

ABSTRACT

TEMPLE, NICHOLAS MATTHEW. Re-conceptualizing Fantasy Theme Analysis in a Digital Online Context. (Under the direction of Dr. Kenneth Zagacki).

Fantasy Theme Analysis is an approach to doing rhetorical criticism that arose in the early 1980s. It provides a lens through which we can view and understand decidedly postmodern rhetoric that is fragmentary and devoid of any one specific author. Rather, the kind of rhetoric that FTA works with is that of the group where multiple voices produce themes that lead the critic to the rhetorical vision that guides that group. Unfortunately, FTA is an approach that seems to have come before its time; it was developed before the digital communication context where such fragmentary rhetoric is the norm as opposed to the exception. With this dissertation, I argue that FTA is particularly well suited to the new digital environment because the text is less fixed, more ephemeral, and less attributed to a specific author. In order to support this argument, I put FTA in conversation with such relevant philosophies as Kenneth Burke's dramatism and theories such as Agenda Setting Theory. I then examine three unique case studies that highlight different facets of FTA that prove its use in the digital context. Through this analysis, we ultimately see how a pre-existing approach to doing rhetorical criticism may be updated and applied to current rhetorical contexts.

Re-conceptualizing Fantasy Theme Analysis in a Digital Online Context

by
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DEDICATION

To my soon-to-be wife Nicky for being there for me through it all.

BIOGRAPHY

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CHAPTER 1. DISSERTATION OVERVIEW

Introduction

Theory building is a difficult process. So too is the process of developing a method of applying the theory. Method can inspire theory and theory can inspire method. There is usually no rhyme or reason to which one precedes the other or if one even springs from the other at all. However, if both are present then the scholarly knowledge that results is usually quite rich. Despite this fact, relatively few new theories and methods are developed and with good reason. Theory building is slow and sometimes painful. In order to present a new theory or method, one has to be prepared to see incredible amounts of time and energy subjected to intense scrutiny and criticism. Sometimes this is a good process, as it leads to ironing out the inconsistencies and pushing the theory in a positive direction as it grows and matures. In other cases, critics search for and find fatal flaws in the theory, perhaps shutting the theory building process down or at the very least crippling it.

Such may have been the case with Ernest Bormann's Fantasy Theme Analysis (FTA) and the theory that was developed from it, Symbolic Convergence Theory (SCT). In 1972 Bormann introduced FTA as a new approach to rhetorical analysis, which he had been developing in seminars with graduate students since 1970 (Bormann, 1982). Although the emergence of SCT pushed the conceptual framework of FTA into the realm

of social science, this initial emphasis on rhetorical analysis is important to note and is what this dissertation is most concerned with. FTA predates SCT and as such the entire conceptual framework should be rooted in a critical, interpretive, and predominantly rhetorical emphasis.

Within ten years, his method was under attack by Mohrmann (see Mohrmann, 1980, 1982a, and Mohrmann, 1982b), who engaged Bormann in a heated debate over the legitimacy of the method in the 1982 volume of the *Quarterly Journal of Speech*. While some of the criticisms of FTA proved to be more damning than others, Mohrmann's attacks very likely slowed the development of the method and, subsequently, the theory. It did so by discouraging scholarly work that employed FTA, at least in rhetorical studies, for much of the next decade. Indeed, as a reviewer Mohrmann even required one FTA scholar to revise a publication submission by omitting all FTA terminology (Mohrmann, 1982b). Bormann (1982) responded that actions like this crippled the analysis, but Mohrmann (1982b) contended that the analysis could stand on its own without FTA terminology and was perhaps better for having removed that initial language. What matters here is that developmental research on FTA was slowed by the debate and that other reviewers were probably persuaded to engage in similar censorship.

Still, both FTA and SCT have continued to attract scholarly attention. Indeed, both perspectives frequently appear in communication textbooks, as noted by Bormann, Cragan, & Shields (1994). There have been multiple FTAs performed by

various scholars in the nearly four decades that it has been around, even in spite of the strong attacks made by Mohrmann and others. In my view, this work has been extremely valuable. In a response to criticism by Joshua Gunn claiming that the popularity of SCT is in decline, Bormann, Cragan, & Shields (2003) assert that the number of professional articles and books using SCT exceeds 485. Since the publication of Bormann, Cragan, & Shields' article, nearly seven years have passed and more research utilizing both the method¹ and the theory has been published.

For me, what is most interesting about the current decade's work utilizing the concepts of FTA and SCT is not that it continues to exist, but rather how it continues to exist. Methods and theories grow over time, but in slightly different ways. Theories are the more changeable of the two, because theory building generally occurs through the application of that theory. In other words, the more scholars work with a given theory such as SCT, the more it develops; the less scholars work with it, the more it stagnates. Methods such as FTA also tend to grow over time, but their most basic tenets are usually ironed out long before current scholars use them. By their most basic tenets, I mean the skeletal set of rules and vocabulary that can be codified in a textbook.

¹ While I understand that there may be some debate over whether FTA should be classified as an approach or as a method, I will tend to use the terms interchangeably. A full discussion on the distinctions between these two terms is beyond the scope of this dissertation, but some explanation is warranted for this choice. "Method" is the more objectionable term to use, but my use of it is supported by Edwin Black's early designation of the approaches to doing rhetorical criticism as "methods" in his book *Rhetorical Criticism: A Study in Method*. Black (1978) is not ambiguous in this designation, as evidenced by quotes such as this one: "the *methods* by which rhetorical criticism is practiced have changed since 1965" (Black, 1978, p. ix, emphasis mine). Due to this early designation, I feel that referring to FTA either as an approach or as a method of practicing rhetorical criticism is equally justified. I will refer to it as one or the other throughout the course of this dissertation, but both will mean a way of doing rhetorical criticism.

Granted, the vocabulary can develop as the situation calls for it, and has in the case of FTA, but rarely does one go back to the original vocabulary base and significantly alter it. For example, the unchanging core of FTA involves the use of fantasy themes, rhetorical visions, fantasy types, symbolic cues, to name a few. Methods and theories are applied in new and different contexts, and sometimes these contexts cause them to move away from their original foundations. Sometimes such growth is fruitful, but sometimes it is not. As will be discussed below, critics of FTA would argue that the latter is true. Specifically, in moving beyond the small group communication origins of FTA to more mass media contexts, scholars utilizing the method have come under critical scrutiny. The validity of such criticism is debatable because quite often, applying methods in new contexts can provide interesting perspectives that may not be evident in methods thought to be more appropriate to those contexts. The focus of this dissertation, however, is not upon the growth FTA has seen in mass media contexts, although I will certainly discuss that growth in detail and address the criticism of it. What is more interesting to me is how a return to the small group foundation of the method might inform analysis of FTA in a digital online context. In light of the most recent work utilizing FTA, it is precisely this foundation to which we must return because these (small group) roots may make the method particularly applicable in understanding online rhetoric.

Many novel FTA studies have been published or presented at conferences since 2000 that make use of data collected from the digital realm of the Internet. Indeed, as

of the writing of this dissertation, a quick search of the Communication and Mass Media Complete database inputting the search term “Fantasy Theme Analysis” brings up 35 essays, articles, and book chapters concerning FTA since 2000; of this number, 12 employ data collected from the internet. Although 12 publications do not constitute a majority of 35, they are a third of that total number, more than any other data type. To give an example of the spread of common data types, three were conducted using rhetoric from over a century ago, two were conducted using newspapers, two were conducted using movies, and three were conducted using television. There were other types, but there were not more than one or two of each current data type. While my survey is not in any way a full blown empirical study of database entries, it can be presumed to be a representative sample. Communication and Mass Media Complete is a prominent database for the Communication discipline and while it sometimes does not contain older materials that have not been converted to PDF files yet, it does tend to have the most current published articles as these are regularly converted to digital form as a matter of course.

Studies that examine rhetoric in digital media contexts are already common and are only becoming more so as time goes by. The publications that I discuss above are but a small fraction of the evidence that support that assertion. This proliferation is only to be expected, as people will utilize the communication media available to them. We have seen the age of the newspaper, the radio, and the television; now the current generation of scholars bears witness to the rise of the Internet. Warnick (2007)

discusses the importance of online rhetoric explicitly and implores rhetorical scholars to engage in expanded research programs focusing explicitly on rhetoric in the digital media context. I believe that current rhetorical critics who are popularizing FTA again are doing just that. My goal here is to link these otherwise disparate essays and publications together and provide more focus to that research. In short, I aim to enact a program of research for applying FTA in digital contexts.

The contribution that this dissertation makes is twofold. Broadly speaking, my purpose is to answer Warnick's (2007) call for new methods to explore online rhetoric. Although the method itself is not new, I will argue that it is particularly well suited to the new digital context and may yet contribute much towards a canon of methodologies designed to study digital rhetoric. In working with FTA in a digital context, I intend to demonstrate how rhetorical scholars might begin to think about applying old critical methods to new contexts, which I hope will lead to further scholarship in developing new methods for such contexts. There is no specific "digital rhetorical criticism method" that may be developed for digital contexts and digital contexts alone, but there are certainly methods both old and yet to be developed that may suit the digital context better than some or even most others. My more specific purpose here will be to explore how FTA can be updated and applied to such digital contexts. In other words, I hope to provide meaningful contributions to building the method. To address these purposes, I propose the following overarching questions:

- *How does FTA function in different communication contexts?*

- *To what extent does FTA represent a method that is particularly well suited to digital contexts?*
- *To what extent does FTA move us to more scientific versus inventive ways of doing rhetorical inquiry? What can be done to mitigate this possible move?*

The increasing percentage of FTAs conducted on internet based forms of communication is significant and perhaps even circumvents some of the more damning of the criticisms levied against the method years ago. Before the popularization of the Internet, many FTAs relied upon more static text-based sources. Even those that focused on media outlets such as television used fixed media moments in time. As will be discussed below, this was the source of some criticism of the work as it moved away from its origins in small group communication. Fantasy themes certainly exist in many outlets as evidenced by the literature cited below, which is part of the strength of the method. Yet the fact remains that a significant part of the true strength of FTA lies in the orality present at its roots - an orality that lends itself to a distinct immediacy of response. By orality, I mean a secondary orality defined in the same manner as Ong (2002) it when he identified a kind of orality predicated upon print culture where people speak aloud but are think in text. This kind of orality becomes particularly important in a digital context where text is nigh ubiquitous and yet imminently malleable as Lanham (1993) indicates. It is the ability to study the immediate responses emphasized by small group secondary orality, I contend, that separates FTA from other methods of rhetorical criticism and allows for it to potentially be particularly well

suiting to a highly interactive online context. This potential aptitude could explain the increasing numbers of FTAs conducted using data collected in an online environment. Regardless of its success or lack thereof in other areas, I argue in this dissertation that FTA is particularly well suited to the new digital environment because the text is less fixed, more ephemeral, and less attributed to a specific author. These qualities are more in line with orality, which returns FTA to its foundations in the work of Bales' small group analysis. FTA could have been introduced before its time, but to argue this point is to discount much of the quality work that scholars have accomplished with it and I do not mean to do that. However, I do believe that the rise of the digital environment is an exigence to which FTA, perhaps more than any other existing critical method, is particularly well suited to respond due to the similarities between small group communication and computer mediated communication, which I will discuss in more depth in Chapter 2 of this dissertation. Interestingly, the very number of FTAs seems to have risen since the advent and popularity of the Internet. Now more than ever before in its relatively short history, FTA is coming into its own. The current digital communication context provides FTA as a method with the opportunity to grow in new and interesting ways even as it returns to its roots just as I believe Bormann originally intended it to grow, even if he likely did not expect such development to bring it back around full circle.

In order to provide initial support for these arguments, the rest of this dissertation will be devoted to exploring how FTA can be utilized in the current digital

environment. To do that, I will show how others have used FTA and discuss the ways in which they speak to a new digital orality as explored by Lanham in his 1993 book, *The Electronic Word: Democracy, Technology, and the Arts*. Despite its age, the book is groundbreaking in exposing the ways in which the era of print text is being broken open by the new electronic text, which resembles oral culture more than print culture. Understanding FTA in the context of what I call a kind of 'digital orality' is vital, for that is where scholars are pushing it. However, in order to engage in these explorations, I must first discuss the history of FTA and its criticisms. It is crucial to understand what has brought FTA to this point in order to predict how it will continue to grow in a digital environment. Also, an understanding of how other scholars have criticized FTA is important. Some of these criticisms have centered on the relationship between small group and mass media communication; to address these, I will attempt to more clearly outline the difference between these two contexts and how they work together within FTA.

Fantasy Theme Analysis

FTA arose from Bormann's interest in the work of Robert Bales, who had been studying group fantasizing. Bormann considered the idea of group fantasizing as relevant not only to small group communication but also to mass communication and rhetoric. According to Bormann, "Group fantasizing correlates with individual

fantasizing and extrapolates to speaker-audience fantasizing and to the dream merchants of the mass media.” (Bormann, 1972, p. 396). Bormann and those inspired to use FTA after him would spend many years providing the evidence to back up such a grand claim, although some critics of the method would remain unconvinced. The concept of fantasizing caused Bormann to draw the connection between small group communication and the messages that ‘chain out’, or spread through ever larger audiences up to and including mass media audiences. According to FTA, people in small groups sometimes ‘dramatize’ the content of their conversations. They begin to speak of “characters, real or fictitious, playing out a dramatic situation in a setting removed in time and space from the here-and-now transactions of the group.” (Bormann, 1972, p. 397). The separation in time and space is the key factor to note in this description. Discussions of what is immediately happening within the group are not considered fantasy themes. Rather, recollections of past events or dreams of what could happen in the future are the stuff of fantasy themes. This is where a group constructs its social reality and develops a common culture. According to Bormann, who was interpreting Bales, this process can and does happen even among zero-history groups. As those in the groups in Bales’ studies communicated with one another and fantasy themes chained out within them, the “...tempo of the conversation would pick up. People would grow excited, interrupt one another, blush, laugh, forget their self consciousness” (Bormann, 1972, p. 397). For a fantasy theme to function as such, it must serve to carry some form of persuasive message that captures the imagination and the passion of a

person encountering it. It must function to advance some important part of the group drama by highlighting a concept deemed important by those participating in that drama. Indeed, Bormann, Knutson, & Musolf (1997) later add precision to what a fantasy theme is when they describe how fantasy themes function in contexts larger than small groups. They define it as, “message that catches and focuses [people’s] attention until they imaginatively participate in images and actions stimulated by the message” (Bormann, Knutson, & Musolf, 1997, p. 255).

Fantasy themes may be embedded with instructive topoi, moral instructions, metaphorical comparisons, and/or definitions of various concepts important to the group, but they are more than the rhetorical concepts that may compose them. Fantasy themes serve to articulate specific aspects of the group ideology that impact the larger rhetorical vision of the group in tangible ways. They are similar to McGee (1980)’s notion of the “ideograph”, but whereas McGee’s ideographs focus on the macro ideological level of critique, Bormann’s fantasy themes focus on the micro thematic persuasive messages that serve to build such an ideology for a group. The group, through varying degrees of interaction, explicitly socially constructs the fantasy themes. Foss (2004) highlights the centrality of the active construction of themes when she explains that, “The term *fantasy* is designed to capture the constructed nature of the theme. Fantasy themes tell a story about a group’s experience that constitutes a constructed reality for the participants” (Foss, 2004, p. 111). In short, fantasy themes are words, phrases, or statements and they may be embedded within, carried by, or

composed of metaphors, topoi, metaphors, and other tropes and figures but they must serve to interpret past events and/or envision future scenarios for the group. Fantasy themes involve the active *interpretation* of events, rhetorical or otherwise, that are inducted into the group drama. Group members in Bales' study would engage in both verbal and nonverbal communication as they participated more and more in the construction of their evolving drama.

As Bormann and other scholars conducted research using the method, the lexicon for it began to grow to accommodate growing list of findings. In short, the method became more sophisticated with use. Originally, the primary two terms were fantasy themes and rhetorical visions. Bormann defines rhetorical visions as the composite dramas which form symbolic realities for people by catching on within their groups. According to Bormann, "A rhetorical vision is constructed from fantasy themes that chain out in face-to-face interacting groups, in speaker-audience transactions, in viewers of television broadcasts, in listeners to radio programs, and in all the diverse settings for public and intimate communication in a given society" (Bormann, 1972, p. 398). Rhetorical visions reveal what is important to a given society at a certain point in time. Fantasy themes form the basis of the rhetorical visions and illustrate the concerns of the collective public consciousness. However, one can see again in the definition of the rhetorical vision the roots of the theory in oral interaction. Even television broadcasts, according to Bormann, derive from and motivate the oral interaction between people.

From fantasy themes and rhetorical visions, Bormann's work soon revealed the need for another classification that was broader than a specific fantasy theme but narrower than a full-on rhetorical vision; he called this classification "fantasy types". Fantasy types fall on a continuum between fantasy themes and rhetorical visions. They are composed of fantasy themes but are not an allusion to or a label for a whole rhetorical vision. Instead, they are more of a category or a genre of fantasy themes. A fantasy type, as described by Bormann (1982b), is, "...categorized [by] a family of fantasy themes...[that are] similar in basic storyline, mood, and tone" (p. 295). Movies and novels can be classified into shorthand terms such as 'horror', 'romance', or 'sci-fi', and so can fantasy themes. Bormann uses the example of 'Carter has played dirty politics' as being enough to trigger associations to multiple fantasy themes including calling Reagan a racist and using the hostage crisis in Iran to avoid primary campaigns, among others (Bormann, 1982b).

Fantasy themes also involve the use of *dramatis personae*. These are the characters that recur repetitively in the themes and visions. Usually there are heroes and villains composing the drama, either fighting for what is 'good' or seeking to threaten the social order. These personae can be vague abstractions personified by the drama such as God or 'The People' (Bormann, 1972). However, characters within the drama can also be real people. The persona of a real person is not the same thing as the person in the flesh. Instead, it is the character of that person as represented in the minds of the people and portrayed in the media. For example, there is a George W.

Bush persona and George W. Bush the man. Bush and his aides attempt to manage the Bush persona and at the same time people encountering the persona attribute certain characteristics to it on their own. What ultimately chains out amongst people in their groups is the Bush persona. This persona is dynamic, however, and subject to change with group interaction. The ways in which a society responds to and changes these personae says much about that culture.

In the first decade of its inception, Bormann and others did much to advance the method. Much of Bormann's own work centered on the political climate of the time, as it was a rich source of data. With his study of the Eagleton affair, Bormann (1973) addressed the interrelationships among fantasies in different contexts. This study, in particular, emphasized the power of the electronic media to provide dramatizations that can cause group fantasies to chain out through large sections of the American populace. Such fantasies can become powerful enough, Bormann claimed, to affect voting behavior. Another study by Bormann (1982a) also emphasized the role of the media by analyzing how the disjointed dual television coverage of the Reagan inaugural and the Iran hostage release actually served to reinforce the Reagan persona as one associated with the rhetorical vision of restoration and renewal. Yet here as elsewhere, Bormann clearly emphasizes that most television coverage is not actually composed of fantasy themes as he has defined them. Television coverage is instantaneous for the viewer, especially when it is live, and thus exists in the here-and-now. It can reveal underlying fantasy themes and can affect the chaining out of them, but it is not in itself

composed of fantasy themes. Bormann (1982a) contrasts television coverage with newspaper coverage, saying that newspapers are composed of fantasy themes because they are accounts that take place after the event. Ultimately, he establishes FTA as a method that, while rooted in the immediate nature of small group communication, is still more concerned with how small groups construct their realities based on narratives of past events and *dramatis personae*.

For a brief time, Bormann and those working with FTA utilized an empirical method called a 'Q-sort'. This was a survey that allowed users to rate the salience of fantasy themes collected via rhetorical analysis to their own beliefs. Bormann, Koester, & Bennett (1978) used this method to test political cartoons as indicators of salient shared fantasies. They wanted to know if these political cartoons served as the mass media version of the 'inside joke' for groups to respond to and recall larger rhetorical visions. The concept of the inside joke is an important one in FTA, as it functions as the symbolic cue that hints at entire fantasy types or rhetorical visions. They found that, "...the cartoon did function as the mass media equivalent of the inside joke for our sample of respondents." (Bormann, Koester, & Bennett, 1978, p. 329. (Here the word 'joke' must not be confused for the humor inherent in a cartoon. Bormann's 'inside joke' is not a joke per se, but more a symbolic cue. The vocabulary of the method and SCT later evolved to reflect this, as inside jokes ceased to be referred to as such, but instead simply became 'symbolic cues'.) As Bormann, Koester, & Bennet state, political cartoons are the mass media *equivalent* of an inside joke. In this instance, the Q-Sort

analysis served as an important social scientific tool that suggested that the political cartoons did actually link to salient rhetorical visions. Bormann, Kroll, Watters, & McFarland (1984) also utilized this method to study the way in which voters in a particular city clustered into specific rhetorical communities based on rhetorical vision. There were not many other Q-Sorts, however. Despite Bormann's desire to link rhetorical and social scientific methods and the success of these two studies, Q-Sorts seemed to fall out of mainstream FTA.

This discussion of FTA as it has existed up to the present day has accomplished two things. First and foremost, it has set the stage for a discussion of FTA in the current environment. In order to understand what is being done with the method currently, the history and major precepts of the method must be understood. However, I have also sought to emphasize what I see to be the importance of FTA's roots in dynamic interaction and a primarily oral style of communication. The dynamic oral interactive roots of the method will become vital when I enter into my discussion of FTA in a digital context. Now I turn to a discussion of FTA in the broader context of the history of rhetoric as a whole. Following that, I address some of the criticisms levied against FTA because these, too, must be understood. As I suggested earlier, they may have slowed research on FTA through the 1990's, despite Bormann's responses to them. Throughout the course of my dissertation, I intend to demonstrate how the nature of rhetoric in a digital environment serves to answer those criticisms more effectively than I believe even Bormann himself was able to do.

Classical and Modern Connections

Although FTA developed more out of small group communication than out of any hard and fast rhetorical theory, it did not develop in a rhetorical vacuum, so to speak. Bormann did not publish his initial essay in any of the social scientific journals or in communication theory journals. He did not present his work as a new methodology for small group communication analysis, although several subsequent researchers including Bormann himself certainly took it in that direction with SCT. Instead, he aimed his work at an audience of rhetorical scholars, publishing it in the *Quarterly Journal of Speech* and explaining what he saw as a novel method of rhetorical criticism. His methodology was one of several that arose because of an environment created by a 1957 *Western Speech* special issue devoted to criticism. According to Leff (1980) in an introduction to a similar issue nearly 25 years later, this 1957 issue decried the then current state of criticism and set about reforming the art, “by finding new and more useful approaches to rhetorical criticism” (Leff, 1980, p. 264). After this issue, many novel approaches to the art appeared. Leff said that, “Some of these approaches matured, assumed a fairly well defined form, and generated a substantial body of critical literature” (Leff, 1980, p. 264). FTA was one of these approaches.

Interestingly, many of these approaches seemed to break from classical rhetorical theory. Discussing these differences would be beyond the scope and purpose of this dissertation, but in keeping with the focus of this chapter I will demonstrate how

FTA specifically deviated from a more classical understanding of rhetoric. FTA is not concerned with any one speaker. It focuses on themes “chained out” by many people, each one of them a rhetor in his or her own right but ultimately never attributed as the source of the themes. This would seem an anathema to ancient scholars of rhetoric. The reason for this is that many of these scholars focused more on the efforts of a lone speaker. The Sophists were well paid public speaking teachers, after all! When Gorgias supposedly convinced a city to erect a gold statue of him, it was he who was the rhetorician, not a multitude of voices. When Cicero spoke before the Roman Senate and wrote on the joining of eloquence and wisdom, he referred to an Orator Perfectus – not a mob rhetoric. Aristotle’s famous definition of rhetoric as “the faculty of observing in any given case the available means of persuasion” can (and has) be stretched in many ways, but Aristotle’s advice was to a single rhetor.

Of these scholars, Aristotle at least might have been sympathetic to an approach such as FTA when he claimed that rhetoric is the counterpart to dialectic; FTA could very well be viewed as a type of dialectic, albeit one between a multitude of rhetors either in a small group or linked by the mass media. Plato certainly demonstrated the viability of a dialectic existing between more than two people in his the *Gorgias* – although imperfectly by my thinking here since in that work Socrates for the most part engaged each of the characters in turn, rather than all at once. There were moments when the communication widened from one on one to a circle, but they were not common. Still, it is not too much of a stretch to assume that had he wanted to, Plato’s

Socrates could have continued his own variant of small group communication and knowledge production (as was so important to his beloved dialectic) rather than going back into one on one communication. If FTA is to be placed closer to the dialectic end of the dichotomy that Aristotle explored so long ago, then it is still a very important part of the rhetorical tradition. It is, in fact, quite easily arguable that participants in a dialectic are engaged in rhetoric. Bormann, however, carries the dialectic one step further into his rhetorical visions to explain how what comes of such dialectical themes “chaining out” are persuasive *in their own right* before and even beyond needing to be expressed by a sole rhetor utilizing them as the means of persuasion.

If one follows the argument thus far that FTA is closer to the dialectical end of the scale while maintaining elements of the explicitly rhetorical, then it should also serve to reason that FTA might actively participate in one of the earlier canons of rhetoric as elaborated by Cicero, *inventio*. Every rhetor must invent arguments from the means available to him or her. Fantasy themes that chain out in group communication are certainly resources at the disposal of such rhetors, whether the rhetors realize it or not. To this day in public speaking classes, instructors teach students to pull ideas and arguments from the public sphere. Students must look for what is important to their society at the current time and draw upon that to form arguments. What these students might be noticing and utilizing could be themes, if not Bormann’s fantasy themes. Utilizing fantasy themes common to one’s audience is an excellent way to identify with that audience, much as Cicero would have advised.

Vico would have certainly agreed hundreds of years later. He was concerned with the issue of ingenium, which scholars such as Serna (1980, 1983) point out is related to Cicero's inventio. Inventio as a canon has been divorced from rhetoric at various points in history by scholars such as Peter Ramus, but Vico actively sought to reunite this canon with rhetoric. Through ingenium, the rhetor makes connections between disparate facts. Serna (1983) demonstrates how ingenium actually divorces invention from reason because of these imaginative connections. It does not seem like too much of a stretch to claim that fantasy themes can (or perhaps even must) be the product of a kind of group ingenium. The group, in composing its narrative, draws connections between various dramatic elements, and these connections become the themes that chain out.

It is clear, then, that FTA can trace roots back to ancient and medieval thinking about rhetoric. However, the question arises as to what kind of modern environment might have engendered it? The answer must lie in the modern environment of the 1970s, although the more current environment seems an even more fertile context as I have argued throughout this dissertation. Bormann studied small group communication in an academic environment still focused on a sender – receiver model, despite attempts to move beyond it. As noted above, many ancient theorists seemed more concerned with this model, but by Bormann's writing communication was coming to be more understood to be a dynamic interaction with feedback loops. It could easily be many to many as easily as it could be one to one. The mass media of the time only

exacerbated this concept, and organizations became larger all the time. FTA also flourished during a time when ideology was more and more on the minds of rhetorical scholars. Around ten years after Bormann's initial publication, McGee (1980) published his now seminal work on the Ideograph. According to his thinking, "Human beings in collectivity behave and think differently than human beings in isolation." (McGee, 1980, p. 2) He goes on to elaborate his hypothesis that, "If a mass consciousness exists at all, it must be empirically 'present,' itself a thing obvious to those who participate in it, or, at least, empirically manifested in the language which communicates it." (1980, p. 4) For McGee, then, rhetoric is the container as opposed to the thing contained. It surrounds and pre-exists any and all communication. This would seem to locate FTA closer to McGee's side of the critical debate of the 1980s and 1990s, although to automatically place it there would be to act hastily. McGee claims that, "the only way to shape or soften power at the moment of its exercise is prior persuasion" (1980, p. 5). Where, however, does such prior persuasion come from? It must arise from somewhere. The very ideological climate so important to McGee must come into being through communication, and the process of understanding the origin of such a climate is the focus of FTA. Indeed, FTA does engage in the close reading that Leff (1990) advocates. Condit (1990), in critiquing McGee, makes the point clearly: "Bormann's fantasy theme critiques rely on close textual reading, as does that which is good in the fantasy theme school" (p. 331). Thus, FTA can examine the creation of the ideological climates that McGee describes by first focusing closely in on the themes as they chain out.

FTA stands among several modern methods of analysis such as Burkean analysis, narrative analysis, myth analysis, and metaphor analysis, among others. It perhaps bears the most similarity to McGee's ideographs, as indicated above. One could even argue that, in preceding McGee's notion of the ideograph, FTA perhaps served to inform McGee to some extent. Certainly, the ideograph seems to bear a close resemblance to the rhetorical visions and fantasy themes. Compare the notion, for example, to McGee (1980)'s argument that, "the political language which manifests ideology seems characterized by slogans, a vocabulary of 'ideographs' easily mistaken for the technical terminology of political philosophy" (p. 5). What are these slogans if not fantasy themes of a sort? And yet, McGee's ideographs stand above and beyond fantasy themes. They are perfected themes, of a sort, in that they bear a closer resemblance to Burke's and Weaver's "God" terms. McGee (1980) provides several examples of ideographs such as "property", "religion", "right of privacy", "freedom of speech". Any of these could be a fantasy theme under the correct conditions, but seem to supersede what a small group could come up with quickly. These are the themes that define a people, a culture, and a nation more than fantasy themes, which seem to be more transient and situationally based. Certainly, fantasy themes can and do chain out to very broad contexts, but it takes much work to put them at the ideological level that McGee elaborates on. FTA thus enters the critical field at a different point than ideographs and illustrates a more nuanced view of group rhetoric and its formation. At the same time, the rhetorical visions that FTA discovers might be in more competition

with the ideographs, but are not upon closer inspection. Many rhetorical visions are a bit more specific than the near god terms McGee describes. Both methods, however, do define communities by uniting in-groups and separating such groups from out-groups. In addition, both methods operate under the logic that rhetoric is more of an amalgamation of fragments than a finished text. McGee (1990) in particular later complains that too much emphasis has been placed on the term “criticism” in “rhetorical criticism”, which would move the process into more of a philosophical realm. He instead advocates for an emphasis on the rhetoric, positing the term “critical rhetoric” as an improvement. He argues that, “rhetors *make* discourses from scraps and pieces of evidence...The apparently finished discourse is in fact a dense reconstruction of all the bits of other discourses from which it was made. It is fashioned from what we can call ‘fragments’” (McGee, 1990, p. 279, emphasis in original). The logic of rhetorical fragments is foundational to both McGee and Bormann’s approaches to rhetorical criticism.

Narrative and myth analysis, on the other hand, again go broader than FTA while maintaining roots in human drama. For example, Fisher elaborates on “narrative fidelity” and “narrative coherence”, essentially asking whether a given narrative hangs together with its own elements and those in the broader culture. Does the narrative resonate as being true with what the audience knows? This might be similar to FTA, which tells stories of various *dramatis personae*, but FTA is less concerned with the narrative as a narrative per se and more the themes that arise from such a narrative.

What rhetorical vision do such themes lead to? Certainly, coherence amongst themes is important, but such coherence isn't *necessary*. For example, the American ideological left and right may have themes that contrast with regard to foreign policy, but the overall rhetorical vision could still be that the United States has a right or responsibility to "police" the world. This vision could be the summation of contrasting but ultimately identical themes. Does this demonstrate narrative coherence? Not quite. Yet it works within the analytical structure of the method.

We can see how FTA connects to many theories and methods across time. As an approach to rhetorical analysis, it both fits within and responds to that history. Although it maintains a more postmodern outlook on rhetoric in which rhetoric is splintered among a large host of anonymous voices, it still bears some resemblance to the dialectic of Plato and Aristotle. Both Plato and Aristotle believed that a kind of powerful social truth could arise from the dialectic, and FTA continues this tradition of belief by showing us the rhetorical visions – or "truths" – of groups of people on a variety of subjects. As a postmodern form of dialectical analysis, FTA responds to a rhetorical situation wherein there are more voices acting anonymously to produce a powerful rhetoric. The digital context of communication has given us this. Power no longer exclusively lies with the single speaker, but more and more rests with a collective. When empowered single speakers do address audiences, they must do so with a focus on how the collective of rhetors will respond.

Criticism and Response

As I explained from the outset, the most damning criticism of FTA came in 1982 from Mohrmann in the *Quarterly Journal of Speech*. Within that year's volume of the journal, Mohrmann and Bormann engaged in a debate over the merit of the method that was encouraged by the journal's editors at the time (Mohrmann, 1982b). This was a debate that had been percolating for some time, having first appeared at the 1978 meeting of the Minneapolis Convention of the Speech Communication Association (Bormann, 1982b). Here Mohrmann made his arguments against FTA that would later become the basis of his 1982 articles. The debate was a heated one because, as Bormann perceived it, Mohrmann was, "...less interested in holding fantasy theme criticism within proper limits as he was in destroying it completely, root and branch." (Bormann, 1982b, p. 288).

Bormann was not exaggerating. Mohrmann's first assertion in his essay was that, "...fantasy theme method is not a logically consistent extension of the theoretical bases from which writers contend it derives..." (Mohrmann, 1982a, p. 110) This was a statement that Mohrmann unpacked in the first section of his essay. Essentially, Mohrmann took issue first of all with the roots in Bales' work, which he noted was heavily steeped in Freud. Although he iterated several times that he did not condemn Bales' work due to its Freudian roots, he did claim that it is not understandable outside of a Freudian context; thus he judged FTA by that context and found it wanting. Indeed,

after making an extended analogy to a situation involving a *Playboy* magazine and comparing an analysis of the fantasy chaining process to Freudian perspective, Mohrmann (1982a) concluded that, "...the baby must be thrown out with the bath water because interpretation is so dependent on Freud." (p. 116). Bormann (1982b) responded by insisting that the Freudian basis to Bales' work could indeed be ignored for being irrelevant to FTA. He said that he did not find Bales work to be a complete theory, and concluded that, "...the only thing for which we are indebted to Bales is his finding of the dynamic process of sharing group fantasies." (Bormann, 1982b, p. 303) Thus, Bales' work served as the inspiration and according to Bormann, to use the major premises of that work to judge FTA was unfair and ill-conceived. Mohrmann called this a 'cavalier rejection' of the Freudian basis and said that it is unacceptable because, "If theoretical linchpin is not to be found in Freud's speculation, where is it to be discovered," (Mohrmann, 1982b). Bormann's argument seemed to hold more weight here because Mohrmann placed an overemphasis on Freud. Any ties to Freud were tangential at best and not readily evident in the workings of FTA. Still, Mohrmann's question was important, and I believe that an answer to it might be found in the work of Kenneth Burke, whose notion of Dramatism maps onto FTA fairly well. More importantly, as I intend to demonstrate in the second chapter of this dissertation, Burke's philosophy can serve to both ground and push FTA as a methodology forward. Method allows for the rigorous application of theory, but theory, when utilized

appropriately, not only serves to ground method but also to challenge it and provide for growth.

Mohrmann (1982a) also accuses the fantasy theme approach of tending towards circular argument and yielding a confining and unnecessary taxonomy. This taxonomy and the hierarchy that is contained within it have produced formulaic and predictable criticism, according to Mohrmann. As Mohrmann argued, "...the fantasy theme approach simply is a new circularity, one in which a naming of parts is its own *raison d'être*." (Mohrmann, 1982, p. 125). Bormann (1982b) notes that Roderick Hart made the same criticism and even accused FTA of re-labeling old concepts, and while his response is more directed at Hart, it also addresses Mohrmann. Essentially, he does acknowledge that the charge of re-labeling old concepts would be a valid one if indeed FTA had taken Freudian concepts as its basis, which it did not. Bormann asserts that new concepts added more precision to his method of analysis and explains that, "Once we started surveying the rhetorical landscape we found a complexity that forced us to develop new technical terms to describe it adequately." (Bormann, 1982b, p. 297) Here again I concur with Bormann, as any program of research and analysis from Aristotle to Burke requires a certain vocabulary in order to be useful.

Of course, answering Mohrmann's taxonomical charge is the relatively easy part; answering his criticism that FTA produces formulaic and predictable criticism is far harder to answer, and in fact prominent FTA scholars do not even attempt this. In fact, in a *Communication Yearbook* work on the state of the method as of 2001, Bormann,

Cragan, & Shields (2001) embrace this aspect of the criticism levied against both FTA and SCT, claiming that replicable research is the hallmark of good social science research, which they have been trying to merge with rhetorical criticism methodology all along. Here I take issue with these researchers, for it seems that they have fully embraced what Nothstine, Blair, & Copeland (1994) refer to as the ideology of professionalism that has permeated the humanities. This ideology results in the increasing influence of scientism, wherein those in the social sciences and humanities attempt to emulate practices in the “hard” sciences (p. 23). One is encouraged to describe methods and view data from a neutral standpoint based on what it can contribute to theory, as opposed to what it can teach us and our students. According to these authors, rhetorical inquiry and criticism especially has more pedagogical roots in that specific examples illustrate informative methods of looking at instances of persuasion. As they state, “Mainstream rhetorical criticism finally capitulated to the ideology of professionalism, a victim of the disciplinary call to unity, scientizing itself and compromising or discarding altogether its earlier defense of a pragmatic, pedagogical, public orientation” (p. 30). FTA bears the mark of this scientific impulse, and it has been carried to its logical extreme in some iterations of SCT. It might even be appropriate to claim that SCT is a kind of Burkean “perfection” of the process started in FTA – although to claim such would be to be a bit tongue in cheek, as Burke did not mean perfection in the idealistic sense, but rather as “rotten with perfection.” SCT is not *rotten* per se, but it is thoroughly scientific and has moved away from the

pedagogical, public oriented grounds that rhetorical inquiry and criticism started on. My goal is to move FTA more towards these original grounds, although it may be impossible to ever completely separate it from the scientific. Such an endeavor may not even be worthwhile, as there is much FTA has to offer as is.

Before moving on to Mohrmann's third and final major criticism of FTA, it is important to discuss the relationship between FTA and SCT. It is hard to distinguish between the two, and in fact there is a lot of slippage between them. Reading publications that are more explicitly FTA such as Bormann's founding 1972 article and those that are more representative of SCT such as the Bormann, Cragan, & Shields (2001) does not lead one to any meaningful distinctions other than an increased proliferation of concepts over time such as Fantasy Types and symbolic cues- as we see in Mohrmann's above criticism. Indeed, if one looks at Table 3 in the 2001 article, "Rhetorical Communities Studied Using SCT - By Author", one finds articles that are more explicitly FTA and those that lend themselves more towards what is thought of as SCT. Although not one of Mohrmann's initial criticisms, this slippage between the method and the development of the later theory can prove problematic. The distinction I see is that studies utilizing SCT move away from the pedagogical, public oriented viewpoint of rhetorical criticism, focusing very explicitly on theory building. Bormann and other FTA/SCT researchers make the need for theory building clear in nearly every piece describing the state of the theory (See: Bormann, 1983; Bormann, 1986; Bormann, Cragan, & Shields 1994; Bormann, Cragan, & Shields 2001 for examples). The

theme seems to be that rhetorical methodology informs the theory, and the empirical methodology verifies it. FTA is an arm of SCT, with both using the same terminology and conceptual framework. The difference lies in the approach to exploring those concepts.

Nothstine, Blair, & Copeland would likely express discomfort at the overt scientism in FTA as a result of the focus that led to its evolution into SCT. However, scientism has its place in validating both theory and methodology, and research under the SCT heading has become a part of the Communication Theory canon. What I would argue is that FTA, while connected to SCT, should focus more on the pedagogical and the public orientation. FTA should allow the critic to explore fantasy themes as they chain out across various contexts and discover underlying rhetorical visions. These results need *not* be cookie cutter or even replicable, although those of a more empirical mindset may wish to verify the rhetorical findings with social scientific research. FTA should not be divorced from SCT, but neither should it have the same scientific goals. Ultimately, what we see in FTA and SCT is an interesting case study of what one conceptual framework looks like in two disciplinary contexts -- that of rhetorical inquiry and that of social science. What is normally seen as a dichotomy becomes in this case a dialectic bridged by a single taxonomy of conceptual terms.

Perhaps the most difficult of Mohrmann's criticisms to counter was his charge that one cannot assert that messages chain out from group communication to other communication modes such as the mass media and back again. In his discussion of

Bales' original research, he repeatedly points to the emphasis on group communication. For example, he says when summarizing Bales that, "...further, and most important, fantasy chains develop interpersonally, occurring only in a group." (Mohrmann, 1982a, p. 111). Later, he reiterates more strongly, "Fantasy chains are forged in a transactional imperative. As isolated individuals, you and I may dream, may have daydreams, may engage in reveries, but fantasy demands, at the very least, the potential for human interaction." (Mohrmann, 1982a, p. 112). Mohrmann has difficulty accepting the mass media element of fantasy theme chaining, claiming that there is simply no basis linking chains in small groups to corresponding phenomena in society at large. He goes so far as to claim that such a process must indicate 'configurational determinism', or elements of the drama must have a degree of consistency in order for there to be chaining back and forth. Here Bormann seems to falter a bit in his response, saying only that this is a broad claim for which Mohrmann should bear the burden of proof (Bormann, 1982b). This may be so, but once raised the point must be answered one way or the other. Evidence that this criticism continued to lurk in the background came five years later when Williams (1987), having severe difficulty with the mass media element, also criticized FTA. Williams asks such questions as if there is a difference between sheer exposure by the press and a theme that has actually been caught up and chained out and if there is a difference between a fantasy theme and/or a rhetorical vision and a political slogan that reminds the audience of previous speeches. These he identifies as severe gaps in the method.

Mohrmann's third criticism proved to be too difficult to answer at the time. While FTA scholars could dismiss criticisms of an arbitrary new taxonomy and wave away any discomfort with potential Freudian roots, they could not so easily overcome the charge that one of their more fertile grounds for criticism, the mass media, was in fact incompatible with the foundations of their critical method. In this respect, it is possible that FTA, at least as it was initially conceptualized, overstepped its bounds. As a method of understanding the rhetoric of small groups, it worked. When applied to the mass media, it became more questionable. Some would say that it simply did not work.

However, FTA has found purchase in a new medium that did not exist at the time of Mohrmann's criticism: the internet. The internet answers Mohrmann's critique by returning FTA to the small group roots which Mohrmann himself emphasized. Here is where I believe Mohrmann most hit the nail on the head when he pointed out that the roots of the research were in a dynamic, transactional model of communication. The mass media environment that existed when FTA was first conceived was not conducive to FTA's particular style of analysis. Bormann seemed to realize this in his comments about the impossibility of fantasy themes in a televised environment. Now, however, the visual communication of television, the audio communication of the radio, and the textual communication of the written word have all come together in one medium that uses these various technologies to create an intimate atmosphere in which people can communicate much as they would in small groups. Small group communicative reflexivity has entered the communication media environment, and with it the potential

for dynamic and fluid communication. In what follows, I explore how FTA works in a digital internet environment and how current scholars are studying this phenomenon.

Fantasy Theme Analysis Digitally Reborn

According to Lanham (1993), with the coming of the electronic text, printed communication has become more interactive than ever before. Indeed, calling electronic text 'print' may even be a misnomer, as Lanham views print as a perceptual self-denial in which color is forbidden, sound is proscribed, and typographical constants are enforced. Electronic text, on the other hand, causes us to realize this self-denial by forcing us to look *at* the text as opposed to just *through* it. This *at/through* oscillation is critical to Lanham's argument. Print is abstract and fixed, inviting readers to look through the symbols on the page to the conceptual world beyond them. Electronic text, by virtue of introducing visual play through text size, color, boldness, italics, font, etc, causes us to look at the text to what is going on with it. Such visual cues are akin to a form of gesture. One can even think of them as 'visual gestures'. As Lanham (1993) puts it, "We can, then, think of electronic prose as moving back toward the world of oral rhetoric, where gestural symmetries were permitted and sound was omnipresent." (pp. 74-75)

There are many ways that Lanham equates electronic text to the original oral rhetorical style of the ancient Greeks including, for example, the revived importance of memory (albeit in the form of computer memory). What is important for the present discussion is not the high rhetorical style, however, but the ways in which electronic text comes to be more equated with dynamic oral group interaction. In addition to the above inherent qualities of electronic text, Lanham cites the strong return of gestures through the iconography that has grown to prominence in an internet environment. Lanham wrote this work in 1993, meaning that the iconographic power of computers was a far cry from what it is now over a decade later, and yet his words were incredibly prophetic. The internet is full of visual gesture. All one need do is find a message board to see that people usually pair at least one picture with their post called a 'user icon'. Sometimes they have more than one picture in the recurring text below their posts, called a 'signature'. On top of this, most are proficient at embedding visuals within their posts. One example of a website that utilizes user icons extensively is www.livejournal.com, which is a community blogging site. Quite often users have multiple user icons which they choose from to convey the mood of a given post. Others who reply utilize their own icons to convey their own moods. Within the text itself are emoticons, or combinations of symbols that produce a smiley face or a frowny face or anything in between. This is but one example of Lanham's iconographic gesture at work, but there are many more. Lanham quotes Susanne Langer, who sums up this point quite well and definitively links such visual gesture to the oral realm of discourse:

Visual forms – lines, colors, proportions, etc. – are just as capable of *articulation*, i.e. of complex combination, as words. But the laws that govern this sort of articulation are altogether different from the laws that govern language. The most radical difference is that *visual forms are not discursive*. They do not present their constituents successively, but simultaneously, so the relations determining a visual structure are grasped in one act of vision. Their complexity, consequently, is not limited, as the complexity of discourse is limited, by what the mind can retain from the beginning of an apperceptive act to the end of it. (Langer in Lanham, 1998, p. 77, emphasis Langer's)

The other major difference in electronic text is the fact that it is truly more dynamic and interactive because of this ability to alter it upon a whim and add such icons, fonts, typefaces, etc. According to Lanham (1993), "The book is seen as static, inelastically linear, sluggish; the new cinematographic form as dynamic, interactive simultaneous, swift" (p. 33). To the book I would like to add the traditional newspaper and television broadcast. These are not nearly as static as the book, and indeed electronic formatting has added much to both media, but once set down and/or broadcast, the 'text' becomes unchangeable. In other words, the text is not interactive. In the case of television, moving pictures may be visually dynamic, but they are not discursively dynamic. The internet, on the other hand, allows for interactive on-line

conversation. Users on www.Livejournal.com, a fairly popular blogging website, can read each others' posts and respond to them, inserting icons as they feel appropriate. People participating in message boards can do the same in a less journal-like, more conversational environment. Entries can usually be at the least deleted if not edited. Authors are not readily identified, as the only information about a person posting a message to a website is self-reported, much as it would be in a zero-history small group meeting face-to-face.

Bormann described the evolving drama among the group in Bales' study when he discussed the changing tempo of their discussions and how people grew more excited in their comments (see above quote from Bormann, 1972, p. 397). Here one begins to grasp the significance of the correlation of electronic text to the orality present in small groups. The dynamic interactivity characteristic of an oral communication context is apparent here and this is what carries over so well into a digital environment. Fixed texts (by which I mean communicative artifacts, not merely print) have been an uneasy partner of FTA from the beginning. Mohrmann and later Williams found issue here and while Bormann laid the burden of proof upon the critics to prove this charge, nobody ever proved or dismissed it adequately. The new interactive digital medium weds technology and group communication more successfully than any previous medium, and as such should, I believe, prove a fertile ground for FTA critics. What is particularly of interest in this new context is that this is language in a more visceral, visual form; these are dynamic interactions between

people that are digitally stored and can easily be accessed for later examination. This should be of obvious interest to the critic that would wish to study such interactions in more depth than may be allowed by attempting to capture more traditional small group interactions in the moment. However, it is also of interest to the communicators in the digital environment because such thoroughly recorded communication must logically lend itself to a required greater reflexivity on the part of those communicating in this space. An unknown audience is virtually assured.

Such compatibility between the interactivity of face-to-face small group communication and the digital communication environment may be why we are beginning to see several FTA publications appear in recent years utilizing data collected from this medium, as I suggested earlier. These studies range from macro to micro, from studies across multiple websites to those focusing on one message board. For example, Duffy (2003) studies the rhetorical vision of online hate groups by conducting an FTA across four different hate groups' web sites, the white nationalists, Neo-Nazis, Ku Klux Klan, and black separatists. Although these groups are not necessarily connected and in conversation with one another, and indeed are quite likely separated by physical distance, the internet allows for a sort of cross pollination between the web sites that make the study of rhetorical visions possible. The implication of a study such as this is that disparate websites of physically separate groups that are tied together by a common genre may not be completely separate. The internet provides the means to tie these groups' communication to one another in ways that could never have

happened outside of the digital context. Typical of the internet, there are not often clearly identifiable authors and the material is not static. It is important to note that the internet is unique in that it involves both static reporting and interactivity.

Another FTA study utilizing digital technology by Chen (2007) appeared at the International Communication Association (ICA). This study had some promise, as it used a blog as its source material. However, this study identified a limitation of FTA that carries over into the digital realm. William (1987) identifies this limitation when he asks if one speech is sufficient to conduct an FTA and finds from his research of Bormann's work that the answer is no. FTA is dependent upon a dynamic, interactive context. One speech simply does not work. Nor does one text of any kind. Kyle & Avanzino use just one blog by one individual to conduct their analysis, and as such it fails to produce a truly rigorous FTA. Their analysis was good as a rigorous study of a single rhetorical text, but in my view the method is not satisfied. Still, we learn as much or more from the attempt as we do from any success. What is significant here is that they were the first I have seen to apply FTA in a blog environment. Many blogs have a place where readers may reply to the blogger and one another, producing an interactive environment usually rich with iconography. More work should be done using FTA in the blogosphere to make use of this recorded dynamic environment. This would further expand FTA and display its usefulness in this context.

Several other studies that I found which utilize FTA in a digital context were more successful in applying the method. One by Perry & Roesch (2004) explored the

tributes to Mister Rogers of the television show *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood* that were posted on the PBSkids.org website. Such electronic tributes demonstrated religious fantasy themes that chained out among the viewers of the show. These were individuals that never met in person but were able to communicate with one another as a zero history group in an online environment to share stories of how Mister Rogers affected their lives. The analysis is a poignant example of how the television show itself was not the fantasy theme, but instead provided the basis for the online interactions to form fantasy themes that participate in an overall rhetorical vision. A previous study by Bishop (2003) stuck primarily to newspaper and broadcast coverage of the show to conduct an FTA, and while it was a fruitful and rigorous study, it did not exemplify the small group roots of the fantasy theme process as well as the study by Perry & Roesch. The two studies together do much to paint a large picture of all of the rhetorical visions surrounding the show.

Two other studies each focused on a single thread on a message board. Message boards are excellent sources of rich data from people communicating with each other in a small group style environment. As such, an FTA across an entire board would be difficult unless one were attempting to discover a unifying rhetorical vision for all members of the board across all contexts pertaining to that board. Each thread can by itself yield several fantasy themes and a cohesive rhetorical vision. This is certainly what Aleman (2005), and Myers & Andrews (2006), discovered in their recent studies. Aleman (2005) studied one discussion board on a website called SeniorNet, entitled

'Meeting New People", and found themes chaining out among the participants that supported a rhetorical vision counter to that of popular romance novels that portray women as dependent on controlling men. Instead, the vision of an individual woman still desiring heterosexual love from a gentleman is revealed. Participants in this vision dramatized stories from their own experiences, responded to others, and even became heated when the vision was challenged by one male poster. Myers & Andrews (2006) chose a thread from a website called 'technodyke' entitled "Issues with Perception". They pulled out key character, setting, and action themes and showed how these worked to create a rhetorical vision involving the desire for a world where gender doesn't matter. What is especially interesting in this piece is the discussion of the visual aspects of the thread and the forum at large. This discussion closely mirrors Lanham's discussion about the dynamic nature of electronic text summarized above. Myers & Andrews describe some aspects of the forum as follows:

Reading back through a thread, one often sees notes of postings that have been edited by the author multiple times. There are many other things that appear with each posting: the current avatar, chosen icon or picture, of the person posting their current signature line and various other identifiers may be included in their profile ... Each time a response is appended to a thread, the thread is pushed back to the top of the list of all the threads that appear under that forum. (Myers & Andrews, 2006, p. 4)

Clearly this was an active discussion made all the more dynamic by features in the technology of the forum.

Despite the difficulty in doing so, I will try to show how it is possible to conduct an FTA in a message board setting if one is seeking to understand a particular culture. This is more akin to studying the rhetoric of a broader group, however, or perhaps a group of groups. McCabe (2009) demonstrates the utility of the method in this context by conducting a study of the fantasy themes that chain out among people in online communities that support eating disorders. McCabe examined fantasy themes across 12 message boards to find the rhetorical vision that exists in this online culture. The digital environment is unique in that, while it mimics the communication small groups, it also goes beyond that communication in that members of one group can belong to and participate in many such groups simultaneously. As such, fantasy themes are not place-bound, as a face to face group would be. In this case, McCabe did not study every thread on one given board, but instead found threads regarding the same subject on multiple boards. Although it cannot be fully verified, it is feasible to hypothesize that many of those contributing to one thread on one board would also be communicating with one another on another board, thus creating a sort of mobile, anonymous group. Fantasy themes from one board would thus chain out across multiple boards. McCabe explicitly recognizes the utility of the method for the context when she states that,

There is every reason to apply fantasy theme analysis to the proliferating online groups, such as pro-eating disordered. Given that traditional use of this theory grew from face-to-face interaction, it is likely group consciousness will also converge to create a new notion of shared reality among individuals, a mediated rhetorical vision within online groups. (McCabe, 2009, p. 6)

Such a notion of shared reality is new when one considers that the group has become much broader and much more anonymous than ever before, and yet is far more interactive than watching television or reading the newspaper.

Similarly, listservs and other aggregates of online communication are also able to show fantasy themes chaining out. One conference paper by Page (2004) follows a listserv in which employees laid off or fired from Cahners Publishing Company kept in touch and created a shared social reality based on their reported experiences. The employees were separated by time and space, but functioned much like any other group of individuals. Park (2004) examines another even broader group of online individuals in an FTA of user-produced Korean internet pornographic novels. Pornography in Korea is illegal, but the internet has made a space for Koreans interested in it to not only find it, but also to create it. Park's FTA reveals a rhetorical vision constructed through these works that shows how these Koreans view sexuality and male-female relationships. The authors of these novels never communicate directly, at least not online, but it is feasible, if not highly likely, that they read one another's works. This would imply a certain interactivity and perhaps even reflexivity. Perhaps one writing

such a work could expect to see some form of “response” in the work of another. In this way, fantasy themes could and did emerge to be picked upon by a critic such as Park.

These studies clearly demonstrate the dynamic interactivity of electronic text on the internet. They displayed the strongest evidence for the chaining out of fantasy themes. The studies regarding message boards and listservs in particular demonstrated the method at its most effective. One could clearly see participants reacting to each other and picking up on certain ideas and concepts and then further elaborating on them. These studies are implicit arguments for the strength of FTA in an online environment because they focus on discourse that occurs between groups of individuals interacting in an online text-based environment that simulates small group communication. In Chapter 2, I will explore these connections between small group communication and computer mediated communication more explicitly, but suffice it to say here that each of these studies emphasizes rhetoric in online environments that is more immediate and interactive than that of traditional mass media contexts. With this dissertation, I will explore FTA’s strength as an approach to analyzing rhetoric in online communication contexts by making more explicit arguments for utilizing it in my own case studies.

Moving Forward

Bormann (1982b) quoted Charles Pierce in his response to Mohrmann: “What else is a man to do when he has an idea ... but ride it as hard as he can, and leave it to others to hold it back within proper limits?” (p. 288). FTA has come a long way since its introduction in 1972. Bormann and other interested scholars have “ridden it hard” and advanced the method through the 1970s and 1980s even in the face of harsh criticism. SCT has even arisen from the method as a viable theory of communication. Overall, despite some setbacks, the method has continued to exist and to produce valuable insights into rhetorically constructed social reality, as evidenced by the plethora of published work utilizing both the method and the theory (see Bormann, Cragan, & Shields 2001 for a comprehensive listing of that work).

Existing is not enough for a method or a theory, however. For a method to thrive, it must remain relevant. As our primary methods of communicating with one another radically change with the technology and we begin to move back towards our oral roots, the theories and methods of rhetorical criticism must follow or become outdated and no longer useful. It has been my belief that FTA is particularly well suited to the new digital era and this has been born out by multiple recent examples utilizing the method in this context. My aim here has been to demonstrate this and to take the first steps towards updating FTA for a digital environment, steps that the rest of this dissertation will build upon. FTA already contains within it the oral roots and

methodology to accommodate data collected in the digital context, and returning it to those roots is the key to understanding how it will thrive in the study of online communication phenomena.

In this introduction, I have attempted to answer some of the more damning criticisms made of FTA in the 1980's. By more clearly separating out the dynamically interactive oral roots of the method from the mass media elements, I have shown how the method can indeed thrive in both contexts. The mass media are a rich source of symbolic cues that link and are potentially reacted to by those in social groups. These groups can exist in face-to-face interaction or online. The online context, in particular, allows for extensive, detailed, rigorous FTA study due to the readily archived interactive exchanges. One may use FTA to study a given phenomenon in both a mass media and a digital context and produce between the two studies a fuller picture of the social reality, as was evidenced by the two studies involving *Mister Rogers' Neighborhood*. This may even allow for FTA scholars to once and for all more fully understand what kind of link really exists between group communication and the mass media, although that link is likely to shift from context to context and across time. Still, a fuller understanding may allow such a link to be more readily identified in those differing contexts, and that would provide for more fruitful analyses of rhetoric in a digital environment.

How can FTA as a method remain relevant in a digital context, however? In order to answer this question, a more robust theoretical network is necessary. It is important

to argue for FTA's relevance over all in order to establish its relevance to the digital context. Also, how does the technology affect the rhetoric and vice versa? Such a question is important to any rhetorical scholar seeking to promote a rhetorical criticism method as being particularly appropriate in a digital context. If the technology has no effect on the rhetoric, then there is no need to seek out appropriate critical methodologies as Warnick (2007) suggests, as they should work just as well in one technological context as another. The chapter summaries below demonstrate how I will address the research questions stated above and these concerns, as well as others.

Chapter Summaries

Chapter 2: Theoretically Grounding a Digital FTA

Due to previous criticisms by Mohrmann and others, it is necessary to address some theoretical weaknesses of FTA as an approach to doing rhetorical criticism. While Mohrmann may have been gone a bit far when he made Freud a central point of one of his criticisms, he did well to point to the necessity of a more rigorous form of theoretical grounding. In an effort to better theoretically ground FTA and move it into a digital context, I will show in this chapter how I believe Kenneth Burke's dramaturgical philosophy, Agenda Setting Theory, and current small group communication research all converge to strengthen FTA as a critical method. My discussion of Burke, for

example, will serve to demonstrate how FTA can be thoroughly grounded in a dramatic logic, which should alleviate some of the Freudian concerns that Mohrmann had. Agenda Setting Theory provides a strong basis for understanding how fantasy themes can move from the media agenda to the public agenda – the difficulty of which was another concern of Mohrmann’s, as seen above. Finally, current small group communication research does much to show how groups are functioning in a digital environment. Returning FTA to these roots is a necessary first step on connecting it to digital rhetoric.

Chapter 3: The Fantasies of International Confrontation

The first of three case studies, this chapter is an FTA that looks at fantasy themes produced online during the first 24 hours after Iran announced that it had successfully enriched Uranium for the first time. Here I argue that an FTA can be conducted utilizing mass media sources online. One of Mohrmann’s criticisms centered on how fantasy themes could not chain out to the mass media and back again; this chapter attempts to illustrate how they can, especially in a highly self-referential digital environment. The speed of the chaining out process seen in this FTA is the hallmark of small group fantasy themes, and this indicates an interesting similarity between the mass media rhetoric and small group rhetoric online. In an online environment, the mass media can establish a rhetorical vision with unprecedented speed. Moreover, here FTA shows how

the media quickly formed a rhetorical vision that closely aligned with the government's goals. However, I show in this chapter how such speed can also make the fantasy uncontrollable by any central authority; in this case, we find evidence of the formation of a dialectic of competing iterations of the rhetorical vision. FTA allows for the examination of how many voices construct a social reality from which people may seek moral guidance in what it means to be a member of the United States.

Chapter 4: Science as "Other"

In this chapter, I will argue that FTA is helpful in studying the fantasy themes that chain out in a message board. My case study is a message board thread discussing the recent Climate Research Unit emails that were leaked. Here I explore how a group of internet citizens who may or may not know each other and are likely not experts construct and chain out fantasy themes related to this specific incident in the climate change debate. The thread I use can be found [here](#) and has 2130 replies. This number of replies represents a healthy discussion of the topic and provides quite a bit of data for analysis. With this case study I try to demonstrate precisely how a message board thread is more like the small group environment that FTA initially hails from. We see how discussion board participants work to form a group fantasy where science is "other" because while science is "truth", those who practice it are conspirators that engage in questionable activities outside of the public eye. Moreover, we see an

interesting trend that aligns with the conclusions of Chapter 3 – the public, despite not trusting the scientists, still socially constructs a rhetorical vision of reality that is highly consistent with what that of the scientists. FTA allows for the study of how multiple anonymous voices in a digital environment casuistically chain out fantasy themes that illustrate an interesting consubstantiality between the people’s ideas of what science is and what it does.

Chapter 5: A Discourse of Images

In this chapter I extend FTA beyond its normal boundaries by exploring how images function as fantasy themes. Here I will study climate change images across multiple digital contexts including Al Gore’s *An Inconvenient Truth* and online images relating to climate change. A simple Google Image search for the term “Climate Change” brings up a plethora of images that indicate themes worthy of study. In order to establish what I will call a “discourse of images”, I will discuss how fantasy themes function metaphorically when they are illustrated by images. This work has precedent in the Bormann, Koester, & Bennet (1978) article that discusses political cartoons as symbolic cues. In a digital environment, images become as valid as text as a real form of communication that can convey themes that in turn chain out to reveal interesting

rhetorical visions. We can literally “view” what is most important to the public at a given point in time.

Chapter 6: Conclusion – The Roots and Future for FTA

This chapter connects FTA back to rhetorical theory and criticism as a whole. In addition, I will return to the research questions proposed here in the introductory chapter and answer each utilizing my analysis of the case studies. I will argue for my first research question, for example, that my case studies show that the speed, anonymity, asynchronous communication, and visual imagery that characterize communication in a digital environment all have tangible effects on the rhetoric. A critic using FTA is in a good position to understand the collective rhetoric. In response to my second research question, I will suggest that in digital environments where specific authors become far less important, it becomes critical to look at themes of rhetoric not attributable to any single source. With regards to my third research question, I will argue that while FTA does indeed move the critic towards more scientific methods of thought, it need not do so at the expense of its inventive roots. As the case studies show, there is much that it may offer in critically understanding the more particular contexts in which rhetoric occurs locally. In my concluding comments, I will identify future directions for research involving FTA in a digital context. Over all, this chapter solidifies the contribution made by this dissertation to FTA and rhetorical inquiry and criticism as a whole.

CHAPTER 2. THEORETICALLY GROUNDING A DIGITAL FTA

Introduction

An unfortunate theme that seems to run through the latter half of the history of FTA is its supposed lack of significant theoretical grounding. As noted in chapter one, Mohrmann (1982a) is the originator of this criticism. His claim that FTA is not consistent with the Balesian, and thus Freudian, theoretical bases from which it derives has haunted FTA to this day, even in spite of Bormann's attempts to debunk it by saying that Bales was only a starting point. Even Bormann's work with his colleagues in developing SCT did not serve to alleviate this criticism. This failing seems to emanate from an unanswered question: if Freud does not provide the theoretical underpinning to the methodology, then what does? Perhaps if Bormann had started with SCT and if FTA had grown out of that, this question might be more satisfactorily answered. Unfortunately, however, FTA pre-dates SCT, and despite implicit claims to the contrary in many current works that seem to conflate SCT and FTA, SCT cannot serve as the theoretical underpinning to FTA because of this fact. SCT certainly can and does support FTA, but those critics working with FTA are still left with the dilemma of grounding their methodology in something more stable.

Another charge levied by Mohrmann, as noted earlier in this dissertation, is that one simply cannot assert that messages chain out from group communication to other modes such as the mass media and back again. Bormann's work began with small group communication, and according to Mohrmann, linking the rhetoric of those in a group to the one-to-many style of rhetoric of the mass media is unfounded and perhaps even something of a non-sequitor. How can the rhetoric of the mass media follow from that of small groups? Mohrmann points out that the process of fantasizing as Bormann describes it demands that there be some form of human interaction. This, too, becomes something of a theme in the history of FTA, for critics such as Williams (1987) also criticize FTA on these grounds.

These criticisms represent the shadow under which FTA critics must operate, and indeed have operated for the past few decades. Several have chosen to ignore it. There are many examples of critics conducting FTAs utilizing data from mass media and digital environments that do not even make a nod to Mohrmann's criticism. However, if FTA is to be taken seriously in its own right, the criticisms against it must be addressed directly. It is the purpose of this chapter to address these criticisms in such a way that meaningful work can be done utilizing FTA in a digital environment without reproach. While Bormann might have believed that Mohrmann sought to destroy FTA in its formative stages (and he might have been right), it is my contention that Mohrmann's criticisms, when answered appropriately, will serve to be constructive, especially as they open the way for a clearer understanding of FTA's relationships to digital media.

This chapter is divided into three sections that will theoretically build (or fortify) FTA from the ground up to the current digital environment. In the first section, I will demonstrate how the work of Kenneth Burke can serve as a theoretical anchor for FTA that also manages to push the method forward. My goal with this section will be to use the work of Burke to address Mohrmann's criticism regarding the theoretical grounding of FTA. Brushing aside Mohrmann's accusation, as Bormann originally did, is not nearly so productive as grappling with the issue Mohrmann raised. However, while I find Burke's work useful, it is not the endpoint of a theoretical grounding of FTA; rather, it is only a very productive starting point. In my view, future FTA researchers should grapple with this issue further and continue working to fit FTA into a long theoretical history. In the second section, I will differentiate mass media communication from small group communication. Here I will explore how FTA can serve as a connection between the two and how it cannot. Finally, I will connect small group communication with computer mediated communication (CMC) in an effort to demonstrate how the online communication environment provides FTA with a unique opportunity to shine as a critical perspective well suited to the new digital communication context. Ultimately, this chapter will serve to theoretically ground FTA in a way that has not been accomplished before. Such grounding is necessary if FTA is to be pushed into a new communication context such as the online environment.

Fantasy Theme Analysis Dramatistically Considered

According to Kenneth Burke, literature is “equipment for living”. Many who have studied Burke’s writings and applied his philosophies have extended this sentiment to rhetoric as well. This extension seems entirely justified considering that, by the end of *Counter-Statement*, Burke’s first book and a treatise studying the phenomenon of “art for art’s sake”, Burke has moved through the forms of literature and has already arrived at the following conclusion: “effective literature could be nothing else but rhetoric” (Burke, 1931, p. 210). Thus began a long career in which Burke sought to build up his philosophy of dramatism – a philosophy that at its heart sought to explain how man as a symbol using and misusing creature used symbols to communicate, persuade, and ultimately construct a symbolic reality.

Burke saw a place in his work for both the poet/rhetor and the critic. Indeed, he went to great lengths to distinguish between these roles and to explain the importance of both. Such is the subject of his essay “Poetics in Particular, Language in General” (Burke, 1966). In addition to being a philosopher, Burke himself was a critic and demonstrated as much in several essays. Rhetorical critics have gone so far as to codify some of Burke’s philosophies into two methods of criticism, cluster criticism and pentadic analysis. These two methods serve as two different lenses through which to

view discourse, and are part of rhetorical criticism textbooks taught to many students today (Foss, 2004). Many more critics utilize his philosophy to ground their own pieces of criticism. Burke's dramatism has served to elucidate aspects of rhetoric that otherwise may not have been acknowledged.

Burke's corpus has not yet been used to ground entire methods of criticism outside of those methods that directly arose from the work. In many cases, this is not surprising. Neo-Aristotelian criticism was clearly based in the work of Aristotle (or should have been). Ideological criticism has strong roots in Marx. Other methods, such as generic and metaphorical criticism, draw from a broader base of material; critics utilizing these methods tend to choose those definitions that suit their aims best and structure their methodologies accordingly. In some cases, however, a methodology will arise that does not have the strong grounding that rhetorical theorists and critics demand. FTA is one such perspective for doing rhetorical criticism that arose relatively recently in rhetorical circles.

As noted in chapter one, Ernest Bormann proposed FTA as a method of rhetorical criticism in 1972 in his essay "Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision: The Rhetorical Criticism of Social Reality". FTA was not explicitly grounded in any major philosophical work – a fact that was particularly problematic for Mohrmann. We have seen that one of Mohrmann's complaints revolved around the theoretical basis (or lack thereof) of FTA. As a method, FTA is strong, but it is my belief that a grounding in the philosophy of Burke could serve the methodology well and perhaps fortify it against past and

potential future attacks. The purpose of this section is to explore FTA in a dramatic light and to propose ways in which Burke's theoretical insights may push FTA further. Dramatism has much to offer FTA as a method of rhetorical criticism both in the way of grounding and in the exploration of previously under-developed aspects of the methodology.

In order to make this argument, I will explicitly connect the major tenets of FTA to important concepts in Burke's work, thus demonstrating how FTA can be dramatically considered. Specifically, Burke's thinking on consubstantiality, scope, and reduction will prove very useful to understanding Bormann's conceptualization of fantasy themes. Then I will demonstrate how Burke's concept of casuistic stretching can both illuminate and complicate the under-developed notion of "chaining out" in FTA. By the end of this section, I hope to have shown how Burke's philosophy can be used to improve FTA as a more novel method of rhetorical criticism. Ultimately, by reading FTA through the lens of Burkean theory, I attempt to put FTA on stronger theoretical grounds with regard to analyzing the rhetoric of digital discourses. In digital media, fantasy themes more clearly indicate the consubstantiality of the people interacting with them. In addition, the casuistic nature of the chaining out process is more obvious and perhaps even easier for the participants, as will be seen in Chapter Four.

Consubstantiality and Fantasy Themes

The concepts within FTA lend themselves well to dramatic consideration. Bormann does not ever directly cite Burke in his work, but one does not have to stretch the language and the concepts too far to arrive at a distinctly Burkean standpoint. Although analogizing FTA to Burkean concepts may open the current analysis up to accusations of merely applying what Burke (1966) himself refers to as a terministic screen, that is acceptable and to a certain extent the very point. What is a theoretical grounding if not a type of terministic screen? The difference here, of course, is that FTA has its own terminology and is itself a terministic screen in its own right. It is important to note before proceeding, however, that this is not simply an exercise in analogizing, but an attempt to apply an accepted logic to a method that has had its grounds questioned.

At its heart, Bormann's FTA involves questions of what Burke refers to as "scope and circumference". Originally, Burke explained his logic here in terms of the scene-act or agent ratio that he had formulated in his *A Grammar of Motives*. The scene itself is where the circumference can be altered, and alterations here have implications for any interpretations about agents in the scene or the acts they may commit. As Burke explains, "the choice of circumference for the scene in terms of which a given act is to be located will have a corresponding effect upon the interpretation of the act itself" (Burke, 1945). Here Burke is explaining how the breadth of the circumference affects

everything within the scene, or to borrow some of his other terminology, the container affects what is contained. However, as is usually the case, Burke is functioning with a hierarchy, here perhaps a hierarchy of circumference, and he moves freely up and down within it. Later in his explanation of circumference, he goes on to say that in, “systematic placement, one must see things ‘in terms of...’ And [sic] implicit in the terms chosen, there are ‘circumferences’ of varying scope” (Burke, 1945, p. 77).

The logic of scope and circumference is readily applicable to FTA because FTA is exactly such a hierarchy. Although the critic presumably arrives at the rhetorical vision after careful analysis of the fantasy themes, that rhetorical vision serves as the rhetorical scene by which the circumference is drawn. The rhetorical vision is the widest circumference of the analysis, and once understood must affect further interpretations of the fantasy themes within it. These themes are the discursive “acts” within the situation, whether they are spoken aloud, recorded in print, or even viewed on television (for fantasy themes can be present in the televised discourse, even if they are not considered part of the chaining out process). Although the process typically involves the critic defining the themes before teasing out the rhetorical vision, it is impossible not to see the themes being viewed “in terms of” the rhetorical vision. As Burke can move about within the hierarchy, so too should other critics. The rhetorical vision in an FTA may indeed be viewed “in terms of” the themes that logically preceded it. Though the rigorous critic attempts to analyze all of the fantasy themes available, it is not out of the question that even once the study is complete and the rhetorical vision is

explained, other fantasy themes might make themselves apparent to be viewed “in terms of” this discovered vision.

What is absent from the current logic of FTA is Burke’s logic of reduction. Reduction is a critical aspect of the notion of circumference. In one sense, the logic of reduction fits fantasy themes perfectly. Burke says that, “Variants of reduction...are the atomistic vocabularies that would account for entities in terms of the particles of which they are thought to be composed, as one might account for a building in terms of the materials used in its construction” (Burke, 1945, p. 97). The building is the rhetorical vision, and the materials are the fantasy themes and fantasy types. Burke eschews this type of reduction, however, and with good reason. While it fits within the FTA paradigm, Burke is wary of any logic that would view a “wider” circumference in terms of a more “narrow” circumference. Fortunately, FTA avoids this pitfall by consistently keeping the rhetorical vision in mind.

Yet what if the rhetorical vision is a reduction as well? In Burke’s view, it would seem to be. As Burke claims, “In a sense, every circumference, no matter how far reaching its reference, is a reduction” (Burke, 1945, p. 96). This is where reduction is absent from Bormann’s methodology. Critics using FTA typically consider the rhetorical vision the stopping point. It is the culmination of the analysis, the point the critic is attempting to make. Here the reader learns what a given culture considers important at a given time. Unfortunately, however, if the critic’s or the reader’s thinking ceases here, the reduction becomes problematic. Burke further explains that, “any generalization is

necessarily a reduction in that it selects a *group* of things and gives them a property which makes it possible to consider them as a *single entity*" (Burke, 1945, p.96). Here, the rhetorical vision is that very generalization, or single entity, and the things are the fantasy themes. Burkean logic would instigate a reversal in which the rhetorical vision becomes the reduction of the fantasy themes.

The FTA critic who does not take the logic of circumference and reduction into account runs the risk of engaging in a type of fallacious logic. Indeed, it is this very risk that Mohrmann (1982a) may have been concerned with in his criticism of the method when he charged that its hierarchy of terms leads to formulaic criticism. If the rhetorical vision is viewed as and treated as the ultimate endpoint of FTA criticism, then Mohrmann's charge is correct. The act of criticism becomes formulaic: fantasy theme A plus fantasy theme B plus fantasy theme C equals rhetorical vision D.

How then might the FTA critic avoid this kind of fallacy? The rhetorical vision must not be considered as an endpoint in and of itself. The critic should instead view it as what Burke would call the "title of titles", but *only* of the given rhetorical situation under analysis. Burke's "title of titles" is synonymous to a god term, and indeed Burke claims that God *is* the, "Term of Terms, the Title of Titles, the X of X's" (Burke, 1950, p. 76). Titles are part of the rhetorician's repertoire, for according to Burke the rhetor will use them to identify a given person or cause with whatever may call forth the desired response. In a very real sense, the fantasy themes are the titles that, wittingly or not, any person in a group utilizes to identify both him/herself and others with the

rhetorical vision, or title of titles. It is this identification that the critic must study in depth.

Identification is a key notion in Burke's thoughts on how rhetoric functions. According to Burke, "A is not identical with his colleague, B. but insofar as their interests are joined, A is *identified* with B. Or he may *identify himself* with B even when their interests are not joined, if he assumes that they are, or is persuaded to believe so" (Burke, 1950, p.20). Although A and B are here featured as individuals, the logic holds if B is a rhetorical concept, such as a fantasy theme. However, in this case when one is identifying with a fantasy theme, one is to some degree sharing consubstantiality with all others who have identified with and chained out the fantasy theme already and all of those that will do so in the future. Essentially, fantasy themes possess rhetorical power insofar as one can identify with any of them, and any fantasy theme can be identified with the broader circumference of the rhetorical vision. Fantasy themes enable people to identify with one another and to be consubstantial. Conversely, the rhetorical vision should be identifiable with each and every fantasy theme that it is composed of if it is to hold any relevance and thus defining power at all. In sum, identification is key in understanding the persuasive power of fantasy themes; those chaining out the themes must identify with both the themes and the rhetorical vision. In so doing, they will identify more strongly with one another and thus the group. This is the true rhetorical power of fantasy themes. For this reason, the critic must be able to demonstrate how

the fantasy themes and the rhetorical vision align with one another. Identification is the *raison d'être* of fantasy themes and rhetorical visions.

Mohrmann was correct in his charge that FTA is hierarchical in its taxonomy and its nature. While Mohrmann meant this as a criticism, it is not necessarily a detraction of the method. According to Burke, human beings are ever goaded by the spirit of hierarchy. Hierarchy is in everything. The discussion thus far about FTA should prove instructive to the critic in avoiding the pitfalls of which Mohrmann spoke. The rigorous FTA critic functioning under a Burkean logic should discuss the fantasy themes and the rhetorical vision in terms of scope and reduction, weaving “up” and “down” within the hierarchy to show how everything is consubstantial. Within the analysis, the rhetorical vision may be the temporal endpoint in a linearly structured paper, but in reality it is but a piece of the whole just as any of the fantasy themes are. Burke would likely refer to the entire study as a piece of poetry, and to understand it as such the critic needs to lead the audience back and forth through the layers of circumference. What Burke calls a “historicist style of expression” simply will not do, for as he points out it leads to temporal prioritizing and a quasi-temporal way of stating the relationships between the principles (Burke, 1966).

Perhaps an extended metaphor by Burke relating to his Pentad will make the point yet more clearly here. The underlying logic of Burke’s pentad is the logic behind all of his philosophy, for as is often the case with Burke, everything is connected. Burke explains that:

The margins of overlap provide opportunities whereby a thinker can go without a leap from any one of the terms to any of its fellows. (We have also likened the terms to the fingers, which in their extremities are distinct from one another, but merge in the palm of the hand. If you would go from one finger to another without a leap, you need but trace the tendon down into the palm of the hand, and then trace a new course along another tendon.) Hence, no great dialectical enterprise is necessary if you would merge the terms, reducing them even to as few as one; and then, treated this as the “essential” term, the “causal ancestor” of the lot, you can proceed in the reverse direction across the margins of overlap, “deducing” the other terms from it as its logical descendants. (Burke, 1945, p.xxii)

This analogy to the hand illustrates Burke’s notions of consubstantiality, and is readily applicable to the purposes of this discussion. Rather than think of the rhetorical vision as the descendent of the fantasy themes, it is far more instructive and perhaps even more interesting to view it as the “causal ancestor” from which each fantasy theme can be deduced. Each fantasy theme is one of the “fingers”, and is thus connected by the rhetorical vision that is the “palm” of the hand. Although such connections typically remain implicit (if they exist at all in the criticism), Fantasy Theme Analyses should demonstrate the level of connectivity Burke makes explicit here.

Casuistic Chaining

Thus far, I have tried to ground FTA in Burke's philosophy including scope, reduction, identification, and consubstantiation. Burke's thoughts have the potential to push FTA further, as noted in the discussion about his notion of reduction. One final notion introduced by Burke may serve not to ground FTA at all, but rather to push it forward even further and explain a process that is often left implicit - the process of fantasy themes "chaining out". Typically, the FTA critic will demonstrate this process by simply representing a given theme through quotations as data. If a group is observed, these will usually be more paraphrased quotations. On the other hand, if the critic is analyzing texts such as newspapers, magazines, message boards, blogs, or some such other text, the data will be fairly direct quotations. The chaining out is in the repetition of the theme, and as such more repetitions mean a stronger case for the presence of a fantasy theme.

For the basic analysis, this barrage of data may be good enough. Such a wealth of quotations is qualitatively significant and quasi-empirical. Since Bormann was attempting to merge rhetorical and empirical methods, as he stated multiple times and demonstrated in his analyses utilizing Q-sorts, such an empirical feel may even be

desirable. Yet in its roots, Bormann clearly laid FTA out as a rhetorical method. When people pick up the themes and chain them out, they are rhetorically identifying with them.

What happens, however, when those themes are passed on and chained out? If one is pulling from sources reliant upon the Associated Press wires, then the repetitions likely remain exactly the same. However, when the critic pulls the themes from visceral conversation, either in face to face communication, internet chats, message boards, or even editorials, the themes are far less likely to remain exactly as they first started. The process of identification must leave room for alterations that allow an individual to remain true to his or her original ideals.

Although designed more for changing hierarchies, Burke's notion of casuistic stretching seems to have some relevance here. As Burke describes it, "By casuistic stretching, one introduces new principles while remaining faithful to old principles" (Burke, 1937, p.229). Burke claims that all forms of metaphorical extension are in fact aspects of casuistic stretching. He further explains that, "Since language owes its very existence to casuistry, casuistic stretching is beyond all possibility of 'control by elimination'" (Burke, 1937, p. 230). Language is always the result of the casuistic stretching of a previous ideographical hierarchy.

The process of chaining out may in fact involve aspects of casuistic stretching. In order to be passed on, a fantasy theme must resonate with the person that is repeating it. The person must identify with that theme. Anyone passing on a theme thus

automatically becomes a rhetorician. The rhetoric is hard to avoid. Yet in the process of making the rhetoric one's own, an individual may engage in the act of casuistic stretching. Outside of direct repetition from one news source to another via the Associated Press, this act of casuistic stretching seems not only likely, but necessary. As Burke has stated in his description of identification, person A is *not* identical with person B and thus must engage in an act of identification with the theme as presented by person A.

At this point it seems instructive to turn to Burke's notion of "recalcitrance", for this term must factor into the process of casuistic stretching. Any given hierarchy, or in this case fantasy theme, does not simply stretch. According to Burke, the poet, or rhetor, always meets with considerable recalcitrance in the organizational process. According to Burke, "*a statement is an attitude rephrased in accordance with the strategy of revision made necessary by the recalcitrance of the materials employed for embodying this attitude*" (Burke, 1954, p.255). There is resistance and rephrasing that must occur as any idea or theme meets resistance. To claim that a fantasy theme in the chaining out process does not meet any form of recalcitrance would be at the least naïve and at worst destructive to the analysis as a whole. The formation of the fantasy theme as it chains out is thus dependent upon the ebb and flow process of casuistic stretching and recalcitrance. These three processes are interdependent and account for the formation of the theme over time.

A fantasy theme is thus an amalgamation of the chaining process including casuistic stretching and recalcitrance. This is in direct contradiction to the implicit idea that it might be something that can be readily repeated verbatim over and over. There is some essence to the theme, something that may be picked out by the critic and given a name, but the theme stretches with each person who chains it out. Although a new hierarchy does not directly come about (for otherwise the fantasy theme as it began would not be the same as the fantasy theme as it “ended”, if it could be said to end), the chaining process is decidedly a casuistic one. The thoughtful critic applying a Burkean lens may analyze the casuistic chaining process of each theme more closely, thus coming to a greater understanding of the rhetoric in action. Such analysis may also lead to a greater understanding of the very substance of the theme and even the rhetorical vision that arises from it.

Discussion – The Implications of using Burke to ground FTA

Giving FTA a theoretical grounding in Burke can serve to address Mohrmann’s (and others’) theoretical criticisms to some extent. While this involves moving away from FTA’s alleged psychoanalytic roots (see, for example, Gunn 2003a, 2003b, 2004), such a move would put FTA on much firmer theoretical ground. Psychoanalytic theory

may be questionable as a basis due to the misgivings of major scholars such as Mohrmann, but Burke is more widely accepted and used.

It is important to note that Burke himself has a very strong relationship with psychoanalytic thinking, which should make this grounding somewhat ironic. After all, he once wrote that he found Freud, “suggestive almost to the point of bewilderment” (Burke, 1939, p. 258). Burke went on to say that he would like to copy representative sections of Freud’s work and, “write glosses upon them” (Burke, 1939, p.258). There is no doubt that Burke was at least in part intellectually indebted to Freud. Hart & Daughton even go so far as to say that Burke was “Freudian to his core” (Hart & Daughton, 2005, p. 262). In fact, one of the major tenets of Burke’s philosophy, the notion of “identification”, is most definitely Burke in conversation with Freud’s ideas on identification (Davis, 2008). Burke’s notion of identification is directly connected to his later discussions of consubstantiality, as indicated by the famous passage below:

A is not identical with his colleague, B. But insofar as their interests are joined, A is *identified* with B. Or he may *identify himself* with B even when their interests are not joined, if he assumes they are, or is persuaded to believe so. Here are the ambiguities of substance. In being identified with B, A is ‘substantially one’ with a person other than himself. Yet at the same time he remains unique, an individual locus of motives. Thus he is both joined and separate, at once a distincte substance and consubstantial with another. (Burke, 1969, 20-21)

If consubstantiality is part of Burke's notion of identification, and if his notion of identification is related, and perhaps indebted, to Freud's, then on the surface it may seem like I am here trading one grounding in Freud for another. That is not precisely the case, however.

The difference between Burke and Bales is that for Burke, Freud is not infallible. Indeed, Burke typically places Freud under heavy analytical scrutiny, utilizing those concepts that he finds most useful and critiquing what he finds objectionable. Both Hart and Daughton (2005) and Davis (2008) are quick to note that Burke was not *only* indebted to Freud – he had roots elsewhere as well. For example, he was also fond of pushing Marxist thought as far as it could go to serve his own devices. Perhaps the most accurate statement regarding Burke's influences is that he “used all there was to use” (Hart & Daughton, 2005, p. 262). One simply cannot peg Burke as Freudian any more than one can peg him as a Marxist. Davis notes that, “Although Burke never denounced Freud and loved him to the end, his anxiety of influence did take a parricidal turn, which expressed itself – in part and interestingly enough – in Burke's own theory of identification, which he himself described as ‘post-Freudian’” (Davis, 2008, p. 124). Davis cites Burke's 1978 essay “Methodological Repression and/or Strategies of Containment”, where Burke described his theory in that manner. Clearly, Burke is both enamored of Freud and at the same time attempting to go beyond Freud. Put another way, Freud's thinking seems to provide the fodder with which Burke fuels his own

thinking. It is philosophy to be poked, prodded, torn apart, and refashioned to Burke's own liking. There is a significant difference between being influenced – directly or not – by another's work and being directly dependent upon it. Mohrmann seemed to accuse FTA of being directly dependent upon Freud. Bormann claimed this was not the case, and there is evidence to support his assertion, as I mentioned in Chapter One. FTA may be indirectly influenced by Freud, but Burke too was directly influenced by Freud and his thinking is all the better for it.

Through this analysis, I have attempted to provide FTA with a grounding in the dramatic philosophy of Burke. Such a grounding may answer the charge levied against FTA that it is not logically consistent with the theory from which it supposedly derives. Bormann denied this psychoanalytic derivation, and if the intent of the originator of the method is to be upheld over the suppositions of the critics, then a new theoretical basis is necessary. As I have demonstrated here, Burke's philosophy is more than up to the task of grounding FTA. One may still accurately accuse FTA of having connections to Freud, even through Burke, but just as Burke's thinking is not thrown out for such connections, neither should FTA be discarded. Ultimately, we as critics should judge both Burke and FTA by what they can contribute to rhetorical theory and criticism, and of course also by what they already have contributed to the discipline.

It should be noted that this analysis has been more than an exercise in analogizing the concepts within FTA to Burke's own philosophy. When Burke's dramatism is applied to FTA, weaknesses in the method become readily apparent. No

longer can the rhetorical vision be viewed as an endpoint, the culmination and ending of all of the proposed fantasy themes. So too can the “chaining out” process no longer be left as a process only cursorily examined. Burke shows us where to look for the rhetoric in the fantasy theme process. When Burke’s methods are appropriately applied to FTA, it becomes so much more than the formulaic “cookie-cutter” process Mohrmann accused it of being. While FTA cannot be said to have derived from Burke, as that was in no way the stated intention of Bormann, it *can* find a grounding in Burke and even an impetus for improvement and change...or, put another way – casuistic stretching.

The work of Kenneth Burke has proven quite useful in answering Mohrmann’s first criticism. If FTA can be successfully grounded in the philosophy of a respected theorist such as Burke, even with his own Freudian influences, then it is not as worthy of being thrown out as Mohrmann said. At this point, we must take Bormann at his word and assume that he had no direct intention of being influenced by Burke since he never cited his work. However, the indirect influence of Burke can be readily argued for. One need only look at the vocabulary of FTA. Bormann describes rhetorical visions as being dramas consisting of *dramatis personae* acting in narratives separated from the here and now. This is at least somewhat similar to Burke’s own vocabulary for dramatism. It was Burke who really popularized the use of drama as a metaphor in rhetorical studies, and thus a connection to Burke here is undeniable. It may even be more explicit than most, even without Burke being specifically cited. Fantasy Theme Analysis serves to move us forward by allowing us to see how Burke’s dramatism plays

out across time and many different voices. To claim that FTA is only beholden to Freud via Bales is as fallacious as claiming that Burke is only beholden to Freud. The evolution of rhetorical thought is far more complicated than that.

Fantasy Themes and the Mass Media

Having at least to some degree answered Mohrmann's first criticism, it is time now to turn to another major criticism— that FTA cannot be extrapolated to mass media modes of communication and back. This is a more difficult claim to answer, as Mohrmann was at least to some degree correct. Bormann himself points out that fantasy themes as he defines them do not for the most part appear in television coverage (Bormann 1982a). It would seem that, at least to a certain extent, Bormann agrees with Mohrmann's assessment. That agreement only goes so far, however, as in his initial introduction of the method Bormann specifically mentions the “dream merchants of the mass media” (Bormann, 1972). This is in fact what Mohrmann is referencing.

The problem, once again, is one of theoretical backing. When Bormann initially conceived of FTA in his 1972 piece, Bales' study and Bales' study alone grounded his work. From that point onward, Bormann relied upon the method itself to generate data

that could retroactively support the method's viability. Although this is in some respects how theory building works – there is an initial flash of insight followed by copious studies to confirm or refute it – it is also in this case what allowed critics such as Mohrmann and later Williams to take issue with the mass media aspect of FTA. Bales' work was limited strictly to small groups. There is no basis there to support the idea that fantasy themes can go between interpersonal and mediated communication.

In this instance, however, there is no real need to reinvent the wheel, so to speak. Other scholars working around the same time as Bormann and his cohort were developing a media theory that was to have a lasting effect on mass media research. In fact, McCombs & Shaw (1972) codified this theory the same year that Bormann published his initial work on FTA. Agenda Setting Theory proved to be invaluable in the following decades in drawing the necessary links between what is communicated via mass media outlets and what is thought and thus communicated about by people at the interpersonal level.

Other concepts directly connected with Agenda Setting Theory will also prove useful to grounding FTA in mass media research. Framing is one such concept that demonstrates the level of control that mass media rhetors can exert over the messages, and thus fantasy themes, conveyed to the public. Also, the concept of media priming offers some psychological support for how audiences interpret and thus potentially chain out themes received from the mass media. Media priming was an idea first introduced in the 1980s to further explain media effects (Roskos-Ewoldsen, Klinger, &

Roskos-Ewoldsen 2007). Whereas Agenda Setting Theory looks at the macro effects of mass media communication on audiences, priming focuses more on the micro level effects. Specifically, priming looks at the effects of specific mediated stimuli that directly and immediately affect how a person will respond to a given idea presented some time after the initial stimulus. Both framing and priming provide explanatory power for what happens to a message as it moves from the mass media to the public consciousness.

Neither Bormann nor other FTA researchers ever really connected FTA and Agenda Setting research. This is likely because the development of FTA paralleled Agenda Setting Theory and preceded priming research. However, Agenda Setting Theory can draw the necessary links between mass media communication and small group communication. Agenda Setting Theory is not a perfect answer to Mohrmann's criticism, though, as will be seen below. What is important here is to understand how fantasy themes work between the two communication contexts, and how they don't work. Communication via the mass media must be differentiated from that via small group communication before small group communication can be more strongly equated to digital communication via the internet, and Agenda Setting Theory will prove valuable in making that distinction. First, though, it is important to discuss in more detail what Agenda Setting Theory and the related concepts of framing and priming are. It is to a discussion of this field of communication research that I now turn.

Agenda Setting Theory and Priming Research

Establishing a clear link between mass media communication and public, or interpersonal, communication has been the goal of researchers for many decades. As far back as 1922, Walter Lippmann noted that those in charge of designing public policy should be aware of the mass media's ability to influence the images people have of various events. Later, in the mid-20th century, Cohen would make the classic statement that would become a guiding insight to media effects researchers in the agenda setting field. He said that the mass media, "may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about" (Cohen, 1963, p. 13). This notion marked a turning point in research into a connection between the media and the public. About a decade later, Agenda Setting Theory became officially known as such when McCombs & Shaw (1972) assigned it that theoretical label in a study of the media's role in the 1968 presidential election.

It is important to note what Cohen's statement, which was to permeate much agenda setting research for several decades, said about the relationship between the media and the public. Cohen was expressing something of a top-down view of the relationship between the media and the public. Mohrmann's (1982a) criticism of FTA was that one could not verify that themes could chain out from small group contexts to the media and back again. In one respect, considering Cohen's research, his statement is

still fairly accurate. Agenda setting research, even after it became codified into a full-fledged theory and model, never verified a bottom-up relationship between the public and the mass media. What is clear from nearly a century's worth of agenda setting research is that the mass media, which at this point was composed of newspapers, magazines, radio, and television, functions as a disseminator of information, and, as I will argue below, fantasy themes. Put another way, it is a one-to-many linear process. This will prove to be the critical difference between the way the mass media works and the way digital media communication mediums such as the internet operate, and part of the reason why internet communication is more closely aligned to small group communication than is mass media communication.

Agenda Setting Theory has an impressive pedigree of research that both supports agenda setting as a phenomenon and expands the theory to account for potential weaknesses brought up by critics. In 1993, Rogers, Dearing, & Bregman (1993) reported over 200 articles on the topic, and that number has grown substantially in the nearly two decades since. Initially, the scope of the theory was much broader and to a certain extent multi-disciplinary (Miller, 2005). There were three different primary agendas, and those were the media agenda, the public agenda, and the policy agenda. The media agenda involved all of the topics that the media covered in their daily news offerings. Meanwhile, the public agenda was more composed of the topics that the public believed were important. Finally, the policy agenda was made up of topics that decision makers were more interested in. According to Miller (2005),

these three agendas were each primarily studied in a different discipline; media agenda was traditionally taken on by sociologists, public agenda was in the realm of mass communication scholars, and the political scientists studied the policy agenda.

The 1972 study by McCombs & Shaw shifted the focus from the broad agendas of these three different areas to a narrower one that specifically focused on the elusive link between the media agenda and the public agenda. Here the question became not so much what each agenda was, the question concerned whether a correlation existed between the media agenda and the public agenda, and if so, how that worked. Did the topics from the media agenda end up on the public agenda? Could the media dictate the importance of certain topics by allotting them more time than other topics? These are the questions that are also important to FTA. If a salient topic can move from the list of topics the mass media finds important to the list of topics that the public finds important, then a fantasy theme can chain out from the mass media to the public. That is part of the essence of the chaining out process as defined by Bormann and as I have elaborated on above. A message is conveyed by the mass media and it can be picked up and elaborated on by the public, or in some many cases by other mass media sources. The very topics that the mass media makes salient can become the themes that chain out if they catch on within both the media and the public consciousness. In order to do this, however, they must have some explanatory power within the drama that people socially construct in an effort to understand a given situation. This is the lynchpin of the relationship between FTA and mass media communication.

In their study, McCombs & Shaw (1972) found that the public agenda very nearly mirrored the media agenda. The correlation was very strong. Later studies verified this finding by replicating it, thus establishing consistency for the budding theory (see Zhu & Blood, 1997 for a review). However, a correlation, no matter how strong, was not good enough for Agenda Setting Theory. The issue was that correlation does not indicate causality. There was no evidence in the initial studies to support the statement that the mass media agenda affected the public agenda. Put another way, it was not clear that the topics that achieved importance were initiated by the mass media and passed on to the public. The strong correlation that McCombs & Shaw (1972) and later researchers found could have just as easily been used as evidence to support the exact opposite conclusion that the public agenda affects the media agenda. What the public found important could have been passed along to the media. Also, as unlikely as it sounds, even a strong correlation could have been a coincidence of some kind, or there could have been some other source setting the agenda for both the media and the public. Without a direction of causality, there could be no argument for agenda setting.

Fortunately, the issue of causality was answered in relatively short order. Shaw & McCombs (1977) conducted another study with a model revised to first discover topics of importance on the media agenda, and then a short time later discover topics important to the public. The correlation between the media agenda and the public agenda was still supported by the data. Many studies following this one confirmed the results (see Iyengar & Kinder, 1987; Protess et al., 1991, Huegel, Degenhardt, & Weiss,

1989, & Zhu, Watt, Snyder, Yan, & Jiang, 1993 for examples). These later studies also added methodological variations to strengthen the causal relationship, such that Zhu & Blood could later claim that, “these multiple methods have demonstrated a clear causal influence of the media agenda upon the public agenda” (Zhu & Blood, 1997, p. 98).

The strong causal relationship between the media agenda and the public agenda established by the agenda setting theorists is valuable to an understanding of how the mass media can function to deliver topics, or as I argue here, fantasy themes, to the public. This process, however, is not necessarily intentional. While the news is generally structured to be a drama, media spokespersons likely do not think of themselves as chaining out certain themes. Still, it is important to note that the news media do create consumable drama for the public, intentional or not. Nimmo & Combs (1983) discuss this point very clearly in their book. As they note, “Dramatic representation of what goes on in the world constitutes the inherent logic of mediated realities, whether those realities are the products of group or mass communication” (Nimmo & Combs, 1983, p.14). As noted above, the relationship between these two agendas is a top-down one. The causal link that these researchers have established empirically verifies that the mass media is at the proverbial top and is, in fact, the disseminator. It is important to note that interpersonal communication cannot be taken out of the equation, however. Emphasis should not be placed on the mass media as a technological series of communication mediums, but rather as an interactional context. The technological mediums through which the mass media communicate are merely the

conduit, and in this case the conduit cannot (yet) function as anything but a top-down communication apparatus. People use mass media technologies to interact with one another in a less direct fashion than face-to-face communication. One reporter may see a story and react to it, finding a way to also report on the story in a way that fits both his or her and the news corporation's goals. In this way, the reporter is interacting with the work of the author of the first story, even if the two are not engaged in direct conversation. This is a crucial point to understand with regards to FTA and its relationship to mass media communication. If the mass media are an interactional context, then they are capable of generating fantasy themes and functioning as the "dream merchants" Bormann (1972) initially described them as.

Indeed, to go one step further, whatever fantasy themes the mass media comes up with to disseminate do not necessarily originate within the mass media. Those who work within the mass media know what is important to report due in large part to their connection to the world around them – a world composed of many other public interpersonal contexts. On the one hand, Mohrmann was correct; it is ludicrous to presume that fantasy themes can chain out from small group transactions to the mass media and back again. If one thinks only in terms of one particular small group affecting and being affected by the mass media, this makes sense. That is a very narrow and circular way to conceive of communication involving the mass media, however. The transactional imperative that Mohrmann asserts is necessary for fantasy chains to form occurs behind the scenes of the mass media. It is, in fact, where the topics of importance

for the media agenda are decided. It is quite possible for fantasy themes to chain out from various group interactions to the group of people behind the mass media, and then for those same themes to be chained out to the public via the various forms of media technology. That media technology functions as a tool that dictates *how* the fantasy themes chain out, but it does not dictate *whether or not* those themes chain out. The primary difference between the fantasy themes that chain out from the mass media and those that chain out in face-to-face interpersonal interactions lies in the level of spontaneity involved. The mass media agenda is, of necessity, planned. Airtime is precious; only so many news stories will fit into the time allotted to a news broadcast, and each of those stories only has so many minutes – or seconds – allotted to it. The fantasy themes of the media are thought out ahead of time, scripted, and in many cases rehearsed. This is not so of face-to-face group settings, as Bormann noted in his 1972 study. In face to face interactions, people tend to forget themselves more often and blurt out ideas that others may pick up and chain out into fantasy themes. Thus, agenda setting scholars have proven that what the media puts on its planned agenda ends up on the public agenda as well. The job of the rhetorical scholar utilizing FTA is to take note of these origins and study what happens from there.

It is also possible, and has been demonstrated by those studying FTA at the mass media level, for the mass media to chain themes out amongst itself. Indeed, the mass media provides a great deal of recorded content for the rhetorical scholar to study. Williams (1987) questioned if themes chained out in the mass media or simply were

repeated over and over. The answer to his question is not an either/or answer, but rather a both/and. Certainly, due to the nature of press releases and AP wires, certain ideas and concepts will be repeated word for word in multiple outlets. As I try to show in chapter 3, these ideas are not fantasy themes unless they are picked up, altered, and chained out elsewhere to contribute to a shared fantasy that guides public life. The repeated ideas provide the seeds for themes, but require the interaction of other people and news outlets to truly become fantasy themes. Where fantasy themes chain out in the mass media, one will see those themes being casuistically stretched, worked with, and expanded upon. The idea at its core will be recognizable, but one will be able to see the mass media having a kind of dialogue with itself as opposed to simply repeating what was expressed elsewhere. The dialogue of the mass media among its various contributors can be thought of as just another level of discourse that is interactional rather than interpersonal, as those responding to other news reports are not always directly addressing one another. This level is a voyeuristic one, however, in that the public may tune in, take from the discourse those fantasy themes that feel most relevant, and chain them out.

Another aspect of mass media communication that differentiates it from interpersonal communication is exemplified in what later agenda setting scholars would come to call second-level agenda setting. Here, we see the reversal of Cohen's famous sentiment that the media may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think. McCombs, Shaw, and Weaver (1997) make the distinction

between first-level agenda setting, or the type of agenda setting discussed thus far where items from the media agenda end up on the public agenda, and second-level agenda setting. Second-level agenda setting shows how the media directly influences how people should think about the issues that they bring up. This aspect of Agenda Setting Theory attributes to the media the power to present an issue to the public in particular ways that may influence the public to be in favor of that issue or against it. Later studies corroborate this idea (see Golan & Wanta, 2001 and McCombs, Lopez-Escobar, & Llamas, 2000 for examples).

The concept of framing is critical to understanding second-level agenda setting (Takeshita, 1997). Framing describes how the media emphasizes certain aspects of reality and downplays others (Miller, 2005). For example, as I note above, certain stories are given more airtime than others. Or, in the context of the written mass media, those stories may be given more space on the page. Some stories are placed first while others are in the middle or last. Certain ideas may be given more space and time within the story and others may not be mentioned at all. The very tone and the style of vocabulary usage may serve to put a spin on a particular story. Although many journalists attempt neutrality, it is reasonable to presume that neutrality is never an absolute. Scheufele (2000) claims that framing invokes particular interpretive schemas in the audience of the mass media that influence how that audience interprets the information that is being presented. In short, the mass media is persuasive in a very planned way.

Second-level agenda setting and the framing effects that are a part of it differentiate mass media communication from interpersonal communication in that it once again highlights the less spontaneous nature of the mass media. Media spokespeople will generally choose dramas that the public is guaranteed to be interested in (Nimmo & Combs, 1983). As such, the media agenda is planned in accordance with what kind of drama will best “sell”. From this context, the public picks up those fantasy themes in the media drama that resonate best and chain them out. In an interpersonal context, fantasy themes arise and are chained out with less of a sense of planning. Indeed, they arise with too much speed to be framed initially. It is certainly the case that each person that chains out the fantasy theme from then onward will inherently frame it, but this kind of framing is usually less direct than what is planned and put into the mass media. Without such framing, there can be no casuistic stretching. The frame shifts over time with every retelling; each retelling is necessarily a reframing. The reframing process happens more readily in interpersonal contexts, but can and does happen within the more planned arena of the mass media. The primary exception is, of course, the idea repeated verbatim across various outlets as discussed above. This phenomenon is more prevalent amongst the digital media where such copying is easier to accomplish due to an environment less extemporaneous than the interpersonal context. However, just as the simple repetition of an exact sound bite is not the chaining out of a fantasy theme, so too is it not part of the reframing process. It may be part of the framing process, as it is giving more time to a particular subject, but until someone

interacts with the idea that the sound byte represents, it does not become a part of the process of chaining out.

An understanding of how the mass media work must be complemented by an understanding of audience psychology as related to the mass media. This fact was realized by agenda setting scholars in the 1980s and 1990s , and it is directly relevant to an understanding of how FTA works in the mass media as well. One particular concept proposed and studied by social and cognitive scholars since the 1970s that has proven particularly useful is priming (Roskos-Ewoldsen, Klinger, & Roskos-Ewoldsen, 2007). In a meta-analysis of priming, Roskos-Ewoldsen, Klinger, & Roskos-Ewoldsen (2007) define priming as, “the effect of some preceding stimulus or event on how we react, broadly defined, to some subsequent stimulus” (p. 53). Initially, work on priming was purely focused on its psychological dimensions. Early cognitive psychology scholars used network models of memory to illustrate how information in the memory is stored in nodes. These nodes are connected to other related nodes via associative pathways. When one node activates, it can further activate other nodes (Anderson, 1983). Priming is the manipulation of the firing of these nodes. For example, if the media were to first present a story regarding the capital punishment of a criminal accused of murder and then turned to a discussion of what to do about Iran developing nuclear weapons, the audience would be more likely to be thinking of crime, punishment, and perhaps death; these would be the activated nodes and thus the frame of mind the audience was in. They would become the lens through which the audience

would then view Iran. In short, an audience member in this situation would be more likely to view Iran's actions as criminal and deserving of punishment.

There are two important characteristics to take into account when considering the psychological impact of any given prime. These characteristics are the intensity and the recency of the priming event (Roskos-Ewoldsen, Klinger, & Roskos-Ewoldsen, 2007). The intensity of the prime is the strength of it and refers to the frequency of the prime and/or the duration of it. A prime that is repeated multiple times, for example, is far more intense than a prime that only occurs once. In this regard, the digital media has a bit of a priming advantage in its ability to repeat a message many times verbatim. A priming event that lasts longer is also much stronger. Recency in the context of priming, "refers to the time lag between the prime and the target," (Roskos-Ewoldsen, Klinger, & Roskos-Ewoldsen, 2007, p. 57). Those messages with a longer time lag are that much less effective than those with a shorter time lag. With regard to the example above, the story about the criminal accused of murder would not be nearly as strong of a prime if it occurs ten minutes earlier in the newscast than the story about Iran.

Priming as an area of study seemed a natural fit for agenda setting, and several scholars have made the connections between this area of cognitive psychology and communication theory (see Iyengar & Kinder, 1987; McCombs, Einsiedel, & Weaver, 1991; and Willnat 1997). Agenda Setting Theory demonstrates how the more the mass media concentrates on certain topics, the more likely those topics are to appear on the public agenda. Priming as a psychological phenomenon explains how this process

occurs psychologically. Primed topics will appear especially relevant, and those topics will further have a second-level agenda setting effect in telling us what to think about subsequent topics.

Priming is important to FTA because it provides additional insight into precisely how the media's presentation of topics can and does influence how and whether the public will further chain out these topics, leading to the potential development of fantasy themes. In fact, it may prove even more useful to FTA than it does to Agenda Setting Theory. Agenda setting theorists are more concerned with how topics on the media agenda end up on the public agenda. Priming offers a good look into the psychology of what happens with those topics in second level agenda setting, but it should actually be more useful to FTA scholars. FTA is more concerned with what happens to the themes once they are transmitted from the mass media to the public. If those themes are picked up and chained out, then an FTA scholar is interested in how those themes are casuistically stretched over time to become the fantasy themes that the public makes of them.

Priming is critical in the chaining out process for several reasons. First, priming may in many cases be a direct result of how the mass media plans the topics that will be transmitted to the public. While it would take a more finely tuned understanding of the way priming works than most mass media dispensers have to obtain the full effect of planned priming, it may be safe to argue that at the very least the dramas depicted in the news segments are planned. Various types of stories hang together. It is possible

that audience reactions may be planned. This is certainly the argument of second level agenda setting, especially as it is supported by priming. If that is the case, then it indicates a certain control over the chaining out process. That control may be more or less tenuous depending on the depth of the planning involved, but by virtue of being there it represents one critical difference between the chaining out of fantasy themes from the mass media and the less planned chaining out of fantasy themes within small groups.

Priming is also important to the chaining out process because it allows for an understanding of how fantasy themes may chain out from the mass media. If one can study the potential psychology of the audience, then one will have access to a certain level of predictability of how themes may chain out. To use an example from above, knowing that crime, punishment, and death will be foremost on an audience's mind when viewing a story on Iran would be valuable to an FTA scholar. This becomes especially true when one considers that quite often, an FTA scholar does not have access to the chaining out process of the audience that views a story distributed by the mass media. If an FTA scholar can predict how a story may chain out, and thus how it might casuistically stretch, then the analysis becomes all the more useful both to rhetorical theorists and to news outlets that may wish to know how their stories will be received by audiences. Priming is that predictive link, and its utility has already been established in the cognitive psychology literature.

Like the work of Kenneth Burke, Agenda Setting Theory and the effects of framing and priming that it covers are useful to further understand how FTA works from a theoretical level. In this instance, they serve both to prove that the chaining out process can definitely occur from the mass media to the public and to demonstrate just what is happening when that process occurs. Here we see how fantasy themes can be embedded in news report dramas. The links that Agenda Setting Theory and its related processes allow us to draw are important to explicating how FTA must work in a mass media environment. Also, just as with the work of Burke, these concepts push FTA in new and productive directions. Priming especially is useful for the predictive force it offers to the analysis of FTA scholars.

The mass media context is different from the small group context that FTA arose from, however, as will be seen below. It is important to examine how these two communication contexts may be connected. Fantasy themes must be understood as acting differently in the mass media context. Bormann (1982a) discusses how fantasy themes act within the mass media when he contrasts television coverage with newspaper coverage. He claims that since television coverage is instantaneous for the viewer, it is not composed of fantasy themes because it takes place in the here-and-now. Newspaper coverage, however, is composed of fantasy themes because they are composed of accounts that take place after the event. Here I disagree with Bormann. I would argue that newspapers are actually like television in the way the two mediums convey fantasy themes. Neither is composed of fantasy themes per se, but rather

indicate the presence of fantasy themes that have already chained out in group contexts behind the scenes. In order to add a level of precision to FTA that deals with the mass media, I propose the addition of the term “fantasy theme *indicator*” to the taxonomy of the method. A fantasy theme indicator is much like a fantasy theme in that it represents an idea that news sources have repeated and casuistically stretched as other news media sources pick it up and include it in their stories. The presence of a fantasy theme indicator in multiple mass media sources represents a chaining out of a particular fantasy theme among the news community. In addition, the greater the repetition of the theme, even when it is copied word for word, the more salient it is. If a fantasy theme indicator appears repetitively across different news reports and outlets, then it may represent a more salient theme. In essence, fantasy theme indicators may be thought of as the mass media equivalent of Bormann, Koester, & Bennett (1978)’s notion of an “inside joke” or “symbolic cue”, but the two are not the same. The latter requires interaction between real time participants whereas the former does not.

I have here demonstrated the use of mass media communication theory for FTA scholars and I have bridged the gap between the mass media context and the small group context by introducing a term that adds more precision to FTA when used to study mass media rhetoric. This is but one productive example of what such an inter-theoretical perspective can offer a rhetorical criticism method such as FTA in an increasingly mediated communication environment. The online environment, however, is different in several ways from the traditional mass media environment. It is in many

respects more similar to the small group environment that FTA is originally based in. With that in mind, it is necessary to turn to a discussion of exactly how the online communication environment more closely resembles small group communication than the one-to-many communication environment of the mass media.

Computer Mediated Communication and Small Group Communication

When Bales (1970) first published the work that Bormann (1972) later used as the inspiration for FTA, Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) was not a concern. Computers had not yet advanced to the point of being a communication medium. Bales was concerned with small group interactions. Bormann was as well, although he was more concerned with the rhetoric that occurred in such interactions. However, Bormann (1972) was quick to extrapolate the interactional rhetoric of the small group environment to the mass media. Bormann was part of an interesting trend in rhetorical studies of moving away from single pieces of rhetoric directed at audiences of varying sizes (e.g. a speech, a newspaper story, a television broadcast, etc) to rhetorical fantasy themes produced by anonymous authors as opposed to a single source. Although the transition itself was a valid one in an era of proliferating mass media voices, Bormann's leap from fantasy themes among small groups to fantasy themes in the mass media

might have been a bit premature. I have demonstrated above how mass media communication functions, and while there are certainly connections between the media agenda and the public agenda, the differences must be noted by the rhetorical critic if any productive discourse is to ensue. The mass media communication environment is not the same as the small group communication environment.

There are similarities, however, between CMC and small group communication. It is my argument here that the similarities between the two contexts more closely align CMC with small group communication than with mass media communication. However, CMC is quite diverse and there are aspects of it that cause it to act more as a mass media communication medium. I will discuss these below. Still, by and large CMC is a far more interactional medium than the mass media communication medium is, and due to this it is more fertile ground for the chaining out of fantasy themes. Below, I will discuss the connections between small group communication and CMC. Through this discussion, it will become apparent that the new medium that online communication affords people has returned to people the ability to interact with the information that is being presented to them. Through that interaction, fantasy themes are more likely to arise and chain out than they would be in a static mass media environment. However, even the mass media is adopting some of the qualities of small group communication as various news organizations move their content online and offer interactional opportunities to the public.

As of the early 2000s, some small group communication textbooks began to include chapters on CMC as it related to group communication dynamics. Interestingly enough, as of 1999, at least one small group communication textbook by Cragan & Wright (1999) did not address the issue. However, just three years later Harris & Sherblom (2002) devoted a whole chapter to the subject. This attention is congruent with statistics of internet penetration over the past decade. According to the Pew Internet and American Life Project, the home broadband penetration increased from just under 5% in June of 2000 to just over 40% in February of 2006. In conjunction with that increase, Horrigan (2006) reports that the percentage of Americans using the internet in general rose from 60% in 2004 to 73% in 2006. While these reports are from more recent years than Harris & Sherblom's textbook, they do indicate an extremely rapid increase not only in internet usage in general, at least as far as the United States is concerned, but also in high speed internet access. More and more Americans are using the internet for a variety of reasons considering the numerous types of information that may be found on it. Chief among those reasons, however, is to communicate. For example, Smith (2008) reports that 12% of internet users have created and/or worked on a blog. However, 33% indicate that they have read a blog (Smith, 2008). Thus, fully one third of internet users potentially interact with bloggers and each other via blog comment threads, and this is only one way to communicate on the internet. Such commenting is also available on news website stories, and then of course there are message boards, instant messenger, and other online arenas of

communication. Since the internet lends itself to interaction, it is only natural that textbooks dealing with human interactivity should have to consider CMC. It is also not surprising that a textbook devoting an entire chapter to the subject should come out only three years after one failing to do so. If the numbers above are any indication, the medium rose in popularity very quickly and academia had to follow suit. To teach our students small group communication without considering the internet as a very prevalent environment for that communication would be to do them a disservice.

When considering CMC, one must note the variety of types of communication possible in this medium. Unlike the mass media, which are only one-to-many (or few-to-many, if one wishes to count co-anchors and multiple pundits), the internet allows for multiple modes of communication. A news source posting a story to the internet follows the traditional one-to-many format of the mass media, but is complicated when commenting is allowed – and it often is. Message boards offer another type of communication wherein users may post messages of varying lengths with the expectation that others will respond and the originators of the message board threads will get the opportunity to reply in kind. There are also blogs as mentioned above, emails, chat rooms, Facebook, and instant messaging services. Each online format for communication offers a slightly different experience to the internet user.

All of these modes of communication can be categorized into two primary types – synchronous and asynchronous communication (Harris & Sherblom, 2002).

Synchronous communication on the internet consists of those forums where replies are

in real time with little to no delay. These generally consist of chat rooms and instant messenger. Audio and video conferencing are also synchronous. Skype is a popular video conferencing software, and it is free. Asynchronous forums of communication on the internet include comment columns on news stories and blogs, the news stories and blogs themselves, message boards, video sharing software such as YouTube, and other such forums. In each of these forums, responses can be delayed anywhere from minutes to days to even weeks, although longer time lags between replies are not very common. Communication on the internet can thus be thought of along a scale of synchronicity where on one end of the scale there is no delay whatsoever and on the other there are lengthier delays. However, it is important to note the fact that there are replies at all. Synchronous or asynchronous, there are generally replies, and thus the scale merely measures the type of interaction; that there *is* interaction is a foregone conclusion in this instance. Internet communication is already differentiated at this juncture from mass media communication, and it is more closely aligned with small group communication as an interactional medium.

The real differences between small group communication and online communication seem to arise in the arenas of social presence and media richness. Regardless of the similarity between the two modes of communication, online communication is still technologically mediated whereas face to face communication is not. The difference is one of degree, and social presence and media richness measure that degree. Social presence involves the amount of perceived feedback opportunities

within any given communication medium. Through this feedback, those participating in the communication create a sense of shared meaning. Indeed, the development of shared meaning is very important to most group members who are attempting to achieve meaningful communication. According to Short, Williams, & Christie (1976), social presence generally describes the sense of group members that there are actual participants in the meeting that are involved in the communicative process. Thus, social presence is clearly highest in face to face encounters, and scales down from there as various online media are employed to facilitate the meeting process.

Social presence can be measured along a scale of media richness. Daft & Lengel (1986) proposed such a scale, which they called the media richness continuum. Richer media include those that carry more social information such as visual and audio cues simultaneously and these fall closer to one extreme of the continuum. These media tend to be more synchronous and involve an increased transmission of feelings and emotions, which generally leads to increased social presence (Trevino, Daft, & Lengel, 1990). Those media that provide less of these various communicative aspects are known as leaner media. Leaner media are much slower to develop participant feelings of social, emotional, and relational connections.

Face to face communication is clearly the richest of communication mediums, as it allows for the greatest social presence along the media richness continuum. People may observe gestures, facial expressions, body language, and voice pitch and inflection. The cues are also the most simultaneous in a face to face situation. From there, online

video conferencing may be the next step along the continuum, perhaps followed by audio conferencing. Online text based communication, however, is much leaner than the video and audio conferencing. Instant messaging is richer than more asynchronous forms of communication such as email and message board posts, but text based communication in general is far leaner than face to face communication (Graetz et al., 1998). Deciphering text based messages generally takes more time than deciphering their face to face counterparts (Walther, 1996).

Leaner communication media are not without merit, however. For one thing, media richness only generally refers to how fast social presence is communicated. Given time and effort, leaner media can and do facilitate the communication of richer information such as social, emotional, and relational cues. People can and do come to know each other more intimately in online, text based environments. In fact, Walther (1996) demonstrates how leaner media can even benefit the deepening of relationships that promote greater depths of intimacy, trust, and affection amongst the group members. Such depths may actually be due to slowing down the communication of social presence. There are less channels through which various forms of communication may pass, but if this forces people to work harder to build social connections, then that hard work could pay off in deepening social relationships over longer periods of time. While social presence and media richness is a definite hurdle that interpersonal groups must overcome, it is not an impossible obstacle. Unlike mass media communication,

relationships can be forged and social meaning co-created among active members of the group.

Synchronous or asynchronous, high or low social presence, rich or lean media – the one constant with the digital online communication environment is that there is always some form of interaction. These concepts as explicated by several scholars across multiple decades refer to interpersonal communication. At its heart, whether face to face or not, interpersonal small group communication comes down to the interaction between people. Online communication, whether text based or not, facilitates this kind of interaction to varying degrees – but it always facilitates interaction. This is the critical distinction between mass media communication and interpersonal small group communication; there is interpersonal interaction in the latter and none in the former. The closest mass media communication can come to that kind of interpersonal interaction is by using other forms of communication media. Live telethons and radio talk shows utilize the telephone. Some news programs on the 24 hour news networks have taken to responding to Twitter tweets, emails, and Facebook messages on the air (but the interaction very rarely if ever continues beyond the message and single on air response – there is no response back from the audience member). There are some examples of the mass media striving for interaction, ironically by supplementing its communication with online media, but by and large the mass media remains a one way conduit devoid of the interaction required for social presence. The internet does have some mass media elements wherein communication

is one sided, but in many arenas it is interpersonal communication – not mass media communication.

Placing the internet into the realm of interpersonal communication has important implications for rhetorical critics. Rhetoric on the internet becomes interactional and that means that certain types of rhetorical criticism will be more useful than others. Certainly, each form of rhetorical criticism can and does have a place on the internet. However, when studying the interactional rhetoric of critical perspectives such as FTA will have particular relevance, as its origins are in the small group communication that Bormann and his researchers and Bales were concerned with. Mohrmann (1982a) himself pointed out that fantasy chains are forged in a “transactional imperative”. The internet, in many respects, either offers or even demands that very kind of transactional imperative. An instant message calls for a response, a message board thread is not a thread without replies, bloggers leave themselves open to comment, and even the mass media provide the option to comment as they colonize the newest communication environment. The nature of the medium is interaction, and those that utilize it demand the social presence that it can offer.

With this chapter, I have worked both to ground FTA theoretically from a rhetorical standpoint with Burke and to move it into the digital media communication environment. That environment is diverse in that it includes both the mass media and the more interpersonal realm of the internet. FTA can function in both, although it does so in different ways. In the next three chapters, I will present three different case

studies that explore how FTA can be applied to a digital media environment. With the first of these case studies, I will illustrate how FTA can apply to more traditional news stories transmitted via an online environment. Even traditional stories that fall more into the mass media function differently in an online space. The second case study will explore the more interactional rhetoric of a single message board thread with thousands of replies on one subject. This form of rhetoric falls more into the CMC realm and as such will demonstrate FTA's productive utility in a CMC environment. Finally, the third case study will explore the capacity for images to be and to carry fantasy themes on the internet and in the mass media. Images are able to be passed around and manipulated in the current digital media environment in a way that has never been possible before. As such, there is an imperative to study how they work within the interactional rhetoric of the internet and FTA may be particularly well suited to that task as well. Ultimately, these three case studies will put into practice concepts that have here been explored only theoretically and will very firmly ground FTA as a viable method of digital rhetorical criticism.

**CHAPTER 3. THE FANTASIES OF INTERNATIONAL CONFRONTATION:
A Fantasy Theme Analysis of the News Coverage of Iran's Uranium
Enrichment**

Introduction

On April 11, 2006, Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad announced to the world that his country had successfully enriched uranium for the first time. The *Washington Post*, among many other online news services, quoted the Iranian president as saying, "I'm announcing officially that Iran has now joined the countries that have nuclear technology." This announcement came amid global pressure on Iran to avoid furthering its nuclear program. Indeed, President George W. Bush said the day before Ahmadinejad's message that, "We do not want the Iranians to have a nuclear weapon, the capacity to make a nuclear weapon, or the knowledge as to how to make a nuclear weapon" (*Baltimore Sun*). Tensions over the Iranian nuclear program had been running high up to this point. After Ahmadinejad's revelation, the media exploded with stories about the situation in Iran. Very quickly certain themes began to emerge in this public discourse, and certain quotes by high-ranking officials from around the world began to be repeated over and over. The threat of Iran had been in the back of peoples' minds before; now, because of all the media attention, it was at the forefront.

The day that Ahmadinejad made his announcement and the following twenty-four hours of news coverage were an influential turning point in the mass media coverage of Iran. In addition to being of importance to political rhetoric, the coverage from that day serves as a very clear example of how mass media rhetoric functions in a digital online context – in this case to create a rhetorical vision centered around foreign policy crisis. While communication about Ahmadinejad’s announcement took place in a variety of contexts, it was in the digital online context that it really flourished.

Rhetorical themes spread with incredible speed online, and within a day a clear and strong rhetorical vision had formed that would guide the United States’ interactions with and public attitudes towards Iran for the next several years.

The development of the Iranian nuclear story and the speed with which it played out in the public arena are characteristic of the modern digital mass media age. In this chapter, I use Bormann’s fantasy theme analysis (FTA) to examine the way in which the media picked this story up, the aspects they chose to highlight, and how those aspects “chained out.” The repeated fantasy themes are of critical importance because they framed the Iranian issue in a very specific way and foreshadowed how the story would develop as more people began to participate in the rhetorical drama. Accordingly, the fantasy themes contributed to emerging foreign policy perspectives in which various heroes and villains played out their roles in a dramatic scene.

Moreover, this entire event is a compelling example of how the mass media function in a digital online environment. As mentioned below, with few exceptions the

data for this study came almost entirely from news sources that appeared online in the twenty-four hours after Ahmadinejad's announcement. In an online environment, the mass media can establish a strong rhetorical vision with unprecedented speed. The media agenda quickly becomes the predominant narrative, as seen in the blog sources I also use. Once that narrative is set, Agenda Setting Theory shows us that it moves to the public agenda. The fantasy themes that the mass media highlight as being important become important to the public as well. While this dissertation is not necessarily concerned with gauging public response to the media agenda, it does clearly demonstrate how the media agenda, which includes the fantasy themes and the overall rhetorical vision generated and promoted by the mass media, formed in an online environment. That is the overall importance of this particular example. Understanding how the mass media forms a cogent rhetorical vision in an online environment is important to a broader understanding of how FTA can be utilized to analyze mass media rhetoric in an online context. As I suggested at the outset, FTA does have a strong explanatory power with regards to mass media rhetoric. If we know what is important to the mass media, we then have one important bit of evidence of what is important to the public.²

² It is important to note the limitations of FTA in this context. This analysis is not a study of the public's churning out of the fantasy themes (or lack thereof), nor is it meant to be. The digital online communication context does offer certain limited ways to measure some of the public's response to the mass media's rhetorical vision. If one could find message board threads from exactly that time, then one could conduct a parallel FTA study of that data. Such a parallel study takes advantage of the interactivity of the online environment, offering a unique opportunity to examine the rhetoric of both the media agenda and the public agenda and to

In this chapter, I will focus on a sample of news stories that were published on April 12, 2006, the day after Ahmadinejad's announcement. I will examine the online publications with the widest range of readership. FTA reveals how fantasy themes carried through the mass media also functioned to provide audiences with the resources necessary to cope with the possibility of protracted conflict in the Middle East and to understand how their country should view itself in respect to the international community. Moreover, as I will suggest in my conclusion, FTA demonstrates how the media socially constructed a rhetorical vision that mirrors that of the prevailing government authorities.

compare the two. In this manner, one could better gauge the public reaction and compare it to the rhetorical vision that the mass media conveys. The limitation of that kind of study, however, is that it relies on a very limited conception of the "public". In such a study, the public must be defined as those who have both access to the internet and the time and desire to contribute to discussions on the topic. As noted in Chapter 2, the number of those with high-speed internet access has substantially grown over the past decade, but there are still those who have limited access and/or time. A definition of the public agenda must be narrowed to accommodate such a comparative study. Still, the findings of such a study would prove valuable to FTA scholars seeking the connections between the media and public agendas. This kind of comparative study is beyond the scope and purpose of what I intend to do here, however. Agenda setting theorists have already forged those connections, and my work here is meant to demonstrate the formation of a mass media agenda in an online environment. FTA is of particular relevance here because it is an effective way to measure how the mass media sets their agenda. Media agendas are embedded in the fantasy theme indicators that appear within their discourse. Indeed, these fantasy theme indicators are how the media articulates their agenda; they are how the agenda is communicated and ultimately re-interpreted by the public. Through repetitive form, the media sources indicate what they feel to be important. In many cases, as AST has shown, the themes articulated by the media become an important part of the public fantasy.

The News Media Rhetoric of International Politics

The United States and the Middle East have always had a tenuous relationship at best. Due to the political instability of the region, the United States has traditionally approached political dealings with the Middle East with caution. However, there is a need to keep communication with the region open. The Middle East is important to many people for religious reasons. Jews, Muslims, and Christians all believe parts of the Middle East to be religiously significant, and this has led to many conflicts in the past. In addition to holding religious importance, the Middle East contains huge reserves of oil that some of the countries in the region control. For these reasons and more, the Middle East has proven to be the impetus for quite a bit of political conflict over the years. Rhetoric about this conflict has always been reported and expanded upon by the mass media, and this has especially been the case in recent years with the advent of the 24 hour news networks such as CNN, Fox News, and MSNBC. Such rhetoric has excited the U.S. public's interest and imagination and fueled various rhetorical visions depending upon the situation.

The news media play an important role in public perceptions of important events both at home and abroad. When reporting on international events, the news media tend to maintain an ideological perspective consistent with that of their audience. Indeed, Rachlin (1988) points out that foreign policy stories portray international events in such a way as to remain consistent with their authors' native

country's political and cultural perspectives. Interestingly enough, this kind of reporting would seem to be part of a rhetorical feedback loop of sorts, for Agenda Setting theorists have demonstrated that the news media is capable of telling the public what to think about, yet here we see that the media must remain consistent with what their public thinks about the issue at hand. It would appear that the news media creates the perspectives that they must pander to.

Public perspectives vary, however. In a study of the impacts of news media coverage of the Iraq war, Lin (2009) found that different news sources impacted audiences in different ways. People tend to selectively expose themselves to news channels that reflect their personal beliefs. Due to that fact, different news channels portray foreign policy stories in different ways because they are addressing different audiences. For example, in her study Lin concludes from the data that her "study findings(sic) indicate that at the inception of military action, viewing Fox news-talk programs helps explain stronger support for the [Iraq] war, and watching CNBC news contributes to lower levels of support for the war" (Lin, 2009, p. 29). These findings are consistent with the general knowledge that Fox News caters to a more ideologically conservative audience that would likely have supported the war efforts of the conservative Bush administration at the time while CNBC caters to a more liberal audience that would have been less likely to support those efforts. Lin (2009) even goes so far as to cite Kull, Ramsay, and Lewis (2003)'s findings that Fox viewers demonstrate the highest rates of misperception concerning the war. This fact is of particular

importance because it further demonstrates the power of the media in creating public perspectives and then pandering to them; if a media source such as Fox News reports false information, then its audience will adopt that information into its worldview and form misperceptions. In the rhetorical feedback loop regarding the Iraq War, Fox News would have to support the very misperceptions that it created in order to keep its audience happy.

Misinformation from the news media regarding international events can be detrimental to the public consciousness. There is little defense against false sources of information if those sources are the only sources of information. While one might think that education could serve as an effective defense against what can rightly be considered propaganda, Johansen & Joslyn (2008) demonstrate in their study of education and the news media during the Iraq War that this just isn't so; those with more education were just as likely as those who were not as educated to be misinformed about the Iraq War. They reported that, "Because of the media environment surrounding the Iraq War, institutional as well as individual barriers to propaganda were not effective and much of the public believed facts about Iraq that were not supported by evidence" (Johansen & Joslyn, 2008, p. 592). Part of this is due to trust. Clearly, those sources that are considered more trustworthy are more persuasive than those that are not (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). Correlating to this, Iyengar & Kinder (1985) found that there were greater agenda setting effects for those who trust the media than those who do not, and Miller & Krosnick (2000) demonstrated that priming

is influenced by the perceived trustworthiness of a source of information. Thus, if many trusted sources corroborate each other with information that is incomplete or inaccurate, even an educated public will adopt that information as truth.

Unfortunately, the media often favor a handful of specific sources on any given topic. Indeed, this is often in an effort to enhance the media's own credibility. Journalists frequently tend to cite highly recognizable political figures that have already established reputations on key issues (Calvert, 1987). As Shepherd (1981) reports, those sources regarded as "experts" by the public due to repeated exposure often enjoy far more utilization than other less well-known sources. When fewer sources are utilized by the news media, there is an increased potential for news coverage to be one sided. Such was the case for Johansen & Joslyn (2008) when they found that news coverage of the Iraq War tended to be more one sided than not. This kind of one-sidedness produces a rhetorical environment in which the public only receives one highly persuasive view of a given international event. When less sources are utilized, the number of fantasy themes are necessarily limited as there are fewer to pass from the media agenda to the public agenda. The limitation on the number of fantasy themes, especially when combined by audiences selectively exposing themselves to just one news media source be it on TV or on the internet, becomes highly problematic as will be seen in the analysis below. A limited number of sources produce a limited discourse.

Due to the risk of a limited discourse, it is important to study the rhetoric of multiple news media sources. Rhetorical scholars must be aware of such limited

discourse and the implications of it so that we can better educate our students who might one day seek to contribute to that discourse. FTA is a rhetorical criticism method well suited to the analysis of the rhetoric of multiple voices. The news media is not a single rhetorical source that can be analyzed in much the same way as a speech or a single rhetorical text like a movie or a novel. Instead, the news media is a cacophony of voices that seem to all speak at once, creating a rhetoric that is devoid of any single author. Due to this fact, other authors have utilized FTA when studying the rhetoric of the media, as one can see from the FTAs discussed in Chapter 1. Indeed, media coverage of Iran itself has been the subject of an FTA. Dowling (1989) conducted an FTA of the print journalism coverage of the Iran hostage crisis of 1979. The study demonstrated how the massive coverage given to the event by the mass media served to urge Americans to not only be preoccupied with the episode, but to also vote out an incumbent president. Dowling's FTA shows the power of a plethora of media voices all contributing to a rhetorical vision. Also, Dowling's findings echo Rachlin (1988)'s assertion that the mass media tend to attempt to remain consistent with public attitudes in their reporting. He says that his study, "suggests that popular print media do more than objectively report reality. Rather, they may exert a great influence on, as well as accurately reflect, American attitudes relevant to making important political decisions" (Dowling, 1989, p.145). Thus, an FTA of print journalism further demonstrates the connection between the media agenda and the public agenda.

While Dowling's study is important in demonstrating the connection mentioned above, it pre-dates the internet as a popular source of news. Online news is similar to print news in many ways. Both print and online journalism involve publishing news stories. However, in the case of online journalism, fantasy themes can and do chain out much faster than in print news, which is hindered by a more strict publication schedule. This study fits into a long and varied tradition of political rhetorical scholarship generally and a corpus of FTA scholarship specifically by demonstrating how an FTA of the news media coverage of an international event functions in an online context. Substantially, it is not much different from Dowling's study or any other FTA using data gathered from the news media. Qualitatively, however, it is very different. The data gathered for this study all come from the span of a 24 hour period of time. Clearly, the news media continued to cover Iran's enrichment of Uranium. However, as will be seen below, fantasy themes chained out to rapidly form a rhetorical vision for the public agenda to adopt. To this day, the Iranian regime is still mistrusted by the United States media and public, and its nuclear program has been questioned several times. The fantasy themes and the subsequent rhetorical vision explored below have endured in the public consciousness, and their endurance is a poignant illustration of the power of the online news media.

It is evident at this point that FTA is an important critical approach for studying mass media coverage of political rhetoric, especially in an international context. FTA is useful in both print and online media contexts. Before moving on to the next section,

however, it is important to further address Mohrmann's point that FTA cannot be used in a mass media environment due to its small group roots. Chapter 2 of this dissertation elaborated on the connection between the media agenda and the public agenda.

However, it is important to improve upon FTA by increasing its precision as a tool for rhetorical analysis.

In what follows, I engage in an FTA of the online news media coverage of the Iran nuclear enrichment story. Quotes directly from the media may be seen as fantasy theme indicators, whereas those quotes reported by the media from actual political figures are more indicative of fantasy themes. The presence of the quotes from political figures and the fantasy theme indicators together inform my interpretation of the fantasy themes that I have identified.

Rhetorical Analysis of the Iranian Nuclear Situation

Aspects of the reality emphasized by fantasy theme indicators were evident in the way in which the Iranian nuclear story chained out through media circles as a social drama. I examine how these fantasy theme indicators functioned and the corresponding rhetorical vision below. The analysis below illustrates the points made above wherein small group interactions build upon each other more directly. I do not derive these fantasy themes from direct interactions, but rather to an implied indirect interaction among the reporters and political figures stemming from easy access to each other's

work and statements. The fantasy themes are assumed from the presence of the fantasy theme indicators – an assumption warranted by the clear interactivity between the iterations of each theme.

International Conflict and Iran’s Defiance

The mass media’s emphasis on what I call the “international conflict” fantasy theme was indicated by its repeated emphasis on international concern with and opposition to Iran’s announcement. This international conflict fantasy theme served an important function in the drama as it unfolded in the media outlets. Through the chaining out of the idea of an international conflict, the media created a fantasy for the public that identified the heroes and villains and set the scene for how the public should perceive these characters. In this regard, this fantasy theme resembled the Cold War rhetorical vision that Bormann, Cragan, & Shields (1996) identified, wherein there was a fight between “the old elements of Freedom versus Tyranny” that involved the communists plotting to overthrow the free world as represented by the democratic institutions of the West (p. 2). Within this rhetorical vision, the United States was engaged in a war that it must not lose, but that it could not win without resorting to nuclear holocaust. The United States as a central actor had to win via words and propoganda as opposed to guns and bombs if the future of the human race was to

continue to exist. However, as will be seen below, due to the properties of the digital communication medium, the fantasy I analyzed gained traction in the public consciousness far more quickly than it did in that earlier study. Bormann, Cragan, & Shields (1996) discussed a vision that took much longer to form and be maintained. It spanned decades and included consciousness creating, raising, and maintaining.

Of note, Bormann, Cragan, & Shields (1996) discuss the Cold War Vision as one that “imploded” with the end of the Cold War. In my case study we will see that that is not the case; the *dramatis personae* and the scene have changed, but the rhetorical vision has not. The function that it provided – populating an uncertain world with clear good guys and bad guys and telling U.S. citizens where places in such a world are – is still clearly necessary.

The media’s announcement of Iran’s enrichment of uranium automatically appeared to pit Iran against other members of the international community and most notably the United States, even though the emphasis reflected both the media’s and the Bush administration’s attempt to frame the opposition as coming from not only the United States, but from multiple international entities. For instance, *MSNBC.com* quoted Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, who claimed, “...*the world* does not believe Iran should have the capability and the technology that could lead to a nuclear weapon (emphasis mine).” While remaining unclear about what, precisely, the “world” referred to, Rice suggested that all reasonable nations were alarmed at the Iranian decision. Rice herself quickly became one of the primary characters in the unfolding drama and was

cast by most of the media as a hero. The above-mentioned quote or paraphrases of it were repeated several times in other news publications. The *Baltimore Sun* carried a story about the Iranian situation that mirrored Rice's interpretation. In fact, it referred directly to the following statement made by White House spokesman, Scott McClellan: "...the *international* community has serious concerns. (emphasis mine)." Meanwhile, *The New Yorker* reported that Ahmadinejad's announcement drew "*international* criticism and concern (emphasis mine)."

The United States' reaction to the possibility of a nuclear Iran here seems to have roots in a longstanding attitude towards nuclear technology. Kinsella (2005) identified four themes of nuclear discourse that seem to characterize American thinking on the subject. In his study, Kinsella named mystery, potency, entelechy, and secrecy as the four most prominent themes that inform American thinking on the subject. According to Kinsella, Americans attribute a great deal of power to nuclear technology along with a feeling that progress in the field of nuclear science is inevitable, the natural outgrowth of human progress. Still, there is a necessary sense of other-ness to it that the public, as non-experts, do not and can not understand. Hence, it is shrouded in mystery. As Kinsella points out, however, mystery begets hierarchy and there are those that should control the unknowable technology. While this works in favor of the U.S. government much of the time with its citizens, it works against those such as Iran who, in the fantasy themes, are deemed too dangerous or unstable or simply not responsible enough to wield the potent nuclear technology. These themes of nuclear discourse serve to inform

the U.S. public in the fantasies they construct both at home and abroad with regards to nuclear technology, forming an ideology that undergirds the foreign policy visions that result.

Spokespersons for other foreign countries like England, Germany, France, and Russia, who also became characters in the unfolding foreign policy drama, seemed to support this developing fantasy theme, such that Iran as a nation was almost universally cast in the mainstream press as the villain. However, it should be noted that although each country had a specific spokesperson(s), and with the possible exception of Secretary Rice, the countries themselves were the primary characters on the international stage. The political officials who spoke in the media appeared to serve as representatives for their respective citizenry, as if a definitive consensus had already been achieved between these officials and their constituents.

The most prevalent example of how this conflict theme chained out was the reported possibility that the Iranians would build a nuclear bomb. In other words, nefarious or questionable motives were attributed to the Iranians, thus emphasizing their status as villains in the unfolding drama. Although it was repeatedly emphasized that Iran was by its own admission only seeking to enrich uranium on an industrial scale, the possibility of Iran developing nuclear weapons was what most of the media focused on. Indeed, this possibility was repeated so often that it nearly drowned out the information on Iran's emphasis on a peaceful nuclear program. Perhaps the intense focus in the fantasy theme on the nature of Iran as the villain overwhelmed all other

possible interpretations. Online news services described the process of what Iran would need to make a bomb and how long it would take. A story from *Monsters and Critics.com* was titled, "Iran one step closer to nukes." *ABC.com* opened its story by speaking of how Israel's military commanders believed that "...Iran is a long way from creating a nuclear weapon." The idea that the threat of nuclear weapons was some time off also appeared in the *Washington Post*, which claimed that Iran had only enriched uranium to 3.5 percent, a number it argued was "...far below the level needed to produce a nuclear weapon." Overall, specific estimates for how long it would be before Iran could create a nuclear weapon ranged from a year, as proposed by *MSNBC.com*, to five to ten years, as the *LA Times* reported the prognostications of American intelligence officials. The overall message was that the Iranians would inevitably build an atomic weapon. The duration it would take to complete this project gave the US and its allies time to respond.

Another fantasy that chained out is what I call 'Iran's defiance'. With this fantasy theme, we see the villain in the drama once again clearly identified. In this case, defying the will of the majority of the world served as another reason to demonize a nation. In enriching Uranium, Iran apparently defied the mandates of the United States and the international community. *The Washington Post* quoted press secretary McClellan, who argued that "...Iran's *continued defiance* of the international effort to freeze the country's nuclear program (emphasis mine)." Another unnamed European diplomat was quoted in *The Washington Post*: "The bottom line is they completely ignored what

the rest of the world tells them to do.” French government spokesman Jean-Francois Cope was reported as urging Iran “to respect its obligations and stop nuclear activities,” in *Guardian Unlimited.com*. Repeatedly, various media quoted McClellan, German spokesman Frank-Walter Steinmeier, Russian Foreign Ministry Spokesman Andrei Krivtsov, and German spokesman Thomas Steg as saying that Iran was moving in the “wrong direction.”

The implication here, of course, was that countries from which these spokespersons hailed -- the rest of “the world,” -- had the moral authority to “tell” the Iranians “what to do.” With the collective weight of these gathering nations brought to bear against the Iranians in the public press, the nation seemed to be isolated and therefore morally adrift. These officials chained out the idea of Iran’s defiance by emphasizing that Iran was a rule breaker while the other Western countries were the rule makers who had every right to judge and sanction Iran’s actions. In fact, the media described the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) as being responsible for enforcing nuclear regulations on Iran, which implied a moral right to do so. The Agency was touted by *Foxnews.com* as having the legal jurisdiction to “...push Iran to comply...with nonproliferation requirements.” According to *MSNBC.com*, Secretary Rice was reported to have telephoned Mohamed ElBaradei, the head of the agency, to offer support in pushing for Iran’s compliance. It claimed that ElBaradei was heading to Iran on that Thursday, April 18, to seek “full Iranian cooperation with the Security Council and IAEA inquiries.” In this sense, then, the “Iran’s Defiance” fantasy theme was

consistent with prevailing views about the international world order of family of nations that have been part of American foreign policy since President Woodrow Wilson promoted the idea of a “League of Nations” after WWI and which has continued up through the present day.

(Military) Confrontation and Diplomacy

Another fantasy theme, in some ways connected to the preceding one, is what I refer to as the ‘confrontation’ theme. However, while the international conflict fantasy theme served to pit the “good” guys against the “bad” guys, the confrontation theme dealt more with how the good guys should deal with those bad guys. In many ways, this fantasy theme functioned rhetorically to show how U.S. citizens should understand confrontation, military or otherwise, is warranted. In addition, this fantasy theme served to place the United States in the power position in the minds of the public such that those in power have the right to confront those under their authority. Much as the mother may confront the child and the boss may confront the employee, within this fantasy the United States could confront Iran. Here the fantasy theme of “confrontation” spun out within the shared media fantasy to give the U.S. both legitimate power and moral authority on an international stage.

As the spokesperson of U.S. international policy, Secretary Rice played a major role as a hero in this theme. The media often quoted Secretary Rice, who suggested that the Security Council would need to take “strong steps to make certain to maintain the credibility of the international community.” *MSNBC.com*’s story was titled: “Rice: ‘Strong steps’ may be needed to stop Iran”. While Secretary Rice did not detail these ‘strong steps’, the title of that particular story suggested that such steps would lead to a direct (perhaps military) confrontation. Interestingly, her quote focused on the international community, even though the call for ‘strong steps’ came most vocally from the United States and the Bush administration and perhaps represented a diplomatic ploy on the part of the administration to warn the Iranians about the risks associated with their nuclear brinkmanship.

As if to offer the “carrot” rather than the “stick,” Secretary Rice was also quoted on *Foxnews.com* as saying, “...there’s no doubt in my mind that if the Iranians continue down this course there has to be some course of action with the Security Council.” This fantasy theme, which suggested the necessity of concerted and international diplomacy as well as other non-military measures, also chined out in other media. Some of these media sources suggested that, as *CNN.com* put it, “economic and political sanctions are under consideration.” *CNN.com* elaborated on this idea by claiming, “...senior department officials said it could include a move to impose a travel ban against Iranian officials and freezing assets of the regime.” Already the fantasy of punishing Iran by imposing sanctions was showing up as an addendum to the fantasy of a potential

confrontation with Iran. This is understandable as it could be presumed that punishment would lead to confrontation, although the media did not draw this explicit connection themselves.

The media's emphasis on "diplomacy", another fantasy theme, runs parallel to other fantasy themes and was often mentioned in the same articles. For example, after quoting Rice as saying "we can't let this continue," *Foxnews.com* concluded its article by referring to Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, who reportedly said: "The United States is on a diplomatic track." *The New York Times* quoted British foreign secretary Jack Straw: "If Iran does not comply, the security council will discuss further diplomatic measures." This particular statement, which also mentioned Iran's defiance, highlighted the country's obligation to 'comply' as well as the United States' commitment to rational negotiation. Here we see embedded within the diplomacy fantasy theme a prioritization of moral obligations. Specifically, the U.S. and its citizens must make every effort to resolve conflict with communication before resorting to military action, even if military action is a possible end-game threat. Holding the moral high ground and winning a "war of words", so to speak, is not a new theme in American discourse, as Bormann, Knutson & Musolf (1997) indicate in their explanation of the Cold War rhetorical vision mentioned above.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov also chined out the diplomacy fantasy theme, but he tended to take a more cautious approach. Lavrov was reported several times as saying that the use of force could not solve the standoff over Iran's nuclear

program, but instead could, "...only create another explosive hotbed in the Middle East." The idea here seemed to be that all diplomatic measures must be taken before a military strike was even considered publicly. The quoting of Lavrov in the American media served to remind audiences that all options must be considered when thinking about confrontation. Again, as the chaining out of the theme above indicates, this was a view the United States as a character in the drama appeared to be endorsing as well, if the news reports of the administration's position were accurate. The difference between the Russian view and that of the Americans as articulated in the proliferating fantasy themes was perhaps one of tone: While the Russian actors were explicit about not recommending a military confrontation because of its likely catastrophic consequences on the scene of the drama, the American perspective on a military option and its unintended consequences was more muted, even though, as at least some news agencies later claimed, the Bush administration had already planned for regime change and a possible nuclear attack against Iran and its nuclear facilities (see Hersh, 2006).

Once again, the idea of the United States as the hero in an international drama that must stand directly opposed to so-called "villains" is not a new one. Wander (1984) indicated that one vision of American politics since the beginning of the Cold War has been what he calls "prophetic dualism". As he describes it, "prophetic dualism divides the world into two camps. Between them there is conflict. One side acts in accord with all that is good, decent, and at one with God's will. The other acts in direct opposition" (Wander, 1984). In this situation, just as in the Cold War period that Wander described

most explicitly when talking about this type of American foreign policy, even though the U.S. was viewed as being an absolute force of good, the country could not go to war because the results of a potentially nuclear conflict would be too devastating to the human race as a whole. Instead, Americans had to win the war of words through diplomacy. The American actors wanted to keep the military option open, but only as a last resort, and this was consistent with that long-standing vision that Americans put diplomacy before the use of force. It also served to put the Iranians in a defensive posture.

At this point, the fantasy quickly perpetuated by the media very likely fit the Bush Administration's goals of disrupting Iran's nuclear ambitions, just as similar visions of prophetic dualism have supported the goals of previous Cold War administrations (Wander, 1984). Although they could not fully control what the media said on the matter or how the drama unfolded, those within the Bush Administration were probably satisfied with where the fantasy predominantly ended up in the mainstream media.

For its part, *MoveOn.org*, a primarily liberal news and editorial outlet, chained out the fantasy in a different way when they sent out an email to its list insisting on diplomatic action. In contradiction to some of the media mentioned above, this email quoted an unnamed member of Congress as saying, "...there's no pressure from Congress for a more diplomatic route." The message went on to suggest that there was a strong possibility of the United States initiating a nuclear attack on Iran. However, the

email pointed out that, "...there's time for a diplomatic solution" and concluded by providing a link to a petition to stop a nuclear attack on Iran. This email, which clearly repudiated the Bush administration for its alleged military threats against Iran, represented the themes of confrontation and diplomacy being carried out by the alternative media to more extreme ends than in the mainstream press. Here the drama shifted and the U.S. moved away from being a hero and more towards being a villain. From *Moveon.org*'s point of view, if the U.S. did not consider diplomacy to be the best option, then it became a villain by virtue of being willing to sacrifice countless lives and environmental welfare in a nuclear holocaust. This was a drama of no heroes where the American people were caught in the middle of a conflict between the reckless character of the Bush Administration and the potentially dangerous specter of a nuclear Iran. Whereas the mainstream media only tended to report the words of high ranking officials on the topic of diplomacy, *MoveOn.org* intensified the drama when it presented an apocalyptic vision of the situation and immediately called for action on the part of the reader. It suggested that it was not only the Iranian's provocative action that would initiate such a conflagration but also the Bush administration's hawkish approach to international affairs.

The Rhetorical Vision

These combined fantasy themes formed a rhetorical vision in which the world was populated by the forces of right and wrong and good and evil, a worldview reminiscent of the Cold War rhetorical vision as articulated by Bormann, Cragan, & Shields (1996). This rhetorical vision was clearly suggested by a *FoxNews.com* quote from secretary McClellan that served to structure the ongoing drama: “Defiant statements and actions only further isolate the [Iranian] regime from the rest of the world”. Iran as the rogue nation character was in the wrong and through its ‘defiant’ actions was ‘isolating’ itself from ‘the rest of the world’. In other words, Iran was setting itself up in direct opposition to the forces of ‘good’ and had to be ‘stopped’. Although this vision did not achieve quite the same ‘us versus them’ mentality as in the Cold War Paradigm, there was still a very clear ‘us’ (the United States and its allies) versus a very clear ‘them’ (Iran).

The rhetorical vision suggested that if Iran went on to create nuclear weapons, a confrontation on the order of the old Soviet-Western struggle might yet come to fruition. Fantasy themes that frame a nation such as Iran as defiant and then go on to chain out themes of confrontation and punishment can function to authorize countries such as the United States to act as the police of the world, thus bringing order and predictability to the overarching drama. In this case study even the theme of diplomacy obligated the U.S. as an actor in the drama to use diplomacy as a first course, since it

seemed to assume that any rational and benevolent world leader would act this way when dealing with an intransigent and defiant country. In this rhetorical vision, rational world leaders must do everything possible to stop villainous actors such as Iran. The implication was that Secretary Rice – and indeed the entire Bush administration – embodied this sort of diplomatic restraint but that the administration was willing – and more than capable – of resorting to more aggressive military measures if necessary. International voices were repeatedly presented, but only when they backed up the United States. In the end, the United States was left in the dominant position of considering action against Iran and other countries either did or did not support it.

Implications and Conclusions

This chapter suggests that diplomacy was universally encouraged by the articles and by most of the diplomats quoted in them. This was probably because, in the broader context of American foreign policy, the United States' continued involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan severely limited its military options against Iran. Yet, at the same time, the fantasy theme of “diplomacy” seemed overshadowed by the idea that Iran would eventually develop a nuclear bomb and the (not entirely remote) possibility of a

military “confrontation” with Iran. These two fantasy themes chained out in ways that created a rather ominous rhetorical vision, in which the forces of right were lining up to do battle with the rogue nation. The message appeared to be that, as long as the United States viewed itself as the superior force for good, ‘defiance’ from countries like Iran would simply not be tolerated.

Of even greater significance is the fact that, as I suggested at the outset, these themes came together in the media to construct a view of the Iranian situation that very closely reflected that of the White House. Frequently, Secretary Rice and other high ranking American officials were quoted in the media voicing their views on the situation – as if these were the *only* viable renderings of the conflict. Although the media studied here seemed to be neutrally reporting, rarely were outside voices heard. The problem is that such news reporting, when it serves to chain out such fantasy themes and therefore rhetorically construct (or dramatize) American foreign policy, may also serve to reinforce the current political administration’s view of reality in the minds of the average readers.

The findings of this chapter seem to echo the complaints of the scholars reviewed above that the mainstream media can serve to deliver to the public a very one-sided view of a given situation. When the media only offer a relative few credible sources, then it is hard for the information to be anything but one sided. As Johansen & Joslyn point out, if there is not enough credible opposition willing to censure the White House line on a given issue, “journalists find few credible sources for comments critical

of the White House, so that the information offered by the media is one-sided" (2008 p. 593).

In an effort to combat this tendency towards one-sidedness in the mass media, Robert Entman (2004) has argued that the mainstream press should attempt to achieve what he calls 'frame parity'. "To reach frame parity, the news must offer a *counterframe* that puts together a complete alternative narrative, a tale of problem, cause, remedy, and moral judgment possessing as much magnitude and resonance as the [current] administration's" (Entman, 2004, p. 48). Counterframes allow citizens to more intelligently form their own interpretations of the situation, since they have two or more competing sets of data and opinions from which to choose. As Entman suggests, whether or not members of the public fully go with one frame or the other or use the information to construct their own framing is irrelevant so long as they have the opportunity to see more than one side of the issue. Unfortunately, as is the case in what I have described above, he goes on to say that, "...frame parity is the exception, not the rule (p. 48)." The Bush administration had achieved what he calls 'frame dominance' because the media presented no other frame as it chanted out the events in Iran. Instead, the rhetorical vision achieved by the media very closely matched the dominant frame of the Bush administration and no frame parity was achieved.

As was evident by the *MoveOn.org* email, however, outside voices did exist, but the mainstream media typically did not pick them up with any degree of consistency. For example, even months after the initial reports examined here, the Iranian nuclear

issue heated up once more when Iran did not meet a deadline to stop nuclear development. While confrontational themes came to the forefront yet again, a different story was told on the back editorial pages, as when *Newsweek* editorialist Fareed Zakaria asked: "Can everyone please take a deep breath?" He proceeded to explain why Iran was not the "10 feet tall" enemy that Washington claimed it in fact was. Meanwhile, Gwynne Dyer, a nationally syndicated political commentator with an expertise on military affairs, wrote in the Raleigh *News & Observer* that, "Iran's actions are not worth a real crisis, and the situation is certainly not very urgent" (2006, p. A19). Dyer's editorial appeared on page A19 of the newspaper, buried under 18 pages of other stories, none of which explored the "non-crisis" interpretation of Iran's nuclear ambitions. His voice and other alternative voices, most who could be seen as presenting versions of Entman's "counterframes," appeared peripherally in the mainstream press while the primary attention was taken up by other major stories of the day. This lack or decentering of alternative voices suggests that the media was not actually as neutral as they seemed; they presented one way of viewing the situation that also, wittingly or not, happened to be fairly consistent with the government's dominant discourse.

The media plays a vital role in the way in which many United States citizens form their views of the world. Increasingly, the news media in an online context are becoming a major part of that role. As seen in this case study, in an online context, news media fantasy themes chain out much faster than in a print context and still manage to form an enduring rhetorical vision. Because of this, one must be concerned when the

media's vision of international affairs closely aligns with the White House line. This is especially true when the White House's rhetoric contains themes of confrontation or hints at potentially disastrous military action. However, in an online context where fantasy themes proliferate outward with unprecedented speed, there appears to be at least some likelihood of rhetorical visions that involve both frames and counter-frames in a dialectic that ultimately keep dramas from becoming too extreme in either direction. When the counter-frame is weakened by decreased visibility, it becomes problematic, but as the Internet matures the notion of a "front page" becomes blurred. A counter-frame message appearing on a webpage that is not "behind" any others, but can sometimes serve as the first point of contact for a reader if that reader is following a hyperlink from Google or from a friend. The evolving situation in Iran will need to bear the close scrutiny of rhetorical scholars as it unfolds and is socially constructed by voices in the White House, the media, and around the world via the Internet.

This chapter has demonstrated the utility of FTA in an online context involving the more traditional news media. In addition, I have introduced the concept of fantasy theme indicators as a way to more precisely understand how fantasy themes operate in a mass media context. As the news media increasingly colonize the online space in an effort to reach a broader audience, it becomes more necessary to understand how it functions rhetorically within that space. In the next chapter, I explore a case study involving the general public interacting in an online space to produce fantasy themes and a rhetorical vision. The interactions of the public in an online context are

necessarily different from those of the mass media in the same context, for when the public interact with each other, their interactions are more akin to small group interactions.

CHAPTER 4. SCIENCE AS “OTHER”: A Rhetorical Vision of Discussion Board Participants

Introduction

Anthropogenic global warming (AGW) has been an incredibly contentious issue both in the United States and abroad for more than a decade. Most know AGW as simply climate change. Indeed, referring to climate change as “global warming” is something of a misnomer that is more easily refuted by skeptics. Global warming refers only to a greenhouse effect on the planet, whereas climate change encompasses the warming effects in addition to other effects of a changing climate. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)’s website defines the difference by specifying that, “Climate change refers to any distinct change in measures of climate lasting for a long period of time. In other words, ‘climate change’ means major changes in temperature, rainfall, snow, or wind patterns lasting for decades or longer” (EPA.gov, 2010). Climate change might involve cooling in certain areas even as the Earth as a whole warms as a result of more greenhouse gasses in the atmosphere. The point of contention, however, is located in the term “anthropogenic”. Many acknowledge that some form of climate change or global warming is happening. People disagree, however, as to how much, if any, responsibility humans bear for the phenomenon.

Within the scientific community, there is a general consensus that AGW is a real phenomenon. Climate change is in large part due to human activity. According to an Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report written by scientists, there is a greater than 90% chance that the majority of the warming effects that the Earth has experienced since the 1950s are due to an increase in greenhouse gas emissions by human activities (IPCC, 2007). The EPA website endorses this study and directs readers to it under the FAQ “Are human activities responsible for the warming climate?” by providing the PDF. In the same FAQ, the EPA also definitively states that the planet is warming: “The global temperature record shows an average warming of about 1.3°F (0.74°C) over the past century” (EPA.gov, 2010). From the EPA website, then, one gets the impression that the science is clear on the matter and that there is government endorsement for it – AGW is happening.

The scientific world was rocked by a rather shocking event towards the end of 2009, however. On November 19, 2009 hundreds of private emails and documents that were supposedly exchanged between some of the world’s leading climate scientists over the course of more than a decade were leaked to the internet (Hickman & Randerson, 2009). The emails were reportedly from the email system of the University of East Anglia’s Climatic Research Unit (CRU). According to BBC.com, “Researchers at CRU, one of the world’s leading research bodies on natural and human-induced climate change, played a key role in the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change’s Fourth Assessment Report, which is considered to be the most authoritative report of its kind”

(BBC.com, 2009). The IPCC data statement on global warming cited above and featured on the EPA website is from this report.

The leaking of these emails and documents was scandalous because they seemed to provide damning evidence of collusion among scientists and other experts to fabricate the existence of climate change. According to the Guardian website, the following anonymous statement accompanied the emails: “We feel that climate science is, in the current situation, too important to be kept under wraps. We hereby release a random selection of correspondence, code, and documents. Hopefully it will give some insight into the science and the people behind it” (Hickman & Randerson, 2009).

Although there is no way to say for sure, it is very likely that the sampling of data is anything but random. The stated purpose of those that hacked into the CRU’s email server and published the data appears to be to increase transparency in science.

However, those opposed to the idea of AGW (i.e. those opposed to the thought of human culpability in the matter) immediately seized upon several quotes from the emails that can be read as scientists falsifying data and conspiring to keep the truth hidden. For example, in an email dated 1999, one scientist wrote, “I’ve just completed Mike’s *Nature* trick of adding in the real temps to each series for the last 20 years...to hide the decline”. Hickman & Randerson (2009) claim that skeptics jumped on that quote in particular as evidence of data manipulation, and this claim is verified by the data from this study.

However, experts such as Bob Ward, director of policy and communication at the Grantham Research Institute on Climate Change and the Environment at the London

School of Economics, point out that the term “trick” is often used both in science and in other contexts to mean a clever way of doing something as opposed to deception. Ward along with others such as a spokesman for Greenpeace attempted to quell the surge of accusations from skeptics by saying that if one looks through any organizations emails from the past decade or so, one is likely to find potentially scandalous content – but that doesn’t mean anything. People sometimes talk trash in emails, but that does not mean they are engaged in a global conspiracy. Still, as might be expected the skeptics did not buy that line of reasoning.

Everything surrounding the leaked emails and the so-called scientific scandal came to be known as “Climategate”, especially among skeptics. As Bormann, Cragan, & Shields (2001) indicated, the “-gate” form is in fact a fantasy type that, “depicts governmental corruption and cover-up” (p.284). Terms that use the “-gate” form subsequently become symbolic cues that refer to specific situations. They point to Watergate, Irangate, and Whitewatergate as examples. The fantasy type certainly holds true here, lending even more validity to their example. Although non-skeptics tended to avoid the use of the term, “Climategate” caught on as a symbolic cue that called to mind the whole episode involving the leaked emails and documents. Indeed, as of this writing a quick Google search for the term brings up just under one million hits. Despite the negative connotations associated with the symbolic cue, for the sake of clarity I will use it to refer to the episode for the remainder of this chapter. For better or for worse,

Climategate is what the episode actually came to be known as. The skeptics came to control that framing.

While Climategate was a hot topic on the agenda of the media, it was also an important issue on the public agenda as well. People were eager to discuss the event and express their opinions on it in a variety of internet forums. Several bloggers wrote on the ordeal and there were message board threads devoted to it as well. One message board thread in particular became an in depth source of discussion on the topic between anonymous sources. This thread appeared on “The Something Awful Forums” in the “Debate and Discussion” section under the subheading of “Science, Academics, and Philosophy”. Something Awful (found at www.somethingawful.com) is an internet comedy site that produces satire on a wide range of topics. The discussion board forums, despite requiring a one-time payment of \$9.95 up front to contribute, are very active. As of this writing, the forums have just under 150,000 total users with around 7000-8000 registered users being logged in at any given time. This number is in addition to lurkers, who peruse the forums without logging in to contribute. There are many different types of sections in addition to the “Debate and Discussion” section; for example, there are sections devoted to motorcycles, sports, tourism and travel, business, video games, and several other interests.

The thread in question was titled “Climatic Research Unit hacked; emails and documents leaked”. It began on November 21, 2009, just days after the email leak occurred. Participants in the thread self identified both as simply interested

participants and as various types of scientific experts, although there was no way to check their credentials. Interestingly enough, none of the participants identified themselves as climate science experts. Thus, while expertise was somewhat frequently invoked as a sign of credibility, those who participated in the thread were for all intents and purposes a group of concerned individuals from various backgrounds. These individuals carried on a fairly lengthy discussion, especially by discussion board standards. When the thread unofficially ended (people stopped posting), it was 64 pages long. There were 2522 individual posts that ranged over a period of seven months. This discussion maintained a small group dynamic while taking full advantage of the asynchronous nature of the communication medium.

Due to the qualities listed above, this discussion board thread was ideal for the present study. Although participants utilized self identified expertise to boost their ethos in an anonymous environment, their status as non-*climate science*-experts made them just like any other zero-to-minor history group discussing a current event separated from the here-and-now. The difference was the digital medium of communication, and that difference made for a different style of rhetorical situation than Bormann initially studied via Bales. There were both different constraints and different opportunities. The purpose of this chapter is to explore those constraints and opportunities by applying the model of FTA that I have laid out in Chapter 2 including Burke's concepts of consubstantiality and casuistic stretching. I argue that the digital medium represented by this discussion board thread offers a good opportunity to

observe in detail how fantasy themes that chain out casuistically reaffirm the norms of a community and thereby re-constitute that community after it has been threatened.

Below, I begin by discussing other relevant scholarly work involving the study of message boards. After that, I engage in an FTA of this message board thread. Finally, I conclude with a discussion of the implications of the view of science that the rhetorical vision engendered by the rhetoric of this thread leads to. Ultimately, this chapter will demonstrate the unique viability of FTA for use in the study of online rhetoric that I have argued for in previous chapters.

Discussion Boards, Computer Mediated Communication, and the Public

Sphere

Discussion boards on the internet represent a vibrant and productive form of computer mediated communication (CMC). As mentioned above, they provide participants with an asynchronous communication medium to express ideas, form arguments, and interact with one another on schedules that best fit into their lives. Due to the asynchronous nature of the discussion board, space and time cease to be constraints in the rhetorical situation. In fact, certain opportunities arise. As McKenna & Bargh note:

Not only can an individual engage in a social exchange without the other person being online at the same time but also he or she has a far greater control over his or her side of the interaction than is possible in a conversation by telephone or in person because there is no need for an instantaneous response (McKenna & Bargh, 2000, p. 60).

A person on the east coast of the United States may participate equally in a discussion with someone from the west coast, England, or anywhere in the world. One might work a day job and the other a night job; one might be a member of the lower-middle class and the other a high-powered executive – it does not matter. These are no longer constraints. Another opportunity that arises in an online context has to do with the anonymity of the interaction. Participants are free to construct different identities for themselves, sometimes even exploring different genders, races, and even sexual orientations (Kendall, 2000; Turkle, 1995). Participants are not constrained by the realities of their offline identities.

A lack of the ordinary constraints associated with face-to-face group interaction should not be mistaken for a utopian environment free of any constraints, however. In an online, anonymous communication context new constraints arise. The most obvious is access to the environment; not everyone has access to a computer, the internet, or the expertise required to successfully navigate newer digital technologies. As evidenced by Pew statistics cited in Chapter 2, the number of people in the United States with access

to high speed internet has risen substantially since 2000, but there is still a digital divide. When communicating on a discussion board, one is limited to group members that are able to afford access to the space. In the case of the Something Awful discussion board, a one-time fee of \$9.95 is required to participate. Another fee of the same amount is required to access the archives, of which the data for this study are a part, and still another is required for a premium membership that allows one access to such basic tools as the ability to search the forums more easily and the ability to report abuse. Ten to thirty dollars might not be prohibitively expensive to many, but it is sufficient to keep most children and those not able or savvy enough to pay for things online out of the conversations.

Another constraint arises from the very anonymity of the space that serves as an opportunity above. On a discussion board, users more often than not utilize pseudonyms. In many current situations, they are allowed to post a profile picture. That ability, however, is more often than not used to post anything but an image of the participant. On the Something Awful forums alone, there are examples of cartoon characters, politicians, celebrities, quotes, and other types of creative profile pictures. There are no pictures of the participants themselves. In such an environment, however, Brummett (2006) reports that questions of ethos and credibility become much more acute. In a study on the use of rhetoric on a newsgroup (which is very similar to a discussion board) devoted to motorcycle enthusiasm, he claims that, "In a digital world in which the representational epistemic standards of accuracy and fidelity can rarely if

ever be confirmed, an urge to guarantee unverifiable representations can be as pressing as it is poignant” (Brummett, 2006, p. 289). Throughout the study, he provides evidence of newsgroup participants often share anecdotes full of detailed technical language in an effort to position themselves as experts on the topic at hand. Those who are unable to provide such detailed information, or those who do so and are proven wrong, lose most of their credibility. Dogmatic language is also a tool used by participants to verify expertise because assuredness in one right answer seems to be a successful way to gain credibility. The data from the Something Awful discussion thread seen below corroborates Brummett’s findings. Establishing ethos in an environment where personal information and background is difficult if impossible to come by, then, serves as a very real rhetorical constraint that participants must navigate if they wish to be taken seriously and have full access to the conversation.

Although this behavior is somewhat uncommon among discussion boards, Something Awful has forum administrators that will actively put participants on probation or even ban them for making contributions that are not meaningful in some way. In fact, all users have a link to a “rap sheet” at the bottom of each post they make to a discussion board thread. The rap sheet details the times they have been put on probation and/or banned and why. In the forum guidelines, new participants are urged to lurk for a while to figure out the norms so that they do not get in trouble. Ethos is a very real component of the online community and people are reminded of that fact in tangible ways through overt policing behavior. Forum administrators are not just

police, though; they are also active participants. Non-administrators with access to the ability to report others also unofficially police the forums. In this way, the community's discourse is collectively self regulated. That kind of very public regulation becomes yet another constraint; participants must craft responses that will not result in punishment.

From a broader perspective, a sense of community is important to members of discussion boards. The attempts to achieve it serve as another type of constraint. Participants on message boards are building community even as they engage in a type of public sphere that challenges earlier conceptions of what comprises the public sphere. For instance, in his earlier work Habermas (1989) initially conceived of a the public sphere as a domain of social life that involves private people coming together as a public. In this work, Habermas set forth a normative definition that involved a public sphere open to all citizens. Habermas's public sphere required these citizens to be able to speak without coercion as equals who could eventually arrive after a healthy debate and/or discussion at a common or public good. Later, after much criticism, Habermas (1998) revised his definition of the public sphere to be less dependent on a specific place and more inclusive of a wider variety of communication contexts where people's opinions, "are processed, synthesized, and filtered until they become public opinions" (Tanner, 2001, p. 384). Tanner (2001) goes on to explain that by public opinion, Habermas was referring to that opinion which arose via public debate in an active public sphere as opposed to that measured by a survey. Essentially, the public sphere is more of a concept that describes the currents of communication in social spaces – such

as an internet discussion board. According to Tanner (2001), these types of social spaces become more abstract the further removed they are from the physical world and, “Communication over the Internet is a manifestation of these changes and the abstraction to a ‘virtual world’ with people communicating over computer networks” (2001, p. 385). For Habermas, then, FTA would give us a closer approximation to how communication works in the public sphere via the internet than more traditional source-oriented rhetorical criticism methods because it gets at the collective rhetoric that forms public opinion.

In addition to Habermas’s work with the public sphere, many scholars have recently been more explicitly concerned with community in regard to CMC (e.g. Bakardjieva, 2003; Ess & Sudweeks, 2005, Herring, 2004, Herrman, 2007). According to Herrman (2007), some scholars view CMC as a novel arena for social interaction unhindered by geography that is isolated from the offline world (e.g. Turkle, 1995; Ward, 1999) while others believe that online spaces constitute communities in and of themselves (e.g. Markham, 1998; Miller & Slater, 2000). The two views are not incommensurable, but the latter does more to move us away from the idea that there are two separate “worlds” – those that are online and those that are offline. Scholars seem to agree that CMC builds a sense of community. That sense of community is vital when participants come together to debate in a public sphere as equals

Previous scholars have demonstrated how discussion boards and CMC in general function as a rhetorical situation different from the typical one-to-many context

represented by previous modes of communication. They have also shown how the online communication environment both is a part of the public sphere itself and how it challenges earlier notions of the public sphere. FTA can do a lot to show us how the myriad of anonymous voices on the internet come together to organize people's ideas and thus develop a community through engaging in discourse and debate. In the study below, I will demonstrate the utility of the method by analyzing the online conversation of a group of individuals both interested in and concerned over the Climategate affair.

Science as Other: A Shared Rhetorical Vision of Science

A brief overview of the overall rhetorical vision here will serve to ground this study and to illustrate the its connection with the preceding fantasy themes. While not all FTAs require such an overt Burkean focus, this one is particularly well suited to it. The discourse on the discussion board is clear and very well recorded, allowing this criticism the luxury of more certainty with regard to how the fantasy themes encouraged community members to identify with a shared rhetorical vision despite substantive differences. Such clarity and documentation is not unique to this study, however; it is endemic of discourse on the internet. As such, an FTA more explicitly informed by Burkean theory is appropriate and quite productive when dealing with asynchronous discussion board discourse.

The rhetorical vision that both emerged from and guided the discussion in the Climategate focused thread on the Something Awful discussion board was one of viewing Science (with a capital “S”) as something other. Although the discussion turned into a debate between the proponents of AGW and those opposed to the idea of human responsibility and culpability in climate change, this title of titles was the guiding force behind both sets of arguments. The rhetorical vision advanced the idea that science is other, and those who practice it are at best a priestly class that should not be questioned, and at worst are hindered in their service to it by their own humanity – their needs for fame, funding, job security, and other non-scientific concerns.

Within this dynamic rhetorical vision, several specific scientists mentioned in the emails became the *dramatis personae* that populated an international stage. The specific setting was initially described as being CRU, but since the emails involved scientists from all over the world, the setting became something of a nebulous, esoteric concept. The scientists were removed from the here and now within inviolate laboratories that these emails gave the public a glimpse into. Cyberspace itself became a part of the setting, as the messages were emails and they were posted to a website that was quickly taken down. Due to the nature of the Internet setting, however, no information that is posted ever disappears, and the many copies in circulation on the Internet served to perpetuate the drama. As will be seen in the fantasy themes below, to some the scientists were the beleaguered heroes attempting to continue onward in the name of science despite devastating and unfair setbacks to their credibility. To others,

the scientists were the villains hiding the truth from the public, attempting merely to capitalize on the people's ignorance.

There were two major fantasy themes that culminated in this rhetorical vision and lead one towards it. The first deals with science as a whole, and is what I call the "Science as Truth" theme. This theme, quite simply, is composed of many statements that express a view of science as being *truth*. It is highly reminiscent of Descartes' Cartesian Dualism in which the truth is out there – whether we can access it or not – and that science is the primary means by which we can approach an understanding of "objective" reality. An important subset of this fantasy theme is a series of statements regarding "how Science should be done". There are both proper and improper ways to get at the truth that is science, and this served as the action part of the fantasy theme. Those scientists that conducted science in the correct way were the heroes; those that misused science were the villains. In some cases, the villains were peer reviewers who let faulty science through into publication. In the conflict over the truth of AGW, handling science in any way that violated the "truth" made one a villain. The second fantasy theme deals with the scientists themselves, and is what I call the "Scientists as Conspirators" theme. Although this particular theme derives its title from the subset of participants that accused climate scientists of collusion, I mean for it to be viewed more broadly than that. This theme encompasses ideas of both conspiracy and collaboration of scientists, but always behind the scenes. It gets at a general attraction to the idea of "experts" that know more than the general public does and at the same time a fear of

their ability to manipulate the public with that information. In this manner, the scientists could only serve as villains, which could confuse the drama for those wanting to decide once and for all the truth of the matter. Were the scientists infallible in their pursuit of truth, or was the very notion of truth challenged by the humanity of the scientists that needed funding, political clout, and tenure? The participants in the discussion struggled with this question as they chained out this particular fantasy theme. Those who contributed to this theme debated whether or not transparency was desirable in science, but regardless of the stance one took on the issue, all viewed scientists as working at least to some degree behind the scenes. The leaked emails were a peek behind the proverbial “scientific” curtain.

Already, one should note the connectedness of the two fantasy themes and the rhetorical vision. The idea of science as other pervaded the discourse that produced the fantasy themes. It was the wider circumference by which the themes must be viewed, and hence this is why I preface my analysis with it. The rhetorical vision should be kept in mind as the analysis proceeds below and I will return to it in more detail once I’ve elaborated on the fantasy themes.

Before proceeding, however, I must make a brief note about my method. As noted above, the discussion board thread is 64 pages long and is composed of 2522 individual posts. Due to the extreme length of the discussion, I chose to sample only the first half. Specifically, I examined pages 1-32 in their entirety. The sampling is not random because observing the fantasy themes as they chained out in order is important

to understanding how they formed and casuistically stretched. While the number of pages examined was predetermined, it is also important to note that the fantasy themes observed had long been established before I reached the halfway mark. Each successive addition to a fantasy theme that I noted merely served to demonstrate the phenomenon of casuistic chaining and/or recalcitrance. The rhetorical vision did not shift.

Also of note, I do not refer to the participants by their chosen pseudonyms, but rather as “Person A”, “Person B”, and so on. While maintaining the anonymity of already anonymous participants seems somewhat redundant, especially when I am viewing what is essentially a public space, I still believe it necessary to offer at least some protection for the online identities created by the participants for themselves. Since one has to pay to access the archives of which this thread is a part, the gesture seems appropriate. Only those participants who contributed regularly to the conversation receive labels, though; because of the nature of the discussion board environment, there were several participants who only made one comment and never spoke again. These posters are simply quoted anonymously.

Science as Truth

The fantasy theme that I title “Science as truth” began very early in the discussion thread on page two with one person saying, “...it has never been a good idea

to accept something as an undeniable fact just because it is the ‘truth’ embraced by mainstream science at the time”. Following this comment, many participants began incorporating their own ideas as to how closely science resembled truth. Page one of the conversation seemed to be devoted to first posting links to relevant information regarding the affair and figuring out what to make of it. Person A created the discussion thread with an initial posting including a story from BBC.com (cited above) and then linked to several other relevant sources of information such as Guardian.co.uk and some opinion blogs to show the AGW skeptic’s side of the issue. Initially, Person A was only asking for thoughts, although he would later play an active part in the conversation. As the discussion went on, this fantasy theme came to guide much of the discourse and developed a few related subcategories that I call “misreading science”, “how science should be done”, and “who should practice/interpret science”. Each of these subcategories contributed to the overall fantasy that Science is a form of pure truth that exists apart from humanity to be observed and gotten at through “proper” scientific investigation.

Ideas about how science should be done and how scientists should operate were perhaps the most compelling aspect of this fantasy theme. Many participants approached the concept of truth in science by heatedly discussing their ideas about the business of science. In response to the person above, another poster said that, “Mainstream science only comes to a ‘fact’ after rigorous testing and evidence has been provided. I’m more than happy to believe what millions of scientists tell me because

their careers depend upon it...no one's becoming a millionaire telling me the glaciers are disappearing". Here we begin to see the fantasy theme beginning to casuistically chain out as it takes shape. There is an idea of "mainstream" science and how it operates. Scientists are not profiteers, but rather servants to their profession. Person A later contributed to ideas of how science should be done by saying that, "If you are a fellow climate scientist who is willing to do things 'the right way', scientists will share data with you. 'The right way' here means: giving the person that shared the data with you a co-authorship on your new paper and not using their data to attack their earlier papers". This is a comment as to how he believed science is done and a subtle critique of how the "right way" to do science is inherently biased. Almost immediately, we see how this is interconnected with the "Scientists as Conspirators" fantasy theme. Part of doing science correctly, according to Person A, is collaborating with other scientists. Later, Person B came into the conversation and introduces the metaphor of science as a business to sum up these aspects of the theme: "I've said it in previous posts in this thread, science is a *business*, and precious few people in this thread are going to really understand how it works, let alone in the general public (sic)(emphasis in the original)". With this statement, Person B is reaffirming the view that science sometimes entails the difficult business of seeking external funding, which many people may not understand as necessarily a part of the scientific endeavor.

As the thread went on, the business aspect of the theme stretched into and merged with the idea of science as a political venture. In fact, a few pages before calling

science a business, Person B said, “To be honest, I find it incredibly annoying that climate change science has been so married to politics that people can align with one or the other ‘side’ of the debate without so much as a cursory understanding of the relevant science”. Science as politics did not sit well with Person B and also did not sit well with many others. Some tried to justify it, but an undercurrent of distaste still lingered. For example, Person C said at one point that, “Maybe if all of your research points to really dire consequences for the world, you might feel the need to make sure this information is publicized especially when up against a disinformation machine funded by the largest and most profitable companies on earth”. Person C was reacting against someone who had earlier implied that scientists do science for the fame.

Those who positioned themselves as AGW skeptics actually leaped upon the idea of politics in science as evidence of what science should not be. Person D, upon introducing herself to the conversation, proceeded to say that, “these ‘scientists’ are acting far more like politicians with an agenda to push than scientists”. In the same posts, she repeated the idea that “that is not science” and “that is not scientific behavior” many times. She later in another post went so far as to say that, “What this episode really shows is how utterly antithetical to proper scientific inquiry the behavior of these global warming activists is”. Activism is often related to politics, but Person D explicitly connected the two as she stretched her own take on the theme. She was claiming that science as practiced by these scientists becomes political, and because of that the scientists are therefore activists in scientists’ clothing. Unfortunately for her,

she encountered recalcitrance in the debate as the idea of “activism” did not catch on; rather, the idea of science as necessarily political only became stronger. For example, Person B verifies the political nature of science even as he worked to purify the field of its political dimensions, all the while establishing his credibility in the rhetorical situation when he claimed that:

I'm an actual scientist in a field tangentially and often directly related to climate science, and this sort of politicking goes on (though usually to a lesser degree) everywhere. I'm not sure why this should be surprising, scientists are not saints. Human beings are petty and vindictive in general, sorry to break it to you. When you factor in the intensely competitive nature of the "business" of science, are you really surprised this happens?

Again we see him introduce the idea of science as a business, but by this point in the conversation it has quite clearly been absorbed into the idea of science as political endeavor. One could safely say that the participants at this point casuistically stretched Science as an autonomous truth seeking enterprise to that of a business to that of an enterprise intertwined with the business of politics. Still, underneath it all Science remained the “Truth” for participants in this drama – the problem was in how that Truth was arrived at and how it was then conveyed to non-scientists

This fantasy theme created tension between those characters who were not ordained with the ethos to participate in science and those who were found wanting. The fantasy themes constructed the ongoing drama, in effect demonizing the non-scientists and the skeptics who did not believe in AGW and were vocal in their disagreement. By relegating the skeptics to the non-scientific category, this fantasy theme undermined their credibility. For example, very shortly after the thread was posted by Person A, one person said that, "It seems to be that it's going to be a losing battle. 15 years worth of e-mails being searched for every bit of out-of-context bullshit they can find". Another person extended the idea by saying that, "And none of this is the least bit surprising. Given the number of people who dismiss evolution as 'just a theory', people with an agenda are always ready to misread scientific terms when it's convenient. They aren't interested in truth - merely in pushing their toxic ideology".

Here, the fantasy theme "science as truth" divided the real promoters of science from the skeptics. It suggested that the scientific community is constantly under watch from the outside and that the boundaries of the scientific community need to be continually reinforced. Person E, who became a major player in the discussion as it went on, contributed an idea that caught on within the context of the fantasy theme when he said that, "That's the thing people are missing here. Even if there is evidence of data fudging beyond small in-house reports or whatever, all the raw data is publically available for people to actually go and investigate whether there's some bullshit going on". Essentially, Person E was arguing that the data is available for people to work with.

Anyone who comes to a different conclusion than that of the scientists is misreading the science because the data speaks for itself. Others picked up on the data analysis aspect. One person later responded to a skeptic by saying, "You have no idea what you're talking about, holy shit. The entire goddamn email you pulled this quote from is about analyzing data! They didn't 'superimpose another image', but noticed the declining usefulness of data due to the superimposition of one signal on top of another". Further attacking the credibility of skeptics based on analysis of the actual data, yet another participant denigrated the status of opinion versus science when he observed, "I think it's pretty obvious that the collect [sic] opinion of lay people isn't being decided on the merits of the science, but rather a predisposed opinion - which isn't going to change regardless of how the data is disseminated or how many poorly-conceived criticisms of their analysis are performed". Opinion is in direct opposition to science here, and the analysis is beyond question. Person C encapsulated this aspect of the theme quite well several pages later when he summarized, "The majority of the loudest critics aren't scientists at all or are not scientists in that field so they don't possess a sufficient enough foundation to attempt to reproduce the work. The best most of them can do is to try and punch holes in the analytical work while having limited knowledge of what is being analyzed". Here the non-scientist skeptics actually became the villains in the drama for some.

Regardless of whether one was an AGW proponent or skeptic in this discussion thread, the fantasy theme that science is truth pervaded. One set of comments

promoted this fantasy theme by accusing skeptics of misreading the data and claiming that the public simply could not understand the data to perform an analysis worthy of being called science. In this social drama, the data were inviolate, even if the scientists had to sometimes resort to political methods to maintain funding for their work and convey their findings to those who could not understand the raw science. The other side of the comments accused climate scientists of fraud and of ruining the scientific enterprise with their own agenda. One skeptic lamented, "I see the scientific method bled to death on an altar. There is a pit, filled with the remains of Dawkins, Sagan, Leonardo, Franklin, Copernicus, Mendel et al. There is a fire, fed with the lost libraries of knowledge that ideology murdered". In other words, the fantasy theme created a social drama in which science was portrayed as the means of obtaining truth, but that truth was in jeopardy of being lost to deceitful scientists who were pictured here as the enemies of science. Hence, the skeptics, who also depicted themselves as a kind of priestly class, were outraged at the violation of what should be sacred. Someone even went so far as to express their anger in very poignant terms: "I expect industry organizations that would be affected by climate regulation to use dirty tactics. Fuck them - and fuck scientists with an equally dishonest agenda". In this social construction of scientific practice, honesty in science was prized above all, perhaps in large part because those who are not scientists were not believed to be able to understand the science. The role expectations in this dramatic rendering of science were such that translators were required to be honest, because if they are not, the public did not know

what to believe. It is to an analysis of how those translations are situated within the emerging drama of scientific conflict that I now turn. People had very strong opinions of the scientists themselves as the gatekeepers to knowledge.

Scientists as Conspirators

The “scientists as conspirators” fantasy theme is most characterized by negative connotations. Indeed, referring to the entire affair as “Climategate” casts a shadow over it much like attaching “-gate” to any scenario has done since the Watergate scandal. By referring to the leaking of emails as Climategate, skeptics – and even those proponents of AGW that picked it up, as some did in the course of the conversation and in the media – framed the social drama as one in which scientists were engaging in shady deals behind the scenes that were ultimately harmful to the public. The term Climategate elicits a deep distrust in scientists as the experts that have some bearing on policy decisions with their research. However, the proponents of AGW, and subsequently the defenders of the scientists in question in this fantasy, reinforced certain notions about the integrity and practice of science when they discussed the necessity of collaboration away from public scrutiny. Thus both sides of the debate in the thread socially constructed a vision of science in which transparency was imbued with the highest

value. Below, I will demonstrate how this part of the fantasy theme progressed, but first it is necessary to consider the *dramatis personae* involved.

Since this fantasy theme involves the actual scientists, it is important to take note of their roles as *dramatis personae* in the narrative that unfolded in this particular discussion thread. Interestingly, in most rhetorical visions the *dramatis personae* are composed of both heroes and villains. As I suggested above though, in this particular narrative there were only villains. Each side of the debate had their own villains, but at no point were heroes identified. The skeptics identified the scientists that wrote the emails as the villains. Person F was in fact very clear about who he felt the villains were from the very first page:

Regardless of whether you believe that the Earth is going into another ice age or we're all going to be underwater in a year due to melting ice caps, the principal villains in this story are Michael Mann, Keith Briffa, and Phil Jones. They have been obstructing, hiding, and doing everything in their power to make sure that their faulty research remains the gold standard in climate science. How has the IPCC determined that we're the warmest in 1000 years? These guys. How do we know that the Earth has been warming since the 19th century? Mostly these guys.

Each of these characters factored heavily into the discussion that followed. Phil Jones, however, was featured prominently perhaps because it was he who authored the email quoted above that described the data manipulation “trick”. In this version of the fantasy theme, however, the scientists were never treated as heroes. While they were depicted as experts, they were not praised for their accomplishments. There is a distinct difference between defending someone’s faults and praising that person’s accomplishments, and fantasy themes that defended the scientists fell into the former category.

In the “scientists as conspirators” fantasy theme that emerged from the discourse of the AGW proponents, the villains were most broadly all of the skeptics. In fact, Person A went so far as to draw an analogy that painted skeptics in a very unfavorable light when he said that, “They'd call themselves 'climate skeptics' (thus linking themselves to a grand tradition of scientific skepticism), and the mainstream calls them 'denialists' (which semantically links them with Holocaust denialists).” The face of the skeptics and thus the primary villain, at least for the AGW proponents, in this fantasy theme gradually seemed to become a skeptic blogger named Stephen McIntyre. McIntyre achieved the status of a pseudo-scientist due to his own analyses of various sets of climate change data. However, McIntyre wasn’t given any credit for being an expert. Person C claimed that, “If McIntyre was truly interested in doing real work, he could have easily just run reconstructions with the data he had and then brought up any possible issues that came up”. Another contributor to the discussion went even further,

saying that, “McIntyre isn't a scientist and isn't able to actually do the math”. As the ringleader of the skeptics in the narrative constructed in this thread, McIntyre became the figurehead to whom scorn was directed. Tarnishing the ethos of McIntyre was akin to tarnishing the ethos of skeptics in general.

Once the *dramatis personae* were identified, those participating in the fantasy theme could begin debating the nature of the work accomplished behind a curtain that the anonymous hacker removed. Social dramas work best when conspiracies become integral parts of the plots. The primary evidence of conspiracy for the skeptics was that the scientists had been either hiding or misrepresenting the data. Person F quickly advanced this idea on the very first page: “I've yet to go through all of the emails but I have been led to believe this confirms various suspicions: that they have colluded to cherry-pick paleoclimate proxies”. He later elaborated on this point in another post when he said that, “The e-mails put into word form what has already been discovered. Mann & his compatriots at CRU have been fudging numbers for years... They were colluding to deceive and it's now in black and white”. As this part of the fantasy theme chined out, people began to cite an email by one of the scientists that detailed the deletion of other emails. In that email, the scientist in question said, “Can you delete any emails you may have had with Keith re AR4? Keith will do likewise. Can you email Gene and get him to do the same?”. The tools of the discussion board allowed people to highlight quotes from the emails in addition to quotes by other discussion participants, so one might suggest that the *dramatis personae* from the emails achieved more of a

rhetorical presence than might otherwise be possible. Others elaborated on Person F's sentiment. One person said, "What possible non-nefarious reason could they have for deleting emails in response to a FOI [Freedom of Information] request? I understand these things are out of context, but I'm having a really hard time imagining a harmless context for that".

One idea that caught on in the conversation and that contributed to the "conspiracy" plot was that scientists were censoring those who were not in agreement with the mainstream. This plotline came about by emails regarding attempts to influence a scientific journal to not publish papers skeptical of climate change by refusing to submit articles to that journal. As one person said, "I am disturbed by the quote I posted above claiming that they could get an editor of a scientific journal ousted if they could prove he was a sceptic". Person C responded that, "There is more to it than that. Two really flimsy skeptic papers got published which led to a bunch of resignations. So it wasn't just ousting people in the skeptic camp solely for that reason but ousting them because they are allowing bad science to be published because of their views". Here we see the "scientists as conspirators" fantasy theme interconnected with the "Science as Truth" fantasy theme in that there is good (true) science and bad (false) science. What is not truth actually should be censored. In this fantasy theme, Person E furthered the defense of the scientists by saying that:

There's no grand conspiracy, and they are not saying "Oh man! This dude's gonna blow the game and expose us all!", they are saying "This guy is not good at this job". Seriously, I'm getting the feeling that the whole core of this story is the deliberations of an academic community viewed through a filter where peer review is somehow nefarious code-talk for "lets cover shit up".

One of the skeptics argued in return that, "Ultimately, the problem is that they are trying to discredit research for reasons other than scientific truth. If you have problems with published work, you address them using scientific arguments, rather than by trying to subvert the editorial process of the journal involved". Still, those defending the scientists maintained that, "excluding bullshit from publication in peer-reviewed scientific journals is not squelching opposition, it's maintaining a standard". The whole deal, at least in this version of the fantasy theme, came down to whether or not a scientist was good enough to practice the science. In this fantasy theme, there were those who were not good enough, and those deserved to be censored. However, it was only the scientists – the true heirs of the unfolding drama - who could judge the worth of other scientists.

As this fantasy theme chained out, it once again casuistically stretched into questions of transparency. Specifically, participants began to invoke the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). If something happened behind a curtain, then it was conspiracy; if, on the other hand, people could have access to everything that was going

on, then it wasn't. With regards to the potential deletion of emails, Person D said, "They conspired and colluded to obstruct FOIA requests, even going so far as to delete requested information. That is highly illegal." In response, another participant argued that, "FOIA... would not apply to a personal email account hosted on a server unrelated to work". Interestingly, this aspect of the fantasy theme developed into a technological metaphor. Person A first voiced this metaphor when he said, "Maybe we really will see an 'open-source' paleoclimate reconstruction, taking all of McIntyre's criticisms to heart?" The open-source metaphor came as a response to questions of whether or not the public should have access to the data that the scientists gather. However, people quickly disagreed with the open-source concept. One participant said that:

Too much openness can be detrimental to research and debate, though. It is important for people working in the field to have back channels in which they can say, "hey, I think there might be a problem with your numbers" without the media immediately plastering GLOBAL WARMING DEBATE HEATS UP all over the news, and a minor dispute over some technical arcana plucked out of context and used to promote inaction.

Another agreed, saying, "I do not agree that the public should be involved in science (open source) because dispassionate and informed research and opinions are a feature of science". The general opinion, at least as it was indicated by the fantasy theme, was

that there *should* be a curtain behind which the scientists could work. Meanwhile, the complaints of the skeptics centered on the fact that there *was* a curtain.

According to this fantasy theme, then, scientists must conduct the work of science away from the public vision, so that the sovereignty of the actual practice of “objective” science is protected. Some complain, but in this portrayal of science distance is absolutely necessary. With regard to the integrity of the scientific endeavor, the fantasy theme suggested that in doing the work of science, for good or for ill scientists police themselves and censor others who either do not do good science or do not agree with the commonly accepted viewpoints. According to this fantasy theme, scientists have the right to censor others not part of their elite community. By doing so, scientists understand themselves to be upholding the Truth of Science. In this sense, then, the fantasy theme reinforced long-held views that the scientists are the experts and as such are the gatekeepers of truth.

The Implications of a Rhetorical Vision of “Science as Other”

Cartesian Dualism was alive and well in this conversation, as noted above. Both in the fantasy theme of “Science as Truth” and in the fantasy theme of “scientists as conspirators”, one can see a strong tendency to view science as being something apart from humanity that can only be accessed by those ordained to do so by society. Science

is the truth, and scientists are the arbiters of that truth. They are people who, through academic rites of passage, are entrusted not only with finding that truth but with safeguarding it as well. The scientists control the data, and as was evident from the churning out of the fantasy themes, at least these participants believe that they should consider how they release that data to the world. Those who challenged the authority of scientists had to be purged from the scene. Some believed in the total transparency of science and lauded the leaked emails as a step in that direction, while others believed that in order to do their best work scientists must have at least some degree of privacy. As was evident from several examples, many of these group participants believed by and large that the public cannot even understand the truth in its rawest form of scientific data and code. The fantasy themes and the ultimate rhetorical vision they articulated suggested that since the public cannot handle the hard work of science themselves, scientists need to translate their findings. Regardless of which side of the debate one was on in this conversation, however, this rhetorical vision really boiled down to a separation between science and the public, and that is where the rhetoric became potentially damaging to the more immediate topic of climate change, in my view. This is because if the public is separated from the relevant knowledge to make critical decisions with respect to climate change and the options regarding it, then they are in a sense rendered powerless.

In addition to Cartesian Dualism, this rhetorical vision strongly supported the scientific norms elaborated by Merton (1973). That is, because the social drama created

a scene in which the practice and therefore the boundaries of the scientific community were under attack, the plot had inevitably to move toward a way of quelling the threat and hence of restoring the boundaries of the community. Mertonian norms consist of universalism, communism, disinterestedness, and organized skepticism. All four of these norms are evident within the fantasy themes explored above. Universalism is the norm that a person's personal qualities should not factor into judgment of his or her claims; we see this on both sides of the debate and in the fantasy themes. The scientists who wrote the exposed emails were defended on the grounds that their science should not be judged by their at times inappropriate comments and the skeptical bloggers should not be judged because they were climate change skeptics. Communism, or the norm of data being widely available and not secret, was actually strongly argued for above to the point where people began questioning how scientists could make *all* of their data available and still maintain profitable careers. The fantasy themes also suggested that less political, more disinterested scientists should not let the will of popular opinion sway their work. The norm of organized skepticism was variably applied in interesting ways, however. In one version of the science is truth fantasy theme, the norm of remaining skeptical towards AGW was rebuked, at least until more evidence was found. This plotline implicitly argued that the scientific community was past the point of reasonable skepticism. AGW was an already proven reality in this narrative. The other version of the science is truth fantasy theme called for more organized skepticism, repeatedly dramatizing the fact that there just was not enough

evidence to accept AGW yet. In this respect, organized skepticism became almost a rhetorical tool in this fantasy theme for the AGW skeptics and a crucial value in the underlying drama; by continually falling back on it, they could argue from a very scientific standpoint that AGW simply should not be accepted as a reality yet. One could legitimately ask (and several pro-AGW advocates did ask) when there would ever be enough data to satisfy the skeptics, though. In essence, the major question raised here is when in the social construction of scientific boundaries and community do Merton's scientific norms cease to be norms as such and instead become a rhetorical device?

According to Charles Taylor (1991), the answer to the above question is that Merton's scientific norms are *always* rhetorical. Taylor claims that scientists use Merton's norms in what he calls public demarcation rhetorics. Public demarcation rhetorics essentially refer to the rhetorical boundary work that scientists engage in when explaining (implicitly and/or explicitly) the boundaries between various parts of science and between science and non-science to the public. As Taylor describes it, "public demarcation rhetorics appear motivated by the specific goal of establishing the boundaries of science for audiences which do not participate in the daily activities of science" (Taylor, 1991, p. 407). Taylor provides a specific case study of the Mertonian norm of universalism and illustrates how the replication of an experiment, in theory a vital part of this norm due to the ability of anyone to reproduce an experiment and get at the "real" science, is in actuality not as highly valued within science *except* when it is useful to say that because an experiment cannot be replicated to one's satisfaction, it is

not a good experiment. Issues of replication can be used by scientists to demarcate boundaries between what doing science the right way and doing science the wrong way looks like. While Taylor was mostly getting at how the scientists themselves demarcate rhetorically, this discussion board case study shows us how fantasy themes may engage in the kind of boundary work Taylor studied. FTA has allowed for a deeper understanding of how the public continues to perpetuate the rhetorical vision ultimately initiated from within the scientific community itself.

By most accounts, the skeptics of AGW are in the wrong, but the social drama perpetuated in their version of the above-mentioned fantasy themes and rhetorical vision only exacerbate the existing divide between AGW proponents and skeptics. One might suggest that the more they invest in the drama, the more they come to believe in its heroes, villains, and plotlines. Yet in the year since the so-called Climategate scandal happened, there has been no rush of evidence to support the idea that scientists are indeed colluding to keep a myth of AGW alive and well. In addition, a British investigation exonerated the supposed conspirators. If anything, a quick glance at the EPA's website shows that there has been yet more evidence that climate change is a real phenomenon and that human activity is at least to some degree to blame. The IPCC statement of scientific findings is still up on the EPA website as evidence. Climate change is an issue that we cannot afford to keep in a kind of ephemeral, cerebral, academic state that only experts have real access to. However, that is exactly what

seems to be happening if one takes the rhetorical vision of a group of dozens of concerned individuals on the Something Awful discussion forums into account.

The Cartesian Dualism of the rhetorical vision of this group of discussion board participants evidenced a very pronounced separation between scientists and non-scientists, between the public and science. Through the use of FTA, we've seen the collaborative rhetoric of the discussion board thread lead to two major themes that speak to that separation. There was no single rhetor conveying these themes, nor was there a more authoritative voice leading the adoption of these themes as we have seen in FTAs that utilize mass media sources. The themes arose from anonymous sources that had zero to little history with one another. FTA has proven particularly useful in this online environment because it was able to capture a rhetorical vision that would have been impossible to see through the lens of more single-source oriented rhetorical analysis methods. Here we have been able to see how a pseudo-scientific community (pseudo only because actual scientific identities cannot be verified) reconstitutes itself and the nature of science online.

The rhetorical separation mentioned above at best inclines people to be persuaded by scientific data, but it does not result in action. Action remains in the realm of the scientists. So long as fantasy themes are perpetuated that actually disconnect the public from scientists, people will remain disconnected from the action needed to work towards real solutions towards climate change. At worst, people aren't persuaded by the scientists or the fantasy themes that emerged to set them off as elites invulnerable

to public scrutiny. Instead they are led to believe that whatever happens behind the proverbial curtain is nefarious and somehow against the public interest. The fantasy themes can promote this concern, as unwarranted as it might in fact be. That mode of thinking leads towards active *resistance* against what actions people might actually take to mitigate climate change risks. A situation arises in which those who believe in AGW as a problem are left with a precious few alternatives to action, some of which aren't even very effective (e.g. rallies, walks) because they are disconnected from the science that would give them a clearer picture of what to do, and those who are skeptical attempt to deny them even those avenues of action. These people believe that science is truth and that the scientists work together behind closed doors to get at that truth, but if science is indeed "other" as this rhetorical vision would suggest, then proponents of AGW do not know what to do. They do not have access to the truth. A rally or a walk might have a small chance of convincing a senator to introduce legislation, but if enough skeptics vote in enough skeptical politicians, then that legislation would fail.

Ultimately, we need to find fantasy themes that encourage people to be more comfortable with science. Science cannot be viewed as other if we are to use it to solve major problems that it illuminates. People need to feel connected to science in intrinsic ways starting from very early education and moving up. Interestingly enough, the idea of open-source science that was downplayed if not outright demonized in the fantasy themes could actually be the key to a more scientifically oriented public. While not all data can be made available due to competitions and tenure concerns within science (as

participants in the discussion actually brought up at one point), enough can be put into the public's hands, likely via the internet, to allow for at least some greater transparency. If the public is more comfortable with what to do with that data, then issues such as AGW can be de-politicized. The science is not other; it is right there – a part of each individual for use in obtaining the understanding needed to move to proper action.

Conclusion

I have demonstrated through this chapter how FTA is particularly well suited to analyzing the digital rhetoric of discussion boards. In particular, I have provided an example of how a more Burkean FTA might look. My Burkean FTA has allowed for an in depth critical understanding of how a group collectively comes to certain overarching rhetorical agreements in, even in the midst of a heated debate, and how these debates become encapsulated in fantasy themes. As I demonstrated in this case study, although there may have been differences of opinion as to the validity of climate science, the sanctity of science as an institution was preserved and upheld. Ultimately, my FTA illustrated how a community articulates its threats and symbolically restores breeches to the authority of that community and the community ethos. Had this particular discussion occurred outside of a digital context, we might not have seen as many people

have as much of a say, and we certainly would not have witnessed this level of detail. I turn now to my final case study. Now that I have explored how more a more textual rhetoric of climate change functions in a digital space, it is time to examine what a more visual climate change rhetoric looks like. After all, digital spaces allow for the transmission of far more images than ever before, and images can and do convey fantasy themes as much as texts.

CHAPTER 5. A DISCOURSE OF IMAGES: Visual Fantasies of Global Warming

Introduction

With the advent of digital communication technology, the controversy over climate change and global warming has entered the visual realm. In 2006, former vice president Al Gore produced a documentary entitled *An Inconvenient Truth: A Global Warning*. This 96 minute film, which has received several awards including an Oscar for Best Documentary, is a manifesto compiling a great deal of evidence for global warming. Gore tries to persuade his audience that not only is global warming a real threat, but it is one they can and should do something about. It is essentially a filmed and edited version of a presentation that Gore says he has given thousands of times across the United States and around the world. What is interesting to note, however, is that the bulk of this movie is spent attempting to prove that global warming is a real danger. Only towards the very end, and within the credits, is the audience told what they can do to help avert climate change.

This movie is an important milestone in the debate over global warming not because it offers yet another argument for or against the crisis, but because it is the first major step towards a *visual* argument that has appeared in the popular mainstream culture of theaters

and DVDs. Since the movie came out, there has been a proliferation of visual images related to climate change on the internet. Part of the problem with the idea of climate change is that for all of the attention given to it, the concept has remained an abstract one. One cannot necessarily walk outside and see climate change. It is not always a tangible danger. This might account for why there has been both social and by extension political inertia and even skepticism regarding it. Academics, environmentalists, and politicians all have attempted to give a face to this issue, but this has come primarily in the forms of written and verbal rhetoric. While Gore does continue in this tradition, within his presentation and with the release of this movie he has made some progress in placing the debate into something of a visual realm, where it may have the potential of reaching a larger audience. In essence, Gore is attempting to lend a visible essence to an invisible topic. The evidence of his success is found in a simple Google Image search for the term “climate change”. The images that people have actively posted to the internet on websites and blogs have elevated what began as a relatively isolated piece of argument in Gore’s film into a full blown discourse of images. Climate change now has a face.

In general, FTA has not been utilized for studying visual rhetoric. Foss (2009) presents one exception as an example of FTA in her textbook, but such examples are rare. In fact, I would suggest that the example of visual FTA that Foss presents is flawed because it examines only one image – a piece of graffiti art. As I have indicated many times throughout this dissertation, FTA is valuable as a tool for understanding rhetoric produced *collectively*. In order for that to happen, there must be a group of voices in conversation with one another.

However, as I demonstrated in chapter three, those voices need not be in direct conversation. Several of the FTAs I have cited in previous chapters involve the use of data from news media sources, which are more involved in indirect conversation. Although such examples are more textual in nature, they have laid the groundwork for how a visual FTA can operate. Images are rarely in direct conversation with one another.

Visual fantasy themes are different from both mass media fantasy theme indicators and the fantasy themes conceived of by small groups, however. In the case of small groups, people respond directly to one another in a way that images cannot, as discussed above. Also, visual fantasy themes do not chain out synchronously, as in small group face to face communication. They are more akin to the asynchronous communication of discussion board participants, as in chapter four. Unlike the communication on a discussion board, however, visual fantasy themes need not be and usually are not connected to one another spatially. They are not images in a thread, but rather they appear in places entirely unconnected to one another. This would make them like mass media rhetoric, but unlike mass media rhetoric, visual fantasy themes are more than just indicators; they are actual themes being chained out. In many instances, the images are authored by one individual who was clearly influenced by other images that he or she encountered. When one is influenced by images and then subsequently influences others via the creation of an image in the same visual vein, that individual is chaining out a fantasy theme. Overall, the images provide a visual language which helps to identify and give shape to the characters, storylines, and dramas already present in fantasy themes found in other media.

The purpose of this chapter is to explore how visual fantasy themes operate. Gore's movie encapsulates and perhaps plays some part in initiating the themes presented in this study. For that reason, the images that it perpetuates will be a kind of cornerstone to this study. The movie has an online presence as well, so including it in the discourse of images is warranted. With this chapter, I argue that visual fantasy themes operate via a complex interplay of metaphor and metonymy in the visuals that allow them to serve as vehicles for the rhetoric. As such, this chapter provides a chance to study both the visual and the metaphorical and metonymic characteristics of fantasy themes. Before proceeding to the analysis, however, and to better understand the context of Gore's film and the subsequent internet images that followed it, I turn to a review of the scholarly literature on global warming. As I noted in chapter four, global warming is not the same thing as climate change; it is merely a part of climate change. This chapter focuses on global warming specifically since that is what Gore was primarily concerned with in his movie and that is what the images specifically speak to.

Scholarly Literature on Global Warming

Global warming is a topic that has been around since the early 1980's. Shanahan and McComas (1999) report that in 1983 *The New York Times* ran a story on how the National Academy of Sciences issued a report that warned of a buildup of carbon gases in the

atmosphere. Of course, the issue didn't receive that much attention at first. It was in what Shanahan and McComas (1999) described as the pre-problem stage of the Down's Cycle. Indeed, at first the Reagan administration labeled the assertion as 'alarmist'. Three years after that, Dr. James Hansen connected this with a greenhouse effect that he observed taking place, but it took yet another two years for the issue to explode into the common consciousness of the general public. The sudden interest may be the result of 1988 being a particularly hot year on top of some very hot years. Regardless, the public immediately went into the 'alarmed discovery' and 'euphoric enthusiasm' phases of the Down's Cycle, according to Shanahan and McComas (1999). This is where people suddenly realized global warming was a problem and mustered the strength to combat it in the form of demonstrations and political activism. Unfortunately, when the looming threat of global warming proved to have no immediate effects, there was backlash and the public went into the final stage of the Down's Cycle, the 'post-problem disinterest' stage. Since that time, interest in the subject has fluctuated.

Environmentalists' interest has not wavered, however. In fact, the subject has become one of the most recent and certainly the most powerful in a canon of apocalyptic rhetoric dating back to Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*. As Killingsworth and Palmer (1996) claim, "In depicting the end of the world as a result of the overweening desire to control nature, activists have discovered a rhetorical means of contesting their opponents' claims for the idea of progress with its ascendant narratives of human victory over nature". (p.21) This 'end of the world' is the primary rhetorical trope in apocalyptic rhetoric. Global warming rhetoric has relied upon such rhetoric since its inception. According to Killingsworth and Palmer, one

key thing to note about apocalyptic rhetoric is that it is not meant to be literal; it is instead meant to win people over to a cause and galvanize them into action. The scenario presented by rhetorical doomsayers is not truly inevitable, but according to them there is a real risk of it happening if audiences do not act in the ways that they prescribe. Gelbspan (1998) presents one such example of global warming apocalyptic rhetoric. According to Gelbspan, there is a 'coming permanent state of emergency' in which food growing regions of the world will begin to fail due to global warming caused by overpopulation and over-industrialization. Totalitarianism will begin to dominate as food becomes scarce and governments have to take greater control in the wake of what Gelbspan refers to as the 'environmental migration' of refugees from affected countries. As Gelbspan (1998) argues, "If we alter the balance of natural relationships that support our lives, those changes will ripple through the complex relationships that make up our society". (p 153)

In the wake of the chilling assertions such as Gelbspan's, environmental activists are left attempting to answer the question of what can be done to address the problem. Certainly apocalyptic rhetoric fails if it leaves the audience in a state of despair, believing that there is nothing that can be done. Contrary to Lovelock's startling claims, most environmentalists believe that we can avoid the worst of global warming and take great pains to educate the public in that regard. They have been successful to some extent. Lindsay (1995) reports that the UK defined something known as the 'precautionary principle', in which it said that "interactions [of natural systems](sic) are complex [and](sic) where there is significant chance of damage to our diversity occurring, conservations measures are appropriate even in

the absence of *conclusive* [my emphasis](sic) scientific evidence that the damage will occur” (Lindsay, p. 215). In essence, the people must act in a pre-emptive fashion in order to ward off a possible apocalypse.

Still, it is up to the environmentalist rhetoricians to persuade people of this. Research into the rhetoric of global warming has not thus far explored how rhetoricians attempt to make the topic a visible one for audiences. However, some critics have studied a similar process in the visual artifacts of the Civil Rights movement. Gallagher and Zagacki (2005) examine how Norman Rockwell’s later paintings functioned rhetorically to make the abstract knowable. In this case, democracy and democratic tolerance are the abstract concepts that one cannot normally literally ‘see’ but as Gallagher and Zagacki (2005) show, Rockwell did perform the rhetorical trope of making such abstract concepts visible by disregarding established caricatures, creating recognition of others through particularity, and depicting material aspects of American society. In their later piece on the *Life* photographs of the marches on Selma in 1965, Gallagher and Zagacki (2007) go so far as to say that, “. . .the *Life* photographs brought what had been previously invisible, in light of the abstract, de-personalized nature of the [Civil Rights] rhetoric, into clear focus.” (p. 13). What they speak of here are the people of color who had become invisible in the rhetoric of the day, a removed abstraction that could be attacked and vilified.

The lack of research on how global warming as a concept is made visible may perhaps be due to the fact that not many rhetoricians have attempted this difficult task. Still, as Timothy Steffenmeier (2005) reported in a paper submitted to the National

Communication Association, visibility has been a part of arguments dating back to Aristotle and his concept of *energeia*. Steffenmeier interprets Aristotle thus: “In effort to produce memorable enthymeme – one that might become popularized (urbane) – the student must understand not only style (i.e. antithesis) and word choice (i.e. metaphor); they must have a sense for *bringing before the eyes* (i.e. *energeia*). [emphasis mine]” (p. 7). It is this aspect of argument that is critical, especially to rhetoricians dealing with abstract topics such as global warming. In today’s society, where such visualization can be achieved outside of the words that were Aristotle’s main focus, *energeia* achieves an even more central role. Contemporary audiences are more disposed to visual arguments, and thus if any rhetoric is to achieve prominence, it is highly advised that it have some visual components. The rhetorician must be skillful in bringing it before the eyes in a much more literal fashion than Aristotle predicted. This is precisely what Gore did with his movie and what many have done through the internet. Critically, Gore’s movie was a success; it won him several awards including an Oscar and a Nobel Prize. Unofficially, if one peruses the internet looking for the topic of global warming, the visual rhetoric of his movie was also a success; the images he utilized appear in various altered forms and interpretations in hundreds of places. It would seem that proponents of AGW have finally succeeded in adding the visual element to Aristotle’s ancient equation. The question becomes: how compelling have the images utilized by these rhetoricians been? Has the concept of global warming as a real, visual phenomenon caught on in the mind’s eye of the public? Also, to what extent do the visual images embody a set of fantasy themes that socially construct particular dramas about the causes and effects of global

warming? If AGW visual rhetoricians have in fact completed the equation through the use of *energeia*, if they have made the impending apocalypse visible through visual fantasy themes, then it is likely that global warming as a concept will have attained an all new level of persuasiveness that could once and for all begin to set Lindsay's precautionary principle into motion. The apocalyptic rhetoric of global warming could finally achieve a much larger measure of success not enjoyed since the latter part of the 1980's.

In the following section, I will elaborate on a model of visual FTA that utilizes metaphorical analysis. Due to the nature of visual rhetoric, methods of rhetorical criticism must sometimes be revised. In that way, visual rhetoric is much like digital rhetoric, which is appropriate since digital rhetoric is quite often composed of visual rhetoric. However, in cases like this, a kind of hybridization of rhetorical criticism methods is very productive. Certain elements from both metaphorical analysis and FTA are useful to visual rhetorical analysis, and a merger of the two can only serve to make the present analysis stronger.

Metaphor, Metonymy, and Fantasy Themes

If an image is to function as a fantasy theme, then it must serve as the vehicle for some kind of message that can capture the imagination and the passion of a person encountering it. FTA is particularly well suited to the analysis of the rhetoric of images because while that message is important, it need not be as concrete as other methods of rhetorical analysis would require. The message can be more of an idea or an interpretation

that catches on within the mind of the audience to the point where others may repeat it by passing the image along directly or by creating their own images to share with others via digital media. As others present their take on the visual ideas, the fantasy themes may be said to chain out, although it is far more difficult to track the chronological progress of the chaining out process. One might be able to place one movie before another, but the proliferation of an image type on the internet is far more organic and sporadic. Instead of tracking the progress of a visual fantasy theme, then, the critic must instead note that the theme has chained out by the collective force of a large number of examples of the image type. As such, different images become variations on the theme rather than the casuistic stretching of it. However, the lack of an easily tracked chaining out process does not detract from the value of the analysis. The fact that one can observe that a visual idea has chained out is important and can do much to give the critic an idea of what the rhetorical vision the visual fantasy theme and others like it indicate.

How, then, does one access the fantasy themes in the images? Interpreting what the images mean, especially as they are chained out, is important. This step is what allows for the critic to say that one image represents the same fantasy theme as another similar image. Otherwise, the images would be rhetorically unconnected. One way in which the critic may access the fantasy themes is by investigating the use of metaphor and metonymy. In essence, images are being used to stand for the idea they represent. Text may or may not accompany the image in question, but the audience still comes away from the image with an idea of what it represents. Both metaphor and metonymy may serve as methods that allow the critic to put

the idea behind the image into words and thus get at the form and content of the fantasy theme.

Metaphor and metonymy have been rhetorical tools for a very long time. Indeed, ancient scholars such as Aristotle and Cicero discussed them at length in their works. Whereas originally metaphor may have been a mere device among devices to aid in persuasion, now scholars such as Lakoff and Johnson (2003) hold that, “Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature.” (p.3) They elaborate on this by suggesting that what people experience and do every day is very much a matter of metaphor. Thus, metaphor becomes much more than a device; it approaches what Kenneth Burke refers to as the ‘equipment for living’. Burke considered metaphor and metonymy to be two of four “master tropes” (the other two being synecdoche and irony), and claimed that they play a significant, “role in the discovery and description of ‘the truth’” (Burke, 1945, p. 503).

Metaphor works as a direct comparison between two objects or concepts. Whereas simile uses ‘like’ or ‘as’ to mediate the comparison, metaphor utilizes no such cushion. (Osborn, 1978, p.10) Osborn (1978) describes the difference between hard meanings and soft meanings and how these two concepts come together in interesting ways in metaphor. Hard meanings refer to those words that directly denote a tangible object for which they stand. Such meanings are generally independent of context. In contrast, words with soft meaning are more contextual in nature; they are not connected to hard objects, but they do need to attach to hard objects in order to resolve their ambiguity. Due to their ambiguity, soft words

can move from context to context while shifting meaning by degree accordingly. Metaphors in a sense play with hard and soft meanings by taking hard words out of their ordinary context and placing them in a situation in which context becomes the defining factor much like with soft words. In this way, metaphors can be very persuasive. As Osborn (1978) states, “...*successful metaphor should result in an intuitive flash of recognition that surprises and fascinates the hearer, and illuminates the prime member of comparison.* (emphasis Osborn’s)” (p. 10)

Metonymy, while similar to metaphor, is different in one key way. With metaphor, one object or concept is conceived in terms of another. With metonymy, one object is positioned to instead stand for another. (Lakoff and Johnson, 2003, p. 36) As Osborn (1978) puts it, metonymy, “...represents a subject by directing attention to something characteristically associated with it.” A key piece of metonymy is the concept of synecdoche, in which a part is made to stand for a whole. However, as Lakoff and Johnson (2003) point out, there are several other forms of metonymy including the institution standing for the people responsible, the producer standing for the product, the place standing for the institution, among others.

As can be seen, although distinct concepts that stand on their own, metaphor and metonymy are members of the same family of rhetorical tropes through their comparisons of subjects. To study the two in isolation is possible, but it may be more productive to recognize both as working together. This is especially true in the study of visual images where the distinction between the two forms is not so clear cut. As will become evident in the analysis

below, it is possible for both to be present in some images due to their highly contextual nature. The value of exploring metonymy in this way should not be underestimated. As Osborn (1978) claims, “Metaphor is perhaps more glamorous, and has received far more attention, but synecdoche and metonymy are *the* great underrated figures of human speech. In our time, their impact has been nothing short of phenomenal” (emphasis Osborn’s (p. 11).

Two more concepts that will factor into this analysis are Osborn’s (1978) culturetypes and archetypes. These are important elements in classifying metaphors at a broader level. Culturetypes, according to Osborn (1978), are the words that tend to express key values of the current time to a certain group of people. Osborn (1978) equates these terms to Richard Weaver’s ‘god and devil terms’. Culturetypes, as one would expect from this comparison, generally have very positive or negative connotations associated with them. Examples of such terms could be ‘progress’, ‘democracy’, ‘science’, or ‘modern’, if one is looking at a primarily Western society. Such terms change with the time and place, however, so one should be careful in their evocation.

Archetypes, on the other hand, are what Osborn (1978) identifies as the master metaphorical tropes that have existed since the time of ancient Greece. He identifies eleven of them. These are deep and ancient identifications that are more enduring than the culturetypes. Such identifications are important in drawing an audience together by reminding them of the significant experiences that they share in common. Virtually everyone can relate to the eleven archetypes that Osborn names. Thus, when they become the vehicle

that is the lens through which the tenor of the metaphor is addressed, people of all backgrounds are more likely to understand how the comparison works.

For the most part, the rhetorical concepts of metaphor and metonymy have been relegated to the domain of words just as fantasy themes have. They are, however, especially powerful tools for understanding how certain abstract (or soft) concepts can be made visible. In today's primarily visual environment, images are being used more and more to stand for broader concepts or to represent such concepts. Essentially, images are being used both metaphorically and metonymically to persuade people. While this is nothing new, as art has utilized these concepts in one way or another many times throughout history, it is significant in the more recent vast proliferation of images that has been made possible by digital media. Now people may communicate with images as never before, chaining out ideas metaphorically represented by the visuals people choose to create.

In the FTA below, I describe the metaphors and metonymy at work in three major climate change visual fantasy themes. Since Gore's film fits more with the media agenda, I generally begin by elaborating on the themes as they begin in the film. Then, utilizing data from a simple Google Image Search of the term "climate change", I describe more images that have appeared on the internet since the film's debut. In this manner, I move from the media agenda to more of the public agenda, although images from a Google Image Search may be from personal or commercial web sites. In this way, the internet serves as a kind of intermingling of the public and the media agendas as it is the middle in which both meet. It is important to note, however, that this Google Image Search is accurate as of the writing of this

dissertation. Images on the search are constantly changing as more are uploaded to the internet. I do briefly identify the web site source of each image, but since the images are not text, I do not have articles to cite. Also, it is possible for people to pull down images and replace them with new images as time goes on. This discourse should thus be considered current only for December of 2010, which is the original data gathering for this chapter took place.

Fantasy Themes and Images of Change: This Is Global Warming

Al Gore utilized many varied images in *An Inconvenient Truth* to make his argument, there were three types of fantasy themes in particular that chained out as images. These same three fantasy themes appeared in many places on the internet in the years following the film. The fantasy themes were carried through the images of hot cityscapes, the images of melting ice, and the line graphs involving lines moving up in the majority of cases. There are, of course, more images relating to climate change discourse than fit into these fantasy categories, but these are particularly powerful. At least in the discourse studied here, they have managed to move global warming from an abstract concept to a visible one by symbolically creating a world in which human progress became the villain that could ultimately lead to catastrophic consequences for life on Earth. The fantasy themes relied on

visual metaphors and metonyms as vehicles to communicate undesirable change that other contributors to the internet chained out through the creation and active posting of similar images. Used alone, the images would not hold as much power; however, as fantasy themes each of these images is repeated in some form or another many times across the internet and appeared several times throughout the length of Gore's film. The repetition of the image types potentially allows for each fantasy theme carried through them to be more salient and significant in the mind of a given viewer. Below, I examine how each of these images, as fantasy themes, functioned rhetorically to construct a vision of climate change. Afterwards, I discuss how such a visual argument can be persuasive in constructing a rhetorical vision of humanity's power to actively change its environment.

Cityscapes on Fire and the Reversal of Progress

When one first looks at a copy of *An Inconvenient Truth*, one is presented with a compelling and disturbing fantasy theme even before the DVD is placed into a player to start the movie (see Figure 1). I call this fantasy theme "cityscapes on fire". While not every image conveyed fiery overtones, most of them did. What is important to note with this fantasy theme is the cityscape as the author of its own destruction. Even the less fiery but still stormy pictures tended to convey the sense of heat within the context of the global warming fantasy. On the cover of *An Inconvenient Truth*, there is a picture of a factory with three smokestacks. The person that went to see the movie in theaters sees the same image because

it was also used for the movie poster. The main factory buildings are positioned to the left of the image and some of the smaller factory errata are positioned off to the right. Meanwhile, the three smokestacks are exactly centered in the image. White smoke is pouring from all three sections of the picture and filling the dark blue sky. What is striking about the smoke is that, while it is filling the sky in expected ways on the right and left, the smoke coming from the smokestacks is forming into the image of a hurricane. The factory including the tall smokestacks takes up half of the picture and the hurricane composes the other half.

A person picking up a copy of the movie is thus immediately thrust into one of the central fantasy themes of the film in a very visual manner. One can easily infer that technology in the form of the factories that are parts of some manmade cityscapes is the villain – i.e. the cause of adverse changes in the climate. Weather patterns have been and in many cases are considered to be natural parts of the environment. This fantasy theme visually depicts human agency and essentially indicts it for causing one of the sources of human misery – destructive climate change. Certainly this is extremely applicable considering the visual fantasy theme in the context of a nation that had just been through one of the worst hurricane experiences in recent memory a year before the film was released with Hurricane Katrina. The media images of the destruction dealt to New Orleans were still fresh in the minds of the populace, as were the digital images of the hurricane on weather maps.

There is more at work than a simple cause and effect indictment in this fantasy theme, however. On the surface, one might infer that such a simple statement is all that is being made by the cover to this movie. If it were the only such image, such a perception could

arguably hold some merit. There are other images throughout the movie that advance the fantasy theme further, though. One of the opening images is that of more smokestacks outlined in red emitting smoke. This red indicates warmth and heat. Two back to back images that Gore uses towards the beginning of his presentation while directly referencing pollution and global warming really advance the narrative that human progress via cityscapes and factories is causing catastrophic climate change. Here we see the visual fantasy theme functioning to define human progress as the villain of the narrative. It is at the same time destroying both the environment and itself. These two images are again of a factory emitting smoke, but they appear to have been taken at a very opportune moment during a sunset or perhaps to have been digitally altered because they are composed primarily of very bright fiery oranges and yellows. Indeed, the first of these two pictures is only barely recognizable as a factory because the smoke and the bright colors dominate the visual, obscuring the smokestacks so that they become more like silhouettes. Out of context, this visual could even be taken to be a factory that is burning up in a fiery conflagration. In the next image, the factory buildings and smokestacks are much more distinct and the sky more clearly that of a sunset, but it is still composed of very strong oranges and yellows to give the viewer a sense of fire, especially when combined with the smoke coming from the factory.

Similar images were presented throughout the film and have since appeared on the internet, which suggests that the “city on fire” fantasy theme chained out visually there. For example, theage.com.au features an image of smokestacks belching smoke into the sky (see Figure 2). Soxfirst.com actually has a cartoon of a man with an earth for a head wearing a gas

mask with smokestacks also emitting a great deal of black smoke (see Figure 3). In keeping with the fiery factories of Gore's film, Market.oracle.uk has a very similar image of smokestacks backlit by a vivid orange, as does Antemedius.com (See Figure 4, Figure 5). In each case, smokestacks violate the sky and, as such, chain out the fantasy theme that human technology is destroying the environment.

These images from both the movie and the internet are not always of factories; in fact, many are actually orange cityscapes. Gstaadblog.wordpress.com shows a cityscape that appears very small due to distance from the camera under heavy storm clouds (See Figure 6). The city is not on fire color-wise, but it is definitely in danger. Visually, the city is insignificant compared to the threatening cloud cover. Envirohub.net has an image of a city silhouette from so far off that it is only identifiable by the massive amount of smoke coming from it (See Figure 7). This image is backlit by a bright orange sunset like those from Gore's movie. Freakingnews.com goes so far as to present a more extreme visual of a city under an orange storm cloud that is assaulting the buildings with lightning (See Figure 8). These are always unnamed cities because the names are not what is important. What is important is the visual fantasy theme carried by the images. Each city is synonymous to any other city because every city is a manmade construction. In many instances, as noted above, the city is set against the backdrop of a particularly vibrant sunset that is blazing orange, which creates a world almost quite literally on fire. In one set of images within Gore's film, orange colors aren't even needed to convey heat. In these instances, the viewer once again sees a city and then sees a road with moving cars in which the backdrop is a city. Instead of using color to

indicate heat, though, the images rely on the visible wavy lines that one often sees over parking lots on a hot summer day.

In any event, the common fantasy theme uniting these images is the indicts human constructed civilization in the case of global warming. The fantasy theme is visually using an interplay between metonymy and metaphor to socially construct a world in which technological progress is the villain. At the very base, there is the metaphor that cities and the factories that are parts of those cities are related to the broad Western culturetype of 'progress'. Indeed, one subplot of the fantasy theme is that so-called technological "progress" is ruining the environment. Hence, in the "cityscapes on fire" fantasy theme, we see an inverted progress narrative in which the heroes are sometimes villains. Osborn (1978) cites Richard Weaver as believing that 'progress' was the ultimate god term, or culturetype as Osborn would label it, of his time. Although his time was during the 1950's, this term still holds a lot of influence in the current day for Western cultures. In this instance, progress is being enacted as part of a metaphor in an interesting way. Progress has become the unspoken, invisible tenor of the metaphor while the images of cities and factories are serving as the vehicle that allows us to 'see' this concept. Were the metaphor to be put into words that could identify the fantasy theme, it would read 'progress is cities and factories'. However, the fact that these images are invariably bathed in extremely hot colors or contain visual elements, such as wavy lines that indicate heat, causes these images to serve as a lens in a much more literal way than even Osborn likely envisioned. The audience is viewing the culturetype of progress through the hot images of cities, which in turn is meant to invite them

to come away from the movie with a bad feeling about this type of progress. Thus progress as the tenor has been explained and illuminated by the visual vehicle of images of cities and factories covered in hot, primary colors.

The metaphor presented in this fantasy theme can be carried deeper. Even though Weaver identified progress as a god term as opposed to a devil term, the term comes with a sinister undertone and therefore encourages viewers to see the particularly menacing nature of the scene in which humans actually violate nature via progress. Civilization is the product of reason, and since the time of philosophers like Descartes and Bacon, reason has been divorced from the body or the natural; the mind has been divorced from the body. Bacon was the one who most effectively initiated this divorce between reason and nature as he advocated for the domination of it. Indeed, his rhetoric ascribed a masculine role to rationality, especially as it related to dominion over nature via the science of the time, and a feminine role to nature. Merchant (1980) explores these relationships and metaphors when she speaks of the power of Bacon's rhetoric: "This method [of examining nature], so readily applicable when nature is denoted by the female gender, degraded and made possible the exploitation of the natural environment."

When noted in this light, the metaphor that progress is cities and factories carries with it underlying metaphors that are supposed to carry with them certain negative connotations in order to give these visuals persuasive power. First of all, the cityscapes represent the rational, scientific advancement of humankind. This in turn is seen as being male. Nature on the other hand, as Merchant (1980) points out in her exploration of Bacon, is female. In every one of

the pictures, the fantasy is conveyed that cities are the active agents and nature the passive receiver. This is especially true in the images involving smokestacks thrusting into the sky, spewing smoke into the atmosphere. These images carry a far different fantasy theme than Bacon's praise, however. Instead of lauding the progress of humankind as embodied by civilization, the fantasy theme indicts such progress for gradually destroying the world in which we live.

At this point, the primary metaphor shifts into the role of metonymy within this fantasy theme. It is possible that some could have made these leaps in logic without the use of visuals. Here, however, the fantasy theme is made in a metaphorical manner and such visual 'progress' comes to stand for an entire narrative about climate change. The audience 'sees' global warming by witnessing a part of the cause of it. Smokestacks thrusting into fiery skies become visual representations of global warming within the context of the social drama of climate change. This is not to say that they would not hold such power outside of this context, however; the fantasy theme is certainly very powerful and one could draw these conclusions on one's own. What is important to consider here is how such images bolster the fantasy theme used rhetorically by Gore and how it chains out on the internet functioning to turn human progress into the villain of the narrative. Here we clearly see the chaining out of a fantasy theme in which cities, as the bastions of human progress, are contributing to global warming.



Figure 1: DVD Cover



Figure 2: Smokestacks



Figure 3: Smokestacks Cartoon



Figure 4: Hot Smokestacks



Figure 5: Hot Smokestacks 2



Figure 6: Stormy Dwarfed City



Figure 7: Smokey City



Figure 8: Stormy City

Melting Ice

Running parallel to the indicted cause of climate change is one of its effects. The image of melting ice represents one of the most prevalent fantasy themes in the both Gore's film and on the internet. I call this the "melting ice" fantasy theme. Indeed, the melting ice becomes the thrust of Gore's social construction of climate change within *An Inconvenient Truth* at one point and continues to play a significant role throughout the film. While many images on the internet do not have the benefit of a fully formed presentation on climate change to assist them in getting the message across, they still manage to convey the fantasy

theme. In some cases, they are attached to textual arguments. However, they do not need the benefit of a ninety-minute presentation, nor do they even really need the textual assistance – at least not any more. Gore’s movie and others like it have already chained out the fantasy theme that connects melting ice and global warming, and now most of the images can stand for themselves. Below, I first discuss the fantasy theme of “melting ice” as Gore used it visually, and then I move into how it has since chained out on the internet. Like the “cityscapes on fire” visual fantasy theme above, this fantasy theme operates as both a metaphor and a metonym.

Gore utilizes images of melting ice frequently, especially towards the beginning of his presentation. He shows picture after picture, identifying them as different glaciers that have melted. In several cases, he shows pictures of one glacier in a chronological series from some time in the past to the present. For example, he shows a picture of Kilimanjaro in 1970 and contrasts that to a picture of the mountain in 2000 and one of today. The ice recedes substantially in each picture. Following that, he shows a similar situation with the Columbia glacier retreating, and one of the Italian Alps when he specifically references the Adamello-Mandron glacier, one of the Switzerland Alps, Peru, and Argentina. In every area, ice and glaciers are melting. He also shows pictures of glaciers that he doesn’t name breaking apart and falling into the sea. Sometimes he identifies these videos as being of glaciers in Antarctica, others the images are simply examples or transitions. At one point there is an image of scientists in Greenland studying something known as ‘fresh melt’ where the ice is melting and pouring down into itself and causing the ice to melt in fractures underneath the

surface which speeds up the melting process. This image is reproduced almost exactly on the website Skigreenguide.com, which demonstrates that it specifically caught the public interest (see Figure 9). Gore even utilizes CGI in order to show a brief animated image of a polar bear searching out ice and being unable to find it. The implied plotline is that the polar bear eventually drowns, having nothing to climb up onto. It is a narrative that Gore plays out as he tells of instances of polar bears swimming for miles to find ice to climb up onto. The fact that melting ice is used in real pictures, CGI, and transitions in the movie composed of pans over bits of ice in the ocean presumably melting speaks to the recognized power of these images to serve as a vehicle in the metaphor illustrating excessive heat and thus the fantasy theme that melting ice signals the ongoing destruction of the planet.

Based on my Google Image search for “climate change”, Gore’s work with the image of melting ice has caught on with at least some members of the public and excited their interest, for they have chained out images that in some instances directly recreate his visual ideas, as seen in the Skigreenguide.com example. There are many instances of ice that is isolated in ocean water, presumably melting. The melting is not clear, but the viewer seeing the images in the context of the fantasy theme about climate change is led to no other conclusion. For example, News.amrita.edu has an image of a relatively small glacier foregrounded by many small, “melting” pieces of ice in a vast expanse of ocean water (see Figure 10). Ecomii.com has an image that is startlingly similar to it (see Figure 11). With regards to glaciers, topnews.in shows an image of a small ice island in the middle of the ocean (see Figure 12). The NYTimes.com, on the other hand, has an image of an even

smaller chunk of glacier surrounded by water (see Figure 13). Wdcs.org seems to go one step further by showing several thin columns of ice sticking up out of the ocean (see Figure 14). The viewer would likely assume that these thin columns used to be much thicker. There are many more images like these. In every case, most viewers would not know whether these are natural looks for the ice or if they are melting due to global warming. However, the audience, due to metaphorical relationships already drawn by Gore, are invited to participate in the fantasy in which these images are signs of dangerous warming. The melting ice becomes the scene of the drama – a scene that serves as a sign of the catastrophe to come.

Even Gore's polar bear images and the underlying fantasy theme involving them have chained out in the public visual consciousness. Poe-news.com has a particularly poignant image of polar bears walking across what looks to be a melting, barren landscape (see Figure 15). This part of the fantasy theme overlaps with the "cityscapes on fire" fantasy theme above in that the scene is backlit by a sunset that makes it appear hotter. In an image by ernestoguilar.org, one polar bear stretches out towards another across a chasm of water separating two sections of ice (see Figure 16). An image on Changemakers.com seems to go a bit further in that kind of appeal to pathos by showing an isolated polar bear on a small island of ice in the middle of the sea (see Figure 17). Perhaps the saddest example of this particular take on the fantasy theme, however, is one by Arcticportal.org that shows a polar bear perched on a thin column of ice that is clearly too small for it (see Figure 18). All of these images contribute towards the creation of a scene in which the polar bears become innocent victims of the melting ice caused by the looming villain of human progress. The

polar bears are almost anthropomorphized in these images because the viewer is lead to identify with their plight – the ice melts, the sea levels rise, and soon there is no habitable land to live on. In essence, the polar bear’s plight is synonymous with our own in the drama.

Naturally, verbal arguments that support this visual fantasy theme are significant. At points, Gore refers to the ice to directly reinforce his argument within his movie. Other times, the melting ice serves only as a transition element between scenes in the movie. Melting ice is both an active part of arguments for AGW and a backdrop for the them. Working in this way, the melting ice enacts Aristotle’s concept of ‘*energeia*’ very literally. AGW rhetors use the ice to visually reinforce the concrete and abstract concepts by bringing those concepts before audiences’ eyes in ways that words cannot. Although *energeia* as Aristotle originally envisioned it was enacted through speech, modern mediums allow rhetoricians such as Gore and those posting to the internet to literally present the fantasy theme instead of describing it. In either case, the effect is the same. Although one might argue that bringing fantasy themes before the eyes of the audience is more difficult through words, there is still a certain strategic element of choosing which images will best bring one’s social drama before an audience today. Not all images are equally adept in portraying the same narrative, and even at that if a rhetorician chooses what he or she considers the ‘best’ images then he or she must still work to display those images in the best way to achieve the most compelling social rendering of the scene.

Melting ice is an image that also serves as both a metaphor and a metonym. Here, however, the two terms lose some of their separation from one another in the ambiguity that

images can contain. While the metaphor and metonym explored here are very similar, the critical distinction is that heat can be melting ice in the mind of an audience member without being connected to global warming. Metonym is the device Gore and the rhetors that have chained out this fantasy theme use to connect melting ice to global warming.

On the one hand, heat and melting ice are used metaphorically as AGW rhetors highlight the relationship between them. Heat becomes the tenor that the audience presumably understands through having experienced in some form or fashion before. The images of melting ice, in turn, become the visual vehicle that they use to depict the dramatic conflict caused by excessive heat on a global scale. Although most everyone knows that heat melts ice and that the earth is alternately hot and cold and that this is normal, these rhetors are using these images to illustrate the fantasy theme that *excessive* heat exists on a global scale, by which they mean that the Earth is in fact hotter than is normal. The global depictions of melting ice serve as the lens through which this excessive heat is to be viewed as part of a visual fantasy theme. This much is made quite clear when Gore himself uses a metaphor to refer to it when he calls it the ‘canary in the coal mine’, referring to how canaries were used as warnings in coal mines. If the canary died, that meant there was too much methane in the air and the miners needed to get out. Similarly, if the ice melts that means the environment is hot – and if ice that isn’t supposed to melt melts, then the environment is too hot and something is wrong. In this way, melting ice is a key scenic element in the fantasy theme: the vehicle of the metaphor expressed above becomes the warning of the excessive heat.

On the other hand, melting ice also can and does become a metonym for the drama of global warming when used by AGW rhetors in these repeated images. Currently, it is a relatively small part of the eventual catastrophic conclusion to this narrative. In the fantasy theme presented in Gore's film, melting ice is mostly fueling the main problem by producing more surface area in the ocean for heat to collect in. This fantasy theme suggests that in the future, though, humanity will have many other problems to deal with in relation to global warming. Still, the repeated use of these images in the movie and on the internet serves to connect this fantasy theme to the greater narrative of global warming. Melting ice thus comes to stand for the entirety of climate change in Gore's film and on the internet. It is generally characteristically connected with heat in general, but when ice is melting on a global scale, then that melting ice comes to represent a global excessive heat. By using the images of melting ice in this fantasy theme, these rhetors collectively inscribe the metonymic relationship in the mind of the viewer. The chaining out of this particular visual fantasy theme has potential persuasive impact, as will be described below when I cover the rhetorical implications of these images. A fantasy theme centered on melting ice allows for global warming to acquire a visual aspect that one can point to and cite as being global warming. Suddenly, the abstract concept of global warming comes before the eyes of the audience as an unfolding human drama in which the very perpetrators of the imminent catastrophe are also the characters most likely to bring the plot to a different resolution.



Figure 9: Melting Ice



Figure 10: Melting Ice 2



Figure 11: Melting Ice 3



Figure 12: Shrinking Glacier



Figure 13: Melting Ice 4



Figure 14: Melting Ice 5



Figure 15: Polar Bears



Figure 16: Polar Bears and Melting Ice



Figure 17: Lone Polar Bear on Ice Island



Figure 18: Lone Polar Bear on Melting Ice

Escalating Towards Destruction

The final series of images that hold narrative significance within Gore's movie specifically are the very graphs that he uses to promote the fantasy theme that we are moving toward imminent catastrophe. I call this the "escalating towards destruction" fantasy theme. Although one might not expect this fantasy theme to chain out among the public, it does. Graphs denote quantitative data in a visual way, which makes them significant in the visual rhetoric of AGW. They are important forms of conveying fantasy themes because they make quantitative data visual and supply connecting bridges to the already existing narratives

located in the other fantasy themes, which is important when addressing an audience of any size. With regard to Gore's film format for his argument, numbers, while considered distinct rational concepts, become more abstract cerebral concepts when presented before an audience that cannot conceivably keep up with the sheer amount of numbers and figures presented to them in an hour and a half span of time. On the internet, the audience has more time to examine the numbers. However, when faced with so much material, it is likely not the quantitative data that become important to the audience but the visual, narrative form in which that data is presented. The ability of the audience to visualize these numbers as part of a story is vital to any advocate who chooses to use such data. In his movie, Gore may have started a trend for the portrayal of AGW data that has caught on among its advocates due to its persuasive appeal.

Gore utilizes graphs to portray a variety of data as well as the fantasy that human progress is escalating towards unpleasant ends.. One graph follows the average temperatures since the Civil War in the United States. Another charts the temperature of the oceans. Still another shows how insurance rates have gone up over the years due to environmental related costs and concerns. There are also comparison line graphs showing multiple lines moving across the graph and comparing their progress. One shows populations going up at the same time as food demand goes up. Another shows CO₂ rates over time by country with the United States showing the highest increase. There is also a graph showing the average miles per gallon of oil that different countries get in their cars. In this graph the United States gets the lowest miles per gallon and shows the lowest increase in this number over time. Perhaps

the most startling graph is one that spans the entire wall behind Gore covering 650,000 years. There are two lines on the graph, one for the average temperature of the Earth and one for the levels of CO₂ during each period of years. It goes up and down across the wall, dramatizing climate changes over the history of the earth, each line mirroring the other and making the visual argument that the average temperature and the amount of CO₂ in the air are related. At the end of the graph, Gore must get in a lift to carry him up to where the CO₂ has climbed since the Industrial revolution. Although this graph is closer to the middle or beginning of the film, as far as the graphs go it is a climactic moment in the unfolding social drama that graphically emphasizes something that could have been at the back of the audience member's mind: all of these graphs are going *up*. With only a few exceptions regarding the melting of ice – which is visually characteristic of the ice melting in the form of a graph – this is true of each and every line graph. The storyline here is that in all aspects of the global warming drama, humanity is escalating toward certain doom.

The form of a graph, specifically a line graph, displaying data that goes up with regards to AGW chains out in multiple places on the internet. This is probably because it efficiently conveys the fantasy theme of “escalation towards destruction”. NYC.gov has a line graph most like those presented by Gore of sea level rise compared with average temperature increases (see Figure 19). Although not of AGW itself, Weblogs.hitwise.com shows a line graph of Australian searches for “climate change” versus “global warming” (see Figure 20). Both lines are going up. Another line graph going up was posted by Solar-center.stanford.edu entitled “Temperature, CO₂, and Sunspots” (see Figure 21). Climatex.org

posts several line graphs going up for the global average surface temperature (see Figure 22). The list of websites posting line graphs going up continues, but the important thing to note is that with very few exceptions, all of the graphs are line graphs and they are all going up. All of these graphs visually chain out a collective fantasy of progress as escalation toward disaster; we are going forward and upward towards an uncertain but quite possibly apocalyptic future. The one exception that proves the rule, so to speak, is a triangular graph posted by Thesocietypages.org that shows different bars for different percentages of people that believe global warming will harm various things (e.g. plant and animals species, future generations of people, you, etc) (see Figure 23). However, the triangle is pointed down, with the wide base at the top. Even this graph goes up!

Interestingly, the importance of the numbers behind the graphs becomes irrelevant to the argument for AGW in a purely visual sense. Certainly, it is important that one can go back and verify all of the numbers as being accurate and coming from credible sources; otherwise Gore himself and other advocates using these graphs lose some credibility. However, the way in which these rhetors use the numbers in their graphs emphasizes the visual drama over the merely empirical quantification of it. They achieve this in large part by making the graphs all of the same type. Nearly every single graph is a line graph, and this helps to both enforce the fantasy theme and to chain it out visually. Line graphs are distinct from the other types of graphs – pie graphs, bar graphs, etc. – in that they portray a line moving forward from left to right indicating a sense of progress for good or ill. Temporally, the graphs visually move through time as they go from left to right. The left is the chosen

beginning and as each line moves towards the right the viewer is carried forward in time. Time is always moving forward and it cannot be stopped. In this case, the audience is carried upward as well. Normally, a line moving up has a positive connotation; in the context of the AGW rhetoric that connotation is inverted.

This positive connotation generally comes from Osborn's archetype of 'above and below'. As Osborn (1978) describes it, "Images projecting positive, desirable ends and ideals above us (toward which we should strive) and their negative opposites below us (into which we should avoid falling) are normally quite powerful and intense." (p. 18) These graphs invert this archetype and suggest a very different narrative because by going up, they represent an unpleasant escalation towards undesirable ends. This inversion occurs because the graphs taken as a collective are another vehicle in the metaphor for the culturetype of 'progress' in the most negative sense. They utilize Osborn's archetype of forward and backward, fashioning a fantasy theme where humanity always moves forward, progressing towards an uncertain future. The forward and backward archetype, as originally described by Osborn, suggests a scene in which humanity is on the move, moving forward towards a greater goal (or retreating from it in the face of hostility). Osborn himself notes this archetype as being possibly related to the culturetype of 'progress'. However, Osborn speaks of the usual interplay between these two archetypes of 'above and below' and 'forward and backward' as being interrelated to form a spatial orientation to the world. Here one works against the other to show that yes, these lines do mean humans are moving forward and upward, but in ways detrimental to their future. The lines of progress are also lines of

escalation carrying the characters of this drama – and the subsequent average temperature of the earth – forward and upward into oblivion. This visual inversion of Osborn’s archetypes is the essence of this fantasy theme. Each and every line graph going up that is at the very least attached to climate change via the tagging process that Google’s spiders can read serves to chain out the theme and potentially persuade viewers that the situation is escalating towards crisis.

The implications of this inversion in the relationship between these two archetypes are worth noting. One could argue that by inverting the archetype of above and below, proponents of AGW lose some of their persuasive power. People are conditioned to understand narratives in which things are above them as being good, and this includes graphs moving up. Humans want to move forward and upward; this is progress and progress is considered good. However, I argue here that by inducing this dissonance in the minds of the audience, advocates for AGW encourage the audience to re-think previously held narratives about progress, what is good, and what is desirable. In this fantasy theme, those discussing AGW as a real phenomenon also potentially incite their audience to re-think their positions on global warming which is, of course, Gore’s primary purpose in his film. These images, and the fantasy themes carried by them, challenge deeply held archetypal beliefs in the audience in order to more effectively open them up to the very real fact that AGW is a story whose end is catastrophic.

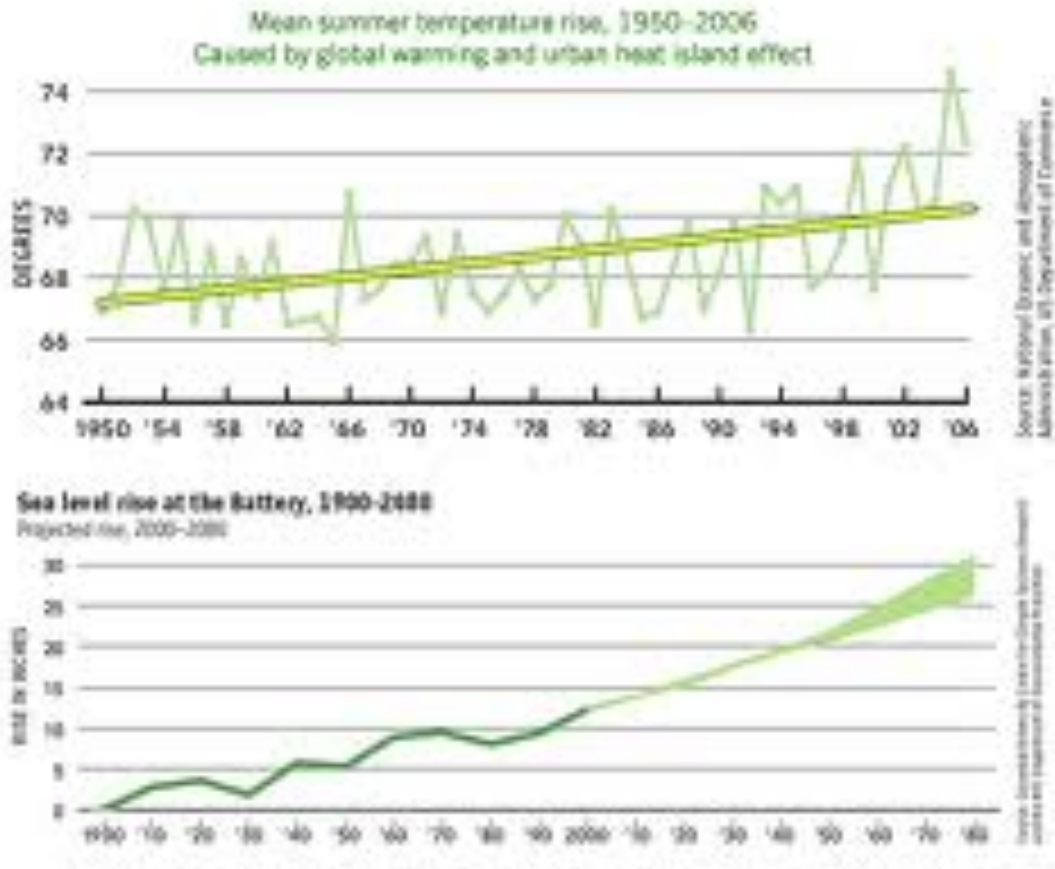


Figure 19: Temperature Rise Graph

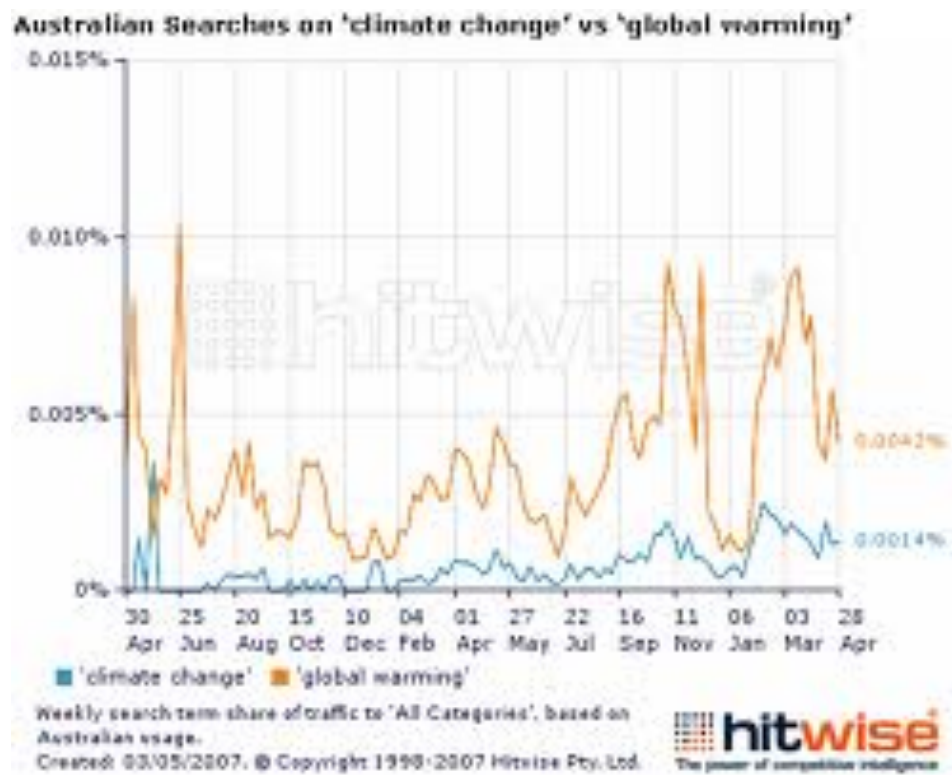


Figure 20: Australian Climate Change Searches Graph

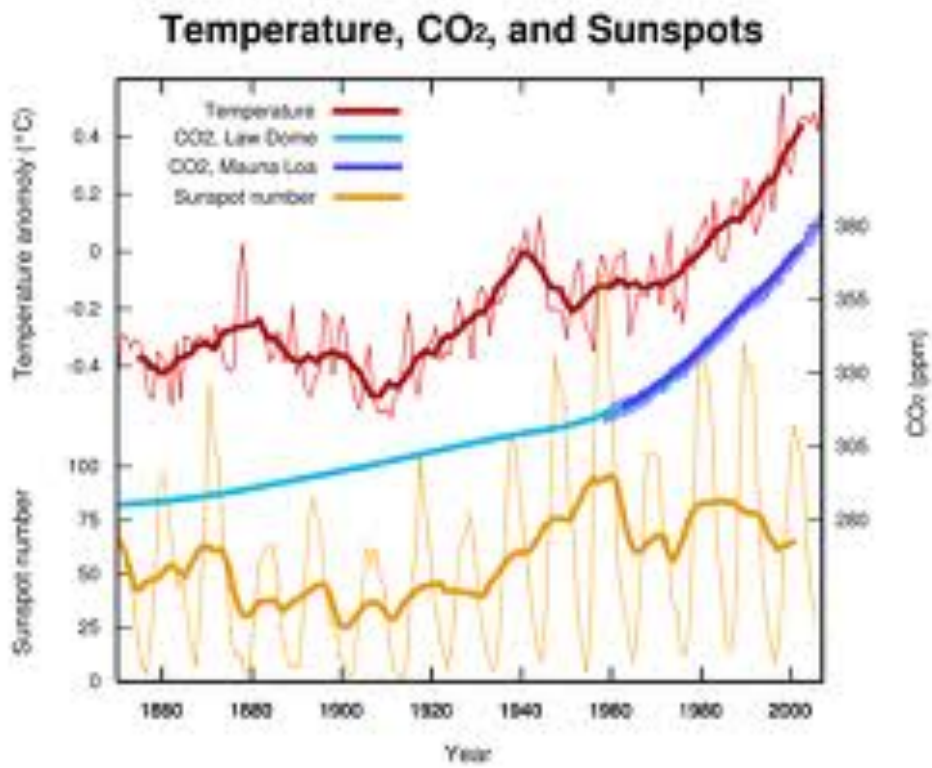


Figure 21: Temperature, CO₂, & Sunspot Graph

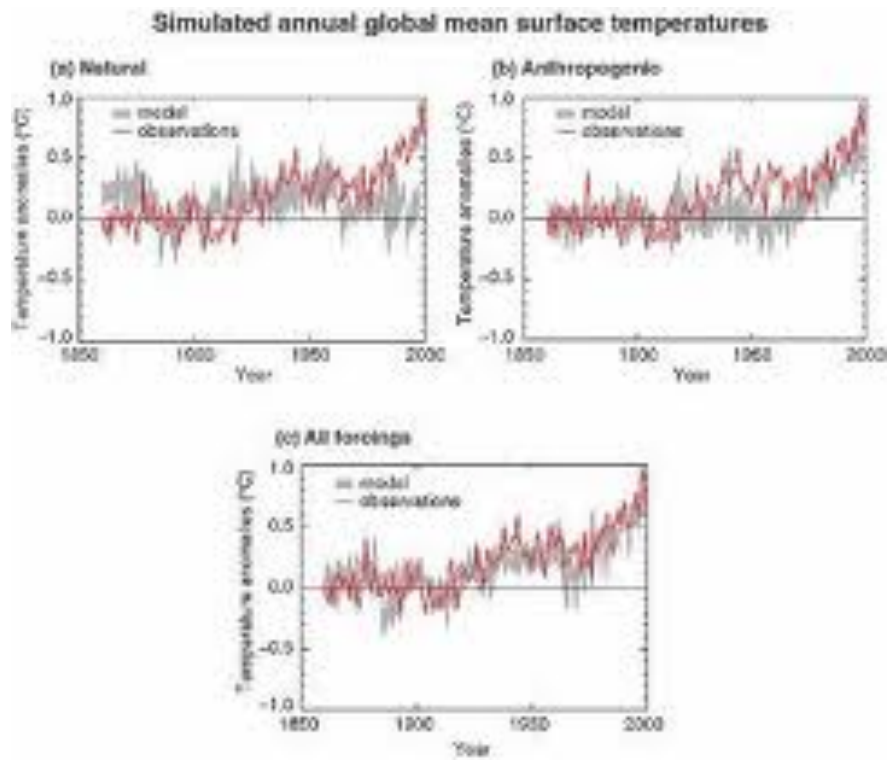


Figure 22: Surface Temperatures Graphs

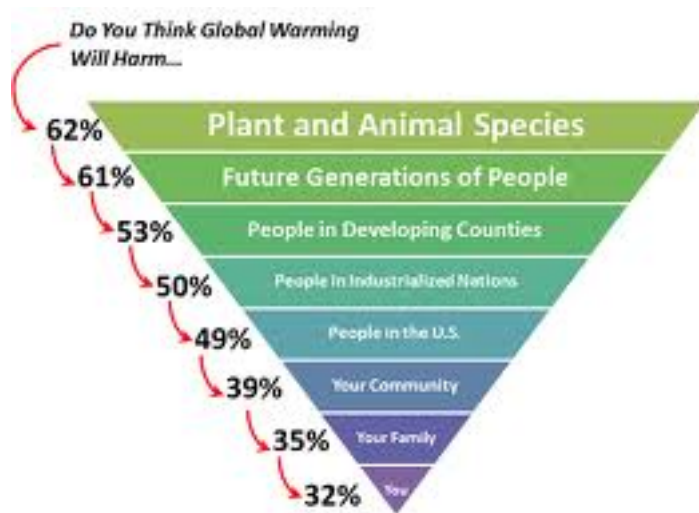


Figure 23: Global Warming Harm Perceptions Graph

A Rhetorical Vision of Humanity's Power to Change its Environment

The three visual fantasy themes detailed above all come together to promote a rhetorical vision of power and change framed against the backdrop of an apocalyptic future. They visually create a reality in which human beings not only have the power to change the world – they are actively doing so, but not for the better. Through expanding cities and the grand goal of “Progress”, humanity is altering its environment on an epic scale, at least according to the fantasy themes. If any proof on the matter is needed, there are dozens of line graphs showing a narrative of constant progress forward and up. Unfortunately, that change has harmful side effects, as evidenced by the fantasy theme of melting ice. However, the

positive or negative nature of that change is almost a moot point. Humanity is the arbiter of change, and that is what is important.

In his movie, Gore urges his audience to use this power for change for positive effect. Those advocating for the reality of AGW on the internet who use the same types of images as they chain out these fantasy themes are very much attempting to do the same thing. By attempting to visually persuade the audience of their power to affect change, Gore and those writing about AGW on the internet are trying to empower people to believe that they can actually do something to affect such a massive issue. Part of the problem with an issue as far reaching as AGW is that individual people often feel powerless to do anything. As I demonstrate in chapter four, many people may even feel separated from the science and thus separated from the solution. By promoting an empowering rhetorical vision, proponents of AGW that act as visual rhetors are attempting to change that. People may not hold terminal degrees in climate science, but they may have the power to change the world according to this rhetorical vision. The issue becomes moving the audience to action. At the end of his movie, Gore provides several actions one can take to reduce one's impact on the environment. Of the many websites that promote this rhetorical vision via chained out visual fantasy themes, some offer actions and others do not. Many are simply illustrating the problem. However, the power to change the world is still put into the hands of the audience, and that is what is important.

Implications and Conclusions

The three visual fantasy themes in this study contain within them metaphors and metonyms that give them rhetorical power in a purely visual sense. In some respects they do require a context such as Gore's film to exploit their persuasive potential. This is especially true of some of the images of melting ice. In many cases, the ice was not even obviously melting; it was simply broken up over a large expanse of ocean. Seen outside of this movie or a discussion on global warming, it is simply ice or melting ice and could have causes entirely unrelated to any form of climate change. In other respects, though, some images could stand on their own outside of any context and still present their message effectively. The images of the factories and the graphs function in this way. Regardless of the stand-alone power of any of the images, however, is the fact that they can all become more compelling in the context of a visual medium such as that of Gore's movie.

Gore organizes all of these images into fantasy themes and uses in them in such a way as to encourage the greatest persuasive impact. The same can be said of those advocating AGW on the internet, although not all of these advocates use all of the fantasy themes in such a neat package as *An Inconvenient Truth*. The images that convey the fantasy themes go beyond their stand-alone power by being presented together in what Kenneth Burke(1968) referred to as 'repetitive form'. This was the mechanism by which the visual fantasy themes were chained out. As Burke (1968) described it, "*Repetitive form is the consistent maintaining of a principle under new guises. It is the restatement of the same thing in*

different ways.” (p. 125). In all three cases, the fantasy themes were repeated many times, albeit in slightly different ways. This resembles the chaining out of a verbal fantasy theme wherein the same idea is rephrased in multiple different ways. There were always different cities or factories being shown or different pictures of ice. In the case of the graphs, each graph was of new information. On the DVD of Gore’s movie, all three images even appeared in a collage of images featured on the title menu. Burke goes on to say that, “By a varying number of details, the reader is led to feel more or less consciously the principle underlying them – he then requires that this principle be observed in the giving of further details” (p.125). The underlying principle in each of these fantasy themes was the different way or ways of portraying global warming through visual metaphor and metonymy. Each image allowed the viewer to visually understand global warming in some particular way that advanced the argument. The repetitive form contributed to the potential persuasiveness of the each fantasy theme by visually instilling this principle in the consciousness of the viewer. This kind of repetitiveness is vital to the functioning of visual fantasy themes. Since they cannot be said to temporally chain out like more textual fantasy themes, one must instead observe the chaining out process through the repetitive form found both in film and on the internet.

In the context of a film, however, temporality can at least to some degree serve as a persuasive feature in that images can be presented in a parallel fashion. Although a single film cannot count as a discourse that produces fantasy themes by itself, it is still important to note how a film might more persuasively promote those fantasy themes. After all, Gore’s

movie appears, based on the visual evidence I have drawn from the internet, to have been successful in exciting the minds of some viewers to such a degree that they perpetuated the images and the fantasy themes associated with them. Jeanne Fahnestock (2003) discusses the persuasive power of presenting things in this kind of parallel form, which is closely interlinked with Burke's notion of repetitive form, although Fahnestock more explicitly discusses the persuasive potential of it. Fahnestock (2003) defines visual parallelism as the, "...juxtaposition of three or more images in either a vertical or horizontal row or in an array of both" (p. 142). Although Fahnestock speaks of the representation of images in a static context here, it is likely not stretching her argument too far to say that this can apply to images presented along a temporal scale, such as in a movie. Most of the images in *An Inconvenient Truth* are not presented at the same time; at best they are presented one right after another such as in the verbal forms of parallelism Fahnestock speaks of earlier in her article. In many cases, they are presented sporadically throughout the length of the movie. Assuming the audience member does not stop watching the movie, the images will occur in a parallel form, but the experience will be temporal rather than horizontal or vertical. When Fahnestock (2003) concludes that, "...parallel form, whatever the content, is in itself a persuasive device" (p. 147) because it invites the audience to group items or images into sets of supporting items or comparable instances, she also speaks to movies and presentations involving a progression of images as well as those involving static sets of images.

The repetitive, parallel form of Gore's visual fantasy themes and the repetitive form of those images found on the internet can achieve a persuasive effect transcending that of any

single one of the images in isolation. The challenge of the visual AGW advocates featured in this study was more than to just prove that global warming is indeed occurring and to convince people to take measures to prevent it; they also had to put a visible face on global warming. Otherwise, on a micro level, there would be no reason to enter into the primarily visual forum of movies and the internet. On a more macro level, these advocates had to enter these more visual forums in order to get people literally to 'see' that this is a problem that is actually occurring. Their audience was a visually centered one and more abstract arguments do not hold the same power that they used to. Aristotle's *energeia* must be literally enacted as often as it is enacted in the more verbal sense. Beyond bringing global warming before the audience's eyes, however, the proponents of AGW had to persuade the audience that the images of these fantasy themes were in fact valid ways to visualize the concept. In essence, they had to demonstrate that global warming really does look like this. Otherwise, the metaphors and metonymy would have failed.

In the end, AGW proponents seem to have succeeded in the goal of influencing at least some audiences to view global warming in these ways precisely because of the repetitive and parallel forms they utilized. The problem became a visual one because they presented the images in such a way as to persuade an audience of their worth. This is significant because advocates of AGW have successfully entered the visual realm with an abstract concept and made it visible. In addition, they have inscribed each of the repeated fantasy themes in the minds of the audience as visual metonymies to represent global warming. As more people begin to enter and communicate within the increasing visual

forums available to them, their methods of making their arguments persuasive through visual fantasy themes should continue to be examined. This will allow rhetorical scholars to follow how Aristotle's *energeia* is continuing to evolve in our modern technological era.

CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSION

Introduction

During the course of rhetorical history, scholars from Aristotle to St. Augustine, from Cicero to Vico, and from Bacon and Locke to modern scholars such as Black, Burke, and Foucault have all contributed to the discipline in key ways in order to move it forward and push thinking about rhetoric deeper. Importantly, not all of these scholars would consider themselves to be within the discipline of rhetorical studies. Foucault, for example, was interested in power but was adopted by rhetoricians for what his thoughts on power could do for discussions of rhetoric. Toulmin is a similar example, having originally known his academic home in the philosophy about logic. Yet each has had much to say to inform current rhetorical theory and criticism.

The same is true of FTA. We have seen that FTA traces its roots to the work of a social psychologist, Robert Bales. According to Bormann, Cragan, and Shields (2001), SCT evolved upon two lines of small group research, that by Bormann and his associates at the University of Minnesota and that of Bales and his research team at Harvard, who were utilizing content analysis to study the interactions of small groups. FTA arose from this work, not yet the full-blown theory of SCT, and was explained at length by Bormann in his seminal 1972 essay, *Fantasy and Rhetorical Vision: The Rhetorical Criticism of*

Social Reality. From the title alone, it is clear that Bormann at least believed that he had developed a new rhetorical criticism methodology, and as the essay makes clear, this methodology arose from the social sciences. Work following this article that utilized FTA seems to have proved him right. The question that arises, however, is whether or not FTA has become too scientific, as Nothstine, Blair, & Copeland (1994) warned all rhetorical criticism was becoming? In chapter one, we saw that the scholars initially interested in FTA sought to push it more towards being a social scientific methods. Does this mean that scientism is ingrained in the foundation of FTA?

Throughout this dissertation, I have attempted to ground FTA as an approach for doing rhetorical criticism particularly well suited to a digital context. I have grounded FTA theoretically both in the work of Burke and in Agenda Setting Theory. Although my three case studies did not utilize social scientific methods directly, the initial grounding in Burke and AST continues the somewhat schizophrenic tendency to utilize both rhetorical and empirical foundations, even if empirical data is utilized only implicitly. However, to use theories grounded in more empirical methods of study is not the same as being empirical. I have argued that FTA is not, ultimately, scientific. Those scholars who went on to develop and utilize SCT did engage in social science, but my concern throughout this dissertation has ever been on FTA as consistent with the primarily pragmatic, pedagogical, and public orientation outlined by Nothstine, Blair, & Copeland (1994). As a rhetorical method, I have demonstrated that it is strong. Moreover, I have shown that it is an especially powerful approach to rhetorical criticism when looking to

analyze the rhetoric of the more collectivist, less source centered rhetoric of digital online communication contexts. My case studies have tried to demonstrate this. Each study identifies the tangible benefits for understanding collectivist rhetoric in the three specific situations I outlined. Those seeking to communicate as a journalist, or as a discussion board participant, or as one designing images for a website with a rhetorical aim might all take away practical advice from this dissertation. Likewise, those seeking merely to understand the rhetoric in each of these contexts for use in policy making and public communication campaigns can equally find use here.

However, my goal is not to eliminate the social scientific influences entirely. Rather, I seek to place the social science in service to the public orientation that FTA as a way of doing rhetorical criticism should have. Those scholars who have worked on SCT have done a great service to the methodology, even if they have at times conflated SCT and FTA to a damaging degree. Similarly, I have attempted to use AST in the service of FTA here. FTA may utilize the benefits of good empirical research without falling into the scientific intellectual trap that ultimately leads to the professionalism that Nothstine, Blaire, & Copeland fear. Rhetorical criticism need not become scientific for the use of good science. Indeed, the use of the fruits of scientific methods could be at the heart of a real sense of interdisciplinarity between the humanities and the social sciences.

I turn now in my concluding chapter to a discussion of the answers to the research questions that have guided this dissertation. The answers to my research

questions represent the future of FTA, and thus they serve as a good note on which to end this study.

Research Questions Revisited – Towards an Interdisciplinary, Digital FTA

This dissertation began with a series of research questions designed to push FTA in directions that will benefit scholars interested in understanding how rhetoric works in a digital, postmodern environment. With the advent of digital media, we have seen a variety of new contexts open up to communicators. Those unprepared for this shift have not fared so well as those who have embraced it. One clear and recent example that supports the idea that public rhetoricians must adapt may be found in the 2008 election. President Barack Obama made use of a variety of digital social media to communicate with voters, while Senator John McCain primarily relied on more traditional methods of communication. While a more formal study into the candidates' digital campaigns is beyond the scope of this conclusion, it does seem safe to say that history has demonstrated where the path to political victory lies. Much like the televised Kennedy/Nixon debates, the 2008 election provided a clear argument for the new primacy of digital rhetoric. FTA is a viable method for studying that rhetoric, as I will discuss in more detail below in the answers to my research questions.

RQ 1 – How does FTA function in different communication contexts?

As demonstrated in Chapter 1, FTA is an approach that has been used by rhetorical critics in multiple different contexts. Initially, it was designed for use in small group contexts. However, as the method grew, Bormann and others experimented with different contexts. Bormann carried out FTA's by looking at the rhetoric of what he called the "dream merchants of the mass media" in newspapers. Others have examined televised news and even novels. There are numerous examples of FTAs in different contexts up to and including the digital contexts discussed in this dissertation, but I have argued that it is the digital contexts that have pushed FTA the furthest. Digital communication contexts show us the limits and the opportunities for analysis under the FTA paradigm.

Chapter 3 as a case study most closely resembled the one of the communication contexts in which FTA has already been utilized in the past. Textual news stories on the internet, at least in terms of their content, are similar to textual news stories found on paper. For that reason, Agenda Setting Theory concepts apply in the same ways discussed in Chapter 2. Those who set the media agenda chain out themes among one another to determine which stories will be written and distributed. The fantasy themes that appear in those stories filter down into the public agenda. Collectively, news stories covering similar themes work together to create a psychological priming effect that

seems to lead to the public picking up on those themes deemed important by those writing the stories.

The digital context has an important effect on the rhetoric involved in these stories, however. We saw in Chapter 3 that fantasy themes in a digital news environment chained out with unprecedented speed for the mass media. In fact, the speed with which fantasy themes in the digital environment chained out is far more akin to the speed with which interpersonal fantasy themes spread in small group contexts. Within 24 hours, a clear rhetorical vision of international politics involving the United States and Iran emerged. American and other world leaders were able to convey their message almost instantly to their audiences. The news media were able to feed off of each other and these world leaders quickly and efficiently despite being spatially separated. Temporal separation ceased to be the same barrier that it was to primarily offline news sources limited to specific times of the day for dissemination of information. As soon as a story was completed, it was presumably posted for all to see. While the news did not actually approach the same form as interpersonal communication, it did move much closer to the interpersonal end of the spectrum. The effect of the digital context was to close the gap of function between the interpersonal and the mass media contexts. In a digital context, these two forms of communication do not become the same, but they do become much more similar due to the increased speed of information transmission.

The case study in Chapter 4 touched on a different kind of digital context where the interpersonal became even more pronounced. In a discussion board thread, people may come together and interact much more directly than the news sources interact with their audiences. Discussion board participants can and do engage in more of a dialogue with one another, actively shaping fantasy themes in more visible ways. These participants may have anything from zero history to a lengthy history sometimes including years of potential interaction with one another. The account creation dates for many of the participants in the FTA in Chapter 4 indicated that they had been members of the Something Awful community for many years. Some even referred to one another's actions in other discussion threads.

While the literature discussed in Chapter 1 reveals that FTAs utilizing discussion board data are not new – in fact, they are on the rise – they are significant. My contribution with Chapter 4 is to indicate exactly how significant this kind of FTA can be. More than any other recorded digital context, discussion boards move us back to a more small group style communication. There are critical differences, however. For one thing, temporality is an important factor. As with digital news stories, interaction can be quick, but it is still much slower than actual face-to-face interaction. Discussion board threads also function like small group communication, to an extent. People can reply directly to one another and pick upon interesting ideas. However, unlike small group communication, there seems to be a tendency to keep certain ideas alive in exactly the same form through the use and ease of quoting. In fact, this seemed to stifle the chaining

out process in some instances because the theme simply could not grow if it was only being repeated verbatim. As Chapter 4 showed, however, the participants in this particular discussion board thread did manage to chain themes out with time, but there was significant quoting. Few discussion threads include as many participants or go on for nearly as long as this one did, though. Six months plus is an extraordinarily long life for a discussion board thread. Finally, anonymity was a contributing factor.

Accountability existed on the forum in the form of reprimands including probation and banning from the board, but people were still more free to speak their mind unedited due to a lack of more immediate social consequences. When anonymity is a factor, the psychology of those involved should presumably change. Anonymity goes beyond zero history and into a social realm that lacks immediacy. For example, even a simple frown ceases to serve as a social consequence for an undesirable comment. When paired with asynchronous communication, anonymity results in a different style of communication, as I discussed in Chapter 4.

The final digital context covered in this dissertation was the visual context represented by the entirety of the internet. Here the effect of the context on FTA is more broad, and perhaps even has more implications for rhetoric as a whole. To say the internet is a more visual environment than any communication context that preceded it may be arguable – after all, television is at least as visual if not more so – but it is a very visual environment, and unlike television, it is interactive. Anyone utilizing the internet to communicate can post more than text; they can post images and video as well. One

can perform a Google Image search and see hundreds of posted images relating to a given search term, as indicated by Chapter 5.

Chapter 5 is an important entry into the rhetorical criticism canon because it demonstrates how fantasy themes may be carried within visual images, which have been made to be interactive in an online environment. For perhaps the first time in history, images become fantasy theme entries into an ongoing conversation on a massive scale. This kind of visual chaining out places images within the rhetorical purview of FTA in a way that they have never been before. Images convey fantasy themes through rhetorical vehicles such as metaphor and metonymy, and these messages are picked up and chained out by others who post similar fantasy themes that become variations on the original theme. Images, perhaps far more than words, excite the imagination and can lead to important rhetorical visions. Through the use of a simple Google Images search, a rhetorical critic can witness how the public “sees” global warming and the fantasies employed to define it. Seeing how the public visualizes abstract concepts such as global warming can be of critical importance to policy makers.

As digital communication contexts proliferate, they will likely come to have different effects upon the rhetoric of those who would communicate within them. We can already see from these three case studies the effects they have had on the way we may view and use FTA. Specifically, speed, anonymity, asynchronous communication,

and visual imagery all factor into the way critics working in a digital environment should examine fantasy themes.

RQ 2: To what extent does FTA represent a method that is particularly well suited to digital contexts?

The above discussion demonstrates the effect that different digital communication contexts have on FTA. Each of the case studies has shown different aspects of the digital environment that arise in the different contexts within it. These case studies have also demonstrated just how well suited FTA can be to studying rhetoric in digital contexts. As we see in Chapter 2, the online environment presents communicators with various contexts that resemble interpersonal communication more than the one-to-many contexts embodied by the mass media. I argue that FTA represents a method that is particularly well suited to digital contexts precisely because of the more interpersonal nature of those contexts.

We have seen that FTA arose from small group communication, and that many would see it confined to the contexts within which it arose. It has been my argument all along that FTA functions best with interpersonal communication. It can be used for mass media rhetoric, but it truly shines as an approach that gets at the less formal,

much messier conversational rhetoric that appears in interpersonal contexts. Since many digital contexts bridge the gap between interpersonal and mass media rhetoric to varying extents, they require methods of analysis that account for the unique qualities of interpersonal communication. FTA is one such approach. In an environment where single authors become far less important, it becomes more critical to look at themes of rhetoric not attributable to any specific source.

This dissertation has demonstrated, however, that FTA alone is not always sufficient to examine rhetoric in a digital context. When studying the rhetoric of a discussion board thread in Chapter 4, a distinctly Burkean approach was useful in conjunction with FTA to illustrate how people come to identify with a common rhetorical vision despite substantive differences. Burkean concepts, as I argue in Chapter 2, can and should be relevant to FTA in contexts other than digital ones, but in a discussion board thread they are particularly useful. Consubstantiality takes on a more literal meaning when people can directly quote one another in chaining out various themes. Indeed, it was often the case that various contributors to the thread examined in Chapter 4 utilized the tools available to them to specifically highlight quoted text in a different colored box before or during their own posts. Some would go so far as to provide a highlighted quote, a bit of original commentary, another quote from the same post, some more commentary, and so on and so forth. In this way, participants used the technology to address oppositional arguments point by point. Arguers have been able to do this orally and in writing for a long time now, but the technology here perfected that

particular argumentation strategy and I argue that the availability of this tool perhaps even *encouraged* the use of that strategy. FTA proved useful here because in a way, participants in the discussion were doing more than contributing to various fantasy themes – they were quite literally highlighting the themes they felt were important to the conversation. Through the use of FTA, the critic can seize upon such a resource and analyze the rhetoric that it conveys to the maximum potential.

In addition, the analysis in Chapter 5 would not have been possible without the use of metaphorical analysis. Metaphor and metonymy allow a visual rhetorical critic to ascertain the messages behind images that do not always have words attached to them. If a message cannot be derived from a given piece of rhetoric, then an FTA critic cannot access the theme behind it. FTA is most definitely well suited to a digital environment, but it works best in tandem with other rhetorical methods that allow different forms of access to messages conveyed through different mediums.

RQ 3: To what extent does FTA move us to more scientific versus inventive ways of doing rhetorical inquiry? What can be done to mitigate this possible move?

Although FTA began as an approach primarily rooted in rhetorical scholarship, those that sought to work with the method and grow it initially seemed quite interested in bringing a far more social scientific approach to the method than is normally seen in

rhetorical inquiry. Indeed, we have seen from Chapter 1 that the first generation of FTA scholars actually brought more quantitative approaches to the table in examining fantasy themes. Their work led to the formation of SCT as a more social scientific theory, but it also may have played a significant role in moving FTA away from inventive roots in small group rhetoric to a more scientific way of conducting rhetorical inquiry. However, I hope that with this dissertation I have shown that such a scientific outlook is not necessary or endemic within FTA. As an approach to doing rhetorical criticism, FTA may move us more towards scientific ways of thinking, but it does not need to do so at the expense of its inventive roots. In short, the move can be mitigated. I would argue here that the dichotomy of scientism versus inventiveness is a false one; both styles of thinking are useful to rhetorical inquiry and both lead to interesting and productive insights. Throughout its history, FTA has utilized both the scientific and the inventive as resources to come to novel conclusions about the rhetoric being analyzed. It is instructive at this point to look to a more social scientific methodology that arose in the early history of FTA but did not survive. The example below demonstrates one particular instance of scientism that did not prove to be very productive to FTA overall, but did demonstrate how scientism can potentially be utilized to come to novel conclusions.

For several decades after its inception, Bormann and his fellow researchers sought to solidify and improve their new method. We've seen that critics utilized this method in order to analyze specific message sets, whether they originated in small

groups or more commonly forms of mediated content such as newspapers, television media, movies, etc. The scholars working on the method, as noted previously, pushed towards a more social scientific approach in SCT. As such, it should come as little surprise that very early on several researchers including Bormann himself attempted to extend the method and potentially validate it through the use of social science methodology. Specifically, these researchers utilized Q-Methodology in order to provide empirical data to support the critics' observations of publics buying into the rhetorical visions portrayed by various media. Cragan & Shields (1977) explained the situation thus: "...the major concepts and structure of the theory have yet to receive empirical verification. In the absence of empirical objectivity, the possibility exists that the reconstructed visions are merely the product of the filtering process of the critic's mind" (p. 274). In this article, Cragan & Shields sought to ground dramatic theory in empirical data. This work was begun by Shields in his 1974 dissertation, which was the first attempt to use these two methods in conjunction with one another.

Despite the ambitions of this research and the seemingly good fit between the two methodologies, this type of research did not catch on in the long run. There have been many studies utilizing both FTA and the theory that resulted from it, Symbolic Convergence Theory, but there were only five studies that utilized FTA and Q-methodology in tandem (Cragan & Shields, 1977; Rarick et al, 1977; Bormann et al, 1978; Bormann et al, 1984; and Endres, 1989). Also, the last of these studies appeared in 1989, which leads one to infer that after this date, FTA researchers simply stopped

using the method. This cessation might have had something to do with Mohrmann's nearly damning criticism of the method (see Mohrmann, 1980; Mohrmann, 1982a; & Mohrmann, 1982b), but it seems unlikely that this would be the case considering that Mohrmann's criticism did not mention the use of Q-Methodology in FTA at all.

Mohrmann was more concerned with the questionable roots of FTA in Bales' work, the new taxonomy of terms that he viewed as unnecessary, and the questionable ability of fantasy themes to chain out from small group contexts to the mass media and back again (Mohrmann, 1982a). If anything, Mohrmann might have seen some redeeming qualities in continuing the use of Q-methodology to validate the method and demonstrate more solidly how fantasy themes do or do not move from small groups to the mass media and back again. Why then did researchers stop using Q-methodology?

There is no clear answer to the question of why the researchers stopped using Q-Methodology. Presumably, based on the timing of the studies, the cessation is linked to FTA as a whole losing scholarly support. However, it may also be the case that Q-methodology was too scientific. Q-methodology served to quantify and categorize rhetorical themes in a very scientific manner that seemed to lose sight of the actual rhetoric. Unfortunately, the rhetoric became more of a series of data points that did not allow for much inventive analysis. Rhetoric is typically irreducible to numbers because numbers do not allow for nuanced qualitative analysis. It may be no coincidence that SCT seemed to gain popularity after these studies even as FTA lost favor. The scholarly enterprise seems to have been pushed in a more scientific direction.

Since the resurgence of studies utilizing FTA as an approach, however, we have not seen a resurgence of Q-methodology. Scholars have tended towards more inventive ways of doing research using FTA. This dissertation is one such example. Each of the case studies in this dissertation utilized actual fragments of conversation to expose fantasy themes present in the discourse. These themes were not quantified, but rather told three narratives of discourse that resulted in three different rhetorical visions. To a very large extent, the interpretations of these fantasy themes and rhetorical visions have been inventive. For example, the interpretations of the images in Chapter 5 had to be inventive in order to get at how the images served as persuasive messages. FTA can and should be inventive, especially in a digital environment.

We should not, however, rest with the inventive. The inventive is informative, but the scientific roots of FTA should not be discarded entirely. One reason for this is that the force of a theme comes from its demonstrated repetition. A statement proposed in isolation is not persuasive under the FTA approach unless the idea contained within it is picked up and chained out. We must see the process of what I have called in Chapter 2 “casuistic chaining”. In this light, we must realize that the scientism and the inventiveness can function hand in hand. Science, after all, requires invention just as invention requires science. To oppose the two in a false dichotomy is to do a discredit to them both. Those who pushed FTA towards using Q-Methodology may have gone too far to one extreme, but it did provide for some interesting and informative research.

Revisiting the idea of Q-methodology may in fact be a productive direction for future research, assuming that it does not eclipse the rhetorical insights.

Conclusion

In the end, FTA is an approach some would call a method of rhetorical analysis, but it is ultimately inseparable from the social scientific influences that its originators built into it. Such separation is in fact not desirable, nor should it be. Empirical data may be utilized in service of rhetorical research; FTA scholars have demonstrated that fact time and again. To separate the two is to do a disservice to both. Indeed, it is likely that FTA could even be used in service of more scientific methodologies. To separate the two types of analysis too strongly is to damage both, and just as FTA may serve as a bridge between traditional rhetorical analysis and rhetorical analysis in a digital context, so too it may serve as a bridge between two types of methodologies. This has always been a goal of FTA, and now as it moves into a digital realm it should be so again. New contexts for rhetoric require new ways of thinking, and scholars of all backgrounds must be willing to adapt. This may be the greatest lesson of the digital communication environment. I have demonstrated how FTA can adapt.

Broadly speaking, this dissertation has served to demonstrate the utility of a postmodern rhetorical criticism approach in a communication environment composed

of what McGee (1990) would call “textual fragments”. Here I have provided one answer to Warnick (2007)’s call for more approaches designed for understanding rhetoric in digital contexts. While I agree with Warnick that we need new approaches specifically designed for digital rhetoric, I have demonstrated here how pre-existing approaches might be updated and rethought to apply to the new digital context that we as scholars are presented with. McGee’s commentary on textual fragments in 1990 was prophetic to a certain degree in that rhetoric has become ever more fragmentary, although he would likely contend that it has been fragmentary all along. Indeed, the digital context may only be more clearly showing us the fragmentary, interconnected workings of rhetoric. Now we see more of the pieces behind what used to be seen as finished pieces of rhetoric. Here I would echo Warnick’s call for more approaches designed to understand this context better. Future research in this field should develop such approaches with an eye towards the fragmentary rhetoric that the digital context reveals. For example, as of this writing the power of digital, fragmentary rhetoric has recently been demonstrated in the effects of Twitter in the revolution in Egypt and also in demonstrations in Iran. FTA would be of great utility in understanding how extremely brief 160 character tweets chained out thematic messages that ultimately lead up to rhetorical visions that have motivated large groups of people if not entire nations. Finally, FTA scholars should continue to explore the balance between the scientific and the inventive in the method. Q-methodology may be worth revisiting, so long as themes are not completely reduced to numbers. The numbers may prove

instructive in an environment of amalgamated rhetoric, but ultimately we must always come back to the inventive and thus the pedagogical. What can we learn from what the myriad semi-anonymous voices are saying? Ultimately, it is up to future FTA scholars to push the approach further, and it is up to all rhetorical scholars to adapt to a new digital rhetorical context.

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