especially regarding epistemology (Boiko, Warren, Kartchner, & Emery, 2001; Carr, 2008).

Conclusion

Commonplaces and databases both have their benefits and deficiencies regarding invention heuristics. As many cited here have demonstrated, writing has become

increasingly autonomous: people write to strangers; people write anonymously; people gain *ethos* by following generic rules of discourse communities, not through any temporal associations; people can satisfy their inventional needs through databases alone, with no need for ever interacting with other people; and people can outsource their memory needs the same way.

Rather than writing becoming increasingly autonomous, more precisely, individual authority has become increasingly autonomous. Crowley (1993) traced this changing dynamic of commonplaces and databases as personal experience became more valuable than commonplaces:

From Campbell's day [circa late 1700s] forward, modern rhetoricians substituted something they called "experience" for communal memory [commonplaces]. This curious entity was presumed to be constituted by an individual's sensory relationship to the physical world. Modern rhetoricians simply forgot or neglected the roles played by ideology, communal tradition, and memory in forming a self. This forgetfulness of common knowledge led in turn to the privatization of invention, because its results were thought to be solely the results of "individual experience." This set of moves made invention seem somewhat mysterious to those who were not good at it. Modern rhetoricians explained that some people were better at invention than others because they had had more productive experiences: They had read more, done more, thought harder. The pedagogical response to this impasse was to concentrate on arrangement and style. (p. 39)

It may seem that people and databases are capable of providing the same access to common knowledge, but the problem with databases can be its very strength: the "serendipitous apprehension of relationships" (Ramsay, 2004). Yet databases may seem interchangeable with commonplaces for memory and inventional schema because society has treated documents as authoritative for so long (e.g. Illich & Sanders, 1988).

Chapter 5

Siri Analysis and Classroom Application

John Malkovich: Joke?

Siri: Two iPhones walk into a bar... I forget the rest.

John Malkovich: That's funny.

Siri: Was it something I said?

John Malkovich: Yes it was.⁹

Siri is an intelligent assistant technology created by Apple which comes standard with the latest iPhone (4S). The Apple website described it this way:

Siri on iPhone 4S lets you use your voice to send messages, schedule meetings, place phone calls, and more. Ask Siri to do things just by talking the way you talk. Siri understands what you say, knows what you mean, and even talks back. Siri is so easy to use and does so much, you'll keep finding more and more ways to use it. (Apple, Inc., 2012)

People began anthropomorphizing information by granting it authority to stand on its own--more precisely, for information to "speak" for itself--in the Middle Ages. Before this, only people could know information. Once external information was authoritative and autonomous, it was tasked with storing information and memories externally. As technology evolved along with the ever growing body of information, databases were created to search, analyze, categorize, and retrieve information. Information has taken over classical memory and externalized it: the memory-as-storehouse scheme was externalized with recorded information; the memory-as-process scheme was externalized with databases. Making technology seem like people, as in the case of Siri, mainstreams a

⁹ This exchange was part of an advertisement for Siri (Apple.)

significant advancement of this anthropomorphization. The drastic changes from memory as a *melistic* rhetorical canon to a type of computation outsourced to technology took centuries to be realized. Technology like Siri accelerates this trajectory with its widespread availability and sudden cultural ubiquity.¹⁰ In this chapter, I investigate Siri as a model database system and some problems with the presentation of Siri as human and the idea that commonplaces and databases are interchangeable.

Welch described the indistinction between people and technology as “one of the most intellectually and politically dangerous issues of our time” (1999, p. 68). She further explained how this danger results from the separation of people from knowledge or information via writing:

[T]he idea that knowledge is a retrievable reality out there in the world...an idea appropriated in ways that suggest the workings of machines rather than the interactions of human beings with various constructions of the world [is dangerous]. The idea that knowledge and one’s own encoding (in speaking, writing, or any symbol system) are separate entities disconnected from the decoder remains a general received opinion even among thinking people... (p. 68-69)

As technology ever advances, it leads to interfaces like Siri that seem as capable as people in making sense of recorded information. In this situation, people are no longer required to actively process information, and they might passively receive it instead.

As different as classical memory is from documented information, so cultural commonplaces are different from information databases. Commonplaces require the interactions of people to create, interpret, and apply them. In commonplaces, people make sense of memories. Databases, conversely, require technology to operate. In the

¹⁰ Even Apple websites alternate between referring to Siri as it and as she (Apple; Apple, Inc., 2012).

database model, technology makes sense of memories, stored as information.

Commonplaces and databases fulfill the same role to each conception of memory, ancient and modern.

At issue with technology like Siri is not what technology is capable of. At issue here are ancillary, fragmentary consequences to outsourcing once important personal and cultural faculties. Technology like Siri is an intriguing artifact for analysis because it effectively denies the differences in commonplaces and databases--instead, it marries the two and presents them as consubstantially one. Siri is almost convincing evidence of this claim. Just like people in commonplaces, Siri knows enthymemes, has relaxed generic constraints of invention (“just [talk] the way you talk” to Siri [Apple, Inc., 2012]), and interacts in real time.

But Siri is not a person who shares commonplaces. Siri is a technology. By combining its technological powers with some of the features of commonplaces, Siri creates revolutionary inventional schema. Instead of the strict generic constraints or language games (Lyotard, 1984) that determined the scope of what could be invented in print media and its linear iterations, Siri understands “the way you talk” (Apple, Inc., 2012) as people in commonplaces do. The means of invention are similarly expanded from writing in ways that “cling desperately to the letter of [the] handbooks laws” (Connors, 1993, p. 66) to possibilities beyond the traditional composition of documents. If photo or video recordings are better means of invention, for example, Siri is fully capable of these means. Importantly, a traditional generic constraint of

technology, that one know how to operate that technology effectively, has been largely sidestepped by Siri, a technology that also navigates and manipulates other technologies.

Besides making the rules of invention more pliable as commonplaces did, Siri also incorporates database technology. Siri effectively performs the functions of classical memory by searching huge bodies of information for relevant selections. It also makes interactions with information possible without requiring interactions with that information's author/s, or, for that matter, any consideration of context at all. In fact, Siri even further decontextualizes information than one would experience if she were sifting through search results herself. When Siri returns the results, they are already narrowly focused (in figurative and literal scope--the screen will not display a full page, but will be zoomed in to the relevant location on that page) to address only the specific issue at hand.

While Siri democratizes invention, it also fragments commonplaces by entirely removing the need for people from them. Technology has taken over the roles of classical memory, so important to community and culture. Technology like Siri moves toward the same replacement of commonplaces.

This is especially problematic, as Matt Taibi discovered in his undercover-culture operations. In *The Great Derangement* (2009), he detailed how people looking for meaning could construct almost any reality they wanted, and be justified by the information they found. People with conflicting worldviews can both be equally justified by information in their positions. The religious zealot and the conspiracy theorist are equally authorized by cultural texts, as Taibbi demonstrated. So are the zealot and the atheist, the conspiracy theorist and the state historian, the capitalist and the socialist, the

misanthrope and the humanist, etc. This problem is essentially a lack of cultural commonplaces, made with other people, for purposefully making sense of the world together. Without these commonplaces, people turn to information. The information they find is culturally framed, but not the same way commonplaces are.

In other words, there is a common body of information, but it is not determined purposefully. Instead, it is determined by individuals, each working in individual contexts, who access information. Databases such as Google then prioritize search results based on prior selections (Carr, 2008). Search results, and so information, are thus culturally framed--not by any intentional, purposeful, consensual, meaning-making process, but by random acts of individuals acting in independent contexts. This is how the body of cultural information can justify conflicting points of view. Add to this the underlying commodification of knowledge, and even the possible search results have already been framed by other people buying and selling information (Lyotard, 1984). This has a clearly fragmentary effect on cultures dominated by information.

When one asks Siri for information, then, the response depends on the popularity of responses to previous similar searches. The perils of treating such a technology as a cultural commonplace also include the dangers of content-management updates. Siri's commonplace information could change, even drastically, without warning, notice, or mention of the change. As a database of a seemingly infinite supply of information (available via the Internet), Siri cannot offer agreements about what is known and unknown as people in commonplaces do. Even more substantial than these issues is the fact that commonplaces, by definition, require people, and Siri is not a person.

Siri is a clever interface that has been endowed with many human characteristics. Talking to Siri might even seem like talking to a person in many regards. This hybrid schema that makes information more available and more useful through an interface that acts like a person can be dangerous. The danger lies in the implication that technology can be substituted for people, that databases are consubstantial with commonplaces. And Siri's promoters imply exactly this:

Zoey Deschanel: Is that rain?

Siri: Yes, it appears to be raining.

Zoey Deschanel: Oh, *let's* get tomato soup delivered.

Siri: I found a number of restaurants whose reviews mention tomato soup and that deliver.

Zoey Deschanel: Good--because I don't wanna put on real shoes. Remind me to clean up--tomorrow.

Siri: Ok, I'll remind you.

Zoey Deschanel: Excellent, today *we're* dancing. Play "Shake rattle and roll." (Zoey, emphases added)

Of course, Zoey Deschanel is home alone, by herself. She is not talking on her phone, not using the technology to connect with another person who's not physically there. She's talking to her phone, and technology has enabled it to talk back.

Conclusion

Siri is problematic in this context because it posits an interchangeability of commonplaces and databases. Indeed they are analogous, both critical to concepts of memory and community, both critical to invention. But they are not the same. The differences between the larger situations of classical memory and external memory are important because they give context to important distinctions between commonplaces and databases, even people and technology.

Siri could be improved as a means of invention in various ways. One way would be to make transparent the information Siri accesses, including who ultimately determines that information, and how. This would avoid many of the potential problems of the mercantilization of information that Lyotard (1984) warned against. Another way would be for Siri to incorporate aspects of social searching, perhaps even going so far as to respond with encouragement to actually speak with real people for information. This would be a step back from the current denial of commonplaces and an acknowledgement that technology and databases are not the same. Another way Siri could improve invention or “the production of ideas” (Lyotard, 1984) would be instead of providing answers (which are end points, terminuses, not the production of ideas) to model question-asking, or suggest connections to related ideas.

Chapter 6

Classroom Applications

It may very well be that some students will need to learn to crudely mimic the "distinctive register" of academic discourse before they are prepared to actually and legitimately do the work of the discourse, and before they are sophisticated enough with the refinements of tone and texture to do it with grace or elegance. To say this, however is to say that our students must be our students. Their initial progress will be marked by their abilities to take on the role of privilege, by their abilities to establish authority.¹¹

David Bartholomae wrote an important essay, *Inventing the University* (1985), quoted here, about commonplaces in composition classrooms. His work is important because it empathetically accounts for student errors as they learn to write academically, and because it focuses on the roles of commonplaces in doing so. Bartholomae's essay, however, does not account for databases in composition as my study does. In this final chapter, I explore problems of the uses of databases and of commonplaces in invention, and suggest some ways that both might be used to greater effect in composition classrooms.

In composition classrooms, commonplaces are often presented as another tool alongside databases. Before database use was common practice, Bartholomae (1985) made an impassioned case that writers newly introduced to academic discourses do not yet have the rhetorical tools that would afford them effective participation in those discourse communities. What Bartholomae called discourse communities are types of

¹¹ (Bartholomae, 1985, p. 415)

cultural commonplaces. When faced with the impossible task of participation, then, students fake academic discourses until they are finally able to discern and replicate the long-established rules of those commonplaces. This period of faking the discourse is when students invent the university, or piece together schemata for how particular academic disciplines approach, interpret, and communicate information within their respective discourse communities. Presenting his primary, qualitative research as evidence, Bartholomae argued for re-conceptualizing the import of participation in commonplaces and the markers of good and bad writing. After unpacking his argument, I offer some updates to Bartholomae's work for incorporating databases as a way to balance commonplaces.

One recurring phrase Bartholomae employed is that of students' need to appropriate (or be appropriated by) some particular discourse. In the phrase's original context within the article, Bartholomae (1985) first stated:

The students have to appropriate (or be appropriated by) a specialized discourse, and they have to do this as though they were easily and comfortably one with their audience, as though they were members of the academy, or historians or anthropologists or economists; they have to invent the university by assembling and mimicking its language, finding some compromise between idiosyncrasy, a personal history, and the requirements of convention, the history of a discipline. (p. 403)

Perhaps clarifying the use and limitations of appropriation, or the word's semantic range, is the first step in unpacking Bartholomae's argument. If students must appropriate a specialized discourse, then they must make it their own, even assimilate concepts into a new or existing schemata for that discourse. The *OED* defines appropriate as "to make (a thing) the private property of any one, to make it over to him as his own; to set apart."

These are human actions that can't be performed by another agent upon a human, so it does not hold true that a student could be appropriated by a discourse. Clearly, a discourse could not make a student its own.

What could Bartholomae have meant, then, if appropriated were an incorrect term? Rather than the discourse subsuming a student of whom it is exclusionary, it would simply leave her out or pass her by. Bartholomae's stance would thus be: Students have to appropriate (or be left out of) a specialized discourse. This pedagogically motivating statement represents a divergence of paths with clearly binary results: mastery of a specialized discourse, or exclusion from a specialized discourse--and these specialized discourses, no less, together comprise the unique *lingua franca* of the university.

Applying this new term where Bartholomae used his original term, his message becomes, "Our students, I've said, have to appropriate [(or be left out of)] a specialized discourse, and they have to do this as though they were easily or comfortably one with their audience" (p. 406). A student's process toward appropriating the conventions of these commonplaces include, according to Bartholomae:

- bluffing sameness with audience (p. 403, 406), including bluffing membership in specialized academic discourses or commonplaces (p. 403)
- compiling and using the language of commonplaces (p. 403)
- arranging an equitable marriage between personal and institutional histories and discourses (or personal and institutional commonplaces) (p. 403)

In order to create identification with an audience, a student must enter into a discourse with rules governing "the use of examples, the possible conclusions, the

acceptable commonplaces, and the key words of an essay” until she “can better imagine how a reader will respond to a text and can transform or restructure what [she] ha[s] to say around a goal shared with a reader” (p. 406). When students move from “imitation or parody” to “invention and discovery” and incorporate the language of specialized academic discourses, they are then able to “extend themselves into the commonplaces, set phrases, rituals, gestures, habits of mind, tricks of persuasion, obligatory conclusions, and necessary connections that determine the ‘what might be said’ and constitute knowledge” (p. 408).

In other words, students must learn and conform to the generic conventions within a new commonplace, such as for essays written within a particular academic discipline. In Lyotard’s words, they must learn new language games (1984). These conventions, in turn, determine what can be invented within these commonplaces. Before students learn and conform to these practices and conventions, they are likely to perpetuate what they remember of different contexts until finally realizing that new schemata are necessary for approaching new commonplaces effectively (p. 406-7).

According to Bartholomae’s model, modern commonplaces share many complications with ancient commonplaces. Participation in commonplaces through discourse is still necessary to participate in community (Bartholomae, 1985; Crowley, 1990, 1993). Personal experiences may still be marginalized out of commonplaces. For ancient people, this marginalization likely occurred to preserve community consensus and authority (Crowley, 1990, 1993). For modern people, this marginalization likely occurs when those who try to participate in the commonplaces can not effectively appropriate

their generic constraints (Bartholomae, 1985). Modern commonplaces, though, are not the only places of invention: databases offer an alternative, technologically advanced invention schema.

Using Commonplaces with Databases

As I have attempted to demonstrate with this reconstruction of memory and the commonplaces and databases so important to memory and to invention, databases and commonplaces are not the same. In composition pedagogy, however, they are often presented as though they are. Students are taught to invent, compose, and deliver as though doing so in commonplaces with other people or in databases with information are interchangeable and the same. Such instructions overlook important distinctions between commonplaces and databases as means of invention, chief among them activity/passivity in invention and composition. Activity occurs in the commonplace model, as students must consciously work with other people to make meaning. Passivity occurs in the database model, as students receive information and use it toward new goals.

Commonplaces and databases can be used complementarily, though; one can remedy problematic issues of the other. For example, the use of databases alone for invention is problematic because of passivity, but they can be used to create more activity. This might look like students using databases to look up words in a class, then returning to a commonplace when the class discusses different definitions from different sources in order to make sense of them. The use of commonplaces alone for invention is problematic because of the problems of commonplaces: they can deny personal experience in favor of consensus, and they can be simply wrong. In this case, databases

could remedy the situation for students who question or otherwise don't fit into commonplaces. For example, Edward Said chronicled the marginalizing problems of commonplaces regarding the cultural histories of Israelis and Palestinians in his article, *Invention, Memory, and Place* (2000). He noted that "collective memory is not an inert and passive thing, but a field of activity in which past events are selected, reconstructed, maintained, modified, and endowed with political meaning" (p. 185). In this particular situation, Palestinian history has been utterly denied in favor of Israeli history, despite facts and lived experiences to the contrary. Said himself lived in what is now Israel, before he and his family were relocated with other Palestinians, then had their histories erased. This is perhaps an extreme example, but databases could remedy problems like these for people like Said who need information from outside of commonplaces. In this way, databases can provide a remedy for commonplaces.

Databases are no more inherently problematic than commonplaces, and modern databases offer some specific circumstances that foster invention and avoid fragmentation. When the entire process of classical Aristotelian rhetoric from invention to delivery is collapsed into databases, this is problematic for denying activity and other people in the process. Such situations occur when databases provide the entire means of invention, reducing invention to following generic constraints or playing language games (Lyotard, 1984). Databases used in conjunction with commonplaces, other people, and activity, however, are full of promise. If students were to invent in commonplaces, for example, and then research using databases, this would be a much more robust, active, and community-grounded activity. Databases are productive sites of research and could

lead to ancillary inventions or productions of ideas (Lyotard, 1984). Databases can be sites of new knowledge or the production of ideas when they're not predisposed, such as the Google algorithm, to simply provide more of the same results.

Conclusion

Databases offer historically unprecedented access to information and other people's ideas. Using them can be a revolutionary tool for invention, and would be best deployed when used as a balance to commonplaces. Such practices would fortify both means and reduce the problematic potentials of each. Of course, further research into practical classroom applications of commonplace/database hybrids is necessary, including teaching the important distinctions between the two, and their epistemological consequences, to students.

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Curriculum Vitae

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Education

Eastern Washington University, Cheney, WA
Master of Arts: Rhetoric and Technical Communication 2012

Texas A&M University, Commerce, TX
Bachelor of Arts: Linguistics 2004
Membership: Phi Beta Kappa

Community Colleges of Spokane, Colville, WA
Associate of Arts 2003
Membership: Phi Theta Kappa

Professional Presentations

“Habermas, Empowerment, and Voting Law Changes”
Crisis and Resistance: Texts, Tumult, and Transformation conference
University of Idaho 2012

Professional Experience

Eastern Washington University, Cheney, WA:
Graduate instructor: English 101 2011

Developed syllabus, course structure, lessons plans for introductory college writing course; collaborated with colleagues on curriculum development, evaluation standards; and participated in departmental evaluation of student writing and departmental grading standards.

Graduate instructor: English 201 2011-12

Developed syllabus, course structure, lesson plans for academic research-based writing course; participated in departmental evaluation of student writing and departmental grading standards.

Graduate instructor: English 205 2012

Developed syllabus, course structure, lesson plans for introductory technical communication course. Facilitated partnership with community for service-learning project. Collaborated with colleagues to solve project-related problems. Participated in departmental evaluation of student writing and departmental grading standards.

Graduate internship: English 170 2011-12

Worked with small student groups in large seminar literature course. Facilitated online discussion groups and in-person book clubs.

Memberships

National Council of Teachers of English