

including the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, found "little that was new and certainly nothing sensational" in the speech. Even at this relatively early date, the *Inquirer* noted that "the situation seemed to call for somewhat plainer speaking." See *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 29 October 1945, 1; and *Philadelphia Inquirer*, 28 October 1945, 6.

<sup>30</sup>Harry S. Truman, "Address on Foreign Policy at the Navy Day Celebration," 435.

<sup>31</sup>Harry S. Truman, "The President's News Conference of October 31, 1945," *Public Papers*, 454.

<sup>32</sup>Harry S. Truman, "Message to the Congress on the State of the Union and on the Budget for 1947, January 21, 1946," *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Harry S. Truman, 1946* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1962), 44.

<sup>33</sup>George F. Kennan, "Moscow Embassy Telegram #511: 'The Long Telegram,' February 22, 1946," reprinted in *Containment*, ed. Etzold and Gaddis, 59, 61-62.

<sup>34</sup>Winston Churchill, "An Iron Curtain Has Descended," reprinted in *The Dolphin Book of Speeches*, ed. George W. Hibbitt (Garden City: Doubleday, 1965), 302.

<sup>35</sup>Harry S. Truman, "The President's News Conference of March 8, 1946," *Public Papers*, 145.

<sup>36</sup>Harry S. Truman, "The President's News Conference of March 14, 1946," *Public Papers*, 155-156.

<sup>37</sup>Harry S. Truman, "Address in Chicago on Army Day, April 6, 1946," *Public Papers*, 190.

<sup>38</sup>Harry S. Truman, "The President's Special Conference With the American Society of Newspaper Editors, April 18, 1946," *Public Papers*, 211.

<sup>39</sup>Harry S. Truman, "The President's News Conference of May 9, 1946," *Public Papers*, 243.

<sup>40</sup>Clark M. Clifford, "American Relations with the Soviet Union: A Report to the President by the Special Counsel to the President, September 24, 1946," reprinted in *Containment*, ed. Etzold and Gaddis, 70. Though submitted under Clifford's signature, this top-secret report was prepared in large measure by George M. Elsey. Elsey had been assigned by the Director of Naval Intelligence to the White House Map Room in April 1942, a position he maintained throughout the War. By 1945, Elsey was a senior naval officer in the White House, reporting directly to Admiral Brown, the president's Naval Aide. When Clifford assumed the duties of Special Counsel to the President in mid-1946, Elsey became his assistant. See Underhill, *The Truman Persuasions*, 192.

<sup>41</sup>Harry S. Truman, "The President's News Conference of November 11, 1946," *Public Papers*, 478.

<sup>42</sup>Harry S. Truman, "Address at the Lighting of the National Community Christmas Tree on the White House Grounds, December 24, 1946," *Public Papers*, 511.

<sup>43</sup>Richard M. Freeland, *The Truman Doctrine and the Origins of McCarthyism*, 67.

<sup>44</sup>Athan Theoharis, *Seeds of Repression*, 31.

<sup>45</sup>Theoharis, *Seeds of Repression*, 43.

<sup>46</sup>Theoharis, *Seeds of Repression*, 31. Theoharis, like other revisionist historians, rests his case for Truman's motivations toward the Soviet Union almost entirely on two unrelated instances. The first occurred in 1941 when, as a Senator, Truman made the off-hand remark: "If we see that Germany is winning we should help Russia and if Russia is winning we ought to help Germany and that way let them kill as many as possible, although I don't want to see Hitler victorious under any circumstances." It is important, however, to note the context within which the remark was made. Germany had just broken its "non-aggression" treaty with the U.S.S.R., a treaty that had aligned Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Russia in the minds of most Americans. Russia was *not* viewed as an Ally at the time of Truman's remark. Indeed, most people viewed Russia as an enemy. The second piece of "evidence" used by revisionists to suggest Truman's deep-seated animosity towards the U.S.S.R. is Truman's frank talk with Molotov on April 23, 1945, in which he spoke to the Soviet Foreign Minister "in words of one syllable" concerning Russian violations of the Yalta Accords. Yet what Truman said to Molotov seems, in substance, to be more or less the same thing that Roosevelt had already said to Stalin through secret cables. Like Roosevelt, Truman sought to make clear his country's interpretation of the agreements reached at Yalta. Neither piece of evidence is demonstrative of a deep-seated psychological predisposition against Russia. See LaFeber, 6, 17-18.

<sup>47</sup>Harry S. Truman, *1945: Year of Decisions*, I (New York: New American Library, 1955), 302.

<sup>48</sup>Truman, *Year of Decisions*, 302.

<sup>49</sup>Woodrow Wilson, "Address to the Daughters of the American Revolution, Washington, D.C. October 11, 1915," *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Woodrow Wilson, 1915*, 378. On the use of Wilson by both Roosevelt and Truman see John F. Wilson, "Rhetorical Echoes of a Wilsonian Idea," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 43 (1957): 271-277.

<sup>50</sup>Roosevelt cited in Thomas G. Paterson, "The Quest for Peace and Prosperity: International Trade, Communism, and the Marshall Plan," in *Politics and Policies of the Truman Administration*, ed., Barton J. Bernstein, 79.

<sup>51</sup>Truman, *Year of Decisions*, 341.

<sup>52</sup>Truman, *Year of Decisions*, 342.

<sup>53</sup>Freeland, *The Truman Doctrine*, 36.

<sup>54</sup>Freeland, *The Truman Doctrine*, 36.

<sup>55</sup>Harry S. Truman, "Letter to Heads of War Agencies on the Economic Situation in the Liberated Countries of Northwest Europe, May 22, 1945," *Public Papers*, 61.

<sup>56</sup>Harry S. Truman, "The President's News Conference at Olympia, Washington, June 21, 1945," *Public Papers*, 132.

<sup>57</sup>Harry S. Truman, "Address in San Francisco at the Closing Session of the United Nations Conference, June 26, 1945," *Public Papers*, 142.

<sup>58</sup>Harry S. Truman, "Special Message to the Congress Transmitting a Statement of Foreign Loan Policy, March 1, 1946," *Public Papers*, 138.

<sup>59</sup>Harry S. Truman, "Statement by the President Upon Signing the Strategic and Critical Materials Stockpiling Act, July 23, 1946," *Public Papers*, 354.

<sup>60</sup>Truman, *Year of Decisions*, 87.

<sup>61</sup>Truman, *Year of Decisions*, 139.

<sup>62</sup>Truman, *Year of Decisions*, 139.

<sup>63</sup>Truman, *Year of Decisions*, 140. Clark Clifford, Truman's chief speechwriter during most of this period, recalled just how important the study of history was to the President: "[Truman] said that he read every article in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*—particularly those about American history. And his knowledge of American history was not based on dates, and names, and great events, but it was upon understanding of issues of today and problems of various presidents. And that was invaluable because when people would say, 'Well, if Harry Truman can be president, why then your next door neighbor can be president.' I used to hear that. Vitally incorrect, I might add—because of his background and his understanding of American history. And he used it all the time—the problems that Jefferson had, that Adams had, that Judge Jackson had. . . . And he knew those men so well. He knew them way, way back to the exigencies of the times. And it set him apart. I would say that he had a better understanding of American history than any president, except Woodrow Wilson." Personal interview with Clark M. Clifford, 23 March 1984, Washington, D.C.

<sup>64</sup>Truman, *Year of Decisions*, 303.

<sup>65</sup>See Eugene E. White, "Rhetoric as Historical Configuration," in *Rhetoric in Transition: Studies in the Nature and Uses of Rhetoric*, ed. Eugene E. White (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1980), 7–20.

<sup>66</sup>Harry S. Truman, "Address on Foreign Economic Policy, Delivered at Baylor University, March 6, 1947," *Public Papers*, 167.

<sup>67</sup>Reinhold Niebuhr, *The Irony of American History* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1952), 2.

<sup>68</sup>John Lewis Gaddis, "The Strategy of Containment," in *Containment*, ed. Etzold and Gaddis, 26.

<sup>69</sup>See Joseph M. Jones, *The Fifteen Weeks (February 21–June 5, 1947)* (New York: Viking Press, 1955); Wayne Brockriede and Robert L. Scott, *Moments in the Rhetoric of the Cold War* (New York: Random House, 1970), 10–43.

<sup>70</sup>Jones, *The Fifteen Weeks*, 149.

<sup>71</sup>Harry S. Truman, "Special Message to the Congress on Greece and Turkey, March 12, 1947," *Public Papers*, 178–179.

<sup>72</sup>Harry S. Truman, "Special Message to the Congress on Greece and Turkey, March 12, 1947," *Public Papers*, 180.

<sup>73</sup>Robert A. Taft cited in Harold B. Hinton, "Plea to Congress: President to Ask Joint Session Tomorrow for Greek, Turkish Loans," *New York Times*, 11 March 1947, 3.

<sup>74</sup>Kenneth S. Wherry cited in Hinton, "Plea to Congress," 3.

<sup>75</sup>James Reston, "Bewildered Congress Faces World Leadership Decision," *New York Times*, 14 March 1947, 2.

<sup>76</sup>William E. Jenner cited in Felix Belair, Jr., "Truman Plea for Mid-East Today Is Assured of Bipartisan Support," *New York Times*, 12 March 1947, 4.

<sup>77</sup>"PCA Denounces Truman," *New York Times*, 13 March 1947, 3.

<sup>78</sup>Harry F. Byrd cited in C.P. Trussell, "Congress Is Solemn: Prepares to Consider Bills After Hearing the President Gravely," *New York Times*, 13 March 1947, 4.

<sup>79</sup>Harry S. Truman, "Remarks at a Meeting With the American Society of Newspaper Editors, April 17, 1947," *Public Papers*, 208–209.

<sup>80</sup>Richard Freeland states the argument in its classic form when he notes: "On March 21, 1947, nine days after the Truman Doctrine speech, President Truman issued an executive order establishing a new program to rid the government of disloyal employees and protect it from future infiltration by subversive individuals. . . . On its face, the President's action seemed a fitting sequel to the Truman Doctrine speech, for it reinforced the idea, essential to that statement, that the global communist movement was at work and did constitute a present menace to American security." See Freeland, *The Truman Doctrine and the Origins of McCarthyism*, 115.

## OF THAT WHICH WE CANNOT WRITE: SOME NOTES ON THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF MEDIA

W. Lance Haynes

**C**ONSIDER FIRST what, without mirrors, we would know of our faces. Let us imagine here, not a particular point in antiquity, but simply a world empty of surfaces sufficiently reflective to permit us the study of our own likenesses. How would we conceive of ourselves in such a world?

The point is sufficiently slippery that we may devise strategies to avoid it, noting, for example, that someone else could draw our faces for us or describe us through comparisons to others. And so we might. But let us forbear from these strategies for a moment and mentally travel through our daily paces without a mental mirror image of our own appearances. We awaken, we dress, breakfast, travel to work, write, read, teach, and so on. We dine in the company of our significant others without knowing, so to speak, how we look to them. We stand and lecture to our students in the same way, with no sense of how they, or our colleagues, "see" us. This is an eerie idea, to say the least. We are faceless, ghosts in a world of acoustic space.

Such is the nature of mirrors that they inform us of our place in the world in a peculiarly concrete way; they objectify our physical being in a physical world, confirming it through infinite visual detail. No other sense permits a corresponding degree of resolution: touch, taste, smell, and even hearing lack the concreteness and the precision that vision affords. Without mirrors, we could not image our physical selves with any degree of clarity.

In the same way, writing is the mirror of the conscious mind and without it we would not imagine our mental internal selves with any more resolution than we could imagine our faces without the aid of mirrors. Of course, once we have seen our reflections—or learned to read and write—we are forever so informed and will evermore mentally construct our images or our paragraphs in the shadow of that experience. But without writing, we could not even, for instance, give meaning to our place in time, for there could be no calendars. Life might be quite pleasant without calendars, but, as creatures of a world where time is recorded, we will never know. This point is instructive in two ways: first, it suggests the profundity of the change in the nature of human consciousness brought about by change in the dominant media of communication. Second, it points the way toward understanding certain limitations inherent in literacy: the written word is to the mind what the reflection is to the body physical. Our visual image of the physical body is limited by the contents of its reflection and likewise our conceptualizations of mental processes are limited by that which may be formed in a literate universe. Indeed, there are pertinent things that cannot be so encompassed, yet which the study of rhetoric will find relevant: gaps and blind spots in our knowledge that should at least be filled with metaphor.

Consider the issue of assessment. Many of us have been concerned with the problem of assessing what we term communication competence. Everyone agrees

that this kind of competence cannot be adequately measured with pen and pencil instruments alone. Yet, the performing arts excepted, ours is one of the very few branches of scholarship that cannot be so assessed, and it is surprising that more is not made of the distinction: the others are rooted in literacy, specifically, in literate conceptualizations of the universe. We are unique in this sense, that here—and perhaps only here in the whole corpus of knowledge—are processes so necessarily worthy of study rooted in a preliterate form of conceiving.

In spite of its oral roots, the contemporary study of rhetoric is thoroughly dominated by the written word. By this I mean to bring up the point, not that the work of scholars is conducted through written media (though this fact may indeed contribute to the problem, it need not), but that the fundamental conceptualizations of rhetorical process are dominated by the thought patterns and belief systems of literate culture. It is the thesis of this essay that if we recognize and cope with literacy's restraints, then rhetoric can be seen more usefully as the study of how people alter each other's predispositions; further that such is a necessary step if we are to fully embrace the rhetorical implications of oral and video media.

Each of the three broad media categories—oral, literate, and video—can be seen to have its own distinct ways of altering predispositions, some of them quite apart from those conventionally associated with rhetoric in academe. The explosive growth of electronic media is radically altering the proportions in which humans mediate and demediate their communication. Much that was recently the exclusive domain of the printed word now belongs to the cathode ray tube, and technology shows no inclination to reverse the trend. As the media ratios shift, whatever bearing media have on rhetoric shifts with them, imparting a sense of, if not urgency, surely direction to our present endeavor.

Certainly there is a determinant relationship between language and thought; but our concern is likewise with a determinant relationship between media and thought. The media through which thoughts are expressed in a culture affect the nature of those thoughts. Because we know how to read and write (and therefore have a literate bias), the point inevitably remains somewhat obscure: if we did not, and if we were unaware of the existence of a process by which ideas could be recorded permanently in symbols on the pages of books, how would we think, what would we think, indeed, what would our lives be about? And what would it be like to speak with others? And what *could* it be like? Even more startling, imagine a world devoid of writing where, somehow, video technology is widespread. What would the programming be about? And again, what *could* it be?

History lends much to understanding the relationship of rhetoric to media. The many millenia of *homo loquens* that preceded the seven or so of *homo scriptor* have left us an interesting collection of artifacts and a very few "primitive" communities from which the nature of oral cultures, of orality and of its rhetoric, can be observed and contrasted with its literate and electronic descendents. Indeed, some vestiges of orality can be readily observed in contemporary rhetoric as well, both on the screen and in face-to-face communication. Although Walter Ong points out that writing has left its indelible imprint on our consciousness and we are what we are, rhetoric today is a synthesis of oral, literate, and video qualities.<sup>1</sup> We should no more expect to understand orality or video exclusively through literacy than we might hope to study sound or touch with only a mirror.

In this essay, we attempt to locate literacy's bounds, at least in terms of rhetorical

studies, and to look beyond them at the nature of nonwritten rhetoric: of people's efforts to alter each other's predispositions through processes neither generated by nor dependent upon the written word. First, it is germane to consider several perspectives on the evolution of media in the history of human consciousness. From there, we explore the distinction between orality and literacy and its relationship to video; critical examples of oral and video rhetoric are then presented that suggest a basic taxonomy for further research.

### MEDIA EVOLUTION

Perhaps the most substantial statement on the role of media, Harold Innis's magnum opus, *Empire and Communications*, sets out the premise that the very rise and fall of civilizations is a function of their dominant communication media. Innis divides the history of the West into writing and printing periods, and stresses differences between media that emphasize time (heavy, durable media like clay and stone) and those that stress space (for example, paper). Emphasis on space accompanies stress on political organization—rapid dissemination to far-flung colonies, for example—while permanence reflects religious organization: "Introduction of a second medium tends to check the bias of the first and to create conditions suited to the growth of empire." Innis concludes with references to the growth of the socialized state and the use of force in the twentieth century as results of the radio-newspaper competition.<sup>2</sup>

Marshall McLuhan writes in the context of Innis's mentorship, "The 'message' of any medium or technology is the change of scale or pace or pattern that it introduces into human affairs." Carrying Innis's thought deep into the electronic age, McLuhan sees the new media as literal extensions of the human nervous system and predicts that humankind is rapidly reaching a final phase in the "extensions of man—the technological simulation of consciousness when the creative process of knowing will be collectively and corporately extended to the whole of human society."<sup>3</sup>

The relationship of media and consciousness in McLuhan's scheme is suggested in his description of the contemporary world as an "age of anxiety for the reason of the electronic implosion that compels commitment and participation, quite regardless of any point of view. Every culture and every age has its favorite model of perception and knowledge that it is inclined to prescribe for everybody and everything."<sup>4</sup>

Similarly, the recognition that ontological assumptions must change with cultural values prompted Halloran to caution that "one cannot simply graft modern rhetorical or communication theory onto Classical rhetoric"<sup>5</sup> and led D'Angelo to develop an evolutionary perspective on rhetorical composition.<sup>6</sup> D'Angelo unites the ideas of Teilhard and Neuman to draw parallels between the evolution of human and societal consciousness and the composition process.<sup>7</sup>

Evolution involves a process of extreme differentiation by which the universe is moving from the state of homogeneity to one of specialization. Neumann has argued that to trace the progression of archetypal myth is to trace the evolution of human consciousness. The pattern Neumann suggests begins with the creation myth: the myth of original unity in which the ego is still submerged in the unconscious. Then follows the myth of the hero: the hero is born and consciousness develops. Finally comes the transformation myth, in D'Angelo's words, "the stage of the reflecting,

self-conscious ego, the return to original unity in which the whole and its parts are synthesized into a unified system."<sup>8</sup>

Teilhard sees the transformation stage on the horizon of contemporary society: "We must recognize the rapidly increasing probability that we are approaching a critical point of maturity at which man is completely reflecting upon himself not only individually but collectively," and "the more intensely mankind becomes organized and technologically centered upon itself, the more does its upward impulse (its passion for discovery, for knowledge, and creation) tend to predominate over its elementary need to establish itself and survive."<sup>9</sup>

Here then is a general, emerging thesis that Western civilization is now undergoing a third major alteration in consciousness tied directly to the advent of electronic media, the previous two having been differentiated by the introduction of writing. For present purposes, this thesis has been explored most cogently in the work of Walter J. Ong, S.J. Father Ong's essays trace the evolution of rhetoric from its oral epic beginnings in a state of culture he labels Primary Orality to the recent state of High Literacy and beyond. Ong believes we are now entering a time of Secondary Orality, when the linear thought modes of High Literacy are being countered by an instantaneous kind of experiential communication that in many ways resembles the preliterate mode of Homeric Greece but that inevitably retains much literate process as well.<sup>10</sup>

The single most profound change literacy brought to civilization was probably the separation of knowledge from its knowers. Messages as a facet of human consciousness went from instantly experienced, additive, existential phenomena to unfolding, recordable, reviewable propositions. Only as this change occurred did it become possible to dissect critically the validity of the message *qua* message, to decide whether the symbolic chain of experience displayed should be accepted or rejected. Similarly, knowledge could now be written and stored. Whereas form and style in oral culture were governed by the necessity of memorability, literacy directed linguistic priority to clarity and precision, making abstraction not simply possible but vital to the resulting intellectual milieu.

A key question then becomes: was there rhetoric before literacy? Certainly there are many among us who will answer in the negative. As humanists, we are given to valuing choice highly and to seeing rhetoric as the means to enlightened humane choices. And just as it is difficult to admit the cacophonous abbreviated kitsch of television—especially television advertising—into rhetoric's domain, it is difficult to see a role for enlightened choice in the preliterate world we are about to examine. Yet we will argue that the processes by which predispositions are altered, both those of orality and, later, of video, although radically different, do belong to the same sphere of humanity as the rhetorical processes of literacy, and likewise demand our attention.

While, in the Primary Oral world, rhetoric functioned through the transmission of culture—people were predisposed to cooperate through the shared application of a communal encyclopedia of myth and lore—it was only a few centuries before Aristotle was able to observe three distinctly propositional functions: determining what is just, what is expedient, and what is praiseworthy.<sup>11</sup> The end of rhetoric, that is, altering people's predispositions, remains unaltered, yet the means change, pointing back to the shift in consciousness from phenomenal and additive to propositional and critical. Whereas in oral culture each new message added to the

individual's store of cultural knowledge in a shifting and consensual fashion, literate culture turned the human mind into an evaluative repository that needs to access only what is deemed valid and useful in accordance with the belief system of the evaluator.

Enter video. In an Age of Secondary Orality, we see humankind returning to a dominant mode of communication that is fundamentally oral-aural, where relationships among messages are determined not by senders who permanently anchor their words with ink, but by audiences who tie incoming information to the fluxing domain of their own stored experiences. It is amid this three-stage background that we proceed. Smack in the middle of a literate world, let us look back beyond its limits to try and grasp the essence of orality, to study how writing may enhance and how it may hinder that essence; likewise forward to speculate on video media and how and where the conceptual frameworks of the literate mind may confine or liberate their potential.

### *Primary Orality*

Before the parturition of written knowledge, in the time when knowledge could be only what was passed on by speech and retained by the collective memories of the community, we may understand that individual human consciousness was a significantly less assertive aspect of existence than it is for us. Because this relationship of speech, knowledge, and consciousness is the root from which our essay now grows, it is worthwhile to consider Havelock's description of the Homeric and post-Homeric Greek educational experience:

He is required as a civilized being to become acquainted with the history, the social organization, the technical competence, and the oral imperatives of his group. This group will in post-Homeric times be his city, but his city in turn is able to function only as a fragment of the total Hellenic world. It shares a consciousness in which he is keenly aware that he, as a Hellene, partakes. This overall body of experience (we shall avoid the word 'knowledge') is incorporated into a rhythmic narrative or set of narratives which he memorises and which is subject to recall in his memory. Such is poetic tradition, essentially something he accepts uncritically, or else it fails to survive in living memory. Its acceptance and retention are made psychologically possible by a mechanism of self-surrender to the poetic performance, and of self-identification with the situations and the stories related in the performance. Only when the spell is fully effective can his mnemonic powers be fully mobilised. His receptivity to the tradition has thus, from the standpoint of inner psychology, a degree of automatism which however is counterbalanced by a direct and unfettered capacity for action, in accordance with the paradigms he has absorbed.<sup>12</sup>

Several points stand out. First, the consciousness is one shared by all members of the social world. From a communication standpoint, shared consciousness—which is to say a shared frame of reference or aggregate of experiential associations for assigning meaning to events—on a national scale is an extraordinary phenomenon. It bespeaks a greatly enhanced ability to communicate without misunderstanding and, lacking misunderstanding, a greatly diminished opportunity for the development of a mature self-concept. Contrast this with the modern world where people are daily confronted with evidence of differences among ourselves: whenever we find that our views, our opinions and perspectives—the meanings we assign to events—differ from those of others, our concept of self waxes stronger. Oral cultures would seem to

possess an environment where the communicative self is far more diffused through the fabric of society.

This notion of a diffused identity is further reinforced by the poetic tradition, which Havelock tells us involved uncritical acceptance through self-surrender to the poetic performance and self-identification with the situations and stories related to the performance. Compare Ong's description of a young black man from a highly oral ghetto culture attending a college composition class:

He was very attentive, trying hard. But he had no textbook with him and it was immediately apparent that he did not feel at all disadvantaged by this fact—even though the class was engaged in an analytic discussion of a text. . . . The student didn't even try to look at the textbooks of any of the other students near him. But he was clearly earnest, trying. Trying what? To be "with it." . . . In a Primary Oral culture, education consists in identification, participation, getting into the act, feeling affinity with a culture's heroes, getting "with it"—not in analysis at all.<sup>13</sup>

Consider also the uncritical acceptance, surrender, and identification in tribal cultures where justice is administered according to proverb: the judge-chief, after listening to all parties concerned, retires and then returns to cite one or more sayings or proverbs that support his verdict. A more familiar example is the way children in our own culture sometimes settle disputes by quoting their own proverbs. "Turn-about is fair play," one child tells another in order to take a turn by the window on a long automobile trip.<sup>14</sup> In each of these cases, the correct course of action is embedded in the situation and perceived as part of the phenomenon itself rather than deduced propositionally.

We may infer, then, that the oral world is highly subjective. Only a hazy distinction exists between opinions and facts for both exist indiscriminately. Only a blur separates word and deed as well. The knower knows with his whole being, indeed makes no distinction between himself and his knowledge.<sup>15</sup> Put another way, "In a society where the only known word is the pure, evanescent spoken word it is easier to think of objects as words than it is to think of words as objects."<sup>16</sup>

Ong pulls together work as diverse as that of psychologist Luria and anthropologist Levi-Strauss to list "some psychodynamics of orality."<sup>17</sup> Luria's work is especially revealing in its copious presentation of fragments from interviews with illiterate and barely literate collective farm workers to illustrate how cognitive processes (perception, generalization, deduction, reasoning, imagination, and self-analysis) change with social conditions and mastery of knowledge. More recently, Robert Shuter's excellent study of the Hmong, a Laotian tribe who, at least until the last few years, still possessed an oral culture, exemplifies many of these same oral psychodynamics.<sup>18</sup>

Altogether, Ong identifies at least nine distinct aspects of traditional orality.<sup>19</sup> Let us consider each in turn. Thought and expression in oral cultures are:

(1) Additive rather than subordinative, stringing ideas together without regard to their internal relations—in contrast, writing, which lacks existential context, develops elaborate grammars to clarify meaning.

(2) Aggregative, rather than analytic, using elements that are "not so much simple integers but clusters of integers," epithets, clichés, and the like, that are more friendly to memory: the sturdy oak, the brave soldier, "the Glorious Revolution of October 26," exist as single elements in the oral mind.

(3) Redundant: where writing establishes a line of thought to be referred back to, speech cannot, thus must repeat.

(4) Conservative/traditionalist, honoring elders for their memories (what they know) rather than innovative and speculative as minds freed from memory tasks by writing tend to be.

(5) Close to the human lifeworld: the idea of an abstract, neutral list or a technical manual would be totally alien to the oral mind which conceives of everything in concrete terms of human activity.

(6) Situational rather than abstract: in keeping with the subjectivizing, totalizing idea, new situations are always interpreted in their existential context rather than in terms of abstract concepts.

Though we should bear in mind that Luria's work was done among illiterates on the fringe of a literate world (Uzbekistan and Kirghizia, USSR, during 1931-1932), his findings are revealing. Among them: oral subjects identified geometric shapes only with reference to concrete objects, for instance, a circle is a plate or a moon. When presented with pictures of four familiar objects, three of one category, one of another, they saw the group in situational rather than categorical terms: pictures of a hammer, a saw, a log, and a hatchet produced responses like: "They're all alike. The saw will saw the log and the hatchet will chop it into small pieces. If one of these has to go, I'd throw out the hatchet. It doesn't do as good a job as a saw." Finally, concrete definitions were virtually impossible: when Luria asked one subject to explain what a tree is, the responses were "Why should I? Everyone knows what a tree is," "There are trees everywhere . . . so what's the point of my explaining?" and, finally, a description of how trees are grown.<sup>20</sup>

(7) Agonistically toned: *agon*, the contest or struggle of human being, is centrally featured in thought and expression because it is so central to human existence and cannot, without benefit of writing, be separated from the lifeworld in the same sense that knower and knowledge cannot be.<sup>21</sup>

(8) Homeostatic: maintaining perpetual balance among existential events, knowledge, and language. Ong cites studies by Goody and Watt noting that oral thought and expression retain perpetual balance by "sloughing off" memories which are no longer useful.<sup>22</sup> Genealogical records maintained through memory for legal purposes among oral African tribes were found to have changed radically when compared to British written records forty years later, changed to accommodate changes in social relationships.

(9) Empathic and participatory: being disengaged from words spoken, as with other existential events, is impossible. We return to the black student in college composition class "getting with it."

Spoken words are alive and powerful, as Ong illustrates elsewhere: "A primitive hunter can see a buffalo, touch a buffalo, smell a buffalo, and taste a buffalo when the buffalo is completely inert, and in fact dead. But if he hears a buffalo, he had better watch out, something is going on."<sup>23</sup> There is, in a sense, a kind of existential magic associated with sound in that it is the primary bond among the oral community.

The importance of community should not be underestimated as a factor in orality. Shuter provides the following statement one of his subjects offered to explain how the Among pass on important cultural beliefs:

Normally, when the person who knows most of the things in the community, most of the cultural things, when they realize that the man is old, people will go to his house at night

and ask him to teach them. As many people that can will go to the house and learn, but they know that a lot of people can go and learn but a few can remember, so maybe 10 or 20 will go to an elderly's house and learn at night, but probably two or three remember.<sup>24</sup>

The oral mind learns communally and it recalls communally: "When you and I learn together, you may remember one thing and I remember one thing; we share and discuss. In case I forget something, I ask you—you may remember what I forgot. I may remember what you forgot."<sup>25</sup>

Ong summarizes qualities built into oral rhetoric, mnemonic patterns shaped for recall: (1) rhythm; (2) balance; (3) repetition and antithesis; (4) alliteration and assonance; (5) the use of epithets and formulas; (6) standard thematic settings; and (7) the incessant use of proverbs.<sup>26</sup> In this same vein, Havelock describes the oral performance as a totally absorbing phenomenon. This sort of Mimesis, as he terms it, involves both participation, that is, experiencing the narrative as one of its characters, and participation in the performance as a performance.<sup>27</sup>

Mimesis in Ancient Greece tended to include musical accompaniment, often with dance, and always with strong rhythmic dimensions. One might reflect on the soldier's experience of marching in parade to martial music or the sophomore's leap to the dance floor beset with "Saturday night fever" to gain some glimmer of the mimetic experience. Further, we should not disregard the dynamic of audience participation, the kind of energy that results from the interactive power of an audience responding: Saturday night fever symptoms explode exponentially among a like-minded group of friends.

Havelock also points out that the automatistic dimensions of Greek personality were counterbalanced "by a direct and unfettered capacity for action."<sup>28</sup> Encountering the enemy in a narrow mountain pass, the Greek soldier, rather than pausing to calculate the odds, could simply frame the situations in terms of the response of Achilles or Agamemnon. How paltry seem our vague gentlemen's codes and Better Business Bureau ethics, mitigated by rationales of profit and patriotism, in comparison.

And what then may we say of rhetoric in the Age of Orality? Cooperation was induced; communities were predisposed to act in concert. Without writing, common assent was achieved through a celebratory sharing of cultural mythos: the transmission of culture itself through a highly participatory subjective rhetorical process among a society whose group consciousness far outweighed any strains of individualism. The poet, elder, or rhetor was also an educator, indeed, the educator, who passed on the cultural heritage from polis to village and from generation to generation. This reminds us, of course, that as educators today we remain rhetors cloaked in the ivy of our institutions and the printed texts of our own diverse cultural mythologies.

### *The Intervention of Literacy*

Noting that the oral mind knows through an "empathic identification of knower and known, in which the object of knowledge and the total being of the knower enter into a kind of fusion," Walter Ong captures the impact of writing on the individual member of a culture: "The separation of knower and known makes possible both art (*techné*) in the ancient Greek sense of detached abstract analysis of human procedures, and science, or detached abstract analysis of the cosmos, but it does so at

the price of splitting up the original unity of consciousness and in this sense alienating man from himself and his original lifeworld.<sup>29</sup>

The introduction of writing, in giving rise to science and art, also bestowed the potential for creating an apparently objective reality: the potential for recording, more or less permanently, statements that assert "this is the way the world is," quite apart from the person who apprehends that world.<sup>30</sup> In the *Phaedrus*, Socrates relates the story of Thamus and Theuth: Thamus, King of Egypt, tells the god Theuth that, thanks to writing, "your pupils will be widely read without benefit of a teacher's instruction. In consequence, they'll entertain the delusion that they have wide knowledge while they are, for the most part, incapable of real judgment." Socrates goes on to tell Phaedrus that "then any man who imagines that he has bequeathed an art to posterity because he puts his views in writing and also anyone who inherits such an 'art' in the belief that any subject will be clear or certain because it is couched in writing—such men will be utterly simple-minded."<sup>31</sup> All too often, this passage is dismissed as an old conservative's prattling against innovation, yet in the present sense its deep insight is apparent.

Writing in another context, Edwin Black has characterized this cultural change as the "democratization of philosophy. . . . While in ages past men living in the tribal warmth of the *polis* had the essential nature of the world determined for them in their communal heritage of mythopoesis, and they were then able to assess the probity of utterance by reference to its memetic relationship to the stable reality that undergirded their consciousness, there is now but the rending of change and the clamor of competing fictions."<sup>32</sup>

Unwittingly, it is indeed with the competition of fictions that Aristotelian rhetoric concerns itself. The functions of deliberation—of the just, the prudent, and the praiseworthy—imply an objective world about which people can know without regard for the lack of any ultimate criteria for truth. What is more, Ong points out how it is that the growth of writing leads to increased structure by arguing that the alphabet imposes an overwhelming sense of order and control. "Arrangement in space seemingly provides maximal symbols of order and control, probably because the concepts of order and control are themselves kinesthetically and visually grounded, formed chiefly out of sensory experience involved with space. . . . It appears no accident that formal logic was invented in an alphabetic culture."<sup>33</sup>

Writing seems to carry with it implicitly the assumption of an objective world to which it corresponds. When seen in light of its oral precedent, the rise of the autonomous self can be understood of a relative piece: an objective world materializes, charted on paper apart from its apprehenders, on whom, incidentally, objective being is also bestowed. Self-concept, that bundle of beliefs the literate human being makes up to describe his or her individual nature, appears in the light of orality to be a relatively recent innovation.

Cathcart and Gumpert argue that electronic media are bringing about a major change in the nature of self-concept, contending that "not only are the media substantively altering the relationships among individuals, but that the formulation of the individual's *self-image* is, in large part, media dependent."<sup>34</sup> Their position is rooted in Mead's symbolic interactionism, which argues that the self-image evolves through the experiences of daily life in three stages reminiscent of those argued by Neumann for the evolution of society.<sup>35</sup>

Mead saw the development of a mature concept resting on recognition first that the

experiences of other people differ from one's own, and then on learning, through interacting with others, a variety of roles that inform the process of constructing one's own self.<sup>36</sup> In an oral world, it would be the communal encyclopedia that defined, among other things, the entire catalog of roles from which the self could be constructed. Moreover, without writing, such a self could only be hazily defined at all. Indeed, given the overwhelmingly communal nature of orality, one's self would be a most unimposing aspect of consciousness.

Thus, we should not be surprised to find that Luria's oral subjects could not be articulate about their selves. Ong notes that "Self-analysis requires a certain demolition of situational thinking. It calls for isolation of the self, around which the entire lived world swirls for each individual person, removal of the center of every situation from that situation enough to allow the center, the self, to be examined and described."<sup>37</sup> Questions Luria asked his subjects about themselves ("What sort of person are you? What's your character like? What are your shortcomings?") were usually answered through external reference: "I have few clothes," or "I don't like to deal with clergymen." Asked if he thought all people were the same, a fifty-five-year-old illiterate replied, "No, they're not the same. There are different ones [holds up fingers]: here's a landowner, here's a farmhand."<sup>38</sup>

The case, then, for a generative relationship between literacy and self-concept can be summarized as follows: Literacy brings with it the appearance of an objective world. If there appears to be an objective world, then individual people obviously appear located in it. Because these individuals are observed to behave in relationship to other objects, and because writing, in giving rise to science and art, flushes out the need to explain, among other phenomena, human behavior, the creation of a tightly packaged self-concept, as we now conceive of it, is inevitable. Once there were seen to be selves behaving toward the objectified world, and once these selves began to account for their own behavior, the evolution of a complex system of beliefs about one's own self—the establishment of a category of experience labelled "me" by each human being and informed by contrasting one's own life experience with others—was a foregone outcome. Indeed, it seems inevitable that the self-concept would become a sort of governing agent, a set of rules about future behavior based on past experience, and that these rules and a corresponding drive for self-consistency are thus artifacts of the sort of order writing imposed on the world, natural results of the new consciousness engendered by writing. The objectification of self, incidentally, brings with it the objectification of audiences and speakers apart from speeches.

We come back now, however, to the notion advanced at the outset, that writing and consciousness as we know it mirror each other. Although we may note that oral processes appear to do the same thing, they do so only to members of the literate world. Thus humankind has come to the twentieth century as beings who perceive and evaluate and respond to experience not as joint participants in the unfolding drama of a collective mythopoetic adventure but as individual self-determining organisms who personalize (rather than mythologize) each event as it occurs. The literate person's experience is given meaning not by phenomenal comparison to a collective social encyclopedia but by critical reference to a realm of individual experience the central governing feature of which is the self-concept. "The doctrine of the autonomous psyche," wrote Havelock, "is the counterpart of the rejection of the oral culture."<sup>39</sup>

*Video as Synthesis*

Electronic communication is a synthesis, in both the mediated qualities of its messages and in the dialectical sense, of our oral and written heritage. However, the oral-aural primacy of electronic message systems, augmented by visual delivery that is, like sound, ephemeral, is nonetheless at the present time subordinate to literate conceptualizations of communication process. Further, audiences are now thoroughly schooled in written ways of thought and, as Ong points out, "abandoning the artificial securities of typography has proved too traumatic for most, particularly for the semieducated, who cling to the fixity of typographic space as a substitute for the living presence of truth."<sup>40</sup> The transition will continue, of course, with little regard for the diminishing ability of some to cope.

We can expect the written word *per se* to lose its primacy as the transmitter of knowledge in an electronic world, but given its legacy in science and technology—to say nothing of the humanities—the issue of transmission may seem dim. What is significant to our present purpose, however, is that video is becoming widely accessible, promising to provide ordinary users with an electronic counterpart to the metrical malleability of the oral poet's couplet: chunks of electronic experience that have neither the indefiniteness of oral-aurality nor the spatiotemporal permanence of print; electronic transmission neither requires the immediate presence of a live audience nor faces the unpredictability of casual readership. Instead, we now have the ability to extend and compress both time and space to match the needs of massive and statistically predictable electronic audiences. McLuhan suggests that our senses have been extended so we live more and more in a global village where knowledge is cumulative instead of competitive and the primary mode of communication is once more becoming highly participatory.<sup>41</sup>

Paralleling these changes, we note how the notion of knowledge or truth has moved from subjective to objective to intersubjective; Brummett observes that truth, once frozen by print, has become unfixed. "What are given to us as truths can change and do change from one week, show, or channel to the next. And the variety of points of view that the media acquaint us with increases the realization that there are many ways of knowing. . . . The sheer amount of knowledge, of conflicting truth, the increase in access to information, creates an awareness of knowledge as mutable and many faceted."<sup>42</sup>

Where print leads to the isolation of the individual self, Brummett notes that electronic media facilitate awareness of others and mutual participation in others' lives. He cites McLuhan: "The immediate prospect for literate, fragmented Western man encountering the electronic implosion within his own culture is his steady and rapid transformation into a complex and depth structured person emotionally aware of his total interdependence with the rest of human society."<sup>43</sup>

And what is becoming of rhetoric in this new age? Whereas events, including the transmission of messages, have a sort of coequal status in the existential subjective world of orality, literacy dissects communication content into a plethora of component parts, separates speakers from speeches, authors from texts, and audiences from both with scientific dispassion. The alteration of predispositions is now often viewed as a function separate from entertainment or information. Moreover, at least one contemporary school of video studies has added such categories as companionship

and sexual gratification to the list of uses or functions of the new media.<sup>44</sup> In the oral world, all these other functions were side effects, subsets of the cultural transmission process. Literacy provoked the temporary and artificial dissection of cultural perpetuation, producing countless imitations and revisions through paradigmatic evolution, through dialectic, even through the popular press. Print has amplified exponentially the separation of man from lifeworld by shredding communal knowledge into so much confetti. In oral cultures, entertainment, companionship, even vicarious sexual gratification, were by-products of the rhetorical process. And in our literate world the modern encyclopedia, vast though it is, remains a digest of our culture while academe has become the guild of its minstrels.

In the primary oral world, behavior was rhetorically influenced through the guidance of the culture's epic lore, but note that, apropos Ong's list of orality characteristics, such lore was situational, concrete, close to the lifeworld. Anything not practically useful was sloughed off. Thus incoming events could simply be framed against a finite collection of practical situations; responses followed in accordance with the appropriate communal teaching. Certainly, this framing process occasionally provoked controversy; as Ong reminds us, "the African chieftain sitting in judgment had better give voice to the proper proverbs or sayings. Otherwise he is in deep trouble."<sup>45</sup> But the point here is that this framing process is the only opening in primary oral rhetoric and that the alternatives, that is, the possible maxims, stories, and so on from which to choose are decidedly finite in number. In contrast, lists of *topoi* in the boomdays of High Literacy had dozens of possible lines of argument, to say nothing of the variations each *topos* would find in the circumstances of any particular issue, nor of the seemingly infinite possibilities that combinations of arguments offer the classical propositional rhetor.<sup>46</sup>

The matching process in oral rhetoric borders on having a phenomenal rather than a propositional character. A situation appears. The situation is grasped in its evident entirety and framed within the mythopoetic store. All events, the speech of others included, are afforded similar validity. Disagreement about the meaning—framing—of events is limited by the finite communal store; if it persists, disagreement can be readily settled by the elders. In contrast, rhetorical process among literates is a tenuous business. Aristotle assigned to his audiences a preeminent ability to reason—the same ability attributed, in writing, of course, to Plato's Socrates, who was doubtless quite literate himself. Although Aristotle assigned some importance to emotional and ethical pressures, the emphasis in his rhetoric stresses the deliberative nature of rhetorical action: the construction and testing of propositions.<sup>47</sup>

Putting aside for the moment whether or not the humane tradition of rhetoric should extend beyond reasoned deliberation, let us postulate a scale of rhetorical process that ranges from purely nonconscious framing to purely reasoned deliberation: from phenomenal to propositional rhetoric; let us consider this scale and then weigh video upon it. Regardless of media, communication involves the assignment of meaning to behavior, which is to say treats behavior as symbolic. Senders behave, receivers observe behavior and assign meaning to it. The meanings assigned are based, as I.A. Richards has shown, on the store of previous experience the sender and receiver have had, together or independently, with similar observations.<sup>48</sup> Herein is the root of misunderstanding: our individual experiences with particular events often differ significantly.

In an oral culture where a communal encyclopedia was so fully shared by so many, misunderstanding was far less likely than in a written world where symbolic experience is as diverse as our reading habits. Richard's point is that all experience individuals have with a given symbol affects in some measure their predispositions to respond to it. Further, Adams and Jordan argue that the metaphor "Smith is a lion" affects our notion of lions as well as our beliefs about Smith.<sup>49</sup> Of course, our experience with Smith, assuming that we are not reading from a list of lions, will be affected more strongly. This effect, a change in our predispositions resulting not from deliberation but from experience, is the effect of phenomenal rhetoric.

In contrast, propositional rhetoric, so characteristic of a culture that separates knowledge and knower, involves the painstaking construction of proofs intended for sequential critical digestion. From the phenomenal standpoint, the process must appear like gothic architecture, leading the audience through cognitive labor to construct cathedrals of definitional precision, decorated with pathos and ethos, and cemented with the mortar of linear logic. The oral subjects seemed to operate without formal deduction, which they found uninteresting, unrelated to the practical world, yet from a literate perspective, anything else tends to seem obtuse or trivial.

We might say that where propositional rhetoric addresses the figures of human affairs, phenomenal rhetoric addresses their ground. Phenomenal rhetoric operates by simulating experience, directly altering our predispositions to respond to events—to assign meaning—in particular intentional ways; in other words, by altering the store from which we draw our meanings. In oral cultures, the content of phenomenal rhetoric is that evolving store of mythopoetic experience shared by all. As the store evolves, it infuses events with meaning that is seen collectively as the continuing mythic drama of the cultural community and that generates a high degree of predictably cooperative behavior. We are all acquainted with this state of civilization, at least as the stereotypical childlike world of Levi-Strauss's totalizing savages and Margaret Mead's innocent Samoans. But in Western civilization at the present time, we are more and more overwhelmed by a new phenomenal rhetoric. Indeed, television's greatest rhetorical strength is its ability to simulate experience—video operates not unlike the folk minstrel's performance in the village square, inducing subscription to a shared encyclopedia by a mass, and still growing, community of people who possess, not only a literate sense of individuality, but an electronic sense of self-within-community as well. Granted that television rhetoric, even in its commercials, contains much that is propositional, for ours is still primarily a written culture with a penchant to respond reasonably to reasoned argument and a fond belief that such is the exclusive nature of our vulnerability to persuasion. Yet is it not the case that the greater potential of television as a suasive medium lies, like the oral poet's psychomimesis, in the realm of simulated experience?

### NONLITERATE RHETORIC

Our quest so far has been to gain some understanding of nonliterate rhetorical process as a function of media dominance, the issue Dance refers to as equipotentiality and Harper calls operationalization.<sup>50</sup> We have pointed out that nonliterate processes, once largely subsumed by literate propositional rhetoric, may grow in importance as video media ascend to dominance. Let us now examine two pieces of contemporary rhetoric, one speech, the other video, where we might expect to find

nonliterate process at work. Taken another way, our task is now to inquire, from our (literate) vantage point, what are the limits of literacy as a mode of investigation? When do the lenses of analytical thought, recordable knowledge, and objectivity now exceed their fields of focus, and beyond those limits, with what lenses may we try to replace them?

Kevin is now a senior, majoring in electrical engineering. He is a shade under six feet tall, exceptionally well-proportioned, with a round face and closely cropped hair. He is a moderately conservative person, even among the highly competent group of black students our technical institution attracts. He is soft-spoken, with a confident and friendly air. His perpetual smile flashes brightly, bestowing a sense of well-being and joy on all who receive it. I have seen him use this smile to deliberately warm cold hearts and with equal care to tan red necks.

The semester Kevin last studied under my direction was also his final season as a football player—after a career that began when he was nine and culminated just recently, some 114 games later, when he captained our college team through its last game of the season. No doubt this achievement contributed some to his ethos among the student body, yet football is not a major part of campus life here, and I doubt that one student in twenty asked at random could name our quarterback or our captain, unless they knew them in some other context.

Outside the classroom and football, it would be through the campus religious community that one might know Kevin. I'm certain he will take no offense if I describe him as an evangelical Christian, nor if I hasten to add that he is not a crusader nor a self-professed born-again nor any of those other labels of zealotry by which campus religious activists are given to proclaiming themselves. But as I understand him, Kevin, as a mature and reasonable person, has a deep faith in the teachings of the Holy Bible as he interprets it, and similarly, believes through faith that his relationship with Jesus Christ guides his life rightly. I use the term evangelical because there is a link between his warm personable charm and his faith: he would say that he knows some extraordinarily good news and he loves to share it; and he consistently gives the impression that he is a person with good news to share. From the beginning of our studies, Kevin's aim has been clear: to improve his ability to share the good news, to induce others to experience Christianity as he does.

Four times I have been in an audience to which Kevin spoke, or, perhaps I should say, four audiences to which he gave the same speech. This is because, although there would be major differences among the written texts—had there been written texts: there were not—I have discussed each event often with him, before and after, and we were always discussing the same speech. It is a speech I suspect Kevin would love to give a hundred more times, travelling from classroom to classroom and town to town. Each time, the text changes to meet the demands of the situation and the audience; each time, he does things differently. Each time, in my judgment, the speech improves.

We refer to it as the yardstick speech, after a metaphor he coined early on: "Christ is my yardstick." The underlying theme grew out of conversations among Kevin, myself, and several students from my interpersonal communication class where one of the major issues is understanding how the ego limits one's effectiveness. I advocate no general prescription for coping but I do help students to study their own behavior and find their own personal techniques. A sense of Jesus' presence, professes Kevin,

helps him to measure his ego's effects without distortion, thus the reference to yardsticks.

Twice when Kevin spoke, it was before a classroom audience; once he was on a ladder in my back yard surrounded by forty or so interpersonal communication students and their friends. When he begins the speech, he reminds me of something I read once about the president of an African nation spending several minutes in low, deep laughter with his audience before he ever says a word. Kevin doesn't laugh, but he does begin softly, smiling, rolling and rumbling his words out, grabbing the members of the audience one and two at a time with his eyes and stroking them with his voice. He speaks of experience they all have in common: of the pressures of their technical curricula, of campus social life, and of their common values: grades, success, good jobs, romance. Occasionally, he initiates a one-to-one interchange with someone he knows by referring to some event they've both attended or some experience they've shared; similarly, if he senses people remaining aloof from him, he asks their names and places them hypothetically in his next anecdote or illustration. This courting of the audience continues until all hands are won, at least a good five minutes.

Eventually, Kevin introduces the idea of ego, drawing it out of a concrete anecdote composed as he goes from the threads spun while he courted. He talks about ordering pizzas and going to the library to study, and people making and accepting and rejecting each other's ideas and suggestions, and describes realistic campus life scenarios that the audience can readily identify with. And after several minutes of this, Kevin strings the anecdotes together to depict a major stressful interpersonal situation; he describes the symptoms of stress in terms that the audience can feel. In effect, he simulates interpersonal stress, leading the audience to actually experience its symptoms and dwelling on their depiction until he senses a level of tension he considers sufficient.

Then he takes a few minutes to reflect on the experience he has created by repeating it step by step. First, he backs the audience out of its tension—soothes them again with his voice and his energy—so they can briefly glimpse their egos' strangleholds as they pass in and out of stress. He feels a collective sigh of relief, then depicts still another stressful situation, tightening the bond again and then asking them if they cannot let go by themselves. He introduces the slightest antagonism, softly, just hinting that he can relieve his own symptoms (while they cannot), then quickly confesses what a struggle it is for him, and how often he fails. He tells anecdotes from the football field, bemoaning how his own ego has time and time again limited his effectiveness and even lost the game. He is as weak as the weakest member of the audience, he tells them.

Intellectually, he remains one of them, yet emotionally he is special; he is the inducer of their experience with credibility extending far beyond the bounds of reason. Kevin has shown that he understands the audience's inner world and, without saying so, that he can alter it.

The audience is his. They want to know his secret. Even though he has not openly admitted that he has a secret, the prospect is implied and drives their curiosity. It is just as if the converted at a revival have been promised the key to eternal life: they listen as though the hereafter hangs in the balance.

Kevin wants the audience to regain briefly the concept of deity they had when they were small. He describes promises he made and broke as a child and the guilt and

fear he felt. He lost his new jacket and, rather than face his mother, begged God to help him find it, promising eternal faith in return. He wanted to win a swimming race, and swore everlasting devotion in exchange for the victory. He wanted to be invited to a party, was chased by the neighborhood bullies, was blamed for older boys' mischief. He leads the audience to recall their own juvenile fears and superstitions. And they do.

Kevin is careful, in his wording, to avoid what we might call evangelical clichés. Probably the most impressive thing he has learned in his studies is that the relationship between speaker and audience—their feelings for each other—is such a major component of rhetorical success. He has come to see his speech as a bonding agent to bring those around him into his sphere (or exclude them); he embeds his intentions in the bonding process so that cooperation is a by-product and establishing his role as speaker is paramount. He has become sensitive enough to audience feedback that very slight negative responses earmark gratuitous risks and thus rule out risky behaviors, verbal and otherwise; and he has noticed that, when he refers to his "personal relationship with Jesus Christ" or "letting Jesus into his life" outside his own church circles, bonds sometimes dissolve rapidly.

But with the audience aroused by reminders of their own periodically irrational behavior and anxious to learn of its remedy, Kevin evokes a frame of mind that can intuitively grasp the meaning of his own prescription. With scarcely a hint of missionary purpose, he brings the audience to reconsider religion's role in their lives.

"You couldn't lie to that god you made those promises to, whether it was the Christian god or Jewish, or Moslem, or Buddhist or whatever, and that's the way I am now. I can't lie to Jesus."

On the surface, Kevin's point concerns a technique for seeing through one's own rationalizations. On a deeper level, he simulates a spiritual experience in a very practical way. Awakening almost no resistance among the audience, Kevin actually gives his auditors experience with the metaphor of letting Jesus into one's life. He resists the temptation to unpack or analyze it, believing that his intentions will be far better met by leaving that task undone. It is the oral experience, not the critical analysis, that will alter predispositions in this speech.

Kevin concludes by briefly courting again. His system isn't foolproof and sometimes his ego struggles so hard that he forgets to try and see through it until too late, after he has really done something foolish. Does the audience know what he means? They join him in ironic laughter at their universal frailty.

And in what is surely the most powerful moment of the speech, Kevin turns the energy of his own laughter from irony to inescapably contagious joy and draws the audience through an agony of relief to share in its celebration. At length, he thanks them and departs amid heartfelt applause. The audience has experienced spiritual joy through Kevin's Christianity and although there is much in this speech that can be explained through traditional literate analysis, there is also the power of the phenomenal experience itself without which the rhetorical process defies complete capture.

Each time I review Kevin's work, I am struck by how freely he is able to interact with his audience. He seems to constantly be readjusting and adapting, yet he is never at the slightest loss. He never stumbles, never runs out of words, yet he assures me he has never written a list of ideas, an outline, let alone a manuscript in

preparation. His effort, as best I can discern, does not rely on literacy save in that some (perhaps all) of the knowledge it contains is shaped by the character of literate minds and the needs of literate audiences.

The preparations Kevin has made take advantage of the skills of orality. He has talked this speech through with me, perhaps with other people, and repeatedly with himself and an imaginary audience many times. He has avoided writing any sort of aid to memory whatsoever. When he actually delivers the speech, his mind is totally unhindered by the temptation to coordinate his words with any conscious verbal recall. When he speaks, Kevin is totally interactive; he relies on his powers of oral composition to produce the best possible speech and relinquishes guidance of his own attention to those same powers.<sup>51</sup> Instead of delivering a prepared message or performing a script, Kevin is truly speaking, *communicating orally-aurally*, to his audience.<sup>52</sup>

What limitations of literacy can we see through Kevin's efforts? Certainly his content included some pop social science theory that would be possible only among literates. Indeed, we might well point out that the reflexive behavior Kevin induced in the audience is itself an artifact of literacy. Only literate audiences can so readily reflect. On the other hand, the process of catching the audience up in an existentially unfolding experience while establishing one's role as the speaker (the experience inducer), the process of massaging the audience with sound and action so vividly as to simulate experience itself, nudging them to "get with it," and most important of all, the ability to do these things interactively, constantly readjusting to the audience's changes without the interference of a critical consciousness—these are oral skills that provoke an oral response with which literacy has little to do beyond pale imitation.

Indeed, interactive oral skills so defy our literate entreaties that we often do not teach them, do not even acknowledge them in our research. Consider the case of feedback, for example. Although extensive research has been conducted, it has been overwhelmingly confined to the study of conscious and deliberate action and reaction.<sup>53</sup> Summarizing feedback research, Book notes that although feedback is recognized "not as an independent activity, but rather as an interwoven set of relationships . . . involving interrelated variables which influence the entire system,"<sup>54</sup> it is nonetheless the case that "research has focused on the ability of a speaker to interpret feedback instantaneously and then adapt the speech to it, and the effects of such conscious adaptation on the delivery of the speech."<sup>55</sup> The rather obvious nonconscious nonverbal responses audiences give to a speaker and, likewise, the nonconscious adaptations speakers make in response are necessarily ruled out by literate thinking about interactivity. From a literate perspective, we are led to act as if any behavior not accounted for through conscious and deliberate action is of no consequence at all.

An altogether different sort of example can be found in the literature of dramatism.<sup>56</sup> We place a high premium on the human propensity to rhetorically order the universe in dramatic terms and we practice complex systems of analysis on textual evidence of drama. But it is as if we believe the words of the text carry the power that draws the audience into psychic participation—which may well be the case in writing, but certainly not in speech. Indeed, the evidence from orality clearly suggests that the participatory dimension of dramatic enactment rivals or surpasses its verbal elements in importance. Where do we study or teach the behavioral qualities by which the speaker triggers dramatic participation? Dramatists, it seems,

might take far more interest in the medium's effect on the message and we are not speaking simply of a revival of interest in *actio*.

Let us make several more nonliterate notes on Kevin's speech. From talking to Kevin, I understand that he apprehends an experience—or a series of like experiences, at any rate—and that he is about the business of immersing the audience in that experience, casting its tenor about them like so much seed scattered to wild birds. He does not regard the audience as adversaries to be convinced nor as heathens to be converted but as other members of his community with whom he shares the experiences of living. It seems that, to whatever extent the audience's own critical faculties remain inactive, lulled into Kevin's spell, they participate as fully as he.

It is also important to observe the total interactivity that Kevin clearly evidences, coupled with his own testimony that when he is speaking, he is not composing, nor planning, nor consciously aware of anything other than the message he is speaking as he speaks it and of the audience as they hear it. His composition process, ongoing and existential, is out of awareness altogether.

Kevin and his audience are participating in a communal experience; he is the speaker and they the attenders, but he is not the leader and they are not his followers. He induces the experience, and thereby casts a spell around his naming of it. The naming is integral but in no way sufficient. Is it not likely to be the case that the audience's literate faculties are lulled to rest and that they find warmth and contentment in the community of Kevin's audience?

There is, of course, a strong sense of incompleteness about the preceding paragraphs, a reluctance to let them stand by themselves even without a text to examine. It is one thing to name an event as a spell cast, quite another to explain how it is done. As literate critics and teachers, we are conditioned to value pragmatically, to search for the means to construct, if not a step-by-step set of instructions, at least a checklist of observables to include, or of precepts we may adapt to our own ends. We are conditioned to search for them in the text and there is no text. Indeed, there cannot be a text that records the experience itself; there can be only metaphor that brings us hints and glimmers, that recalls—from our experience in life, perhaps even from our genetic store—those feelings of communal celebration that transcend our individuality: how else may we cross the bounds between literacy and orality?

Echoing its oral ancestry, classical rhetoric tells us that one may learn from models as well as from precepts. Kevin's models doubtlessly include other speakers who are richly steeped in oral residue. As Ong's example of the black student in composition class suggests, American black culture is far more oral than the mainstream. On the other hand, the receptivity of Kevin's largely white audiences hints that the gulf between the two cultures may not be so wide. If we cannot satisfactorily preceptualize without text—and we are not yet through considering why this is the case—we may still resort to modeling. And if, personally, we find the ways of orality elusive, has not technology given us other means to model? I am thinking, of course, of video; yet video, if it is not also to be text bound, presents other problems. And in examining those problems, we might also expect the implications of electronic media as synthesis of oral and literate to include a reheightened sensitivity to oral ways.

Let us consider that, given his literate audiences, the spell Kevin casts is of a relatively new sort, one in which the audience is physically quiescent for the most part, and that there is very little of literacy's influence in the speaker or the audience of this new psychomimesis. What Kevin does in person, I am confident he could also

do through video, at least in the hands of a skilled director. There would be some differences in the way the audience was courted, of course, and in the ways experience would be simulated. These differences, together with the nonliterate similarities, are most telling; to better understand them, let us consider a series of television commercials that, like Kevin's speech, rely on nonliterate means.

The retail price of a pair of blue denim trousers has multiplied five times or more in the past twenty years, vastly outstripping growth in the cost of production. Probably as much as any other product, denim pants or blue jeans have been vaunted—"hyped"—through the competitive strategies of Madison Avenue. Now they are usually known as designer jeans and it's harder than ever to find a pair that fit well.

Recently, one major manufacturer introduced a new line of blue jeans with a series of meticulously produced commercials that feature no spoken narrative whatsoever and only the briefest keying of the product logo at the very end. There are lyrics, largely paying homage to the lifestyle of the commercials' characters, and noting that this lifestyle includes clothes that fit well. But by no stretch of the imagination could these commercials be seen to offer arguments in favor of purchasing the product; they make no assertions about durability, quality, value, or any other reasoning in favor of buying the jeans. Instead, these commercials, and so many others like them, combine the various channels of meaning video offers to simulate a very attractive kind of experience that is tightly fused to use of the product. There is no causation or correlation suggested—the product is simply there. To comprehend the experience these commercials simulate, we may enumerate first what the screen presents, then what the loudspeaker presents, and finally consider the effect of the two together.

The screen shows urban settings, primarily working neighborhoods and city parks, usually full of people. Featured primarily are young adults, presumably the product's principal market, and most of them are wearing tightly fitting jeans. All these characters are attractive people; they are trim and fit, all with fairly conventional hair colors and styles. The rest of their clothes are fashionable but decidedly casual. At least half the people are black; all are happily engaged in their weekend city life, which is largely recreational: skateboarding, bicycling, dancing in the streets. Several people are shown engaged in labor but always with a comical twist. A young woman washing a taxi cab winds up in a water fight, a young man moving a jukebox on a cart drops it face down in the middle of a busy street. Two especially hip-looking white fellows spend their time just waiting, one sprawled comfortably on a sidewalk, another stroking his pet goose. Gorgeous and sparsely clad white and black chicks find their black and white dudes, hug them, tease them, and generally have a fine young urban time.

They are not alone. Vignette appearances by cute kids, large and elderly women, a variety of pets and people in many shapes, ages, and colors provide a communal background of easy living and good times. Everywhere we see alleys to hide in, fences and fire escapes to climb, piles of still usable trash to rummage through, inviting storefronts to enter and friendly stoops on which to sit, meet the folks, and join the scene. There is not a bad vibe anywhere around.

The characters' accessories are the instruments of leisure: roller skates, basketballs, pets, frisbees, bicycles, skateboards, jogging shoes, sweatbands, towels, hoses and water buckets, drumsticks and rattles. The sets are freely decorated with ghetto art from graffiti to murals to junk sculptures. The lighting is always that of a breezy

summer afternoon in City Park, the shadows cool and welcoming, the sunlight inviting, never oppressive. Nearly everyone's stylishly long hair affirms the breezes; there is no hint of perspiration.

Groups of street musicians are prominently featured in two commercials of the series; one group is mixed, the other all white, but the music is generally of black genres.

As to the sound. The tunes and the rhythms are decidedly black, often rhythm and blues, but also featuring everything from the scat of Sixties quartets to joyful gospel choruses, from tight street raps and break dance chants to reggae and calypso. And always sandwiched in are bluesy riffs that dissolve on the afternoon air and a pulsing conga drum that does not.

There are words sung and chanted, usually in barely decipherable praise of their lifestyle and, as already noted, the fit of their jeans. I recall only three of the words but they are the name under which I have filed this experience away in my memory and which I rather expect will roll off my tongue whenever the experience comes to mind. The first word is the brand name of the jeans, the other two name the style. The last of the triplet is "blues," and it packs the product, the light bluesy tenor of the afternoon, and no doubt the sky—rather than a more somber kind of blues—in those fashionably faded blue denim trousers. The triplet always finishes the stanza (and the commercial) by rising to a crescendo of praise that really makes those blues ring out in spiritual passion.

This commercial brings the pleasures of Central Park on Sunday afternoon in early September, but blessedly without the bad vibes. Gone are all suggestions of violence, crime, poverty, and tragedy. Gone is even the possibility of fear. There's not a mugger, not a street gang, not a runaway horse or a stray fly ball, not a mean cop or a dishonest taxi driver, not even a rude waitress or a panhandler to be seen. There is no one with a really sordid past to reveal. There's not even anyone in sight who might not speak English. It's virtually Nirvana on the East Coast.

It is of course the case that the observations of the preceding paragraph are about what was not in the commercial. In order to simulate a particularly positive experience—positive enough to practically reify the product—it is presumably not sufficient to concern oneself only with what are its elements, but also with what in some sense should be but are not. Could it be that the elimination of negatives induces a sort of ideal world concept, a mythic world of heroes and goddesses in modern dress and settings? In fact, is this not an important dimension of television's rhetorical potency, similar to the psychic dimension of orality whereby participation in an ongoing mythic experience is induced? The audience knows no will to resist; we are so quick to idealize, to simplify, to get with it, whenever there is no reason not to. It is as if literacy, by dissecting reality into objective components, provides through consciousness a sort of detente switch that replaces ideal with flawed reality and community with alienation. A written paragraph provides markers around which the reader's mind fills in from its own experience—which rarely approaches the mythic. Video is far better equipped to resemble an idealized world than is literacy.

Participants in this sort of nonliterate video are as purely engaged in apprehension of the experience as Kevin and his audiences during the yardstick speech. There is no trace of anything presented in these commercials to distract the intellect, nothing that might prompt the viewer to think analytically of the crass objectives that motivated the producers. The audience is transported to a mythical world in which it is drawn

to participate—albeit vicariously—as fully as viewing conditions permit, a world ontologically insulated against noise of any kind, a warm sheltering community not unlike the audience Kevin shares. And socially, watching television is indeed a communal act. Along with the sense of joining the mythic pop culture world that comes from “getting with it,” from watching noncritically, there is a sense of being part of the mass audience. We know implicitly when we watch television that countless others watch as well; we have the tacit sense that wherever and whenever the signal can be received, others respond as we do and thus share the communal experience. Although this sense may not be an artifact of the video medium per se, it is nevertheless a factor with which current efforts to understand video must contend.

Were Kevin to join forces with a skilled video director, I have suggested that his speech could be adapted to achieve a similar level of rhetorical effectiveness on television. It would be, of course, with different techniques for courting the audience and simulating the experiences he presents. Although precluded from individually targeting audience members by personalizing anecdotes for them, mass targeting techniques now abound. It should surprise no one to learn that the jeans commercials above were directed toward East Coast urban young people: the commercials were quite obviously personalized toward that group and Kevin’s video would likewise need to feature the appearance, the lifestyle, and the values of his intended audience. Also, Kevin and his director would need to carefully and richly dramatize and depict the succession of experiences Kevin takes his audience through; and, of course, they would need to idealize the entire production, removing any hint of the flaws that activate critical response or rejection.

The role of consciousness is in some sense the cutting edge of this issue, and with it must be mentioned the corresponding question of intentionality, that is, whether a behavior should correspond to some mindful intention of the sender in order to be considered as communication, and especially as rhetoric.<sup>57</sup> Understanding nonliterate rhetoric requires, among other things, that we regard all behaviors of audiences and rhetors—everything, abstract or situational, mindful or mindless, intentional or accidental, verbal or nonverbal—as potentially relevant. Growing skepticism over the usefulness of verbal reports, in the light of the oral consciousness as Ong and others have revealed it, lends further support to the contention that studying nonliterate rhetorical process must allow for an unintentional or nonconscious dimension.<sup>58</sup>

Our literate biases are apt to make us recoil here. The act of transporting the audience, of catching them up in an idealized world where critical faculties lie silent, surely grates on the humanist tradition. Furthermore, much that literacy holds precious, the complexities with which poetry transports, for example, are somehow rendered trivial save to the connoisseur: anyone who has taught the appreciation of art or literature realizes the difficulties of teaching this knack to college students. Video can transport even the dullest mind with no education at all. In fact, it takes an act of will to avoid being caught up in it, just as it must to avoid the seduction of psychomimesis or, for that matter, Saturday night fever.

Surely, we should not recoil. To the contrary, it seems likely that a humanistic response to video is mandatory for the practicing rhetorical critic. Some impressive groundwork has been laid by Larson in political commercials and more broadly by Schwartz in advertising theory.<sup>59</sup> Larson has noted our “natural inclination . . . to

concentrate on discourse and discourse alone," and elaborates on Schwartz's evoked recall model of persuasion as a kind of instantaneous, gestalt-like experiential rhetoric that shifts critical attention away from the "logical assembling of discursive elements," away from message content to message technique, and focusing on experience as its raw material.<sup>60</sup> The evoked recall model provides an important step away from the bounds of literacy and, quite possibly, can serve as a basis for the development of much nondiscursively oriented methodology. A video oriented audience may well respond to oral rhetoric, perhaps even to writing, in an increasingly experiential mode. What then could be more pressing at this time than to facilitate mass audience sensitivity to phenomenal rhetorical process and, through scholarly criticism, to generate practical defenses against its abuse?

We may start by recognizing that video commercials are legitimate critical objects; indeed, that in some sense they represent optimal use of the medium at the present time. And we may proceed by distinguishing nonliterate phenomenal applications of video from what are still quite common propositional, literate uses. As McLuhan has pointed out, the establishment attempts to make the new media do the work of the old.<sup>61</sup> Then, sensitized to the nonliterate aspects of rhetoric and to the notion that such aspects may never be satisfactorily revealed or integrated into our repertoire through their texts alone, we may begin to explore alternatives.

#### RHETORIC AND MEDIA

This essay concludes by addressing three concerns. First, to facilitate future exploration, an attempt to organize this perspective on the rhetorical processes of orality and video in a helpful taxonomy of media and rhetorics is presented. Second, there is the problem of alternatives: how can scholarship and pedagogy hope to function outside the literate tradition anyway? From what quarters can other tools possibly be developed to further the aims of criticism and of education? Last, and surely most important, the question of rhetoric's humane tradition remains to be addressed. There is an excellent case to be made that reasoned deliberation, the cornerstone of our tradition, is firmly rooted in literacy; thus one might argue that the neglect of orality and of video is justified because those media so often involve "mere persuasion," or because the processes of which the rhetorics of video and orality take advantage afford too small a role for humankind's higher faculties.

To summarize the argument so far: central to the present conceptualization of media are technologies for storing and transporting ideas in space and time outside the human mind. Because different media constrain ideas according to their own unique technical requirements, particularly as regards their relations with the human sensorium, media exert a large influence over what and how people think. Further, since from this perspective rhetoric is broadly seen as the faculty of altering predispositions, we may infer first that media influence rhetoric—indeed, we have seen in orality and literacy two quite different means to achieve rhetorical ends—and, second, that the use of literate means to study the rhetorics of orality and video is problematic.

Thus it should be useful to speak of rhetoric with reference to its mediation, at least if in so doing we can clarify the limits of literacy. Let us first search for pristine examples: that is, for the "pure" use of orality or literacy and its distinctive rhetoric, and then consider the variations that result, first as the two combine, and then as

video makes use of orality and literacy. Our purpose is to generate a category system through which critics and rhetors may better distinguish the appropriateness of their options and their tools in a world where literacy cannot always extend.

To be sure, the purely oral cultures that remain—and there are painfully few—offer a continuing source of critical material that has been far from thoroughly tapped.<sup>62</sup> The rhetorical critic who seeks examples of whole communities engaged in mutually committing themselves to cooperative ends through psychomimesis—through the rhetoric of orality—may certainly still find some. However, the difficulties of study *in situ* are real enough, an exciting challenge to those who have long since relegated the practice of rhetorical criticism exclusively to the armchair academy.

For purely literate rhetoric, one might seek no farther than the editorial page of the daily newspaper. However, the possibility that video audiences increasingly respond experientially to what they read should always be kept at hand. Perhaps, in this light, we should consider more carefully the essays in scientific and technical journals. Avoiding altogether the use of rhetoric is an endeavor that should require nearly as much rhetorical know-how as its opposite and is rarely as successful. Scientific information sharing, unlike reading the newspaper, implicitly imposes a nonexperiential (analytic) frame on its reader without which comprehension is usually impossible.

Is there a pure video rhetoric that is neither literate nor oral in its process? Although the presentational power of video, combining aural and visual modes of presentation with objective and subjective (background music, color tones, transitions) content is quite distinct from that of oral or literate media—video simulates experience far more readily and with greater intensity—the rhetorical process of altering predispositions through shifting ground, through restocking the store of cultural knowledge, is the same rhetorical process that was noted in orality. Of course, the video audience may well be led propositionally, persuaded through the application of reason, the arousal of emotions, and the credibility of airwave personalities as well. But is there still something else?

Actually, literate approaches to video's influence on cultural beliefs, from Gerbner's "hidden curriculum" to Slater and Elliot's "social reality," abound.<sup>63</sup> Although not articulating the manipulation of social norms as the rhetorical process of orality, these studies do provide a variety of literate accesses to video rhetoric. Perhaps, in understanding how the audience may well be induced to cooperate through the mode of orality—through the phenomenal presentation of an ideal mythic world in which it participates through the electronic psychomimesis of viewing television—literate studies may penetrate video quite deeply after all. But perhaps not. There is a sense of super-reality about video that charges the altered predisposition with a sense of *deja vu*, that renders us wearing those denims because we already do.<sup>64</sup> Because we just have. We will not litter, we will wear our seat belts, we will visit our stockbroker, because we already do these things, every day, as members of the television audience. And since we have not actually done so, we should not close the door on the possibility of pure video as something else again.

If one cannot immediately grasp the rhetoric of video amidst its literate and oral applications—and we must admit that we yet cannot—we can at least define the ground around it. This may be achieved simply enough, by recognizing the possible permutations of media and rhetorical process. Along with noting that there is a kind

of video literacy, a use of video in the traditional propositional mode of literate rhetoric, and that there is also a video orality, a phenomenal experiencing that has no literate ties, let us add the oral literacy that first reached prominence with the Sophists<sup>65</sup> and is still greatly in evidence today in the practice and criticism of speech texts.

### *Oral Literacy*

The rhetoric of oral literacy dominates academic study, at least that of the speech department, in the modern world. We note not so much that it focuses on written material, as that it studies mindful process. Within oral literacy's bounds, one assumes implicitly that what is written or spoken—the text—conveys the central persuasive effort, and thus critics concentrate on development of appropriate value premises through which conscious cooperation can be induced.<sup>66</sup> The rhetoric of oral literacy treats of orality almost exclusively as delivery. At an extreme, this is the condition under which a performed manuscript is more highly esteemed than an interactive public speech, and its literary virtues are sung loudly while its rhetorical effectiveness is sometimes relegated to speculation in the footnotes.

A written speech performed is perhaps extreme, but one spoken from an outline is only somewhat less so. Any time the words to be said or even the ideas to be presented are fixed—preordered on outlines, notecards, or by mnemonic devices—the existential quality of interactive communication is diminished. The speaker risks being no more open to the audience's needs than is a sheet of paper and the effect approaches that of reading a prepared statement. This is not to say that a prepared statement can have no effect; indeed, some are quite moving, especially to highly literate audiences, and when precision is a vital criterion, there is no substitute for the manuscript.<sup>67</sup> Yet the technical constraints of literacy are such as to degrade the existential interchange of orality. The manuscripts published in *Vital Speeches of the Day* are vivid examples. It is of course imperative that such messages be documented because they represent an essential medium for the conduct of public business. However, their ostensible oral nature has little to do with their actual function. On the other hand, what would it mean to title the publication *Vital Essays of the Day*?

Though sacrificing interactivity, oral literacy adds the powers of performance (witness Ronald Reagan) to the manifold advantages of thoughtful discourse; for whatever orality may be, it is not self-consciously thoughtful. On the other hand, oral literate listening is based on the premise that one may think and listen more or less simultaneously and analytical listening schemes are taught in traditional speech classes.<sup>68</sup> Note, however, that analytical listening, if successful, can counteract the effects of orality, especially the emotional and ethical effects of speaker presence. Indeed, one cannot help but wonder about the process we engage in when we evaluate student efforts while listening to them: certainly the literate qualities can be so evaluated, but are not the oral qualities thus rendered inaccessible?

### *Video Literacy*

Video Literacy is a common enough term, used to describe the ability to contrive and send video messages and to receive them in a discursive manner; that is, to "read" television. We have seen, however, that the knack of reading television, while in some sense necessary, is far from critically sufficient; indeed that "reading" precludes

understanding certain vital aspects of video rhetoric—those which are not or cannot be written. Also, it would surely seem that a rhetoric of video literacy must include the many attempts to apply the techniques of literary criticism to film, and later television, and the still predominant use of written schemes and scripts to order, prepare, and perform on the screen as though creating an animated illustrated narrative. Judging such efforts from their own perspectives, of course, suggests great success has been achieved, but only within the limits of literacy. The highbrow appeal of public television, for example, and the notions of quality it promulgates are of course the standards of literacy—of what Ong calls High Literacy—transferred to video.

Commercials, too, are rife with video literacy, with propositions and with visual attention manipulation techniques learned from the print advertising trade.<sup>69</sup> One may assume such productions will continue as long as audience consciousness remains sufficiently dominated by literacy to respond to them and probably somewhat longer. It is not, of course, that the video literate audience necessarily attends analytically. Indeed, that technique, borrowed directly from literacy (from reading analytically) is difficult enough to learn when the inputs are restricted to those of a speaker speaking. The intrusion of consciousness interferes with video communication far more than it facilitates it. While one pauses to consider the propositional pitch of a single commercial, several more have time to slip into experience unconsidered.

Video literacy, by making tacit assumptions about the limitations of rhetorical process, diverts attention from the prospect of video becoming our dominant source of communication. Will the audience continue to think, for instance, as if the only knowledge that matters is stored in books? Will they continue to esteem the external creations of individuals more than the internal creations? We live in a world that rewards the creation of heroes in literature and on the screen more richly than the actions of heroes in real life, a distinction that could be made only in a literate world. Could such a distinction be blurred in a video dominated society? Indeed, is the nightly network news not doing so? Perhaps it is not only the semiliterate who cling so tenaciously to the security of fixed knowledge; perhaps it is sometimes the highly literate as well. In any event, the issues of video literacy and of the role of consciousness in communication both argue for a third category of media rhetoric, one that binds orality and video tightly together.

### *Video Orality*

Video orality, then, is at once the most fugitive and the most promising of the categories that we now enumerate. It is presently found in the nonliterate aspects of television, of course, and especially in the mythic super-real communal world of commercials. It is increasingly the mode of response of the video audience but not necessarily the mode of stimulus of video producers, who are still hampered by video literate consciousness. There is no particular reason to debate the merits of oral versus literate video rhetoric nor to contrast either with oral literacy. Presumably each presently lends itself best to audiences steeped in its own tradition. Yet as societies become more dominated by video, we may perhaps expect to find more video orality and consequently, less of its literate counterparts. We should note, in this light, a sense in which Kevin's audiences may well be attuned to video orality in a

way that previous generations have not been. It seems likely that growing up in an environment dominated by video rather than by print would make one less hasty to be critical, more willing to "get with it," to enter into the speaker's world.

Video orality retains the ephemerality of actual events; its messages come to the mind with much of the same existential quality as experience, rather than as linear prose. Of course neither video nor literacy affords the sort of feedback orality carries. Yet video, because it packs each moment with sound and sight, and through its ability to idealize and "noiseproof" its experiences, engenders a state of mind where interactive adaptation is far less critical to rhetorical success. Then too, the size of video audiences, far larger and more immediate than print, enables video rhetors to more effectively use response probabilities in lieu of immediate feedback to achieve a sufficient degree of success.

Also, since video messages are ephemeral, revisions, adaptations, virtual changes in how reality is depicted may be cast relatively unhampered by what has gone before. Unlike print, which remains in the library on guard against contradiction, video orality conditions its audiences to accept a great measure of mutability: it is the way the world is now that counts. Witness how easily serial productions adapt to the comings and goings of their stars. One worries that, were Edward R. Murrow to air his famous expose of Senator McCarthy today, the Senator's repeated self-contradictions would arouse only yawns—again witness President Reagan.

And what of consciousness in the realm of video orality? From the present vantage point we can see that there are times when consciousness is vital and other times when its intrusion degrades both sending and receiving processes. Kevin's rhetorical effectiveness and his audience's ability to fully experience his speech are both degraded by the intrusion of consciousness. Our series of jeans commercials presents an experience that does not endure under conscious analysis and we have argued that the experience's potency arises at least somewhat from elements that are absent in any textual sense. Among other observations, we might note how a literate audience, as it engages mindfulness, necessarily assumes a skeptical posture toward the rhetor that defies unity. Contemporary orality must overcome this posturing through a video version of psychomimesis to be successful. More to the point, video orality—given its increasing dominance—very likely is overcoming it on a mass scale.

### *Video Orality and a Broadened Humanism*

Thus we approach the second of our final concerns: the problem of alternatives. How can we, as scholars and teachers, function at all outside the literate tradition? What other tools than literate thought can possibly further the aims of criticism and of education? Several potentially useful paths are worth noting.

One promising avenue is to consider what a nonliterate classroom might be like. No texts, of course; no lecturing from outlines or notes, and, certainly, no notes would be taken. Oral discourse of a totally practical nature, fully interactive, conducted by a teacher who maintains active intellectual engagement with the audience would be the norm. Such a class might cover a body of theoretical material developed through literate means, but if the end is a practical one, that material would be considered only in the context of actual experience. As the class is led to experience, for example, changes in their predispositions, stimulated either through their own behavior or through that of the teacher, such experience is framed in theoretical terms, always

with direct reference to immediate events. We have in mind, by the way, skills-oriented courses in human communication. To gauge the extent one's own institution is biased by literacy in the sense discussed above, one need only imagine the furor such a nonwriting based course would create.

We have already suggested that video has great potential as a tool for nonliterate teaching and investigation. That potential may best be tapped by recognizing and fully using video's capacity to simulate experience. In the classroom, as in any rhetorical situation, we must ask first, "what do we want the audience to do?" second, "what experience will predispose them to do it?" and then, "how can we use video to simulate that experience?" As video takes on more of education's responsibilities, it will surely be through bringing experience into the classroom that it does so. Under present conditions, such experience is processed analytically—indeed, we tacitly assume that analytical processing is integral to the learning process, but is it? Does video orality not suggest other paths? In a world dominated by video, teachers will find video-simulated experience a partner that rivals the best of texts. Furthermore, since video provides a vehicle for teacher and student to share experience, an unparalleled opportunity to restore community may await us.

We need to explore the video-engendered consciousness as it develops, being especially sensitive to the possibility that its most important dimensions, seen through literate eyes, may seem trivial. Thus, we need to recognize clearly the boundaries of literacy: it is not the use of particular media per se that presents limitations; it is the cognitive biases underlying them. In the case of literacy, the biases center around what we might call the myth of mindfulness: that only through willful, ordered manipulation can the mind attain its greatest heights. Certainly it is the case that literacy has been a necessary step in the development of abstract reasoning, indeed to the capacity for abstract thought at all; but, once such capacity has been developed, is there any reason to assume that mindfulness is still needed? May not video have freed us from that prospect? There is extensive research in cognitive psychology demonstrating that, once a process has been thoroughly learned through conscious acquisition, the mind will naturally relegate that process to an automated status.<sup>70</sup> Why should we not expect all the cognitive processes involved in communication, to include those of reasoning out of awareness while fully attending to incoming messages, to be similarly automatistic?<sup>71</sup>

While the implications of cognitive automatism have much relevance to oral communication, they promise an even greater contribution to our study of video. Presently, a critical response to video is hampered by both the lack of a grammar or logic of experience with which to confront video orality and by the human mind's inability to consciously analyze video messages as rapidly as it receives them.<sup>72</sup> There is no reason not to expect that, once we develop an appropriate grammar for video—a grammar of synthetic experience—it can be automatized. Incorporating this concept of automatism into our research and teaching of speech and video represents still another important step away from the cognitive biases of literacy.

How might scholars and teachers of rhetoric respond? Obviously, continued insistence on the traditional critical posture is counterproductive. Not only is that posture inadequate for video messages, but it likewise counters the basic strength of video communication. Even if one can learn to view video analytically with extraordinary rapidity, in so doing, one loses the opportunity to participate in video experience. Let us seriously weigh the proposition, not that audiences no longer

develop critical faculties or that they learn to turn them on and off; rather that, just as in becoming literate, audiences learned a mode of consciousness pervaded by skepticism, through learning video orality, audiences develop a mode of consciousness in which the critical faculty—while present and functioning out of awareness—does not intrude into mindfulness. There is nought but our literate biases blocking the way to such a position.

Here we find the third and final issue of our essay, the tradition of rhetoric as a humane study. From our present vantage point, the business of enlightened choice-making after thorough acquaintance with the options is at once a joyful tribute to humankind and a pinnacle of literate conceit. While we cannot quarrel with the precept that options enrich life, we must note that contemporary society places us within a web of choices so complex that only the most pressing are ever consciously accessed. Education systems that insist on obedience to rules as a fundamental tenet of their process sidestep the issue of enlightened choice as surely as do the absolutisms of religion and science. If humanism is not to be assigned a mere page in the history of Western philosophy, it must extend back into orality and forward into video; the concept of reason must be modified to accept and enhance our capacity for right choices made out of awareness; humane rhetoric must be the study not of choosing but of alternative-making and our notion of argument must be broadened to encourage tolerance for ambiguity. Recognizing the extent to which humane behavior, once learned, need not be preceded by conscious deliberation paves the way toward creation of a truly humane world society. We may even speculate that just as orality bred circumstances from which literacy was born and eventually flourished, literacy has spawned video, and from video may rise not a global village—after all, the prospect of village life thrills us not—but a global community.

Regarding the evolution of media in dialectical terms implies the eventual coming of still another antithesis, that beyond video lies some further stage no more imaginable to us than was video to Plato or Gutenberg. What matters now, however, is that we approach video not as a new kind of literacy but as a synthesis of oral and literate ways. Let us afford to video orality as much attention as we have paid to its literate counterparts. Because literacy provides the currency for scholarly transaction, this endeavor is problematic, but not impossible if we proceed slowly, both in the classroom and out. History itself suggests directions.

School should not start with literacy but with orality. Because the literate world has so diluted the impact of oral communication, children come to school totally insensitive to interactivity, to feedback, to the importance of orality as the unifying medium of the human condition. In effect, we should follow the pattern of history itself: first thoroughly examining and learning to teach oral skills *qua* oral skills, with appropriate attention paid to their effects and to their effectiveness. Then writing and reading may follow, though before the portals of literacy are flung open, students should pass through a dark passage wherein the light and warmth of community are willfully abandoned; then as they venture forth, it should be with a firm understanding that beyond these wonders lies . . . the road back. Literacy must be only a way station on the road to fulfilling one's humanity.

Video is impregnating modern civilization with rhetorical processes that cannot be optimally studied, taught, or used by traditional literate means. Focusing on rhetoric solely through literate frameworks has long since led us to treat oral rhetoric as if it were written and performed—as if the rhetorical processes at work in oral

composition and interaction differ little, if at all, from those of written thought and, indeed, to then attempt the promulgation of an orally-performed version of literate rhetoric. This oral literacy flourished through centuries when intellectual life was thoroughly dominated by print media and, indeed, it flourishes still. Literacy is so thoroughly institutionalized that it staggers the mind to imagine anything else coming to pass. Yet it may be that our difficulty is a bit like that of a barely literate collective farm chairman who struggled to complete the syllogism: "In the Far North, where there is snow, all bears are white. Novaya Zemlya is in the Far North and there is always snow there. What color are the bears there?"

"To go by your words," the chairman finally replied, "they should all be white."

It was not the case that he could not deduce, but rather that he saw little relevance in doing so.<sup>73</sup>

## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup>Walter J. Ong, "Literacy and Orality in Our Times," *Journal of Communication* 30:1 (Winter, 1980): 197-204.

<sup>2</sup>Harold A. Innis, *Empire and Communications*, revised by Mary Q. Innis with a forward by Marshall McLuhan (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972), 7, 170.

<sup>3</sup>Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, 2nd ed. (New York: Signet, 1964), 19, 24.

<sup>4</sup>McLuhan, 20-21.

<sup>5</sup>S. Michael Halloran, "Tradition and Theory in Rhetoric," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 62(1976): 241.

<sup>6</sup>Frank J. D'Angelo, "An Ontological Basis for a Modern Theory of the Composing Process," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 64(1978): 79-85.

<sup>7</sup>Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *Toward the Future*, Rene Hague, Trans. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1975); Erich Neumann, *The Origins and History of Consciousness*, with a foreword by C.G. Jung, R.F.C. Hull, Trans. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1954).

<sup>8</sup>D'Angelo, 82.

<sup>9</sup>Teilhard, 184-185.

<sup>10</sup>Most relevant to our present effort is Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word* (London: Methuen, 1982).

<sup>11</sup>Aristotle *Rhetoric* 1358b.

<sup>12</sup>Eric A. Havelock, *Preface to Plato* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963), 198-199.

<sup>13</sup>Ong, "Literacy and Orality in Our Times," 198.

<sup>14</sup>Ong, "Literacy and Orality in Our Times," 197.

<sup>15</sup>Havelock, 197-233, esp. 208-216.

<sup>16</sup>Walter J. Ong, "Voice as Summons for Belief: Literature, Faith, and the Divided Self," in Walter J. Ong, *The Barbarian Within and other Fugitive Essays* (New York: MacMillan, 1962), 51.

<sup>17</sup>Alexander R. Luria, *Cognitive Development: Its Cultural and Social Foundations*, Michael Cole, ed., trans. by Martin Lopez-Morillas and Lynn Solotaroff (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1976), 1-175. Ong's commentary is helpful, in *Orality and Literacy*, 47-56; Claude Levi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962).

<sup>18</sup>Robert Shuter, "The Hmong of Laos: Orality, Communication, and Acculturation," in Larry A. Samovar and Richard E. Porter, *Intercultural Communication: A Reader*, 4th ed. (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1985), 102-109.

<sup>19</sup>Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 37-57.

<sup>20</sup>Luria, 32-39, 60, 86; cf. Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 51, 54.

<sup>21</sup>Walter J. Ong, *Fighting for Life*, (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1981): See 125-129 for a discussion of agonistic residue in contemporary academe.

<sup>22</sup>Laura Bohannon, Emrys Peters, and Godfrey and Monica Wilson, cited by Jack Goody and Ian Watt, "The Consequences of Literacy," in Jack Goody, Ed., *Literacy in Traditional Societies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968), 31-33 (see footnote 1, page 31); cf. Ong, *Orality and Literacy*, 46-49.

<sup>23</sup>Walter J. Ong, *Why Talk?* (Novato, CA: Chandler and Sharp Publishers, 1973), 14.

<sup>24</sup>Shuter, 105.

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