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Metaphors of Memory: Complexity and the Fourth Canon

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Metaphors of Memory: Complexity and the Fourth Canon

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Abstract

This dissertation examines four main sites of memory scholarship (bodily memory, historical and historiographical memory, material memory, and digital memory), arguing that at each site, memory is treated in ways which are inconsistent with most current scholarly understandings of how it operates. Each chapter focuses on one of the major sites of memory scholarship, demonstrating how particular uses of keywords at that site undercut its own attempt to address memory's complexity. In the process, I lay the groundwork for alternative conceptions of memory in that site that offer new avenues for memory research.

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Chapter One

Introduction: Moves and Trends, Sites and Keywords

Isabella kept up a complex memory, but it was something she believed was worth keeping. She supposed it helped her to make herself happier and less bewitched by a world which she felt was out to utterly stupefy her. Though, at times, she wondered if it might be not the world, but her own heavy memory, trying to trick her.

-Paul Fattaruso, *Travel in the Mouth of the Wolf*

I wanna remember to remember to forget you forgot about me

-Modest Mouse, "A Different City"

I. Opening Moves

Select at random any collection of rhetorical memory scholarship published in the last 30 years, and it is likely to begin much like this—with an epigraph that alludes to the complicated, often confusing, and intimate relationship we have with our memories. What follows typically includes a nod toward memory in the Greek tradition: a reference to the goddess of memory, Mnemosyne, mother of the nine muses; a mention of the river Lethe, sometimes referred to as the river of unmindfulness (or the river of forgetfulness), which wipes the memories of all who drink from it; the binary concepts of *aléthia* (unforgetting) and *lēthe* (forgetting); Herodotus, the philosopher who claimed that “the purpose of history was to keep the memory of both the Greeks and non-Greeks alive;” Aristotle’s *On Memory and Recollection*; or—quite popularly—Plato’s *Phaedrus*, in which he admonishes “alphabetic writing,” claiming that it will be the downfall of memory (Herodotus; Plato). These works might also include a mention of Augustine’s *Confessions*, in which he marvels at memory’s “infinite multiplicity;” Cicero’s *de Oratore*, where he claims that memory is

the “repository of all things” and that unless memory is made “the keeper of the matter and words that are fruits and thought of invention, all talents of the orator, though they be of the highest degree of excellence, will be no avail;” or Quintilian’s *Institutio Oratoria*, in which he claims that “memory may be improved by cultivation” (Augustine; *de Oratore* 2.36.354; Quintilian).

However, perhaps most pervasively, they are also likely to include a mention, if not provide a detailed account, of the legend of Simonides of Ceos, who is often coined the “father” of mnemonic techniques because of his ability to remember every man who died in a tragic accident at a banquet hall, based simply on their seating location. The tale is legendary also in the sense that it informs the basis of most contemporary understandings of mnemonic techniques: for instance, Pierre Nora uses it to coin the term, “lieux memoire,” (translated as “memory site”) which was foundational to early collective memory work. As Jennifer Richards posits, “this story is retold in rhetorical handbooks as a way of introducing the most important technique of rhetorical memory training, the ‘place’ system” (Richards 22). As such, Simonides’ story not only coins the “common place” as a mnemonic means of remembering but is also a common starting place for writing about memory, particularly for those interested in “strengthening” it (as in, increasing a capacity to remember). For example, Frances Yates’ paradigmatic tome, *The Art of Memory*, details the history of memory training and techniques from ancient practices through the Renaissance—and ultimately argues that this training shapes Western processes of communication and thought. Mary Carruthers also dedicates two books to the study of pre- and early- Modern mnemonic techniques, relying on Yates as an important companion throughout her work: *The Book of Memory* and *The Medieval Craft of Memory*.

Such fascination with the “places” of memory and “improvement” of it through mnemonic techniques, as Bradford Vivian outlines, is not difficult to ascertain: “the practical genius of these mnemonotechnics lay in the fact that they allowed orators to exhibit amazing powers of recall by magnifying, through sheer repetition and embellishment, natural powers of situated and embodied remembrance” (Vivian 288). As such, it is easily understandable how the allure of such a skill might still be particularly enticing for those who study rhetoric, oration, and communication.

Along with these moves back to Greek and ancient traditions (which is also a typical trend in rhetoric, broadly-writ), memory scholarship also usually begins with one of two stances regarding its exigence: either *no one is paying attention to memory*—or—*everyone is paying attention to memory*. The first argument is, in large part, a reactionary call to “return” to memory after its longstanding demotion following Peter Ramus’ infamous reconfiguration of the five rhetorical canons—assigning invention and arrangement to philosophy; style and delivery to rhetoric—and ignoring memory altogether. The aftermath of rhetoric’s restructure (and memory’s rejection) continued well into the twentieth century, where it begins to tempt interest once more, in part, because it had been “ignored” (Hoogestraat 150). In 1960, for example, Wayne E. Hoogestraat claimed in the *Quarterly Journal of Speech* that memory had become the “lost canon,” and argued for its viability in the field of rhetoric (Hoogestraat 141). The refrain that memory had been “lost” remained consistent into the 1990s and early aughts. For another example, Janine Rider begins her preface to *The Writer’s Book of Memory* (1995) by claiming that “I was told some years ago that the rhetorical canon of memory had great potential for contemporary study, but that no one was paying any attention to it” (Rider ix); and John

Frederick Reynolds opens his book, *Rhetorical Memory and Delivery* (1993), with an argument that calls for a reaffirmation and invigoration of the “problem canons” (memory and delivery), quoting Mary Carruthers in claiming that “of the five canons, memory has always been the canon that received the least attention—despite the fact, ironically, that memory was regarded by the ancients as ‘the noblest of the canons, the basis for the rest’” (Reynolds). More recently, Nedra Reynolds argues in *Geographies of Writing* (2004) that memory “has been largely misunderstood or ignored,” and Susannah Radstone and Bill Schwartz (2010) claim that “arguments concerning the atrophy of memory provide one route into the field of contemporary memory debate” (Reynolds 23; Radstone 2). As such, while it is safe to say that the move to “return” to memory because it has been “forgotten” is perhaps more dated than its antipode and is not as widespread a practice in the most recent publications, framing memory as the “lost” canon or making a move to “return” to it nevertheless continues to have a strong influence on the conversation.

Conversely, calling attention to memory’s ubiquity and longstanding history with rhetoric is the other common move. Sometimes, it is more a caveat to be acknowledged before the main argument can be made: *we know everyone is talking about memory, but ... we realize that studying memory is nothing new, but ...* etc. For example, the opening line of Kendall R. Phillips’ 2004 collection, *Framing Public Memory*, is that “‘Public Memory’ has become a familiar key term in the humanities and social sciences;” Jeffrey K. Olick et. al. (2011) begin their collection, *The Collective Memory Reader*, by claiming that “Memory is hardly a new topic;” and Siobhan Kattago (2015) opens *Memory Studies* with the assertion that “memory has long been a subject of fascination for poets, artists,

philosophers, and historians. More recently, Seth Long (2020) introduces his book by parsing the nuance between the ‘lost’ canon and its popularity, claiming that

... the fourth canon’s visual precepts have yet to be taken up by contemporary rhetorical theorists in a consistent way, despite the fact that the canon has long since been ‘rediscovered’ and given a central role in the field. Upon inspection, however, rhetoric’s new *memoria* retains only a fragile connection to the memoria practiced throughout history. The new fourth canon is not the same as the old – which would not be an issue if the old canon were no longer relevant to the twenty-first century. However, the ancient canon of memory remains deeply relevant to the contemporary moment. (Long 2)

Long goes on to articulate the connection between visualization and the practice of mnemonic techniques in a digital era much different from ancient Greece, which is a move that both recognizes memory as a canon needing reinvigoration, yet also acknowledges that memory is a subject matter with widespread and pervasive interest. It may be safe to say, then, that publications such as these—whether seeking to reinvigorate or add to a popular, continuing dialogue—underscore that there is invested interest in memory as it pertains to rhetoric.

In this vein, most contemporary work that acknowledges memory’s ubiquity refers to or operates off the understanding that there has been a sweeping “memory boom,” resulting in widespread interest in the canon. There are two global, traumatic events given priority credit for catalyzing this “boom,” the first of which was spurred in the mid-twentieth century, following World War II. The exigence to resuscitate memory (alongside the response to “reclaim” it as a canon) was particularly sharp following the atrocities of

the Holocaust. The move to salvage and revalue memory was a highly popular move, particularly with historians and political theorists dealing with the aftermath and trauma: for example, Hannah Arendt's *Eichmann in Jerusalem* examines the rhetorical capacity of memory, specifically, the repetition of clichés and “empty” words to make evil “terribly and terrifyingly normal” (Arendt, 142). When recounting the trial of Otto Adolf Eichmann, one of the main orchestrators of the infamous Final Solution, she claims that,

To be sure, the judges were right when they finally told the accused that all he had said was 'empty talk'--except that they thought the emptiness was feigned, and that the accused wished to cover up other thoughts which, though hideous, were not empty. This supposition seems refuted by the striking consistency with which Eichmann, despite his rather bad memory, repeated word for word the same stock phrases and self-invented clichés each time he referred to an incident or event of importance to him. Whether writing his memoirs in Argentina or in Jerusalem, whether speaking to the police examiner or to the court, what he said was always the same, expressed in the same words. The longer one listened to him, the more obvious it became that his inability to speak was closely connected with an inability to think, namely, to think from the standpoint of somebody else. No communication was possible with him, not because he lied but because he was surrounded by the most reliable of all safeguards against the words and the presence of others, and hence against reality as such. (Arendt 143-44)

Examinations such as these take into account “bad memory” and “true” history—however, as Arendt articulates, a “bad” memory doesn’t necessarily indicate a refusal to remember “correctly,” or even a conscious obstruction of “truth.” Other notable scholars, such as

Yosef Hayim Yerulshami's 1982 tome, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory*, argue for a reclaiming and redefining of Jewish identity and conceptions of the past through memory and what it means to remember: the Hebrew word for "remember" is "Zakhor" – however, it not a subjunctive verb; it is an imperative, a commandment. Yerulshami's book, which is often compared to other paradigmatic harbingers that redefined "reality" for non-Western people (such as Edward Said's *Orientalism*, Mikhail Bakhtin's *Dialogic Imagination*, Harold Bloom's *Anxiety of Influence*, and Erich Auerbach's *Mimesis*), is still considered a canonical work on Jewish memory: as Sidra Dekoven Ezrahi claims in his 2007 article for *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, "it is hard to overstate the influence of ...*Zakhor* on contemporary academic and popular constructions of Jewish history and memory; it is hard to imagine a scholarly endeavor or university syllabus in any area of Jewish studies that has not been affected by the book" (Ezrahi).

However, outside of Jewish Studies, and in rhetoric more specifically, other notable scholars such as Barbie Zelizer, Bradford Vivian, James Young, Marita Sturken, Walter Benjamin, Edward Casey, Jeffrey K. Olick, Paul Ricoeur, Stephen Browne, Barry Schwartz, Kendall R. Phillips, Barbara Biesecker, Victor Vitanza, Michael Bernard-Donals, Steven Katz, Brian L. Ott, Carol Blair, Greg Dickinson, and countless others have taken up the Holocaust as one foundation for reexamining memory's role in publics; identity; subjectivity; history and historiography; and hegemonic dynamics. In fact, it would be much simpler on paper to identify what influential rhetorical memory scholar in the past thirty years has *not*, in some capacity, used the Holocaust as a platform of study—if such a person exists. Furthermore, major journals such as *RSQ*, *QJS*, *Rhetoric of Public Affairs*, *History and Memory*, *Philosophy & Rhetoric*, *enculturation*, and *Memory Studies* (to name

a few) have published (and continue to publish) articles relating to Holocaust trauma and memory – in fact, *Memory Studies* has dedicated entire issues to it. Furthermore, the fascination with memory and its relationship with the trauma of the Holocaust did not diminish as the twentieth century began to close: the 90s and early aughts saw a proliferation of interest, such as Cathy Caruth’s (1995) *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, which focused on how trauma affects memory and uses the Holocaust as a limit case for such trauma. Into the twenty-first century, Neil Levi and Michael Rothberg (2003) indicate that trauma studies was also concerned to address an unresolved past of “intellectual complicity” in the Holocaust, in particular the “very different complicities of figures such as Martin Heidegger and Paul de Man” (qtd. Levi and Rothberg, 16). As Marianne Hirsch and Leo Spitzer claim, “the Holocaust has in many ways shaped the discourse on collective, social, and cultural memory, serving as both a touchstone and paradigm” (Hirsch & Spitzer, qtd. Radstone 390). As such, the persistence of the Holocaust (and trauma on a large scale) as well as its interconnectedness with memory suggests that although this is not necessarily a new trend, it is one that is still rife with possibility and will not be easily forgotten in future scholarship.

Another notable, traumatic event which sparked a surge in the already in-motion “memory boom” is the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and its aftermath. Topics surrounding the attacks (such as such as memorialization, commemoration, commercialization, protest, justice, atonement, and forgiveness) prompted themes for conferences, new collections, and calls for analysis that reinvigorated an interest in memory.¹ However, interest in 9/11

¹ Kendall R. Phillips frames his collection with the declaration that “the memory of September 11 is evident in this volume,” noting that several scholars quickly changed their work to incorporate the traumatic event: for example, “Ed Casey’s recollections of the spontaneous memorials in Union Square

and its relationship to memory has not died down in the decades since the Twin Towers fell. In 2004, Barbie Zelizer uses images taken of the World Trade Centers on 9/11 in an analysis of what she calls the “about-to-die” moment and its relationship to the “subjunctive in popular imagination,” which she claims is integral to public memory (Zelizer 179). In the third chapter of *Public Forgetting* (2010), Bradford Vivian analyzes the political influence of public memorialization and commemoration in the wake of 9/11; and later, in 2017, he again takes up 9/11 through an analysis of the National September 11 Memorial as a site of public memory and commemoration. More recently, in 2019, Nicholas S. Paliewicz and Marouf Hasian analyze the National September 11 Memorial in their book, *The Securitization of Memorial Space*. The Holocaust and 9/11, however, do not have a complete monopoly on sites to which rhetorical scholars flock in relation to memory: other traumatic events such as Soviet rule in Russia (Kattago); mass bombings and shootings (Eberly); slavery and Apartheid (Poirot and Watson; Mack); the AIDS epidemic (Sturken; Dunn); and manufactured disasters (such as the 1986 Challenger explosion) are also popular grounds for memory scholarship. As Jeffrey K. Olick, Vered Vinitzky-Seroussi, and Daniel Levy claim, “the memory boom thus unleashed a culture of trauma and regret, and states are allegedly now judged on how well they atone for their past misdeeds” (Olick 4). This is to say, the uniting factor of the surge in memory interest can be traced back to trauma and traumatic events – and, subsequently, the move to atone, judge, make reparations, memorialize, or commemorate them.

As such, this opening underscores that there are a set of predictable beginning moves that most memory scholarship makes: 1. The return to ancient traditions of memory

Park and his visit to these memorials on September 17 bring a concrete poignancy to his deeper meditation on the experience of public memory” (Phillips, 11-12).

as a canon – a subset of which is a large focus on ancient to early-modern mnemonic exercises and techniques to “strengthen” memory and 2. Employing the exigency that either memory is nowhere *or* everywhere – a subset of the latter being the widespread acknowledgement of a “memory boom,” for which the uniting force is trauma. However, after these opening moves, memory scholarship begins to circulate differently and factions off into distinct yet related sites of analysis. Broadly speaking, they are: bodily memory (the focus of which is mnemonic techniques and ancient traditions, also nonhuman memory); historical and historiographical memory (the focus of which is the ways in which narratives co-create individual and shared memory); material memory (usually memorials, monuments, and material commemoration); and digital memory (ways in which nonhuman – *nonliving*, even – actors can store and retrieve data). These sites often overlap and cross paths: it is very common, for example, for scholars to use a monument as a case study for work in historiography—and in such work the focus is how historiography intersects with memory; the monument is the means of articulating it. However, the focus of the work varies in ways that make these sites arguably distinct. Furthermore, within these sites are certain trends that scholars take with memory. These trends are as ubiquitous as their opening moves, yet they tend to vary in predictability, tone, and focus. As such, they are worth detailing to further trace the contours of the field as it came about (and where it is now), and then to pull from these commonalities general keywords and assumptions, which I will interrogate in the following chapters.

II. Trends

There are two widespread trends that memory scholarship tends to follow in rhetoric, composition, and communication. The first major trend is what is often called

“public” or “collective” memory; this trend employs both “public” and “collective” as umbrella terms, and they are used interchangeably without preference. As a result, “public memory” has become more-or-less synonymous with memory scholarship itself: from the overwhelming deluge of rhetorical study’s interest in public memory, it would seem that scholarship is not rhetorical memory work if it does not focus on *public* memory. In other words, public or collective memory is assumed to be the only worthwhile way to think and write about memory. As a prominent scholar once told me at a conference, “if it doesn’t have anything to do with publics, why bother with memory?” Her sentiments are not, without foundation—particularly given that a large movement in rhetoric is the argument that everything is public: defining something like “individual” or “private” memory wouldn’t be possible without a public. And what influence would individual or private memory analysis have to do with rhetorical concerns like persuasion, identity, or affect? (Historians, biographers, autobiographers, memoirists, poets, and fiction writers would likely beg to differ.) However, as Siobhan Kattago outlines this problem, “it makes no sense to say that remembering is collective—only individuals are able to remember, not groups. However, ‘collective instruction’ is only possible when individuals speak the same language and can understand one another” (Kattago 4). In other words, memory is understood as an individual phenomenon, but, in terms of academic study, it is overwhelmingly (arguably, only) concerned with how individual memories affect, change, or complicate publics and public identities.

A brief history for context: the term “collective memory” was first coined in 1902 by the Austrian essayist, Hugo Von Hofmannsthal; however, it gained prominence and momentum through work of the renowned French sociologist, Maruice Hawlbachs, who is

often referred to as the “father of collective memory” (Olick and Robbins 106). Hawlbachs’s central claim in his paradigmatic publication, *The Collective Memory*, is that “memory is framed in the present as much as in the past, variable rather than constant. Studying memory, as a result, is a matter not of reflecting philosophically on inherent properties of the subjective mind but of identifying its shifting social frames” (Qtd. Radstone). The proliferation of interest in memory and trauma became fodder for collective and public scholarship: “following the decline of postwar modernist narratives of progressive improvement through an ever-expanding welfare state, nation states turned to the past as a basis for shoring up their legitimacy. The decline of utopian visions supposedly redirected our gaze to collective pasts, which served as a repository of inspiration for repressed identities and unfulfilled claims” (Olick 3). Consequently, the turn of the century (particularly after 9/11) saw interest that increasingly tackled memory through changing publics.

Furthermore, the escalating need to balance retention through remembering with the nagging reality that remembering does not necessarily prove faithful to any “actuality” of the past made scholars skeptical of any “real-ness” to memory—thus seeking a “real-ness” in public discourse as a tangible starting point. As Kendall R. Phillips claims, “It is, however, worth noting at least one of the most pervasive contexts within which this recent interest in public memory has emerged—the increasing mistrust of ‘official History’” (Phillips 2). For example, in his groundbreaking tome, *Memory, History, Forgetting*, Paul Ricoeur traces the tension between memory and history by questioning certain trends: namely, he asks why some historical events (such as the Holocaust) are time and time again the vanguards of historical focus, while other traumatic moments in history (the Armenian

genocide, for example) are notably absent. Public memory, as such, is a bridge between “official” history and the understanding that memory, which is unreliable, shapes it. Michael Bernard-Donals succinctly acknowledges this mistrust (as well as a rationale for public memory) in his 2016 book, *Figures of Memory*:

memory has always had a fraught relationship with history...You could say that memory runs alongside, or works to produce, history (and in some instances occlude it). Cultural or public memories are typically agreed-upon representations of past events that serve to forge a collective identity among individuals in a community. Public memories give coherence to the past as a palpable form through discursive but more often visual and performative means. Public memory is constantly shaped and reshaped through its repetition and its performance in public spaces, and it often enough flows against the sanctioned channels of history, sometimes forcing history into altogether new channels and sometimes flowing into stagnant pools that remain alongside history’s course but troubling it...the mutability of cultural memory is bound up with the contemporary understanding of the mutability of the self, the individual as a member of a collective whose identity is manufactured in the crucible of memory. (Bernard-Donals 9-10)

In essence, the friction between history and memory—that is, the widespread mistrust of “actual” or “true” history and the implicit understanding that memory is inconstant and intangible—brings the focus (and value) on memory’s ability to create, shape, morph, or demolish publics. A large takeaway of this, however, is that in doing so, public memory recognizes that memory is not necessarily a faithful conduit of past events, that memory

and history are both in flux, and that skepticism of “true” narratives is worthwhile and smart.

The second widespread trend within memory scholarship is the attempt to define it. Circling back to the Greek tradition, Herodotus claims that “without memory, one cannot live, for it is what elevates man above beasts, determines the contours of the human soul; and yet it is at the same time so unreliable, elusive, treacherous.” Aristotle² also makes this move in *On Memory and Recollection*, claiming that memory is “neither Perception nor Conception, but a state of affection of one of these, conditioned by the lapse of time” (*On Memory* 449b). He elaborates by saying that just as “a picture painted on a panel is at once a picture and a likeness,” a memory is both “an object of contemplation” and “in relation to something else, it is also a presentation” (*On Memory* 451a). Aristotle’s definition was pervasive to the point where it still remains a common conception for memory: the “wax tablet,” or “tabula rasa,” is a metaphor for memory in which the mind is the tablet and the memory an imprint on the mind, and it is a fundamental reference (or understood/assumed starting point) in many studies. For example, Freud uses this conception of memory as the foundation of his “A Note upon the Mystic Writing Pad,” in which he elaborates the difference between conscious mind (which forms no permanent traces) and unconscious mind, which is where permanent memories can be stored. Jacques Derrida complicates Freud’s “writing pad” later in *Writing and Difference*, arguing the “writing pad” as a performative force: it is inscription and reinscription, writing and erasure, remembering and forgetting.

² “For definitions do not carry a further guarantee that the thing defined can exist or that it is what they claim to define: one can always ask why.” (*Analytics*)

Others, such as Henri Bergson, challenged conceptions of memory as being states of being (or imprints) which are plottable on a linear spectrum of past, present, and future. He claims that “the pure present is an ungraspable advance of the past devouring the future. In truth, all sensation is already memory. We seize, in the act of perception, something which outruns perception itself” (Bergson 26). Bergson was one of many harbingers who have since challenged definitions of memory as static, containable, or states of being, and (similar to how most public memory came about via the understanding that memory is a fickle historian) most current scholars recognize that memory broadly-writ cannot be concretized or subjected to a single (or multiple) noun(s). So they offer adjectives instead. That is, they recognize the impossibility of “nailing down” memory to one meaning or concept, so they define through description. Such a call to define the indefinable is often inspiration for journals and collections: for example, twelve years ago, in the inaugural issue of *Memory Studies*, then-editors Henry L. Roediger and James V. Wertsch put out a call for papers that “consider definitions of memory and note that the single term itself is not particularly useful” (Roediger and Wertsch 11). Furthermore, researchers are drawn to memory, in part, because of its inconstance: “it is ‘memory’s protean instability that has inspired the burgeoning field of memory studies’” (Hutton 11, qtd. Kittago).

Implicit in this move to define through description, however, is already a definition: it defines memory as intangible, elusive, constantly mutating and becoming. Some scholars assert this definition outright before moving on to other concerns regarding memory—often, the implications of such a mercurial subject matter which is a large part of our lives. For example, Bradford Vivian claims that, “memory is unavoidably, and sometimes maddeningly, inconstant” (Vivian 1); Rossington and Whitehead open their collection with

the claim that “a characteristic of thinkers who have sought to undertake conceptual ground-clearing in relation to memory is their compulsive need to discriminate among its meanings. From Aristotle’s distinction between remembering and recollecting to Hegel’s *Erinnerung* and *Gedächtnis* to the present, memory has proved itself too overwhelming to be encompassed by a single definition” (Rossington and Whitehead 3); and Susannah Radstone claims that “it is not clear what meanings attach themselves to the generic conception of memory itself; and while in the academy there is a common belief that memory is ‘everywhere,’ what this means remains an open matter” (Radstone 1). Similarly, Anne Rossington and Michael Whitehead claim that “most contemporary accounts of memory begin with the premise that it is not located in the mind of a human being or animal but is rather an aspect of the brain’s behavior which necessarily is both mental and physical at the same time” (Rossington and Whitehead 2). In these cases, the authors open with a particular tone, to the sound of *we know this already, but it’s nevertheless important to remind ourselves that what we’re dealing with is a slippery little sucker*.

Additionally, there are two general ways in which memory is defined after the acknowledgement that it is difficult or impossible to define in the first place. These are not unrelated to the mercurial nature of memory, and they do often overlap: generally, scholars tend to operate from the shared assumption that memory is 1. disparate and transdisciplinary and/or 2. complex in the sense that it is not subject to binaries such as mind/body, past/future, remembering/forgetting, or true/false. The first acknowledges that memory is ubiquitous across fields and sparks interest and debates in many disciplines: indicative of this trend, Kendall R. Phillips claims that “the last twenty years have seen a rapid proliferation of [public memory’s] use in such disciplines as architecture,

communication studies, English, history, philosophy, political science, religion, rhetoric, and sociology. The rapid growth in the transdisciplinary study of public memory can also be seen in the number of published case studies and the amount of material encompassed within this rubric, from monuments to television programs and museums to city streets” (Phillips 1). However, memory is not just a hot topic in the humanities and social sciences, but also in other fields, such as neuroscience and neurobiology. The amount of medical research in memory—particularly Alzheimer’s disease and dementia—is highly prevalent in medical journals, conference themes, and other research and publications. This research is usually distinct from that of the humanities and social sciences: as Susannah Radstone asserts, “the memory that is the object of investigations of the cognitive scientist has a conceptual provenance and history distinct from the memory discussed by anthropologists or theorists of digital media” (Radstone). However, it is not always the case that they are disparate. Some scholars bridge the “hard” and “soft” sciences: for example, the former student of Jacques Derrida, philosopher Catherine Malabou, draws upon such neurological research (neuroscience, neurobiology, trauma, and brain damage) in relation to memory in her book, *The New Wounded*. She applies current neurological research to reinterpret Freud’s texts on psychoanalysis and memory, ultimately claiming that “destructive plasticity” from trauma fundamentally changes our philosophical *and* medical conceptions of pain and brain damage. Furthermore, Barbara Wilson works with medical research on amnesia to illustrate that “while memory may be relevant to personal identity, it is possible to have a sense of identity without it” (qtd. Rossington 3).

The second (that memory is more complex than traditional binaries) is also a favored way of defining memory after acknowledging that it cannot be committed to a

single definition: Jane Greer and Laurie Grobman posit that “memory studies and memory are complex and multi-layered, resisting easy narratives” (Greer 3). Many scholars use memory to challenge the mind/body dichotomy: for example, Mary Warnock does so by arguing that in addressing the question of what memory is, the obstacle of ‘dualism,’ that is a philosophical belief that the mind and body are separate needs to be removed, claiming that “most accounts of memory begin with the premise that it is not located in the mind of a human being or animal but rather an aspect of the brain’s behavior which necessarily is both mental and physical at the same time” (Warnock 2). She goes on to discuss memory as a continuum, not one or two faculties, both outside and inside the mind and body: “it is over-simple to think of memory as one ‘faculty’ which can be explained by one account. But it is not much better to think of it as two faculties. It is better to think in terms of a continuum” (Warnock 14). Similarly, as Henri Bergson outlines in *Matter and Memory*, memory can be seen as duration, which resists the common duality of past/future (i.e. memory as a repository of past events for future use). His conception of memory as duration does not conceive memory as a faculty of repetition or reproduction, in which the past is repeated or reproduced in the present and is opposed to invention and creation. Rather, as Keith Ansell-Pearson points out, for Bergson, “memory is linked to creative duration... it evolves and creates something new at every moment” (Ansell-Pearson 62).

Another common binary is that of remembering and forgetting (and, implicit within that differentiation, the valuation of remembering over forgetting.) Friedrich Nietzsche was perhaps one of the first philosophers to challenge this in his *Untimely Meditations*, when articulates the “problem” of history, claiming that history does not “serve life,” and that “we are all suffering from a consumptive historical fever and at the very least should

recognize that we are afflicted with it” (Nietzsche). By this, he means that the movement retain and remember has been plaguing us due to the fact that forgetting is taboo: specifically, he diagnoses the “harmful effect” of the excessive consumption and retention (remembering) that history impossibly strives for, arguing that for life to flourish, it must be allowed to forget, claiming that “there is a degree of doing history and a valuing of it through which life atrophies and degenerates” (Nietzsche). More recently, however, Bradford Vivian challenges the assumption that forgetting is inherently negative in his book, *Public Forgetting*, using events such as 9/11 to demonstrate how forgetting can be generative. Additionally, scholars such as Paul Ricoeur (*Memory, History, Forgetting*), Jacques Derrida (*The Work of Mourning*), and Wole Soyinka (*The Burden of Memory: The Muse of Forgiveness*) approach forgetting not as the antithesis of remembering, but as a necessary aid in healing, forgiveness, and atonement. For example, Soyinka questions the possibility of reconciliation between oppressor and victim, particularly in the midst of ongoing, centuries-long oppression, racism, tyranny, and violence wreaked upon the people of Africa and through the African Diaspora, acknowledging that any chance of healing relies upon a form of surrendering, or willingness to let go.

Broadly speaking, then, the combination of postmodernism’s mistrust of grand, sweeping narratives with the recognition of memory’s social variability has led contemporary memory scholarship into a confrontation regarding memory’s bewildering and beguiling complexity. This confrontation has revolved around a set of core keywords: trauma, nostalgia, container/retainer, remember/forget, forgiveness/atonement, memorialization/commemoration, static/dynamic, and true/false. While the discourse as a whole displays a remarkably consistent set of moves and trends, each of the four main sites

of inquiry into memory outlined in the first section (bodily, historiographical, material, digital) deploy these core keywords differently. Taking off from these categories, in the following chapters, I argue that for each of these four sites, the ways in which these particular keywords are applied are employed in ways which constrain memory's complexity. In essence, while this introduction has been mainly a literature review, what follows will pursue the relationship between these sites and keywords. Each of the following chapters focuses on one of the major sites of memory scholarship, demonstrating how particular uses of keywords at that site undercuts its own attempt to address memory's complexity. In the process, I lay the groundwork for alternative conceptions of memory in that site that offer new avenues for memory research.

III. Chapter Breakdown

The dissertation which follows takes into consideration the general contours of the field, articulates common keywords from those contours, and complicates them at a particular rhetorical site. Each chapter addresses the ways in which our field treats memory through these keywords and points out how memory is constricted by its treatment in that site. The next chapter (Chapter Two) takes its approach through the site of bodily memory. It challenges the mind/body dichotomy that is often smuggled back into arguments which rely heavily upon Greek conceptions of memory and interrogates the long-held traditions of "strengthening" memory through mnemonic techniques which are often deeply intertwined with physical, bodily practices. It delineates such traditions (particularly the "method of loci" and traditions of using bodily aids as mnemonic techniques), mainly utilizing work from Francis Yates (*The Art of Memory*) and Mary Carruthers (*The Book of Memory; The Medieval Craft of Memory*). The central keywords that the chapter

interrogates are static/dynamic, container/retainer, true/false, and remember/forget. Ultimately, the chapter argues that rather than common metaphors for memory which reinscribe the mind/body dichotomy and frame memory as a faculty capable of being “improved” through mnemonic exercise, another metaphor for memory could be that it is metaphor itself.

Chapter Three takes up historiography as a its site of inquiry, challenging the field’s overwhelming obsession with public and collective memory. I use Michelle Ballif’s conception of “hauntology,” as she articulates in *Theorizing Histories of Rhetoric*, arguing through her theoretical scaffolding that memory is a hauntological force. The main keywords at play are nostalgia, forgiveness/atonement, true/false, public/collective, static/dynamic, and trauma. The chapter argues that current iterations of public memory unintentionally reinscribe commonplace misconceptions about memory which rely on a commitment to representational correctness.

Chapter Four takes on memory’s intersection at material sites, using monuments and memorials as particular case studies. The main keywords at play in this chapter are trauma, static/dynamic, forgiveness/atonement, and memorial/commemoration. I use recent events and conversations surrounding Confederate memorials and the Black Lives Matter movement as my main case studies. In doing so, I follow the lines of Michael Bernard-Donals’ *Figures of Memory*, in which he argues that the rhetorical construction of memorials are both didactic as well as an intervention to personal and public identity. Along with Bernard-Donals, I rely upon work from Bradford Vivian (*Commonplace Witnessing*), Marita Sturken (*Tangled Memories*), and Jeffrey K. Olick (*The Politics of Regret*). Extending upon these authors’ arguments, the chapter argues that memory has a

synecdochal relationship to the past: monuments and memorials are often erected for the purpose of remembering (sometimes in a didactic fashion), and over time, come to stand in for memory itself.

Chapter Five approaches memory through digital sites, using the Greek conception of *kairos* as a guiding force and beginning with one of the first digital sites of rhetorical intervention: the online journal, *Kairos*. Keywords for the final chapter are static/dynamic, public/collective, and contain/retain. I follow Collin Gifford Brooke's arguments in and Jacques Derrida's arguments in *Archive Fever* through several digital archives (Facebook, Wikipedia, and Google). Through these case studies, the chapter demonstrates how, while most scholars begin with the understanding that memory is dynamic rather than static, treatments of memory in digital rhetoric (particularly, the reoccurring metaphor of memory-as-computer or memory-as-storage) is antithetical to the practices this scholarship sets out to encourage.

Chapter Two

Memory as Bodily Practice: A Trustworthy Infidelity

“I am dishonest. And a dishonest man you can always trust to be dishonest. Honestly, it’s the honest ones you have to watch out for because you can never predict when they’re going to do something incredibly stupid.”

-Jack Sparrow, *Pirates of the Caribbean*

Baseball is ninety percent mental, and the other half is physical.

-Yogi Berra

I. The World’s First Rock Star

Amidst the gilded Romanticism of mid-1800s Europe, when concert halls swarmed with rustling ball gowns, shushed chatter, and decorative silence, the 28-year-old Hungarian composer and pianist, Franz Liszt, found himself amidst a movement bearing his name: *Lisztomania*. Much like “Beatlemania,” which would follow over a century later, Liszt found himself at the heart of fanatical hysteria whenever he performed and wherever he went. Baronesses and Countesses became formative versions of what we might now call “groupies,” throwing decorum to the wayside, brawling over a glass he’d drank from or a handkerchief he’d once used: “one eyewitness recalled that ‘on one occasion a woman snatched up a half-smoked cigar that Liszt had cast aside, and, in spite of repeatedly retching, she continued to smoke it with feigned delight’” (BBC). In fact, the intensity of his rabid fan base reached such an extreme that doctors and psychoanalysts of the time diagnosed *Lisztomania* as a contagious bodily disease, faulting an “aura” surrounding Liszt, which supposedly bewitched his audience and catalyzed such inexplicable,

irrational, and indecorous behavior. While this fiendish fandom seems more characteristic of the rock-star obsessive, celebrity fervor of the 20th century onward, Liszt was, in several important ways, different from what we might imagine as the quintessential Romantic performer and composer. In fact, these differences are what many musicologists return to in an attempt to diagnose the rise of *Lisztomania*. Like most celebrated pianists of his time, he was a child prodigy, yet this was one of the few similarities he shared with his contemporaries. For example, in 1839, when he began his professional career, he embarked on an expansive tour of Europe, in which he was the first pianist to play solo onstage, performing what is now widely recognized as the “recital” (Hilmes 28). Additionally, during these recitals, Liszt positioned the piano at an angle to the audience, thus allowing his spectators to observe his head-banging, gyrating, sweat-flecking performances. And, finally, not only was Liszt “the first to perform the whole of the known keyboard repertory from Bach to his contemporary, Chopin,” he performed without relying upon a written score: that is, he did so entirely from memory (Hilmes 35).

However, Liszt was by no means the first or only musician to perform from memory. After 1751, for example, Handel played from memory primarily because of his physical inability to read (he had gone blind), and there are letters from Mozart’s 1763-1766 European tour in which he writes, “I played quite a bit from memory at Count Salern’s these last three days... and at the end of the ‘finalmusick’ with the Rondeau, all from memory” (qtd. Spaethling 66). Furthermore, in 1837—around the same time Liszt was rocking Europe—Clara Wieck (later known as Clara Schumann after she married fellow musician Robert Schumann) performed two of Beethoven’s piano sonatas from memory, and Carl Czerny regularly performed Beethoven’s work sans score for Austria’s Prince

Lichnowsky when he was merely 14 years old. Yet, despite the growing popularity of young musicians mesmerized with memorization, their mnemonic feats were not without criticism. For example, upon hearing of Czerny's performances, Beethoven was not impressed: "even if he plays correctly on the whole," Beethoven said, "he will forget in this manner the quick survey, 'a prima vista,'³ and occasionally, the correct expression" (Brown 78, Thayer 315-16). Beethoven was not alone in his censure; Chopin, for example, upon encountering one of his students who intended to play from memory admonished him, saying, "I don't want any of this. Are you reciting a lesson? I want to teach you precisely or not at all" (Eigeldinger 281). As such, at the time, performing without the written score was taken as a lack of professionalism: the score was to be treated faithfully and with respect, which meant that relying upon memory and not the trustworthy, written notations and marginalia was highly irresponsible. Additionally, musicians who memorized were denigrated as arrogant, attention-seeking, and ostentatious because they diverted the audience's attention from the music "itself" (or, the original composer's "vision") and refocused it on themselves. In other words, following a written score paid homage to the original (no longer present) composer, while memorization refocused the attention on the present performer: memorization allowed a musician to embody their performance—the music, the spectacle, the composition—becoming a physical, tangible conduit for the composition.

Attitudes changed, however, regarding memorization, mainly due to two factors: the first of which was the increasing commercialization and commodification of music. Attending concerts was no longer simply an upper-class privilege, and more people began

³ The Italian "a prima vista" translates literally to "at first sight," but is commonly referred to as "sight reading"

to obtain both the time and surplus income to access instruments and practice them, increasing the number of amateur musicians, many of whom looked to the canon of other established musicians who had come before them, modeling their styles off their predecessors. Secondly, the Romantic valuation of human virtuosity—the superhuman performer—contributed to the increasing number of musicians with a larger-than-life stage presence. In this sense, these performers were exciting because they possessed a dynamism which separated them from their classical (and, comparatively, bland) professional counterparts. In fact, during this period, the term “professional” shifted from musicians who faithfully read and relied upon a written score to those who memorized the score “with accuracy.” For example, a critic’s review of one of Mendelssohn’s 1833 performances articulates this shift:

The performance of Mozart’s *Concerto in D Minor* by M. Mendelssohn was perfect. The scrupulous exactness with which he gave the author’s text, without a single addition or new reading of his own, the precision in his time, together with the extraordinary accuracy of his execution, excited the admiration of all present; and this was increased, almost to rapture, by his two extemporaneous cadences...

The whole of this concerto he played from memory. (“Philharmonic Concerts” 135)

In other words, performing from memory allowed musicians to demonstrate their virtuoso and separate themselves from those who depended upon the written score. However, as more and more musicians fell into this trend, what was once rare became not only commonplace, but demanded to the point where a musician would not be (and, often, still isn’t) taken seriously unless (s)he performed from memory. As an *Etude* reviewer from 1886 posits, “[Playing] from memory has not only become a matter of fashion, but bravura

and report on the side of the artist, and the public has so accustomed itself to it, little by little, that it now almost feels entitled to demand it” (*The Etude* 202). This shift, then, represents a changing attitude between performance, music, and memory: what was once irresponsible and arrogant (playing without the score) became professional and spectacular. That is, before musicians like Liszt and Schumann (Wieck), playing from memory was denigrated; whereas, even to this day, it is celebrated—perhaps, demanded—to the extent that if a pianist does *not* play from memory, (s)he is seen as unprepared, lacking mental strength, or amateurish.

As the turn of the century approached, then, conversations shifted from criticisms of memorized performance to musical pedagogues and mnemonic techniques. Books and articles began to circulate, usually promoting mnemonic methods involving slow, concentrated processes which require the musician to learn one bar at a time before moving on to the next (Bré et al 57-8). For example, in 1886, W.S.B. Matthews published one of the earliest step-by-step memorization guides, paving the way for more comprehensive instructional books, such as Frederick Shinn’s 1898 book, *Musical Memory and Its Cultivation*, in which he recommends slow, repetitive, bodily movement through the piece, encouraging a “distancing of the mind to allow focus of movement” (Shinn 22). That is, much of the work of memorizing relied on mnemonic techniques that were heavily invested in bodily repetition. Furthermore, part of the purpose of such repetition was to discipline the mind to “let go” (forget), surrendering to the body’s control in remembering the correct timing and movements. The goal was to embody the music, to override conscious intervention, and make way for an unconscious, bodily remembering. And this method is not foreign to musicians today: the mnemonic, bodily exercises prescribed in these first

instruction books inform how most musicians are taught to think about their memory and their performances.

For a more recent example of how memorization affects performance, at the 2019 CCCC convention in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, Greg Stuart and Byron Hawk performed a sonic composition entitled “Close Categories in Cartesian Worlds,” which consisted of four, four-minute parts in which Stuart bowed a high E on a tuned cymbal while Hawk slowly altered the volume of a sine wave, creating a completely different sound experience for each listener, based on their position or orientation in the room. After their performance, Stuart delivered his prepared comments, in which he described musicians and composers who were instrumental to the creation of such experimental sound movements—namely John Cage, Michael Pisaro, and Élaïne Radigue. Radigue, specifically, he claimed, was one of the first composers to use electronics and synthesizer-based tones to combine and layer sounds—sounds which often change so incrementally that their particular combinations and changes are almost imperceptible. What is also notable about her composition process, however, is that she works one-on-one with another musician, co-producing the composition without writing it down. Their compositions are only recorded through memory, therefore becoming an incredibly intimate, private, and exclusive privilege to know and perform. In other words, if an artist would like to play music by Bach, Tchaikovsky, Led Zeppelin, Liszt, The Beatles, Kenny G, Cardi B, Schumann, Future, Wagner, or any other fathomable composition, usually, sheet music is available for purchase. It may be difficult or expensive (a different form of exclusivity) to come by, but it exists in writing. However, if anyone wanted to perform one of Radigue’s compositions, (s)he would have to personally work with Radigue or someone who has, at one time,

directly worked with her. This privileged exclusivity not only underscores the value memory holds for performance, but, in this case, the performance *and* the musical score itself is entirely dependent upon memorization.

This shift from written score to memorization affords an important takeaway. Namely, it allows us to see broader changes in cultural resonance: the move from favoring the disembodied genius (writing, the recorded score) to one that is embodied by a person (the performer). Furthermore, playing from memory creates an improvised intimacy with an audience which cannot be recreated or recorded (as in the case of Liszt or Radigue). Similarly, it creates an exclusivity: those who memorize and perform from memory as well as those who have observed such performances get a glimpse into something unique: each performance is one-of-a-kind. Liszt's memorized performances "infected" the hordes of fans surrounding him, perhaps because they felt the unique-ness of his performances: his memorization of the written score, his performances (through memory) are not static. That is, every performance, even though it has been internalized—memorized—is never enacted in exactly the same way, which underscores that memory's dynamism. Furthermore, just as we appropriate it (memorize the score), it appropriates us (transforms us into a "superhuman" performer; "infects" crowds), and this relationship is in constant flux. In other words, memorizing—in embodying what was written—the performance, the music, the performer, the audience all become something else entirely, which means that to "be faithful" to a score does not necessarily mean relying on an external, written symbol system. To be faithful, in this sense, not only allows for, but *expects and anticipates infidelity*: it does not depend on a one-to-one representation of the original score, or the original composer's "vision" (whatever that might be). Rather, it depends on a necessary

departure from that “vision” and also a departure from the dependence upon writing. In other words, to be faithful in a solo, memorized piano performance is to internalize and embody it, with the understanding that such embodiment will deviate from, forget, and be unfaithful to the score “itself.”

II. Physical and Sensory Mnemonics

The conception of memorization as embodiment—as well as mnemonic techniques to strengthen memory—were not by any means original to musicians and pedagogues of 1800s Western Europe. For example, in Classical rhetoric, Mnemosyne (the personification of memory) is the mother of the nine Greek Muses, through nine consecutive fornications with Zeus. The Muses were considered “embodiments and sponsors of performed speech,” some of which included history, science, geography, comedy, poetry, drama, music, and mathematics—to name a few (Praz 62). In this way, we could say that (for the Greeks) a promiscuous memory is the mother of all other arts. (Similarly, we could posit that everything conceived from memory is a bastard child.) Furthermore, mnemonic techniques and mnemonic pedagogy have just as ancient and expansive a history. Protagoras, for example, likens mnemonic exercises to the gymnastic training of the body, and sixteenth and seventeenth century works by philosophers such as Francis Bacon and Thomas Wilson treat memory as “the practicing of effective mnemonic techniques” (Pruchnic 473). One of the first of these techniques is the *method of loci*, which is described in detail by Cicero and Quintilian. Both philosophers claim this method was initially immortalized through Simonides, who became infamous for being able to recall every person seated in a banquet hall after the ceiling had collapsed, based on their location at the table (*De Oratore*, II, lxxxv). Quintilian expands on Simonides’s “discovery”

(sometimes referred to as his “invention”) of such a technique, advocating for orators to curate tangible places in order to link them with what they wish to recall:

This achievement of Simonides appears to have given rise to the observation that it is an assistance to the memory if places are stamped upon the mind...Places are chosen, and marked with the utmost possible variety, as a spacious house is divided into a number of rooms. Everything of note therein is diligently imprinted on the mind, in order that thought may be able to run through all the parts without let or hindrance. (Quintilian, qtd. Yates 37)

In other words, the experience one wishes to remember is more easily recalled when it is linked to a physical place. As such, location and place (as well as visual or tangible objects—other bodies) became essential tools to those who wished to improve their capacity to recall through the *method of loci*. For example, as, Cicero asserts:

persons desiring to train this faculty [memory] must select places and form mental images of the things they wish to remember and store those images in the places, so that the order of the places will preserve the order of the things, and the images of the things will denote the things themselves, and we shall employ the places and images respectively as a wax writing-tablet and the letters written on it. (*De Oratore*, II, lxxxvi)

We might notice that both Quintilian and Cicero mention the “imprint” or “stamp” or “writing” of a memory upon the mind as well as the “storage” of memory in a particular room or place. Both of these references allude to two other notable mnemonic metaphors which involve techniques that are still, in some ways, taught today: the “wax tablet” or *tabula rasa* and the “storehouse,” *memory palace*, or *memory theatre*, respectively.

Notably, in *The Book of Memory*, Mary Carruthers analyzes these two common metaphors for memory in ways that can be directly linked to bodily senses (primarily sight, sound, and touch). That is, while the *method of loci* does rely on physical place (and being able to recreate that place—imagine it in one’s mind), it also relies upon sight: first the experience of seeing, then the seeing in the “mind’s eye.” Furthermore, the *tabula rasa* and storehouse metaphors expand upon the physicality necessary for mnemonic techniques to aid human recollection.

The *tabula rasa* describes memory as a physical inscription upon the brain, favoring sight and touch over other sensory experiences. Essentially, the memory (an imprint) would remain in the brain (wax) until its author decided to erase it, wipe it clean, making a smooth space for new imprints. As Aristotle claims, “the change that occurs marks the body in a sort of imprint as it were, of the sense-image, as people who do seal things with signet rings” (Aristotle, qtd. Carruthers 19). Plato’s *Theatetus* also uses the metaphor of the signet ring-in-wax, marking a distinction between the then-favored (auditory) oration and the censured (vision and tactile-based) writing and reading: as Socrates recalls, Plato says, “Let us call it the gift of the Muses’ mother, Memory, and say that whenever we wish to remember something we see or hear or conceive in our own minds, we hold this wax under the perceptions or ideas and imprint on them as we might stamp the impression of a seal ring” (Plato, qtd. Carruthers 24). Similarly, in her celebrated 1966 tome, *The Art of Memory*, Frances Yates analyzes how the wax tablet metaphor stems from the *method of loci* through Cicero and Quintilian, claiming that “the art of memory is like an inner writing,” and quotes Cicero’s assertion that “[for memory], we use places as wax and images as letters” (Yates 38). She connects the *method of loci* to the wax tablet in order to

claim that these mnemonic techniques lean heavily on the physical sense of sight (“Simonides’ invention depended on the primacy of the sense of sight”), yet also depend upon imagining physical places (Yates 40).

However, while sight may be privileged over other bodily senses, the wax tablet does allow other sensory faculties which aid in recollection—namely, in repetitive memory training. That is, in order to make the imprint “stick,” repeatedly imprinting will make the stamp deeper and more difficult to erase. For example, both sight and sound are at play in what Carruthers describes as the “Guidonian hand,” a technique in which students memorize a musical phrase by assigning one note to each digit on their hand, then humming or whistling each note on their hand forward and backward repeatedly. She uses the example of a well-known children’s song, “Mary Had a Little Lamb,” and instructs her audience to hum the tune forward, marking each note with a finger, then backward while still looking at and moving their fingers (Carruthers 22). The takeaway is that to hum forward from memory is relatively simple; however, to hum backward, without the visual and physical aid of the hand, it becomes much more difficult. Yet, with these aides, and through repetition, the backwards tune becomes just as easily accessible as the forward.

Much like the aforementioned mnemonic techniques of the late 19th and early 20th century, repetition was integral in cementing the ability to recall a particular note or song; music and songs are and closely linked with repetition and memorization. For example, songs get “stuck” in our heads—sometimes only after hearing them once—and the longer they are “stuck,” the harder they are to dispel. Additionally, pre-Kindergarten through K-12 pedagogy often heavily relies upon melodies for repetitive memorization in its practices. While these songs can be relatively ubiquitous (the “ABC” song; “Head, Shoulders, Knees,

and Toes”), they are also adaptable to each classroom and location. When I was in second grade, for example, I memorized all of the counties in South Carolina to the tune of “She’ll be Comin’ ‘round the Mountain”—which is, in its original form, already intensely repetitive. The wax imprint metaphor not only encompasses a range of physical and sensory faculties, it also offers a mode of conceptualizing memory in tangible ways. In other words, it conceptualizes memory as, one, able to make an impression in a physical way upon the (human) brain; two, able to be more firmly impressed through repetition; and three, is sensory: as in, memory is able to be visualized (as writing on a tablet or to “see in the mind’s eye”), heard (as in the “Guidonian hand”), as well as felt (to be imprinted, to “know by heart;” to have a “gut” feeling; or to “regurgitate” facts).

The other common mnemonic metaphor, that of the storehouse—sometimes also referred to as the memory palace or theater, storage-room, treasury, or strongbox—expands from the wax tablet to include not simply memory’s storage, but its organization as well. This expansion hinges upon the mnemonic distinction between process/impression and content/organization: Carruthers claims that “whereas the metaphor of the seal-in-wax or written tablets was a model for the process of making the memorial phantasm and storing it in a place in the memory, this second metaphor refers both to the contents of such a memory and to its internal organization,” and that “thoughts cannot be made without materials in memory. For whatever memory holds occupies a *topos* or place, by the very nature of what it is, and these topica, like bins in a storehouse, have both contents and structure” (Carruthers 37, 40). In other words, the storehouse includes the “storage”

(usually in the mind), its “contents” (memories which are stored), and the “organization”⁴ (method of storage) all as memory. In this metaphor, memory is a trinity: it is the thing being stored *as well as* the container *as well as* the container’s organizational system. For example: “I have a memory of eating breakfast yesterday” would refer to the “thing” being stored (eating breakfast yesterday), whereas “She has a good memory” refers not only to the soundness of her “container,” but also to her ability to access each memory from that container—i.e., its organizational structure.

As could be expected, certain iterations of this metaphor underscore different valuations of memory: for example, the treasury or strongbox imply that memory is a form of currency or precious item that needs to be (and *can* be) safeguarded. As Hugh of St. Victor says, “In the treasure house of wisdom are various sorts of wealth, and many filing-places in the storehouse of your heart. In one place is put gold, in another silver, in another precious jewels. Their orderly arrangement is clarity of knowledge... orderly arrangement illuminates the intelligence and secures memory” (qtd. Carruthers 133). In this treasury, then, memories as things are more or less valuable on a scale of most protected to least—yet memory as the storage space and memory as organization are valued to the point of intelligence and illumination. For others, such as Boncompagno da Signa, memory-as-storehouse is akin to an everlasting soul: embodying memories in the soul protects them indelibly and eternally as the soul cannot be erased, even when the body is no longer living. He claims, “Nevertheless, some doctrines have remained in the storehouse of [my] soul, which I have not wished to write down in these pages that are perishable” (qtd. Yates 117).

⁴ The word “organization” stems from the Latin “organum,” meaning “mechanical device” or “instrument,” which are similar to one of the current English definitions of the word, which include bodily organs themselves as well as the arrangement of these organs inside a body.

The pages, in this instance, are perishable while memory is eternal—the inverse of how it has been iterated in this metaphor.

Still others expand upon the desire to secure memory in an “eternal place,” and went to great pains to diagram, systemize, and prescribe intricate storehouse structures in what is commonly referred to as the “memory palace” or “memory theatre” (Yates 148). Giulio Camillo, for example, conceived extensive, elaborate plans for such a theatre, which he hoped to physically build in a way that could bring memory into a tangible, brick-and-mortar structure—however, his dream was never actualized. As Yates describes,

[his] theatre is a system of memory places, through a ‘high and incomparable’ placing; it performs the office of a classical memory system for orators by ‘conserving for us the things, words, and arts with we confide to it.’ Ancient orators confided the parts of the speeches they wished to remember to ‘frail places,’ whereas Camillo ‘wishing to store up eternally the nature of all things which can be expressed in speech’ assigns them to ‘eternal places.’ (Yates 148)⁵

While each of these particular iterations allow slightly different conceptions of memory, they all designate a worth to its contents and its organization, and, as such, memory becomes a hierarchized-schematic, in which its contents are either more or less valuable, short or long-term, valued both for what they “are” as well as how “well” they are kept, and also for the curator’s “orderly” ability to retrieve them.

⁵ Yates’s in-depth examinations of mnemonic techniques such as Giulio Camillo’s allow her to claim that when memory is filtered through a physical being or space, that physicality allows memory (a seemingly intangible thing) to be imagined, conceived of, and used in ways that affect how we think. That is, she ultimately claims that the valuation of these mnemonic techniques has infiltrated and shaped the development of the Western intellectual tradition—and therefore has shaped the thinking itself. In other words, Western thinking has been shaped by “trustworthy” mnemonic devices passed down and repeatedly “imprinted” in our intellectual traditions, thus shaping how we think—which inevitably shapes *what* we think as well.

And although particulars of the mnemonic techniques championing physical and sensory experiences have evolved over the centuries, the basic principle remains: mnemonic pedagogy instructs pupils to seek memories, create a vivid sensory perception (image, smell, touch, sound, feeling) to stand for each individual thing to be remembered, and, furthermore, places that substitution into or onto some kind of structure. In other words, the fundamental mnemonic technique that has developed from antiquity and into contemporary pedagogy teaches is metaphorical: if you want to remember something unfamiliar, link it to something you already “know.” Its basis is arbitrary substitution. Compare what little you can glean from a new experience—however tenuous (in fact, the more arbitrary, the more likely you are to remember)—to one that is already familiar and committed to memory.

To use a quotidian example: I am plagued with a horrible sense of direction, and, upon moving back to my hometown after about five years away, I could never remember which exit to take from the Interstate connector as I drove to work. Was it I-20 West, toward Augusta, or I-20 East, toward Florence? It also didn’t help that the particular intersection where the two exits convalesce is notoriously nicknamed “malfunction junction,” as drivers have to make a very quick decision where to exit, merging with incoming, accelerating and exiting, decelerating traffic. When I told my mother about my navigational difficulty, she gave me her strategy.

“You work near the outlet malls, right?”

I did.

“Well, the way I remember it is that my Aunt Florence loved to shop. So, when I go to visit you, or to the mall, I go toward Aunt Florence.”

I haven't forgotten the exit since, and in that particular sense, the mnemonic technique was successful. However, I also cannot disassociate it from my mother, my great-aunt Florence, the job I disliked there, or the slight feeling of panic every time I pass that intersection. Even seemingly dissociated events (as when Hurricane Florence hit the East Coast in the fall of 2018) reminded me of my inability to recall directions, and all the associations which follow. That is, in using this mnemonic method of comparison, we may be able to remember what we think we want to remember, but we also inevitably smuggle in other ancillary, sensory perceptions and associations—and it becomes essentially impossible to disassociate them once the connection has been made. These unintentionally imported connections may often be innocuous (as mine are with I-20); however, they may not always be—and it is impossible to know what the aftereffects are (innocuous or otherwise) ahead of time. As such, the consequences of substituting what we “know” for the unknown and their progenies—is that we cannot necessarily choose what or how we remember: we fabricate an abstract, arbitrary relationship, yet in that fabrication, we christen that relationship as having material consequences—which we are always unable to predict—and even when the comparative relationships seem to be personal, their comparative effects may still often impact both us and the world around us in unforeseen ways.

For example, Stephen Mailloux examines these manufactured relationships in his chapter from *Post Nationalist American Studies*, “Making Comparisons: First Contact, Ethnocentrism, and Cross-Cultural Communication.” He describes comparison as a productive method of reframing American exceptionalism, claiming that comparison is always ethnocentric by nature, and, as such, questions “transcultural comparison related to

attempts at cross-cultural communication” (Mailloux 111). In his argument, Mailloux coins the term, “hermeneutic ethnocentrism,” which, he claims, is interpreting and evaluating any encounter with the other through one’s own system: “when we meet up with alien practices, verbal and nonverbal, we ultimately interpret and evaluate such foreign practices domestically by troping and arguing within our own culture as we name, describe, and compare these practices” (Mailloux 112). In other words, much like the mnemonic technique of invoking the familiar to recall the unfamiliar, hermeneutic ethnocentrism defines the “other” through itself. However, as Mailloux continues, this definitive, evaluative, and interpretive process is not a one-way street: just as we define the other through ourselves and our own experiences, so does the other define *us*. In fact, for Mailloux, the definition of “we” or “us” *depends* on the outsider: we are only able to draw a boundary around “us” *because of* the existence of the other, the outside of “us.” Put simply, we are constituted by the other. It is likewise for memory: just as we define, interpret, and evaluate our own experiences through memory, and just as we choose and curate which memories we want to recall through mnemonic techniques—memory is equally operating upon us, defining who *we* are and how we see ourselves in the world. In other words, while it is commonly assumed that memory would not exist without “us,” “we” would not be ourselves without memory.

There is, however, one metaphor for memory which accounts for the inevitability of shifts and unintended associations—that is, allows for a faithful infidelity: that of the medieval comparison of memory to a pigeon-coop (Carruthers 38). At the time, pigeons were raised for nourishment as well as communication (similar to how memory, as was thought then, “nourishes” the mind and body). However, while pigeons might be

domesticated in the sense that they are trained to stay under manmade confines with the temptation of food or shelter or attention, they might also fly away on their own accord, perhaps to return—or perhaps not: “[pigeons] are domesticated, yet also autonomous and unpredictable” (Carruthers 38). In this sense, the storehouse is not necessarily a treasury, strongbox, or palace which holds memory “safe” under lock-and-key; rather it is a place that houses other beings—beings which interact with us and influence us (as we do them) but are simultaneously able to fly away at will. That is, a pigeon coop is a manmade home for autonomous animals, which affect and are affected by us, yet have their own freedom and experiences which are separate from ours. When the pigeon flies away, it may not return—or, if it does, it isn’t the same pigeon it was when it left. It has experienced life and events that its human counterparts could never know or feel or be a part of.

This is not only a departure from most accounts of the storehouse, but current scholarship, as well, where it has become commonplace to dismiss any metaphor which likens memory to a storehouse (or filing cabinet or computer, as it is sometimes referred to in more contemporary work)—mainly due to the assessment that the mind’s structural integrity is not in any way compatible to storing memory, and the assumption that “storing” memory only to retrieve it later, pure, unchanged, and “accurate” is impossible. That is, most interactions (not only in the field of rhetoric, but pervasive through history, psychology, and neuroscience as well) begin with the premise that memory is fickle and cannot be stored as a static, intact “thing.” For example, the entire field of forensic psychology circulates around the complicated relationship between human remembrance—moreover, human *confidence* in remembrance—and accuracy. As forensic psychologists Daniel Simons and Christopher Chabris’s 2011 study begins by claiming,

“People often imagine their memories to be like vast libraries, where information is written down, filed away, and then brought back when it’s needed (or lost in some dusty shelf). But the act of remembering is more complicated than that” (Yong 2011). In other words, popular belief buys into memory-as-storehouse in a very literal sense, while professional scholarship begins with the understanding that this metaphor is not literal, but, rather, is incredibly porous.

The pigeon-coop version of memory allows for such porosity; its storehouse is not “sound,” and the memories it contains will ineludibly be changed, even though they may appear the same. Furthermore, the degree or consequences of those changes are impossible to predict, and often go unnoticed. That is, pigeon-coops do indeed contain “riches;” however, those “riches” are not stagnant documents valuable only because of their perceived accuracy or fidelity to an actuality: rather, they are valuable because they are *not* stagnant: “they are valued in terms of their present usefulness, not their accuracy or their certification of what really happened” (Carruthers 38). In other words, what this metaphor allows is a way of thinking memory as a very integral part of our lives, while also not being captive to our mind or body. It allows memory to be its own autonomous body or force that affects us and is affected by us—intertwined with us as well as with events and experiences that are beyond our purview.

III. Bodily and Memory

We would be remiss to assume that the conception that we shape memory just as it shapes us is a new one: Henri Bergson, for example, was one of the foremost thinkers to take memory seriously as an agent (as in, not simply a tool that humans could hone through mnemonic exercises) in his seminal 1896 book, *Matter and Memory*. In his original preface, Bergson claims that memory “is frankly dualistic...it affirms both the reality of

matter and the reality of spirit,” yet his book is spent first creating, then dispelling and disabusing arguments for that dualism (Bergson 9). He begins by creating such a dichotomy, separating memory into “habit-memory” (automatic behavior that is strengthened through repetition and bodily perception) and “pure memory” (an unconscious memory, one that is virtual). However, as his argument progresses, it becomes clear that the line between “habit-memory” and “pure memory” is an impossible one to draw, as Bergson claims that memory is not a stagnant thing, but is a constantly moving on a plane between bodily perception and contemplation (the base of “pure-memory”) (Bergson 63). Furthermore, he claims that “the function of the body is not to store up recollections, but simply to choose, in order to bring back to distinct consciousness, by the real efficacy thus conferred on it, the useful memory, that which may complete and illuminate the present situation with a view to ultimate action” (Bergson 106). In other words, the body’s function is to rhetorically select which memories are “useful” for a current context. His conclusion culminates with a thesis that is opposite that with which it began, asserting that “memory is something other than a function of the brain” (Bergson 142). What Bergson’s philosophy allows, then, is for memory to be autonomous to human bodies, yet interacts upon and with other bodies (human or otherwise), and influences them through perception and recollection. In other words, for Bergson, memory is not born from or a function of the human brain—it is something other.

Following Bergson’s work, in roughly the last thirty years, public and collective memory studies have made tremendous strides in conceptualizing memory as not simply a function of the (singular) human brain, but as something that can be shared, morphed, and passed on. This scholarship recognizes that memory cannot be stored or housed within a

person, but is fluid between people, creating (or dividing) groups and movements. For example, in Bradford Vivian's essay, "Memory and Repetition," he defines the concept of public memory itself through nomadic metaphors: namely, the consistent (repetitive) relationship between amnesia, distortion, change, forgery, and authenticity, claiming that "the complex truth of memories depends upon the distortions of repeated acts of recollection as much as any original or authentic perception" (Vivian 189). However, while Vivian's central argument is about public memory, he opens by analyzing Quentin Compson's narrative in William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*, claiming that Quentin's father, when bequeathing him an heirloom, "lends prophetic meaning to his son's entire life; his words resound endlessly with their gravity" (Vivian 187). Perhaps because the essay is arguing for a less categorized approach to *public* memory (an approach that is not right/wrong, authentic/inauthentic, but depends upon repetition, which always changes), or perhaps because it appears in a collection entitled *Framing Public Memory*, or perhaps because the concentration of interest surrounding memory in contemporary scholarship generally circulates around publics, Vivian qualifies his opening move by saying, "the senses of time and memory in *The Sound and the Fury* are not explicitly public. In many ways, they are intensely personal and even resistant to public articulation" (Vivian 188). However, as he goes on to highlight, their very "system of values and ideals concerning the interrelated meaning of past, present, and future—which allows for reconsideration of the assumptions upon which the study of public memory is often based" (Vivian 188). In other words, the foundation of public memory is often (if not always) very personal, intimate, even *resistant* to the public. And, in a sense, most scholarship in current collective and public memory recognizes that memory is not solely public; however, it

doesn't seem to find memory that isn't public very interesting or worthwhile. In this sense, while a vast amount of scholarship does recognize the porous nature of memory and its fluidity, its focus is on the fluidity of public and collective memory, and how that affects people. It recognizes memory as embodied; however, overwhelmingly, it does not take memory as its own body, its own force; rather, defines memory primarily through the human, glossing over the possibility that memory exists beyond the human—individual or collective—and does other things in the world beyond shaping collective identities and histories.

For example, to consider memory as somehow a body outside the human, brain, or mind, we might pause for a moment to notice that both metaphors (wax tablet and the different iterations of storehouse) both stem from the *method of loci* (literally: method of locating) in a sense that they focus memory as a telos to be sought after, tracked, found—then claimed and stored for a more streamlined future retrieval: “The crucial task of recollection is investigation, ‘tracking down,’ a word related to vestigial, ‘tracks’ or ‘footprints.’ All mnemonic organizational schemes are heuristic in nature. They are retrieval schemes, for the purpose of invention or ‘finding’” (Carruthers 23). For example, in *On Memory and Recollection*, Aristotle likens this mnemonic search to hunting: “as those who throw a stone and cannot stop it at their will when thrown, so he who tries to recollect and ‘hunts’ [after an idea] sets up a process in a material part, [that] in which resides the affection” (*On Memory* 453a). Furthermore, Aristotle says that recollection has “moving potential;” it is able to start a process in order to reobtain the “object”—to regain the original experience. Because of this, it follows that memories (the things being stored or imprinted) are not inherently within a (human) body; rather, they must be sought after,

found, or hunted. That is to say, memory exists outside of the human. Memory is not dependent upon the human mind or body: memory cannot be entirely “housed” or “stored” in the (human) body or “imprinted” upon us, but because we (Western scholars, that is) have conceptualized it that way for so long—since antiquity—we have forgotten that it has other potentialities. That is, while memory is usually assumed to be “stored” in a brain, to be cerebral or part of a mind-capacity, all the major metaphors we have at our disposal depend upon physicality. Our metaphors for memory rely upon bodies rather than the mind. Similarly, we’re accustomed to only think of memory in terms of the human, namely, what humans can imprint, store, or organize. In this sense, our conception of memory is inherently rhetorical: we select what (and how) we wish to remember, employ mnemonic techniques to ensure we preserve and store it in an organized manner, then replay it in our heads, and, over time, consider as it as the thing or event itself, whatever that might be. The repetitive replay solidifies into what we then call our “memory” (as if we could own it); yet memory is not stagnant: it moves through us, moves with us, changes us, and is changed by us.

To think that such a wild force—a force with its own body of forces—could possibly be entirely contained, let alone contained and accessed at will is overly simplistic and does a disservice not only to memory but to our sense of self, identity, and mental capabilities. What we have and hold onto are metaphors of memory: imprints or substitutions (which are, of course, types of memory) but these substitutions do not and could not possibly comprise the entirety of its force. In other words, when we use the metaphors of wax-tablet or storehouse, we relegate all of memory to an oversimplified, containable, organize-able body. And while we do contain, retain, and lose “memories,”

these memories are rhetorically manufactured. They are our own creations which we then mistake for the *only* memory that matters, when, really, our embodied memories are simply a particular stratum of a much more expansive force.

IV. Muscle, Procedural, and Cellular Memory

Columbia, South Carolina is not necessarily the cultural hub we might imagine as home to a thriving community of classical ballet dancers and eager audiences—yet the Southern state’s Capital of just over 133-thousand residents boasts two internationally-competitive companies (The Columbia City Ballet and the Carolina Ballet) which regularly tour and exchange talent with the New York City Ballet, the Boston Ballet, the Bolshoi Ballet, and the Paris Opera Ballet. The Columbia City Ballet alone routinely sells out its 10-15 performances per year, and its professionals currently include five principal dancers, four soloists, and 19 company members—not to mention the hundreds of students who circulate through its classes and select performances as chorus members. Having grown up in Columbia (and having been a dancer in this particular community throughout my adolescence), I am friends with many of the artists who, unlike me, continued to train and perform as their profession. As such, we often have discussions about our overlapping day-to-day work—the intersections between practice, rhetoric, learning, composition, and performance—and many of these conversations convalesce around choreography.

Overwhelmingly, my friends assert that choreography—the structural foundation of a ballet’s composition—is the “original vision” of the author/choreographer (comparatively, the composer for musicians).⁶ They also are in agreement that

⁶ We might notice certain similarities with the solo piano performance—the “original vision” of the choreographer/composer or the artistic leeway solo performances have. However, a ballet is markedly different than a solo piano performance: it is not simply an experience between the audience and one

choreography is necessary for a collective understanding of what needs to happen in a performance. In some instances, this understanding might be an overarching “vision” or “feeling,” while, in others, it might equate to particular movements, synchronized with the orchestra and fellow dancers. In this case, being “in time,” “in step,” or “together” essentially refers to being in the right place at the right time, simultaneously, with the other performers: and doing so is crucial for a performance’s “success.” (For a non-ballet parallel, think of synchronized swimming, marching band patterns, or a kickline.) However, synchronization to choreography not only allows the ballet to be aesthetically pleasing, but more pragmatically, is necessary for physical safety: injuries most often occur when dancers break from the choreography. Dancers, orchestra members, and the stage crew trust one another to follow through with what they have practiced and memorized together, and if one piece of their team deviates from the rote script, it becomes not only obvious to the audience and a detriment to the performance’s reception, but a physical hazard to be overcome.

However, this adherence to synchronization and fealty to composition applies mainly to company and group numbers. A solo performance—much like Liszt or Schumann’s solo piano performances—has far less restrictions. In fact, the nature of solo performances import certain liberties that come with being trusted as a solo artist: for example, the soloist must be strong enough to captivate the audience’s attention and “fill” the entire stage for an extended period of time—however, during that time, there is no one

performer. Rather, there is an entire cast, crew, and orchestra involved in a ballet’s production. Furthermore, audiences watching a ballet do not necessarily know what to expect, as each choreographer has slightly different ways of rhetorically fashioning each dancer’s talent with the musical score. That is, each ballet will always be differently choreographed in each company: seeing “Swan Lake” in Boston may have the same story, score, and “feel,” yet will inevitably be different from “Swan Lake” in New York. Each ballet’s choreography will place its dancers first, intending to highlight their talent rather than remain “true” to an original version.

else dancing to compare her to, and (usually), no one else for her to endanger if she deviates from the prescribed choreography. In other words, for a soloist, the dancer's main responsibility is that she begins and ends where she was choreographed to be. What happens in the middle can quite often result in an amalgam of original choreography and improvisation—especially with first-time solo artists. For example, I recently had a discussion with my longtime friend, Kristi Beers, who continues to lend her considerable talents to the Columbia City Ballet and owns a local dance studio, Palmetto Performing Arts. We began talking about our first experiences dancing solo onstage, and agreed that there is a definitive moment in which a soloist realizes she is alone.

You start off with what you've practiced thousands of times," she said, "going through the motions without thinking. Then, usually about a third of the way into it, you go, 'Holy shit! It's just me!' and you're suddenly aware of being watched by hundreds of people. And then you can't remember the next step. So you make it up as you go, and you pray to god that the music will take you back to where you need to be.

As Kristi continued, sometimes a soloist can fall back in with where she "needs" to be; however, most of the time,

you fake it with a smile. You try and make every move with confidence. With purpose. But to do that, you've got to trust that your body can remember the same technique that you've practiced...When you improvise, you basically just go through what movement comes out of your body, because you can't remember the order it's supposed to happen in. You've got to rely on your ability to make a movement you've made so many times before, and you trust that even though you

don't know what your next move is, you can deliver it with confidence. And of course, you hope the audience doesn't notice.

What these conversations, and, particularly, Kristi's insight underscores are the well-worn platitudes that "the show must go on," or "fake it 'til you make it." However, implicit in this description is the understanding that not adhering to choreography is not necessarily "faking it," or "false." Rather than taking improvisation as its own composition—or, a faithful infidelity—it is taken as a "false" version of the original choreography. Additionally, these discussions also reveal the paradoxical and inherent understanding that the ability to improvise is a necessary skill for performers, particularly solo artists. That is, to be a good soloist, the dancer must be able to improvise in a way that isn't noticeable to the audience as improvisation or deviation. However, as Kristi points out, in order to improvise,⁷ a performer must trust her body to have memorized certain movements through repetition—even if these movements are not in the choreographed order. The movements are repeated, but differently than the "original" choreography. In other words, the ability to improvise is the body remembering when the mind forgets – but that remembering isn't 'faithful' in the traditional way of equating 'faithful' with exact.

Yet, infidelity (and forgetfulness) are an essential element to performance. Remembering is not necessarily crucial to a performance's success, but is *part of* a performance—just as forgetting is. While the Columbia City Ballet employs principal dancers, soloists, and company members, it is still seeking to replace its former Prima Ballerina, Regina Willoughby, who retired in the spring of 2018 after over twenty years as

⁷ In select cases, improvisation can lead to critically acclaimed performances, when the soloist "feels" the audience, the music, the "moment," and allows movement to move through her. (In this sense, "improv" becomes "improve"). However, it's also a dice-throw: for as many acclaimed improvisational performances, there are unaccountably more flops.

the company's star. Her final performance as Cleopatra in *Cleopatra*—a ballet conceived, written, and choreographed specifically for her by William Starrett and Mariclare Miranda—was internationally acclaimed (in its first as well as final instantiations), yet, as Willoughby describes in a follow-up conversation with a local newspaper, she cannot remember her own state of being in that farewell performance—nor can she recall being in certain highlight performances throughout her career (Harris). For example, she claims that portraying Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet* is her favorite role, describing the experience of performing Juliet as “an out-of-body” experience: “The curtain went up and it was the end of the ballet before I realized. Prokofiev's score tells the story in such an incredible way and to have that flow through my body was like nothing else” (Harris). What Willoughby refers to here is not necessarily the choreography/composition or the score or her own memorized ability, but the necessary erasure of what she has memorized in order to allow the “flow” of these elements to move through her body—the becoming of a performance.

This particular “becoming” of a performance is what we might commonly refer to as muscle memory, “procedural memory” or “motor memory.” It is “embodied implicit memory that unconsciously helps us to perform various motor tasks we have somehow learned through habituation, either through explicit intentional training or simply as the result of informal or even unintentional learning from repeated prior experience” (Shusterman 4). That is, muscle memory is understood as both learned through habit or repetition, yet it is also unconsciously executed. However, it is important to understand that muscle memory is not *simply* a function of the body:

the term ‘muscle memory’ is nonetheless deeply entrenched, perhaps because it serves key rhetorical functions. Muscle suggests body in contrast to the mind, as

muscular effort is frequently contrasted to mental effort...because of this common brain/ brawn opposition, muscle memory conveys a sense of mindless memory. Such memory is mindless, however, only if we identify mind with mindfulness in the sense of explicit, critically focused consciousness or deliberate, reflective awareness. Procedural or performative tasks of implicit motor memory often require and exhibit significant mental skills and intelligence, as, for example, when a good pianist plays with spontaneity yet also with aesthetically sensitive mindfulness. In demonstrating that intelligent mind extends beyond clear consciousness, muscle memory also makes manifest the mind's embodied nature and the body's crucial role in memory and cognition (Shusterman 4).

In this sense, there is an interplay of consciousness and unconsciousness, mindfulness and mindlessness, which is essential to muscle memory. While "mindfulness" implies consciousness, "mindlessness" implies unconsciousness: and muscle memory (and, I would venture to say, all memory) amalgamates the two. For example, in her introduction to *The New Wounded*, Catherine Malabou assesses how traumatic events interrupt the 'natural' formation of memories, and questions if there is such a "natural" formation at all: "there is never a simple relation between the 'normal' interior of the psyche and the violent interruption of an unpredictable exterior. Sociopolitical trauma never occurs entirely by chance. Every event always derives, in one way or another, from an indivisible intimacy between the outside and the inside" (Malabou 11). Consider, for example, weight lifting, or any other physical activity which increases muscle mass. In order for muscles to expand, to grow stronger, they must first be ripped, torn, or, quite simply, injured. It is the constant, habitual tearing and repairing which regenerates tissue and strengthens muscles.

However, whether we are mindful of this or not, it has become habitual to discuss “mindlessness” as having generally negative connotations, especially in juxtaposition with “mindfulness:” that is, in attempting to render muscle memory as legitimate or important, we have first had to say that it is not *simply* mindless. There is, however, a functionality to muscle memory that is essentially requisite of the mindless: that is, in order for organs themselves to work, to execute their tasks, and also for the mind to function as a mind, muscles must be able to work *without* mindfulness. That is, they must also be mindless. For example, we do not consciously tell our stomachs to digest or our hearts to beat. And just as we cannot consciously command certain muscles to perform their tasks, inversely, we cannot consciously command them *not* to. Furthermore, our muscles not only work without our consciousness, but rather, some scientists argue that they work *because* we are not mindful of their working (Eichenbaum 117). To use a colloquialism, these particular muscles have “a mind of their own,” and, arguably, a memory of their own.

However, the presupposition for procedural or muscle memory (arguably, memory writ-large) relies heavily upon able bodies—specifically, bodies which are able to repeat certain (often difficult or taxing) movement. In other words, a “good” memory often equates to a “healthy” body. This is a prejudice that has been deeply ingrained since antiquity: for example, in his *On Memory and Reminiscence*, Aristotle claims that “those whose upper parts are abnormally large, as is the case with dwarfs, have abnormally weak memory, as compared with their opposites, because of the great weight which they have resting upon the organ of perception, and because their mnemonic movements are, from the very first, not able to keep true to a course, but are dispersed, and because, in the effort at recollection, these movements do not easily find a direct path” (*On Memory* 453b).

While we may have a more inclusive way of viewing ability since Aristotle's time, certain patterns of assumption remain: for example, we do not question a person's memory until it begins to "fail." Usually, that failure manifests in bodily ways, and until very recently, dementia and Alzheimer's patients "often remained undiagnosed until a physical injury rendered their condition unable to be ignored" (Quiroga 53). In short, physical, bodily health has traditionally been correlated with a person's ability to remember, or to have what is usually considered a "strong" memory: the strength of a person's body equates to the strength of her memory.

However, it is not simply human bodily strength or human memory which purports this assumption; memory (muscle, procedural, or otherwise) is not unique to humankind, and other beings are constantly called to withstand the strain and demands which memory places upon them. A horse, for example, is often referred to as being "broken" when it goes through the process of learning how a saddle, reins, harnesses, or a bit feels; how to carry a load on its back; or how to take commands and direction from that load. Another example might be the commonly-known experiment involving Pavlov's dogs, who salivated at the ringing of a bell, which they remembered and associated with food based on a continuum of past experiences. This type of involuntary, procedural memory is what we often refer to as "training" or "domesticating" animals (which is not unlike how ballet dancers, musicians, professional athletes, or other performers train), yet it happens beyond the human, without human intervention as well. A bird learning to fly from its nest, a deer or giraffe walking, then running for the first time are also among many countless examples of procedural memory.

As such, memory also works at the level of cellular or viral bodies: take the flu virus, for example. It continually morphs, changing its strain to accommodate new challenges and vaccinations. As Deborah Gordon claims in her article for the *Smithsonian*,

Any living being can exhibit the simplest form of memory, a change due to past events. Look at a tree that has lost a branch. It remembers by how it grows around the wound, leaving traces in the pattern of the bark and the shape of the tree. You might be able to describe the last time you had the flu, or you might not. Either way, in some sense your body ‘remembers,’ because some of your cells now have different antibodies, molecular receptors, which fit that particular virus. (Gordon)

The common thread here, then—which laces itself through procedural memory, whether it is animal, cellular, viral, etc.—is not only repetition, but is the *type* of repetition, which is always different, is always a departure, is always violent and/or traumatic. Tearing muscles in the repeated process of weight lifting, “training” animals through involuntary practice, cutting (pruning) a plant to encourage it to grow a certain way, forcing the body to continuously conform, learn, and repeat new movements—all of these induce trauma on some level to force the “ability” to repeat a past action. In other words, bodies not only remember trauma; they remember *through* trauma.

One extreme example of this might be found in ancient and medieval forms of polygraph tests, which are synonymous with torture.⁸ While there are countless references to torture and truth-telling, one of their earliest descriptions can be found in the Hammurabi codex from the 18th century BCE as well as the Assyrian codex from the 12th century

⁸ Sadly, these practices are not so medieval on the chronological spectrum as we might hope: torture is still used to coax “truth” from an unwilling participant, and its pervasiveness is often unchecked, withheld from public knowledge, or diminished in times of war or conflict.

BCE, which recommends throwing or pushing women who were suspected of witchcraft or adultery into a large body of water; if she managed to survive, she would be acquitted. Other methods sought God's judgement or wisdom from a divine being: *The Book of Numbers* (5:11-31) describes a "bitter water ordeal" wherein a woman suspected of adultery should drink a glass of holy bitter water and swear in God's name that she had not betrayed her husband. If she was lying, her thighs and midsection would become swollen. Other forms of torture, such as pouring or dripping scouring oil onto a restrained person's bare flesh, gradually pulling limbs from a person's body, or a myriad of innumerable gruesome forms of dismemberment were, more or less, common medieval practices which were used to force a person into divulging "truth" (Ford 166). Michel Foucault, for example, begins *Discipline and Punish* by describing specific instances of such torture, and in tracking the connections between punishment, torture, hegemony, and sovereignty, he also examines torture's relationship with truth and truth-seeking. He claims:

Beneath an apparently determined, impatient search for truth, one finds classical torture the regulated mechanism of an ordeal: a physical challenge that must define the truth; if the patient is guilty, the pains that it imposes are not unjust; but it is also a mark of exculpation if he is innocent. In the practice of torture, pain, confrontation and truth were bound together: they worked together on the patient's body. The search for truth through judicial torture was certainly a way of obtaining evidence, the most serious of all—the confession of the guilty person; but it was also the battle, and this victory of one adversary over the other, that 'produced' truth according to a ritual. (Foucault 41)

In other words, torture could be rationalized whether the accused was guilty (the torture is justified) or not (the accused has physical proof—a badge of “honor”—of her innocence). Furthermore, in claiming that torture binds pain, confrontation, and truth together in a bodily way, Foucault is able to outline how truth is “produced.” In other words, truth is not external, already-there, or absolute: rather, truth is manufactured through conflict and violence.

As such, subjecting a person to pain—or, sometimes, the threat of pain—repeatedly, was thought to produce “truth.” Surprisingly enough, these ancient and medieval methods bear resemblances to present-day polygraph tests (more colloquially referred to as “lie-detector” tests), which seek to measure the veracity of a person’s memory by detecting bodily responses: they gauge a person’s cardiovascular activity, skin conductivity, temperature, respiration, perspiration, and pupil dilation over a series of questioning. Although their reliability has been repudiated by the U.S. Supreme Court after scientific demonstration consistently proved them too variable to be trustworthy, polygraph tests are still regularly used as evidence to a jury regarding whether a witness is “lying” or not, and are also commonly used to screen new employees for high-security careers. However, veracity aside, they are certainly useful in establishing popular support or belief of a person’s ethos. Take Christine Blasey Ford, for example, who took multiple polygraph tests which indicated she was being truthful regarding her accusations of sexual assault against the (now confirmed) Supreme Court member, Brett Kavanaugh. However, Virginia’s Lieutenant Governor, Justin Fairfax, who was accused of sexual assault by two women, Vanessa Tyson and Meredith Watson, also passed a polygraph test, thus bolstering his ethos while undermining theirs.

As such, polygraph tests (specifically, polygraph tests used as evidence in legal cases) have been fodder of heavy debate in forensic psychology since the late 1970s (Saxe). As Brandeis University psychologist, Leonard Saxe, claims in an interview for *American Psychology*, “the idea that we can detect a person's veracity by monitoring psychophysiological changes is more myth than reality. Even the term ‘lie detector’ is a misnomer. So-called ‘lie detection’ involves *inferring* deception through analysis of physiological responses to a structured, but unstandardized, series of questions” (Saxe). In essence, Saxe’s critique of modern polygraph tests underscores the inherent rhetorical nature of asking questions and analyzing responses; however, it also echoes Foucault’s claim that truth is manufactured, as well as his contemporaries’ conclusions: as psychologist Gershon Ben-Shahar claims, “it may, in fact, be impossible to conduct a proper validity study” (Verschuere 22). In other words, it’s impossible to conduct a scientific study to determine “truth.”

In this sense, what polygraphs—either ancient, medieval, or modern—actually measure is what the questionee *remembers*, not necessarily actuality or “truth.” That is, what these tests *question* (and expect in return) is whether a subject divulges what “actually” happened, yet what they provoke is that subject’s memory: all a polygraph test could possibly ask of its subject is if she remains faithful to her own memory, not any all-encompassing veracity of what “really” happened. Polygraph subjects may not lie, but not lying may also not align with triangulated, documented, or otherwise confirmed “actuality.” Furthermore, what “lie detectors” (and torture, especially) does is condition a response that will reduce whatever trauma is being inflicted, whatever that response may

be—whether it is “truthful” or not. That is, most tortured subjects “create” truth by giving an answer which will stop their own trauma.

What these instances of training, procedural memory, and torture further substantiate is the previous claim that there is no true or false to memory. A musical performance, a ballet solo, etc. cannot be simply true or false: it is “true” in the sense that it is performed, but can never be completely true to an original. It is and is not true, is and is not false. Likewise, memory can neither be true or false: it is always both and neither: it is always faithful infidelity. However, another takeaway we can glean from these case studies is that memory’s relationship with trauma is co-dependent and entangled—often entangled to the point of indistinguishability. While memory is a traumatic force on us, we also force memory: bodies induce trauma to repeat or remember past action, but bodies are also subject to that same force. In other words, repetition has been, throughout antiquity and into modernity and contemporary practice, the primary mnemonic technique we use to ensure that memory “sticks”—whether it is bodily, metaphorical, or otherwise. And this repetition is always violent, is always a form of trauma. In other words, the mnemonic techniques we have (which inform how we “understand” memory) are both metaphorical and repetitive. We repeatedly substitute what we do not know for what we do “know”; we repeatedly force one thing, one movement, one thought, for another. And while there may not be a way out of violence or trauma, there may be other metaphors or other mnemonic techniques than those which have pervasively infiltrated (and therefore influenced) Western thinking.

V. Memory and Metaphor:

If, then, we can separate memory from truth or actuality, we are, once again, left with metaphors: substitutions for how memory might operate with, through, and outside of

us (and others). As we have explored, throughout most of Western history, memory has been understood through metaphors that have been inherently bodily (the *method of loci*, *tabula rasa*, or storehouse), which is interesting because we usually associate memory with the cerebral: we place it in the mind, yet the way in which we metaphorize memory is bodily. In other words, in order to “make sense” of what we mean by memory, we have to think about it in a physical way. Given this, and given that memory is more complicated than these metaphors allow, memory’s force is simultaneously bound up in as well as outside of these relatively simple realities. As such, we need to consider another way—another metaphor, perhaps—for memory which accounts for its complexity.

One way of doing so may be to take seriously that memory as not simply a physical, actual force (a force which we can tangibly see, hold, or even relate to.) However, it is also not simply a virtual force (the intangible, unrelatable), but, rather, it is both actual and virtual, and also neither. In other words, by virtual, memory is the plane outside tangibility. It is the force that moves through and with other beings, co-producing their and its existence. We can see its effects, we can see how other bodies and beings react to it, and how those reactions interact, but we can’t point to it. As such, in describing such intangibility, it becomes necessary to place the virtual on the actual plane. Here is such a metaphor: memory’s virtual force is similar to (but not quite) the autonomous pigeon which has its own experiences beyond our own—which we could never know or predict—and affects other beings and bodies. However, in order to describe memory this way, we have actualized it. We have to make it “like” something we already know. In this sense, memory becomes the pigeon. It is the tangible metaphors we make: it becomes the pigeon, pigeon-coop, the storehouse, the wax tablet, etc.—substitutions that, once we create, we can never

quite separate (as my memory with I-20 and my great-aunt Florence). Yet the process of the virtual memory becoming the actual metaphor of memory (also memory) is a movement between virtual to actual: it is a constant, co-productive movement from memory to memory. In other words, it is that becoming, that transduction from the virtual to the actual (and vice versa).

In *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari claim that we never know what a body can do; however, we assume we know what bodies are based on what each organ can do: “We know nothing about a body until we know what it can do, in other words, what its affects are, how they can or cannot enter into composition with other affects, with the affects of another body, either to destroy that body or to be destroyed by it, either to exchange actions and passions with it or to join with it in composing a more powerful body” (Deleuze 257). They then go on to claim that:

The plan(e), conceived or made in this fashion, always concerns the development of forms and the formation of subjects. A hidden structure necessary for forms, a secret signifier necessary for subjects. It ensures that the plan(e) itself will not be given. It exists only in a supplementary dimension to that which gives rise (n + 1). This makes it a teleological plan(e), a design, a mental principle. It is a plan(e) of transcendence. It is a plan(e) of analogy, either because it assigns the eminent term of a development because it establishes the proportional relations of a structure. (Deleuze 266)

In other words, these planes, strata, or surfaces that Deleuze and Guattari reference are not stagnant surfaces, but rather planes on and with which things happen: they are not linear planes being mapped onto time. Strata function as a line mostly because they divide—but

they do not delineate outside from inside; they separate outside from outside, inside from inside. We might see memory in the same way: it doesn't separate what is from what is not, it separates what is from what it is. As polygraph case studies have shown, what "is" is always dependent upon and also completely separate from memory: memory (through trauma) creates what "is" but also is and is not what it creates. And it is this constant movement (what I am calling transduction) that may allow us a different metaphor for memory.

More recently, in *Resounding the Rhetorical*, Byron Hawk argues research as transduction: he claims that rather than creating certainties, "research puts the quasi-object of study into a different flow of circulation, widens its potential paths and relations, and transforms it and the people and places it entangles, expanding it as quasi-object" (Hawk 109). Research interrupts, creating diffraction, and, for Hawk, "transductions are moments of diffraction" (Hawk 101). In other words, research is transduction because it generates resonances with an object of study, not reflecting it as a stagnant and absolute "actuality," but diffracting it—co-producing another version and simultaneously opening it to further lines of flight. Similarly, in his essay, "'A Timeless Now:' Memory and Repetition," Bradford Vivian claims that memory's repetition is transitory. He describes memory much like Hawk describes research: as repetitive in a way that does not simply reproduce or reflect the same, but rather, memory is continually transient (nomadic) in that its repetition constantly produces other versions of itself (Vivian 199).

In this way, seeing memory as transduction may allow for more complexities than previous metaphors have allowed: that is, memory is incessant movement from the virtual plane to the actual; any physical metaphor takes something from the virtual and actualizes

it, constantly co-producing other versions. Memory never reflects an absolute, already-existing “past” or “truth,” but, rather, is a repetition of difference. However, another benefit of conceptualizing memory as transduction (which physical metaphors do not necessarily account for or highlight) is that transduction is not a one-way street: transduction moves between actual and virtual, virtual and actual—consistently, constantly co-producing. For example, on the virtual plane, memory is transduced into *something*, some physical metaphor—for example, a monument. However, that monument then transduces back and affects the virtual field in particular ways. One such way is that any given individual experience of memory necessarily happens on the actual plane—so an individual experience of memory has to be transduced from the virtual to the actual. And, as I will examine in chapter four, when someone experiences a monument, they’re not necessarily directly participating in a collective or public memory that exists as an actual thing.

What is really happening is that monument has become a virtual field, and their experience of that monument is a specific transduction back to them, which can never have anything more than them in it. And that’s why monuments mean so many different things to so many different people. It’s also why they can be intensely problematic: we expect monuments to have a static or certain property or aura or affect to them, when they don’t. Monuments are supposed to represent a past event (usually a trauma or atrocity), which they are not equipped to embody. Every time they transduce, they transduce differently. And that becomes a problem when it comes to previous metaphors for memory—and especially become problematic for public memory. Every individual transduction doesn’t create a collective, it teeters on this virtual plane, yet seemingly means nothing unless it contributes to the existing body of collectivity.

As such, memories move and create friction between an outside and an outside: there is no interior or exterior. What memory does is separate the virtual from the actual, it moves between different versions of itself. In this sense, memory is the transduction. Memory is the line that separates the virtual (out there) memory from the actualized (tangible) memory, as well as the transduction (movement) between the two. Memory is never an entirety: it's the process of transduction; it's the metaphors that get made in specific instances which allows us to think memory is this storehouse, this tablet, this pigeon, or this thing that I hold. However, as we have seen, the danger in this bodily and physical actualization is that the actual becomes memory itself: we mistake the metaphors we make for memory as its entirety, ignoring the virtual field of possibilities that memory allows for and creates, ignoring the transduction between the virtual and the actual or real. For example, Bruno Latour describes "real" as the culmination of every version of a thing that has ever existed. The mistake, however, is thinking that *your* particular version is the thing itself, when the closest version of the real is every version that has ever happened, when, really, any transduction of that memory is another version of the virtual.

Chapter Three

Memory as a Hauntological Force

The perpetual act of forgetting gives our every act a ghostly, unreal, hazy quality. What did we have for lunch the day before yesterday? ... What was I thinking about, three seconds ago?

-Milan Kundera, *The Curtain*

Thus, history becomes a mere history of illusory ideas, a history of spirits and ghosts, while the real, empirical history that forms the basis of this ghostly history is only utilized to provide bodies for these ghosts; from it are borrowed the names required to clothe these ghosts with the appearance of reality. In making this experiment, our saint frequently forgets his role and writes an undisguised ghost-story.

-Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology*

There has never been a scholar who really, and as a scholar, deals with ghosts. A traditional scholar does not believe in ghosts.

-Jacques Derrida, *Spectres of Marx*

I. Memory's Ghostly (Non)Presence:

There was a vacuous expression on the boy's face when we stopped him on the side of the road to ask for directions. He was carrying two paper grocery bags, bulging with what appeared to be heavy contents, yet he didn't seem irritated at having been delayed.

"We're looking for the cemetery," I said. "The one connected to the Waccamaw church?"

He blinked, shifted the load in his hands, and I repeated myself.

"You mean, you're looking for Alice," he corrected me.

I smiled and told him yes, then asked if he might mind showing us, as we were obviously from out of town. In return, we could give him a lift, if he wanted. The boy didn't turn his head, but his eyes glanced down the road.

"That way," he said, and turned in the other direction, resuming his brisk pace.

I'd just graduated high school and had driven to Charleston with my good friend and co-graduate, Emily Rast. The trip was a last hurrah for us before we set off to different states and universities. We both felt a newly-minted sense of independence, and we'd intended to indulge this grown-up feeling by taking an unchaperoned trip to attend the annual Spoleto Festival. However, not having researched the lineup ahead of time and finding ourselves rather out-of-pocket, we decided it would be thrilling (and exponentially cheaper) to go ghost hunting instead. We poked around graveyards and reported haunted spots (the site of Blackbeard's hanging, Revolutionary and Civil war sites), none of which proved particularly fruitful, save for the scarce adrenaline of imagining a supernatural presence only to realize it was a stray cat or rogue lizard.

Like many places wrought with horrific pasts and disparate socioeconomic populations, ghost narratives are not simply common, entertaining lore in the Lowcountry; rather, they are constitutive of what the Lowcountry *is*. Whether they are historic mansions situated comfortably in the quiet, magnolia-perfumed streets south of Broad or the quickly-erected, prefabricated homes just beyond the fishy din of I-26, local residences have something in common: the underside of the porch (if they have one) or easement surrounding the windows and front door is typically painted a specific, blue-green color known as "Gullah blue" or, more commonly, "haint blue"—"haint" is the Gullah pronunciation for "haunt." According to Gullah legend, these haints are frustrated because

they are suspended between life and death, a part of both worlds, but not belonging to one or the other (Pickney 47). Because of their frustration, they wreak havoc on the living; however, much like the mythological river Styx, which separates earth from the underworld, they are chained to earth and cannot cross over water. As such, “haint blue” paint mimics the color of water, keeping malevolent spirits from crossing the threshold. Stories like these inform what it means to be from Charleston, what it means to belong to that community. Paranormal figures and their lore are an integral cog in the structure of public identity, uniting a public without a substantive middle-class—a local population that, for the most part, is either quite poor or exponentially wealthy. And such lore isn’t taken lightheartedly, as outsiders might be tempted to do: Charlestonians have a deeply-ingrained reverence toward the supernatural.

Emily and I were, quite ostentatiously, not a part of this public. While both of us grew up in South Carolina, our nonchalant, plan-B *Ghostbusters* hunt made it increasingly evident that we were brazenly inconsiderate outsiders. Neither of us put much stock into hauntings or spirits. We weren’t expecting to find anything, really—but we were enjoying the titillation of chills now and then, the creative rush of speculative embellishing. So, rather than driving directly back to Columbia as planned, we took another detour, a last-ditch effort to encounter the supernatural at Alice’s famed grave at the Hermitage in Murrell’s Inlet.

Sometimes referred to as “the white lady,” Alice Belin Flagg was, according to most legends, the beautiful daughter of a wealthy planter. At age 16, she had fallen in love with (and become engaged to) a merchant—a man whose profession was beneath the dignity of what her father and elder brother (a physician) considered acceptable. To conceal

her betrothal, she wore her engagement ring on a ribbon around her neck. Unfortunately, in the spring of 1849, she fell ill with malaria, and her brother—a physician who was attempting to heal her—discovered the ring. Furious with her secret engagement to a plebian, he flung the ring out the window, into the marsh surrounding the house. Delirious and bereft, Alice clutched at her neck, but, as the story goes, without the comfort her ring provided, she succumbed to fever and died two days later. The current inhabitants of the Hermitage (the Wilcox family) claim to see Alice from time to time; she wears a white gown, blonde hair streaming about her like tendrils of scattered light, searching the marsh for her ring (Hall 134). Emily and I, however, sought her grave for another legend: local stories claimed that if a person ran backward around Alice's flat headstone 13 times wearing a ring, it would turn upside-down around the wearer's finger, allowing Alice to see if it was hers.

We both wore our class rings, perhaps out of some scientific effort to keep the variables as controlled as possible. Jogging backward, trying not to trip, I began to feel disrespectful and ashamed of our antics around some poor girl's grave. Whether her legend was true or not didn't matter anymore; someone had suffered and died, and I was embarrassed to be gleaning a thrill out of her loss. It seemed cheap. However, my self-disappointment wasn't quite overwhelming enough for me to quit, so I kept my right hand gripped tightly, fingernails digging into my palms. I didn't look at my ring, but I was hyper-aware of its metal against my fingers. After the thirteenth circle, Emily and I faced one another, and I could tell from the sweat on her upper lip that she felt the same hesitation I did. When we looked down, however, we found that both our rings were still right-side-up. We exhaled and started giggling; I felt as if I'd escaped a near misfortune unscathed,

then felt silly for placing stake in such an outlandish story. Emily began to laugh harder and reached toward me, pulling me into a one-armed embrace. As she did, her class ring flew off her finger and landed on Alice's grave, echoing in metallic spirals until it fell still.

One perfectly logical explanation is that her ring was too big to begin with. Or perhaps she may have been dehydrated; hands naturally undergo distention and deflation throughout the course of a day. We were sweaty from exertion and adrenaline, which may have lubricated her fingers. A myriad of other logical explanations could be provided to account for something that, in any other circumstance, would be quotidian and innocuous: if her ring had flung off the week before in our hotel room, we wouldn't think twice of it—we wouldn't remember it in ten minutes, let alone over a decade later. But in that moment, we felt something completely inexplicable and separate from logic. We felt distinctly different from something (or someone) outside of us, but also intimately united as well.

I do not recount this narrative simply to disclose an entertaining story about the supernatural, paranormal, or superstitious; rather, I open with this experience in order to draw connections between the paradoxical force of encountering a ghostly presence and that of memory. Like memory, this type of encounter is irreducible to logic: it is within and outside of us—intimate and shared—and also neither. Like memory, the encounter is an experience that is felt rather than explained, known through “gut feeling” or “by heart” rather than actuality or certainty: in fact, to place value in these encounters (or memory) through actuality or certainty is to misconstrue their power entirely. Furthermore, like memories themselves, ghosts are worldly—rooted in this world's past while affecting and co-producing its present and future; however, they are also otherworldly: they are ephemeral yet eternal, pervasive and personal. We treat ghost stories as neither true nor

false—not necessarily “made-up” fiction, but not as fact, either. They are something else. We may not believe in ghosts, or even in ghost stories, but we do not, necessarily, consider them false in the sense that they could be empirically proven wrong (or right):⁹ they are something other, and proving them one way or another is beside the point. As Fredric Jameson explains in *Ghostly Demarcations*, examining ghost stories doesn’t have anything to do with “believing” (or not “believing”) in them: “Spectrality does not involve the conviction that ghosts exist or that the past (and maybe even the future they offer to prophesy) is still very much alive and at work, within the living present: all it says, if it can be thought to speak, is that the living present is scarcely as self-sufficient as it claims to be; that we would do well not to count on its density and solidity, which might under exceptional circumstances betray us” (Jameson 39). In other words, the importance of ghost stories is not whether they are real, or even if we believe they are real: what ghost stories allow is for a non-presence of the present tense.

Notably, ghost stories revel in multiplicity rather than exactitude; the more versions of hauntings abound, the more they take form and life. More accounts—even contradictory ones—do not overshadow, detract from, or discredit another; rather, they add to their mystery and intrigue which is their lifeblood. For example, my recount of Alice’s story is by no means the only one: a cursory search will result in thousands of versions, all of which overlap in crucial junctures (Alice, her betrothed, the ring, and her death), yet deviate in others. Some accounts claim that she did not have malaria at all, but fell ill when her father discovered her with her fiancé, and henceforth, she died of heartbreak. Others indicate that, after seeing his sister’s distress at her lost ring, her brother felt remorse and bought her

⁹ As films, television shows, or documentary-style ghost hunts display—often, with unintentional comedy.

another, but she knew it was a substitute and died anyway. The Wilcox family claims to have preserved her room in the Hermitage as it stands today, while others who have studied Alice's story insist that she could not possibly have lived there, as the structure was not completed until after her death (Hall 133). However, at the essence of all of these overlapping and divergent narratives is not certainty or actuality, but possibility. That is, an undeniable, definite, or empirically approved singular report of Alice's story would stymie its power: it would no longer be open to multiple possibilities, unending and ephemeral. It would be stagnant. The power of the paranormal—as well as the power of memory—is rendered through its inability to be traced to an exact.

It is these conditions of possibility and impossibility that Jacques Derrida takes up in *Spectres of Marx* through his concept of *hauntology*. Derrida's term supplants its homophone (*ontology*) and in doing so, it substitutes the importance of being and presence with the ghost—a phantom which is neither present nor absent, dead or alive, possible or impossible. The ghost is an intrusion (an other) in our world and, as such, is very much present; however, it is also not comprehensible within our available intellectual frameworks—nor is it reducible to the systems we have constructed which allow us to “comprehend.” In other words, the ghost is a (non)presence as well as a (non)absence—and because of its paradoxical nature, it complicates our understanding of (im)possibility. In her 2013 collection, *Theorizing Histories of Rhetoric*, editor Michelle Ballif articulates this (im)possibility in her chapter, “Historiography as Hauntology,” claiming that “our impossible hauntological scholarship aims not (only) to conjure a plurality of histories (or petit narratives) but also to forestall any satisfaction in thinking the ‘*impossibility as also a possibility*’ of plurality, which relieves us of our ethical obligation to think the *possibility*

(of plural histories) *as also impossibility*” (Ballif 146). Put differently, the condition of possibility for plural histories is also their condition of impossibility: in order to “have” the possibility of the infinite, it must be demarcated as such, and demarcating (defining, placing horizons around) such a thing renders the infinite impossible.

Baliff continues her argument by applying Derrida’s concept of *hauntology* to historiography, arguing for a hauntological (rather than ontological) approach. She quotes Derrida, from *Specters of Marx*:

If there is something like spectrality, there are reasons to doubt this reassuring order of presents and, especially, the border between the present, the actual present reality of the present, and everything that can be opposed to it: absence, non-presence...before knowing whether one can differentiate between the specter of the past and the specter of the future, one must perhaps ask oneself whether the spectrality effect does not consist in undoing this opposition, or even this dialectic, between actual, effective presence and its other. (qtd. Ballif 148)

In other words, she uses Derrida’s temporality of the specter—that is, the conception that the specter does not subscribe to (or, is other than) the same linearity of time and history (past, present, and future) our world has constructed. For Ballif, the difference between hauntological and ontological is of utmost importance for the ethical implications of writing historiography: while the traditional, *ontological* approach to history places its focus in being, existence, and actuality, a *hauntological* practice is rooted in (non)presence, (non)being, or (non)existence. Hauntological forces are and are not present, do and do not exist. They are both alive and dead—they exist in liminality. While hauntology’s

complication may seem particularly opaque, it challenges the potential oversimplification (“clear” specificity) which ontology lends to history and historiography.

The takeaway for historiography practiced through hauntology is that it “reveals the concept of linear time as an ontological category of historical understanding,” and, in this sense, “works with/in spectral temporality without presenting a linear linking of so many ‘modalized presents’ to ‘historicize the past’” (Ballif 148). That is, history and historiography which is bound to an ontological practice will always reinscribe and historicize a “past” as a mono-conceptualization—one which necessarily cuts away (devalues) excess narratives and preserves (values) choice bits of the past as an organizable linearity—in essence, binding it to meaning-making. However, hauntology attends to the “radical singularity of the event which linear history elides by subjecting it to a narrative—with beginning, middle, and end—or to a paradigm, or to a case study, or to a representative anecdote, saddling all events with signification and meaning, subjecting them to tidy explanatory world of causes and effects, which presume and necessitate a buried past and predictable future” (Ballif 149). In this sense, past, present, and future (as plotted on our limited, linear spectrum) folds in on itself if we think of it through hauntology: “present” cannot be differentiated or pointed at—nor could “past” or “future.” As Ballif claims, “the ‘past is already a phantasm, conjured from the future. As an ‘effect of the present,’ which is an ‘effect of an effect,’ the ‘past’ is, therefore, only ever known insofar as it has been historicized after the fact, and hence comes from the future.” (Ballif 149).

My argument is quite straightforward: I take up Ballif’s position of historiography in relation to ontology and hauntology, but I replace historiography with memory as it applies to rhetorical conceptions of memory and how memory functions in rhetorical

discourses. I claim that the most contemporary scholarship in rhetorical memory (namely, public memory) uncritically imports ontological principles—even though most scholars in this discipline recognize memory’s complexity as something other than “being” or “existence.” That is, most scholars would agree that memory is not rooted in actuality or representation or meaning-making; however, in practice, this scholarship re-enforces such systems. In situating its urgency in the ontological, the majority of memory scholarship inevitably prioritizes being, existence and actuality, which necessarily reinscribes linear conceptions of past, present, and future—as well as dichotomies of right and wrong, true and false. I argue, as Ballif does with historiography, for a hauntological approach to memory—one which, as Derrida claims, “will never present itself in the full form of presence;” it is “an alterity that cannot be anticipated...cannot be awaited as such, or recognized in advance therefore, to the event as the foreigner itself, to her or to him for whom one must leave an empty place, always, in memory of the hope—and this is the very place of spectrality” (Derrida 82). This empty place, left “in memory” is the place of “spectrality” – memory is that spectrality, that ghostly (non)presence and (non)absence. In other words, I argue that memory is a haunting, hauntological force.

II. The Problem of “Public” Memory

Byron Hawk opens his first book, *A Counter-History of Composition*, with the claim that “composition has been haunted by an unseen ghost” (Hawk 1). My claim is distinct, yet it also echoes his: public memory is haunted by a definitional problem. As a concentration of interest that spans divergent disciplines (psychology, philosophy, neuroscience, architecture, rhetoric and rhetorical theory, communication studies, linguistics, history, and historiography—to name a few), it is not difficult to imagine why it does not have a consensus of what it (itself) is or does. Much like the field of rhetoric—

which necessarily resists static definition—this is not in and of itself problematic, but rather, is potentially generative. As John Muckelbauer claims in his essay addressing rhetoric’s elusive ambiguity, “Returns of the Question,” “owing to its historical and structural promiscuity, rhetoric seems never to stray very far from the question of what it is,” and yet, “it is also the case that our contemporary milieu simultaneously invites us to encounter our disciplinary identity crisis less as a crisis of identity and more as an opening of alterity” (Muckelbauer). In other words, the impossibility of defining rhetoric under any stable conditions gives it infinite possibility—and, furthermore, “defining” rhetoric in a particular way does not mean that definition limits rhetoric’s capacity; it is one of many definitions. Defining rhetoric does not place boundaries around it, but rather allows it to operate in diverse capacities and through different milieus.

As such, “public” memory’s lack of definition—or, perhaps, its inability to be defined—is not the haunting problem. The problem is the dearth of conversation surrounding what such definitions might or could be. That is, while rhetorical discourse “seems never to stray far from the question of what it is,” public memory scarcely poses this question to itself, and has certainly strayed far from articulating any need to return to it (Muckelbauer). In other words, while resisting a singular definition has proved generative for rhetoric, “public” memory has rarely been approached as a fundamental term that is necessary for conversation: the “public” of public memory is not a recurring return in public memory discourse. Crucially, however, this scholarship operates under the assumption that “public” has a more or less stable definition—one that, usually, has something to do with how (human) collectives, communities, cultures, histories, societies, and identities are created and disseminated. As such, I would like to return to the question:

what are ways in which we can define public memory, and, furthermore, what do these definitions enable or complicate for public memory as a “field”?

The term “public memory” began circulating roughly 30 years ago, gradually replacing its predecessor, “collective memory,” which became commonly used after Maurice Halbwachs published his integral thesis, *The Collective Memory*. Often referred to as “the father of collective memory,” Halbwachs coined the term in an effort to separate memory from history, which were often conflated. History, he claims, attempts to “authorize” the past into a singular or “authentic” account of past events, while “studying memory...is a matter not of reflecting philosophically on inherent properties of the subjective mind but of identifying its shifting social frames” (Qtd. Radstone). Collective memory recognizes that memories are not simply individual phenomena (which could be articulated as “actual”), but rather, are integral to the formation and movement of particular social groups. There has been little work done, however, to differentiate collective from public memory since the term became more widely used—nor is there any real consensus about why the shift happened to begin with. Furthermore, the preference of terms “public” or “collective” seems to be one that is at liberty of each scholar to employ based on style or preference; the terms are often used interchangeably and sometimes listed together as the same entity. This synonymy (or, perhaps lack of concern for terminological rigor) underscores how little importance current scholarship places on what would seem to be fundamental terms.

However, while there has not been much attention to this problem of definitional return, that is not to say there has been none altogether. Kendall R. Phillips’s

interdisciplinary collection of essays, *Framing Public Memory*,¹⁰ is one exception. While the book came out over 15 years ago (in the wake of, and partially in response to 9/11 and its aftershock), its “frames” for public memory still align with ways in which public memory circulates today, even though these frames have not been explicitly revisited in current discussions. In his introduction, Phillips articulates two general ways of interpreting public memory—frames around which the collection is organized: “In my reading of the essays there are two different though not incompatible ways the notion of public memory is rendered. Or, more specifically, there is a different sense in which the terms public and memory are conjoined. These differences can be suggested by considering two ways of unpacking the phrase ‘public memory.’: ‘the memory of publics’; or ‘the publicness of memory’” (Phillips 3). The first of the two (“The Memory of Publics”) traces the way that memory creates and is created by various publics and engages with memory as it appears in and constitutes the public sphere. He claims,

The important sense here is that some entity that can be labeled a public exists and, further, that these entities have memories...to speak of the memory of publics as public memory is to speak of more than many individuals remembering the same thing. It is to speak of a remembrance together, indeed, of our remembrance together as a crucial aspect of our togetherness, our existence as a public. (Phillips 4)

¹⁰ Even though it is a book which traces the contours of what public memory might look like and do, *Framing Public Memory*’s inside jacket blurb uses collective and public memory interchangeably: “Whether addressing the transitory and mutable nature of collective memories over time or the ways various groups maintain, engender, or resist those memories, this work constitutes a major contribution to our understanding of how public memory has been and might continue to be framed.”

As such, “The Memory of Publics” defines public memory not as a conclusive account of a past, but rather as a shared space which can be pointed at or identified, engendering a particular unity and creating a particular public.

For example, Edward Casey’s essay, “Public Memory in Place and Time,” defines public memory by subordinating other types of memory (individual, social, collective) to the larger field of “public.” He claims that individual memory (“the person who is engaged in memory on any given occasion”), social memory (“the memory held in common by those who are affiliated either by kinship ties, by geographical proximity...or by engagement in a common project. In other words, it is memory shared by those who are already related to each other”), and collective memory (“the circumstance in which different persons, not necessarily known to each other at all, nevertheless recall the same event—again, each in her own way”) are all different kinds of public memory (Casey 20, 21, 23). That is, individual, social, and collective memory are *types* of public memory broadly-writ. As for “public” memory, he claims that “by saying ‘public’ we mean to contrast such memory with anything that takes place privately...‘Public’ signifies out in the open, in the *koinos cosmos* where discussion with others is possible—whether on the basis of chance encounters or planned meetings—but also where one is exposed and vulnerable” (Casey 25). In other words, “public” memory (for Casey) is all memory that is made open to discourse with other humans, of which there are three types: individual, social, and collective. He argues that public memory is exposed to interaction, deliberation, and interpretation—and, as a result, public memory serves as a boundary (“horizon”) that a public uses to constitute its own identity and existence. (For example, when I mention that ghost stories in the Gullah tradition inform what it is to be a part of Charleston, this is

what it demonstrates). As such, “The Memory of Publics” conceives of public memory in relation to social entities: it is rooted in and framed through (human) social movements and heuristics.

Kendall’s second frame for public memory, “The Publicness of Memory,” engages the appearance or occurrence of memories in public. While this conception, of course, has some overlap with the previous frame, it differs in that its focus is not on a public having, sharing, or utilizing particular memories, but rather, the instances and ways in which memory presents itself in public ways. In other words, rather than operating off of “subject-object logic—where publics have memories, contest memories, interpret memories, etc.—part 2 opens up the nonsubjective aspects of memories appearing in public—the uncertainty of memories, their elusiveness, their mutability” (Phillips 9). While the first frame focuses on the capacity of publics as an entity with the capability to *have* memory (suggesting that in order for a social group to be considered a public it must have or use memory to demarcate itself), the second frame engages with the elusive and mercurial appearances (and disappearances) of memories in publics, reminding us that public memory is “inherently transitory and receding” (Phillips 10).

For example, Charles Scott’s essay, “The Appearance of Public Memory,” overlaps with Casey’s definition in that he claims, “to say ‘public memory’ is to say at once a memory of people, people in memory, and memory that is not a private domain or hidden possession” (Scott 149). However, as he approaches public memory from a linguistic standpoint, Scott problematizes the subject-object relationship implicit in part one’s insistence that publics *have* memory, arguing that “when we say that a public memory happens at this practice or this institution or as these words, we speak in, among other

memories, a grammatical memory of a kind of happening that is neither subjective nor objective” (Scott 149). As such, he argues that in describing memory, a “middle voice” is necessary: a voice in which the action is also the subject (appearing appears, lightning strikes). Memory is not *had*—rather, memory happens, memory appears, or memory “might.” Furthermore, he claims that “the ways in which appearing happens are public—of people—and are thus available for understanding,” but are never static and continually available; just as memories appear, they morph, shift, and disappear—they are never guaranteed or predictable (Scott 149). Scott’s argument underscores the slippery nature of memory, emphasizing that a public cannot “hold” or “have” a memory (in a linguistic sense, at least); that is, just as memory unpredictably appears in public, it also disappears. However, his argument also emphasizes that the publicness of memory’s appearance (and disappearance) is “of people,” is social, and is presented through (human) “understanding” (Scott 150).

Bradford Vivian’s essay, “‘A Timeless Now’ Memory and Repetition” also falls under “The Publicness of Memory,” challenging the conception of the static nature of memory which certain interpretations of public memory in part one might imply: namely, that a public can remember, repeatedly (ideally, without the “erasure” of forgetting) in order to define itself. For example, as Stephen Browne suggests in “Arendt, Eichmann, and the Politics of Remembrance,” that the existence of a “healthy” public depends on its capacity to remember, while forgetting is detrimental and potentially fatal to a public and its own identity (Browne 56, 57). Conversely, Vivian argues that memory is “a repetition of difference rather than a repetition of the same,” and in recognizing it as such, we are able to acknowledge how forgetting can be productive in that it is mutable: repetition of

difference allows for transformations—new instantiations of the same refrain (Vivian 208). As such, there is no such thing as an “accurate” or true memory—nor is there a “false” or wrong memory, either: “public memory is most productively evaluated on the basis of categories other than simple right or wrong, accurate or inaccurate. Instead of reducing memory to either one of these categories, I offer an account of the formative and transformational influence of repetition on public memory that mnemonic dogma would suppress” (Vivian 191). In other words, remembering is not a stable recurrence, but rather, every repetition—every remembering—always appears anew, and, as such, each repetition of remembering is folded in with forgetting: each repetition is a radical singularity which cannot be reduced into a true/false, right/wrong dichotomy. However, the stakes of conceiving remembering (and forgetting) as repetition with difference are pointedly steeped in the values that specific publics have placed on true/false, right/wrong—particularly in a political sense. Vivian opens his argument by proposing “to augment the very concept of public memory by surveying the emergence and transformation of collective memories that do not aspire to the iconic authority so often denoted by civic monuments or memorials but are nevertheless crucial to the maintenance of a given community and its heritage,” and introduces his conclusion by asserting that “the ethical and political implications of collective or public memories must be measured by the quality of the social relationships established or sustained through their expression rather than the transcendent truth or undiminished authority of memory itself” (Vivian 190, 205). As such, the value of public memory is not an ultimate or authoritative truth, but is valuable to a public through the multitude of ways in which it establishes productive relationships through its appearance in a (social, human) public.

While there are marked differences in the ways in which scholars in part one and part two engage with *memory*: particularly, part one's emphasis on the ability of a public to *have* memory—therefore implying that memory can be obtained—vs. part two's emphasis on memory's characteristics as ephemeral, ever changing and dynamic. However, the ways in which the essays in both sections engage with *public* are more or less the same. Across the board, public is social, exposed (not private), and human in the sense that a public is able to interpret, discuss, demarcate, politicize, and *assign meaning* (or values) to memory and/or themselves *through* memory. As Phillips claims, “these [public] memories that both constitute our sense of collectivity and are constituted by our togetherness are thus deeply implicated in our persuasive activities and in the underlying assumptions and experiences upon which we build meanings and reasons” (Phillips 3). As such, the conception of *public* for public memory is (it would seem) unanimously social as well as ontological: it is rooted in an understanding of itself that relies on the existence of people and their histories, politicization and interpretations of the past, and meaning-making.

Yet, as many (if not all) of the scholars featured in *Framing Public Memory* would agree—they overwhelmingly argue for such conceptions in their essays—memory is more complex than an ontological approach allows and cannot be restricted to being or existence. As Vivian questions, “to what extent is the study of public memory, which is guided (not exclusively but often enough) by the careful separation of fact from fiction, of vernacular from official, of past from present, prepared to affirm memory's daunting complexity...?” (Vivian 204). He also asserts that, “evaluating public memories according to whether or not they accurately represent the past, or even aspire to a transparent communication of its

meanings or lessons, indicates an investment in analytical principles contrary to the formation and perdurance of memory itself” (Vivian 204). In other words, he recognizes that, to “affirm memory’s daunting complexity,” the study of public memory cannot be rooted in true/false, or representational model of past events. Additionally, Scott, in his final paragraph, nods toward the possibility of other conceptions of “public” in relation to memory, suggesting that

the life of public memory depends on lives that are never fully public, on a recession in publicness, and on losses that can never be restored. Alert to these aspects of public memory we might—here’s the subjunctive again—find that to speak well of public memory we need to learn how to speak in regard for *nothing public at all*. As appearing reverts to itself in its occurring it is though nonappearing were remembered, *as though a public place were not literally a place and as though we were public no where else than in appearing*. (Scott 156, emphasis mine)

While Scott does not argue for speaking “in regard for nothing public at all” throughout his essay, his concluding paragraph turns toward the question of publicness (that is, public as a public only in appearing), opening up the space for both public *and* memory to be productively conceived of as other than ontologically structured.

I began this section with two questions: what are some of the ways in which we do (or can) define public memory, and what do these definitions enable or complicate for public memory as a “field.” In tracing the contours of what conversation in public memory *has* defined itself as, across the board, the first question can be answered by the following overlapping agreement across disciplines and conversations: “public” is taken up as both human and social, exposed rather than private, and—most importantly (for the implications

or complications of the definition, that is) invested in hermeneutics, heuristics, and meaning-making. However, the second question is answered through the exposure of such an agreed upon (yet rarely discussed) definitional overlap: many of the arguments engaging with public memory recognize the limitations of such an ontological (that is, invested in being or meaning-making through any kind ‘actuality’) approach, already problematizing what this definition does for public memory (Vivian, Scott). The way I see it, public memory as a “field” has a rarely discussed, assumed ontological rendering of what “public” is; however, the way in which some scholars take up “memory” for public memory problematizes conceptions of “public” which are rooted in existence and being—yet the conversational structure in which their discourses circulate reinscribe these problematics. That is, defining “public” memory as it currently circulates makes it impossible for public memory scholarship to approach memory through any kind of complexity other than the human or human meaning-making, or conceivable through anything other than existing structures (such as a linear past/present/future). My argument is a rearticulation of a possible “public”—one which is approached not through ontology but, rather, hauntology. To describe more pointedly what I mean, I will use Michelle Baliff’s words, which are recognizable from the previous section of this chapter; however, I have supplanted “history” and “historiography” with “public memory,” and the argument is as follows:

[Public memory] which is bound to an ontological practice will always reinscribe and historicize a “past” as a mono-conceptualization—one which necessarily cuts away (devalues) excess narratives and preserves (values) choice bits of the past as an organizable linearity—in essence, binding it to meaning-making. However, hauntology attends to the ‘radical singularity of the event which linear [public

memory] elides by subjecting it to a narrative—with beginning, middle, and end—or to a paradigm, or to a case study, or to a representative anecdote, saddling all events with signification and meaning, subjecting them to tidy explanatory world of causes and effects, which presume and necessitate a buried past and predictable future (Baliff 148).

In other words (mine rather than Baliff's), because of the problems with an (assumed) ontological approach to “public” memory, I suggest revisiting how “public” memory might be approached hauntologically, allowing for it to stand up to what many scholars (Vivian, Scott, Phillips, Eberly) already recognize: that memory is not bound to a linear conceptual structure (past/present/future), nor is it concerned with or indicative of any “actuality” of past events. I am interested in an approach to memory—or, to the field's obsession with public memory—which allows for “radical singularity” of remembering/forgetting; one which is not “tidy” or “predictable,” but is, rather, a haunted temporality—(non)present, (non)linear, and (non)meaning.

III. Memory as a Hauntological Force

While public memory may be problematic, rhetorical interest in publics, ecologies, and networks has been a constant refrain in rhetoric, composition, and communication. This refrain has several notable lines: for example, in his 1961 tome, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, Jürgen Habermas demarcates a division between the public and private spheres which aligns with those in *Framing Public Memory*; however, his argument circulates around the politicalization and sovereign power that public discourse challenges as well as engenders. He claims that “we call events and occasions ‘public’ when they are open to all, in contrast to closed or exclusive affairs—as when we speak of public places or public houses,” and that “representation can ‘occur only in

public...there is no representation that would be a ‘private’ matter” (Habermas). Habermas uses Immanuel Kant’s philosophical approach to “right” and “history” in terms of publicity, arguing that these philosophies form the foundations of the public sphere. From there, he argues that, among many other economic developments, capitalism engendered a “bourgeois public sphere,” in which “rational-critical debate” (such as conversations in salons and coffee houses) served to check hegemonic domination (Habermas). Habermas recognized that the explosion of the media (more specifically, the eighteenth-century print industry) exerted a powerful influence on political (public sphere) life, which was separate from the traditional, ruling agency exerted by the king, or the aristocracy, or parliament. That is to say, for Habermas, it was not simply the burgeon of publishing and literacy that created the public sphere—it was the simultaneous dawn of a shared consciousness: a public—a unity of disparate people, in different places and at different times—could be altogether addressed altogether, as if gathered as one in a giant amphitheater. He envisioned this “public sphere” as a potential democratic utopia where individuals could discuss national issues and come to common consent in public.

However, as with any utopian potentiality, it was not to be realized: he argues that during the nineteenth and early twentieth century, publishing houses and printing presses became consolidated in the hands of the few and privileged, which monitored and censored choice dissenting voices, becoming the instrument of hegemony and sovereignty. This approach to “publics” is evident in public memory scholarship which concerns itself with communication and public speech (as Amos Kiewe examines in his essay, “Ronald Reagan’s Long Good-Bye”), public remembrance—particularly of underprivileged and underrepresented narratives (Stephen Browne, Hannah Arendt, Barbara Biesecker), or

ways in which narratives gain momentum and have potential to change documented history in particular, political ways (Charles Morris, Rosa A. Eberly). In other words, Habermas sees publics as not only open (not private), but essential to political (democratic) movement in ways which overlap with how certain public memory scholars have employed their work.

Public memory aside, Habermas's approach to publics has been integral to the constellation of refrains that "publics" has taken since. For example, in his 1990 book, *The Letters of the Republic*, Michael Warner examines Habermas's theories on eighteenth-century culture through Benjamin Franklin as a case study: An inventor, writer, and politician, Franklin (at least as a literary figure) excelled at writing practices that hid his own agency behind a mask of public-spiritedness. Through a rigorous breakdown of traditional distinctions between political theory, mass media, and belles-lettres, Warner demonstrates a reciprocal influence of styles of writing and publicity in democratic civic conduct and Colonial literature. Warner's goal was to show the various ways that "fictions of a public" shaped each of these writing venues in unique but related ways.

However, in his 2002 book, *Publics and Counterpublics*, Warner deviates from Habermas by delineating the ways in which publics are structured and constructed, arguing that the existence of a public relies on reflexiveness. For example, he describes the ways in which it is common practice to greet an unknown person or a group of people we've never met, but know share a commonality: "Hey, you!" or "my fellow Americans" (Warner 11). In turn, he argues, these types of salutations frame, limit, and prescribe the possibilities of the interaction which follows (Warner 11-12). In diagnosing these interactive possibilities, then, Warner provides a working taxonomy of different styles of reflexive

behavior that characterize types of publics, and in doing so, he makes three notable claims: first, that a public is the social space created by the reflexive circulation of discourse¹¹; second, publics act historically according to the temporality of their circulation; and third, a public is a poetic world making (Warner 67-123). These three claims highlight and reaffirm an understanding of publics which circulate in public memory discourse: the understanding that publics are constituted by “reflexive circulation of discourse” (their existence depends on conversation); an understanding that publics depend upon human conceptions of history and temporality; and an understanding of publics that engenders or creates meaning for the world. In other words—much like public memory—Warner’s approach to publics is very much entrenched in existing, created structures and conceptual material (history and temporality) as well as meaning-making for people.

A decade after Warner’s book, however, Jenny Rice published *Distant Publics*, in which she complicates certain structures essential to Warner’s (among many others’) understanding of publics—notably that publics are exclusively *not* private, and that publics are *always* open, never internal. In other words, she challenges the inherent internal(private)/external(public) binary implicit in most understandings of what “public” means. In doing so, she takes up Agamben’s conception of the “exceptional sovereign,” a paradoxical figure which is “simultaneously part of and apart from this order” (Rice 66). That is, this figure—for example, a queen—is not *simply* private (internal) as she is part of the political structure which orders a larger public, and cannot be separated from it. However, nor is she *simply* public (external) as she is not subject to the same rules which

¹¹ “All the verbs for public agency are verbs for private reading, transposed upward to the aggregate of readers. Readers may scrutinize, ask, reject, opine, decide, judge, and so on. Publics can do exactly these things. And nothing else” (Warner 123).

order that larger public of which she is a part. She is exceptional: both and neither. Rice takes Agamben's conception in order to similarly identify what she calls "exceptional subjects," which exist simultaneously inside and outside publicness, arguing that "[an exceptional subject] is not opposed to the rule, but is related to the rule of virtue by being outside of it. In this case, outside is not a binary to anything else. Just as an easement on the side of a house can be said to be both outside and inside, so too are the exception and the order held in a kind of mutual relation" (Rice 67). In other words, for Rice, a public is not made up through the simple binary of outside/inside; internal/external; public/private—a public is comprised of "exceptional subjects" which are always both and neither internal and external.

More recently, Byron Hawk takes up Rice's research in his 2018 book, *Resounding the Rhetorical*, arguing (through Rice's easement analogy) that publics are "spheres" (Hawk). That is, he argues that publics are not delineated beings, existing only in a conceivable, organizable "public" sphere which depends only on itself (whatever that might be) for its construction; he argues that publics are emergent social ecologies. In defining what he means by "sphere publics," Hawk describes how they are formed:

[Eco-praxis] is neither public nor private, given the old definitions of these terms. They are simultaneously mental, social, and environmental in the sense that they engage in a transversal practice that cuts across all three ecologies without becoming a universal or normative synthesis of them or an isolated idioculture separate from them. They are imminent networks connected across all three ecologies that are not generalizable. In short, these new ecological practices operate through networks that are in continual coproduction and circulation at various rates

of speed, tension, connectivity, and intensity but always participating in the social practices that bring inventories of parts and levels of scale together into sphere publics (Hawk 185-86).

In other words, for Hawk, publics are imminent and emergent, constantly co-producing the world in a way that is not simply external or internal, and envelop connections that are not simply outward, inward, social, or human. This take on publics, however, has marked differences from public memory scholarship, which never seems to stray far from human narrative and the repercussions these narratives have on how humans are affected by and organize their own histories, communities, symbol systems and production of “meanings and reasons” (Phillips 4). While the type of sphere publics Hawk describes certainly factor into human life and exist outside of and within it, public memory overwhelmingly concentrates on how humans construct narratives (via their own constructed systems and mediums) and how those particular structures and mediums affect people and human identity.

Furthermore, Hawk uses the term *parahuman* in order to argue against Thomas Kent’s version of postprocess theory, reframing it as beyond linear and beyond human—yet not completely divorced from human, either. He rearticulates postprocess as “a sense of enfolded processes” which materialize and circulate coproductively (Hawk 14). Hawk goes on to say,

if composition and rhetoric were to articulate a model that goes beyond a linear process as well as human scale, this is a place to start—the emergent movements among vitality, ecology, and rationality. Humans don’t just test their theories on other humans: their engagements emerge from circulating energy that expresses

worlds and assembles publics...rather than being grounded in a human world of guessing or heuristics, reassembling postprocess theory articulates a parahuman world of the refrain, open invention through the expression of worlds where the quasi-object of composition is the network that inscribes the subject as the subject inscribes the network. (Hawk 53)

In other words, for Hawk, process as parahuman doesn't divorce it from or reduce the human, but rather defines the human as part of, participating in, and coproducing processes. In this sense, process is not situated in social (human) movements or hermeneutics; it is the other way around. Process as parahuman is situated in materiality, which is then interpreted, and, through that interpretation, coproduces publics. This inversion is important because it allows process to be not simply defined through the (human) social turn, but rather, acknowledges that process is folded into the entanglements which produce and are produced by social practices and hermeneutics. In other words, it takes seriously that process does not operate on a linear or human scale the way that postprocess theory implies, and process as parahuman allows for this difference.

I began this chapter with a foray into a paranormal encounter—one which I used as an illustration of how memory operates between, through, adjacent to, and with realms of experience—and not necessarily through linear conceptions of time, temporality, or history. The paranormal nods in many ways to how Baliff conceptualizes “hauntology” in relation to historiography as well as how Hawk employs parahuman in relation to postprocess theory. As such, I argue that memory is a parahuman force which operates hauntologically: it is within and outside of us, cocreating us and the world we live in. What Hawk's conception of the parahuman force buys, here, is that publics are not simply

constituted by other humans (and operating within “human” conceived systems). They are constituted by a multiplicity of material forces, other forces which are outside (but integral to) a human-ness. They operate on and co-produce what human systems design as public, but then forget that those other forces might be in play. Similarly, what the pervasive obsession with public memory forgets is its own definitional problem, and the fact that it is haunted by its structural force (memory) which cannot be defined or relegated to a linear structure of past/present/future. In short, public memory forgets that its force is not publics – its force is memory.

Chapter Four

Memory as Synecdoche: Memorials, Revision, and Constitutive Exclusion

Monuments are for the living, not the dead.

-Frank Wedekind

We were revisionists; what we revised was ourselves.

-Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale*

Where I'm from, we believe all sorts of things that aren't true. We call it 'history.'

-The Wizard, *Wicked*

I. Revising Revisionist History

In December 2019, Kehinde Wiley, the artist whose painting of former American president Barack Obama resides in the National Portrait Gallery, entered household conversations once again when he unveiled a three-story, thirty-ton bronze statue titled *Rumors of War*. The towering figure depicts a young black man with dreadlocks; he wears a hoodie, ripped jeans, and high-top Nike sneakers; he rides astride an imperious horse with his chest held forward, shoulders back, his gaze toward the sky. *Rumors of War* was unveiled in the front plaza of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts (VMFA) in Richmond, Virginia—a plaza which is located on the renamed Arthur Ashe Boulevard, inside the R.E. Lee Camp Confederate Memorial Park, directly facing the official headquarters of the United Daughters of the Confederacy. As this convoluted juxtaposition might suggest, the former capital of the Confederate forces has a long and tumultuous relationship with remembering the role it played during the Civil War—a relationship which struggles to balance its past with its desire to be seen as a contemporary metropolitan city—as well as

with the diverse demographic which populates it. This balancing act has not necessarily been a comprehensive or inclusive one: for example, Richmond's Monument Avenue (about three blocks from the *Rumors of War* statue) which, until September 9, 2021, displayed¹² memorials to five Confederate leaders: J.E.B. Stuart, Robert E. Lee, Jefferson Davis, Stonewall Jackson, and Matthew Fontaine Maury. These celebrations of Confederate leadership—which were erected during the Jim Crow era in an effort to revise and camouflage the atrocities of slavery under the auspices of military (white, masculine) “heroism”—loom alongside a singular, more recent memorial to a Richmond native, Arthur Ashe, the first and only black man to win the singles title at three of the four major tennis tournaments: Wimbledon, the Australian Open, and the US Open. This apposition of Lost Cause iconography with Ashe's memorial demonstrates how racist versions of revisionist history can be contested and, in many ways, re-revised. And, as *Rumors of War* also demonstrates, this contestation is continuous: nearly a century after the last Confederate monument was erected on Monument Avenue (and almost two years prior to the first removal) *Rumors of War* was unveiled—partially as a response to their sustained presence.

Notably, Wiley's statue is modeled after that of Confederate General J.E.B. Stuart, one of its Monument Avenue neighbors. The two statues are strikingly similar: they both depict a larger-than-life, confident man astride a muscular war horse; however, their riders are drastically different. One is a young, presumably nonmilitary, black man of the 21st

¹² On September 2, 2021, the Supreme Court of Virginia granted permission for the statue of Robert E. Lee to be removed, which had been Virginia's Governor, Ralph Northam's promise to the state since June 2020. The statue's removal was a public event: live-streamed across multiple news and social media platforms, and open to the public to attend in person. The rest of the monuments on Monument Avenue, however, remain erect. As this chapter will describe, increasing conversations about how, what, and where to display these Confederate relics (or, to destroy them altogether) is contributing to the changing landscape of not only Richmond, but most American cities.

century, and the other is an aging, white, Confederate general of the 19th century.¹³ Strikingly, the level of similarity between the two statues throws these differences into even sharper relief: *Rumors of War* demands comparison in its composition, and in doing so, highlights its difference. That is, the new sculpture understands that it is part of and forever entangled with a complicated and political web, and rather than rejecting or denying that entanglement, it embraces it. In other words, it is not attempting to revise the landscape or narrative of Richmond in a way that erases or even replaces Confederate iconography; rather, it takes on that iconography (as well as the problems embedded within it) and transforms it into something else entirely. This is not to say it transforms it into something “better” (or “worse”); rather, in taking on a similar composition, it not only changes the way we view the statue of J.E.B. Stuart in light of recent racial and sociopolitical wars fought within our country—it also initiates itself into a fraternal narrative beyond its chronological years.

Put more simply, *Rumors of War* revises a previous monument in ways that does not negate what came before; it changes its predecessor in ways that cannot be unseen, and also smuggles itself in that ongoing conversation. To understand some of the dynamics between “revising” history and “revision” broadly-writ here, it might be helpful to look at a more circulated sense of revision. For example, what *Rumors of War* does is, as Joseph Harris describes in his fourth chapter of *Rewriting: How to Do Things with Texts*: to revise is to transform, and “to transform is to reshape, not to replace or rebut. The original does not go away but is remade into something new” (Harris 74). To expand on Harris’s argument: there is a difference between “revising” in the common placeholder—that is, the

¹³ See fig. 1

practice in which words are composed, recomposed, and reconstructed in terms of the text(s) in which the composition situates itself, versus revising as transformative to more than the text that is, itself, being composed. To revise—re (again) vis (see)—is, in its most basic definitional sense, to re-see, to see again. In relation to what Harris describes as “revision,” it is to see again, but also to *see differently* within or in relation to a complex entanglement of arguments. In other words, revision does not simply enact the work of what we traditionally call ‘revising’ (recomposing, restructuring, re-seeing). Notably, the work of revision also resituates itself—and, furthermore, the texts it engages with—in ways that reflexively mark its own structure and leave its predecessors (and progenies) markedly transformed. In this sense, *Rumors of War* does the work of revision: it adds to an ongoing conversation in a way that irrevocably changes and transforms the conversation in which it inserts itself.

As such, the comparative composition of Wiley’s sculpture pits the specious nature of Confederate iconography against the backdrop of current, ongoing wars—wars which have a long history of being underrecognized if not completely ignored. In an official statement during the statue’s unveiling, the VMFA claimed that it “commemorates African American youth lost to the social and political battles being waged throughout our nation.” This commemoration is not simply to recognize that this battle exists and continues—or even to embrace the battle as part of an ongoing network of conflict—it is also to revise a version of history that proliferates whitewashed Southern historical narratives as well as its own identity. As the museum’s curator, Valerie Cassel Oliver, said in an interview with *NPR*, “It is monumental and not just a figure of speech. It is truly monumental, in terms of its ability to be a seismic shift in how we perceive and how we understand ourselves as

people living here” (Zialcita). In other words, new memorials and monuments have the power to revise history and perceptions of identity. In this sense, ‘revisionist history’ might not necessarily hold the traditional negative connotations associated with ‘revising’ history at the expense of marginalized people in order to make its author(s) or supporters appear in a good light, as the United Daughters of the Confederacy attempted to do by erecting statues to slavery-defending Southern leaders. Rather, revisionist history in its more recent instantiations more accurately applies to marginalized people shedding (often unflattering) light on previous versions of revisionist history.

For example, since June 2016, the popular *New Yorker* contributor Malcolm Gladwell has hosted a wildly successful podcast (titled *Revisionist History*) which attempts to expose ways in which traditional history has erased or ignored underprivileged communities and their narratives. Furthermore, in the podcast genre alone, his is one of many which attends to such narratives: *99% Invisible*; *The Memory Palace*; *This American Life*; *Stuff You Should Know*; *Lore*; and *The History Chicks* are merely a few of the most popular podcasts dedicated to exposing how traditional narratives are both uninclusive and inconclusive. More recently, the aftermath of George Floyd’s murder and a resurgence in the Black Lives Matter movement (which had been in motion since 2013, following Trayvon Martin’s 2012 murder) has thrown such discourse into much more sharp and immediate relief. Conversations about racism, memorials, critical race theory, and what versions of history get taught and circulated are very different and much more pervasive after the summer of 2020 than they were when I began this chapter in December 2019. Furthermore, the demand to remove or revise memorials reflects a more ubiquitous, portentous thread that has been percolating for decades, and has reached another boiling

point: the controversy surrounding memorials has either been incited by or has incited violence. For example, even before this “boiling point,” roughly a month after the June 2015 Charleston, South Carolina AME church massacre, the Confederate flag was removed from the State House grounds in Columbia, South Carolina. Until then, the debate over whether to remove the Confederate flag from State House grounds had been an ongoing, heated argument in the state for at least three decades—one which seemingly might never have reached an impasse; however, after the horrific shooting, its removal was quickly expedited. Then, in August 2017, a clash between white nationalists and anti-fascist protestors in Charlottesville, Virginia—which broke out surrounding the decision to remove a statue of Robert E. Lee and rename the public park in which it was placed—resulted in the death of three people. Following these riots, in 2017 alone, four Confederate-era monuments were removed in Baltimore; the New Orleans city council voted to remove four monuments to Confederate figures¹⁴, the last of which (a statue of Robert E. Lee) was taken down in 2019; a statue of Roger Taney, chief author of the Dred Scott Decision, was removed from the state house in Annapolis, Maryland; four confederate statues (Robert E. Lee, Albert Sidney Johnston, John Reagan, and Jefferson Davies) were removed from Austin, Texas; and countless other cities (Lexington, Kentucky; Memphis, Tennessee; Richmond, Virginia; San Antonio, Texas; Boston, Massachusetts; and Stone Mountain, Georgia—to name a few) have proposed or petitioned for the removal of Confederate monuments and memorials.

¹⁴ The New Orleans City Council voted on this in 2018; however, it took until fall 2021 to for removal to happen because of protestors prostrating themselves on the monuments. Removal occurred in the dead of night, as a black-owned business was hired to take them away quietly.

In some cases, monuments are taken down from their original public location only to be re-erected in another, such as a museum or cemetery—as was the case of the Confederate Flag in South Carolina, or all the Confederate monuments in Jacksonville, Florida. Others are either vandalized or torn down (and often destroyed) by protestors, like the statue of a Confederate soldier which was toppled over in front of the Durham County Courthouse in North Carolina—or the monument to Confederate soldiers in Nashville’s Centennial Park, which was drenched in red paint and scrawled with the message, “THEY WERE RACISTS” (Epstein). Of those which remain standing, some are accompanied with a new plaque or signage addressing the problems surrounding the statue’s presence, often erected as “a stopgap because certain laws prohibit removing them” (Epstein). Another response to this dilemma has been to indefinitely cover the standing monuments until the local government decides how to proceed, as the Confederate monument on Georges Island in Boston Harbor was (Guerra). This was also the case of the statue of Robert E. Lee in Charlottesville: the statue was shrouded in a black tarp in 2017; yet recent reviews of its removal has been blocked: in 2019, Judge Richard E. Moore claimed that “any effort to remove the statue would violate a state historic preservation statute” and extended his decision to the monument to Stonewall Jackson as well (Stack). These examples are by no means exhaustive—either in their scope or ways in which communities respond to the demand for revision—in part because the problems surrounding what to revise, how to revise, and what to do with the scrap heap is deeply steeped in cultural, political, and ethical conflict. And, as these examples and current events demonstrate, monuments and memorials continue to be one of the most contested and circulated topics: what gets left up; what gets taken down; and who gets to decide? How should a landscape which includes

racist memorials be revised? And how do monuments rhetorically affect a community – what do they contribute, teach, reinscribe, or introduce?

II. Rhetoric and Memory(als)

Within the field of rhetoric, these questions and tensions are hardly new: the vast majority of rhetoric's treatment of memory (within the last forty years or so) deals with precisely these kinds of issues. Often, memorials are used as used as case studies for encouraging public thought and structures of rhetorical practices: for example, Carole Blair, Marsha S. Jepperson, and Enrico Pucci, Jr. analyze the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, claiming that "though the epideictic function of public commemorative monuments may be their most obvious rhetorical feature, these monuments also display tendencies toward the political or deliberative. Conflicts over whom or what to memorialize and in what ways have occurred frequently, and these conflicts often are registers of present and future political concern" (Blair 263). For Blair et. al, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial is an example of postmodern architecture in that it "seeks a disruption of the 'normalized'"—a disruption which is not unlike Bradford Vivian's (2017) conception of the memorial's *dissensus*. Vivian also points to the ways in which memorials structure public thought and action, claiming that "The memorial thus constitutes a nexus among related discursive practices—habits of collective deportment, historical interpretation, political reasoning, and emotional judgement—in the way that Michel Foucault defines that term—as a constellation of institutional procedures invested in establishing and distributing conditions of truth, knowledge, and power" (Vivian 134). For Vivian, the memorial represents a way in which the past can be "witnessed" habitually—that is, the memorial is a way in which atrocities, in particular, can be remembered without being a "difficult moral, political, or social burden," and, in doing so, co-create a "desirable" public to witness a curated version

of the past (Vivian 135). In essence, as this scholarship highlights, memorials function rhetorically in that they encourage certain forms of public thought and action—and, as such, questions of what and whom get remembered (included) and *how* they are memorialized hold particular political and affective power.

It may be easy to focus on how memorials are deliberative and epideictic, yet they are also forensic: as Jeffrey K. Olick claims in *The Politics of Regret*, movements to memorialize are often done as an apology, reparation, or acceptance of guilt or responsibility for past atrocities: “a variety of redress movements have demanded—and, frequently enough, won—material reparations for numerous historical injustices” (Olick 121). Olick continues to analyze public apologies and “the contemporary wave of public regret as an embedded social product,” as one which has very real ramifications not only in legal and political systems. For example: the “legality” of moving, taking down, or renaming memorials or other “historical” commemorative spaces (notably, in the American South) is one that has been heated for years before the summer of 2020. Part of this movement’s demand for justice involves revising memorials and landmarks which perpetuate racist value systems under the auspices of “history.” For example, in June 2020, the statue of Robert E. Lee, located not three blocks from *Rumors of War*, was covered in spray-painted graffiti (“murderer;” “racist;” “Black Lives Matter;” and a slew of expletives); a statue of Christopher Columbus was beheaded in Boston; and, following Washington, D.C.’s lead, many cities have renamed and painted “Black Lives Matter” on major roads and boulevards (*Smithsonian*, *TIME*, *New York Times*).

As these examples demonstrate, memorials are used as ways of revising public identities, histories, and narratives, and, as might be anticipated, are overwhelmingly

employed as case studies for public memory scholarship. In fact, it is exceedingly difficult to find examples of public memory scholarship which do not, in some manner, refer to (if not solely focus on) a specific memorial or site of commemoration. Unsurprisingly, their concrete and material nature make them an ideal metaphor for the slipperiness and intangibility of memory broadly writ: As Vivian points out, “rhetorical scholars of public memory maintain that one must attend to the material, embodied experience of any given memorial when analyzing its symbolic meaning and effects” (Vivian 136). Additionally, much like *Rumors of War* and the movement to revise narratives which exclude BIPOC and other marginalized voices, this scholarship does also. For example, in her December 2019 article for *RSQ*, Brenda Helmbrecht challenges the disparity between “academic histories” and those which memorials and museums (specifically, California’s Catholic missions) “only hint at” (Helmbrecht 472). She claims that “most missions operate as heritage tourist sites that promote a kind of ‘fantasy past’ where memory and history are constantly in tension” and that “academic histories often seem to exist in one realm, while the historical narratives conveyed at the missions themselves exist in another” (Helmbrecht 472). Ultimately, Helmbrecht argues for a “decolonization” of these particular Catholic missions in the form of inclusivity for native voices and removing the idealized, tame storylines of the Spanish colonizers. She invokes Nedra Reynolds’ conception of how places are changed by people and bodies, just as bodies and people are changed by places: “Our spatial practices of the everyday or our way of being in the world are formed through the memories that make [spaces] at first seem familiar, perhaps comforting, and then habitual” (Reynolds, qtd. Helmbrecht). She goes on to claim that “meaning is not just created by the missions, for as tourists move through spaces, they contribute to the space’s

meanings too...if missions shape their founding narratives to hew more closely to the historical record, they could begin to decolonize, and public memories of Native history could begin to decolonize in response” (Helmbrecht 475). While I would contest her equation of “academic history” with “true,” “accurate,” or even “better” – her argument’s underlying movement to expose ways in which public instantiations of memory reinscribe racist and colonialist values is important to recognize. Put differently, the heart of her argument is the move to revise: she not only advocates the inclusion of indigenous voices, but furthermore, wants to highlight the atrocities committed by colonizers which these missions have either minimized or erased.

Similarly, April O’Brien’s May 2020 *enculturation* article, “Mapping as/and Remembering: Chora/graphy as a Critical Spatial Method-Methodology,” extends upon Gregory Ulmer’s conception of “choragraphy” (a term which O’Brien uses to coin “chora/graphy”) in order to “highlight the exigence for examining issues of race, place, and public memory; uncovering dominant white-centric narratives and meaning-making practices; and creating opportunities for multiply marginalized narratives to circulate in public memory” (2). She defines “Chora/graphy” through the word’s two ancient Greek roots: *chora* (place, space, movement)¹⁵ and *graphy* (writing). Using Ulmer’s reimagining of *choragraphy* (that which is “subjective and open to interpretation. Doing choragraphy means that we move ‘in-between’ – to the liminal space between the material and metaphysical world”) she ultimately claims that chora/graphy is a form of “method-methodology” – a practice that echoes the content – “in short, I am explaining and

¹⁵ It is, perhaps, important to note that there are many different interpretations of *chora*. There is *chora* as public-ness; Plato’s conception of *chora* as a receptacle between form and matter, which Julia Kristeva uses to name the “*chora* stage” (the liminal period before people materialize as a human).

demonstrating at the same time” (4). Through chora/graphy, she merges rhetoric and composition studies with conversations surrounding nonwestern viewpoints (“place-based indigenous meaning making”) in order to “[expose] dominant cultural narratives and [replace] them with community stories that have been historically marginalized” (O’Brien 3). In other words, O’Brien, like Helmbrecht, seeks to revise the ways in which rhetorical practices remember—and her method of doing so is through a spatial method-methodology of chora/graphy.

Helmbrecht and O’Brien’s research is rooted in an intricate web of rhetorical discussions surrounding memory, memorials, place, privilege, and power. For example, Helmbrecht coins her term “fantasy past” with reference to Kristan Poirot and Shevaun E. Watson’s conception of a “tourism imaginary” from their 2015 *RSQ* article, “Memories of Freedom and White Resilience: Place, Tourism, and Urban Slavery.” For Poirot and Watson, “tourism imaginaries” are manufactured versions of a city or place—versions that are rhetorically fashioned toward privilege and consumerism which erase atrocities of the past (in their case, slavery) through “fragments of promotional materials, place narratives, and built environments” which purport a romanticized ideal of a “progressive” past that extends to a present-day “All-American, inclusive” city (Poirot and Watson 93). They take Charleston, South Carolina (more specifically, the controversial erection of a monument to Denmark Vesey, the former slave who led the largest noted slave rebellion documented in the United States) as their case study, arguing that “historical” Southern cities like Charleston “revivify the supremacy of the South’s white elite and undermine the centrality of black agency and resistance” which “highlights profound constitutive interactions among tourism, place, and memory that not only circumscribe what is remembered and

forgotten about racial disparity in the South, but also enable and mark disparities today” (Poirot and Watson 93). Helmbrecht, O’Brien, and Poirot and Watson’s arguments circulate memorials, places, and commemorative materials in ways that not only underscore how these sites are fabricated in order to construct and disseminate privileged narratives, but are continually co-created by people who visit, observe, and purchase (or buy into) part of that “fantasy” or “imagined” past. As such, these arguments diagnose how recent rhetorical discussions of memory, memorials, and commemoration are entangled with revision; however, the threads of this revision are deeply interwoven with concerns: namely, what decisions have been made in the construction of monuments and memorials—what has been selected or included and what has not been commemorated—or, in plainest terms, what we remember through memorialization, and what we forget or ignore. Furthermore, such scholarship has implored avenues for revising these memorials in ways that recognize the underrecognized. In essence, I follow these lines of inquiry, but I ask similar questions differently. I do not simply ask ‘what’ we have remembered or forgotten; I ask *how* decisions might be made about remembrance. And, with the understanding that memorials are constituted by exclusion and are in a constant state of becoming, *how* do we recognize that which has been ignored? In other words, not only how do we memorialize, but how might we interact with memorials with the understanding that they will never be all “acceptable” or “inclusive,” but are in constant flux?

While these three articles demonstrate the demanding and pervasive movement to diversify and include marginalized voices, memorials and commemorative sites have also circulated their exclusions just as much (if not more) than their inclusions. As Erika Doss accurately observes in her first chapter of *Memorial Mania: Public Feeling in America*,

“American memorials are as protean today as their American patrons and publics, and range from multi-acred properties like the National September 11 Memorial & Museum at the World Trade Center to single monuments like the David Berger National Memorial in Beachwood, Ohio” (Doss 19). She continues by demonstrating such ubiquitous variegation by listing a few examples:

From permanent memorials intended as timeless national fixtures to temporary shrines erected at the sites of school shootings and car accidents, contemporary kinds of commemoration include plaques, parks, cairns, quilts (the NAMES Project Foundation AIDS Memorial Quilt), trees (the seven oaks planted at the Johnson Space Center in tribute to the crew of the Columbia space shuttle), and Web sites (there are thousands of online memorials to the victims of 9/11, Hurricane Katrina, and the Virginia Tech shootings, among others. (Doss 19)

Such a list sets her up to argue that “memorial mania” is a barometer for public feeling and cultural movements. She saturates her chapter with accounts of memorials and monuments (the Vietnam Veterans Memorial; the National WWII Memorial; multiple Confederate statues; Mount Rushmore—to name a few); however, Doss uses the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial as a particular extended case study, tracing several ways in which it proved “inadequate” to different audiences. For example, she accentuates the irony that Roosevelt specifically requested that no memorial or monument be erected in his honor, yet, in 1997, the \$48 million colossus was unveiled anyway. She also points out that the former president went to “great lengths to refigure himself as a healthy, competent, and powerful presidential body,” yet one of his statues in the memorial portrays him wheelchair-bound, presumably in the effort to ‘accurately’ represent his sedentary

condition after suffering from polio—a representation that disability activists claimed was “not enough,” and did not “blatantly commemorate their own interests” (Doss 35-6). Other “inadequacies” in the same memorial were levied by “antismoking lobbyists [who] succeeded in eliminating any reference to FDR’s cigarette habit, and animal-rights groups managed to suppress the inclusion of a fox stole in a statue of Eleanor Roosevelt, who stands alone and furless in an isolated niche of the memorial’s fourth room” (Doss 36). Much like Helmbrecht, O’Brien, and Poirot and Watson, Doss points to the problems of memorials regarding inclusion and exclusion; however, rather than arguing for more or different inclusivity—rather than, for example, arguing that the FDR memorial should include a more representative version of disability (whatever that might be), or that it should include cigarettes or a fox stole—or that it should be demolished altogether as its very existence goes against Roosevelt’s recorded wishes—Doss points to the impossibility of its ever being “accurate” or “adequate.” Furthermore, she claims that, unlike the memorials with which it is intertwined, “Memory seems to evade time-less categories, which helps to account for its broad appeal in a cultural climate where category challenging, and shifting, is the norm. Among other clichés, memory is valorized for refusing to ‘stand still’—for being elusive and unstable, open-ended and unresolved” (Doss 49). In this sense, something changes when a memory is relegated to a memorial: the memorial stands in for ‘the thing itself’ (which could never be captured), but we forget, ignore, or do not recognize that the memorial is an incomplete symbol or representation for memory. As such, the memorial is always inadequate. Importantly, however, inadequacy is not a negative quality, per se: it is not necessarily a negation. Embracing the inevitable inadequacy of any particular memorial might allow it to function differently.

Because memorials are constituted by their exclusions, they are in a continual state of becoming: the memorial is always answering to what it is not, constituted by continual exclusions it can never avoid, some of which are more apparent than others.

Bradford Vivian addresses such constitutive exclusions in his analysis of the National September 11 Memorial in New York City in the fourth chapter (“Habitation”) of his 2017 book, *Commonplace Witnessing: Invention, Historical Remembrance, and Public Culture*; however, he does so through a form of witnessing which he calls “habitation.” Early in the chapter, he points out that “the design of the September 11 Memorial, understood as a forum for popular witnessing, raises the quintessential question of politics as Jacques Rancière defines it: not the prospect of articulating ‘an opposition between groups with different interests,’ but the question of *how* one may account for the unaccounted” (Vivian 131, emphasis mine). Following Rancière, he claims that the design of such a memorial constitutes “*dissensus*, which Rancière defines as ‘a gap in the sensible’—an interruptive and disquieting demonstration that some have not yet been accounted for, have not been counted” (Vivian 131). In demonstrating such *dissensus*, he notes that while there was some debate regarding whether to separate the names of the first responders from those of the civilians who died in the attacks, the victims are all named (represented) in the memorial. In contrast, “the names of the nineteen hijackers who perpetrated, and died in, the attacks are not listed—not counted—as casualties of September 11” (Vivian 132). In other words, implicit in the inclusion of some names rather than others renders those names—those people—as “worthy” of remembering while the others are not. Furthermore, underlying these discussions of inclusivity and exclusivity—and, I would argue, the main underlying reason why such inclusion and exclusion

matters—is that, while monuments and memorials are, perhaps most overtly, epideictic forms of rhetoric, they are also deliberative. That is, their “purpose” is to commemorate, which is not only ceremonial, but also serves to encourage ways of thinking and being in the world that affect the future. Put more bluntly: a memorial has effects (“ceremonial” or not) that inevitably encourage certain values or valorization of past figures (for example, Confederate generals depicted as giant, vigorous, swarthy versions of their human counterparts) in ways that shape not only how future generations remember them, but also view their contributions to past and history.

The shaping of history and how future generations will remember often overlaps with historical efforts to provide “accurate” or “authentic” information and/or experiences to the public: the move, for example to remove racist monuments also includes the move to include more monuments and memorials to BIPOC historical figures—it is not simply about inclusivity; it is also a conversation about historical accuracy. This question of accuracy and authenticity is taken up by Bernard-Donals as he analyzes the artifacts, architecture, and spatial layout of the US Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) in Washington, D.C. in his 2016 book, *Figures of Memory*. His work parses the difference between metonymy and synecdoche through Kenneth Burke’s *A Grammar of Motives*, arguing that while both are forms of metaphor (substitution), metonymy is the substitution of a part for a greater event or whole, while synecdoche “could best be expressed as a part-for-part substitution, in which the associative relation *implies* a whole rather than expresses it as part of the substitutive relation” (Bernard-Donals 67, emphasis mine). He argues that while the USHMM founders and curators sought to create a metonymic relationship between the museum artifacts and their viewers—to create a rendering of an “authentic”

experience (the Holocaust)—what the museum does is more synecdochal than metonymic. That is, the artifacts in the museum, he argues, have been displaced from their “authentic” space, have been curated together in a place (Washington, D.C.) where they never otherwise would have been, and the people who view them contextualize them in relationship to one another and to themselves, not to the Holocaust broadly-writ. As such, he claims that it is not a matter of “authenticity,” but rather, an “authenticity of displacement,” which “involves a relation of the object to other objects in a series that focuses attention not on the context that provides the objects a historical unity or wholeness, but which—like the rhetorical figure synecdoche—makes apparent the incompleteness of the relation by focusing attention on the ways in which the objects open up a discursive or memorial space, one that is filled in by the observer” (Bernard-Donals 72). In other words, if we see that these artifacts and this museum have a synecdochal relationship to past events (rather than a metonymic one), we can also recognize the impossibility of “completely” seeing the “whole” that is the past event of the Holocaust—or of memory, broadly-writ.

Bernard-Donals’s argument is important for this chapter as I will follow his lines of thought regarding synecdoche, memory, and memorial spaces. However, rather than focusing on “authenticity” or his “authenticity of displacement,” I focus on what is necessarily excluded from memorials, and how these exclusions not only matter, but are never completely absent. As Bernard-Donals claims about photographic archives and their affect on memory,

Photography lends the imagined memory too much structure, too much organization, and—as a result—leaves ‘what is significant’ outside the

photograph's frame. While it fixes the image on spatiotemporal terms, it also arrests the event or the object it supposedly 'captures,' forcing aspects of the event or object to the margins of the photograph and, thus, to the margins of the observer's imagination. (Bernard-Donals 76)

In other words, in following my previous chapter which describes memory as a hauntological presence, I argue that what is excluded from a monument (pushed to the margins) leaves a noticeable void, and its exclusion is, in a sense, an inclusion. There are always excluded voices, experiences, and histories—memory is always partially subverted or occluded, revision after revision. These monuments will never (*and can never*) metonymize the 'thing itself' (memory)—whatever that might be. Despite their unveilings, revisions, removals—or destructions—they are never complete—nor completely destroyed. They are in a constant state of becoming, no matter how solid they appear. Furthermore, *this becoming is constituted by what gets excluded*. What the memorial does not recognize, what is not there, what is forgotten, what is ignored: these are fundamental elements to its being. In other words, memorials are structures of constitutive exclusions. Sina Kramer (2017) defines constitutive exclusions as

twofold: on the one hand, a system or a body constitutes itself through the production of an excluded element that it nevertheless harbors within itself. On the other hand, this internal harboring of the excluded element is ignored, unrecognized, repressed, or disavowed. As a result, constitutive exclusion produces a remainder, a figure that occupies what Derrida calls a 'quasi-transcendental' position with regard to the delimited space whose boundary it serves to draw. The constitutively excluded figure is both the condition of possibility and the condition

of impossibility of that constituted space, simultaneously grounding and troubling the bodies that rely upon it. (Kramer)

Put more simply, memorials are erected to recognize people or events which are deemed “worthy” of remembering; however, implicit in their erection is also that which is “unworthy” of acknowledgement or commemoration—it is present through its absence. Paradoxically, it is ignored, but its absence leaves a noticeable void. As such, I argue that this constitutive exclusion is how memorials can operate as powerful rhetorical structures; however, such an argument calls for a different way of approaching memory, through synecdoche: a metaphor of memory which highlights and embraces constitutive exclusions.

III. Patchworking Memory: Revision and Constitutive Exclusions

Not unlike the COVID-19 pandemic, the HIV-AIDS crisis which surged into public discourse in the 1980s and 90s (yet is still an ongoing battle, despite strides in HIV treatment) brought about fear, misinformation, prejudice, trauma, uncertainty, and, ultimately, unprecedented suffering and death—all of which spurred a drive to remember, memorialize, and preserve memories of the individuals who suffered and died, often without family members or friends present, under the auspices of the danger of an unknown disease. The AIDS Memorial Quilt was the product of such devastation; however, it is (much like *Rumors of War*) markedly different from other traditional, brick-and-mortar memorials. It came about in San Francisco, conceived in November 1985 by gay rights activist, Cleve Jones. According to the Memorial’s website, Jones had helped to organize and facilitate an annual candlelight march for Harvey Milk and George Moscone every year following their assassinations in 1978. Then, “while planning the 1985 march, he learned that over 1,000 San Franciscans had been lost to AIDS. He asked each of his fellow

marchers to write on placards the names of friends and loved ones who had died of AIDS. At the end of the march...the wall of names looked like a patchwork quilt” (aidsmemorial.org). Jones created a workshop in San Francisco funded by donors who “supplied sewing machines, equipment, and other materials, and many volunteered tirelessly,” taking on mailed-in panels (most of which were pieced together in that workshop.) In its inaugural display in October 1987, the quilt had 1,920 panels/names represented. A year later, it had grown to 8,288 patchwork pieces. In 1996, it had grown from a quilt the size of a football field to a quilt that covered the entire National Mall, when an “estimated 1.2 million people came to view it. The Clintons and Gores attended the display, marking the first visit by a sitting president of the United States” (aidsmemorial.org). Since this display, it has been moved and segmented across the country, and the foundation itself has moved from San Francisco to Atlanta.

Beyond the obvious tactile observation that the quilt is made of fabric, thread, and other more easily deteriorable materials, another observation we can make from its history is that it is constantly being revised. As Marita Sturken points out in her sixth chapter of *Tangled Memories*, “Conversations with the Dead,” the quilt “has not been subjected to the aesthetic debates of, for instance, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial precisely because it is not being produced by one artist and is perceived as a craft as opposed to a work of art” (Sturken 193). It is revision by addition. The quilt is constantly adding panels, always growing larger and never subtracted from: once a panel is added it “cannot be altered by anyone but their makers once [it] has arrived at the NAMES Project and been catalogued” (Sturken 186). The quilt has no single author. It has no single home. It has no single message, no single audience. It is constantly being rearranged, augmented, segmented, and

transported. Sometimes, parts of the quilt will be in multiple cities at once, some of its parts on display, some in temporary storage. It has gotten so large that the last time the entire quilt was displayed as a single unit was its last 1996 display at the National Mall.

As Sturken articulates, the quilt is both “a national memorial of epic proportions and a grassroots memorial...The tension between these two levels—the quilt as a massive project versus the quilt as a product of intimate, local communities—is a major part of its complex effect” (Sturken 186). She analyzes the rhetorical effects of the quilt as a memorial as well as a dialogue and exercise in representation: “each panel,” she claims, “responds to the question: How can this person be remembered? What elements will conjure up their presence...The quilt panels reflect a diversity of relationships, roles, and audiences” (Sturken 188). However Sturken ultimately argues that despite the “grassroots” nature of the project (a project which, in many ways, gave voice to, a naming—a coming-out of sorts—to people who were denigrated and discriminated against), the project as a memorial ultimately still privileges white, male, English-speaking communities over others. For example, she points out that “questions of privilege are directly related to the very nature of the AIDS Quilt. Most organizations that are struggling to deal with AIDS in inner-city black and Latino communities do not have the energy or resources for quilting. Is it a privilege to be able to mourn in the middle of an epidemic?” (Sturken 211). Furthermore, she claims, “the very nature of the quilt as a physical item reeks of traditional ‘Americana’ idealizations of white, heteronormative values...it evokes nostalgia for a simpler, more innocent time, a pastoral world of buggies and butter churns—an America that never existed” (Harris, qtd. Sturken 192).

I understand this criticism; creating such items can take a vast amount of time, resources, and emotional effort. However, I would also like to remember that quilting traditions come from global cultures that are not necessarily rooted in Americana, and that quilts amalgamate an extensive array of ‘unlike’ stitches, fabrics, and panels in a way that highlight unity and beauty in their coming together—as well as their disparities with one another, which are celebrated by their difference in relation to the other. I might point out that the manipulation of textiles is something vastly more accessible to populations across socioeconomic borders (and worldwide) than, say, casting a statue out of iron or brass, or sculpting from marble. I might even venture to say that such nostalgic “Americana” artifacts (like quilts) might make skeptical observers who felt detached from or even antagonistic toward those suffering from the AIDS epidemic feel like this particular plight “hits home” for them. I am not claiming that the NAMES project does not have problems with its inclusivity, or with smuggling in discriminatory practices—however, what I’d like to point out is that the way of memorialization, no matter how it is enacted, will never include everyone and everything—nor will it have a similar rhetorical effect on everyone who interacts with it. This is not to say that what these memorials do not include is not important (quite the contrary), but that what is not included is important to notice and take account of, and the way in which the AIDS Memorial Quilt includes (and excludes) is markedly different from most other memorials and monuments in that sense.

For example, Carole Blair and Neil Michael (2007) also argue that the AIDS Memorial Quilt is different from other memorials: the mere fact that it is made of fabric or other homespun artifacts makes it more fragile, and its fragility mirrors the community which creates it. Furthermore, they argue that its existence as a memorial does

not suggest a finished product – the larger it gets, the more striking/impressive it is—yet, the larger it gets, the more difficult (impossible) it is to display “all at once.” It’s been pieced apart because it is so large – parts of it travel to different cities at once. However, the piecing-apart also suggests an ongoing-ness: unlike other memorials, monuments or museums, the quilt is never finished, and it never expects to be. It is constituted just as much by its inclusions as its exclusions. With all of its ongoing inclusion, there will always be those whose names are not on it, those who do not have a square, a space, the time, the fabric, the energy—and that knowledge makes its breadth even more haunting.

I am still haunted by a personal memory of the quilt: I visited an offshoot display of it when I was 13 years old, at a dance convention in Atlanta, Georgia. It was a “break” between classes, and I decided to part from my friends by myself and walk around to see what it was about. I knew AIDS was a disease, but, as a tween girl, I didn’t know anyone who had it; I assumed it was something far away from me, or from anyone I knew, until I slowly began to take in the panels, connecting them with people—not far away people who had nothing to do with me, but people who I may have, somehow, interacted with. I felt like I was privy to part of them by being able to see tactile versions of what they had made, not displayed behind a museum’s desensitized, sterilized glass wall or in an abstract, minimalist representation of names on a plaque. I began to think about people I knew who didn’t have AIDS, but who were also fatally sick—my uncle who had died from lung cancer because of an asbestos infestation in his workplace, my other uncle who had been recently diagnosed with cancer, my great-grandfather who had died from a stroke—and I connected them with the quilt’s makers. I thought about the hands that had touched all the fabric, the time that had gone into planning and stitching: these were people I might have

known, and there were a lot of them. One of the panels, according to my memory, depicted red, felt block letters on a black background. The man who created it proclaimed his birth and diagnosis date: he was born in 1965—five years younger than my father, and three years after my mother. He was diagnosed on the very day I was born, May 5, 1987. I regret that I do not remember his name, but his final sentence I’ve never forgotten: it said, “If you’re reading this now, I am dead.” I remember staring at that panel for a long time, re-reading, thinking, this person is younger than both my parents, and the day I was born was likely the worst day of his life. I’d never considered that someone might have died on the day I was born. But I was, and he did. I was born on a day that this man who touched and cut out and stitched this fabric, had essentially died. And I was still there looking at it, able to touch it, while he was not.

I did not, until then, have anything to connect to the AIDS epidemic (whether it was a whole, or a part), but in that moment and context, that fabric panel connected me to that man to the AIDS epidemic—in a way that nothing had moved me before. It was, in the essence of what Bernard-Donals describes about the Holocaust Memorial Museum, a synecdochal relationship. I could not connect myself with the AIDS epidemic broadly-writ (nor could I now), nor did those panels stand in for the epidemic itself. But what they did (and what I could do) is connect with the pieces in front of me, detached from their owners, and see the suffering that had happened. I could connect those pieces with other suffering that I knew, and try to understand. It was, of course, not the same suffering as the man who had created his own panel, but it is a memory. It grows, takes new life, remembers what came before in an ever-changing way, and it lives on.

We don't usually think of AIDS or HIV as a "crisis" now (particularly in light of COVID) but it is still present.¹⁶ That is, memorials like *Rumors of War* and the AIDS Quilt are ways in which memorials can transcend the time of "now." They attend to the very real problem (both now and past) of how to include or exclude by embracing the limitations and benefits of temporality; they embrace the unfinished, they embrace constitutive exclusions. They embrace that they are memorializing in-media-res. Put more simply, memorials such as these recognize very real problems, and rather than waiting for these problems to be (re)solved, or for disparate audiences to come to a general consensus, or to agree on a design or composition (one that will always include and exclude) that might "stand the test of time"—they embrace their incompleteness. They embrace that they are constituted by what they do not include as much they are by what they do include.

In other words, on top of the very obvious material and aesthetic reasons, the AIDS Quilt, like *Rumors of War*, is different from other memorials—it synecdochizes memory differently—in that it seeks to represent something that is not necessarily simply both past and present tense, but builds an opening to a future. That is, both these memorials are tasked with representing something that has indeed happened *and* is still ongoing. What they represent is not finished: epidemics, pandemics, racial and sexual inequality are not typical "wars;" they are ongoing. As such, it becomes an important rhetorical question to consider, as Sturken points out: how do we memorialize that which is ongoing? How can we commemorate something that is still happening? "The AIDS Quilt," she claims, "intends to end the 'war' it memorializes. As such, the debate it produces is very different from that

¹⁶ Even though HIV is treatable, marginalized communities worldwide still battle with its spread, and are still challenged to provide care and diagnoses to people who have it. Furthermore, the stigma surrounding its contraction is a large stymie to the progress that might be made in diagnosing and treating it.

raised by the Vietnam Veterans Memorial: it is a debate not only about how to remember the dead but how to effectively end the dying” (Sturken 196). I would argue, particularly in response to disease, bigotry, prejudice, and other ongoing “wars,” that they will never actually be ended, *per se*. I do not wish to be pessimistic or cynical in this viewpoint; however, I do wish to be realistic. This is not to say that these wars should not be waged, or that nothing will ever change: quite the contrary. What I wish to assert here is that these memorials are of utmost importance to changing the ways in which we respond to crises: while the crises might never be ‘finished,’ these representations of memory—commemoration and memorials of ongoing wars serve to bring awareness to them in ways that help mitigate the problem (whether it is medical research, awareness of privilege, etc.) and are also healing and cathartic for those in mourning. In fact, it is arguably *more* important to memorialize *in-media-res*, in the middle of the problem, because doing so allows more potentiality for productive change and awareness. As Carole Blair and Neil Michel point out,

with the ever-decreasing interval between event and public commemoration, it becomes increasingly difficult to perceive a distance between past and present; if we attend to how rapidly, for example, moves have been made to commemorate the Oklahoma City bombing or the attacks on September 11, 2001, the past seems hardly the ‘foreign country’ David Lowenthal has called it...the AIDS Quilt has been many things, but it certainly may be seen as a barometer of contemporary culture. (Blair and Michel 596)

The takeaway, then, which we can draw from these observations is that there is a notable (monetized and politicized) investment in “durable” memorials made from

materials which will stand the test of time. Iron, brass, marble, or brick-and-mortar may seem more stalwart toward natural elements versus, for example, fabric or thread; however, for a memorial to “stand the test of time” requires embracing constitutive exclusions. What is implicit in the desire for durability is really the politicized desire for stability: that is, what most memorials reveal is not necessarily a connection to an “actualized” or static past, but in their effort toward a static durability, they end up highlighting how fragile such narratives can be. Furthermore, as recent protests, dismantlement, vandalism, violence, and revision in general has shown, this perceived “durability” of certain monuments isn’t, in fact, durable at all. Iron, brick, marble, and mortar memorials can crumble as well as fabric and thread. And all of them are constantly in flux, no matter how “solid” they may appear. To take memorials seriously as an extension of memory requires an openness to revision, an openness to what it excludes, an openness to not only the history it seeks to (in some way) embody, but also an openness to what it will never be able to do. In short, rhetorically considering memorials requires not only the understanding that memorials as always becoming, but taking that understanding as a constitutive part of memorials (and memory) as well. Memorials will always be necessarily incomplete—a synecdoche (a part substituting another part) for memory.



Figure 4.1. *Rumors of War, Richmond, VA. Steve Helber/AP*



Figure 4.2 *J.E.B. Stuart Statue, Richmond, VA*

Chapter Five

Memory as Kairotic Interface

Memory is the gathering and convergence of thought upon what everywhere demands to be thought about first of all.

-Martin Heidegger, *What is Called Thinking*

The outside is already within the work of memory.

-Jacques Derrida, *Dissemination*

I. Digital Rhetoric and Kairos

Although Richard Lanham is often credited with coining the term “digital rhetoric” in 1989, it wouldn’t be amiss to claim that the year “digital rhetoric” took hold was in 1996, the year in which *Kairos: A Journal of Rhetoric, Technology, and Pedagogy* launched on New Year’s Day. *Kairos* differed from other journals at the time because it was (and still is) not printed in traditional hardcopy: it is published entirely online, accessible to anyone with an internet connection, and, furthermore, does not print writing in the conventional sense. Rather, it focuses on “webtexts,” which, as its “about” page describes, “are texts authored specifically for publication on the World Wide Web. Webtexts are scholarly examinations of topics related to technology in English Studies fields ... and related fields such as media studies, informatics, arts technology, and others” (*Kairos*). As it describes, the journal focuses on texts that cannot be (fully) printed in traditional journals; texts which rely on a digital milieu in order to circulate—and in doing so, challenge the traditional concept of “text.” For example, a few webtexts from a recent issue feature a video project which “considers participatory composition and media platforms like YouTube and

Twitch;” a curation of “three artistic transpositions of Odissi, an eastern Indian classical dance form, from live movement to digital embodiment;” and recordings taken from writing conferences “analyzed in light of online writing instruction and writing center scholarship on synchronous conferencing” (*Kairos*). These webtexts are unique in that they are not publishable in traditional ink-and-paper ways – however, perhaps more importantly, their mediums are part of the arguments that these authors wish to make.

As one of the founders and senior editor of *Kairos*, Douglas Eyman, claims, the impetus to create an online journal came from “an intrepid group of graduate students” who were frustrated “with reading the work of scholars who were adept at critiquing these new kinds of online texts but who could not themselves produce anything like them” (Eyman 6). There needed to be a different way to critique that embraced online texts *as part of the critique of them*. Additionally, in an interview, Eyman describes that since 1996, *Kairos* has operated under

a fairly DIY approach, in which the entirety of its staff contribute their time and talents and help us to publish innovative work in return for professional/field recognition, so we are able to sustain a complex venture with a fairly unique economic model where the journal neither takes in nor spends any funds. We also don’t belong to any parent organization or institution, and this allows us to be flexible in terms of how the editors choose to shape what the journal is and what it does. (Owens)

As such, one could say that the call for an online platform for webtexts provided an exigent title for such journal: the need for it was kairotic in the sense of the Greek term, which is often explained as “timely” or “opportune.” Additionally, implicit the structural flexibility

that the journal embraces underscores the dynamism of *kairos*, and demonstrates how the journal is, to a certain extent, a way of embodying that dynamism: it is not bound to an agenda, a moment, a period of time, a paycheck, a monetized sponsor, or necessitated route. It can detour, it is open to potential, it can meander, and it can reach audiences who might not be approached through traditional methods of (ink-and-paper) discourse.

For example, Eyman quotes John McDaid's "Toward an Ecology of Hypermedia" to highlight that "media are not passive conduits of information, but active shapers and massagers of messages. To fully apprehend the character of the world they bring us, we must see them as an ecosystem: interacting, shaping and re-presenting our experience" (McDaid 204, qtd. Eyman 5). The mission, then, of *Kairos* has been to publish scholarship that "examines digital and multimodal composing practices, promoting work that enacts its scholarly argument through rhetorical and innovative uses of new media," and, as the longest continuously-publishing online peer-reviewed journal in the field, it continues to remind us that the Greek term, *kairos*, is self-transformative. That is, what the journal's founding (and continuing) principles underscore is that it conceptualizes *kairos* not as a static "moment" (whatever that might be), and, furthermore, reinscribes that *kairos* does not have a subject-object relationship to its audience or users. In other words, digital formats shape and re-present—circulate—in similar ways to *kairos*, which reinscribe the active practice and circulation that *kairos* affords to rhetorical situations. Put another way, digital rhetoric organically embraces the dynamism and practice-ability of *kairos*.

Interestingly, the journal *Kairos* also lends a more tangible way to conceptualize the Greek root of its namesake. *Kairos* is often difficult to conceptualize because, as Debra Hawhee points out, it "does not have a direct English equivalent ... *kairos* marks the quality

of time rather than its quantity... *Kairos* is thus rhetoric's timing, for the quality, direction, and movement of discursive encounters depend more on the forces at work on and in a particular moment than on their quantifiable length" (Hawhee 65-66). Similarly, John Muckelbauer reminds us that traditional "articulations of *kairos* ... clearly [indicate] an ethical dimension to the concept: *kairos* is consistently connected to the notion that one must somehow respond to events at the proper time and in a fitting way" (Muckelbauer 114). For example, when I first started teaching First-Year English, a few senior instructors recommended that I teach *kairos* alongside a *Seinfeld* episode in which George gets heckled in a business meeting, doesn't respond in the moment, but then thinks of the 'perfect' response later that evening, after the other businesspeople had left town. In unsurprising *Seinfeld* comedic fashion, George cannot let it go, and flies across the country to deliver his untimely retort, which doesn't land, and is met again with a comeback he is unable to respond to. The episode demonstrates the classical conception of *kairos* as it is traditionally (and still, overwhelmingly) perceived: as the "opportune" moment for rhetorical delivery, one which must be seized when is "proper" and "fitting," otherwise will be lost. However, it also underscores the uniqueness of that moment—it treats *kairos* as a point in time that, once has passed, cannot be recreated—or, if it is (as George discovers), is no longer opportune, and doesn't deliver the same rhetorical punch it could have had in that one, "exact" moment.

This seemed to me, at the time, to be a great example to use in my classroom. That is, until I realized (as I was teaching, in front of 18 freshmen who were born years *after* the show had already gone off the air) that my students had no real connection with *Seinfeld*. Most of them had never even heard of it, and they didn't find it to be all that funny. (One

student broke the dead silence after I played the clip by asking if George “was, like, on the spectrum somehow?” and didn’t find poking fun at his expense amusing, but, rather, abrasive.) The kairotic moment for that pedagogical strategy had apparently passed. Feeling sheepishly like George, I made it a classroom practice to veer far away from examples that were more than a few years old—until last year, when I noticed that several of my freshmen made consistent references to *Seinfeld* (and other “old” sitcoms like *Frasier*, *Friends*, *Buffy*, and *The Office*). Intrigued, I asked them how they’d come across these shows, and realized that platforms like Netflix, Amazon Prime, and Hulu had reinvigorated interest in a new generation of viewers who could stream and “binge watch” an entire season or series at once. The ways in which digital streaming services allow audiences to watch—on their own time, often without commercials, and as many consecutive episodes as they want—also changed the kairotic moment for these “old” television shows. As such, this multiplicity—this circulation that digital platforms allow—highlights ways in which *kairos* is not that curiously unique (or static) moment that it is often conflated with. Rather, it underscores that *kairos* is not simply one moment (or any period of time, for that matter), but is much more interwoven into the fabric of the complex, rhetorical ecology that drives our world.

Unsettling *kairos* from the situated “opportune” moment is not a particularly new concept in the field of rhetoric and composition. Notably, scholars such as Debra Hawhee and Jenny Rice challenge traditional conceptions of *kairos* as static or situated. For example, Rice conceptualizes rhetorical ecologies rather than rhetorical situation (and situated-ness) in ways that unsettle *kairos* from the strictures of a singular, “opportune” moment, opening it up to a multiplicity of opportunity which is networked and constantly

changing. In her argument to rethink rhetorical situation as ecologies, she proposes “a revised strategy for theorizing public rhetorics (and rhetoric’s publicness) as a circulating ecology of effects, enactments, and events by shifting the lines of focus from rhetorical situation to rhetorical ecologies” (Rice 9). In this sense, the ever-shifting boundaries and porosity of ecologies allows for a *kairos* that is not “situated,” but rather, embodies movement between moments. Similarly, Hawhee focuses her third chapter of *Bodily Arts* around the flexibility and porousness of *kairos*, first by pointing out that *kairos* is often understood in ways which are limited to “disembodied rationalism,” and argues that it is the opposite: nonrational and embodied. She claims that “while *kairos* has re-entered rhetorical contemporary theory in the names of reasoned accommodation and creation, historians of rhetoric have nonetheless presented a different story, making room for the immanent, embodied, mobile, nonrational version of rhetorical *kairos* held by the older sophists” (Hawhee 68). Ultimately, she uses this rationale in order to demonstrate how *kairos* functions in athletics and connects the body with rhetorical timing.

Rice and Hawhee’s work has influenced similar ways of thinking about *kairos*: for example, Thomas Rickert takes up Hawhee’s arguments in *Ambient Rhetoric* in order to claim that *kairos* is “something dispersed into the material environs” (Rickert 95). Additionally, John Muckelbauer uses her arguments in his third chapter of *Future of Invention*, in which he uses her call upon the grammatical structure of middle-voice as embodying “a kairotic connection as happening in the movement ‘between;’ a movement that cannot ‘begin’ or ‘end’ with reason” (Muckebauer 119). Furthermore, he analyzes *kairos* through Gorgias, claiming that “Gorgias’s practice of extemporaneous speaking shows that such a timely/untimely or singular response is actually generative, it is the

connective movement through which variation emerges” (Muckelbauer 118). For Muckelbauer, “*kairos* offers an approach to situatedness precisely through a nonindividual transversal movement;” in other words, *kairos* is not reducible to a singular measurement (of time, space, etc), but rather, occupies the space between—it is the movement between measurements (Muckelbauer 119). More recently, however, in his 2019 *RSQ* article, “The Queer Kairotic,” Joe Edward Hatfield relies on Jenny Rice’s conception of ecologies, claiming that, “the rhetorical ecologies analytic unsettles rhetoric from the contextual enclosure of the Bitzerian model to acknowledge instead how seemingly disconnected rhetorical situations overlap and cause a wide-ranging series of effects across time and space” (Hatfield 28). He uses this platform to argue for the eminent need to “adapt the classical definition of *kairos*, specifically its denotative value as the always fleeting one-time opportunity for producing the most potent rhetoric ... As a rhetorical form circulates, it stretches the initial kairotic moment beyond its point of origin by continually reproducing the spatiotemporal gap of opportunity required for intelligibility and thus rhetorical agency” (Hatfield 28). In other words, his claim is that while there may be an “initial” kairotic moment, *kairos* is not limited to that—whatever *that* might be.

The nonstatic-ness of *kairos* which these digital milieus allow us to see remind us that memory is also non-static and dynamic. In the chapter which follows, I concatenate digital rhetoric with memory scholarship to argue that memory, like *kairos*, is treated in an incongruent manner to how memory scholars conceptualize it: namely, in theory, we understand that memory is dynamic rather than static; however, the way it is circulated in digital rhetoric is overwhelmingly reduced to passive storage: usually through the metaphor of a memory-as-computer, memory-as-database, or memory-as-archive. I utilize Jacques

Derrida's argument in *Archive Fever* that digital technologies are not passive conveyors of content, storage units, or merely representations – rather, they are active in that they do not simply 'record' memory; they also actively structure their users, which in turn changes the future of the technologies themselves. In doing so, I visit several rhetorical sites of digital memory to show how these sites are actively co-created with and by their users, ultimately arguing that memory, like *kairos*, is an active practice, and digital formats allow us to see this active practice in its circulation.

II. Digital Rhetoric and Memory

Curiously enough, *Kairos*'s co-founder and senior editor, Douglas Eyman, also wrote *Digital Rhetoric: Theory, Method, Practice* (2015), which, in addition to being available in traditional print form, is also an online, open-access publication. In it, he claims that “digital rhetoric draws its theory and methods first and foremost from the tradition of rhetoric itself—and this poses a dilemma because rhetoric is both an analytic method and a heuristic for production, and , critically for our purposes, can be structured as a kind of meta-discipline” (Eyman 12). However, despite the dilemma in defining it, digital rhetoric is a powerful undercurrent in our field, shaping conference themes and panels, special editions of journals, specified teaching positions and themed courses in higher education—not to mention, digital rhetoric also has its *own* journals, networked groups, and conferences (Digital Rhetoric Collaborative). The draw to digital is an organic one: the ways in which we connect, communicate, write, speak, *think* – are increasingly mediated by digital venues – and to ignore this is shortsighted. As Douglas Eyman outlines, his book's namesake is a necessary subset of rhetoric, despite certain criticisms that rhetoric

doesn't necessitate a prefix or appendage because of its multidisciplinary nature. He counters these critiques by claiming that:

at the level of theory, [digital rhetoric] allows for the use of and alliance with other fields not typically associated with printed text or speech; it prompts a critical view of current rhetorical theories and methods and opens up the question of whether new theories and new methods can or should be developed; and it provides the boundary condition necessary for the emergence of a new field of study. (Eyman 17)

In this way, it is easy to see how digital rhetoric is a natural move toward making pedagogical strategies and composition classrooms less concerned with CTR, standard English, and all the things that we, as teachers, almost *have* to teach because of departmental standards, but would prefer not to—or, perhaps, would prefer to do differently.

Notably, digital rhetoric subsumed discussions of multimodality, particularly through Lester Faigley's (2000) argument "that literacy has always been a material, multimedia construct" (Faigley 6). He continues by extending literacy to rhetoric, claiming that rhetoric has always been multimodal, multidimensional and material, and he traces the materiality of antiquity until now, arguing that "we have only recently become aware of this multidimensionality and materiality because computer technologies have made it possible for many people to produce and publish multimedia presentations" (Faigley 20). In other words, the awareness that digital platforms provided threw into sharp relief how "multi" and how "modal" composition and rhetoric is, and could be—and, as he points out, always has been. Faigley's arguments also seep into the material turn (or, new

materialism), particularly the materiality of digital and technological platforms, in part as a (feminist) pushback against social constructionist theories. As Karen Barad argues, social constructionists attempt to unearth and decenter hegemonic relationships, yet their emphasis on discourse inadvertently reinscribes their centrality of study into the very circle from which it wishes to break, thus reinscribing anthropocentric and humanist ideals as well as the nature-culture binary (Barad). In other words, a focus on the material draws attention outside the human, which allows for a “discourse” that doesn’t look anything like the “discourse” of social constructionists. And while digital rhetoric was a coined, utilized term, and while it influenced several movements that have profoundly changed the field of rhetoric and composition, it remained more or less ubiquitous—something any scholar could pick up and apply to their own area of interest or expertise.

In some cases, this ubiquity causes skepticism—or, at the very least, some concern for the lack of organizing principle for digital rhetoric. As Eyman points out, “although scholars ... have addressed and critiqued the idea of digital rhetoric, no comprehensive digital rhetoric text has yet been published” (Eyman 8). In fact, his impetus for creating such a book was “to provide an overview and synthesis of the work that has been done to the development of a digital rhetoric theory and also to provide a framework that situates digital rhetoric as an interdisciplinary field of inquiry in its own right” (Eyman 8). He goes on to say that “the term ‘digital rhetoric’ is perhaps most simply defined as the application of rhetorical theory (an analytic method or heuristic for production) to digital texts and performances. However, this approach is complicated by the question of what constitutes a digital text, and how one defines rhetoric” (Eyman 13). As such, it has been taken up in its most generous sense—applying to seemingly, well, anything. For example, as Angela

Haas points out, digital also refers to fingers and toes – “all writing is digital: digitalis in Latin means ‘of or relating to the fingers or toes or ‘a coding of information’” (Haas 242, Qtd. Eyman 19). Or, another way of thinking about how pervasive digital rhetoric is: there is not a clear distinction between what is digital rhetoric and what is not digital rhetoric – and under such (non)definitions, *everything* is digital rhetoric, including the ‘analog.’ As Anna Smith and Jon Wargo (2015) claim, juxtaposing digital rhetorics with literacies produces ecologies, and “thus, our goal in this chapter is not to reproduce static representations of these fields. Rather, we follow Sullivan and Porter’s (1993) lead to ‘locate’ the interstices of these evolving fields as they inform our current understandings” (Smith and Wargo 37). This is all to say—that digital rhetoric is an emergent, powerful undercurrent, that it is ubiquitous and a shapeshifter—is that digital rhetoric itself is not static. It is continuously shaping and shaped by its users, constantly being taken up and entering into different rhetorical ecologies.

However, while digital rhetoric may seem to be everywhere, the ways in which it overlaps with memory is, more or less, located in one metaphor: memory-as-computer. This metaphor stems from other technologies (including writing and books) and traces back to the *Rhetorica ad Herennium*, which describes memory as a “treasury.” Collin Gifford Brooke examines the ways in which memory is mapped into digital and new media milieus in the sixth chapter of his 2009 book, *Lingua Fracta: Towards a Rhetoric of New Media*, noting that “although memory is a canon that focuses our attention on the relationship between discourse and time, the treatment of memory as storage spatializes the canon, reducing it to the single axis of presence and absence” (Brooke 148). Brooke’s chapter (“Persistence”) calls attention to the ways in which memory is circulated in digital

rhetoric—namely, that, in drawing from Platonic traditions, memory has been spatialized to a storage unit (memory-as-computer); that this spatialization is a hindrance, and is not how memory circulates. Furthermore, he notes that many prominent rhetorical scholars regularly attend to memory as storage in their scholarship: “although it may not be particularly controversial to suggest that we construct our memories,” he claims, “construction has not been an emphasis in our considerations of the rhetorical canon of memory” (Brooke 151). For example, he turns to Sharon Crowley and Debra Hawhee’s 1999 book, *Ancient Rhetoric for Contemporary Students*, in which the authors “speak briefly to the potential held by ‘electronic memory systems,’ but that potential is largely conceived of in terms of storage capacity of such systems. They note that electronic memory represents a ‘vast improvement,’ but this improvement is figured as quantitative” (Brooke 151). Ultimately, Brooke argues that memory-as-storage forces memory into a presence/absence binary, and demonstrates how memory is more dynamic than presence/absence through what he calls “persistence,” which is an active practice.

As Eyman points out, however, such work signifies a renewed interest in the canon of memory, yet this interest is still nascent in comparison to work being done in other rhetorical canons. Furthermore, he includes the following table, which outlines the “Classical Definition/Use” of each canon juxtaposed with its “Digital Practice.” As the following table shows, memory’s classical definition/use is “memorization of speech,” while its digital practice is “information literacy—knowing how to store, retrieve, and manipulate information (personal or project-based; blogs or databases)” (Eyman). Additionally, he opens his “memory” section in his second chapter with a similar echo, claiming that “memory in the classical rhetorical canon was concerned with memorization

of speeches but also with the function of memory in developing a store of rhetorical arguments and practices that the rhetoric could draw upon at will” (Eyman).

As this table highlights, the digital *practice* of memory is reduced to storage, retrieval, and manipulation of information. In essence, the metaphor of memory-as-computer—or some other technological storage system (i.e. hard drive, jump drive, disc, archive, chip, or cloud) treats memory as a thing that can be (and is) something stored, something *static*. That is, the metaphor of memory-as-computer reinforces memory as “storage” that anyone can rent—and rent on the cheap (as in involving minimal, if any, practice or effort). In other words, the digital practice of memory as it stands through this particular metaphor doesn’t require much (if any) active practice.

Table 5.1 Comparison of Classical and Digital Canons

CANON	CLASSICAL DEFINITION/USE	DIGITAL PRACTICE
INVENTION	Finding available means of persuasion	Searching and negotiating networks of information; using multimodal and multimedia tools
ARRANGEMENT	Formalized organization	Manipulating digital media as well as selecting ready-made works and reconstituting them into new works
STYLE	Ornamentation/appropriate form	Understanding elements of design (color, motion, interactivity, font choice, appropriate use of multimedia, etc.)
DELIVERY	Oral presentation	Understanding and using systems of distribution (including technical frameworks that support

		varying protocols and networks
MEMORY	Memorization of speech	Information literacy—knowing how to store, retrieve, and manipulate information (personal or project-based; blogs or databases)

Additionally, Brooke addresses the traditional metaphor of memory-as-storage further by disputing a claim from Edward P.J. Corbett, who claimed that rhetoric is solely concerned with written discourse, and because of this, “there was no further need to deal with memorizing” (Corbett, qtd. Brooke 143). As he points out, Corbett’s position echoes Plato’s infamous admonition of “alphabetic writing” in the *Phaedrus*, which places memory and writing in opposite, opposing spheres. Brooke counters this popular stance by claiming that,

The traditional approach to memory in our field...relie[s] on the commonsense assumption that books (and various other technologies) function as extensions of our more limited individual memories. Memory in this approach is something *less than a practice*; accounts like Corbett’s reduce memory instead to a *question of storage*, as if memory simply signified the retention or location of quantifiable amounts of information. It is in this sense that we speak of a computer’s memory – its capacity for storing a finite number of kilo-, mega-, and gigabytes’ worth of information. (Brooke 143-144, emphasis mine)

In other words, through this metaphor, memory is reduced to operating *as* such technology (whether it is alphabetic writing or a wax tablet or a computer). And because of this metaphor—a metaphor which has ceased to be a metaphor and is now a pervasive understanding and treatment of memory-as-concept or memory ‘itself’ (Nietzsche)—

memory has been reduced and limited to storage, to retention, and its value is placed on how well it can stockpile its contents and how well its users can access those contents. Memory's value as an active *practice*, as an exercise valuable to rhetoric—a practice championed in the Greek tradition (as outlined in Chapter 2: Bodily Memory)—has been forgotten, seemingly because of this technological metaphor, or, perhaps, due to the technological takeover of what memory is “supposed” to do for rhetoric.

For a more recent example, in his 2020 book, *Excavating the Memory Palace*, Seth Long claims that “current scholarship on rhetorical memory, even work with a digital bent, tends to overlook the history of the fourth canon and its allied mnemonic tradition” (Long 150). He goes on to say that, particularly when it comes to teaching memory as a rhetorical canon, “as the history has shown, the memory arts need not undergo a wholesale renovation to find relevance in the electronic age. A constellation of precepts regarding the compression, management, integration, and visualization of information, the mnemonic tradition has a digital relevance that glimmers in anticipation from the *Dissoi logoi* onward” (Long 150). I might push to take this further: while there is a longstanding value to the practice of memory since antiquity, or “from the *Dissoi logoi* onward,” digital formats and platforms had (and still have) the opportunity to reinscribe memory as an active practice in the mnemonic tradition. However, the ways in which it has been taken up reduce it to storage—and, as such, conceptions of memory, the way it is taught and circulated, has remained as simply as storage and retrieval.

III. Digital Archives

We began this chapter with 1996, the year of *Kairos*'s inaugural issue—and, curiously enough, this is also the year that the English translation of Jacques Derrida's

book, *Archive Fever*, was printed. In it, Derrida interrogates digital rhetoric—notably through the issue of storage, memory, and digital technology via the archive—and he calls for a rethinking of the archive through changes brought about by digital technologies and media. He traces this rethinking not through *kairos*, but through the archive’s etymology as the Greek concept, *arkhē*, a term that signifies both commencement and commandment. This is important for Derrida because it situates public and state records (documents with power) in privileged locations, available to and protected by select few: “The citizens who . . . held and signified political power were considered to possess the right to make or represent the law” (Derrida). He goes on to claim that technology allows for a reversal of the archival power structure: ‘memories,’ histories, and accounts that had previously been (expensively) sacrosanct, bound in rare books with strict rules, and under privileged access are routinely displayed and archived in public spaces online, which often have free and unrestricted access—and are governed loosely.

Derrida takes up email as a particular point of study for his argument; however, for a different example, let’s look at Wikipedia: an online encyclopedia which anyone with access to the internet, at any time, can view or add information to an existing entry or create new content. In a very basic sense, it is an archive of information – a storage space that, in following with the common metaphor, is a form of digital memory in that it stores information and allows it to be retrieved or accessed. Its modality allows for a very up-to-date research platform: for example, when the U.K.’s Prince Phillip died in April 2021, his Wikipedia page was updated within hours, whereas traditional encyclopedias in print form were no longer up-to-date. It is also a free service: rather than having to locate a recent (and expensive) encyclopedia, anyone with internet access can research any subject at any

time. Granted, there is a socioeconomic pothole here for those who do not have internet access; however, temporarily bracketing that pothole [which is becoming increasingly smaller] these platforms can more easily take advantage of a kairotic moment, and their audience is increasingly extended to include more users and contributors.

To touch briefly on the extension of users and contributors that digital archives encourage, Hatfield (2019) examines how digital archives are both more kairotic as well as democratic (in that they allow marginalized voices a platform) through an examination of queer communities and transgender suicide notes posted online. He cites K.J. Rawson in claiming that, “in studies of similar non-institutional, digital transgender archives, cyberspace ‘provides a revolutionary tool for creating, sharing, and preserving trans histories that would otherwise remain untold’ because ‘ordinary’ people can strategically utilize the affordances of new media to piece together a common past while also strengthening bonds of solidarity and practicing queer worldmaking” (Hatfield 26). He uses queer and transgender suicide notes on Tumblr to accentuate this point, claiming that queer archival cultures mobilize memory rhetorics to resist the threat of “mnemonicide,” (“the assassination of memory,” or the “effect of discriminatory biases that render queer memories unworthy of preservation in historical records”) in order to denaturalize it (Hatfield 26). He claims that “if the occasion of two teenage transgender suicides confers a rather morbid *kairos*, Tumblr users seized its haunted arrival by ensuring Alcorn’s and Mahaffey’s memories circulate continuously rather than vanishing along with the departed” (Hatfield 26). In other words, the extension and access of online archives—not only to marginalized people who have the ability share, but also to a common public who

may not have previously had access—as well as those in power—allows for the circulation of *kairos* in ways that were previously untapped.

Other platforms such as YouTube, Instagram, blogs, Twitter, Tumblr, Facebook, and Reddit allow for similar ways of digital relationships to intervene with memory and archiving. In 2010, for example, Ryan Skinnell takes up Derrida's arguments in *Archive Fever*, positing YouTube as an archive and argues that the archive is a cultural practice of memory:

...archives are incomplete traces of past events...in Derrida's theory of archives, however, this incompleteness is not a barrier, but an imperative of archives that invites users to invent the narratives that make the traces seem whole...the archives may determine what can be wrought from them, but the fundamental incompleteness of materials leaves spaces for users to invent connections that make the archives salient. (Skinnell, qtd Eyman 66)

Skinnell makes the argument that YouTube is a “cultural practice of memory” in order to argue that these practices situate sites for invention. However, other digital examples abound.

For example, Facebook has a feature that will automatically display a “memory” of a post from previous years—an algorithm that, until recently, underscored the assumption that all things posted on a wall or feed will necessarily be *good* memories for all time. The status updates and photos I posted in 2014 of my wedding, for example, were very happy memories—that is, until I got divorced. Logging in to find the unsolicited reminder of a once joyous time can feel like an unfounded assault—particularly as I thought I had deleted all evidence of its existence on social media. The kairoic moment for these memories has

shifted. However, Facebook has since realized the need for a more kairotic version of memories, and began to monitor the content its users put into the site, took down, reported, or blocked. For example, if a user blocks someone else on Facebook, they won't see posts from that person or memories of past posts with them. Similarly, if an event or photo involves someone who has died (and that person also has a memorialized account on the network), reminders of that person will also not appear. In essence, what Facebook requires in order to make its memory algorithm more accurate is more information put into its own network. As Davis and Shandle (2007) posit, "in a technological age, rhetoric emerges as a conditional method for humanizing the effect of machines and helping humans to direct them" (Davis 103). And the executives at Facebook realized this: Oren Hod, Facebook product manager claims, "the algorithm can do a better job of filtering out painful memories, but only after getting some human guidance that lets it know to avoid certain people or topics" (Hod). In this sense, Facebook is a form of digital archive that underscores necessity of human interaction: that is, Facebook is shaped by the information put into its algorithm by humans, but also shapes humans and human memory.

Similarly, some websites like Amazon will "suggest" other items a consumer may be interested in based on past searches or purchases. Often, these suggestions are tangential or even comical (last year, after injuring my knee in a running accident, then ordering a few kitchen tools, Amazon suggested that I might be interested in 'bacon bandages' – which is, as it sounds, Band-Aids shaped like strips of bacon, and I don't even like bacon.) Sometimes, they are annoying (my younger brother recently bought gifts for a friend's baby shower, and now he is being bombarded with suggestions for pregnancy items) – however, *sometimes, Amazon gets it right*. Or, rather, their digital algorithm can be kairotic.

For instance, in purchasing books for this dissertation, I came across several that have proved tremendously useful based off Amazon suggestions (Sibohan Kattago's *Memory Studies*, to name one). In turn, those suggestions shaped the research I did, the ideas and lines of thought and inquiry I followed, and, in turn, the writing itself. As with Facebook, however, in order for Amazon to strike the right kairotic chord, the more information a user puts into its system, the better chance it has of hitting the "right" suggestion.

And while most of the time it might seem like digital archives (such as Facebook memories, advertisements on a feed, or Amazon suggestions) are intrusive approximations, untimely "throwing spaghetti at a wall to see what sticks," or function as a crapshoot to tempt clickbait -- they can (and do), however, take advantage of many opportune moments, with many opportune audiences. This is particularly notable because *kairos* has so often been associated solely with human and human agency. Yet, in this sense, a nonhuman actor can land upon and take advantage of a kairotic moment. These examples are all to say that ways in which technology allows for a digital archive underscore that memories (and archives) are constantly in flux, and not completely dependent upon human agency—yet not entirely divorced from it, either. Which brings us back to one of Derrida's arguments in *Archive Fever*. He claims,

The technical structure of the archiving archive also determines the structure of the archivable content, even in its relationship to the future. The archivization produces as much as it records the event. This is also our political experience of the so-called news media. This means that, *in the past*, psychoanalysis would not have been what it was . . . if Email, for example, had existed. And *in the future* it will no longer be

what Freud and so many psychoanalysts have anticipated, from the moment E-mail, for example, became possible. (Derrida 17)

In other words, Derrida is arguing that media and other digital technologies are not passive conveyors of content, storage units, or merely representations – rather, they are active in that they do not simply ‘record’ memory; they also actively structure their users, which in turn changes the future of the archive.

Take Google, for example—the most widely-used online search engine globally—the noun and transitive verb form of which became an entry in the *Oxford English Dictionary* in 2006 (merely 10 years after *Kairos* was founded/*Archive Fever* was published, and only 8 years after Google itself existed¹⁷) (*OED*). However, while Google began as a search engine, it is now a corporation which not only controls what we see when we search for something online (and is also constituted by what gets searched *for*)—it has extended into email (Gmail), video communication and chat room (Google Chat), document and data storage (Google Drive), multilingual translation service (Google Translate), digital cartography and directions (Google Earth and Google Maps), news outlet (Google News), academic publication archive (Google Scholar), blended learning platform (Google Classroom), laptop computer (Chromebook), and web browser (Google Chrome) – among others. These extensions of what started as a search engine have expanded and infiltrated nearly all facets of our life as it intersects with digital platforms – that is, while it is still a way of mediating how we research and navigate the online archive, it also structures that archive based on the input it receives, and produces more technology

¹⁷ In order to find this information, I Googled “when was Google founded?”

and ways of navigating the world that, while useful for human users, also structure the way those users interact with the world.

Recently, for example, I found myself laughing with a coworker about questions students ask. Essentially, any question I don't know how to immediately answer, I can Google choice keywords quickly, and provide an answer to the student within a matter of seconds. However, we also joked that such research is an acquired skill, apparently, as students (or so it would seem) increasingly ask me questions that can be relatively easily found; it would seem as if they need me to operate an online search engine for them, and we would be out of a job if students found out that secret. ("Hey, Alexa: what classes should I take next semester?"). However, my coworker continued by noting that her husband, who is a Civil Engineer, routinely Googles questions that he has already made note of, but can't easily locate (measurements, city statistics, demographics, census information, past county/state line records, etc.) as well as questions that he receives from clients, students, and colleagues. In this sense, Google serves as an external source of memory (an archive) – even for memories we know we have, but don't want actively think about if an easier way of recollection is available. However, like our mind's "archive," Google is not is not static: it makes remembering easier—yet, it also shapes not only the content of what we remember, but the ways in which we practice remembering.

And not only are search engines (such as Google) an externalization of memory—shaping the way we remember and practice remembering—they also shape the way we learn, and what we trust in that learning process. When I moved into a new home (well, new for me; it was built in 1955), I began tackling home improvement projects on my own, with a limited budget. I felt very accomplished in my domestic success, yet one of the main

reasons I had any success is because I could Google things like “how to change an outlet from two prong to three;” “how to ground outlet;” “how to change kitchen faucet” (shutting off the water mainline is a very necessary step); “how to stain wood flooring;” or (and I’m slightly embarrassed to admit this) “how to *mow the lawn*.” Yes, some of these things I could have figured out relatively easily by trial and error, or by calling one of my parents or friends for their experiential expertise. However, in light of the expertise Google provided, the other options in front of me (other than hiring a professional, which I couldn’t afford) seemed risky. Why risk electrocuting myself through trial and error if I could quickly watch a YouTube tutorial from a trained electrician? Why bother my dad about the lawn (and also open myself up to his heckling me about my yardwork ignorance) if Google could tell me? In other words, Google-as-archive, as a constantly updated source of other users’ experiences, expertise, knowledge, and memories—has also *become the expert*, shaping the ways in which we go about learning new skills.

However, there is another Google platform that is an amalgam of both. That is, there is a platform that demonstrates the ways in which Google shapes the ways we remember, models the ways we learn, and influences what we seek to learn—and also is shaped by what we seek to remember and what we seek to learn: Google Maps. Google Maps is a “web mapping platform” which provides “satellite imagery, aerial photography, street maps, 360 degree interactive panoramic views of streets (Street View), real-time traffic conditions, and route planning for traveling by foot, car, air, and public transportation” (Google Inc.) Google Maps (as of 2020) was being used by over 1 billion people monthly—which it depended upon to provide updated traffic conditions and route planning. That is, the platform takes data from its users in real-time, constantly updating

the speed of traffic, calculating, and recalibrating. For example, if there is a sudden wreck ahead on your route (one which may be many miles away, of which you would have no knowledge otherwise) Google Maps will notify you and offer a reroute. Or, perchance, you miss a turn: Google will recalibrate your route to afford for the change. In this sense, the constant interplay between digital and human actors creates a feedback loop which is not simply information retention/storage and retrieval: Google Maps learns from its users and interprets that input, but does not simply regurgitate a static route. As the users continue to follow the route, it may change based on the continued input, which depends upon the billions of users every month to remain “accurate.” Google Maps serves as an external memory (it not only provides a route, but reminds us in real-time when to turn and notifies us of speed limits), and we trust it as an expert to the extent that many people (including myself) will use it when traveling to a familiar place, just to find the fastest way of getting there.

However, while the human relationship with the archive (and vice versa) may provide arguably positive things—for example, a platform for marginalized voices, as Hatfield describes, or ease of navigating unknown roads and territories—that same technological accessibility and circulation is precisely what also makes these platforms (such as Wikipedia) untrustworthy. For example, one of the reasons why many composition teachers warn students against trusting Wikipedia is because anyone can add anything. Users are encouraged to cite their sources; however, it isn’t required. It is a wealth of (potentially) kairotic information, but the value of that wealth is questionable. In fact, one of the co-founders of Wikipedia, Larry Sanger, recently warned people against trusting information on his own website, which, according to Sanger, was founded in order to create

an online, open resource “committed to neutrality,” but has now a “battleground for a version of the truth” (*The Times* July 2021). Additionally, he claimed that such ‘open’ platforms now “[give] a huge incentive to wealthy and powerful people to seize control of things like Wikipedia in order to shore up their power. And they do that” (Sanger). Wikipedia is frequented by millions of viewers every day, and is one of the first online repositories of information for many people in the beginning research stages. And, if what Sanger says is true – that such platforms can (and are) incentivized by corporations and currency, they no longer operate with the porousness that such an ideal digital platform (e.g. *Kairos*) might offer. The only option the archive has is a re-presentation of a picture or snapshot, and when that re-presentation is pointedly curated, the ‘memory’ itself becomes curated and shifts to whoever has the most incentive (and most ability) to pay for it.

This is all to say, while Derrida’s argument in *Archive Fever* was that technology, the internet, and digital platforms could have allowed for a utopian-esque democratization of hegemonic structures which hold access (therefore power) to archives and memory storage – the ways in which these digital archives have been actualized since his publication has rendered this hope a bit outdated. In other words, digital platforms may *appear* to be more democratic than traditional archives—yet the ones that are most utilized and circulated are the ones that are the *most* monitored by wealth and power. The digital platform allows them to be used by more people than traditional archives; however, the amount of users attracts such hegemony, perpetuating an increasingly controlled narrative to a burgeoning amount of viewers. What I would like to point to here, then, is that memory can never be divorced from the human (or to human power); it can only be divided from

it, because the human is always in the equation. It is how we divide the human from that equation that matters, and that is where memory reasserts its necessity to be actively practiced.

IV. Memory as Kairotic Interfacing

Implicit in memory-as-computer (or memory-as-storage) is also the assumption that everything *needs* to be stored, kept intact, safe and static for retrieval—and, furthermore, tends to treat all of the stored contents as equally valuable, equally deserving to be maintained. This leads to what Friedrich Nietzsche describes in “The Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life” as “historical fever” and “constipation.” He claims that the human preoccupation with the past—the drive to remember—has become “an ever increasing burden of the past, which pushes him down or bows him over. It makes his way difficult, like an invisible dark burden” (Nietzsche). Ultimately, Nietzsche argues that forgetting is necessary for happiness in life. However, with the seemingly infinite capacity of digital milieus to store, the toll of an infinite storehouse on a human’s finite capacities to remember and perceive not only lead to the constipation which Nietzsche describes, but also what David Shenk characterizes as “data smog,” which he claims “cultivate[s] stress, confusion, and even ignorance. Information overload threatens our ability to educate ourselves, and leaves us more vulnerable as consumers and less cohesive as a society” (Shenk, qtd Brooke 152). In other words, digital storage—while it may seem exciting in its infinite capacity—often works against its users, circulating misinformation and confirmation bias, prompting anxiety, and igniting conflict.

For example, the term “surfing” the internet (which, as Brooke suggests, most likely stems from “channel surfing” the television or radio), refers to internet users clicking

through multiple websites in rapid succession: briefly skimming the content of one, then clicking on another, which is usually prompted as an advertisement, promoted article, or sidebar. Each click feeds more information into the algorithm, shaping what will be promoted on the next page. It is a more or less mindless activity, one in which the user passively allows the interface of the internet to steer and control their next click, to direct them to the next site they visit. The tempting urge to flick through different sites quickly and shallowly has led to what is called “clickbait,” a headline or graphic that is often misleading and incomplete, but piques curiosity in the user enough to tempt them to visit the site. (This, also, is monetized: websites can sell more advertisements based on the amount of clicks/visitors they receive.)

However, in recent years, another term has surfaced that is not unrelated to surfing or clickbait: “doomscrolling.” This refers to the compulsion to expend large amounts of time and emotional energy continually consuming negative news online, despite the fact that its consumption is saddening, angering, depressing, or anxiety-inducing (OED). When bad news overwhelms our feeds (e.g. political scandal, racial injustice, social injustice, climate change, global pandemic, etc.), a typical trend is that people either avoid the subjects entirely, or obsessively seek every detail. Doomscrolling became particularly commonplace after the 2016 election, and escalated exponentially during the COVID-19 pandemic, when screen time also skyrocketed, and when terrifying and/or sad news was not necessarily in short supply. Doomscrolling has become a regular part of many peoples’ lives, in part because it is an easily ingrained habit, even addiction. In fact, doomscrolling is now a hot topic of discussion in mental health circles—discussions which usually advocate lessening (or eliminating) screen time; lessening interactions with the digital

archive. In fact, there are even digital tools which mediate our time spent in front of the screen: some platforms remind us to turn off our email and text notifications, while others limit the amount of time we are able to spend online, automatically shutting down once the allotted time has been reached. This stepping back from digital archives follows with what Brooke describes as “one solution to information overload is simply to take in less information,” which also, I would add, puts out less information into the archive as well.

What internet practices like surfing, following clickbait, and doomscrolling demonstrate is that the interface of the internet—the way in which memories are reintroduced to users, the ways in which users interact with, are changed by, and recirculate them—does not necessarily force, but encourages a passive relationship: one in which the user can very easily be guided to and through sites and platforms, taking in content often superficially and without much effort. As Brooke claims, “we also might consider what kind of memory practice lends itself to the impulsive reading that the Web seems to encourage” (Brooke 156). However, if we conceptualize memory not as the usual static repository, but as an active practice, we change this rather passive relationship into one that is complex and dynamic. That is, actively practicing memory in digital milieus first requires us to recognize that memory is dynamic. However, in recognizing this, we can then actively practice memory in a way that allows it to be a way to interface kairotically with the infinite, digital “data smog” in ways that actively create kairotic connections in order to circulate. In other words, rather than allowing memories to be remembered to us, rather than passively doomscrolling or succumbing to clickbait, allowing the interface of the internet to control its users—users can use memory as a way of interfacing with digital platforms in kairotic ways.

Interfacing, in a very broad sense, is the means by which we interact with something else. It is a between (inter) space—an ever-changing format by which we can make the other relatable to us. It is the platform through which we interpret, act through and with, meet, attempt to connect with some(thing/one) foreign to us—which is, by the way, everything—including, arguably, ourselves. As Eyman outlines, “Digital rhetoric in many ways erodes the distance between the rhetor and reader, producer and user...we can consider interface customization as mechanism for allowing the user to decide upon an ideal individual arrangement—as for instance, Photoshop’s floating tool palette allows the user to rearrange the elements of the interface upon the surface of the screen” (Eyman 69). However, the interface is never simply us or the other thing – it is always between. Kenneth Burke’s concept of ‘terministic screens,’ for example, is another way of articulating a way of interfacing. According to Burke, words are ‘terministic screens’ (interfaces) for how we perceive and interact with the world around us, and the experiences we have in the world also serve as a terministic screen/interface to how and what we write. As he claims, it is “a screen composed of terms through which humans perceive the world, and that direct attention away from some interpretations and toward others” (Burke 45). However, ‘interface,’ as a term, is usually only associated with the interactions we have with digital or technological programs, and isn’t usually extended to traditionally ‘analog’ ways of interaction. For example, Rebecca Tarsa (2015) claims that interfaces are “the visual and digital tools available to the writer (or reader) for interaction with a given site. Since most of us cannot reach right in and work with the computer languages in which the programs we use are written, we need interfaces to bridge the gap” (Tarsa 13). In the sense of the digital interface then, it is also a translator of sorts, constantly moving between user and

platform. Tarsa continues by utilizing Mark Pepper's discussion of "cool" to say that interface plays a very active role "in dictating what knowledge and conversations we do or don't see. With so much content out there, he says, something needs to act as a filter if we are to extract anything useful; the style of the interface, he says, acts as a powerful first-line tool in the competition for human attention" (Tarsa 13). On top of being a translator, then – the interface is also a form of gatekeeper: one which presents content in ways that encourage and tempt users to navigate the internet in particular ways.

However, we would be remiss to assume that interfaces and the practice of interfacing is limited to digital platforms: Long describes the classical memory palace (a precursor to memory-as-computer) as

...one of history's first interfaces. It was a medium, recognized as such, connecting the knower with the thing known (or, to put it in digital terms, connecting the user with some form of underlying program logic...the history of rhetoric's *ars memoria* can thus be read as a history of information visualization systems, from emotionally charged mental phantasms to mundane pictures in print to full-scale memory theaters—and, eventually, to file folders, icons, and network maps. Across their varied guises, the images of the *ars memoria* have acted as visual portals between information and the users seeking to integrate information into a new assemblage (Long 5).

What can be gleaned, then, by thinking of interfacing not as simply a digital (or analog) practice, is that memory as a way of interfacing is also not simply limited to the digital (or analog) sphere; it accentuates that memory is "an ecology of practice" (Brooke 28). Memory as interfacing is another way of thinking about memory as actively forging,

tracing, and erasing connections. As such, it overlaps once more with *kairos*: in thinking of memory as the practice of interfacing, it allows us to see patterns that arise and ebb through time and the use of the sites with which we interact. That is, rather than passively riding the wave of the next click (surfing) the web, actively reflecting upon and tracing the ways in which memories are remembered to us through digital platforms allows us to make connections (and, sometimes to forget others), and to see the ways in which kairotic intersections emerge and dissipate.

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