

ABSTRACT

MYSTORY FOR THE EPOCH OF ELECTRACY

By

Teresa Troutman

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The mystory is an experimental genre created by Gregory L. Ulmer at the University of Florida as a pedagogical tool and a self-reflective practice. The goal of writing a mystory is to create the mood in the mystoriographer that awakens the creative and inventive ways of thinking that differs from traditional hermeneutic methods of inquiry used in a Humanities education. After composing the mystory, which uses the tools of the World Wide Web to create a personal wide image, a mystoriographer becomes aware of the memes that have been part of the unconscious as he or she had been interpellated into their culture. Once aware of these memes, the mystoriographer can work to bring their Humanities education into the service of their community.

MYSTORY FOR THE EPOCH OF ELECTRACY

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PREFACE

Digital Rhetoric

The internet is changing the way we read, write and think and the old genres of print publishing are falling out of favor. Is there some way education can address the new formats available in electracy that were not possible in the literate environment? The majority of people no longer write in the form of five paragraph essays that stay central to a thesis statement, but we do use the World Wide Web to post, blog, tweet, YouTube and Podcast, moving beyond simple alpha-text processing. A new rhetoric incorporates a bricolage of text with images, audio clips, mash-ups, and video images.

Philosopher Ken Wilber has discussed holarchies, which are hierarchal in nature with each level made up of holons, i.e., atoms are holons which transcend their level to develop into molecules, molecules that are holons themselves but still include the holons of the previous level. Cells transcend and include molecules, organisms transcend but include cells. Likewise, orality contains holons of verbal stories while literacy transcends but includes the stories of orality. Now, with the invention of the Internet, electracy is transcending but including the elements of literacy. All have the holons of a language apparatus,

but the cohesive bricolage from one level to the next transforms reality into a more complex form than has been seen before.

A mystory is an experimental genre, created by Gregory L. Ulmer at the University of Florida. The mystory acts as a rhizome (as suggested by Deleuze and Guattari) or, in other words, as an intermediary for the two holonic forms, using both the traditional idea of text and the new media literacy skills of digital rhetoric. The mystory genre is a pedagogical tool that opens the world for the textual material a student creates instead of limiting it to a monologue between the professor and the student usually in the form of a grade on an argumentative essay. Creating a hypertexted site embedded with text, images, videos, mash-ups of appropriated material, all open to the world for readership and commentary, is one avenue to make the World Wide Web a tool for students in composition, rhetoric and all different genres of creative writing.

One goal of the following thesis and project is to create a mystory wide site that resurrects the author as auteur, through addressing the four quadrants of the popcycle described by Ulmer: family, discipline, pop culture, and school. It is because my discipline is in creative writing that the mystory can act, in part, as an electronic portfolio and digital archive for my fiction, non-fiction, poetry as well as my academic writing. Writing a mystory is a heuristical process, done through invention rather than a traditional hermeneutical process. Much of what is becoming electrated is found through invention rather than through interpretation.

Lisa Gye, a professor at Swinburne University of Technology and a mystoriographer, notes that knowledge can be approached through both interpretation and invention. Gye stated in a *FibreCulture Journal* webpage:

The process was an empowering one in that I was forced to rely on my own resources in the construction of the site. By choosing to not follow an established rhetoric, which was driven by the desire to experiment with the apparatus of electracy, I was able to write myself into the site on the basis of the decisions I made for what would and wouldn't be included and for the directions I allowed the research to take.

Roland Barthes wrote of the "Death of the Author" in 1970, in which the author was removed from any contextual analysis of his or her work. I argue that the mystery genre resurrects the author; his or her writing (or, as in my thesis project, my own writing) is re-contextualized in the mystery genre as the history and culture that surround the mystoriographer is written within the wide scope of the mystery site. Memetic theory also acts as a background to literary critical theory throughout my mystery site.

My research began with contextualizing the need for new genres that encourage the new ways of thinking when the previously fragmented world of print literacy undergoes a change in media that brings a global village together in ways only imagined by media studies critics such as Marshall McLuhan. A survey of the historical and anthropological changes wrought by changes in media and communication technologies ground the projections of an emerging, new epoch with the evolving and rapidly expanding embrace of the World Wide Web. New ways of communicating and networking between human minds change

civilization that require new ways of teaching with new genres to explore how to make the most out of what was previously available to a few select individuals or collection of individuals. A writer who wishes to publish a body of work no longer must battle the gatekeepers of the publishing industry to see their work reach a wide audience. A body of work is no longer severed from the author's meaning even as it can achieve new significance in meaningful appropriation and re-contextualization by other authors and remix artists.

My research also includes a look at the progression of media technologies and at the new door opening in this emerging epoch to expanding the role of what the humanities has to offer to the lives of students who are leaving niches of specialization and crossing the threshold to a multi-disciplinary world using a heuristic of invention rather than interpretation. A mystory genre, when used to its full potential, is more than just an exercise in inventive hypertexting, self-publishing and self-portraiture. It is a pathway to know oneself better in the world through the eye of critical theory and how that praxis can bring about positive change in the world.

Orality and Pre-Literacy

In the early 1980s, I first read about the idea that dolphin communication differed from human communication in that dolphins, because of their innate sonar imaging abilities, conceived of a world holistically and analogically with a language system constituted by 3-dimensional photo-like images that might not only be received sonographically, as is already well-documented, but also sent out

to be received by other sonar-capable animals in what Marc Davis calls “semasiographic writing” (44). Davis imagines that dolphins are able to speak to each other in a manner in which they send “virtual movies” to each other (46).

Pre-literate humans were capable of sending out image pictures in the form of art images, of animal forms sculpted in stone, of earth goddesses with big busts and wide hips and in graffiti-like petroglyphs of hunts with handprints stamped into the creosote-thickened walls of tribal domains. That dolphins have some form of oral apparatus has been shown in their ability to name themselves with a “signature whistle” that is a unique pattern of sound developed for each individual dolphin (Popper 4). Whether or not dolphins have any form culture based on semasiographic communication remains the basis for research and debate.

Humans cultures first learned language probably not unlike the way vervet monkeys learn to moderate distress calls based on whether the threat was from below (i.e., a tiger) or from above (i.e., an eagle). Giorgio Agamben, in his 2009 book *What Is An Apparatus*, believes that language, and with it, orality, is the very first apparatus, “one in which thousands and thousands of years ago a primate inadvertently allowed himself to be captured” (14). Jean Jacques Rousseau believed that language evolved from the “cries of nature” but others have hypothesized that human language is a species adaptation from grooming behavior (Dunbar). Whatever the origin, orality was the primary apparatus of early human tribes and pre-Platonic civilization.

The Egyptians from the time before Tutankhamen used hieroglyphics to tell stories in stone, but in the time of rulers such as Amon Ra earlier, many of the glyphs were not linear, but aesthetic, in arrangement. Leonard Shlain, in his book *The Alphabet and The Goddess*, remarked that a tall figure carved into stone necessarily had to be preceded by a smaller one, regardless of how the linear grammar of the story progressed. The phonetic alphabet the Egyptians did use was hieratic in nature and so was only used for and by the priests and took nearly a lifetime to learn to encode and decode.

In oral cultures, storytelling was and still is the primary way in which cultural information gets transmitted. Storytelling did not create pictures in stone, but in the mind's eye-view of the world with storytellers of different cultures and eras using chant, song, dance and visual props to help gather the tribe together physically, as well as emotionally. Ancient myths were passed along to venerate culture heroes or to position a religious ideal. Orality was a culture's apparatus, a scaffold on which hung every part of tribal life.

An Apparatus

An apparatus offers a support for a culture and is reinforced, in turn, as people change the way they think in order to support the culture. The idea of an apparatus was named by Michel Foucault in 1977, where he described an apparatus as

a thoroughly heterogenous set consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical,

moral, and philanthropic propositions—in short, the said as much as the unsaid... the apparatus itself is the network that can be established between these elements. (qtd. in Agamben 2)

An apparatus is built around a technology, and each shift in technology, from orality to literacy to electracy, has brought about a new epoch in the way a civilization operates. Orality supported an entirely different way of thinking and being than is done in civilizations built around print literacy. The longest surviving oral culture today is in the aborigines of Australia, and their apparatus is built around religious rites where spirits rule the world.

The move to a literate apparatus began with Plato, when he used the alphabet to write down his dialogues. Alphabet writing is “glottographic,” which Geoffrey Sampson offers as the counter to “semasiographic” writing in that glottographic writing, the images (letters) represents sounds, not images (50). Davis states that “glottographic writing can be understood as a sort of primitive tape recording system that selects certain salient features of speech in order to enable the reader to reproduce recorded speech” (43).

Marc Davis hypothesizes that semasiographic writing has been around since the 10,000 year history of glottographic writing systems, but it has been hidden from existence under the term “visual arts” (44). “Semasiographic language is the blending of a semi-pictographic form with concepts associated to that which the character or symbol depicts. Images such as the Maya Tzolkin or Kunab'ku and the Chinese *I Ching* are high-level examples of semasiographic language, as each

contains many layers of encoded information” (Jones 1). The apparatus of literacy is built on the glottographic writing that began with the Sumerians and, via the Phoenicians, was transmitted to the Greeks, where it then became institutionalized. The ability to write down laws created a *dispositif*, to use Foucault’s term, and a power relationship developed between the literate and illiterate people within the apparatus of their civilization.

Robert Ornstein stated in his 1997 book, *The Right Mind*, that:

[w]e are heirs to the Greek intellectual tradition, one of single file logic and rational analysis. And it is not only the formal arguments of Aristotle that have passed down, it is the *alphabet itself* that may play an unexpected role in our brain organization. (41)

In *Phaedrus*, Plato dictated Socrates’ thoughts onto the page and, after that, writing could no longer engender thinking in the same way because the reader could not respond to text with questions the way a listener could in an oral performance. If orality was the initial epoch of mankind, Gregory L. Ulmer describes a second epoch defined by the use and spread of alphabetic literacy. While language and symbols were the technologies of orality, alphabet and print incorporated those technologies into literacy (Ulmer *Noonstar*). The institution Plato created to support the apparatus of print literacy was the Academy, which grew to replace the institutions based on the myths and magic of the oral cultures.

Aristotle, Plato’s pupil, took up the ball of literacy and ran with it, imagining categories for things, separating the subject from the object of study and using his newly acquired literate practices to founded schools of philosophy and ontology.

Eric Havelock, in 1963, advanced the theory that writing invented the voice of the Cartesian theater in the mind, that “a habitus of reading to oneself caused the voice of thought to move from outside (spirit speaking through nature [in orality]) to inside (the ghost in me—psyche)” (qtd. in Ulmer, *Internet* 8). This new way of thinking caused a great divide and the beginning of a new epoch with the ability understanding abstract ideas (such as justice), since now things both seen and unseen could be defined. “Contradictions [of thought] had not been noticed in oral discourse, which lacked the abstract register and scannable memory equipment that allowed one area of experience or statement to be compared with another” (Ulmer, *Internet* 31).

Deleuze and Guattari stated in 1987:

[T]o write is perhaps to bring this assemblage of the unconscious to the light of day, to select the whispering voices, to gather the tribes and secret idioms from which I extract something I call my self... My direct discourse is still the free indirect discourse running through me, coming from other worlds and other planets” (qtd. in Ulmer, *Internet* 154).

A change in the way people communicated led to a different way of thinking about the world and a radically new way of thinking about the self.

Literacy and Hermeneutics

While linguists such as Noam Chomsky believe that language is wired into our brains through evolutionary processes, print literacy is a skill that must be learned. Not all people who could read were able to write, thus the definition of literacy depended on the state of the apparatus at a particular time in history. Those who

were literate had the power over those who could not, for example, the ability to read the Bible during twelfth and thirteenth century England helped convicts earn lighter sentences than if they could not (“Literacy”). Hermeneutics developed as a means of interpretation of a text, beginning with Plato who “feared and warned against the danger of texts being misunderstood in the absence of the author (the text as orphan without its father/author to protect it)” (Ulmer, *Internet* 42). In 1900, Wilhelm Dilthey stated that “the goal of hermeneutics was to understand the author better than he understood himself” (qtd. in Macey 111).

In the evolution of hermeneutics, divine texts were protected by the hermeneutic activities of the priests and rabbis, whom not only interpreted the words of the Bible for the illiterate masses but also could not trust a literate congregation to properly interpret the divine word of God for themselves, since words and passages could have multiple meanings. During much of the age of literacy, to be literate meant being able to read and write in Latin, all other languages were considered superfluous in the power relations. At the time of the Protestant Reformation in England in the sixteenth century, hermeneutics dominated religious practices of exegesis, until Friedrich Schleiermacher secularized hermeneutic study “to all human texts and modes of communication” (“Hermeneutics”).

The Enlightenment Period of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries further enlarged hermeneutic practice from solely religious practice. When it came to understanding the world, Immanuel Kant had the catch phrase for this period,

“*Sapere aude*, have the courage to use your *own* understanding” (Macey 111).

The introduction of the printing press in the fifteenth century allowed for mass editions of the Bible and other texts to be produced, 240 pages at a time, such that there was an exponential increase in material available for people who knew how to read them, and also for those who were learning to read and write in the institutions developing around the new print literacy.

By the end of the nineteenth century, the mechanized, electrical printing press was the primary technology of literacy throughout the world. Literacy for all human beings is an ideal born in the Enlightenment, with the goal of rational discernment as the path to truth. However, literacy cannot contain all aspects of the new apparatus structures that have emerged and are continuing to be formed out of the invention of the World Wide Web.

Electracy

Electracy marks the third epoch which began, according to Gregory L. Ulmer (who coined the portmanteau from electric, literacy, trace), and social practices are shifting away from church and school as the center of the world apparatus

through the presence of television, radio, videogames, and other purveyors of commercial popular culture, the electrate apparatus is emerging Apparatus theory indicates that identity experience (subject formation, individual behavior) is changing along with technological shifts. The reason it was possible to abandon so readily the patriarchal features of objective science was because the identity formation of the sovereign self-possessed individual was itself dissipating and being displaced by a new experience of subjectivation. (*Teletheory* 293, 288)

Ulmer quotes Walter Benjamin at the turn of the technology of writing under the electrate apparatus:

It is quite beyond doubt that the development of writing will not indefinitely be bound by the claims to power of a chaotic academic and commercial activity; rather, quantity is approaching the moment of a qualitative leap when writing, advancing ever more deeply into the graphic regions of its new eccentric figurativeness, will take sudden possession of an adequate factual content. In the picture writing, poets, who will now first and foremost experts in writing, will be able to participate only by mastering the fields by which it is being constructed. (“Grammatology” 158)

Tuman agrees with Ulmer and Benjamin when he states: “Narrative is the native form of oral culture, exposition is the native form of alphabetic literacy . . . and collage is the native form of electronics (163). Tuman, Ulmer and others have made the claim for teachers of composition:

to have a direct contribution to make the electronic problematic: to include along with exercises in narrative and exposition exercises in pattern . . . the active seeking for and construction of coherence, which is part of the alphabetic reading strategy, will be enlarged and extended in electronic composition, informed by a set of expectations and a body of poetics that are still in the formative, emerging stage” (Tuman 163).

The poetics of the literate apparatus are inadequate for the rapid expansion of practices that have been developed and are currently being developed on the World Wide Web. “Hypertext,” states George P. Landow in *Literacy Online*, “changes our basic experience of the texts we read, we can expect that it will also change our corollary assumptions about literary education, the curriculum, and the

canon that shapes it and is in turn shaped by it” (67). How does one change basic expectations about literary practice in the coming epoch of electracy?

Gregory Ulmer asks that it be done this way:

[in] contrast with the established convention of writing . . . The arts and letters community (artists, poets, and philosophers) have been inventing the institutional practices that accord with the technologies of the emergent apparatus . . . Electracy was emerging simultaneously in separate dimensions of society, although the artists themselves often understood what they were doing as being opposed to the culture and products of scientific and technological civilization . . . their many inventions opposed conceptual abstractions and sought direct access to a supposed immediate flow of experience. (*Internet* 38)

Ulmer understands that creativity is at the forefront of any exploration of the new apparatus:

From the beginning, electracy has been associated with creativity . . . The benefits to be gained for our society from a harmonious syncretism of literacy and electracy may be judged by analogy with the notion of left and right brain functions in individual humans. Literacy is the prosthesis of the left brain; electracy is the prosthesis of the right brain” (*Teletheory* 298).

Creativity has been poorly understood and undervalued during the epochs of orality and literacy. However, the need for a new paradigm for understanding the creative force of the mind and the value of creativity to the self and civilization cannot be understated in the changes that are occurring in the time of the global village.

Heuretics and Choragraphy

Heuretics departs from hermeneutics in that the reader is not interpreting the text but using it as a path for inventing something new. A hermeneutic reading of the Bible could give one a sermon; a heuretic reading will give another “Ben Hur.” The introduction of hypermediated text, image and sound through the World Wide Web is described as a “Copernican Revolution” and, as such, invention is not doing what has been done, but creating “under a common sight” which Ulmer, quoting Roland Barthes, believes is “the structural man [who is] defined not by his ideas or languages but by his imagination” (Ulmer, *Heuretics* 4).

“The computer is responsible for the most recent ‘frontier of knowledge’ then, bringing into existence a virtual if not a literal new world. Choragraphy, as a heuretic approach to inventing a method useful for this ‘world,’ takes into account the present state of imagination and curiosity” (*Heuretics* 27). Choragraphy is a neologism created by Ulmer out of Plato’s word for “sacred place” associated with invention and, as such, choragraphy is the method for hyperrhetoric, a place “between” two worlds (40). To work in heuretics is to work through choragraphy to “eureka!” which is “curiosity rewarded” (25). *Chora* and *topos* were once used interchangeably, but *topos*, in opposition to *chora* is “the dark region of non-being . . . an individual region where images cannot be reflected, a place suited for hiding . . . [However,] a *chora*,” Annie F. Ashbaugh stated (qtd. in Ulmer),

“reflects itself in a bright space, [it] reflects many images, a place suited for showing” (*Heuretics* 70).

Sarah Arroyo, in her essay “The Medium is the Medium: Heuretic Writing with Digital Movies” states that:

the logic of heuristics emerges through writing when writers *construct patterns* from disassociated parts. These patterns are not known in advance and emerge *through the act of writing* itself . . . Both the conceptual age and the convergence culture require heuretic thinking and writing, and both place tremendous value on inventing new ideas by reassembling the old in different ways. (246-247)

Heuretic thinking requires a shift from left-brain competencies to right-brain coordination with increased activity in the mediating *corpus collosum* between the two hemispheres. When the shift from left-brain dominated hermeneutic analysis incorporates the right-brain’s competencies in holistic, non-linear thought, a writer/creator experiences a suspension of time and a feeling of engagement, an experience described by Mihalyi Csíkszentmihályi as the state of “flow” (*Flow* xi).

The perceptual/conceptual shift would support Platonic thought of the transitional choral space as a place between the unreachable Ideal and the Real, with the inventor mediating between the two spheres. Ulmer, in his book *Heuretics*, gives the example by way of analogy of how Stanislavski’s Method acting school relies on choragraphy to bridge who the actor is to who the actor “wants to be,” describing an underlying Lacanian lack of being that can only be fulfilled by what is outside, on the stage, which is a “project doomed to failure”

but can be reconciled through merging the actor's personality with the translation of the play (116).

As George P. Landow states in *Literacy Online*:

One can conclude that if hypertext presents us with new and unique powers (as it promises), it will offer many other surprises, not all of them pleasant, to be sure. But we can never fully anticipate them. The only way to learn about the effect of hypertext and hypermedia on education and the rest of our culture is by trying it. (110)

Ulmer states that “invention is not the whole of thought and reason, but it is that dimension that has been most neglected in an education conducted by the book (*Teletheory* 168). To rise above the book, new genres have been created, from blogs, vlogs, YouTube videos, online fanzines and character-limited text messaging (a.k.a. “tweets”), but there are few that have been taken up in the university as pedagogical practice and praxis. The mystory genre is one exception that has been developed for learning about the world and oneself that stretches beyond the limits of book literacy.

Mystory

“The ‘self’,” stated Ulmer in *Literacy Online*, “was a Socratic discovery or, perhaps we should say, an invention of the Socratic vocabulary . . . Later, it was textualized by Plato” (“Grammatology” 146). Ulmer further stated:

Theory as mystory is written with the apostrophe of self-address inherited from the essay tradition. A mystorical essay is not scholarship, not the communication of a prior sense, but the discovery of a direction by means of writing. It includes an assertion of comprehension that has more in common with the manifesto than with the essay. (*Teletheory* 113)

From this perspective, a mystory sounds much like a journal, of sorts. Journals can contain images, both drawn and photographed, as well as chronological text. Journals, diaries and epistolary works depend on time and place. Good examples of journals that break away from the traditionally lined-paper or little, gold-locked diaries of childhood are the creative, guided journal *Play!Book* by Susan A.R. Kennedy or the autobiographical/creative writing guide, *What It Is* by Lynda M. Barry.

Mystoriography, in contrast to handwritten journals and evolving further with the Internet's ability to transcend time and place on paper, appears more like an auto-documentary. Ulmer states:

Mystory shares with the autoportrait an interest in a certain break with linearity and the completeness of continuity . . . the autoportrait tends not to be composed as a continuous narrative . . . [but] to a principle of assemblage or bricolage . . . The juxtaposition of autobiographical and theoretical discourses in mystory, that is, in the context of heuristics rather than hermeneutics, didactics rather than reference, recognizes that the subject of knowing is constructed through a process of interpellation. (*Teletheory* 167-168)

The process of interpellation is gained by addressing the four quadrants of what Ulmer calls the popcycle; the popcycle itself comprised of "an ensemble of discourses" which include these apparatus: Career (Discipline), Family (Personal), Entertainment (Pop Culture, and Community, including History and School) (Ulmer, *Internet* 24). Interpellation is how the self is constructed as he or she interacts as a subject in a society.

The goal of writing mystery is to gain a wide scope, “actually, a set of four or five images supplemented by perhaps as many as 100 variations . . . that guide one’s intuitions in every aspect of life across the popcycle” (Ulmer, *Internet* 299). Ulmer states, “The mystery . . . [begins] with the mapping of the popcycle, locating a repeating pattern across the discourses, and isolating the signifiers found in this pattern. The emblem then is composed by means of these signifiers, in order to discover the metaphysics and morality they evoke” (*Internet* 250). The shift is from glottographic writing to the more holistic semasiographic writing, with the mystoriographer conglomerating hypertexted materials together within a meaningful framework.

Mystery is an experimental genre and a pedagogical tool, not only for students to find their choral space, but also for instructors to open a digital rhetoric that gives them practice in the hypermedia arts that are native to an electrate environment. Text is not ignored but neither is it privileged as images, video and sound are appropriated or created online and incorporated into the bricolage of the autoportrait. To borrow a neologism from Jeff Rice, a professor at Wayne State University, writing mystery is “cyborgography,” where students find that “the usage of technology for communicative purposes cannot be separate from personal expression” (Rice 71). In a sense, this reflects Marshall McLuhan’s projections that all technological media are “the extensions of man” (McLuhan).

Derrick de Kerckhove states:

[T]he electronic extensions of the human body allow rapid crossover back and forth between hardware and software, between thought, flesh, electricity and the outside environment. With the interactive arts, we are beginning to graduate from a passive, one-way relationship to our screens to an interactive one. (31)

My unique mystery will contribute to the conversation about how a humanities education can contribute to a world that is, more and more, coming to be known as nations of online communities and will act as a relay to a new heuristic pedagogy and a method for imagining new ways for my own individual and collective civic engagement.

Walter Ong stated: “Without writing, the literate mind would not and could not think as it does, not only when engaged in writing but normally even when it is composing its thoughts in oral form. More than any other single invention, writing has transformed consciousness” (78). Humanities writing classes are required as part of the general education curriculum for most, if not all, accredited universities for all majors. Students come to know themselves through the patterns of what has been written before them as they themselves write their responses, as Jay David Bolter noted:

Writing reveals the writer to himself or herself but, as in quantum mechanics, the process of revealing affects what is revealed. Writing presents a person on the page and tells the writer he or she is that person . . . those who do not write deprive themselves of this experience of symbolic self-expression. A culture that does not write deprives itself of this mechanism of collective reflection. Writing is a way of knowing your own mind, as you see the manifestations of

your mind externalized on the page (or screen). But the mind you come to know is your writing mind. (213)

I have found little disagreement about the importance of writing as a foundation for academic excellence. However, the quality and type of writing that brings about “manifestations of [the] mind” that are expansive or encourage risk-taking have been shut down by indoctrination to a humanities curriculum that urges a literate protocol which may no longer entirely serve the institution or the students in the age of electracy (213).

Lisa Gye remarked in her essay about writing mystery about the stark contrast of the current state of writing pedagogy in the humanities classroom:

It could be argued that the academic essay, as it has come to be institutionalized within the humanities, is a writing that demonstrates all the virtues of mainstream literacy - unity, coherence, perspicuity, closure and correctness. However, what students learn from the process of writing essays which, rhetorically, have been stripped of the art of invention, is to close discourse down, to let the conclusion dictate their thinking and to necessarily censor whatever imagined possibilities seem irrelevant or inappropriate.

The heuritic process does not need to replace the hermeneutic tradition, but can act as a complement that engages writers to explore through generative work rather than relativistic, explicative arguments. Jay David Bolter states:

Electronic technology presents a different self. An electronic text can change each time it is read. The persona of the text is neither stable nor unified; or rather, it projects unity through movement, a unity that reveals itself in the kinds of changes that the text is willing to make in the reader's hands. Authors who return to their own electronic texts find a sliding scale against which to measure their changing self. And still the

author may not find himself or herself in any of the range of textual possibilities. (213-214)

Bolter goes on to quote Harvey Wheeler in saying:

The computer, when it is used as a processor or an outliner or an organizer, becomes an extension of our memory in a more organic sense than this is usually taken to mean . . . That is, the computer feels to us as if it is an auxiliary hemisphere of our own minds. (217)

If developing the human mind beyond the capacity of the evolutionary, physiological apparatus that currently contains it is the goal of a humanities education, then to work beyond the apparatus of the last epoch of literacy is a lofty task set before any educator or student coming into the age of electracy.

To construct my mystory project wide site, I used Google Sites' web pages as a home for interwoven, hypertexted exercises as described in Gregory L. Ulmer's text *Internet Invention*, with a portfolio of my own narrative work embedded throughout, work that falls under the popcycle quadrant of *Discipline*, as my undergraduate degree and post-graduate work is in creative writing. The other three quadrants, *Family*, *School* and *Pop Culture* acted as a form of a quodlibet, which is defined as an extended argument, a mash-up, a humorous musical folly, or simply as "whatever" ("Quodlibet"). As a work in experimental media, I have meaningfully appropriate images, video and text and explored Ulmerian concepts of puncepts and endocepts, as well as exploring critical theorist Roland Barthes' third meanings using my own images, text and videos. From random associations, certain themes emerged and I explored those themes in detail. My

fundamental methodology was heuristical rather than the hermeneutical approach of traditional literate (textual) projects.

As I can update the mystory at any point of the process, I continue to treat the project as an evolving portfolio, taking control of both the creative and editorial functions of online publishing as the avenues for print publishing through traditional media in literacy have been evaporating. Conversely, opportunities for publishing in an electrated environment are expanding. The biggest obstacle for self-publishing online are related to the ideas of memetic theory, in which literacy is cultural meme that, through tradition, tends to value only those works published on paper and distributed for profit. Google Sites allows for reader commentary on each page, making the mystory an interactive portfolio especially when the mystory connects to the Google search engine. Unlike traditional thesis projects, my mystory wide site uses my interdisciplinary skills to act and react to public participation in, what media theorist Henry Jenkins calls, an “affinity space;” an affinity space which “has a goal of sharing knowledge or participating in a specific area, but informal learning is another outcome” (320).

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Exordium 1

“Find that secret point at which the aphorism of thought intersects with the anecdote of life” (Ulmer, *Teletheory* 289).

“The way we experience the world is not the ‘way it really is’ but the way it has proved useful to natural selection for us to perceive it” (Blackmore, *Meme* 112).

“You are the target. All kinds of memes lurk out there waiting for the right moment to enter your brain. There are stereotypical memes of ignorance that cause you to develop a hard shell through which you will only see and perceive a small portion of the world. And the part you'll miss is the more exciting. The best protection from the ignorance memes is the curiosity and proactive attitude vaccinations. “ (Bogomolny)

Who am I?

I first read about memes and memetic theory about two years prior to hearing about the mystery genre, the conventions of the genre set down by Gregory L. Ulmer at the University of Florida. Throughout my undergraduate education, I had been interested in answering the questions as to why I was interested in the things I am interested in and why I believe the things I believe and, as is typical, knowing who I am, where did I come from and what was my fate. I was even fond, for a while, of wearing a T-shirt that added to the great questions of life: and where are the cookies?

Cookies aside, what I concluded, after reading many texts and many books from the great canon of Literature, was that I could no longer accept many of the great answers that were given to me by my family, religion, nor my society's culture nor even by many of the great philosophers and literary critics. Not that their insight wasn't helpful in many ways, but in my final approach to facing this thesis I have found that a blend of new emergent theories and practices, along with the development of the World Wide Web, is changing the way we, as human beings, think as social creatures comes from an long, evolutionary background of change and adaptation. The newest adaptation we have encountered is having access to a global memory back known as the World Wide Web.

Memetic theory was born about 30 years ago when evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins proposed the theory that all evolutionary processes come about not by the design of a "blind watchmaker" but through the machinations of "selfish replicators" (Dawkins, *Blind* 1-3). There were two replicators, Dawkins proposed, at work; one is our DNA, whose whole reason for existence is to create copies of its self and all of the diversity of the biological world are merely phenotypes of changes and adaptations that have occurred in response to mutations and natural selection. The "selfish gene theory" is widely accepted as scientific doctrine albeit with a number of skeptics and controversy ("Selfish Gene").

Dawkins' second replicator theory, which is called memetics or "selfish meme theory" is even more controversial although many anthropologists, social

constructivists and cognitive neuroscientists have been able to use the idea of replicating memes as the method of cultural evolution as a metaphor or a template of how people replicate ideas and pass them on as thoughts and cultural artifacts not unlike DNA replication and phenotype changes observed in biology.

Karen Blackmore writes and lectures on memetic theory and studies consciousness in human beings. She believes that all of our thoughts and ideas are merely conglomerations of memes and memeplexes (large adherences of belief sets that tend to replicate together, like religious doctrines, sports team fandoms, literary theories, et al.) and the singular voice of our daimon that guides us as the “I” inside is nothing more or less than the voice of the collected memes of an individual who has experienced and interacted with culture. “The self is a vast memeplex,” Blackmore states, “perhaps the most insidious memeplex of all” (*Meme* 219). Both she and philosopher Daniel C. Dennett have stated that the whole of self-consciousness that we perceive as the Cartesian Theatre of the mind are imitations built upon other imitations and that the free will and autonomy of the self is merely a misperception of iterations within our memes.

Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi and Harold Bloom have also written extensively on memetic theory and follow Richard Dawkins’ explanation of meme replicators, but unlike Blackmore and Dennett, they have stated that simply being aware of the memes that speak our existence into a “society of mind” (after Marvin Minsky) allows us to control our destiny, by reflecting on what who we are as a collection of these memetic algorithms and purposefully selecting out

those memes that guide us in a direction we want to go by examining those memes that have brought us to where we are (Bloom 20).

Where am I?

When Jean Rath moved from England to New Zealand to teach Humanities and Education at the University of Canterbury, she experienced a culture shock that the travel books had mentioned, but hadn't prepared her for, the direct experience of being a *Pom* among the *Maori*. She decided to keep a reflective journal, but rather than just record the day-to-day challenges of the environment, she worked through her thought processes by creating a mystory backgrounded by those travel journals. Rath wrote:

Mystory is a way to supplement the well-documented advantages of keeping a reflective journal in order to gain insight and balance with regard to multiple roles . . . the mystorical approach to reflective practice (coupled with a layered text representation) draws attention to complex identities in ways that force the read (and writer) to reject simple stories of the self. (150)

Reflective writing practice within different disciplines is nothing new.

Nursing students are required to keep a journal of their learning experiences and feelings about the profession they are about to enter. Yet, for the Humanities student, his or her future professional work isn't as pre-determined as those in the medical or teaching professions. It is true that many Humanities students may go on to teach, but teaching is just one of possible endpoints of someone studying in the Arts and Letters.

A Humanities mystoriographer, if following the genre conventions set forth by Gregory L. Ulmer, uses the mystory to find connections in their life through finding correlations in juxtaposed material culled from their lives and from the World Wide Web. “Apparatus theory indicates that identity experience . . . is changing along with technological and institution shifts . . . mystory prompts authors to locate the terms of their internalized culture, to trace how they have been hailed into Family, Community history, and [Entertainment and Discipline discourse]” (*Teletheory* 288-89). Ulmer believes that interpellation (as discussed by Althusser) can be decontextualized and mapped, as he discusses from his own mystory experiment:

[H]ow I came to have a patriarchal voice, how my body became White, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant, Bourgeois, Masculine, Heterosexual, to discover the localized embodiments by which I played the ventriloquist’s dummy through my superego . . . The point was not to legitimize the status quo or reconcile with hegemony as destiny. (*Teletheory* 289)

This is exactly the point which memeticists such as Richard Dawkins, Susan Blackmore, Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi, Daniel C. Dennett et al. speak of when they discuss the idea of *eumemics*, (a coinage from the Greek words ‘good’ and ‘imitation’) that we can become conscious of the voices of our memes and work to consciously guide our destiny.

Ulmer, in addressing the four discourses of the popcycle with images and stories, instructs mystoriographers to construct a “widesite” that looks like “a self-portrait, whose likeness is finally determined by recognition (you step back from

it and say: *that's me*)” (*Internet* 123). Ulmer further asks, “What if people become aware of and learned how to tap into the wide image as a resource in their career work?” (18). This is the point of using the mystory genre as a method for reflective practice.

In *Internet Invention*, Ulmer suggests finding an image from earlier in the mystoriographer’s life or recalling a first memory as a place to start the reflective practice. The example he gives is of Albert Einstein and the iconic image of the pocket compass. “Einstein experienced what he called ‘a wonder’ when his father showed him a simple magnetic pocket compass” (19). Quoting Einstein, Ulmer further recounted, “Young as I was, the remembrance of this of this occurrence never left me. (19). The mystory genre requires the mystoriographer to look back into memory and find those images and moments similar to Einstein’s compass, to set up “a website documenting an important discovery, or a founding invention, in your career domain . . . the goal is invention, the stage gathering the materials with which to work . . . this site of documentation, a curated display of details related to a discovery (21). The juxtapositioning of these displays can lead to new interpellations and meanings that were known only in the mystoriographer’s unconscious mind.

“The mystory is designed to reveal/compose a “model” of our wide image at the beginning of our career education rather than waiting for it to emerge at the

end of our careers as the style running through our accomplishments” (27).

Ulmer continues:

The story of [Einstein’s] compass becomes a parable for our own search, in the we must find the equivalent of the compass—the scene that we recognize as having this guiding role in our orientation to the world and to life. No matter what object or “prop” might embody our themata, it will serve as our compass. The further value of the compass as parable is that it answers at once the question of “determinism”: it is true that the needle always points north, but once one has this orientation, one may go in any direction. (*Internet 27*)

In “I Untied the Camera of Taste (Who Am I?) The Riddle of Chool,” Ulmer further stated that the personal histories of creative people have revealed a “kernel image or scene” and that invented themselves into society and that mystery is about reconstructing a path to understand what that kernel image is to work in the

Humanities:

The part of this process for which Arts and Letters have some responsibility has to do with filling out the two sides of the metaphor: not only Einstein’s theory of relativity but also the compass his father gave to him as a child; not only Virginia Woolf’s experimental novels but also her memory of St. Ives . . . not only Tesla’s alternating current but the fire hose from a childhood event. (579)

Mystery begins with that autobiographical element which continues to resonate through the images, audio and texts that a mystoriographer uses in his or her diegesis.

Ulmer used a mystery questionnaire for tourists to create an electronic monument display in Florida, creating a personal Mount Rushmore from a computer memory of faces, randomly displaying the faces selected from the

databanks of the questionnaire. “A mystory condenses/displaces into one account information from the four core discourses used by Americans: family anecdotes, school history textbooks, popular media, and disciplinary expertise” (Ulmer, *Electronic* 21-22).

Barry Mauer in *New Media, New Methods* called his version of mystoriography “clipography . . . which allows the writer to make a “self-portrait” out of the materials of entertainment and the discipline, showing the writer her points of identification. These elements are what Ulmer calls the writer’s ‘premises’ . . .” (Rice 244). These premises, in logic, can be implicit assumptions or, in other words, memes. Bauer quotes Ulmer in which these premises “that we reason with, and through our premises and that only by making them explicit, by putting our premises into the writing apparatus and thus external to our minds can we see how they function” (244). Ulmer states that “an individual subject is not autonomous and self-identical, but is dependent upon an effect of language into which he or she has entered” (246).

Where am I Going?

“*Hanblecheyapi*,” Ulmer states, is the Native American word for a vision quest, or “crying for a vision” (*Internet* 201). This is the function of the mystory in its reflective/reflexive operation, “to produce new subjectivities, or ways of knowing about oneself and the world (Gye 2). *Hanblecheyapi* is the discursive practice of Heidegger’s *Stimmung*, getting a sense, mood or attunement to the world not as it is but as it feels it is. The mystoriographer attempts to cross the

first threshold in the hero's journey, as mythologist Joseph Campbell has described it. Mystory is "to locate one's own default or cultural state of mind" or, as Ulmer states in *Internet Invention*, "to form a [hybrid voice], that belongs . . . to the internet (to electracy)" (205).

"The disciplinary work of doing physics, making art, or any other career activity, is experienced within a specific emotional atmosphere or mood of an aesthetic nature. . . [in] the space of the "personal sacred" (Ulmer, *Electronic* 580). Ulmer also adds that with the new tools available in the epoch of electracy, education, entertainment, family history and community are no longer rigid categories fighting for privilege over one another, that privilege is renegotiated as much as mystoriographers invent themselves differently as than they would have with the tools of literacy:

Electracy as prosthesis allows me to put what is in my body outside into an artificial memory that supports feelings and moods beyond anything of which I am organically capable (just as literacy supports analytical reasoning beyond anything of which I am capable in my organic mind). (*I Untied* 589)

Lisa Gye, a mystoriographer, found that the "crossing of discourses" through hypertexting websites "were designed to simulate the experience of invention (Gye 1). In this case, it is making the mystoriographer aware of how he or she has invented him or herself and it is this cry for a vision that one asks how to know oneself and remake oneself better in the epoch of electracy. Jean Rath found her *Lonely Planet* travel guides helped her to make sense of her new "migrant self" in the context of her mystory:

The author's task is to build a structure of possibilities rather than a single argument. It attempts to push against conventional knowledge hierarchies by placing together strands of personal narrative, scholarly discourse and popular culture . . . the writer is left inside the writing not as a psychological subject but as the agent of the action; memories are recalled not to recover the past but rather to use them as, [quoting Ulmer], 'tools for opening the present.' (150)

Jukka Ylitalo, in her essay "From Media Literacy to Multimedia Essay- Preliminary Case Study on Ulmer's Mystory genre," agreed with Rath by stating:

I believe that in all creative processes there should be some ways to facilitate or support that very intimate process of self-discovery, which makes the whole business of art and new media education so very challenging. Personal discourse, diary, autobiography is one of the most basic ways to support this process of self-discovery. (2)

Ylitalo has also noted the difficulty in using mystory as a scholarly writing vehicle in her statement, "Scholarly style has embedded assumptions that the personal should be repressed" (2). It is in the mystory that scholarly writing can break the meme of repressed subjectivity to discover through multimedia invention who we are, where we are and where we, as generations living past the age of the Enlightenment, may be going.

My goal in this thesis is to act as a guide for the literate reader into the new epoch of electracy in which an entirely new social apparatus is operating and interpellating citizens into society. This transition requires new ways of thinking, both creatively and heuristically, and the experimental genre of the mystory is an introduction to some of these new or repressed ways of seeing. Mystoriography demonstrates a movement away from literate thinking to more to making

associations that have become more accessible through the use of the Internet and the World Wide Web. In electracy, we have become aware of the memes that have been accepted as given in the ideologies we have been born into and are not necessarily the way the world is or the way we must live in it.

In Chapter 2, I will discuss how the literate pedagogy of hermeneutic interpretation of texts, while still having a function, must be expanded to take into account the way the electracy is transforming the society. Teaching the mystery genre brings students closer to the ways of thinking that will be necessary to thrive as society moves past literate practices and allows student work not only to be archived but to be available to a larger audience on the World Wide Web; a practice once privileged to only a few student journalists is now available to all students. Students become active and engaged in working through their own discourses with society (the popcycle) and the arts and humanities become a process for enlightenment rather than an educational commodity on a transcript.

In Chapter 3, I discuss how the mystery, as a self-reflective work with autobiographical elements brings the “death of the author” back from the afterlife and challenges the idea that the text is dispossessed from the hand of its creator (Barthes 4). While books and other texts were once thought of as a commodity and conforming a reading to author intent was an act of authoritarian tyranny, in the world of the World Wide Web, authors are more accessible than ever before. In a mystery that incorporates an authors creative work as well as personal

discourses through the popcycle, the hand of the author is a visible spectre and not to be so easily dismissed or discounted in the age of electracy.

Chapter 4 continues with the ideas of how the memes have changed between the literate epoch and the electracy. The new audiences in the mediaspace created with the World Wide Web are not the passive consumers they were even less than 10 years ago. Mystoriographers are professional-amateurs who no longer have to wait for permission to be published. Readers of a mystery can participate with writers by leaving commentary on a mystery website or by creating a mystery space of their own. Convergent culture, I will argue, is primed to co-create in electracy space where audience and media provider were once separated only by the limits of the literate apparatus.

Chapter 5 reiterates that the mystery is a quodlibet for self-reflection and interpellation into society. Finding the common themes and punctum stings, the mystoriographer takes the information to act as a guide to find a way to become better involved in his or her community. While musicians playfully remix music for a new affective work, the mystoriographer remixes text, images, sound and video to activate new and meaningful intuitions that may have been waiting to be invented within the unconscious and brings them to light. There are different avenues to become a participant in electracy culture and my own mystery, I will demonstrate, becomes my compass metaphor for me to become an active participant in some form of public policy making and community involvement.

I finish each chapter with a description of my process in creating a mystory and the ways I agree or disagree with the mystory genre creator, Gregory L. Ulmer based upon the exercises I found described in his texts.

MyStory Mystory I

I began my mystory at a point in my life where I am changing careers and am looking for a new direction; I am looking for a path for re-invention of my self. I began my mystory project with my earliest memories, searching for the punctum in photographs taken around my earliest memories of the *Worlds Fair* of 1964. I also began to construct my own personal *4 Faces of Rushmore*. I included photos of me working my favorite job at *Marineland* and a video of its ruins when the park closed in 1987 that left a punctum sting when I viewed it. I discovered the image on the cover of the *New Yorker* magazine published on my birth date was a familiar, threshold scene that I could use to tie many facets of my life together under the puncept of *Training*.

CHAPTER 2

AN ELECTRATE PEDAGOGY

Exordium 2

“I became convinced that the argumentative, hermeneutic essay of clear and distinct prose inherited from Montaigne to Bacon was . . . historically important but epistemologically superannuated. . . Students read on of “my” speeches on social sculpture and learned “my” motto: *every person is an artist.*” (Ulmer, *Teletheory* 285)

“The internet as a medium of learning puts us in a new relation to writing. First and foremost is the fact that someone besides the teacher may read what students write.” (Ulmer, *Invention* 1)

“Realizing that learning is much closer to invention than to verification, I invented the mystory primarily as pedagogy.” (Ulmer, *Heuretics* xii)

“To create a new university is to take a new look at the universe. . . The way we look at the universe defines ourselves.” (Leonard 119)

“The first communication of an electrated person is reflexive, self-directed.” (Ulmer, *Internet* 5)

“The traditional humanistic plot of educational experience is figured, then, as a painful journey of ‘the conscious subject as it strives—without distinctly knowing what it is that it wants until it achieves it—to win its way back to a higher mode of the original unity with itself from which, by its primal act of consciousness, it has inescapably divided itself off.’” (Ulmer, *Internet* 75)

“I have tried for many years to convert people to a new paradigm, not just to the idea of hypertext, but to the idea of a new literature . . . it has taken me thirty years to see how difficult it is for many people even to imagine an idea of this size, let alone accept it.” (Tuman 43)

“As humanists, we feel that we are on to something important when we discover the uses of art: a spur to evolution and learning, being prepared for the unexpected . . . Marvelous as it is to discover all these purposes to play, there is something a bit disturbing about the whole procedure . . . Play, or art, or universities for that matter are “worth it” if they have a ‘purpose.’ In contemporary culture, we are concerned that everything we do be useful for something. We are a utilitarian people, and the concept of free activity that exists for the joy of doing it is not as appealing to us as something that has ulterior education or commercial value.” (Nachmanovitch 18).

“Or are the poets parasites working on the community still?” (10).

The Playing Field

When it comes to traditional, literate education, the cultural artifacts from the Reformation through to the Post-Industrial world can be seen lurking behind most every classroom door. Memes are traditions, both good and bad, that have been perpetuated through our educational culture from generation to generation, including going to an institution/building to get learning, teacher-led instruction, phonics, uniforms, grades, credits, transcripts, assessments, detention and so on. Memes, I have always thought, are those hoops one has to jump through to get the currency of diploma or degree from an institution. Kirsten Olsen, in her book *Wounded by School*, names many of the memes that keep students from finding learning an enjoyable, lifelong activity, most of which are based in literate practices addressed at educating the many at the expense of all of our students’ creative souls. The old meme of a classroom “where the role of the student is defined as sitting passively receiving information and answering when called on” is the least cognitively demanding work (Olsen 61). Olsen rightly quotes Vincent

Hawkins, the Director of Curriculum, Learning and Assessment in Springfield, Vermont when he states:

Right before our eyes, all that the education sector has controlled, manipulated, validated, embellished, fictionalized, and ranked within an aura of tradition and ritual may be accessed by point-and-click. We need to stop chasing exponentially expanding content. Inquiry, problem recognition and solution, creativity, knowing one's strengths and weaknesses, communication, and relationships are what students must be prepared for." (60)

The problem, Olson adds, is that educators "and students have trouble determining what higher-level content is and how to design and access it. We are deeply imprinted with the norms of teaching and learning by our own schooling, so that it becomes, in the classroom invisible and normative to us. For many, low-level cognitive work is what real school is" (61). Old patterns of school learning were based on a system where information was scarce and difficult to come by. Textbooks were a limited resource and libraries, as opposed to today's standards of Internet access to information, were precious resources to which many students had limited access.

So, what is mystery to the learning environment? Teaching with technology has to mean more than improving keyboarding skills and how to use popular software packages. It is also more than learning to access Wikipedia and how to judge the veracity of the information students access in doing research on the World Wide Web. Only recently have educators begun to form a rhetoric for all of the structure that has come from being a connected global village, a rhetoric

that moves beyond the structures of print literacy to the epoch of remixing, mash-up, meaningful appropriation and repurposing of information.

In the emerging epoch of electracy, students and educators are finding themselves caught in battles over public domain, copyright, licensing and plagiarism issues that were sticky issues even before copy-and-paste technology was as easily accessible as it is today. A pervasive educational meme is “the deep belief among teachers and parents that to truly learn something, it is critical to do it on your own without any reliance on outside resources,” even as a study at the University of California at Berkeley found that Asian-American students found greater academic success by working collaboratively (Collins 45). James Paul Gee founded several learning principles for using technology in the classroom that herald a change in the way students approach content learning that is less individualistic and more pluralistic. Although he was primarily focused on video games, Gee’s principles are cohesive to the approaches Ulmer sees coming to education in the electracy classroom:

The Distributed Principle; meaning/knowledge is distributed across the learner, object, tools, symbols, technologies and the environment.

The Dispersed Principle; meaning/knowledge is dispersed in the sense that the learner shares it with others outside the domain/game, some of whom the learner may rarely or never see face to face.

Affinity Group Principle; learners constitute an “affinity group,” that is, a group that is bonded primarily through shared endeavors, goals, and practices and not shared race, gender, nation, ethnicity, or culture.

Insider Principle; the learner is an “insider,” “teacher,” and “producer” (not just a “consumer”) able to customize the learning experience and domain/game from the beginning and throughout the experience. (212)

Gregory Ulmer, in *Internet Invention*, described several hypotheses that motivated him to develop the mystory genre for pedagogical use. First, that disciplines organize around problems to solve them with a collective intelligence and that the spectacle of culture was a problem of society that English department’s job “is to develop rhetorical and composition practices for citizens to move from consumers to producers,” primarily through the discourse of images now available on the World Wide Web (6). Secondly, that hyperlinked media is associated with “associative ‘lateral’ reasoning described in studies of creative thinking, and the ‘dreamwork’ of entertainment narratives . . . that a wired community may be fundamentally ‘creativogenic’ . . .” and, more importantly, that creative thinking (and, I would add, creative writing) is negentropic (6). Finally, that students needed a workshop to discover their guiding images in a composition study that was inventive rather than interpretative, guiding images that Ulmer believes “are the founding pattern of their signature style of learning and making anything” (6).

Through working on the discourses of the popcycle, Ulmer believes that students are helping to invent electracy out of literacy, “to invent the future of writing” by writing in experimental ways not only with text but with images, sound and video (6). Ulmer states that the opening of the mystory genre will act

to “[unfold] a narrative, with a basic narrative adventure structure (the myth of the hero)” (7). The invention of the self, Ulmer states, quoting Eric Havelock from the *Preface to Plato*, is a “byproduct of the experience of interacting with page Most students who make a mystery experience some degree of illumination The pleasure involved in making a self-portrait is as old as the Humanities itself: the unexamined life is not worth living.” (8).

“To approach knowledge from the side of not knowing what it is, from the side of the one who is learning not from that of the one who already knows, is to do mystery” (*Teletheory*, 131). Brenda Ueland uses this same “logic of invention” (to quote Ulmer) when she instructs writers not to plan a book before they write it:

No, I wouldn't think of planning the book before I write it. You write, and plan it afterwards. You write it first because every word must come out with freedom and with meaning because you think it is so and want to tell it. If this is done the book will be alive That is why I think English teachers and all short story courses put the cart before the horse In English courses, you study plot-construction and sharpen your anxious brows the way a tailor does on the needle's eye, over these necessities before you start your story. But you should tell the story first. Everybody can tell a story. (Sloane 53).

Ulmer asks equally of his genre in pedagogy; “How to represent this new genre other than by practicing it? There is no need to be against hermeneutics in order to be for heuretics, only that heuretics provides an alternative to interpretation that has been lacking in most discussions” (*Teletheory* 32-33).

Shey Marque states in her article, “Mystory in an Online Environment,”

Whether you’re a writer confronting the blank page or another creative artist searching for inspiration, the mystory is an interesting intuitive learning process that makes the most of the unique qualities the Internet has to offer, and it is perfect for online learning in creative arts and ancillary disciplines.
(2)

Ulmer uses stories and theories from a depth and breadth of sources as examples, and includes rationales for using the mystory to foster creative thinking through an inventive process rather than a traditional interpretive, literate rhetoric.

From Wittgenstein to Einstein and particularly the post-structuralist ideas culled from Jacques Derrida and Roland Barthes, Ulmer asks students to understand obtuse and third meanings in images and text, to feel punctums of recognition, to match scenes to memories. “It is important to remember that the obtuse or ‘third’ meaning has been at work all along,” Ulmer states, “but that the literate apparatus was not suited to exploit it fully” (*Invention* 45). “The linking of separate ideas to create a new understanding is the goal of the mystory . . . It provides ideas for educational pedagogy for creative arts students,” although Ulmer would argue that the mystory genre is cross and multidisciplinary (Marque 3). Ulmer wrote in an essay, *Introducing: Electracy*, “The role of the humanities foregrounded in this essay is pedagogy: the development of teaching practices to support the bootstrapping of education into an institution that is symbiotic with electracy . . .” (*Introduction*, 2). Ulmer continues in saying, “We may solve every technical problem, [as] Wittgenstein observed, and still not have touched the

human question” (2). “An electrated mind,” Ulmer also states, “includes a tolerance for nonutilitarian, inefficient, irrelevant events and experiences” (76).

Bringing a mind primed for play to education is what Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi calls being ready for entering a state of “flow . . . [which] occurs within sequences of abilities that are goal-directed and bounded by rules—activities that require the investment of psychic energy, and that could not be done without the appropriate skills” (*Flow*, 49).

Students can learn to write media with media when constructing a mystory using text, images, sound and video they have meaningfully appropriated from a variety of sources or that they have created themselves. Most computers are pre-packaged with cameras and media editing software that a literate student can play with to create mash-ups or video weblogs (vlogs) to include in their mystory. It is the rare cellphone today that is not equipped with photo and video capabilities. Learning to create the elements of a mystory is only a matter of practicing the technology.

The Play’s The Thing

Ulmer stated, “A mystory is always specific to its composer, constituting a kind of personal periodic table of cognitive elements, representing one individual’s intensive reserve. The best response to reading a mystory would be a desire to compose another one, for [oneself]” (*Teletheory* 7). I believe it is because the mystory genre is new and experimental, there are few exemplars for students to follow and, as others have noted, Gregory Ulmer has resisted giving

his own template because, as he quotes Basho, the poet, “one should not follow in the footsteps of the masters, but to seek what they sought” (*Teletheory* 287).

Ulmer concludes about his resistance to a direct, instructional approach to mystory, “The point is not to tell people what to do, but to promote a more creative culture” (*Internet* 277).

Ulmer’s mystory, “Derrida at the Little Big Horn” is available as a print example with electrated elements, but without the hypertexting capacities of the Internet to create a quest story, his role as the donor or wise man/shaman for the mystoriographer-hero is limited. His textbook *Internet Invention* was written as the guide for writing a mystory, but again, it is limited to its stock of webpage exercises which are tools of a literate apparatus; that makes it difficult for the hero of a mystory to simply fill in the blanks. “The key point,” Ulmer states, “for mystory and the wide image is that interpellation (human identity formation) is possible because (in the terms of the humanities disciplines) there is an inner openness, emptiness, hole, incompleteness that through introjection or interiorization of the outside (culture and nature) comes [pre]formatted . . . reproduc[ing] the default state of mind of the world into which one is born” (66).

Arnold Weinstein stated that it is the job of the scholars in the Humanities to “recover our story . . .”

Our story is what we have lost and must find. I am not talking about recovered memories or pop psychology; I am referring to the hidden melody, texture and form of every life . . . I began by saying that none of us can say, with ease or certainty, who we are. I believe we go through life searching

for this script, this means of reassembling our pieces, recuperating our form, measuring our estate. And, as Galileo said of the earth itself, it moves; seismic, fluid, elusive, our sensed fuller life beckons and wants to be graphed. (16)

Ulmer's guide is to approach the story from the other side of, in what civilized people believe, is, a "natural standpoint At the other extreme [where] the poets (artists, sages) who through considerable training have learned how to leave the hole open . . ." (66). It is by the challenge to begin with a creative 'openness' of invention rather than interpretation that a mystery begins to emerge. "Stories in general are a version of human expression that is sometimes formulaic, sometimes, didactic, sometimes instructive or moralistic, or sometimes purely entertaining or informative but . . . stories are always rhetorical" (Sloane 143). Sloane also states that hypertext story writers have a sense for the holistic aspects of their creations because using the technologies of the Internet and the World Wide Web allow "visual representations of memory" not available in orality or literacy and remixes and mash-ups in hypertextual storytelling works more the way human memory actually works with "crazy concatenations, quick cuts, quirky realignments and realignments of remembered events that exist in some bizarre, imaginistic alliteration of mind and the stories it holds" (133).

A Joyful Affair

Hans Ostrum described typical college essays as "a joyless affair. We might as well all dress as Puritans . . . in the culture of college writing, there's a chasm between work and play [but that] play is not incidental but vital." (qtd. in Rouzie

36). Likewise, Lex Runciman asks where all the “fun and pleasure” of writing has disappeared to once it becomes academic, that even “difficult and serious” writing can be fun and satisfying and endlessly rewarding:

One trouble with pleasure (even pleasure that resulting from a demanding and rigorous mental activity) is that it is squishy, it’s difficult to predict, and talking about it seems vaguely unprofessional. It seems frivolous . . . [we need to encourage] student writers to discover and even savor the range of large and small rewards which attend their own writing and thinking Rediscovering for ourselves the internal, even intrinsic rewards of the single, marvelously complex process we call writing and thinking. (36)

Marshall McLuhan agreed that the feeling of play in human communication “that play is fundamentally social and rhetorical, at its best providing reflexive perspective on the situation in which it emerges” (qtd. in Rouzie 37). McLuhan further writes about play, “must be give and take, or dialogue, as between two or more persons and groups . . . the very medium of interplay is the feeling of the audience” (McLuhan 241). Creating mystery is play-like in its double-takes of puncepts, its necessary improvisations, its riffing off of themes discovered in the popcycle discourses.

Albert Rouzie described serio-ludic play in writing, “play as unalienated activity and play as rhetorical . . . which is the most educationally relevant quality of play because it can result in fruitful discourse that combines serious and playful purposes . . . serio-ludic play often calls attention to itself as play while achieving rhetorical purposes, conveying content of a serious nature through playfully stylistic means” (70). Play has been, unfortunately, been associated with all that

is non-academic, what Rouzie calls, “negative cultural baggage,” and while many academics see the World Wide Web as an open playing field, others see it as nothing more than “frivolity and fantasy” which has no place in English Studies despite the chance to experiment with the new opportunities the Internet affords and that English students will use as they move onto life after college (71).

Play in hypertext . . . is more closely related to play in print composition . . . as conceived in college composition settings, hypertexts are singly or collaboratively composed course projects assigned in place of conventional print essays . . . in my experience, playful student-composed hypertexts, especially hypertexts that combine serious goals with playful expression are more the rule than the exception . . . the novelty of hypertext introduces new opportunities for play in the writing process: play can introduce meaningful noise in instrumental composition, freedom to create and include alternative texts within the text, the ability to create narrative frames and metaphors that are, in part, realized through visual means.” (116)

Sherry Turkle described hypertextual composition as the work of a bricoleurs, who craft narrative by “arranging and rearranging a set of well-known materials” (116). Rouzie follows Turkle in saying that the artists of bricolage in hypertexted media approach their task through “dialogic rather than monologic relationship(s),” that hypertext is malleable communication, wrought together with the idea of entertaining readers rather than simply answering a prompt (116). Turkle argues that “this playful style of communication has even continued with the arguably instrumental apotheosis of the World Wide Web as the dominant media for hypertext communication (116).

George Landow states, in his 1992 book *Hypertext 3.0*, that “every hypertext reader-author is inevitably a bricoleur” (115). Rouzie adds:

Conceived in the broadest sense, we are all bricoleurs within our system of language and cultural discourses, improvising new connections, recontextualizing and (re)interpreting signs swirling around us. Since the meaning of a sign is relative to its context, when writers resituate signs within electronic spaces, they can create new meanings out of the signs of old discourses. (145)

“Mystory is capable of activating hyperlogic, situating the mystoriographer within a designated subjectivity that is context sensitive . . .” states Lisa Gye in her essay “Halflives, A Mystory” (4). She continues, “The pedagogical value of this lies in the positioning of the learner as an active participant in the production of knowledge rather than as a consumer of already decided ‘truths’” (4). Digital rhetoric is still in its formative stage and open to invention, unlike print rhetoric which has a long history and development even as it continues to evolve in the age of electracy (5).

Writing through instead of writing about is the difference between learning heuretically rather than hermeneutically. This movement between and through stories is what Ulmer calls conductive reasoning, that students’ webpages are relays that conduct information rather than by using inductive or deductive modes of logic. “But,” Gye states, “the allusion to the way we conduct research reminds us that this process is ‘authographical’ – that we write ourselves into our research” (5).

Ulmer had the final word on play in his pedagogy when trying to make a point about thinking, playing, and creativity, “I demonstrated the point that thought is made in the mind the way that bees make honey in the hive by pouring a jar of honey on my head.” While he regretted the after-effects of wearing a honey-glaze throughout the rest of the lecture, his point was well-taken.

Publish or Perish?

At 230 million years B.C. dinosaurs ruled the earth. Giant lizard hegemony was rampant, and the small, warm-blooded tree shrews were merely a new experiment in lifeform adaptation on the field of play in the early Precambrian era. It is widely acknowledged that a comet hit the earth and, from that, no creature with a body mass greater than two pounds was able to survive the ensuing massive extinction. Once the dust settled, reptiles still remained in diminutive sizes and warm-blooded birds became the new biological experiment from the remainders of the once stately cold-blooded dinosaurs.

There was a sudden explosion in the diversity of life, especially in the descendants from those tree shrews which, from their *avant garde* experimental form, grew into their own phylum to replace the niches left open by the destructive forces of the comet. A walk through any natural history museum shows the remains of many different evolutionary experiments that never made it past their trial stages, but the evolutionary trials managed to deliver us, *homo sapiens*, to the year 2011 A.D. Humans have now entrenched themselves as the biological experiment that worked so well that we are now endangering the planet

with yet another major extinction. The rest of this story is for a different thesis but, by analogy, it brings us to the point of how our culture is evolving with new information experiments as we enter into the age of electracy.

To explore the analogy of the massive changes in the information of the living world of the planet, Gregory L. Ulmer might argue that hermeneutics is akin to the cold-blooded creatures of a previous epoch and, with the invention of the printing press as the media equivalent of a major comet strike that so significantly changed the landscape of human thought. Previous to the printing press, the literati were the behemoths of the Church, who controlled the majority of media niches that left little room for experimentation in new forms of literacy. Once the printing press was able to mass-produce Bibles, the dominance of the Church over the word fell as certainly as did the beasts of the Paleozoic Era. People began to experiment with all different genre forms including the novel, the essay and, eventually, the blog and the experimental genre of the mystery.

If hermeneutics is the cold-blooded equivalent to the world of literacy in the shift in epochs, heuristics is its warm-blooded equivalent in electracy. Just as the saurian giants died off and left room for biological experimentation, even as cold-blooded reptiles, fish and amphibians still remain and have continued to evolve into this era, hermeneutics and literacy will not go away despite the major shift in media production. However, electracy and heuristics are now the *avant garde* in the mediated world.

Creative people are what the tree shrews were to the vanguard of mammalian development. Writers, artists, and musicians have made the most of what the Internet has had to offer in terms of experimentation with new genres in the age of electracy. Yet, at the university level, writers are still being taught at the paleologic level, in which the niches for their avenues of intellectual creativity are few and the protocol is, in university speak, to publish or perish. By publish, I mean to say the rule is to be published by a professional, peer-reviewed journal and by perish means to be out of a job, unable to make that mortgage balloon payment, and out on the street if not surviving by asking the engineering and nursing school graduates if they'd like a side of fries with their burger. The latter is a common joke among Arts and Letters students and one that Gregory L. Ulmer had to confront when he left economics to study in the Humanities. Students graduate with a credential, a transcript and a stack of academic papers that may never see the light of day again if they haven't made the most of what the World Wide Web has to offer for their intellectual talents in the age of electracy. A mystory is an avenue for students to have a published *oeuvre* of work in a digital archive.

The Mystory Pedagogy

When I was working on my requirements for a Single Subject: English teaching credential, I was required to come up with my teaching philosophy, and I eagerly answered that I felt I was to teach in the role of the *sensei*, a word which translated from Japanese means 'one who has walked this path before you.' After

much research and reflection, I agree with Gregory Ulmer when he quotes Basho; I should not follow in the footsteps of the teachers before me, but to seek what they sought. The thing that most teachers I have known have sought was that they wanted to make a difference in their students' lives and to create a lifelong love of learning. Unfortunately, this is most often not the case. Teachers end up frustrated at the students lack of effort in writing endless research papers and students end up feeling apathetic and alienated by grades that they feel don't reflect their effort or understanding of a subject.

It is no wonder; institutions weren't designed for the purpose of creating individual thinkers with creative passion. Quoting Andrea Lunsford in the book *Portfolios: Process and Product*, it is easy to see the thinking of the cultural ideology of education that has led to a kind of stasis of the mind when it comes to learning only what is required to receive a passing grade:

In general, patterns of assessment (like our schools) reflect a *factory* or *industrial* one that goes along with a view of knowledge as a packageable commodity. This industrial model in testing is everywhere prevalent—little worker bees go through the steps of the system producing little pieces of machinery . . . Conditions are rigorously controlled. The student worker has one shot at effective productivity—one missing cog and the product is a failure.” (Belanoff, 260)

Art programs deal with assessment differently and much closer to the warm-blooded beast of heuristical development. “Young artists produce many artworks, from which they pick the best pieces to be evaluated . . .” (Belanoff 94). A mystory can likewise integrate the best of student work into a website that can be

shared outside of the classroom instead of just receiving a “good effort” badge with an often very subjective grade. Karen Mills-Court and Minda Rae Amiran state, “We underestimate who [students] are as well as what they can do when we allow them to take exams and turn in papers that are purely passive responses to what ‘the teacher wants to hear’” (Belanoff 107). A mystory as a digital archive allows students ownership of their work, they are responsible for what they wish to present as examples of what they are capable of doing, rather than turning in work that “is quickly . . . and mentally discarded once the students know their grades . . .” (107).

Like an artist that shows only their best work out of many attempts at creation, so too, can a mystory show the final presentation after all of the criticisms, comments, editing and re-drafting have been done.

Mystory Against Alienation

To use Ulmer’s metaphor, essays are text (the word derived from the same root as the word “textile”) where an archive can be seen more as felt, “mystory is felt, not text;” felt is held together as tangles that make a whole; text is linear, left-brained, and more metaphorically cold-blooded than the warmer-blooded felt (*Internet* 172). Students want to feel more than the mood of alienation that comes with what they feel is a cold-blooded grade.

Alienation, according to M.H. Abrams, is “the reigning diagnosis of our own age of anxiety: the claim that man, who was once well, is now ill, and that at the core of the modern malaise lies his fragmentation, dissociation, estrangement . . .”

(qtd. in Ulmer, *Internet* 75). Anyone who has received a grade less than he or she expected has experienced these feelings of malaise, especially when left with no other recourse than to try and do better on the next paper, with all future brilliant work averaged in with what might have been a dismal beginning of a semester. A mystery can work to bring students back to “a higher mode of the original unity with itself” (75). Research on cognitive development has found that students must learn the practice of meta-cognition or, stated simply, thinking about thinking and reflecting on the ways in which they succeed and on the ways in which they fail, all the while keeping in mind that the goal is to engage in the processes that lead to success (103). I do not believe it is any university’s goal to turn out disengaged students but, regardless, Ulmer noted:

[S]tudents are under some pressure, some stress, some compulsion—their experience is structured by a problem, a conflict: the world resists their goals and plans. These are good students, who will do what is necessary in order to secure the grade, get the credential, become licensed, and move into the productive economy of the society, a situation about which they feel some ambivalence, nonetheless. (77)

Writing a mystery is not just about showing the best and brightest of a student’s capabilities, it is also about subject formation. Marcos Novak, in Ulmer’s *Internet Invention*, stated that human intelligence has always “embodied . . . [in a] virtual diegesis” and that many of the constraints for intuitive thinking that were a part of literate thinking have been removed and opened in the world of cyberspace (229). There is a new “metaphysical condition of subject formation”

that can now exist with the complexity and speed available with the new technology that has come into being within the apparatus of electracy (229).

“The point to keep in mind,” Gregory Ulmer states, “is that the mystery is an autocommunication, addressed to yourself as a self-portrait” (*Internet* 243).

Many artists work with self-portraits, but it is their voice that becomes a recurrent autoportrait in everything they create. Likewise, writers communicate to themselves as much as they communicate to the teacher and the world in a mystery. As Jay David Bolter states in *Writing Space*:

[Writing’s] reflexive character gives the writer a new awareness of self. Anyone, who writes a letter, an essay, a poem, or even a scientific paper, or a legal brief, finds his or her verbal self presented on the page . . . In making verbal thoughts visible, writing creates the mind as a personal and cultural metaphor . . . The memory becomes a writing space, and the writer a homunculus who looks out at the world and records what he sees. The homunculus translates perceptions into words and images and records them; he also puts down his inner thoughts and conclusions. To think is to write in the language of thought and to remember is to search the space of memory until we find what is written there. (210)

Never before have students been so eager to express themselves as they have been allowed to in the digital realm. With access to images, sound, text, and video to appropriate and with places to upload their unique creations, students seem primed to begin their academic discourse in a digital realm.

Student fascination with computers and software has three major components. They want to be connected, principally to one another. They want to be entertained, principally by games, music and movies. And they want to present themselves and their work. (Jafari, 57)

The digital world allows students better communication between themselves and their instructors, better access to standards and criteria from which their final work will be judged and an openness and reflexivity that was difficult to manage in traditional classroom environments.

Ulmer states that, “the mystory has no form of its own,” however, it can serve as a collection of student thought that is non-linear, more felt than text, and uses the digital skills of electracy for its creator to be inventive to create a project that fits the genre conventions but, at the same time, is a unique, creative work (*Internet* 248). The goal of the mystory is for a student to find his defining “wide image” even though, “the actual wide image . . . cannot be determined until the end of your career, as expressed in the pattern of lived events and works, whatever they might be” (248). The mystory is an ongoing project that students can continue to work on throughout their lives even after they have finished jumping through the hoops of academic accomplishment. The mystory, like the not-so-distant ancestors of the warm-blooded tree shrews, can continue to evolve.

MyStory Mystory 2

For my mystory creation, I included two academic essays, *Dolphin Dramas* and *Memes*. Both essays were written as open class assignments and then I extensively rewrote them to include them on my mystory site. For each essay, I composed playful mash-up videos that developed the material beyond what was possible in the text essay alone. It was when I was researching Nietzsche through

YouTube videos that I made connections that I would've otherwise missed in conducting straight, literacy-styled research.

I presented *Dolphin Dramas* at the New Directions in the Humanities Conference 2010 and I was able to bring electracy to my discussion with the video supplement and with the links I provided to the conference attendees. I presented *Memes* at the Hawaiian Arts and Humanities Conference 2011 and I was able to direct interested conference attendees to links of my video supplements and to my *MyStory Mystory* site for critical feedback and commentary.

As I continued to work on my mystory, I began to riff off of my last name as a fish-person.

CHAPTER 3

AUTHORESSURECTION IN MYSTORY: A REMIX

“God is dead.” Friedrich Nietzsche

“The Author is dead.” Roland Barthes

“The Author-God is dead.” Michel Foucault

“The Transcendental Signifier has no referent (and is dead).” Jacques Derrida

“Your lack of faith disturbs me.” Darth Vader

Exordium 3

“I had been thinking for several months about writing a novel about a mental patient, someone who saw the world clearly, as a whole, in sharp contrast to most of the “sane” people running around loose, self-absorbed and paying no attention . . . I released my protagonist from the mental institution where he had been a long term resident, and listening as he described his observations and encounters while traveling from place to place. After a few dozen pages, I could see this approach wasn’t going to work . . . The narrator seemed disdainful and arrogant, a holier-than-thou-know-it-all. A novel whose main character ran around shouting, “You fools!” wasn’t going to sell . . .

“I checked him back into the hospital for further treatment.” (Brewer 167)

“As soon as a fact is narrated . . . this disconnection occurs, the voice loses its origin, the author enters into his own death, writing begins.” (Barthes 4).

“It is language which speaks, not the author . . .” (Barthes 4).

“Linguistically, the author is never more than the instance writing, just as *I* is nothing other than the instance of saying *I* . . .” (Barthes 5).

“The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from innumerable centres of culture . . . the writer can only imitate a gesture that is always anterior, never original. His only power is to mix writings.... Did he wish to express himself, he ought at least to know that the inner ‘thing’ he thinks to ‘translate’ is itself only a ready-formed dictionary...” (Barthes 6).

“A work of art is the unique result of a unique temperament. Its beauty comes from the fact that the author is what he is.” (Gomel quoting Oscar Wilde 75)

“For Foucault... the writer must already be dead before embarking on her career: the writer ‘must assume the role of the dead man in the game of writing.’” (Gomel 88)

“On one level this means, quite simply, that we are to regard the psychobiographical as but one form of writing or signification amongst other, for when we read biography or autobiography we are reading, as everywhere we must, nothing other than writing. And for all its banality, this is a necessary point, in that it provides the most direct route of return for the author as a biographical figure in criticism. The writer’s (auto)biography is writing, and there is therefore no reason to either valorize its significance in the act of interpretation, or to outlaw its deployment on the grounds that it is somehow an improper form of textuality. (Gomel 88)

“Within the archaeological version of intertextuality, as we have seen, the artificial distance between the author and episteme cannot long be sustained.” (Gomel 88).

The Author’s Death

Writing a mystery gave me, as an author, the wonderful opportunity to not only publish my portfolio to a World Wide audience but to also for readers know the human person behind the text. Whether or not any reader ever brings the stories to life for themselves is beside the point. In the age prior to electracy, the costs of having my creations reach the audience they can now were incalculably close to zero. Now, not only can I publish my own work and market it widely through social networks such as Facebook, I have contextualized my writings

within the space of the mystory. I would dare to say that to journey through my mystory is to take a short walk along with me.

I argue that the “Death of the Author” as described by Roland Barthes is a superannuated idea because, while any author’s stories can provide any reader with the birth of new interpretations through an exploration of signifiers and signified, of intertextualities and obtuse meanings much the same way a pensioner collects on work that has been completed, a mystory author’s context for intent is fixed; the memes he or she appropriates to create the stories the way he or she does is only as far as a left-click away within the scaffold of the hyperlinked mystory site.

For example, a Lacanian analysis of my own writing might argue that I write about dolphins because their shape represents a repressed phallus figure and that they penetrate my stories as a frustration of me being a woman in a patriarchal society. However, as significant such a reading may be to a Lacanian critic, Freudians, or even feminist theorists, reading within the context of my mystory, my authorial intent is clearly visible in that I explicitly say that I write about dolphins because I worked with dolphins in my quest to understand cognition in consciousness in humans and other animals, a trait I not-so-coincidentally share with the authors I love to read, who make it clearly the intention of their stories. However, as Sartre proposed, as the author of an original artistic creation, my authority died at the birth of my stories when he stated that:

[Authors] hope that our books remain in the air all by themselves and that their words, instead of pointing backwards toward the one who has designed them, will be toboggans, forgotten, unnoticed and solitary, which will hurl the reader into the midst of a universe where there are no witnesses. (Gomel 76)

It is most writers' dream that they will write with such clarity, resonance and truth that the author's presence disappears, eclipsed by the story, but to die away completely from the text is a radical dispossession. The idea is not, as Sartre suggests, to cut the umbilical cord, but to engage the "strange loop" that forms between author and audience. A strange loop, described by Douglas Hofstadter in his book, *I am a Strange Loop* is an abstract form that, like a moebius strip, cycles around and seems to shift to higher forms in a hierarchal path, but these shifts end up circling back upon each other, returning to the beginning in "a closed cycle" (102).

Strange loops are what cause the infinite regress images when two mirrors face each other and trail off iterative images into a seeming infinity (they are finite, Hofstadter notes, only due to the limitations on the speed of light) or when one hears a high pitched whine when a microphone and speaker come to close together. For a textual example, Gomel cites Borges' intuitive knowledge of strange loops:

In Jorge Luis Borges story *Circular Ruins*, in which the main character creates a man only to realize eventually that he himself is a creation of another demiurge and so on *ad infinitum*, [and so] contemporary metafiction emphasizes the narrative construction of all subjectivity. And yet it also suggests that the human subject is inescapably anchored in the

body and that any attempt to escape its limitation and responsibilities into the freedom of the text may lead to violence. (Gomel 90)

There is something that resonates in these strange loops, Martin Gliserman's book, *Psychoanalysis, Language and the Body of the Text*, argues that, "through the writer's style we find the body [T]he body is encoded in the language, expressing itself and resonating with the reader." (Gomel 90).

In the past, author-reader feedback loops were limited due to the nature of the literate environment. The best feedback an author could give was on the side of the autobiography and memoir; the best feedback a reader could offer was on the side of the fan letter or a published critique. On the World Wide Web, such restrictions no longer keep the writer or the reader a passive receptor to their own or a critic's interpretation of the meaning of the text. A reader can ask the writer what he was intending and an author can answer if, in fact, the author is still alive and not playing at or actually being dead:

On the one hand, this body [the author] is the very ground of the text, whose uniqueness and coherence derive from the uniqueness and coherence of the particular human being(s) responsible for its production . . . on the other hand, the text as a linguistic construct, open to endless readings, interpretations and (mis)appropriations, always points away from the body [of the author]. (Gomel 87)

The Critic is Dead

Hans-Georg Gadamer tells us it is wrong to adopt a commonsense approach to an understanding of an author's intention because:

[O]ur understanding of texts (or anything else for that matter) is always inescapably embedded in particular historical circumstances in a way that cannot be made fully transparent to ourselves . . . understanding a text is a matter of interacting with it in the light of our own situation. (Irwin *Death* 47)

In that way, Gadamer seems to be alluding to the memplexes we hold so dearly as our own may be in opposition to those held by the writer when he put his brain, then his pen, to paper. Taking a further look at Gadamer and the intentional stance, David Weberman in his paper, “Gadamer’s Hermeneutics,” notes six stances the critic takes in rejection of “the identification of textual meaning with authorial intention,” because:

1. There is less in the text than the author had in mind
2. There is more in the text than the author had in mind.
3. The text, like a language, has the character . . . of ‘ideality.’
4. The text is relationally constituted.
5. The text is not about the author’s mind but about the truth of the subject matter.
6. Our interests typically is and typically should be directed not at the author’s intention, but at the text itself. (48)

However, authors’ intent is relevant to understanding deeper levels of meaning. The critical thing Barthes, Foucault, Gadamer and others do is to leave the author undead, a zombie or a phantom to the life of the text; to quote Oscar Wilde: “While some critics believe that there must be a direct connection between the writer and the work, with style (or content) reflecting personality, others argue that the author is a textual phantom, a discursive construct whose relation to a specific person is loose and perhaps even irrelevant” (Gomel 154). William Irwin further describes Barthes’ author-zombie as a “scribe . . . [who takes] dictation on

what he or she may not understand” and that writing is nothing more than “making marks on a page” and only a reader can supply the energy needed to give a text life of its own. (*Against* 230) While in some ways this is true, as in reader-response theory, authors do remain in the loop, as Irwin agrees:

The point is that authors may or may not impose rules on how their texts are to be read. Actually, the right of an author is more limited than this. The author may not dictate how her text is to be read, but only what intended meaning may be attributed to her. As it is unethical to steal from a person’s apple tree, so too it is unethical to misrepresent a person’s intended meaning, whether it is the meaning of a conversational utterance or the meaning of a literary text. (233)

This is not to say that authors want their work shut out of the many interpretations model of Barthes, Foucault, Gadamer, Kristeva, or even Wimsatt and Beardsley’s idea of author/reader’s intentional and affective fallacies. Intent is always between an artist and his or her work, whether it’s artistic, musical or textual. A work is not, however, loaded with empty or multiple intentions; it is instead full of multiple, even infinite, significances. The creators of Coca-Cola, for example, realize that people may not use their beverage for its intended purpose, they may choose to take a bath in it or use it as a metal cleaner (Irwin 235). E.D. Hirsch, Jr. states that the difference lies in the meaning of the text supplied by an author versus the significance a text may have for a reader. William Irwin explains that Roland Barthes and Julia Kristeva believe in killing authors’ meaning such that it doesn’t merely become a product for “consumer-readers” and an end unto itself (365). The product, thus born rather than

packaged, is free to grow from a kernel to a tree of multiple intentions. However, E.D. Hirsch Jr. disagrees with the Marxist analogy:

According to Hirsch's intentionalism, the author does indeed supply meaning, but this does not really restrict the reader, who can read the text however she likes as long as she does not represent her idiosyncratic meaning as the author's intention. Of course, the Coca-Cola Company sells its soft drink with the intention that consumers will drink it . . . Still, there is no obligation on the part of the consumer to drink it . . . A text cannot have meaning x and meaning $\sim x$ at the same time, though it can have meaning x and significance $\sim x$ at the same time. (235)

While it may seem that most living authors are indifferent to their critical death and keep on composing even as they decompose by way of Barthes and other postmodernists, there is a new art movement beginning in the United Kingdom called *Intentism* which puts the responsibility for the intent of a work back onto its creator but allows for readers and critics to read multiple significances into a work.

The Author is Resurrected

It has been over 40 years since Roland Barthes made his proclamation about the "Death of the Author" and the more critics have tried to kill the idea of an intentional author or an affective reader, the more the constructs have been able to morph and reanimate themselves, not unlike the undead creatures in John Carpenter's movie, *The Thing*. The "thing" was a hybrid being, a chimera of human flesh on the outside and alien information concealed within. The task of

the movie's protagonists was to attempt some way to "read" each other to discover which of them had been corrupted.

More likeable and a better analogy is that of Prot (rhymes with goat) from the planet K-Pax in the constellation Lyra, as told by Gene Brewer in his book, *K-Pax*. Gene Brewer is both the real author and the name of the fictional narrator of the book and his antagonist is also a hybrid alien, human flesh but, inside, alien information. In the story it's Brewer's job to tease out the truth from the fiction of the (possibly) delusional character. Prot, ever a trickster, turns out to be an honest, but equally unreliable narrator of his journey "on a beam of light" (Brewer 231). To tease out the multiple levels of significances of *K-Pax* is to read not only the first book of the series, but to see the movie and to read the ongoing saga (currently published up to *K-Pax 4*). If any doubt remains as to what Prot is doing on earth, a reader can turn to Brewer's memoir, *Creating K-Pax*, or, even better, drop an e-mail to Gene Brewer himself on his website. Such is the state of the author in the epoch of electracy.¹

Sean Burke states in *The Death and Return of the Artist* that reintroducing the author and his or her life "creates a thaw in the cold dream of structuralist objectivity . . . the cohabitation of author and reader in the text becomes not part of the pleasure, but its 'index.'" (40). Burke also quotes Roland Barthes when

¹ I e-mailed Dr. Brewer from his website to ask him about how he felt about the "Death of the Author" he responded and said, while he "wasn't very academic, [the 'Death of the Author'] sounded ridiculous."

Barthes contradicts his “Death of the Author” position in his later writing of “Sade Fourier Loyola,” when he wished more from the author than the markings on the paper:

Nothing is more depressing than to imagine the Text as an intellectual object (for reflection, analysis, comparison, mirroring, etc.) The text is an object of pleasure . . . (the Book) transmigrates into our life, whenever another writing (the Other’s writing) succeeds in writing fragments of our own daily lives, in short, whenever a co-existence occurs To live with an author does not necessarily mean to achieve in our life the program that the author has traced in his books . . . to live with Sade is, at times, to speak Sadian, to live with Fourier is to speak Fourier (Burke 40)

What began as the Nietzschean “Death of God,” when the word of the Bible became the word of men and not the transcendental signified, was followed by the “Death of the Author” in which there was no one final reading on a text. At the very least, there was no final word from authors, whether they are living or long dead or, as in the case of Mark Twain, dead for just one hundred years (the amount of time after his death before he would allow his autobiography to be published).

What preceded Barthes was Foucault’s “Death of Man” in which the very subjectivity of the human was called into question. This view has gained support in the neuro-cognitive sciences as the idea of a Cartesian Theatre has been shown to be little more than an illusion, there is no man behind the curtains creating the great and powerful ‘I’ that thinks separately from the “think, therefore ‘I’ am.” In infinite regression, the illusion of an ‘I’ recedes the more one chases after it in

synapses and circuitry until the ‘I’, like God in a Douglas Adams’ *Hitchhiker’s Guide to the Galaxy* tale, goes ‘poof’ and disappears in a chain of logic, one in which *proof* denies *faith* and God dies, once again (Adams 59).

Foucault believed that without a language scaffold for thought, the world would be nothing but a chaotic, uncategorized melee for human beings. To imagine this world, one might think about the way an autistic child sees the world: all input but no language structure. This view of the world is supported by the neuro-anatomical discovery of mirror neurons, structures in the brain that allow us to feel what others feel. Dr. Ramachandran, a neuroscientist known for his work with mirror neurons, has found that children with autism are missing mirror neurons and they may see and feel the world as the chaos that Foucault imagined.²

Far from being dead, the author’s mirror neurons that once played a role in the creation of a story, the writer, acting as a reflexive subject for the world in which he lived, comes back to life to activate the mirror neurons in new readers. One might predict that the more vivid the information exchange, the more vivid the experience. Knowing more about the author and the culture that fathered the text can only add to the experience, activating more mirror neurons as the reader becomes more familiar with voice behind the narrator. Although it is true that

² Personal conversation with Dr. Ramachandran at the Tedx DelMar (CA) Conference in 2010. See also: *Scientific American*: <http://www.scientificamerican.com/article.cfm?id=lack-of-mirror->

readers may never know the true author just as they may never know what is in another person's heart (we are all unreliable narrators of our own experience), it is still possible to get closer to that heart. As Gomel stated, "The mask conceals the face, but also adheres to its contours" (76). Gomel continues:

The central element of intertextual interpretation is to note and make connections between and among texts. Every text is potentially the intertext of every other text, and so reading becomes an infinite process . . . still the theory and practice go too far when, for some, they assume the relations between and among texts actually change canonical texts. Whereas it is enlightening, perhaps even necessary to make connections to *Hamlet* when reading the *Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*, the relations between the two texts do nothing to change the text of *Hamlet*." (88)

Sean Burke echoes the sentiments of those critics who have questioned Barthes' assertions: "Observing light passing through a prism (though 'we know' that the prism is not the absolute origin of the resplendent spectacle before us) we do not deny its effect upon the light, still less call for the death of the prism" (27). Such is the stance of intentionalist E.D. Hirsch, Jr. and also William Irwin, who supports the new school of literary and artistic criticism called *Intentionism*. Irwin speaks for the Intentionism movement as a direction against dehumanizing art and culture, that the claim that the author is an authority and authority equals authoritarian tyranny is a slippery slope argument, at best:

The recognition of the humanity of another, as a person, is a buttress against any attempt to treat that person as a thing, or a sub-human, to be dispensed with without moral consequences . . . Moreover, to see humanity in the intention of the work is to acknowledge the status of that work as an end and not . . . as a thing to be treated as a means to an end . . . I also add

that I think that to ignore the fact that the work is intimately related to the person who produced it is to cut oneself off from its proper appreciation. A work of art is a human gesture and its maker can be seen (perhaps with difficulty at times) IN the gesture. To appreciate the work is to appreciate the quality of the gesture. (Irwin, *Intentism* n.p.)

It is easy to see the mystory as an internet work of art that combines autobiographical, artistic and textual elements that tell a story from its creator's point-of-view. I believe if Mark Twain were still alive in the age of the internet, he would have presented his autobiography in something like a mystory. His work is revived as his readers read more about his life from his own point-of-view:

From Twain's autobiography:

I've struck it! And I will give [my autobiography] away—to you . . . And you will be astonished (and charmed) to see how like *talk* it is, & how real it sounds, & how well & compactly & sequentially it constructs itself, & what a dewy & breezy & woodsy freshness it has, & what a darling & worshipful absence of the signs of starch and flatiron, & labor & fuss & the other artificialities! Mrs. Clemens is an exacting critic, but I have not talked a sentence yet that she has wanted altered . . . (Clemens 20-21)

To this, Twain's editor replied that he found that, while Twain could tell many half-truths, even the great author himself could not be counted upon to “tell the black-heart's-truth,” to which Twain responded with his intention towards earnest veracity in his storytelling:

[T]he remorseless truth is there, between the line, where the author-cat is raking dust upon it which hides from the disinterested spectator neither it nor its smell . . . the result being that the reader knows the author in spite of his wily diligences. (21-22)

Later on, much further along in the autobiography, in a letter to Mark Twain, Helen Keller reveals the prism through which we see both authors' light shine.

“Great men are usually mistaken about themselves” (467).

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In my mystory widesite, I have uploaded a partial *oeuvre* of my fiction, non-fiction and poetic works and a bit of autobiographical work that was outlined in Gregory L. Ulmer's *Internet Invention* curriculum. By adding the autobiographical dimensions, I hope that I will exist, not as a dead author-function, but as a living testament to what my influences were and of the memplexes that I'm coming to recognize as both simple and complex hegemonies. As an Intentist (a new, critical meme), I believe that my work has a specific intent but readers are free to find their own significances from the work that I post, even as that work may be uploaded and remixed with new intentions that have been meaningfully appropriated as I have appropriated work, likewise.

I always hope, like Mark Twain, to tell the truth as close to the heart as I possibly can and I hope my readers will see that in my work. As Gregory L. Ulmer quotes Deleuze and Guattari:

“To write is perhaps to bring this assemblage of the unconscious to the light of day, to select the whispering voices, to gather the tribes and the secret idioms from which I extract something I call my self . . . My direct discourse is still the free indirect discourse running through me, coming from other worlds or other planets.” (*Internet* 154).

CHAPTER 4

CONVERGING ON AN EPOCH

Exordium 4

“The launching of the space shuttle *Atlantis* from Cape Canaveral with six astronauts and a military surveillance satellite on board in November 1991 makes explicit the passage from ancient to modern approaches to the ‘cosmos’” (Ulmer *Heuretics* 24).

“[H]ypermedia is the technological aspect of an electronic *apparatus* My interest is not only in the technology itself but also in the problem of inventing the practices that may institutionalize electronics in terms of schooling” (17).

“[T]he practices of writing in a new technology are fundamentally different from the conventions of the treatise that presently dominate academic work” (17-18).

“The computer is responsible for the most recent “frontier of knowledge” then bringing into existence a virtual if not a literal new world. Chorography, as a heuritic approach to inventing a “method” useful for this “world,” takes into account the present state of imagination and curiosity . . . if the classical rhetoric developed for alphabetic practices is inadequate for electronics, it is a good point of departure for imagining an electronic way of reading, writing, and reasoning.” (27)

“In *The Internet Galaxy* (2001), cybertheorist Manuel Castells claims that while the public has shown limited interest in hypertexts, they have developed a hypertextual relationship to existing media content: “Our minds—not our machines—process culture If our minds have the material capability to access the whole realm of cultural expressions—select them, recombine them—we do have hypertext: the hypertext is inside us.”” (Jenkins *Convergence* 133)

“The joke and vanguardist experiment are played out on something Ulmer calls a *mystory* . . . the use of personal memories, entertainment citations and problem solving strategies to solve social and disciplinary problems They do

not ask one to solve personal problems by voicing personal memories. Instead Ulmer and [others] describe in great detail how artists and other significant cultural innovators use personal stories, neologisms, coincidences, and details drawn from areas apparently unrelated to specific disciplinary problems. (Saper 71)

“[T]oday, the revolution is centered on the shock of the inclusion of amateurs as producers where we no longer need to ask for help or permission from professionals to say things in public.” (Shirky 52)

Fandom Comes of Age

When I was in high school, I became addictively attracted to a television show called *The Man from Atlantis*. It began as a series of movies-for-television that, based on its high score in the Nielsen ratings, then became a short-lived television series. The plotlines became more comic-book styled and the lead actor (Patrick Duffy) began phoning in his performance as the water-breathing hero out to save the world, knowing he had a more lucrative contract rating to be one of the lead actors on what was to become the hit primetime soap opera, *Dallas*.

If I was unhappy with the sloppy performances of both the writers and actors of the television series, I was more than happy to go about writing my own fanfiction for the show, which I then published in nationally distributed fan magazines called fanzines. Through fanzine writing, I met other *Atlantis* fans who shared a passion for “*The Man*” and all things aquatic. I went on to collaboratively editing a ‘zine and circulating among a score of other television-based fanzine collectors who created stories based on plotlines and characters from others shows such as *Star Trek*, *Star Wars*, *The Man from Uncle*, frankly,

any show that had ever been in production had a fan writer lurking in the shadows of copyright violation.

My schoolmates considered me to be a freak but that was okay, because so was *The Man from Atlantis*. I learned a lot about writing and publishing from the experience even under threat of copyright violations and cease-and-desist letters from Solow Productions, holders of *The Man*'s licensing rights. Most likely, media producer Herbert Solow couldn't care more or less about teenage fans infringing on the copyright of a low-rated and cancelled television program. The stories I wrote gave me a name in fan publishing circles and no harm was no foul in this instance.

In 1987, another television show caught my interest, based on the 1985 movie *Starman*. The show was about a human-embodied alien who came back to Earth to rescue his half-human son from the hands of government agents. The show received mediocre ratings and was cancelled after a full season of episodes from 1986-1987. I was back at the typewriter, this time writing letters of protest to the network, the American Broadcasting Company, and to the show's producers, Michael Douglas and Columbia Pictures. I was contacted, in turn, by a group of *Starman* advocates (who called themselves *Spotlight Starman*) as a result of writing these letters and their agenda was to get the show renewed for another season. I participated in public protests complete with "Save Starman" signage and helium balloons. I helped coordinate *Starman* fan photo contests and I even had to opportunity to host a party of the cast, crew and international *Spotlight*

Starman fans in my home in Long Beach, California. Through a rare opportunity, I got to meet with Michael Douglas and pitch future episodes, to convince him that the show's storyline hadn't been played out.

For a while, it looked like the fans might prevail. Several new season scripts were purchased and the spot on ABC's fall line-up remained open until one day late in May 1987 when Brandon Stoddard announced that he was cancelling *Starman* for good in preference to a variety show starring Dolly Parton. Stoddard's response to the fan reaction to the cancelling of *Starman* was that he was angry that fans were trying to dictate programming.

In 2011, *Spotlight Starman* is still a growing international organization and the fans continue to generate *Starman* material. Many have gone on to publish their own professional work based on the ethical and family-friendly values of the original show. In February of 2010, they held a convention and, once again, cast, crew, staff and *Spotlight Starman* fans met in Los Angeles. Due to international showings, the fan-base has grown to include a large, multi-national segment. The Los Angeles "Starman Relaxacon" convention was the site of a marriage between two German fans whom had met via their relationship with the show.

Henry Jenkins calls such fans the vanguards of the new media epoch:

Fans have always been early adapters of new media technologies; their fascination with fictional universes often inspires new forms of cultural production, ranging from costumes to fanzines . . . Fans are the most active segment of the media audience, one that refuses to simply accept what they are given, but rather insists on the right to become full participants. (*Convergence* 135)

In 1989, the Writers' Guild of America held a strike against Hollywood producers and directly ended the era of hour-long, primetime melodramas. What filled in its niche was the new kid on the block: the reality television show. Reality television wasn't reality in the common usage of the word, but 'scripted' reality, where people who weren't trained actors were the would-be stars and any participant could have their shot at their fifteen minutes of fame. Rather than ask the audience to sit back and passively view hackneyed storylines, reality shows thrived only if the audience willingly involved themselves in the shows' outcome. In this new era, producers who once scorned fan involvement now were asking audiences to be allies in helping to make a show a success by calling in, texting votes and jumping into augmented reality gaming (ARG) based on the creative plots that blurred the lines between audience and participant.

If fans were once a nuisance, to be served with cease-and-desist notices from corporate Hollywood's legal offices, the devotion of those fans' participation in this new era is more an indication of a show's success than what the Nielsen ratings had been for determining a hit only a short ten years before. The relationship between producers and consumers has changed and the view of that change can be seen through the lens of a memetic cultural shift.

Memetic Drift in Mediaspace

Richard Dawkins, in his book, *The Selfish Gene*, called cultural thought contagions "memes" (192). While genes are exchanged between organisms

during sex, memes are exchanged, according to Dawkins, via imitation through the “spoken and written word, aided by great music and great art” (*Selfish Gene* 193). Memes work internally inside of an organism’s consciousness as “self-reinforcing” ideas and also in the competitive external environment of “radio and television time, billboard space, newspaper ads, magazine column-inches, and library shelf space (Hofstadter *Metamagical* 51-52). Just as genes that fail to replicate in the pool eventually disappear, so it is true for the memes that fail to be imitated from person to person and from generation to generation will also become extinct.

For example, the meme that *the world is flat* failed to be replicated when a new meme became more successful as men began returning from sea-faring journeys that took them beyond the observable horizon. However, that the *flat world* meme survived at all and replicated for centuries demonstrates the characteristic of memes that they may not necessarily be “the best, truest, most hopeful or helpful ideas” (Blackmore, “Waking” 5). As Richard Dawkins first realized in describing memes as an evolutionary force in directing human culture:

Memes should be regarded as living structures, not just metaphorically, but technically . . . when you plant a fertile meme in my mind you literally parasitize my brain, turning it into a vehicle for the meme’s propagation in just the way a virus may parasitize the genetic mechanism of a host cell. (*Selfish Gene* 192)

Memes have been transmitted through civilizations through art, literature, laws, myths and folklore, theater and, in modern civilization, the advanced technologies of newspapers, television and radio and the World Wide Web in an

ever-expanding bubble of influence. Genes need the nutrient-rich environment of the biosphere to evolve from the simple patterns of chromosomes into the complex gathering of organisms while memes need an environment of thought that supports the transmission and imitation for greater growth and complexity. This environment has been given names such as “the ideosphere” (Hofstadter *Metamagical* 50) or even “the memesphere,” where conglomerations of simpler memes adhere together into a complex set of “mutually assisting” ideas or “co-adapted meme complexes” creating greater “memeplexes” (Blackmore *Meme Machine* 19). Ulmer noted how the meme of curiosity has evolved from civilization to civilization:

[D]ifferent epochs of the Western tradition (not to mention different civilizations) have had different attitudes to curiosity and set different restrictions on it, different limitations of relevance ranging from liberatory (encouraging turning over of every rock just to see what might be under it) to censorious (condemning the vice of poking into matters that should not concern humankind). (Ulmer, *Heuretics*, 24)

Clay Shirkey in his book, *Cognitive Surplus*, talked about the ways that the invention of the printing press changed the audience from one of passive folk who were only read from the Bible in Latin by priests to an audience who produced media: “[B]ooks started appearing in local languages, books whose text was months rather than centuries old, books that were, in aggregate, diverse, contemporary, and vulgar” (44). Likewise, the availability of the Internet has changed the television audience to one that has found a new novelty in

“aggregate, diverse, contemporary and vulgar” forms in the new millennium.

Douglas Rushkoff states:

What makes viral media so important right now, however, is that we are emerging from a mediaspace based on cosmetics to one based in memetics. Branding, as we know it, is obsolete. It’s an artifact of a very old culture—600 years old, in fact—when the real relationships between people and their producers were being replaced by artificial relationships between people and companies very far away. Instead of buying a piece of fish from the monger down the lane, we were buying a can from a company Lord-knows-where. The label—and the brand mythology it represented—meant to substitute for the human relationship we enjoyed before . . .

Interactive media—what we’ve begun to call social media—finally breaks all this down. We’re no longer engaging exclusively with the mythologies of broadcast media; we are interacting with one another . . .

Look at the effect this has had even on television scheduling: All anybody talks about anymore are reality shows. Even today’s most successful dramas—such as *Lost*—feel a bit like dramatic incarnations of reality shows such as *Survivor*.

In the age of literacy, the only thing that kept audiences from become public advocates for their own voices in publishing and producing text was the cost. Publishers were the printing houses that could make an investment in a writer, and editors screened the material sent to them for publication for those texts that might show a return profit for their investment on paper, ink and labor (or in Hollywood, the full production and advertising costs). Clay Shirky stated, “Gutenberg economics, whether you’re a Venetian publisher or a Hollywood producer, you’re going to have fifteenth century risk management as well, where producers have to decided what’s good before showing it to an audience” (45).

Now, with the Internet and the World Wide Web, creators no longer have to have permission to become actively involved in making their work public and audiences no longer have to sit passively by and only take in the media that producers see fit to hand to them.

Henry Jenkins states that new media artists are compelled to break through the cracks of the old media establishment to create “a more collaborative relationship” between producers and consumers (*Convergence* 98). Audiences and storytellers are co-creating content even as the media evolves at a pace that has been previously unknown to artists in the literate environment (98).

Gregory Ulmer uses a frontier metaphor to describe the new memes that are changing the way we see ourselves in relation to the new media rules of co-creatorship:

The electronic apparatus, however, is *a social machine*: the frontier metaphor is in our habits, our conduct, our emotions, in curiosity itself . . . Is it possible to imagine learning and invention that are not cast in the metaphor of a frontier explored by adventurers . . . Choral work . . . puts the ‘adventure of knowledge’ under erasure, which is to say that it is only preclusive, a mere beginning, a proposal, an experiment” (*Heuretics* 31-32).

Ulmer quotes Pierre Levy about the new interactivity and co-creativity in the new mediaspace:

Pierre Levy speculates about what kind of aesthetic works would respond to the demands of his knowledge cultures. First, he suggests that the “distinction between authors and readers, producers and spectators, creators and interpreters will blend’ to form a ‘circuit’ . . . of expression, with each participant working to “sustain the activity’ of the others. (97)

An example of this new meme of audience collaborating with producers is with the television show *Dawson's Creek*, which had more than 200 fan websites devoted to the shows characters and plotlines. The producers saw the opportunity to co-create with the fans and used the World Wide Web to exploit those whose desire was to be part of the show's creation:

As the television series, *Dawson's Creek* was not a radical departure from network norms, but what it did on the web was more innovative. The device of the desktop allowed the producers to take viewers deeper inside the heads of the characters to see other dimensions of their social interactions. Because they coordinated with the series writers, the Web team could provide back story for upcoming events... from the start, the Dawson's Desktop team collaborated with the program's active fans. Its producers said they were inspired to expand the story from reading all of the fan fiction that sprang up around the characters." (Jenkins, *Convergence* 119).

The explicit memes of 'audience as passive consumer' continues to evolve to one in which the 'audience is an active co-creator.'

Mystory is OurStory

Just as fans are no longer willing to sit back and be passive receptors to media programming, there is a new education meme forming where students are no longer expected to simply attend classes, take notes and be a passive receptacle to a commodity called education. If education follows the memetic transformation of convergence culture (as named by Henry Jenkins), then becoming an active student will mean more than just actively chasing grades and a degree or credential. Students will co-create the curriculum and materials by finding ways

to use electracry to become the same participants as fans have become against the old practices of television network programming.

The new vision of the student is one who expects to be entertained, drawn into education, if not to be tuned out to sit silently to text, tweet and Facebook in the back of the classroom. This is the vision professors often see as “the new youth consumer” taking up space in the classroom:

An advertisement created several years ago for Apple Box Productions Inc., depicts the new youth consumer: his straggling dishwater-blond hair hangs down into his glaring eyes, his mouth is turned down into a challenging sneer, and his finger is posed over the remote . . . ‘You’ve got three seconds, impress me,’ he says. One false move and he will zap us. No longer a couch potato . . . he determines what, where and how he watches media. (Jenkins 64)

The mystery was created as a way for students to co-create their education using new media technologies. Clay Shirky calls the ability for amateurs (students) to co-produce with professionals (professors) actively, “cognitive surplus,”

The harnessing of our cognitive surplus allows people to behave in increasingly generous, public, and social ways, relative to their old status as consumers and couch potatoes. The raw material of this change is the free time available to us, time we can commit to projects that range from the amusing to the culturally transformative. If free time was all that was necessary, however, the current changes would have occurred half a century ago. Now we have the tools at our disposal, and the new opportunities they provide. (63)

Free time for a student is time that has been cleared from life to participate in his or her education by doing homework. Rather than doing the old practices of the research essay, namely, a hermeneutic textual work that goes no further than

the professor who assigns a grade and then the paper is filed and forgotten, the mystory creates a space for heuritic learning that goes beyond grades and helps to interpellate the student as a co-creator in a new poetics. Ulmer stated:

I outlined and tested a genre called “mystory,” designed to simulate the experience of invention, the crossing of discourses that has been shown to occur in the invention process. Realizing that learning is much closer to invention than to verification, I intended mystoriography primarily as pedagogy. The modes of academic writing now taught in school tend to be positioned on the side of the already known rather than on the side of wanting to find out . . . hence discourage learning how to learn.” (*Heuristics* xii).

George P. Landow quotes Ulmer in his book, *Hyper/Text/Theory*, when he speaks of the mystory genre:

What is the experience of knowing, of coming to or arriving at an understanding, characterized as following a path or criss-crossing a field, if not narrative experience, the experience of following a narrative? (44)

Writing hypertext is a different form of learning; it is learning to make connections.

Part of what Ulmer is trying to get students to do is recognize how certain forces and discourses shape us at the level of both the conscious and unconscious. To this end, he offers a number of different exercises that get students to recognize what Barthes calls the “sting” of the punctum. That is, how an image or sound or text stings the body prior to consciousness - prior to us making sense of it.” (Brown)

Using media to learn media is how Dr. Michael Wesch teaches his anthropology classes at Kansas State University. Students, instead of writing a narrative paper, were given the opportunity to make a four-minute video, instead.

His own initial educational video made for his Digital Ethnography class was meant to be shown only to “ten of his friends” for feedback purposes (Bonk 221). After posting the educational video to YouTube, it began to receive millions of viewings, “with nearly eight million viewers two years [after posting it in 2007]” (220). Curtis Bonk, in his book *The World is Open*, found that students “want to collaborate, share and explore in technology-rich environments. In the twenty-first century, student learning must be highly personalized and meaningful, not a one-size-fits-all variety” (222). Michael Wesch also affirms that “the current generation of online technologies affords an opportunity for the human species to see the different ways in which the world is connected . . . it might help us create a truly global view that can spark the kind of empathy we need to create a better world for all of humankind” (223).

Thomas de Zengotita in his book, *Mediated*, takes a more cautionary tone:

If you tried to represent the period since Gutenberg on the Cosmic Pathway, you would have to slice that hair lengthwise thousands of times, and then use a powerful microscope to see one slice. This whole technology thing has just started.

But it is accelerating at a tremendous rate.

That’s a good reason to mistrust anybody who claims to understand what’s going on. (251)

De Zengotita distrusts that technology is the panacea to heal the world’s wounds inflicted by mankind in so short a time of civilization. However, Ulmer believes there is a path to healing through digital education. Writing in a heuritic genre that works towards an understanding of a personal ecology within nested

connections of exterior ecologies can take mystoriographers closer to the empathy Wesch spoke of in his digital rhetoric. Ulmer brings in the icon of the compass to explain his technological determinism; “With the compass, method is not a matter of having a predetermined goal, but of “holding to a path on which, in the field of the unknown, new land will eventually appear”” (*Heuristics* 25).

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I linked music videos to my project, music whose lyrics seemed to cross back to my fascination with the ocean and the well-being with the life of the planet. Two of my favorite songs are on the *Kaua'i* website and my *Theme Song* website weaves through the popcycle to help give a direction for my wide image as a fish-person.

CHAPTER 5
MYSTORY AS QUODLIBET

Exordium 5

“Music dictionaries define “quodlibet” (whatever) as a humorous type of music characterized by the quotation of well-known melodies or texts combined in an incongruous manner—kind of a musical collage-montage” (Ulmer, *Internet* 243).

“The whatever is [Giorgio] Agamben’s name for this alignment between you and your world through the gap of language” (242).

“The point to keep in mind is that mystory is autocommunication, addressed first to yourself as a self-portrait. The next step is to juxtapose all four tracks (parts of your website) and make links to any signifiers that repeat” (243).

“This genre, which Ulmer terms “mystory,” combines autobiography, public history, and popular myth and culture . . . Ulmerian mystory provides us with a first, possibly preliminary, model of how to write hypermedia” (Landow 307).

“A mystory is always specific to its composer, constituting a kind of personal periodic table of cognitive elements, representing one individual’s intensive reserve” (Landow vii-viii).

“What your actual wide image will have been cannot be determined until the end of your career, as expressed in the pattern of lived events and works, whatever they might be” (Ulmer, *Internet* 248).

“Life is meaningful only when people feel that the psychic energy they expend in the course of their daily life strengthens their self” (Csikszentmihalyi, *Optimal* 377).

“Ulmer reminds me . . . that I am taking on this mystory quest to enable me to understand myself so that I can see how best I can solve the problems facing my Community” (Boyd *Mystory*).

Whatever is Mystory

The word ‘quodlibet’ is literally translated from the Greek to mean ‘what pleases’ or simply a ‘whatever.’ The *Merriam Webster Dictionary Online* defines ‘quodlibet’ as a “philosophical and intellectually stimulating debate” or “a whimsical medley of familiar tunes or texts” (“Quodlibet”). Musician Weird Al Yankovic always includes one polka quodlibet of popular music on his parody albums, combining songs together with the unifying rhythm of the polka beat from his accordion. A quodlibet is a mash-up of musical, textual and, I will argue, also visual elements that are quilted together by a common theme, juxtaposed as in collage, decoupage and montage. In the case of a debate, it is the theme or thesis statement that quilts the quodlibet together.

A mystory is a hypertextual quodlibet which makes use of every notion of the word, the end result is that the mystoriographer searches for the unifying rhythm that is then translated into the emblem and wide image that brings together the discourses addressed in the popcycle. According to Ulmer, the wide image “represent[s] one individual’s intensive reserve” (*Internet* viii). The wide image is the beat or the mood of the quodlibet and Ulmer states that “[t]he wide image is invented as much as it is discovered: it is a stimulation, a forcing into appearance of something that is immaterial, a field of energy, an orientation that is an emergent pattern that exists only holistically and not in its parts or elements . . .” (*Invention* 94).

Heidegger would call this mood *Stimmung*, which Ulmer concludes is not internal to the mystoriographer and his or her mystory but “an attunement between the person and the environment” (218). While a mystory is constructed by mixing and mashing up images, sounds, texts, and videos from incongruous but personal and internet sources, the emblem that the mystoriographer pulls from this quodlibet is a “magic tool . . . a step-by-step shift of focus away from the plot line . . . using logic that is conductive, a “liquid architecture” rather than a solid framework (Ulmer, *Internet* 228). Inventing an emblem (or finding a ready-made) is the path to finding the wide image, or “the image of the wide scope” and consists of “(1) the feeling evoked by the image; (2) “metaphysics”—what the image reveals about what the world is like, how things are or how the world works; (3) morality: given the first two points, how one should live (what one should do)” (*Internet* 10). The purpose of the mystory, like the purpose of a quodlibet, is to find a pattern through hypertexting the popcycle websites together:

The pattern emerges not at the level of meaning or theme (these may be derived or inferred from the pattern). Rather, the pattern forms at the level of repeating signifiers—words and graphics—which is why each discourse level of the mystory must be document with details that address the senses. (6)

Once one has worked with a mystory and found his or her emblem, the mystoriographer is ready, according to Ulmer in his book, *Electronic Monuments*,

to become an “egent” who is “a consultant . . . concerned with the changes affecting human agency in electracy” (xiii). Ulmer calls the practice of eagents, “EmerAgency . . . whose purpose is to witness, monitor, the process relating knowledge, problems and politics” (xiv). In fact, it is in recognizing the memes that pervade our subconscious selves that make us eligible to find the “existential refrain” between the main discourses of the institutions that make up our lives:

The popcycle is so named to reflect the circulation of ideas or memes through all the institutions, with any of the discourses being a potential source for materials used in any of the other discourses. (19)

Mihalyi Csikszentmihalyi, in his book *The Evolving Self*, discussed the importance of being aware of the memes that infiltrated one’s unconscious mind by asking questions about the themes and ideas that formed the bedrock of one’s interpellated self. Controllers of information media compete for memespace in an audience member’s brain and what can be an idea that “can help improve our lives [can] become an addiction when they make us act against our interests. It is often difficult to tell, however, when that line is crossed” (144). Csikszentmihalyi asked the question, “[a]re there some memes—for example, the flag, ‘mother,’ the dollar, health, television—that control your behavior, without your quite knowing why?” (144). Along the same lines, Ulmer states that the Internet is “a prosthesis of the unconscious mind . . . that give[s] citizens access to the premises [memes] of their judgments by bringing . . . orality and literacy . . . into a cooperative relationship . . .” as the mystoriographer works through constructing an

interpellated self through the experience of writing by intuition by addressing the different discourses of the popcycle (*Internet* 188). “We are building this path . . . between the personal and political, between the private and collective . . . as we go (189).

The idea is that the mystory is a ‘whatever’ that leads to something else, a something else that Ulmer insists is a way that incorporates the Humanities back into conversation with the other institutions of society, that “the dilemmas of the practical world are fundamentally resistant to policies that neglect the human question” (*Internet* 2). The Humanities are concerned with creativity and inventiveness and these are negentropic forces in the universe that have been neglected. Ulmer admonishes that “taking responsibility for these experiences must be separated from the literate formats of courses, exams, lectures semesters” and that “we should consider this moment as a time for invention” (5).

Inventing Whatever

Ulmer invented an online consultancy as “one possible response education might take up . . . [t]he experiment involves testing a new practice of education for a civilization of the Internet (*Electronic* xi). The EmerAgency, as he calls it, “adapt[s] arts and letters education to the Internet and to digital computing in general (xii). Ulmer further states:

The history of invention shows that the greatest problem solvers are those who somehow intuitively learned how to think with the whole popcycle . . . [t]hus one thing researchers have to do to participate in the EmerAgency is to construct their personal Rosetta Stone as a backstory . . . The mystory is

a cognitive [meme] map locating the maker's position in each of the popcycle institutions . . . such a crossroads exists in virtually every person's biography, marking the border or destiny of identity. Mapping this intersection is one way of providing testimony as a witness in the creation of public policy. The mystory helps the agents experience the truth of the EmerAgency slogan: Problems B Us. (21)

In *Internet Invention*, the final exercise Ulmer gives the mystoriographer is to “make a website consultation on the public policy issues related to a current world crisis” (323). Some of the world crises and public policy issues Ulmer suggests addressing are in “child rearing (abuse), bookkeeping (fraud), investment (scams), car-driving (wrecks), beer drinking (alcoholism), drug-taking (addictions), gun-toting (murders), sweets eating (obesity), property owning (sprawl).” (*Electronic* 257). The result, Ulmer hopes, is to “enlist netizens in the creative process of designing contemporary wisdom, and to relate wisdom with knowledge . . . public policy formation comes from the awareness of those in power that their actions are being monitored by agents worldwide . . .” (258).

Ulmer states, “[o]ur method is to study problems with the same analytical care of conventional consultants, but with the motive of seeking in this information possible correspondences.” In his interview with Joel Weishaus, Ulmer talked about using the mystory as a way of making correspondences that will inevitably lead to a ‘eureka moment,’ and that creativity can be learned through specific relays between the student and the world. “About the teaching,” Ulmer stated, “I learned that I cannot simply tell students what the method is: they have to discover it for themselves. Not from scratch, of course, but I have to create an

environment, a situation, in which the students have a Eureka experience”
(Weishaus).

Gregory Ulmer created the *Florida Research Ensemble* (FRE) as a virtual
emerAgency to which he and others have applied the theories and techniques of
the Humanities to problems of the world.

Over the past eight years the FRE has used Internet
collaboration to produce numerous exhibitions, books,
articles, CD-ROMs, DVD-Data, videos, lectures, panel
discussions and websites . . . Projects include *Imaging Place*,
which is a virtual reality project that combines panoramic
video, and three-dimensional virtual worlds to document
situations where the forces of globalization are impacting the
lives of individuals in local communities and has been
ongoing since 1997. (*Florida*)

Imaging Place includes communities in Miami, Beijing, Warsaw, Appalachia,
and other cities in Russia, Taiwan and Mexico. Another project of the FRE is
“Playamancy” which uses a monitoring web camera to perform a “beach augury”
which counts and accounts for beachgoers outside the Edison Hotel in Miami
(*Florida*). The extended project by members of the FRE from 1998 to present
“explored(s) the history, geopolitics and inhabitants of the Miami River, as it
became the problem site of Haitian refugees, Caribbean culture and shipping”
(*Florida*).

At the heart of the [mystory] pedagogy is a certain view of
human motivation: a young person might be more interested
in investigating the superfund cleanup in her community if
she recognized the lyrical principle that the details about the
dangers to the environment provided a complex expression of

her own sense of being. I hesitate to call the kind of writing or production such a student might undertake "poetry" or "art," but there is no doubt that these aesthetic practices must be combined with the empirical ones before we are able to grasp holistically the true condition of our problematic world. (Weishaus 15)

Whatever Communities

The work of the 'whatever,' then, becomes one of learning to become part of an "imagined community," a term coined by Benedict Anderson in his book, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (Bolton 84). "It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communities" (Bolton 84). Real places like Brooklyn, New York is an imagined community as are social digital platforms such as Facebook or Ning. Imagined communities have existed online in the form of popular culture fandoms like the fans of Josh Groban, who call themselves "Grobanites" and the *Spotlight Starman* group that grew together around a television show and continues, like the Grobanites, to do charitable work beyond the intentions of their original community formation (Shirky 66). Ulmer suggests that the Humanities can also serve as an imagined community to better serve the world under the auspices of an "emerAgency":

Imaging Florida is a contribution to a virtual organization called the emerAgency, which is an experimental consulting group. In trying to show you something about this organization I hope to figure out what it is myself. Its purpose is to improve the world, or if not improve the world, then at least to exist as itself, to come into being or into conversation

if not into being. Some day, in the context of problem solving, someone will say: We have tried everything and nothing works very well. It is time to consult with the emerAgency.” (Weishaus)

Henry Jenkins, in his book *Convergence Culture*, has described the “engaged youth paradigm,” a term coined by W. Lance Bennett in which refers to, “the argument that young people are developing greater civic engagement and social consciousness through their involvement in participatory culture” (Jenkins 324). Jenkins speaks of active media participants in contrast to the passive audience consumers of the past in what is now a “convergence culture . . . (c)onvergence occurs within the brains of individual consumers and through their social interactions with others. Each of us constructs our own personal mythology from bits and fragments of information extracted from the media flow . . .” (Jenkins, *Convergence* 3-4).

Csikzentmihalyi agrees that the Humanities have a contribution to make by better understanding and teaching eumemics, to “limit the reproduction of memes” or more explicitly, “contesting the spread of ideas that . . . require energy . . . and lack complexity . . .” and also by “taking action on the assessment of the relative complexity of various choices . . . and practicing the principles for discerning choices that lead to harmony” (*Evolving* 167-169). Csikzentmihalyi further stated these ideals are creative principles which fall within the realm of the humanists to expand and to put into service:

Whether we like it or not, our species has become dependent on creativity . . . [I]n the last few millennia evolution has been

transformed from being almost exclusively a matter of mutations in the chemistry of genes to being more and more a matter of changes in memes—in the information that we learn and in turn transmit to others. If the right memes are selected, we survive; otherwise we do not. (*Creativity* 318)

Ulmer might hope that more mystoriographers will connect through a network such as the emerAgency to become consultants with the Florida Research Ensemble, but the main point of creating a mystery is to become more enlightened to the patterns in our lives that will lead us to more creativity and invention and can help solve the problems that our collective humanity has created for ourselves through ignorant meme replication. Ulmer states:

Perhaps the lesson of our experience is the obvious point that to become something one must first desire it, and that this desire must be directly a part of education. My pedagogy is an attempt to model my eureka experience as a relay the students may use to get to their own similar experience. Eureka has to be learned, the same as anything else. I recognize in myself then at least two desires: to improve the world; to say something (something important or beautiful--or both). Presumably the two are not incompatible: I would say in a beautiful way how to improve the world!" (Weishaus)

MyStory Mystery 5

I looked at my own mystery and found a pattern of repeating signifiers in that I have long conspired to work for protection of the oceans and that my heroes have been those who have seen the beauty and been awed by both the natural world and the cosmos and our tenuous position at the threshold. I thought about how I might use the self-knowledge I have gained to help my community, how I might participate in some kind of local emerAgency as a humanities consultant and I

decided to return to volunteering at the Aquarium of the Pacific (*AOP*) in Long Beach, California.

I am already involved in several projects to change the unsustainable practice of shark-finning by working with the Roddenberry Dive Team whose videos I linked on my mystery website *Below*. My *Emblem* and *Trout of Doubt* websites feature the out-of-sorts half-fish/half-man image that led me to believe I might best serve my community as a volunteer scuba diver. This has required me to become Rescue Diver certified and to update my first aid/CPR/AED/O2 certificates, to pass both a rigorous water skills and endurance exam, to pass a dive medicine physical exam and to agree to one four-hour shift once a week for a year. Before I began my educational journey at California State University, Long Beach, I was an education volunteer at the aquarium and I feel that returning to work in the animal husbandry department as a fish-person liaison is a good fit for my skills, talent and creativity.

How might my Humanities education help my community in this fashion? I plan to work with the diving community at the aquarium to help fulfill their mission statement: “to instill a sense of wonder, respect and stewardship for the Pacific Ocean, its inhabitants & ecosystems” (*Aquarium 1*). On my mystery site *Denver*, I have linked a website to John Denver singing two songs, “Yellowstone: Coming Home” and “Calypso” (the latter song about Jacques Cousteau) and in juxtaposing two lines from each of these songs, I have a motto: “Returning, forever returning, coming home... To live on the land we must learn from the

sea.” I am returning to the work I once loved with a new skillset (all of my scuba updates and my higher education credentials) and working in an environment where I feel most at home with people who share those qualities.

APPENDIX

MYSTORY MYSTORY PROJECT WEBSITES

APPENDIX

MyStory Mystory Project Websites:

<<https://sites.google.com/site/onceuponamystory/>>
<<https://sites.google.com/site/onceuponamystory/home/pdq>>
<<https://sites.google.com/site/onceuponamystory/11th-dimension>>
<<https://sites.google.com/site/onceuponamystory/3rd-dimension>>
<<https://sites.google.com/site/onceuponamystory/3rd-meaning>>
<<https://sites.google.com/site/onceuponamystory/3-faces-of-rushmore>>
<<https://sites.google.com/site/onceuponamystory/4th-mt-rushmore>>
<<https://sites.google.com/site/onceuponamystory/above>>
<<https://sites.google.com/site/onceuponamystory/al>>
<<https://sites.google.com/site/onceuponamystory/alien>>
<<https://sites.google.com/site/onceuponamystory/ambulance>>
<<https://sites.google.com/site/onceuponamystory/aop>>
<<https://sites.google.com/site/onceuponamystory/art-in-action>>
<<https://sites.google.com/site/onceuponamystory/atlantis>>
<<https://sites.google.com/site/onceuponamystory/authorrection>>
<<https://sites.google.com/site/onceuponamystory/scuba>>

<<https://sites.google.com/site/onceuponamystory/biblioholic>>
<<https://sites.google.com/site/onceuponamystory/billions>>
<<https://sites.google.com/site/onceuponamystory/brain-drawing>>
<<https://sites.google.com/site/onceuponamystory/bubbles>>
<<https://sites.google.com/site/onceuponamystory/calypso>>
<<https://sites.google.com/site/onceuponamystory/coati>>
<<https://sites.google.com/site/onceuponamystory/cooper>>
<<https://sites.google.com/site/onceuponamystory/cousteau>>
<<https://sites.google.com/site/onceuponamystory/Denver>>
<<https://sites.google.com/site/onceuponamystory/derridada>>
<<https://sites.google.com/site/onceuponamystory/dolphin-dramas>>
<<https://sites.google.com/site/onceuponamystory/elementary-smackdown>>
<<https://sites.google.com/site/onceuponamystory/emblem>>
<<https://sites.google.com/site/onceuponamystory/fault-lines>>
<<https://sites.google.com/site/onceuponamystory/fred>>
<<https://sites.google.com/site/onceuponamystory/free-falling>>
<<https://sites.google.com/site/onceuponamystory/helen>>
<<https://sites.google.com/site/onceuponamystory/hugs>>
<<https://sites.google.com/site/onceuponamystory/i>>
<<https://sites.google.com/site/onceuponamystory/kaua-i>>

<<https://sites.google.com/site/onceuponamystory/king>>
<<https://sites.google.com/site/onceuponamystory/marineland>>
<<https://sites.google.com/site/onceuponamystory/memes>>
<<https://sites.google.com/site/onceuponamystory/method>>
<<https://sites.google.com/site/onceuponamystory/mongo>>
<<https://sites.google.com/site/onceuponamystory/omega>>
<<https://sites.google.com/site/onceuponamystory/pdq>>
<<https://sites.google.com/site/onceuponamystory/floyd>>
<<https://sites.google.com/site/onceuponamystory/a-popcycle>>
<<https://sites.google.com/site/onceuponamystory/puritans>>
<<https://sites.google.com/site/onceuponamystory/t>>
<<https://sites.google.com/site/onceuponamystory/skate>>
<<https://sites.google.com/site/onceuponamystory/starman>>
<<https://sites.google.com/site/onceuponamystory/syncretism>>
<<https://sites.google.com/site/onceuponamystory/the-talent>>
<<https://sites.google.com/site/onceuponamystory/the-talent/talent-2>>
<<https://sites.google.com/site/onceuponamystory/the-force>>
<<https://sites.google.com/site/onceuponamystory/mary-ellen-carter>>
<<https://sites.google.com/site/onceuponamystory/red-shoes>>
<<https://sites.google.com/site/onceuponamystory/stratford-witch>>
<<https://sites.google.com/site/onceuponamystory/thoughts>>

<<https://sites.google.com/site/onceuponamystory/the-underground>>

<<https://sites.google.com/site/onceuponamystory/training>>

<<https://sites.google.com/site/onceuponamystory/trout-of-doubt>>

<<https://sites.google.com/site/onceuponamystory/watsu>>

<<https://sites.google.com/site/onceuponamystory/webbed-fingers>>

<<https://sites.google.com/site/onceuponamystory/why-mystory>>

<<https://sites.google.com/site/onceuponamystory/wilber>>

<<https://sites.google.com/site/onceuponamystory/worlds-fair>>

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