EXTENDING RHETORIC AND EVENT: LIVED EVENTS IN RHETORICAL ECOLOGY

By

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Recent inquiries into rhetoric — written, spoken, and visual — as event have offered a dynamic lens through which to understand rhetorical acts. Furthermore, Kevin DeLuca’s “image events” suggest event as a political act and offer a postmodern form of argument that generates public deliberation. When image events emerge, the rhetorical situation is constituted by distinct boundaries of rhetor-audience-image. Earlier work on rhetorical situation, for example Lloyd Bitzer and Richard E. Vatz, also suggested a composition of discrete elements (rhetor, discourse, audience, exigence, and constraints). Thus, to extend rhetorical events and eradicate those boundaries in rhetorical situations, this paper proposes a new theoretical term: lived events. Lived events are spontaneous, proprioceptive affects of the audience’s body in collective (inter)action with other bodies for the purposes of producing political and social art. In addition, lived events unfold and function not in rhetorical situations, but in a rhetorical ecology of affective processes and intensities. As an example, this paper explores a performance art installation: One Million Bones. This performance piece meets the three criteria of lived events: rhetorical performance art, topological space, and collective action. By exploring One Million Bones, this paper elucidates not only how lived events
emerge, but enables scholars to rethink visual rhetoric and rhetorical theory, event, and social activism, as well as highlight the interactions and interconnections amongst all these levels.
CHAPTER 1
EXTENDING RHETORIC AND EVENT: LIVED EVENTS IN RHETORICAL ECOLOGY

Much contemporary scholarship within rhetoric and composition has brought the dynamic qualities of rhetoric and writing to the forefront by conceptualizing them in terms of event. In *Composition as a Human Science*, for instance, Louise Wetherbee Phelps contends that “all discourse, spoken or written, is an event in the life processes of individuals” (147) and that “reading is experienced as an event, that is, as a series of cognitive acts felt as responses to another person’s speech act” (140). Drawing on new physics, Phelps proposes a new conceptual structure for written discourse, one that recognizes the “process in which the observer plays an interactive role as participant in a communication event” (141). Yet, the producer and act of written discourse can also play an important role in event creation, as Raúl Sánchez has posited. In “Outside the Text: Retheorizing Empiricism and Identity” Sánchez argues that identity is “an act—the act—of writing. And the writing subject is an act of identity formation, which is to say that it is an act of writing” (245). As an act of writing, identity “is not an epistemological or ontological concept. It is a rhetorical action-an event” (243). In addition to Phelps’ and Sánchez’s work with literate practices as event, Barbara Biesecker suggests that “what we are dealing with . . . is not the saying of the Event, not the inscription of the Event into language or into speech, but saying as the Event, saying as eventful and not as an eventuality” (19; emphasis in original). In “Prospects of Rhetoric for the Twenty-First Century,” Biesecker draws particular attention to speech acts as “evental rhetoric” within a psychoanalytic framework. For Beisecker, “evental rhetoric” is a Freudian and Lacanian uncanny/speech act that unfolds possibilities of/for the new. She posits that rhetoric as event should be conceptualized in terms of audience-centered and that
“evental rhetoric is not a speaking that . . . would ‘determine’ a political sequence. It ‘merely’ opens the (im)possibility, handing its determination over to the audience” (31).

While such approaches above articulate discursive acts — reading, writing, and speaking — as event, as of late, visual rhetoric scholars have also urged us to think of non-discursive rhetorics as event. Drawing on Susanne Langer, Joddy Murray suggests that discursive rhetoric is “bound by semantic forms and, consequently, limits itself by those forms because it assumes that the ‘word’ is the only means to articulate thought . . . [It] is commonly referred to as ‘verbal’ or ‘written’ communication” (4). Discursive rhetoric functions as one idea followed by another idea, a sort of linear conceptualizing in language engagement; in contrast, non-discursive rhetoric presents its content in a non-linear fashion, inducing a sort of horizontal engagement from the viewer. Non-discursive rhetoric “is primarily reliant on image (taken here to mean both sensory and mental images), and that it most often becomes employed to symbolize what cannot be said or written directly by the word” (Murray 4). These types of definitions have enabled rhetorical scholars such as Kevin DeLuca and many others to consider images as rhetoric, and furthermore as events.

In their foreword of the “Enculturation” special issue “Image Events,” for instance, DeLuca and Joe Wilferth remark that “rhetoric is dependent on emergent forms and . . . dependent on emerging technologies, those of production, of mediation, and of delivery. . . . the most interesting aspect of rhetoric is its emergent character, its contingent quality” (n.p.; emphasis in original). For DeLuca and Wilferth, emergence suggests something as “unprecedented, unpredictable, and unexpected,” hence why rhetoric, in general, can be considered an event: an unforeseen phenomenon. DeLuca and Wilferth
argue that images function as rhetorical event, particularly in image events: “staged acts of protest designed for media dissemination” (315). As a concept, image events are useful in that they connect non-discursive rhetorical events explicitly with social activism. For instance, radical environmental groups who create image events use various techniques, such as monkeywrenching, bodily blockage, and other types of ecotage, to disrupt a current exploitative environmental procedure and operation. But as these activists plan the disruptive act, they also consider how the act or protest can gain media attention, and be disseminated. Since image events function in this distributed way, they are fragmented; they function as “moments of generative argument” (DeLuca and Delicath 325). Generative arguments generate participation and expand public discourse by creating opportunities for audience members, who witness image events in person or on television and other media outlets, to create alternative lines of inquiry around a social issue.

One activist group that deploys image events is Earth First! Founded in the late 1970s, Earth First! uses various tactics to halt environmental exploitations and disseminate their ideas. For example, in 1981 Earth Firstlers visually disrupted the Glen Canyon Dam in Northern Arizona by unraveling a 300-foot long plastic ribbon along the dam. As a symbol of industrialism and urbanism, the dam functions as a signifier for Progress. To generate public deliberation, Earth Firstlers sought to subvert this signifier by intervening with another signifier (ribbon). The ribbon, symbolizing a crack, points to the exploitation of natural resources and ecosystems by man-made inventions. According to DeLuca and John Delicath, as the image of this disruptive event was disseminated through news outlets, it was able to dispute “dominant
assumptions that Nature is a storehouse of resources and that Progress consists of exploiting the storehouse” (323). This image event, like all image events, was making an argument, even as it lacked a clear thesis, data, and warrant. DeLuca and Delicath point out that all image events

are an argumentative form characterized by fragmentation. Image events communicate not arguments, but argumentative fragments in the form of unstated propositions, indirect and incomplete claims, visual refutation, and implied alternatives. These fragments constitute invention resources capable of assisting public argumentation and deliberation. (322)

In generating fragmented arguments via the media, image events “shift the responsibility for argument construction to audiences,” which is invaluable to social activism, as viewers are encouraged to rethink dominant ideologies and engage in public discourse (DeLuca and Delicath 317). As Earth First!ers challenged the dominant ideology of the dam as a symbolic site and visual representation of Progress, they hoped those viewers who see the image event would create alternative lines of argument within the public sphere, which might change social and economic conditions or enact legislation. In other words, the hope with image events is that the fragmentation inspires the audience to question and change the way they think and engage differently in their everyday lives and democratic practices.

In theory, image events are a fruitful way to understand the links between non-discursive rhetoric and social activism, specifically the relationship between image, “nontraditional” argument, and audience. In recent years, however, several activists have created non-discursive rhetorical events for which rhetorical theories of image events cannot fully account. With image events, the makers assume their audience will participate via visual interpretation and public dialogue. Once media capture the image
event, makers trust that their visual presentation — even as a fragmented argument — will catalyze the audience to participate in public discourses and press for more civic engagement in relation to issues raised in that event. In this configuration, the audience is situated as an audience-separate-from-text-and-activist (or audience-separate-from-discourse-and-rhetor). In other words, audiences are left out of the processes of invention; they do not become image event makers at the time the image event is initially produced on the ground. The audience is involved only in the post-production of image events. In contrast, in other social activist events, the audience is active participants, inventors alongside the original rhetors. These non-discursive rhetorical events reconfigure the distinctions between rhetor, text, and audience, complicating the dynamics of rhetorical situations and thus our understanding of how non-discursive rhetorics are produced.

One such activist event is what I call a lived event. A lived event is a spontaneous, proprioceptive affect of the audience’s body in collective action with other bodies for the purposes of producing political and social art/protest. Lived events are productive sites for rhetorical study in that they provide a non-discursive, embodied rhetoric within an ecology of intensities, which illuminates the possibilities for rethinking the rhetorical situations of social activism. In this paper, I thus first articulate what lived events are in general to deepen our understanding of how non-discursive rhetorics can unfold in public space within a rhetorical ecology of affective processes and intensities. Along the way, I discuss the social arts project One Million Bones in which lived events have emerged in order to identify three specific, defining characteristics of lived events: rhetorical performance art, topological space, and collective action. To conclude, I very
briefly discuss some possible directions for lived events with(in) emerging digital technologies.
CHAPTER 2
LIVED EVENTS

First, some disclaimers: Like all events, lived events defy representation, making them difficult to capture in written accounts. This difficulty exists because they are neither discrete nor grounded in spectacle like image events; rather, while unique, they are continuous, constantly unfolding and subtle. Lived events are prerepresentational and prelinguistic. They happen before representation gets tacked onto them and/or language captures them and makes them metaphorical. In this sense, they could be identified as a type of robust materiality that Mark Hansen expresses: an experience of technology that happens outside “representationalist reduction” (4). According to Hansen, cultural critics base their arguments upon poststructuralist approaches to ontology and metaphysics by simply using technology as metaphorical for cognition. What Hansen aspires to do is move beyond representationalism to assert a technological real that can better account for a lived experience in and of technology itself. This same move is important when studying lived events, as lived events do not simply function as representational models for engagement with the world. As non-discursive embodiment, they do not rely upon linguistic gestures to give meaning or structure cognition. They also are nonteleological: they have no end or final cause. Lived events simply emerge with contingency, give rise to unpredictable political participation, and thus flee when represented.

Despite their difficulty to be described and represented due to their dynamism, lived events offer rhetorical theory a framework for understanding how the body, affect, materiality, and act(ivity) intersect outside linguistic representation for social and political purposes. In order for lived events to function in this way, however, they must not be
understood as occurring in a rhetorical situation. In his 1968 article “The Rhetorical Situation,” Lloyd Bitzer claims that a rhetorical situation is “a natural context of persons, events, objects, relations, and an exigence which strongly invites utterance” (5). In his view, these elements are discrete and identifiable, and Bitzer offers an “objective realism” to rhetoric and situation. As Richard E. Vatz argues, however, “The world is not a plot of discrete events. The world is a scene of inexhaustible events which all compete to impinge on what Kenneth Burke calls our ‘sliver of reality’” (156). In Vatz’s argument, subjectivism plays a major role in meaning-making. He articulates, “meaning is not discovered in situations, but created by rhetors” (157). Likewise, Louise Wetherbee Phelps contends that when readers encounter rhetoric, they become “constructor[s], creator[s], or major contributor[s] to textual meaning” (134). In doing so, texts, discourse, and rhetor cease to be “static objects.” Rather, as Phelps suggests, they (rhetor, audience, text, discourse, exigencies, and constraints) function in constant flux.

Extending Phelps’ ideas and drawing on Nedra Reynolds and Ash Amin and Nigel Thrift, Jenny Edbauer Rice has suggested we think about rhetorical ecologies rather than situations to acknowledge how rhetoric emerges in an “amalgam of processes” constituted by “intensities of affective encounters and interactions” (12). She asserts that rhetorical situations (or sites) “are made up of affective encounters, experiences, and moods that cohere around material spaces” (11). This understanding of rhetoric — situation as a rhetorical ecology of processes and intensities — is especially fruitful for understanding how lived events unfold because lived events blur the lines between rhetor-audience-text. In other words, lived events happen in and during fluxes and movements, which enable them to eradicate the boundaries between
rhetor, audience, and text. In doing so, they render these elements indistinguishable, and therefore make these elements supplant each other: the audience become rhetor(s) or the audience become the text(s), or the rhetor(s) becomes the audience, or the rhetor(s) becomes the text(s).

**One Million Bones**

Such general characteristics of lived events can be witnessed in the *One Million Bones* project that is currently in production. *One Million Bones* (hereafter referred to as OMB) is a "large-scale social arts practice" project that addresses genocide, both historical and current atrocities. The project involves the installation of one million fabricated (plaster, clay, plaster tape, wood, or fabric) bones at the National Mall in Washington, DC in June 2013. As the OMB website remarks, “this installation will serve as a collaborative site of conscience to remember victims and survivors, and as a visible petition to raise awareness of the issue and call upon our government to take much needed and long overdue action” (“The Project”). OMB’s goal is to compile a mass grave of bones, symbolically each bone representing one victim of genocide, to influence politicians to address current genocides (particularly in Sudan, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Somalia, Burma, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Pakistan). To get politicians to potentially end genocide, this mass grave and visible petition will function rhetorically for the audience and serve a few purposes: (1) invoke the public to acknowledge humanity’s past transgressions, (2) inspire the public to engage more with global issues, and (3) influence the public to write to politicians, hopefully enacting legislative change. These purposes enable OMB to function similarly to image events in that the project sets the final installation among the visual backdrop of Washington. In doing so, it will invoke observers at this installation to take action democratically
(engage with decision-makers) and participate in public deliberation. The project also resembles an image event because the final installation will be captured by video recordings and photographers, and disseminated through an ecology of media: newspapers, Internet, and news channels. To promote this June 2013 final installation, OMB has created preview-installations, and it is in these installations that lived events first emerged.

The OMB preview-installations occurred in Albuquerque (August 27, 2011) and in New Orleans (April 7, 2012). These installations were created to exemplify how the development of the final installation would unfold. Each preview-installation required about two hundred volunteers and an all-day event of laying down 50,000 bones in public space. In downtown Albuquerque, OMB occupied two city blocks with the bones; in New Orleans, OMB occupied Congo Square in Louis Armstrong Park. Since I volunteered at the New Orleans installation, I will focus on the details there in this paper (although there were many similarities in Albuquerque).

Congo Square, located just northwest of New Orleans’ French Quarter, has historically had many cultures engage with the space. Before the arrival of Europeans, Native Americans used the site as a market space, which was later used by slaves too in eighteenth-century French colonial rule when slaves got their one day off per week. Slaves also used this market space for gatherings of song and dance. In the nineteenth century, Congo Square continued to be a kind of haven for slaves to practice music and dance. Therefore, throughout New Orlean’s history, this marketplace functions as a space for emergent art practices and forms composed by various cultures (Native Americans, enslaved Africans, and Creoles). In choosing this public space for an
artistic installation that addresses genocide, OMB rhetorically connects the past to the present as a way to highlight injustices and inhumane practices in American history. As such, OMB uses kairos — right timing-spacing — to communicate how our past is our present. More specifically, the use of this rhetorical device facilitates a consideration of what we do with and how we perceive present social and political matters as we move into the future. For the preview-installation, the ground is thus equally important to the performance and the material rhetoric of the day.

The New Orleans preview-installation began around 9:00 am on April 7, 2012 with volunteers organizing the bones into five piles on the edge of Congo Square. At about 11:00 am, the two hundred volunteers began what OMB calls “Laying of the Bones Performance”: each volunteer would gather two to eight bones from a stock pile, carry the bones to the center of Congo Square, lay them down, and return to the stock pile to repeat the process. After four hours of activity, the 50,000 bones stood as a large installation piece. The installation also included music during the bone-laying: local musicians Luther Gray, Alexey Marti, Bill Summers, Tyrone Henry and Schubert Dauphin and others played percussions and drums and chanted. After the bone laying was finished, Claude Gatebuke and Eric Ndaheba, both survivors of the Rwanda genocide and the Gatumba Massacre respectively, shared their stories with the public. Around 5:00 pm, volunteers participated in a “Reclaiming the Bones” performance, an act of gathering and packaging the 50,000 bones for storage and their eventual re-laying in June 2013 in the National Mall.

The material rhetoric of the bones, the performance of laying them and the music shape an ecology of affective intensities. I will describe this ecology in more detail below
as I explain lived events, but it is important to note, as this paper also shows, that the New Orleans preview-installation cannot be conceptualized as a conventional rhetorical situation; rather, it functions as a rhetorical ecology of affective processes and intensities, and as such allows lived events to emerge. But such a rhetorical ecology only partially creates that emergence; three tentative criteria also need to be met. To note, I understand that in articulating these criteria of lived events, I contradict the emergence of lived events (or any kind of event). According to Jacques Derrida, “Once there are rules, norms, and hence criteria to evaluate this or that, what happens and what doesn’t happen, there is no event” (457). Through my discourse, therefore, the lived events I discuss below cease to be lived events; lived events can only be retroactively identified. Even by simply naming, we attempt to fix boundaries. Those boundaries (representations) have slippage though and can never articulate the exact temporal-spatial dimensions of lived events. The issue also lies in the fact that lived events are ongoing and in constant flux. Lived events are the intensities that Phelps and Edbauer speak of, and, to complicate them more, they are ephemeral. Derrida remarks, “the event is that which goes very quickly; there can be an event only when it’s not expected, when one can no longer wait for it, when the coming of what happens interrupts the waiting” (443). Nevertheless, I propose the following three tentative criteria of lived events: (1) rhetorical performance art, (2) topological space, and (3) collective action. While these characteristics overlap and mesh with each other, I will attempt to explain taxonomically.

**Rhetorical Performance Art**

While lived events can unfold in myriad ways, including acts of writing and speech, they are most evident in what I call rhetorical performance art. Rhetorical
performance art is an artistic project enacted in public space that addresses a social or political issue and induces the audience to participate with their body. By appearing in public space, rather than private or specific institutional space (such as a museum or theater), rhetorical performance art has greater potential to reach and engage a wider audience. As Peter Weibel highlights, this type of engagement has roots in the opening of The Louvre in 1794. He remarks, “With this display of private collections [via The Louvre] to the French people, they were essentially no longer limited to an elite, and the preconditions were thus laid for the expansion of the art public” (1020). While this opening of art to the public literally and symbolically enacted a more democratic society, the move was problematic in terms of not only being accessible to those who could “read” art (a literacy that needed to be learned), but physical access to the museum. In addition, who decides what pieces are selected for The Louvre (or any museum)? This type of question rose in the modernist movement with artists who criticized the museum as an elitist institution through curators’ selections. Thus, modernists began to produce various works in other spaces, such as in the street. In doing so, they reconfigured what public space means and created a firm foundation for rhetorical performance art.

Rhetorical performance art is not necessarily a revolutionary idea for (re)thinking the relations public space and art. For the last one-hundred years, how we engage with these two has been challenged by various artists and movements, from the Futurists to Kaprow’s Happenings to Boal’s Invisible theater to flash mobs or smart mobs. Allen Kaprow’s Happenings especially closely resemble rhetorical performance art and opportunities for lived events. In the late 1950s and 1960s, Kaprow used the term to describe performances and events that were interactive for the audience. Kaprow
defines Happenings as “events that, put simply, happen. . . . we feel, ‘here is something important’ [and] . . . they appear to go nowhere and do not make any particular literary point. . . . they have no structured beginning, middle, or end. . . . They exist for a single performance, or only a few, and are gone forever as new ones take their place” (*New Media Reader* 85). Happenings generated simply a new experience by eradicating performer and audience roles. Furthermore, Happenings sought to fuse art and the everyday. As Geoffrey Sirc notes, “Happenings were all about blurring the boundaries between art and life” (9). Similarly, rhetorical performance art seeks to break down these boundaries of artist-audience and art-life. The difference lies in how Happenings neglected any particular political issue. As Noah Wardrip-Fruin notes, “the work Kaprow reports does not necessarily employ interaction in the service of something besides the creation of a new experience and type of attention” (*New Media Reader* 83). While such aspirations for new experiences was/are admirable, the lack of moving beyond the experience itself fails to account for the moral and ethical imperatives within social and cultural performance. In contrast, rhetorical performance art does draw attention to moral and ethical implications embedded within social and political issues.

Happenings, as well as various other performance productions, did precede rhetorical performance art, however, and hence laid much of the foundation for rhetorical performance art to appear in public spaces and induce audiences to participate. According to Peter Weibel, “Today public spaces (streets, plazas, newspapers, TV, radio and the Internet) form new forums for artistic articulation. They serve as a field of interaction for a different art in which passers-by or users become actors engaged in creating a different society” (1021). While Weibel’s assertion is
slightly problematic in that many of these listed public spaces — newspapers, TV, radio and the Internet — are not open and free (the digital divide sheds much light on this issue), he articulates the various possibilities for rhetorical performance art to create rhetorical ecologies that connect to social and political issues. Audiences experience a much different understanding of the issues when they perform in the art or simply are the art. In rhetorical performance art, the audience are not simply visual consumers as they are in image events; rather, the audience engages with several senses and lives through events to co-produce non-discursive rhetoric.

Ultimately, I do not mean to suggest that rhetorical performance art does not connect to image events. In fact, most rhetorical performance art could be defined in a way as an image event because of similar characteristics in dissemination, content, motivations, or development. Such performances often function for the purposes of dissemination, whether via the public screen or the Internet, by appearing “on the ground” in proximity to digital technologies. Digital technologies, such as cell phones and video cameras, and the networks in which such performance projects circulate, create an ecology of media through which this performance is disseminated. For example, in the OMB project, documentary photographs and video footage of their 50,000 bone preview-installations were/are posted on their website, blog, Facebook, and Twitter. In addition, OMB founder and TED Senior Fellow Naomi Natale has been featured in articles for both local and national newspapers (e.g. Huffington Post), has presented at various conferences and forums, and has introduced the project (not the performance) in educational classrooms (from elementary to higher education). The project’s use of digital technologies facilitates its appearance in various mediums and
textual presentations in order to encourage people to engage with the issue of both
historical and current genocides. Like image events, one of the purposes of rhetorical
performance art is to generate an awareness of social injustices, economic
exploitations, oppressive institutions and ideologies for audiences. The purpose of
rhetorical performance art, then, is analogous to that of image events: to produce
generative arguments and public deliberation.

But, as mentioned in the introduction, image events are constructed with
distinguishable elements of the rhetorical situation in mind; rhetorical performance art,
on the other hand, works to break down the boundaries of artist, audience, and art by
focusing (whether intentionally or unintentionally) on processes and interactions of
artist, audience, and art rather than a final product. Via such processes and interactions,
rhetorical performance art can be thought of as what Brian Massumi calls a “technique
of existence.” In *Semblance and Event*, Massumi contends that a technique of
existence is

a technique that takes as its ‘object’ process itself, as the speculative-
pragmatic production of oriented events of change . . . They [techniques of
existence] make no gesture of claiming ‘objectivity,’ nor do they pride
themselves on their grasp of common sense. At the same time, they reject
being characterized as ‘merely’ subjective. They are *inventive* of subjective
forms in the activist sense: dynamic unities of events unfolding. (14;
emphasis in original)

Drawing on Alfred Whitehead, Henri Bergson, and Gilles Deleuze, Massumi wants to
move away from an object-oriented philosophy of the (fixed) substance or being of
things. In addition, he also wants to shift away from subject-oriented philosophies in
which cognitive approaches position the subject as epistemological producer. According
to Massumi, “cognitivist approaches ask what the subject can know of the world, as if
the subject does not come to itself already in the midst but rather looked upon the world as a reflective remove that it is philosophy’s job to overcome. The cognitivist paradigm equates the subject with the knower, and the object with the known” (6). In contrast to both these philosophical frameworks, a process-oriented philosophy is better equipped to address metaphysical and epistemological inquiries via techniques of existence. Techniques of existence are inventive gestures that articulate what Massumi proposes as activist philosophy. “Activist philosophy,” as Massumi contends, “does not deny that there is a duplicity in process between subjective and objective. It [activist philosophy] accepts the reality of both. Rather than denying them, activist philosophy affirms them otherwise, reinterpreting them in terms of events and their taking-effect” (8). Ultimately, activist philosophy is “fundamentally nonobject [and] ... noncognitive,” (6) and as such it shifts our attention to affect, movement, act(ivity), and embodiment.

Such activist philosophy undergirds the rhetorical performance art of OMB through the spontaneous emergence of lived events. The New Orleans preview-installation attracted a large crowd of observers. Some observers mentioned that they had heard about the event in the local newspaper and simply came to watch, while other observers stumbled upon the installation randomly. It is with these latter observers that the preview-installation further shapes lived events. Many of these observers, who I will refer to as non-volunteers, did not simply have a visual experience. Rather, they ended up spontaneously participating in the same actions and movements of the volunteers: they collected from the piles, made their way to the center, laid the bones, and returned to the stock piles to repeat the process. While OMB certainly does not reject such audience engagement in the preview-installation, such participation is not
one of OMB’s goals. OMB claims its purpose is to “raise awareness of genocides and atrocities going on around the world” by “using education and hands-on artmaking” (“The Project”). The “artmaking” here refers to the making of bones from clay, plaster, etc. and not in the performance of laying down the bones in the preview-installation(s). The expectation is that volunteers who desire to do more than simply make bones will create the preview- and final installations. OMB thus does not intentionally function as phenomena for unpredictable and spontaneous action. However, the project unintentionally invoked the audience to participate and co-produce non-discursive rhetoric through lived events.

When the non-volunteers participated in lived events, they became partial inventors of the installation and the elements of rhetorical situation began to bleed into each other. Audiences were no longer a distinct entity separate from artists/rhetors and art, but instead, they became co-artists and co-creators. Such rhetorical participation eradicates the boundaries between themselves and artists/activists and the tripartite arrangement (artist, art, and audience), as well as redefines the OMB installation: rather than simply defined as a visual petition (a rhetoric) and performance art piece, the project becomes what I am calling rhetorical performance art through the preview-installation’s presence in Congo Square, the focus on genocide, and the participation of the audience with their bodies. To better understand how bodies become rhetorical in lived events, we must first, however, understand how bodies move via proprioceptive engagement in topological space.

**Topological Space**

Lived events require a presence of topological space. Topological spaces differ from Cartesian spaces in that the latter fixes objects with an external grid. The
Cartesian model situates objects with particular coordinates, and the objects, as Alex Reid remarks, “are finite and locatable, and the rational subject functions through controlled and controllable interactions with these objects” (106). These interactions are based primarily on measurable qualities. For example, when a city map is constructed, buildings are represented and a scale expresses the approximate distance between the buildings and landmarks. Before we physically move through the city, we can look at the map and determine how long it might take to walk from building A to B. The map enables us to fix the materiality of the buildings, as well as the materiality of ourselves within actual reality. Once we become familiar with the city, we may no longer need to return to the map to travel; we mentally internalize the map. On days when we are walking in the city and want to arrive at a particular location, we navigate mental maps and direct ourselves to the goal. Ultimately, Cartesian space relies upon a subject-oriented framework and a classic logic for movement: the subject’s mental conception for navigation. This mental map allows for predictability: time and space can be foreseen and ordered. For the OMB project, Congo Square has its asymmetrical circular plaza with grey squared stones arranged in half circles that radiate out from a center point. The plaza, surrounded by two-hundred year old plus oak trees, has coordinates and distinct boundaries that separate it from other parts of Louis Armstrong Park and the main roads outside the gates. Thus, OMB is set within Cartesian space and positioned with an external grid: various maps (city maps, tourist maps, et al.), and subjects can mentally move to and through Cartesian Congo Square.

In addition, the external grid and mental maps turn space into place through naming/linguistic articulations. In a way, Cartesian space would be better understood as
place and occupation. Although Sidney Dobrin does not articulate exactly Cartesian space as place and occupation, he expresses a similar idea when he remarks, “definitions within space are formulated through occupation” (39). During occupation, and when space becomes place, meanings are produced. These meanings are not simply social; rather, they are political and structured within a value system. Dobrin continues, “all occupations are political; all considerations of the spatial must account for the political. All occupations are discursive, rhetorical, hegemonic. Through its occupations, space is not merely social; it is political” (43). Yet, before space becomes political, it is topological and has potential for being politicized. To politicize that space, I am suggesting in this paper that individuals participating in lived events use proprioception, which I explain below in more detail, in topological space to generate novel values and meanings within Cartesian space. Such usage, as we will see, gives lived events a non-discursive characteristic.

The use of proprioception and its production for lived events works nicely because of the nature of topological spaces. For Reid, “topological spaces are not limited to Cartesian geometry. Such spaces are virtual in that they are undecided; they do not have a fixed, Cartesian identity. But they are also actual in that they have a physical, material existence. They simply cannot be fully described in Cartesian terms” (99). Again, analogous with events in general, we arrive at the description of topological space as that which cannot be articulated. But working off the map example above, we may be able to better understand topological space: When we set out to arrive at a certain location, but do not have to mentally navigate how to get there, and arrive without that cognitive use, we experience topological space via our embodied
knowledge. Consider the times when we get home from meeting with a friend or work and cannot remember the walk or drive. Even when we leave from various parts of the city or town and are required to take an atypical route, we still arrive at our home without having to think about every turn and travel distance. What is happening in those moments?

Instead of a Cartesian subject and mind that moves the body, the body simply moves itself, as well as the subject and mind, through Cartesian space. In other words, the body uses an affective proprioception within and from topological space to navigate Cartesian space. As Reid articulates, “Navigation becomes embodied and proprioceptive . . . the body guides itself in relation to the unfolding of its own movements rather than in reference to an external set of spatial coordinates” (107). Proprioception is a sense that allows an individual to know how his or her body parts connect with each other and mobilize through time and space. It is always connected to the external environment. A simple example: when I walk, I do not need to watch or think about my legs and feet to move my body forward. In other words, my proprioception is functioning to propel my body and mind through the actual, physical spatial-temporal world. Yet, proprioception differs from the traditional five senses because it doesn’t come from any specific organ, but from the nervous system as a whole. In a way, proprioception is an ecological sense of the body. However, proprioception is not the internal movement of organs; rather, it is always connected to an external environment (whether on a Cartesian grid and/or topological web). Just because I do not have to think about my heart beating does not mean I am using my proprioceptive sense. Thus, when individuals use proprioception, they move their
bodies through Cartesian space with a knowledge that is derived from the environment, but also from repetition.

Repetition differs from habit, in that habit links the past to the predictable future. For example, when I set my alarm clock every day to 8:00 am, I develop an agenda with predictability. The past simply unfolds into the present so that the future can be predicted. Repetition, on the other hand, is formed via an unpredictable folding of the past, present and future in particular moments, which simultaneously enables the present and future to unfold in unpredictable ways. This unfolding is an event. And that unfolding is disruption. According to Alain Badiou, an event “rupture[s] . . . the normal order of bodies and languages as it exists for any particular situation or as it appears in any particular world” (242). During these ruptures of old structures, the new or novel (the event) is produced. For instance, the repetition of drawing a landscape of trees and mountains can possibly mutate with each drawing, most likely producing unforeseen images of the landscape. The representation of the normal order of the landscape is ruptured with each drawing because the drawer may perceive the trees and the mountains differently. If the drawer allows his or her body to guide the drawing, the trees may become resemblances of people or the mountains as buildings. The landscape may visually become a mix of an urban center and rural pastoral. Included in the act of drawing these drawings is proprioception: movements of the hand, of the intensity between hand and pencil, of the intensity of pencil applied to paper. With each repetition, the body of the drawer learns how to move through Cartesian space; yet, with each repetition the body also becomes comfortable as it begins to move through topological space, to move in possibly novel ways. If those latter moves begin to plan
mentally how to move, then repetition ceases and habit develops. When repetition emerges, embodiment occurs; repetition, in other words, allows proprioceptive acts to develop an embodied knowledge that can generate unpredictable happenings. The drawer now engages with their hand and perception in ways that had been impossible a priori; the drawer has a sense of embodied knowledge from their affective proprioception.

In OMB, since the bone laying process is a repetition, it creates affective proprioception from the topological web. Each navigation from the bone piles to the center allows non-volunteers to perceptually feel their way from topological space through the Cartesian space. There is no external grid or map for the performance. Linguistic directions also are absent; non-volunteers are not told how to act. Yet, non-volunteers are compelled to participate and intuit how to participate through visual, aural, and proprioceptive experience. Non-volunteers, thus, become emergent figures who participate in and create a non-discursive, embodied rhetoric. As Massumi contends, “To get an emergent figure, you need to add senses other than vision. In particular, touch and proprioception, the registering of the displacements of body parts relative to each other” (95). As non-volunteers begin to participate, they generate arguments through their embodied actions. The claim, data, and warrants are not discursively present. The bones and bodies and their movements are making an argument, and while that argument moves closer to a “complete” argument with the repetition, that argument is ultimately fragmented. As non-volunteers develop an embodied knowledge through the repetition, unpredictably also emerges: they could change the path from bone pile to center and how they lay down the bones. At the end
of the day, the installation will become something that cannot be precisely foreseen. All that can be seen, or rather perceived, is the ritual (which I address momentarily) and repetition of volunteers and non-volunteers.

This affective proprioception in OMB develops not only through repetition, but through perception. Before I explain how, I first need to clarify the difference here between seeing and perceiving. For this paper, Ann Marie Barry’s theory of perception, a theory tightly connected to neurological research and psychology with visual communication, helps clarify the terms. She posits that “perception theory” is linked to “the primacy of emotions in processing all communication, and particularly targets visual communication as paralleling perceptual process dependent on primary emotion-based systems of response” (45). In challenging the assumption that visual experience includes consciousness, Barry’s turn to neurology illuminates that “sight may indeed begin with light hitting the retina, [and] vision occurs deep within the brain; . . . [but] perception, the process by which we derive meaning from what we see, is an elaborate symphony played first and foremost through the unconscious emotional system, with neural equipment evolved over millions of years” (46). Before the conscious recognition of a visual situation, Barry breaks down the visual experience neurologically: light/visual information from the environment passes through the cornea, pupil and lens and hits the receptors in the retina; next, that light/information is converted into electrical impulses; the optic nerve then communicates these impulses to the “brain’s visual thalamus and onto the visual cortex where vision actually occurs” (48). It is in the thalamus where the electrical impulses divert into two routes: the thalamo-amygdala pathway and the cortical pathway. The former connects to the amygdale, the emotional center of the
brain; the latter connects to the cortex and begins the state of awareness. The thalamo-
amygdala route has a shorter distance than the cortical route. Hence, by the time we
become aware, our emotions have already been stimulated by the visual environment.
As Barry notes, “Emotional reactions are therefore faster than conscious ones, and
emotional memory frames all conscious response. The cortex also sends a second
signal to the amygdale, adding conscious input to emotional reaction and emotional
response to thought” (49).

Although Barry reverts to a cognitive understanding of visual experience, we can
derive from her study an important idea to understand what audiences might experience
in lived events. In her perception theory and definition of perception, Barry generates a
form of affect theory. As the emotional center of the brain gets stimulated from the
visual environment, the brain and the body can act in ways a prior consciousness, the
best and most obvious example being how individuals engage with advertisements
(Barry 54-55). Such brain, eye, body interaction leads Barry to note that perception is
“the process by which we derive meaning through experience, is a dynamic, interactive
system that utilizes built-in genetic programming to synthesize sensory input, memory,
and individual needs. The eyes are only an initial part of the equation, and can, in fact,
be bypassed altogether” (48). In addition to the eye, the brain is also only one
component to perception. As James J. Gibson contends, “it is not necessary to assume
that anything whatever is transmitted along the optic nerve in the activity of perception.
. . We can think of vision as a perceptual system, the brain being simply part of the
system” (61; emphasis in original). In other words, perceiving is neither an eye nor a
brain-mind centered experience; rather perceiving is an eye-brain-mind-body affect.
Perception is not simply cognitive, but, and more so, embodied. Understanding perception along these above terms helps explain why lived events are an affective experience. Not only does eye-brain-mind-body perception induce non-volunteers to participate in OMB, but these non-volunteers also perceive movement and feel their way through Cartesian space and topological space.

Obviously, non-volunteers see the material rhetoric of bones and the movement of bodies. And they also see the development of an art piece. But they also experience multisensory stimulations: visually, aurally, and proprioceptually. They hear the bones, the rhythms of the music, and the silence of human voices. They hear the reverberating sounds of participants collecting the bones from the bone piles and of bones connecting with the ground that echo throughout Congo Square. Simply hearing the bones’ interaction with each other and the ground stimulates aurally, but perceiving the sounds signifies movement. The dings of bones contacting each other and the ground create a sense of action and movement. In addition, the backdrop to those bones’ sounds is rhythmic music. The striking on the percussions and the beating of bongos adds another layer to the aural experience. This rhythmic combination is also accompanied by chants from the musicians. The aural sources — bones, people, instruments, and chants — creates a rhythm for non-volunteers to (possibly) move through the Cartesian space. Non-volunteers are affectively persuaded by these aural and proprioceptive sources to spontaneously participate in laying the bones. Once in action, non-volunteers move with the rhythm of the ritual, an experience of affective proprioception that produces an embodied rhetoric with political implications.
A lived event is further shaped with these processes of engagement and the multisensory experience, but it is additionally materialized in the installation’s ritual process that unfolds via collective action. Lived events emerge, function, and circulate with(in) a collection of people. Such movements draw our attention to the activity of interactions (collective action), action that further underscores the political dimensions of lived events, but also expresses connections between microcosms and macrocosms.

**Collective Action**

Because lived events are emergent political acts, they create novel ways for the production of new values and meanings, as well as civic engagement, which is always connected to the social unit. Social units — from the micro (local) to the macro level (global) — are intricately woven together and when individuals work collectively, they form possibilities for different ways of connection and participation within a democracy. In other words, collective action is a democratic practice. The form and substance of that democratic practice, of course, can vary. Within Western philosophical tradition, democratic practice tends to hold dialogue and/or public speech as the quintessential for action and social change. As Lorenza Mondada remarks, “Public speeches are living experiments in bringing people together and making them affiliate or disaffiliate with the positions held. They are not reduced to individual words but assemble and organize through manifestations of agreement and dissent, the very bodies of politics” (876). Again, we see democratic practice as tied to discursive representations and acts (dialogue and discourse). Rhetorical theory is rife with (implicitly or explicitly) privileging such verbal, as well as written, language for collective action because of the idea of clear claims, data, and warrants. As a consequence, theories that connect rhetoric to
democratic practice and civic engagement often subjugate or simply neglect the body due to the body’s lack of clear claims, data, or warrants.

Yet, the body can generate much rhetorical force, especially when participating in collective action. As Jason Del Gandio contends, “Collective action relies upon the coordination and communication of bodies. Subtract those bodies and the collective action disappears” (151). Collective actions are often subversive, in that, as Del Gandio notes, “Speeches, letters and [running for] offices are easily controlled by corporate media, governmental bureaucracies, social biases and money, power and privilege. Collective actions [with the body] cut through these contours and allow people to create the conditions of their own communication” (152). Hence, the body or bodies can spur radical changes within social formations through the body’s or bodies’ collective materiality (and movement). Important to note is that collective action differs from collaborative action in which the latter typically suggests that individuals are working together toward a particular outcome. When individuals collaborate, they tend to predict the end. But when individuals collectively act, there is no script or predetermination. In fact, the collective action and the subsequent results may not even materialize and produce any substance, as in the case with lived events. Thus, as collective actions emerge, lived events gain potential to produce a different way of living, of connecting, and of engaging with social and political issues.

Besides unfolding in topological space via proprioceptive engagement, lived events operate via refamiliarization. Drucker defines refamiliarization (which is problematic for two reasons that I address below) as fundamentally “an act of recovery and connection, not innovation, novelty, or shock exposure” (27). Unlike de-
familiarization, which works with shock experience, Drucker claims that refamiliarization has a different purpose:

*De-familiarization* propose[s] a slap-in-the-face shock effect, a momentary surprise meant to transform habitual thought into awareness. But awareness of what? *Refamiliarization* asks images to show the contingent relations of complex systems, to expose vectors and forces of interests, desires, and power. The task of refamiliarization is to show that *what is* is *not* entirely simulacral, but connected to the lived experience of persons and peoples, organic beings, within cultural, political, and vulnerable ecological spheres. (30; emphasis in original)

While explicitly shocking imagery about social issues is necessary at times, and indeed sometimes more productive to radically changing economic, political, and social conditions, it also has the potential to deter collective action. When shocked, individuals often tend to retract to conservative modes, shutting down any opportunity for invention. By closing off those potentials for invention, activists fall short of connecting people and persuading people to act. Drucker thus argues that because of the saturation of images within contemporary society, visual artists need to take a different approach from the “de-familiarization, making strange, and resistant opposition” (29). In other words, we are already bombarded with shocking and strange images, so to think that visual artists can continue to produce such images and believe social action will result is frivolous. Rather, artists and activists ought to use refamiliarization in their image event making if they desire to enact social change. She remarks, “The idea of images as events is useful, but only if we can make something of it as an interpretative practice” (36).

While refamiliarization is useful to understand the collective action needed in lived events, Drucker’s articulation here needs some revision in order to understand how lived events actually unfold. First, similar to DeLuca et al., Drucker focuses on simply the visual experience of an event. As much as she invokes images to connect
people to the “lived experiences of persons and peoples,” she situates the audience with merely a visual experience. Her articulation of refamiliarization thus neglects to account for how refamiliarization occurs as people make connections through multisensory experiences of collective action. During lived events, for example, refamiliarization occurs when individuals connect to others in the actual and immediate lived moment (microcosm), which in turn connects those individuals to others in remote or distant contexts (macrocosm). In other words, there aren’t just images that individuals engage with, and subsequently produce mental concepts; rather, as individual bodies experience affective proprioception with/in connection to other bodies, they become part of a lived experience in ways that images cannot manifest. By connecting these lived experiences to others, refamiliarization has inherent political and ethical implications. The second issue in Drucker’s articulation of refamiliarization is how it neglects to acknowledge the innovation and novelty that are necessary for engaging with democratic practices. Democratic practices respond to complex social and political issues. Innovative and novel ways of thinking and acting are often necessary to solve dilemmas. Connecting is only a basis for refamiliarization; connecting in innovative ways enhances refamiliarization and opens possibilities for engagement in our ever-globalized and interconnected world. Lived events are rhetorically effective because they offer people to connect and address complex issues with innovative and novel actions and affects of the body in the local and to the global.

In the OMB preview-installation, for instance, such innovative and novel actions of bodies unfold as people (spontaneously) participate in collective action through repetition and perception. When they participate in collective efforts that entail repeated
movements of bone placing, they may perceive the installation in two ways: (1) the larger than immediate, in which I mean they perceive spaces that have movement of all volunteers to produce a text that could not be done without many other people and (2) the remote or distant contexts (the historical and current connections of seemingly disparate people), in which I mean they perceive the acknowledgement of the injustices of genocide and the collective action to recover from those injustices. The former perception allows participants to perceive their contribution to a cultural text (the installation) and feel part of a group of visible strangers. It is local. The latter perception enables participants to feel connection to others (both historically and spatially distant) outside the local, hence it is global. The latter perception is what can be called perceiving cosmological spaces.

Cosmological spaces are constituted by the interaction and entanglement of seemingly disparate spaces and objects. In order to perceive cosmological spaces, ritual is often vital. A ritual, a la Massumi,

is a way of performing thought. It is a technique of existence for bringing forth virtual events through techniques involving bodily performance, in mutual inclusion with events of the other kinds. Events, for example, of the heavens, of a cosmological kind. . . . Ritual produces a perceptual feeling of seen cosmological spaces. Its gesturality is visionary. It involves proprioception in the invention of a virtual event of vision, of a cosmologically spatializing kind. Ritual technique produces a cosmological semblance of a spatializing event of vision, perceptually felt at a point of indistinction with cosmological thinking. . . . it invokes into occurring a collectively shared nonsensuous experience of a cosmological kind. (124-126; emphasis in original)

While Massumi’s discourse sounds romantic, and indeed he has been accused of reverting to romantic ideals of self and truth, Massumi identifies the deep connection between ritual performance and refamiliarization that emerges in lived events. In OMB,
participants in proprioceptive ritual move affectively beyond the immediate context of Congo Square, the bones, the other participants, and the installation. Instead, they perceive/feel cosmological spaces: past and current genocides and victims of genocide, both historically here in the United States (Native Americans/Indians) and abroad (Holocaust, Armenian Massacres, et al.) and currently abroad in several African, Southeast Asian, and Middle Eastern states. Through these collective actions, participants are able to connect via their proprioceptive bodies not only with other non-volunteers and participants, but also with the social issue OMB addresses: genocide.

This bodily connection is important because genocide no longer is an abstract concept or a statistic. Instead, participants experience a deep, concrete relation to genocide as attention is drawn to the materiality of bones and bodies (actual and symbolic) across public space. This concrete relation to genocide emerges within and through a rhetorical ecology of affective processes and intensities in which both volunteers and non-volunteers mimic a particular materiality to genocide. Although OMB artists cannot recreate genocidal acts of mass slaughter, they use a particular signifier — bones — and the collective action of lived events to highlight the materiality of genocide. Particularly, as participants compile a mass grave, their actions produce non-discursive rhetoric that becomes more than an abstract visual display: the mass grave is felt through perception that is visual, aural, and proprioceptive. Non-volunteers perceptually feel, in other words, the materiality of genocide through their physical engagement. Genocide becomes a felt experience as participants carry and lay bones and return to the stock pile. That perceptually felt process collapses time. Via live events, participants experience the singularity of past, present, and future folded into
each other. But furthermore, participants feel an unfolding of the present and future that is absent of genocidal incidences.

The OMB collective action that collapses space and time was expressed by both volunteers and non-volunteers. Several participants remarked that through the process of laying bones, they felt the emergence of something larger than themselves. Participants felt a presence of being there at the installation and in the process of inventing the installation, as well as a presence that connected with victims of genocide, both historical and current. This same feeling also rose after all 50,000 bones were laid. Volunteer Avril Lundi writes, “As those last bones were laid, the volunteers began to stand back and just look at what they had been part of. It was a gorgeous moment when everyone there knew in their hearts that they were part of this thing that was so entirely about them and also entirely more than them” (“Love Letter To New Orleans, Post Script”). While Avril uses the word “look” to comprehend her experience, she also follows her explanation with “knew,” which means “look” might be more closely aligned with an enhanced “perceive.” When we perceive something, we do more than develop a mental image of an object(s). As participants navigate their way to bone piles and bring a small number of bones (in comparison to the total number of bones) to the center point, they experience their immediate participation, but also they perceive their results of bone laying as both significant and slightly insignificant to the larger project. It will only be after hours of ritual and repetition that participants will be able to see and perceive the whole installation and the effects of collective action.

While OMB may claim it is a “visual petition” and that collaboration emerges in the making of bones, the preview-installation actually functions as a rhetorical
performance art piece and generates lived events. It does more than image events, persuading the audience through bodily participation in the process of laying bones. While the preview-installation OMB does establish a set of rules (participants collect a set number of bones from the stock piles and are required to lay them down in a specific area), the project also opens space for spontaneity by compelling non-volunteers to repeat the ritual movements. Rather than focusing specifically on the material rhetoric of the bones (the text) or how the installation (another physically larger text) attempts to persuade viewers, the process of laying the bones opens the possibility for lived events to emerge. It is the performance of creating the installation that renders a non-discursive, embodied rhetorical event: a lived event.
CHAPTER 3
CONCLUSION

In this paper, I have attempted to show how lived events help produce new political and rhetorical actions in public space. Image events acquire rhetorical power to address social and political issues by enabling an audience to engage in public deliberation and generative rhetoric. In this event, the audience is disconnected from invention, as their intervention comes post-production. Lived events, on the other hand, complicate that rhetorical situation and allow the audience to produce, and hence offer a new lens to think about how we engage with art and social issues. Lived events are complex phenomena that emerge in particular ways — the eradication of elements in rhetorical situations, the dissipation of Cartesian space and actualization of topological space, and the collective effort within a rhetorical ecology of affective processes and intensities. They entail a non-discursive, embodied rhetoric that also allows for innovative ways to understand argumentation and democratic practices. In addition, they can further enable more complicated theories of epistemology and ontology: knowledge as embodiment, affect, and self — the mind-body entity — as becoming or as a process within a network of processes.

While I focused on a rhetorical performance art in physical space to highlight lived events, emerging digital technologies also provide us with ample opportunities to create lived events. In return, lived events might create new foundations for thinking through the possibilities of Gregory Ulmer’s electracy. Indeed, with digital technologies individuals can further explore radical changes to current injustices and exploitations. By connecting lived events to digital activism, we also open up potentials to better understand rhetorical situations, visual rhetoric, composing, and writing. No longer can
these foci neglect or simply dismiss the value of the body in invention if scholars consider lived events. Rather, lived events could extend conversations in those areas, as well as raise more inquires about the posthuman body or a postbody within rhetorical ecologies and digital technologies. When more of those inquiries emerge, I see those “post” bodies in ecologies with digital technologies further complicating what lived events are. Thus, as an extension of this project, we might begin those inquiries and conversations.
LIST OF REFERENCES


One Million Bones. http://www.onemillionbones.org/


BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Phillip Bratta is currently a graduate student in the English department at University of Florida. Before coming to UF in fall 2011, he completed his Bachelors of Arts in Cultural Studies at Columbia College Chicago, as well as taught ESL/EFL in Chicago, Peru, and San Diego. At University of Florida, he teaches Technical Communication (ENC 3254) and First-Year Composition (ENC 1101 and ENC 1102) courses, and he will receive his Masters of Arts in English (concentration in Composition and Rhetoric) in May 2013. With an interdisciplinary approach, his interests span from rhetorical and writing theory and studies to nationalism, imperialism, and post-colonialism in film, literature, print culture, and popular culture. Beginning fall 2013, he will be pursuing his PhD in Rhetoric and Writing at Michigan State University.