

Cool Content

Communication & Participation

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“I’m making explorations. I don’t know where they’re going to take me. My work is designed for the pragmatic purpose of trying to understand our technological environment and its psychic and social consequences. But my books constitute the process rather than the completed product of discovery; my purpose is to employ facts as tentative probes, as means of insight, of pattern recognition, rather than to use them in the traditional and sterile sense of classified data, categories, containers. I want to map new terrain rather than chart old landmarks. But I’ve never presented such explorations as revealed truth. As an investigator, I have no fixed point of view, no commitment to any theory--my own or anyone else’s. As a matter of fact, I’m completely ready to junk any statement I’ve ever made about any subject if events don’t bear me out, or if I discover it isn’t contributing to an understanding of the problem. The better part of my work on media is actually somewhat like a safe-cracker’s. I don’t know what’s inside; maybe it’s nothing. I just sit down and start to work. I grope, I listen, I test, I accept and discard; I try out different sequences--until the tumblers fall and the doors spring open.”

Marshall McLuhan
Playboy Interview (1969)

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Introduction

Marshall McLuhan observed in *Understanding Media* that there are “cool” and “hot” types of media allowing for greater or lesser participation by the receiver and blurring lines between producer and consumers, authors and readers.

The same might be said of “texts” and “scripts” that circulate within media. While some theories like Reader-Response Theory argues that all texts are cool needing participation for completion, one might also argue that some texts are “cooler” than other texts allowing for greater participation in their completion. In effect, there are “cool” and “hot” texts or scripts.

Not only do cool texts create greater participation by readers, they also allow for greater circulation in culture as completion of the texts become shared projects. In culture these cool texts are key components of what Henry Jenkins terms “spreadable media” in his book of the same name *Spreadable Media*. As Jenkins notes, “Context spreads when it acts as fodder for conversations that audiences are already having.” In effect, cool texts provide the real fuel within spreadable media.

Greater circulation of texts in culture has a strong relationship to greater popularity of the text in culture. In fact, it might be the greatest factor. Not just in current texts but rather the popularity of texts throughout history. In effect, one might be able to say that cool texts lead to popularity while hot texts do not find popularity. As cultural critic John Fiske notes in *Reading Popular Culture*:

“If the cultural commodities or texts do not contain resources out of which the people can make their own meaning of their social relations and identities, they will be rejected and will fail in the marketplace. They will not be made popular.”

Through studying popular and classical texts in history as well as popular current texts, a type of cool grammar might be discovered and refined. The grammar will consist of a particular structure as well as elements (or cool devices) within this structure.

The following is an attempt at identifying the structure and elements of a grammar for creating these “cool scripts.”

* * *

In all of this, the project might go far beyond the bounds of literary theory and popular writing in that cool and hot texts might have a substantial relationship to other areas of culture.

For example, one area is political control. One thesis, that needs (but allows) testing, is that political systems that desire more control over citizens create texts (like propaganda)

that are more “hot” than “cool” for it is not in the interest of controlling political systems to create participative cultures.

One of the great paradoxes today in America is that technology and media have created a “cool” culture of participation (electronic technology and cool interactive media of iPhones and social media) within an increasingly controlling political system. Since the political system has little control over the technology and types of media within this technology, their remaining option for control is texts and scripts within this technology and media.

Therefore, one of the great “elephant in the room” questions for the political system today is how is to maintain control through texts and scripts. The political system has a need to create “hot” non-participative texts and scripts but doing so ensures little circulation and popularity in culture since they are complete needing little participation. The political system seems to attempt to manage this paradox right now by its attempt to participate in popularity created by others. It is ultimately a no-win game for them and suggests a great change is ahead.

* * *

Beyond possible political implications above, the change is invading all parts of culture and society with profound effects.

- In media the change is marked by the change from the one-way broadcast model of transmission and reception to the two-way interactive model of the Internet where digital technology allows individuals to be both transmit and receive.
- In marketing and advertising, brand image and control is no longer something undertaken by the brand owner but becomes a collaborative effort by participation of brand buyers along with brand producers.
- In entertainment, the distinction between authors and readers, actors and audiences, is in the midst of radical change with the emergence of new forms of literary production such “fan fiction” and the growing phenomenon on Broadway called “immersive” or “event” theater where the audience participates in the performance.
- In politics, the distinction between leaders and followers has been challenged by the emergence of organization structures based on flat, connected networks rather than pyramid-like hierarchies. A recent example of this new structure was illustrated in the Occupy Movement of 2012.

The change is fueled by today’s interactive digital technology of the Internet. The result is that creation of culture is open to a larger number of “participants.” While the role merger is radical, it is certainly not the first time this has happened.

For example, one of the greatest achievements of Greek culture was creation of the democratic idea of participation of citizens (original consumers) in the affairs of state. The idea and reality of participation of citizen, consumers in cultural production has been an important (yet largely hidden) dynamic defining periods and eras of history. In fact, an argument can be made that “enlightened” Renaissance-like periods of history have resulted from high participative cultures while “dark” periods of history have been related to low participatory cultures.

Even today, the nations of the world might be placed on spectrum based around the amount of one-way media or interactive media in each nation with evidence that one-way media allows for less participation than two-way media. We made this argument a number of years ago in our manuscript *Media Nations* observing that nations with higher percentages of one-way broadcast media (radios, televisions and newspapers) offer less participatory cultures than nations with higher numbers of interactive two-way digital media (cell phones, computers). The nations with higher percentages of broadcast media trend towards totalitarianism regimes while those with higher percentages of interactive media trend towards democratic systems.

* * *

The dichotomy between participation and non-participation was perhaps best translated into the modern world with the distinction between “hot” and “cool” media made by Marshall McLuhan in his famous *Understanding Media*.

There is a basic principle that distinguishes a hot medium like radio from a cool one like the telephone, or a hot medium like the movie from a cool one like TV. A hot medium is one that extends one single sense in ‘high definition.’ High definition is the state of being well filled with data. A photograph is, visually, ‘high definition.’ A cartoon is ‘low definition,’ simply because very little visual information is provided. The ear is given a meager amount of information. Telephone is a cool medium, or one of low definition, because the ear is given a meager amount of information. And speech is a cool medium of low definition, because so little is given and so much has to be filled in by the listener. On the other hand, hot media do not leave so much to be filled in or completed by the audience.

Concepts like degrees of definition and information are perhaps better understood by their relationship to user participation. As McLuhan noted, “Hot media are, therefore, low in participation, and cool media are high in participation or completion by the audience.”¹ To McLuhan, “hot” media was filled with so much information it was non-participatory for the user. On the other hand, “cool” media offered less information and therefore allowed more participation by the user.

While McLuhan’s dichotomy of “hot” and “cool” media gave modern clothing to the ancient dynamics of participation, its main focus was on types of media and underlined McLuhan’s main thesis in *Understanding Media* that the “Medium was the message.” In

effect, the context of communication or particular media of communication, controlled the content within it.

But McLuhan was a literary historian and scholar as well as a media theorist and he provided a very interesting quote from Sir Francis Bacon in *Understanding Media* that participation might be a function of literary devices (media content) as well as media context noting:

Francis Bacon never tired of contrasting hot and cool prose. Writing in ‘methods’ or complete packages, he contrasted with writing in aphorisms, or single observations such as ‘Revenge is a kind of wild justice.’ The passive consumer wants packages, but those, he suggested, who are concerned in pursuing knowledge and in seeking causes will resort to aphorisms, just because they are incomplete and require participation in depth.

So, not only is there “hot” and “cool” media allowing for less or more participation, there is also “hot” and “cool” devices within media (such as Bacons aphorisms) allowing for less-or-more participation. In this way, aphorisms can be labeled “cool” literary devices because they are incomplete, demanding participation for their completion. In contrast to them, there are “hot” literary devices that deliver “complete packages” with no demand for participatory completion. In effect, “cool” and “hot” literary devices find a correspondence with “cool” and “hot” media. But at the same time, they are not dependent on the media for their definition. In other words, “hot” media might contain “cool” technique and “cool” media might contain “hot” content.”

* * *

At the end of *Cool Scripts* are a few “hot” literary device that precludes participation called clichés and propaganda. A cliché, therefore, might be termed a “hot” literary device in that it cuts off further thought or participation by the reader. A cliché is an expression, idea, or element of an artistic work that has become overused to the point of losing its original meaning or effect, even to the point of being trite or irritating, especially when at some earlier time it was considered meaningful or novel. The French poet Gerard de Nerval once said, “The first man who compared woman to a rose was a poet, the second, an imbecile.”

Thought-terminating clichés, also known as thought-stoppers, or semantic stopsigns, are words or phrases that discourage critical thought and meaningful discussion about a given topic. They are typically short, generic truisms that offer seemingly simple answers to complex questions or that distract attention away from other lines of thought. They are often sayings that have been embedded in a culture’s folk wisdom and are tempting to say because they sound true or good or like the right thing to say. Some examples are: “Stop thinking so much,” and “Here we go again.”

The term was popularized by psychiatrist Robert Jay Lifton in his 1961 book *Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism: A Study of Brainwashing in China*. Lifton wrote, “The language of the totalist environment is characterized by the thought-terminating cliché. The most far-reaching and complex of human problems are compressed into brief,

highly reductive, definitive-sounding phrases, easily memorized and easily expressed. These become the start and finish of any ideological analysis.” Sometimes they are used in a deliberate attempt to shut down debate, manipulate others to think a certain way, or dismiss dissent. However, some people repeat them, even to themselves, out habit or conditioning or as a defense mechanism to reaffirm a confirmation bias.

* * *

Although McLuhan used Bacon’s observation to discuss participatory devices in the scripts and texts, the use of these devices go back much further than Bacon and can be found throughout history. As greater participation in political systems has diminished the distinction between government and citizens, in economic systems between producers and consumers, in literature (and other text and script-based forms) it has diminished the distinction between authors and readers, performers and audience.

The breakdown in scripts and texts of the dichotomy between authors and readers, certainly has a relationship to the politics and economics of their particular periods. One might even argue that this breakdown of the dichotomy in texts and scripts provides the key factor in the coming and going of participatory cultures throughout history.

But beyond creating participatory cultures, the breakdown of the dichotomy between authors and readers might be a key factor creating popularity for certain texts and scripts throughout history. For example, one observes a number of “cool” literary devices in the Bible such as the use of Proverbs and Parables as well as a structure based on short sections. Or what about the novels of Charles Dickens? Rather than publish them in *complete* form, they were published as *incomplete* stories on a monthly basis and later published as books.

There is of course an on-going cottage industry of “how to” write popular, bestselling, blockbuster texts with many pundits and “experts” propounding ideas and theories as to what makes certain scripts rise to stardom in culture. Many devices such as the use of suspense are put forward to explain popularity of the text. Yet in all the discussion, there is little (if any) discussion of the relationship between “cool” devices and “cool scripts” and popularity. Might there be a powerful relationship so far hidden and unexplored? A literary detective might indeed find these methods present in the classics of literature throughout the ages.

The following proposes a type of grammar for creating “cool scripts.” The creation of this grammar is both possible as well as long overdue. In the following pages we offer the beginning outline for a grammar of “cool scripts.” Hopefully, our following text will create participation and blur the distinction between author and reader. As the reader will observe, we attempt to practice what we preach here by trying to avoid writing in “complete packages” but rather incomplete packages with cool devices and words (as well as the images symbolized by the words). So, offered here (hopefully) is an incomplete script of text inviting, encouraging, welcoming (with open arms) a type of participation mystique in the assemblage of a particular creation.

Cool Culture

“Words are a mirror of their times. By looking at the areas in which the vocabulary of a language is expanding fastest in a given period, we can form a fairly accurate impression of the chief preoccupations of society at that time and the points at which the boundaries of human endeavor are being advanced.”

John Ayto
Twentieth Century Words.

Culture (Medium) = Equality, Cool. Communication as communion or coming together.

Individual (Message) = Freedom, Hot. Communication as transmission of moving from one place to another.

Paradox: America was founded at intersection of Freedom + Equality.

The words Freedom and Equality being re-interpreted today in light of Cool Theory. Freedom and equality are within all of us as duality symbols. There is the equality of the unconsciousness and birth and youth that represents the equality of the first and beginning symbol of cycles. The one of birth from the great equality of the ocean within a mother.

There is the movement towards freedom throughout life, away from the mother ocean of childhood and pre-birth and towards (in many ways) an isolating aloneness of freedom in the later years of life. The freedom of old age triumphs over the equality of youth. Temporarily perhaps. But enough to set the background and setting for a particular story. Not only is this a freedom to purchase items but also to see them for purchase in the first place.

Search words represent hot and cool trends that can be measured. “The famous Sapir-Whorf Hypothesis posits a linguistic determinism arguing language plays a central role in creation of a worldview. In the sense that language is a product of words, one can say that a culture's worldview is affected and influenced by the words of its particular language. Words both create and communicate worldviews. The greatest potential in history for the observation and analysis of words exists on the Internet. Indeed, the Internet can be considered history's greatest observatory and laboratory of words.”

“Electric Symbols”

John Fraim – *First Monday*, June 2002 –

<http://firstmonday.org/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/957/878>

Cool Theory

Theories of Communication

This misunderstanding of communication derives from two competing ideas of communication. James Carey, one of the leading communications scholars, talks about these two ideas in his important book *Communication and Culture*. In the article "A Cultural Approach to Communications," Carey points out that there have been two major alternative conceptions of communications in American culture since the term first entered discourse in the nineteenth century. He terms these views as the *transmission* view and the *ritual* view.

The transmission view is defined by terms such as "imparting," "transmitting," "sending," or "giving information to others." The ritual view is defined by terms such as "sharing," "participation," "association," "fellowship" and the possession of a common faith. The transmission view centers around the metaphors of geography and transportation with an ancient heritage derived from the dream of increasing the speed and effect of messages through space. As Carey notes, the center of this idea is "the transmission of signals or messages over distances for the purpose of control." He remarks, "From the time upper and lower Egypt were unified under the First Dynasty down through the invention of the telegraph, transportation and communication were inseparably linked."

Dominance of Transmission

The ancient transmission metaphor was brought into the modern world during the nineteenth century with the western expansion of the American railroads when "movement of people and information were seen as the same thing." While the arrival of the telegraph ended the identity, Carey argues that it did not destroy the metaphor. He concludes that today our basic orientation to communication remains grounded in the idea of transmission.

It is an orientation with strong religious and moral connotations. This was so because movement in space became a highly redemptive act for Americans. More than merely the transmittal of information, movement in space became an attempt to establish and extend the kingdom of God. It is a belief, notes Carey, that has never quite escaped from Americans. "The moral meaning of transportation," he writes, "was the establishment and extension of God's kingdom on earth. The moral meaning of communication was the same."

Carey suggests that as the forces of science and secularization gained ground, the religious metaphors fell away. The technology of communication moved to the

center of thought. But the religious and moral understanding of communication has never left the "zeitgeist" or context against which communications in America is understood. As Carey says, from the telegraph to the computer the same sense of profound possibility for moral improvement is present whenever the machines are invoked." In effect, the transmission view has become a type of paradigm which defines the "playing field" before the "game" even starts.

Ancient Heritage of Ritual

As a result, the ritual view has played only a minor part in America's conception of communication. Even so, Carey argues that the ritual view is by far the older view and is based identity and common roots of the terms "commonness," "communion," "community," and "communication." Carey makes an important and critical point when he concludes that "A ritual view of communication is directed not toward the extension of messages in space but toward the maintenance of society in time; not the act of imparting information but the representation of shared beliefs." If the archetype of the transmission view is the extension of messages across geography to control, the archetype of the ritual view is the sacred ceremony that draws together in fellowship and commonality.

While the transmission view has moral and religious underpinnings, the "indebtedness of the ritual view of communication to religion is apparent in the name chosen to label it." Moreover, Carey points out that it derives from a view of religion that downplays the role of the sermon, the instruction and admonition, in order to highlight the role of prayer, chant and ceremony. In this sense, "It sees the original or highest manifestation of communication not in the transmission of intelligent information but in the construction and maintenance of an ordered, meaningful cultural world that can serve as a control container for human action."

The ritual view of communication therefore sees popular culture as providing *confirmation* of belief rather *transmission* of information. Its purpose is not to alter attitudes or change minds "but to represent an underlying order of things, not to perform functions but to manifest an ongoing and fragile social process."

But the ritual view has been far from the dominant motif of American communications scholarship that has been entranced with the transmission view. Carey suggests that this is in large part a result of Americans obsessive individualism, "from our Puritanism which disdains activity not practical and work oriented and from the separation of culture and science."

Similar to communication, the ancient idea of symbolism and symbols was based on ritual and communion rather than transmission. This symbolic communion involved a ritual coming together centered around a broken slate of clay. The word "symbol" is derived from the Greek word symbolon. In ancient Greece it was a custom to break a slate of burned clay into several pieces and distribute

them within the group. When the group reunited the pieces were fitted together (Greek symbollein). This confirmed the members belonging to the group.

Symbolism

Hot = Duality (Nonparticipation) = Linear, Narrative Time

Cool = Correspondence (Participation) = Non-Linear Time

Great correspondence of above with literary theories and literary devices.
For example, symbol correspondence is really a form of metaphor.

Media Theory.

“There is a basic principle that distinguishes a hot medium like radio from a cool one like the telephone, or a hot medium like the movie from a cool one like TV. A hot medium is one that extends one single sense in ‘high definition.’ High definition is the state of being well filled with data. A photograph is, visually, ‘high definition.’ A cartoon is ‘low definition,’ simply because very little visual information is provided. The ear is given a meager amount of information. Telephone is a cool medium, or one of low definition, because the ear is given a meager amount of information. And speech is a cool medium of low definition, because so little is given and so much has to be filled in by the listener. On the other hand, hot media do not leave so much to be filled in or completed by the audience.”
McLuhan UM.

Relationship to other philosophies and linguistics.

Text Theory

“Francis Bacon never tired of contrasting hot and cool prose. Writing in ‘methods’ or complete packages, he contrasted with writing in aphorisms, or single observations such as ‘Revenge is a kind of wild justice.’ The passive consumer wants packages, but those, he suggested, who are concerned in pursuing knowledge and in seeking causes will resort to aphorisms, just because they are incomplete and require participation in depth.”

Marshall McLuhan
Understanding Media

Mixing Hot & Cool

McLuhan’s theory of “hot” and “cool” media was a provocative section in *Understanding Media*. Yet, as interesting as it was, it’s ultimate place in the McLuhan canon was a rather solitary one never finding a real correspondence with the rest of his work and theories.

For example, one question worth asking is the relationship of “hot” and “cool” media theory to other key theories relating to visual and auditory media and senses. In general, McLuhan felt that visual media (such as writing and the alphabet) was usually “hot” media providing more information. Conversely, auditory media (like speech) was usually “cool” media providing less information.

Yet, as the quote above from *Understanding Media* demonstrates, this was not always the case. Certain visual media like TV was considered “cool” while other visual media, like film, was considered “hot.” And too, certain oral media, like radio, was considered “hot” while other oral media like the telephone was considered “cool” media.

The “hot” and “cool” distinction within similar media (like TV and film, radio and telephones) suggests there might be other distinctions within similar media. Therefore, if McLuhan’s “hot” and “cool” categories do not come symbiotically attached to major types of media, they might co-exist within the same media.

The most obvious example of this co-existence of “hot” and “cool” elements within a particular media is television. While McLuhan considered television a cool media for the amount of information it provided the viewer, this view certainly goes against the grain of numerous media critics who view television more as a “hot” involving little audience participation. In fact, the lack of participation in the television viewing experience is one of the major critiques of television.

Or, consider the telephone, one of the leading “cool” media. Certainly, there is little question that telephones involve much “cool” participation. For example, consider a telephone conversation between two friends. This probably involves the greatest amount of “cool” participatory media with each person using the media as a “peer” of the other. In fact, it might be said to represent the speech component of what is termed peer-to-peer communication on the Internet.

But there are also elements within the media of telephones that involve less participation than other elements. Consider variations of telephone conversations other than “peer-to-peer” conversations between friends. For example, consider a telephone conversation between an employee and his or her boss. Usually, there is far less participation by the employee than in a conversation with a friend. Or, consider an even lower amount of participation in a telephone conversation between a telemarketer and a consumer. And finally, consider perhaps the lowest form of telephone participation in recorded telephone calls placed by automatic call centers. Here, there is hardly any chance for participation. The telephone in effect becomes the epitome of McLuhan’s “hot” media and an interactive “cool” media becomes the speech version of print’s junk mail.

Perhaps the contemporary “poster child” for interactive participatory “cool” media is the Internet. Similar to telephones, it

contains large elements of participatory “cool” media. For example, emails between friends are much like phone calls between friends.

At the same time, like telephones, the Internet increasingly contains many “hot” areas allowing little participation. As an example, consider the increasing number of spam email messages on the Internet. Like automatic telephone calls or junk mail, they allow little participation.

* * *

Since McLuhan’s time, the world has experienced an increasing segmentation of media types which has made his early “hot” and “cool” media dichotomies more difficult to discern. A telephone is no longer just a telephone and a television is often much more than the television of McLuhan’s time.

Telephones, for example, have become wireless Dick Tracy type of devices able to show pictures, stock quotes, email messages and web sites. Wireless communication has made telephones “cooler” while, at the same time, the growing onslaught of telemarketers and call centers with their low participation, have made telephones more “hot.”

Or, consider television that has gained a new aspect of interactive coolness with devices like the remote control and TiVo technology. In many respects, the growing TV programming genre called reality television provides a new audience access to television, making the subtle suggestion that television content, rather than just television technology, has a “cool” participation factor.

In all of this evolution, the designation of “hot” and “cool” media still has great importance as a basic navigational beacon for many students of media in the stormy sea of media flooding the modern world. However, the media it once defined under the labels of “hot” or “cool” has grown from media with relatively distinct boundaries to vast media “cities” with constantly expanding boundaries. For example, consider the growth of Internet sites from the early days of a few pages and links to grand Internet cities like AOL full of different virtual “suburbs” and communities.

While the theories of McLuhan and his ideas about “hot” and “cool” media might take us to the “outer-belts” of these new grand media cities, they offer less help in exploring the suburbs and various populations inside them and their techniques of communication.

* * *

Like his “hot” and “cool” theories of media types, his ideas about “hot” and “cool” technique never received the elaboration they deserved. Yet, as we have observed, technique was constantly on display in the writing technique and style of McLuhan’s prose, or perhaps more accurately, McLuhan’s anti-prose.

In effect, when one takes a broad overview of McLuhan's work it becomes apparent that much of his writing is in the form of aphorisms. This leads to an interesting speculation: the real magic of McLuhan's popularity and fame might not have been so much in the revolutionary *content* of his ideas but rather in the "cool" *contextual* technique that presented these ideas.

In effect, the Boomer generation of the 60s might have been drawn by all the publicity to McLuhan's works but it was the style that allowed them a new type of participation in these ideas. It was a new type of participation not allowed by an environment increasingly filled with the "hot" messages of advertising and politics. They might have come to the McLuhan edifice for phrases like "The medium is the message" and divisions like "hot" and "cool" media.

Yet it was the technique of expression that really pulled the Boomer generation into the McLuhan edifice and made them linger within it longer than they linger in other works of literature. In their bold aphoristic phrasings and attempt to avoid the simplicity of "Idiot's Guide" packaging, a packaging that Bacon identified as "hot" media a few hundred years before McLuhan, his words invited the cool participation they talked about. They really represented the "cool" media of the 60s.

Language of Presence/Language of Absence

Speech is the language of presence and writing the language of absence. Derrida argues that throughout the Western philosophical tradition, writing has been considered as merely a derivative form of speech, and thus as a "fall" from the "full presence" of speech.

Derrida's book *Of Grammatology* starts with a review of Saussure's linguistic structuralism, as presented in the *Course in General Semantics*. In particular, Derrida analyzes the concept of "sign" which for Saussure has the two separate components of sound and meaning. These components are also called signifier (*signifiant*) and signified (*signifié*).

Derrida quotes Saussure: "Language and writing are two distinct systems of signs; the second exists for the sole purpose of representing the first."

Critiquing this relationship between speech and writing, Derrida suggests that written symbols are legitimate signifiers on their own—that they should not be considered as secondary or derivative relative to oral speech.

Metalinguage

A language used to talk about language.

Narratology

The study of structure in narratives.

Phenomenology

A method of philosophical inquiry that lays stress on the perceiver's vital and central role in determining meaning. Edmund Husserl noted that the proper object of philosophical inquiry is not the objects in the world but rather the consciousness of perceiving them.

A philosophical movement that describes the formal structure of the objects of awareness and of awareness itself in abstraction from any claims concerning existence (2): the typological classification of a class of phenomena like the *phenomenology* of religion.

Readerly/Writerly

Devised by Roland Barthes and expounded in his book *S/Z* to distinguish between two basic types of text: 1) the readerly text which the reader's response is more or less passive such as a realistic novel or classic text presenting recognizable world with easily recognizable characters and events where the reader accepts the meaning without needing to make much effort and 2) writerly text which makes demands on the reader in that they have things to work out and look for to provide meaning. Examples are Joyce's *Ulysses* and *Finnegan's Wake*. Makes the reader into a producer. Barthes felt the writerly text was of great value because he felt the goal of literature was to make the reader a producer rather than a consumer.

Readerly Text = Hot Texts

A text that makes no requirement of the reader to "write" or "produce" their own meanings. The reader may passively locate "ready-made" meaning. Barthes writes that these sorts of texts are "controlled by the principle of non-contradiction" that is, they do not disturb the "common sense," or "Doxa," of the surrounding culture. The "readerly texts," moreover, "are products [that] make up the enormous mass of our literature." Within this category, there is a spectrum of "replete literature," which comprises "any classic (readerly) texts" that work "like a cupboard where meanings are shelved, stacked, [and] safeguarded"

Writerly Text = Cool Text

A text that aspires to the proper goal of literature and criticism: "... to make the reader no longer a consumer but a producer of the text." Writerly texts and ways of reading constitute, in short, an active rather than passive way of interacting with a culture and its texts. A culture and its texts, Barthes writes, should never be accepted in their given forms and traditions. As opposed to the "readerly texts" as "product," the "writerly text is ourselves writing, before the infinite play of the world is traversed, intersected, stopped, plasticized by some singular system (Ideology,

Genus, Criticism) which reduces the plurality of entrances, the opening of networks, the infinity of languages.” Thus, reading becomes for Barthes "not a parasitical act, the reactive complement of a writing," but rather a "form of work."

Hermeneutic Code: The Voice of the Truth

Barthes observes that the hermeneutic code is associated with enigmas of the text. It is entities or elements that articulate a question and its answer, as well as events that prepare the question or delay its answer. When Barthes identifies an enigma in the text, he marks it HER. The process of revealing truth by solving enigmas is further broken down in the following sequence:

- Thematisation. What in the narrative is an enigma?
- Positioning. Additional confirmations of the enigma.
- Formulation of the enigma.
- Promise of an answer of the enigma.
- Fraud. Circumvention of the true answer.
- Equivocation. Mixture of fraud and truth.
- Blocking. The enigma cannot be solved.
- Suspended answer. Stopping the answering after having begun.
- Partial answer. Some facets of the truth are revealed.
- Disclosure of the truth.

(Note: Above closeness to screenplay plot structure)

Because the hermeneutic code involves a move from a question to an answer it is one of the two codes (the other being the proairetic or action code) which Barthes calls “irreversible” (XV): Once a secret is revealed, it cannot be unrevealed—the moment of cognition is permanent for the reader. Compared to the detailed sequential actions of the proairetic code, the hermeneutic code encompasses the entire narrative, or at least large parts of it.

(Note: This is confirmation of our “cool” and “hot” script argument!)

Cultural critic John Fiske used the word “producerly” rather than “writerly” to make the same argument that Barthes makes noting:

“Producerly text offers itself up to popular production ... It has loose ends that escape its control. Its meanings exceed its own power to discipline them – it is, in a very real sense, beyond its own control.”

John Fiske
Understanding Popular Culture

Reader-Response Theory

Concerned with the relationship between text and theory with an emphasis on the different ways a reader participates in the course of reading a text and the different perspectives that arise from the relationship. Concerned with the reader's contribution to the text and challenges the text-oriented theories of Formalism and the New Criticism that have ignored or underestimated the reader's role.

Fundamentally, a text has no real existence until it is read. Its meaning is *in potentia* so to speak. A reader completes its meaning by reading it. The reading is complimentary and actualizes potential meaning. Thus, the reader does not have, as traditionally thought, a passive role but on the contrary is an active agent in the creation of meaning.

In 1979, Umberto Eco published *The Role of the Reader*. In this he proposed a distinction between what he calls "open" and "closed" texts. An open text (*Finnegan's Wake*, *The Wasteland*) requires the reader's close collaboration in the creation of meaning. But a closed text (a whodunit by Christie, a thriller by Forsyth or a scientific treatise) determines or predetermines a reader's response.

Semantics

A branch of linguistics which deals with the meanings of words and particularly with changes in these meanings.

Semiotics

a general philosophical theory of signs and symbols that deals especially with their function in both artificially constructed and natural languages and comprises syntactics, semantics, and pragmatics.

Study of signs and sign-using behaviour, especially in language. In the late 19th and early 20th century the work of Ferdinand de Saussure and Charles Sanders Peirce led to the emergence of semiotics as a method for examining phenomena in different fields, including aesthetics, anthropology, communications, psychology, and semantics. Interest in the structure behind the use of particular signs links semiotics with the methods of structuralism. Saussure's theories are also fundamental to poststructuralism.

Syntagmatic/Paradigmatic

Structuralist Ferdinand de Saussure's theory that there are two dimensions in the relationship of words: 1) the syntagmatic or horizontal relations and 2) the paradigmatic or vertical, associative relations.

Cool History

Holy Books

The Analects (Confucius)

Bhagavad Gita

Koran (Qur'an)

Bible

 New Testament

 Old Testament

Talmud

Torah

I Ching

Tao Te Ching

Upanishads

Mencius

Chuang Tzu

Analytics of Confucious

Hadith

Avesta

Book of Mormon

Vedas

Spiritual Books

The Dead Sea Scrolls

The Quran (Koran)

The Tao Te Ching

Bhagavad-Gita

Book of Mormon

Talmud

The Urantia Book

Philosophy

Political

Manifesto

A public declaration of political, religious, philosophical, artistic or literary principles.

“The time of the manifesto is the present (and immediate future); the ‘now’ time (Benjamin’s *Jetztzeit*) of decision. The manifesto has no interest in the past except as part of the problem to be solved. The manifesto, as Derrida reminds us in *Specters of Marx*, typically tells us that ‘the time is out of joint,’ that it is ‘high time’

we set things right, then proposes a course of action or a change of heart in order to move on to better times in the future. Derrida also notes that the paradigm of the modern manifesto is to be found in the ancient (biblical) forms of prophecy, on the one hand, and the gospel (*evangelion*), on the other. The former, of course, promises punishment for those who, bound by the Covenant, violate its terms; it tends towards the revolutionary. The modern political manifesto may combine the two modes, mixing fire and brimstone and love and light in equal measure. The artistic manifesto – think of those of the Futurists and Surrealists – combines threat and promise in a simulacrum of revelation. The scientific manifesto – think of Bacon, Galileo, Darwin – is a different breed; cool, calm and collected, because the scientific manifestor, having a certain knowledge in hand, knows that time is on his or her side; like Galileo censored, s/he can afford to wait: ‘*Eppure, si muove.*’ “

Hayden White
Manifestos for History

Fama Fraternitatis (1614)

Founding Document of the Rosicrucian’s

Common Sense (1776)

Most Incendiary & Popular Pamphlet of Revolutionary Era

Declaration of Independence (1776)

Founding Document of America

“What do we mean by the Revolution? The war? That was no part of the Revolution; it was only an effect and consequence of it. The Revolution was in the minds of the people, and this was effected, from 1760 to 1775, in the course of fifteen years before a drop of blood was shed at Lexington. The records of thirteen legislatures, the pamphlets, newspapers in all colonies, ought to be consulted during that period to ascertain the steps by which the public opinion was enlightened and informed concerning the authority of Parliament over the colonies.”

John Adams to Thomas Jefferson
1815

Communist Manifesto (1848)

Key Document of Communism

Symbolism

Ghost in “specter” haunting Europe

Futurist Manifesto (1909)
Launched Art Movement of Futurism

Surrealist Manifesto (1924)
Key Document of Surrealism

Port Huron Statement (1962)
Founding Document of the SDS

Milestones (1964)
Founding Document of Modern Islamic Radicalism
Symbolism
Space – Below, buried
Movement – Signposts along the way

Society of Spectacle (1967)
Key Document of French Situationists

Rules for Radicals (1971)
Handbook for Community Organizing

Declaration of Independence of Cyberspace (1996)
Applicability of government on the Internet

Cluetrain Manifesto (1999)
Impact of Internet on Markets & Consumers

The Coming Insurrection (2009)
Call to Arms in France and Europe

In a general way, one can say that totalitarian political systems are “hot” allowing for little participation while democratic systems are “cool” allowing greater participation.

Declaration
Talking Points
Providing a script for circulation in media.

Literature

Folklore
Fairytale

A part of folk literature and the oral tradition. No one recorded them until the brothers Grimm produced their *Household Tales* (1812, 1814 and 1822).

Prophetic

Mythology
Children's Literature
Testament

A document that bears witness. An affirmation such as *The New Testament* and *The Old Testament of the Bible*.

Speeches

Gettysburg Address
Ask Not What Your Country Can Do For You

Cool Script Uses

“The power of storytelling is also central to my work as a business executive and entrepreneur. Over the years, I've learned that the ability to articulate your story or that of your company is crucial in almost every phase of enterprise management. It works all along the business food chain: A great salesperson knows how to tell a story in which the product is the hero. A successful line manager can rally the team to extraordinary efforts through a story that shows how short-term sacrifice leads to long-term success. An effective CEO uses an emotional narrative about the company's mission to attract investors and partners, to set lofty goals, and to inspire employees.”

Peter Guber
Entertainment Executive
Harvard Business Review (12/1/07)

Scripts and the stories they structure have application far beyond films and novels. While film entertainment is the obvious use for scripts, there are applications for scripts outside the entertainment industry and ultimately perhaps more important.

For example, scripts have great use in the persuasion professions of advertising, public relations, sales and politics the field of education as a powerful teaching tool. They also have an important place in corporate communications in communications to employees, managers and outside investors.

Perhaps one of the most obvious (but little used) applications for scripts is in the creation of novels. While novels are often adapted into films and sometimes films appear as novels, there has been little merger of the two forms of writing into a new form of script or novel for that matter.

Art forms such as film and literature evolve over time by creating and combining genres within the art forms. This *evolutionary* growth is shown above by the horizontal arrows. However, art forms can create revolutionary changes by merging with other art forms. This *revolutionary* change is shown by the vertical arrow. For example, evolutionary growth in screenwriting (films) and novel writing (literature) involves writing for genres within the art form. On the other hand, revolutionary growth involves combining the art form of screenwriting with that of novel writing.

Marketing

“Traditional branding theory has valued controlling meaning rather than inspiring circulation.”

Henry Jenkins
Spreadable Media

“Companies hold onto the idea that a brand may carry a highly restricted range of meanings, defined and articulated by brand stewards. They avoid creating producerly texts because making material that is open to interpretation leaves the control of meaning out of their hands. But, in doing so, companies limit the spreadability of their messages and constraint the value of the brand as a vehicle for social and personal expression.”

Henry Jenkins
Spreadable Media

“Perhaps the only way to retain complete control over the meaning of a text is never to share it with anyone.”

Henry Jenkins
Spreadable Media

See *Contagious* articles. Relationship of “cool” text to social currency.

Politics

Talking Points

Education

“(In the future) illiteracy will not be defined by those who cannot read and write, but by those who cannot learn and relearn.”

Alvin Toffler

Entertainment

Screenplays

See “Once & Future Kingdom” article

Plays

See notes on new immersive, event trend of Broadway plays

Novels

Cool Literary Devices

Archetype

“All the most powerful ideas in history go back to archetypes...For it is the function of consciousness not only to recognize and assimilate the external world through the gateway of the senses, but to translate into visible reality the world within us.”

The Structure And Dynamics of the Psyche
Carl Jung

Allegory

The term derives from the Greek allegoria “speaking otherwise” and is a story in verse or prose with a double meaning: a primary or surface meaning and a secondary or under-the-surface meaning. It is a story that can be read, understood and interpreted at two levels. It is thus closely related to the Fable and Parable.

The best-known allegory in English language is Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress* (1678) an allegory of Christian salvation or the average man’s journey through the trials and tribulations of life.

Origins of allegory are ancient and religious and it appears to be a universal mode of expression. Much myth for example is a form of allegory in an attempt to explain universal facts and forces. The myth of Orpheus and Eurydice is an example of allegory of redemption and salvation. In fact, most Classical myths are allegories.

Early uses in Plato’s *Timeaeus*, *Phaedrus* and *Symposium*. Particularly, the myth of the cave in Plato’s *Republic* is a well-known example.

Some literary examples.

Divine Comedy
Inferno
Gulliver’s Travels
Animal Farm

Watership Down
Lord of the Rings
The Hobbit

Synonyms

Apologue
Fable
Parable

Related Words

Beast Fable
Bestiary
Morality Play
Legend
Myth
Narrative
Tale

Allusion

Usually an implicit reference. Often a kind of appeal to a reader to share some experience with the writer. An implied or indirect reference especially in literature; *also* : the use of such references

Ambiguity

Relates to a word or expression that can be understood in two or more possible ways.

Example: the *ambiguity* of the clairvoyant's messages from the deceased allowed the grieving relatives to interpret them however they wished.

William Empson's *Seven Types of Ambiguity* was first published in 1930 by. In brief, Empson's theory was that things are often not what they seem, that words connote at least as much as they denote and very often more. Empson observes, "We call it ambiguous ... when we recognize that there could be a puzzle as to what the author meant, in that alternate views might be taken without sheer misreading ... An ambiguity, in ordinary speech, means something very pronounced, and as a rule witty or deceitful." He finds relevance in any "verbal nuance" however slight, which gives room for alternative reactions to the same piece of language. "The machinations of ambiguity, are among the very roots of poetry."

It was one of the most influential critical works of the 20th century and was a key foundation work in the formation of the New Criticism. The book is organized around seven types of that Empson finds in the poetry he criticizes. The first printing in America was by New Directions in 1947.

An ambiguity is represented as a puzzle to Empson. We have ambiguity when “alternative views might be taken without sheer misreading.” Empson reads poetry as an exploration of conflicts within the author.

Seven types of ambiguity:

The first type of ambiguity is the metaphor, that is, when two things are said to be alike which have different properties. This concept is similar to that of metaphysical conceit.

Two or more meanings are resolved into one. Empson characterizes this as using two different metaphors at once.

Two ideas that are connected through context can be given in one word simultaneously.

Two or more meanings that do not agree but combine to make clear a complicated state of mind in the author.

When the author discovers his idea in the act of writing. Empson describes a simile that lies halfway between two statements made by the author.

When a statement says nothing and the readers are forced to invent a statement of their own, most likely in conflict with that of the author.

Two words that within context are opposites that expose a fundamental division in the author's mind.

Antonym

A word of opposite meaning.

EX: Hot and cold.

(Note: Opposition symbols?)

Aphorism

A concise statement of a principle, truth or dogma. Proverbs are often aphoristic as are maxims.

A terse statement of a truth or opinion; an adage; a brief statement of a principle. Wisdom condensed in a few words. Examples: “Give a man a mask and he will tell you the truth.” (Wilde) “The road of excess leads to the palace of wisdom.” (Blake) Aphorisms often take the form of a

definition: "Hypocrisy is a homage paid by vice to virtue." (La Rochefoucauld).'

Examples:

"Mirrors would do well to reflect a little more before sending back images." Jean Cocteau

"Sex without love is an empty gesture. But as empty gestures go, it is one of the best."

Cognitive Dissonance

Mental conflict that occurs when beliefs or assumptions are contradicted by new information. The concept was introduced by the psychologist Leon Festinger (1919–89) in the late 1950s. He and later researchers showed that, when confronted with challenging new information, most people seek to preserve their current understanding of the world by rejecting, explaining away, or avoiding the new information or by convincing themselves that no conflict really exists. Cognitive dissonance is nonetheless considered an explanation for attitude change.

Collage

A creative work that resembles such a composition in incorporating various materials or elements. Example: The album is a *collage* of several musical styles. A term adopted from the vocabulary of painters to denote a work which contains a mixture of allusions, references, quotations and foreign expressions. Common in the works of James Joyce, Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot.

Connotation

Denotation is the opposite. The most literal and limited meaning of a word regardless of what one feels about it or ideas it connotes. Ex: Apartheid denotes a certain form of political, social and racial regime. It connotes much more though.

Connotation is the suggestion of a meaning of a word apart from the thing it explicitly names or describes. For example, an old chair has the connotation of comfort.

General categories relate to positive and negative associations. For example, the word "fat" for many people has negative connotations. The word "childlike" has positive connotations relating to innocence.

“Miuccia Prada, a connoisseur of vintage jewelry, has a collection of tiaras and subverts their formal *connotations* by wearing them for the day.”

Hamish Bowles
Vogue (March 1997)

The opposite of connotation is denotation or specific definition rather than implied definition.

Didactic

Sets out to instruct. More “hot” than “cool” device.

Dissonance

Lack of agreement and especially an inconsistency between the beliefs one holds or between one's actions and one's beliefs. A mingling of discordant sounds and *especially* a clashing or unresolved musical interval or chord.

Double Entendre

Ambiguity of meaning arising from language that lends itself to more than one interpretation. A word or expression capable of two interpretations with one usually risqué.

Fable

A short narrative in prose that points to a moral. Non-human creatures or inanimate objects are normally the characters.

Figurative Language

Language which uses figures of speech such as metaphor, simile, alliteration. Distinguished from literal language.

Free Association

A word or idea acts as a stimulus or trigger to a series or sequence of other words which may or may not have logical relationship. Ex. Joyce in *Ulysses* was a principal pioneer of this.

Free Verse

Gossip

A person who habitually reveals personal or sensational facts about others. Report of an intimate nature. Chatty talk.

(Note: Participation aspect of rumor based around voyeurism? Just as people “participate” in looking at accidents.)

“In the room the women come and go
Talking of Michelangelo.”
TS Eliot,
The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock

Irony

For the Roman rhetoricians, irony denoted a rhetorical figure and manner of discourse in which the meaning was contrary to the words. Two major types are verbal irony and situation irony.

“It can be no accident that the beginning of the great age of satire in the second half of the 17th century coincides with the increasing use of irony as means of expression throughout the world.” *Dictionary of Literary Terms & Theories*.

A pretense of ignorance and of willingness to learn from another assumed in order to make the other's false conceptions conspicuous by adroit questioning called also *Socratic irony*. The use of words to express something other than and especially the opposite of the literal meaning

A usually humorous or sardonic literary style or form characterized by irony.

Incongruity between the actual result of a sequence of events and the normal or expected result or an event or result marked by such incongruity

Incongruity between a situation developed in a drama and the accompanying words or actions that is understood by the audience but not by the characters in the play —called also *dramatic irony*, *tragic irony*

EX: “What a beautiful view,” he said, his voice dripping with *irony*, as he looked out the window at the alley. She described her vacation with heavy *irony* as “an educational experience.”

Language device in which the real intent is concealed or contradicted by the literal meaning of words or a situation. Verbal irony, either spoken or written, arises from an awareness of contrast between what is and what ought to be. Dramatic irony, an incongruity in a theatrical work between what is expected and what occurs, depends on the structure of a play rather than its use of words, and it is often created by the audience's awareness of a fate in store for the characters that they themselves do not suspect.

Maxim

A general truth, fundamental principle, or rule of conduct. A proposition, often barely distinguishable from an aphorism, which consists of a pithy, succinct statement which contains a precept or general truth about human

nature and human conduct. EX: "Old people are fond of giving good advice: it consoles them for no longer being capable of setting a bad example." Synonyms are: adage, aphorism, apothegm, byword, epigram, saying, proverb. Related words: bromide, cliché, platitude, axiom, motto, precept, truism.

Metaphor

"It is the East, and Juliet is the sun!"

Romeo & Juliet
Shakespeare

"A poet makes himself a visionary through a long, boundless, and systemized disorganization of all the senses."

Arthur Rimbaud

"Metaphor systematically disorganizes the common sense of things – jumbling together the abstract with the concrete, the physical with the psychological, the like with the unlike – and reorganizes it in uncommon combinations."

I Is An Other
James Geary

A figure of speech in which one thing is described in terms of another. The basic figure in poetry. Comparison is implicit whereas in simile it is explicit. EX: "He was drowning in paperwork" is a *metaphor* in which having to deal with a lot of paperwork is being compared to drowning in an ocean of water.

In *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Thomas Kuhn noted that metaphor "plays an essential role in establishing a link between scientific language and the world." He noted also that those links are not set in stone. "Theory change, in particular, is accomplished by a change in some of the relevant metaphors and in the corresponding parts of the network of similarities through which terms attach to nature."

In 1978, linguists Michael Reddy and George Lakoff, working independently, demonstrated that metaphor is fundamentally a matter of thought and that metaphorical language is secondary. Conceptual metaphors shape our understanding and determine how we reason. Consequently, metaphors can be central to law as *Citizens United* showed by expanding the common legal metaphor Corporations Are Persons with vast political consequences.

Metaphors We Live By (1984) by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson put the early ideas of Lakoff into book form. The book argued that people use metaphors every time they speak. Some of those metaphors are literary – devices for making thoughts more vivid or entertaining. But most are much more basic than that – they’re “metaphors we live by,” metaphors we use without even realizing we’re using them.

For example, you might not think that the statement “He strayed from the line of argument” is metaphorical in any significant way, but it is grounded in the metaphor that AN ARGUMENT IS A JOURNEY, and the assumption that A JOURNEY DEFINES A PATH. Put them together, and you get AN ARGUMENT DEFINES A PATH, a path which can be strayed from. Lakoff and Johnson explore these interactions in great detail, and suggest some fascinating philosophical and political implications. (Amazon reviewer of *Metaphors We Live By*).

An important recent book on metaphors is *I Is An Other: The Secret Life of Metaphor and How it Shapes the Way We See the World* (2011) by James Geary.

Conceptual Metaphor

In cognitive linguistics, **conceptual metaphor**, or **cognitive metaphor**, refers to the understanding of one idea, or conceptual domain in terms of another. An example of this is the understanding of quantity in terms of directionality such as “the prices are rising.” The idea was first extensively explored by Lakoff in *Metaphors We Live By*.

In his book, Lakoff offers an example of one commonly used conceptual metaphors in “argument is war.” This metaphor shapes our language in the way we view argument as war or as a battle to be won. It is not uncommon to hear someone say “He won that argument” or “I attacked every weak point in his argument”. The very way argument is thought of is shaped by this metaphor of arguments being war and battles that must be won. Argument can be seen in many other ways other than a battle, but we use this concept to shape the way we think of argument and the way we go about arguing.

Dead Metaphor

Used so often, has become lifeless and lost its figurative strength. Has become a cliché. Ex: Green with envy. Top dog. To beat about the bush.

Diminishing metaphor

A discrepancy or discord between enor and vehicle. Thought and image brought together in such a way that they are not wholly congruous. T.S. Eliot's *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*:

Let us go then, you and I
When the evening is etherized against the sky
Like a patient etherized upon a table.

Mixed Metaphor

A figure of speech combining inconsistent or incongruous metaphors. EX: "If we want to get ahead we'll have to iron out the remaining bottlenecks" is an example of a *mixed metaphor*.

(Note: A relationship of metaphor to the *correspondence theory* of symbolism. For example, expressions like "I'm feeling up today" and "I'm high" derive from the metaphorical equation of happiness and height while expressions like "I'm feeling down today" or "I'm low" derive from the metaphorical equation of dejection with depth. Why? Because we are literally up in a vertical sense when we are alert, active and awake and literally down in a horizontal sense when we are sluggish, sleepy or sick. In effect, one can also say that not only is there a metaphorical equation between descriptions of feeling and height but also a symbolic correspondence in that feelings have a correspondence to height in a manner similar to the correspondence between unconsciousness and the feminine, consciousness and the masculine)

Metonymy

Drawing a contiguity between things (rather than similarity like metaphor). A figure of speech in which the name of an attribute or thing is substituted for the thing itself. EX: The stage for the theatrical profession. The Crown for the monarchy. The Bench for the judiciary.

Metaphor/Metonymy

A theory of binary opposition propounded by Roman Jakobson in *Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances* (1956). Jakobson uses the distinction developed elsewhere between the two axes of language, syntagmatic and paradigmatic. The first may be thought of as a horizontal line where one word is associated with another word through contiguity and the second as a vertical line where meanings can be substituted one for another.

(Note the similarity between the two great dynamics of symbolism in opposition based on linear and correspondence on similarity, the horizontal and vertical lines)

Mimesis

Almost the same meaning as mime but the concept of imitation here has wider connotations. Aristotle in *Poetics* states that tragedy is an imitation of action. See Eric Auerbach's *Mimesis*.

Montage

Neologism

Newly coined words are 1) completely new words like hippy, hepcat 2) a word formed from an existing root or prefix like stereo and para and 3) an established word like beat, dig, high which are given completely new meanings. Today, filled with many like power breakfast, camcorder, Grammy, pooper scooter.

Objective Correlative

Something (as a situation or chain of events) that symbolizes or objectifies a particular emotion and that may be used in creative writing to evoke a desired emotional response in the reader. Made famous by TS Eliot in an essay on *Hamlet* (1919). "The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an 'objective correlative' or a set of objects a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that particular emotion such that when eternal facts which much terminate in sensory experiences are given the emotion is immediately evoked."

Onomatopoeia

The naming of a thing or action by a vocal imitation of the sound associated with it (as *buzz*, *hiss*). The use of words whose sound suggests the sense.

Open Couplet

A couplet in which the sense is not completed in the second line but is carried forward into the third or fourth line. Pope's *Epistle to Augustus*:

Our rural Ancestors, with little blest
Patient of labour when end was rest
Indulg'd the day that hous'd their annual gain
With feasts, and off'rings, and a thankful strain.

Open Stage

Any form of staging in which the performers are not separated from the audience. Forms are theater in the round, thrust stage (audience on three sides), end stage (audience facing from one end) and transverse stage (audience on two opposing sides).

Oxymoron

A combination of contradictory or incongruous words (as *cruel kindness*);

broadly : something (as a concept) that is made up of contradictory or incongruous elements. EX: The phrase “cruel kindness” is an *oxymoron*.

“I like a smuggler. He is the only honest thief.” Lamb.

“No light, but rather darkness visible.” Milton, *Paradise Lost*.

“The phrase ‘Broadway rock musical’ is an *oxymoron*. Broadway doesn't have the nerve to let the really hard stuff in the house.” Mark Coleman, *Rolling Stone*, 26 Dec. 1996/ 9 Jan. 1997.

“He calls himself a ‘bleeding-heart conservative,’ and that *oxymoron* sums up the unique Jack Kemp role in the Bush Administration: the apostle of free enterprise who is the ambassador to the poor.” —William Safire, *New York Times Magazine*, 25 Mar. 1990

Parable

A usually short fictitious story that illustrates a moral attitude or a religious principle.

Examples: He told the children a *parable* about the importance of forgiveness. The *parable* of the Good Samaritan

Synonyms

Apologue
Fable
Allegory

Related Words

Beast Fable
Bestiary
Morality Play
Legend
Myth
Narrative
Tale

Paradox

"On their evidence a classic tells, and supremely well, a tale with a sharp point to it that it meanwhile also implicitly rejects. Its sharp point and matching, muted counterpoint shape it overall: thence its felt unity. The polarity is never resolved between the two rival morals of the classic tale, the one express and the other tacit, the one outspoken and the other whispered, the one affirmed and other insinuated: thence its ambiguity, its

felt depth, its enduring vitality. Overtheme and undertheme are cross-fertile contraries, like a male and female principle that play off each other until they climax together."

Rudolph Binion
Sounding the Classics
(Praeger, 1997, Westport, CT.)

A statement that is seemingly contradictory or opposed to common sense and yet is perhaps true. A self-contradictory statement that at first seems true.

Apparently self-contradictory statement whose underlying meaning is revealed only by careful scrutiny. Its purpose is to arrest attention and provoke fresh thought, as in the statement "Less is more." In poetry, paradox functions as a device encompassing the tensions of error and truth simultaneously, not necessarily by startling juxtapositions but by subtle and continuous qualifications of the ordinary meanings of words. When a paradox is compressed into two words, as in "living death," it is called an oxymoron.

Basically, two kinds might be distinguished: 1) particular or local and 2) structural. An example of the first is "I must be cruel only to be kind," a line from Hamlet. An example of the second type is more complex. For example, there is a paradox at the heart of the Christian faith that the world will be saved by failure.

[L]
[SEP]

Origin: Latin *paradoxum*, from Greek *paradoxon*, from neuter of *paradoxos* contrary to expectation, from *para-* + *dokein* to think, seem.
First Known Use: 1540

Examples:

It is a *paradox* that computers need maintenance so often, since they are meant to save people time.

As an actor, he's a *paradox*—he loves being in the public eye but also deeply values and protects his privacy.

A novel full of *paradox*

For the actors, the goal was a *paradox*: real emotion, produced on cue. —Claudia Roth Pierpont, *New Yorker*, 27 Oct. 2008

Again and again, he returns in his writing to the *paradox* of a woman who is superior to the men around her by virtue of social class though considered inferior to them on account of her gender. —Terry Eagleton, *Harper's*, November 2007

She was certainly far from understanding him completely; his meaning was not at all times obvious. It was hard to see what he meant for instance by speaking of his provincial side—which was exactly the side she would have taken him most to lack. Was it a harmless *paradox*, intended to puzzle her? or was it the last refinement of high culture? —Henry James, *The Portrait of a Lady*, 1881

Mr. Guppy propounds for Mr. Smallweed's consideration the *paradox* that the more you drink the thirstier you are and reclines his head upon the window-sill in a state of hopeless languor. — Charles Dickens, *Bleak House*, 1852-53

Paradox of America

Based on two ideas that are in conflict – freedom and equality.

Propaganda

The spreading of ideas, information, or rumor for the purpose of helping or injuring an institution, a cause, or a person.

Ideas, facts, or allegations spread deliberately to further one's cause or to damage an opposing cause; *also* : a public action having such an effect.

New Latin, from *Congregatio de propaganda fide* Congregation for propagating the faith, organization established by Pope Gregory XV †1623. First Known Use: 1718

Manipulation of information to influence public opinion. The term comes from Congregatio de Propaganda Fide (Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith), a missionary organization established by the pope in 1622. Propagandists emphasize the elements of information that support their position and deemphasize or exclude those that do not. Misleading statements and even lies may be used to create the desired effect in the public audience. Lobbying, advertising, and missionary activity are all forms of propaganda, but the term is most commonly used in the political arena. Prior to the 20th century, pictures and the written media were the principal instruments of propaganda; radio, television, motion pictures, and the Internet later joined their ranks. Authoritarian and totalitarian regimes use propaganda to win and keep the support of the populace. In wartime, propaganda directed by a country at its own civilian population and military forces can boost morale; propaganda aimed at the enemy is an element of psychological warfare.

George Orwell's essay "Politics and the English Language."

See Edward Bernays and the beginning of propaganda in the 1930s.
Steward Ewel *Captains of Consciousness* and his book on Bernays.

"Material which fills in every blank limits audience interpretations.
Propaganda, for instance, is less producerly because it sets rigid limits on
potential meanings."

Henry Jenkins
Spreadable Media

Proverb

A brief popular maxim expressing a general truth. Succinct and pithy saying that is in general use and expresses commonly held ideas and beliefs. Proverbs are part of every spoken language and folk literature, originating in oral tradition. Often a proverb is found with variations in many different parts of the world. Literate societies dating to the ancient Egyptians have collected proverbs. One of the earliest English proverb collections, *The Proverbs of Alfred*, dates from c. 1150–80. In North America the best-known collection is probably *Poor Richard's*, an almanac published 1732–57 by Benjamin Franklin.

The best-known collection is *The Book of Proverbs* following *The Psalms* in *The Old Testament*.

"Send a fool to close the shutters and he'll close them all over town."
(Yiddish)

"We cannot step twice into the same river." (Classical Greek)

Pun

A figure of speech involving wordplay. The usually humorous use of a word in such a way as to suggest two or more of its meanings or the meaning of another word similar in sound.

EX: The delicatessen is sandwiched, if you'll *pardon the pun*, between two stores.

She's a skillful pilot whose career has—*no pun intended*—really taken off.

Firefighting sparks my interest.

Rhetoric

Art of using language for persuasion in speaking or writing. A "hot" type

of text allowing little reader participation.

Rumor

Talk or opinion widely disseminated with no discernible source. A statement or report current without known authority for its truth.

(Note: Does the search for a source by the reader or hearer of rumor lead to greater participation? Popularity of tabloids based on rumors?)

Satire

Artistic form in which human or individual vices, folly, abuses, or shortcomings are held up to censure by means of ridicule, derision, burlesque, irony, or other methods, sometimes with an intent to bring about improvement. Literature and drama are its chief vehicles, but it is also found in such mediums as film, the visual arts (e.g., caricatures), and political cartoons. Though present in Greek literature, notably in the works of [Aristophanes](#), satire generally follows the example of either of two Romans, [Horace](#) or [Juvenal](#). To Horace the satirist is an urbane man of the world who sees folly everywhere but is moved to gentle laughter rather than to rage. Juvenal's satirist is an upright man who is horrified and angered by corruption. Their different perspectives produced the subgenres of satire identified by [John Dryden](#) as comic satire and tragic satire.

“The satirist is thus a kind of self-appointed guardian of standards, ideals and truth; of moral as well as aesthetic values. He is a man (woman satirists are rare) who takes it upon himself to correct, censure and ridicule the follies and vices of society and thus to bring contempt and derision upon aberrations from a desirable and civilized norm. Thus satire is a kind of protest, a sublimation and refinement of anger and indignation.”

Dictionary of Literary Terms & Literary Theory – Cuddon.

Sermon

“The sermon became one of the principal sources of instruction and ‘entertainment’ in a period when the Church had much control over the diversions available to the public.” *Dictionary of Literary Terms & Literary Theory* – Cuddon. The great age of sermon literature runs from the 13th to the 17th century. Throughout Europe, the literature of the pulpit had considerable influence on the establishment of ethnic languages and the development of allegory, fable, verse and drama.

Simile

A figure of speech in which one thing is likened to another in such a way to clarify and enhance an image. An explicit comparison as opposed to a metaphors implicit comparison and recognizable by the use of the words

“like” or “as.”

A figure of speech comparing two unlike things that is often introduced by *like* or *as* (as in *cheeks like roses*)

Ex: “She's as fierce as a tiger” is a *simile*, but “She's a tiger when she's angry” is a metaphor.

“The great blast furnaces of Liege rose along the line like ancient castles burning in a border raid.” Graham Greene *Stamboul Train*.

But Dickens finds the unexpected detail, the vivid *simile*. Think of Joe Gargery in *Great Expectations*, “with eyes of such a very undecided blue that they seemed to have somehow got mixed with their own whites.” Or, in *David Copperfield*, Dora's cousin “in the Life-Guards, with such long legs that he looked like the afternoon shadow of somebody else.” —James Wood, *New Republic*, 14 Dec. 1998

A figure of speech involving a comparison between two unlike entities. In a simile, unlike a metaphor, the resemblance is indicated by the words “like” or “as.” Similes in everyday speech reflect simple comparisons, as in “He eats like a bird” or “She is slow as molasses.” Similes in literature may be specific and direct or more lengthy and complex. The Homeric, or epic, simile, which is typically used in epic poetry, often extends to several lines.

Slang

Language peculiar to a particular group. The poetry of the common man. Nonstandard vocabulary of extreme informality, usually not limited to any region. It includes newly coined words, shortened forms, and standard words used playfully out of their usual context. Slang is drawn from the vocabularies of limited groups: cant, the words or expressions coined or adopted by an age, ethnic, occupational, or other group (e.g., college students, jazz musicians); jargon, the shoptalk or technical terminology specific to an occupation; and argot, the cant and jargon used as a secret language by thieves or other criminals. Occupying a middle ground between standard and informal words accepted by the general public and the special words or expressions of these subgroups, slang often serves as a testing ground for words in the latter category. Many prove either useful enough to become accepted as standard or informal words or too faddish for standard use. *Blizzard* and *okay* have become standard, while *conbobberation* (“disturbance”) and *tomato* (“girl”) have been discarded. Some words and expressions have a lasting place in slang; for instance, *beat it* (“go away”), first used in the 16th century, has neither become standard English nor vanished.

Stream of Consciousness

The continuous unedited chronological flow of conscious experience through the mind. Another term for it is interior monologue. Narrative technique in nondramatic fiction intended to render the flow of myriad impressions—visual, auditory, tactile, associative, and subliminal—that impinge on an individual consciousness. To represent the mind at work, a writer may incorporate snatches of thought and grammatical constructions that do not seem coherent because they are based on the free association of ideas and images. The term was first used by William James in *The Principles of Psychology* (1890). In the 20th century, writers attempting to capture the total flow of their characters' consciousness commonly used the techniques of interior monologue, which represents a sequence of thought and feeling. Novels in which stream of consciousness plays an important role include James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922), William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* (1929), and Virginia Woolf's *The Waves* (1931) and *To The Lighthouse* (1927).

Subjectivity

The author is primarily concerned with conveying personal experiences and feelings (autobiography) as opposed to objectivity suggesting the writer is outside of and detached from what he is writing about.

(Note: for purposes of classification into cool or hot, how does one approach these two modes?)

Sublime

To cause to pass directly from the solid to the vapor state and condense back to solid form. To elevate or exalt especially in dignity or honor to render finer (as in purity or excellence). To convert (something inferior) into something of higher worth

Sub-Text

The text of the unsaid a reader tends to construct for himself or herself by imagining what is not said or not done, what might be implied or hinted, what is ambiguous, marginal, ambivalent, evasive and so on. In doing so, the reader exercises insight into the unconscious elements in the work and elicits additional meanings. Fredrick Jameson is concerned with the "political unconscious" of a text that constitutes the unspoken, the concealed and repressed.

Suggestion

The process by which one thought leads to another especially through association of ideas. Ideas, feelings and impulses a word or arrangement of words evoke over and above their actual sense and sound. Really, the use of "cool" devices create this suggestion.

Symbol and Symbolism

The two key dynamics of symbolism can be listed as “hot” and “cool”

Duality = Hot, less participation

Opposition to the times

Person against Culture

Correspondence = Cool, more participation

In tune with times

Person aligned with Culture

Synesthesia

The mixing of sensations. The concurrent appeal to more than one sense.

The response through several senses to the stimulation of one.

EX: Hearing a color or seeing a smell.

First used by Rimbaud and Baudelaire in their poetry and especially in Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du mal*.

Used in everyday speech such as “a cold eye” or a “soft wind” or “heavy silence” or “hard voice” or “black look.”

Synonym

A word similar in meaning to another.

Ex: For the word insane – mad, demented, daft, loopy, psychotic, crazy, nutty.

Vague

Not clearly expressed stated in indefinite terms. Not having a precise meaning. Not clearly defined, grasped, or understood. Indistinct. Not clearly felt or sensed. Somewhat subconscious.

Cool Words

There are various dictionaries focusing on specific devices of language such as aphorisms, metaphors and synonyms. One day there might exist a *Dictionary of Cool Words* or words. Below are a few examples of “cool” words expanded to related cool words through synonyms and related words from *Webster’s Dictionary* (online).

Ambiguity

Synonyms

- Obscurity
- Darkness
- Equivocalness
- Equivocation
- Inscrutability
- Murkiness
- Mysteriousness
- Nebulosity
- Obliqueness
- Opacity

Related Words

- Mystery
- Cloudiness
- Dimness
- Faintness
- Fogginess
- Fuzziness
- Haziness
- Indefiniteness
- Indistinctness
- Shade
- Shadow
- Uncertainty
- Vagueness
- Impenetrability
- Incomprehensibility
- Circuitous
- Indirectness
- Depth
- Abtruseness
- Complexity
- Difficulty

Obtruseness
Complication

Collage

Synonyms

Agglomeration
Alphabet Soup
Assortment
Clutter
Miscellany
Grab bag
Hodgepodge
Jumble
Jungle
Litter
Melange
Menagerie
Miscellanea
Mishmash
Mixed Bag
Montage
Pastiche
Patchwork
Potpourri
Rummage
Salmagundi
Scramble
Shuffle
Smorgasbord
Stew
Tumble
Variety
Welter

Related Words

Notions
Oddments
Odds and ends
Sundries
Accumulation
Aggregate
Conglomerate
Catchall
Alloy
Amalgam

Blend
Combination
Composite
Compound
Fusion
Intermixture
Mix-Up
Chaos
Confusion
Disarray
Mess
Morass
Muddle
Shambles
Imbroglia
Snarl
Tangle

Paradox

Synonyms

Dichotomy
Incongruity
Contradiction

Related Words

Antinomy
Conundrum
Enigma
Mystery
Puzzle
Riddle

Vague

Synonyms

Fuzzy
Indefinite
Inexplicit
Unclear

Related Words

Ambiguous
Cryptic
Dark
Enigmatic

Equivocal
Murky
Nebulous
Obscure
Unintelligible
Bleary
Blurry
Dim
Faint
Foggy
Gauzy
Misty
Woozy
Indeterminate
Indistinct
Indistinguishable
Uncertain
Undefinable
Undetermined
Inexplicable
Inscrutable
Mysterious
Baffling
Bewildering
Confounding
Confusing
Mystifying
Obfuscatory
Perplexing
Puzzling
Unfathomable

Cool Structure

Beginning

Juxtaposition

Non-Linear

Numbers Not Names

For Sequence or Chapters in Narrative

Outline

Coolness might not come from devices within a piece but rather from a particular *stage in the author's creative process*. Outlines represent the beginning stages in the construction of a text. Like all “beginnings” they offer the potential for much participation before an “ending” is placed on the text.

Piece

Short

Sketch

As outlines represent beginning stages in the construction of texts, sketches represent beginning stages in the construction of an image. For example, painters who make sketches of future paintings and share these for comments are similar to writers who make outlines of future texts and share these outlines for comments.

Table of Contents

With One = Hot

Without One = Cool

(Note: No Table of Contents here)

Voice (Narrator)

Point of view

First Person

Alternating

Faulkner's *Sound And Fury*

Second Person

Third Person

Mixed

Virginia Woolf *To The Lighthouse*

Fitzgerald *Great Gatsby*

Reference

Hypertext

Reference to other texts within text

Cool Elements

Probes

Exploration/Search (As opposed to “hot” Discovery/Find)

“I’m making explorations. I don’t know where they’re going to take me. My work is designed for the pragmatic purpose of trying to understand our technological environment and its psychic and social consequences. But my books constitute the process rather than the completed product of discovery; my purpose is to employ facts as tentative probes, as means of insight, of pattern recognition, rather than to use them in the traditional and sterile sense of classified data, categories, containers. I want to map new terrain rather than chart old landmarks. But I’ve never presented such explorations as revealed truth. As an investigator, I have no fixed point of view, no commitment to any theory--my own or anyone else’s. As a matter of fact, I’m completely ready to junk any statement I’ve ever made about any subject if events don’t bear me out, or if I discover it isn’t contributing to an understanding of the problem. The better part of my work on media is actually somewhat like a safe-cracker’s. I don’t know what’s inside; maybe it’s nothing. I just sit down and start to work. I grope, I listen, I test, I accept and discard; I try out different sequences--until the tumblers fall and the doors spring open.”

Marshall McLuhan
Playboy Interview (1969)

Color

Short

As opposed to long text
Or long text chopped into short pieces

“I didn’t have time to write a short letter, so I wrote a long one instead.”

Mark Twain

Sound

Noise = Hot
Silence = Cool

Senses

Eye/See = Hot
Writing
Ear/Hear = Cool

Speech

In *Of Grammatology*, Jacques Derrida argues that throughout the Western philosophical tradition, writing has been considered as merely a derivative form of speech, and thus as a “fall” from the “full presence” of speech.

Nose/Smell = Cool

Light

Darkness = Cool

Light = Hot

Reflection = Cool

Radiation = Hot

Dim = Cool

Bright = Hot

Time

Youth = Cool

Beginning

Old age = Hot

Ending

Place

City = Hot

Nature = Cool

Wilderness the coolest part of nature

Desert = Cool

Architecture

Open = cool

Closed = hot

Space

Shape

Culture

Mass Culture

Broadcast aspect = Hot

Communion equality aspect = Cool

Commodity Culture

Capitalism – No shared fantasies, stress, alienation, freedom; desire is transformation

Segmented Culture

Interactive aspect = Cool

Freedom aspect = Hot

Gift Culture

Non-Commercial – Allows for shared fantasies; desire is sharing and reciprocity and not transformation

Number

Texture

Soft = Cool

Smooth = Hot
Rough = Cool
Hard = Hot

Primary Elements

Water
Earth
Fire
Air

Images

Texts and scripts create images and one might make the claim – as we do with scripts – that some images are more participatory and cool than other images that are hot and non-participatory. Cool images would embody the cool literary devices as well as the cool elements above.

For example, are there paradoxical images? Puzzling images that call for involvement? What of optical illusions?

Illusions

Physiological illusions, such as the [afterimages](#) following bright lights, or adapting stimuli of excessively longer alternating patterns (contingent perceptual aftereffect), are presumed to be the effects on the eyes or brain of excessive stimulation or interaction with contextual or competing stimuli of a specific type—brightness, colour, position, size, movement, etc.

Cognitive illusions are assumed to arise by interaction with assumptions about the world, leading to "unconscious inferences", an idea first suggested in the 19th century by [Hermann Helmholtz](#). Cognitive illusions are commonly divided into [ambiguous illusions](#), [distorting illusions](#), [paradox illusions](#), or [fiction illusions](#).

- **Ambiguous illusions** are pictures or objects that elicit a perceptual "switch" between the alternative interpretations. The [Necker cube](#) is a well-known example; another instance is the [Rubin vase](#).
- **Distorting or geometrical-optical illusions** are characterized by distortions of size, length, position or curvature. A striking example is the [Café wall illusion](#). Other examples are the famous [Müller-Lyer illusion](#) and [Ponzo illusion](#).
- **Paradox illusions** are generated by objects that are paradoxical or impossible, such as the [Penrose triangle](#) or [impossible staircases](#) seen, for example, in [M.C. Escher's *Ascending and Descending*](#) and [Waterfall](#). The triangle is an illusion dependent on a cognitive misunderstanding that

adjacent edges must join.

Fictions are when a figure is perceived even though it is not in the stimulus.

(Note: Might be entire book on images called *Cool Images*)

Cool Languages

Hot languages = Less participation

Cool languages = More participation

The language of the Third Reich helped to create the culture. “It isn’t only Nazi actions that have to vanish, but also the Nazi cast of mind, the typical Nazi way of thinking, and its breeding ground: the language of Nazism.”

The Language of the Third Reich
Victor Klemperer

“New demands led the language of the Third Reich to stimulate an increase in the use of the dissociating prefix *ent* (*de*) though in each case it remains open to question whether we are dealing with completely new creations or the adoption by the common language of terms already familiar in specialist circles. Windows had to be blacked out (*verdunkelt*) because of enemy planes, which in turn led to the daily task of lifting the blackout (*des Entdunkelns*). In the event of roof fires, the lofts had to be free of clutter that might get in the way of the firefighters – they were therefore de-cluttered (*entrumpelt*). New sources of nourishment had to be tapped: the bitter horse-chestnut was de-bittered (*entbittert*).”

Klemperer, the main critic of Hitlerdeutsch, demonstrates, resisting patterns of thought means engaging in conceptual metaphors and refusing the logic that ideologies impose upon them. (See Metaphors under Cool Device section and particularly the ideas of George Lakoff and his book *Metaphors We Live By*.)

Cool Genres

Adventure

Exploration

Mystery

Cool texts in Hot Media

McLuhan observed that movies were a “hot” media in that they enhanced the single sense of vision in such a manner that the viewer (audience) did not need to exert much effort in filling in the details of a movie image. However, there can exist “cool” text within hot media such as text based on the mystery genre.

For example, in 1999, a film was made with an inexpensive handheld camera for \$35,000. It told the story of three student filmmakers who hiked into the mountains of Maryland to film a documentary about a local legend called the Blair Witch. The filmmakers supposedly disappeared and viewers were told the film was pieced together from “rediscovered” amateur footage shot on their hike. No one was sure if this was true.

Wharton marketing professor Jonah Berger mentions this film *The Blair Witch Project* in his book *Contagious* and asks readers “What do we do when confronted with a controversial mystery like this? Naturally, we ask others to help us sort out the answer.” This is exactly what happened. The film garnered a huge buzz simply from people wondering whether it depicted real events or not. The buzz drove the movie to become a blockbuster and grossed more than \$248 million worldwide.

One of the lessons learned here is that a hot media containing cool text can generate huge participation.

Cool Forms

Blogs

Fairytales

Fan Fiction

“The more I dive into this matter of whaling, and push my researches up to the very spring-like head of it, so much the more am I impressed with its honorableness and antiquity; and especially when I find so many great demi-gods and heroes, prophets of all sorts, who one way or other have shed distinction upon it, I am transported with the reflection that I myself below, though but subordinately, to so emblazoned a fraternity.”

Herman Melville
On writing fan fiction

Mythology

Open Source Code/Beta Testers

Parable

Probe

Marshall McLuhan urged readers to think of his work as "probes" or "mosaics" offering a toolkit approach to thinking about the media. Probes are riddled with aphorisms like “The electric light is pure information” and “People don't actually read newspapers, they get into them every morning like a hot bath.”

Tweets

Script

As opposed to text, scripts are outlines for future performances whether film, plays, radio.

Example: In a screenplay, the screenwriter is the “author” while the reader is similar to the first “director”

Talking Points – Forms of scripts used mainly in the political arena or for business communications.

Video Games

Cool Novels

The Epistolary Novel

The word epistolary is derived from Latin from the Greek word ἐπιστολή epistolē, meaning a letter. An epistle is a writing directed or sent to a person or group of people, usually an elegant and formal didactic letter. The epistle genre of letter-writing was common in ancient Egypt as part of the scribal-school writing curriculum. Those traditionally attributed to Paul are known as Pauline epistles and others as catholic (general) epistles.

The epistolary form can add greater realism to a story because it mimics the workings of real life. It is thus able to demonstrate differing points of view without recourse to the device of an omniscient narrator. An important strategic device in the epistolary novel for creating the impression of authenticity of the letters is the fictional editor.

1) Modern “Letters”

The modern epistolary novel is a novel written as a series of documents. The usual form is letters, although diary entries, newspaper clippings and other documents are sometimes used. Recently, electronic “documents” should be added to items for epistolary novels:

- Emails
- Regular mail
- Text messages
- Tweets
- Photos
- Telephone calls
- Recordings
- Radio,
- Blogs
- Videos
- Podcasts
- Facebook posting
- Google word searches
- Recordings
- Cell phone videos
- Instagram (share photos and videos)
- Pinterest
- WordPress blogs
- LinkedIn
- Memos

While electronic documents are difficult to use in printed novels, they are easily accessed in digital novels via hyperlinks. In print novels, the hyperlink of the electronic novel is much more effective provided in print rather than asking the reader to leave print media for digital media to follow the novel.

2) Types of Epistolary Novels

There might be a number of ways to classify epistolary novels. Perhaps the major way is by the number of people adding documents to the novel. Viewed in this way, there are three types of epistolary novels:

- 1) Monologic (giving the letters of only one character, like *Letters of a Portuguese Nun* and *The Sorrows of Young Werther*).
- 2) Dialogic (giving the letters of two characters, like Mme Marie Jeanne Riccoboni's *Letters of Fanni Butler* (1757))
- 3) Polylogic (with three or more letter-writing characters, such as in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*. A crucial element in polylogic epistolary novels such as *Clarissa and Dangerous Liaisons* is the dramatic device of "discrepant awareness" or the simultaneous but separate correspondences of the heroines and the villains creating dramatic tension.

In the above three ways, there is a hint of the regular division of narrative voices into first person, second person and third person narratives. In this sense, we might call the Monologic epistolary novel a first-person epistolary novel, the Dialogic a second person epistolary novel and the Polylogic and third person epistolary novel.

From a "cool" point of view, the Polylogic epistolary represents the potential for the greatest participation of the reader in the novel. Not only does the reader have to decide which documents to use in constructing meaning of the novel, but more importantly, the reader has to determine who the real narrator of the novel is

3) Examples

Nineteenth Century

Fyodor Dostoevsky used the epistolary format for his first novel *Poor Folk* (1846), a series of letters between two friends, struggling to cope with their impoverished circumstances and life in pre-revolution Russia.

Wilkie Collins wrote *The Moonstone* (1868) as a collection of various documents to construct a detective novel in English. In the second piece, a character explains that he is writing his portion because another had observed to him that the events

surrounding the disappearance of the eponymous diamond might reflect poorly on the family, if misunderstood, and therefore he was collecting the true story. This is an unusual element, as most epistolary novels present the documents without questions about how they were gathered. Collins had used this form previously in *The Woman in White* (1859).

Spanish foreign minister Juan Valera's *Pepita Jimenez* (1874) is written in three sections, the first and third being a series of letters, the middle part narrated by an unknown observer.

Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) uses not only letters and diaries, but also dictation cylinders and newspaper accounts.

Twentieth Century

Dorothy Sayers and Robert Eustace's *The Documents of the Case* (1930).

Virginia Woolf's essay "Three Guineas" (1938)

CS Lewis' *The Screwtape Letters* (1942)

Ideas of March (1948) by Thornton Wilder consists of letters and documents illuminating the last days of the Roman Republic.

Some of Your Blood (1961) by Theodore Sturgeon is a short novel consisting of letters and case-notes relating to the psychiatric treatment of a non-supernatural vampire.

Herzog (1964) by Saul Bellow is largely written in letter format. These are both real and imagined letters, written by the protagonist Moses Herzog to family members, friends, and celebrities.

Up the Down Staircase (1965) by Bel Kaufman which spent 64 weeks on the New York Times Best Seller list. In 1967 it was released as a movie starring Patrick Bedford and Sandy Dennis.

Silence (1966) by Shusaku Eno half of which consists of letters from Rodrigues, the other half either in the third person or in letters from other persons.

Flowers for Algernon (1966) by Daniel Keyes takes the form of a series of lab progress reports written by the main character as his treatment progresses, with his writing style changing correspondingly.

Carrie (1974) by Stephen King written in an epistolary structure through newspaper clippings, magazine articles, letters, and book excerpts.

Letters (1979) by John Barth where the author interacts with characters from his other novels.

The Color Purple (1982) by Alice Walker. The 1985 film adaptation echoes the form by incorporating into the script some of the novel's letters, which the actors deliver as monologues.

John Updike's *S* (1988) is an epistolary novel consisting of the heroine's letters and transcribed audio recordings.

Bridget Jones' Diary (1996) by Helen Fielding is written in the form of a personal diary.

Twenty-First Century

The Princess Diaries is a series of ten novels written in the form of diary entries *The Boy Next Door* by Meg Chabot a romantic comedy novel consisting entirely of e-mails sent among the characters.

The Eagle's Throne (2003) by Carlos Fuentes is a political satire written as a series of letters between persons in high levels of the Mexican government in 2020. The epistolary format is treated by the author as a consequence of necessity: the United States impedes all telecommunications in Mexico as a retaliatory measure, leaving letters and smoke signals as the only possible methods of communication, particularly ironic given one character's observation that "Mexican politicians put nothing in writing."

Cloud Atlas (2004) by David Mitchell tells a story in several time periods in a nested format, with some sections told in epistolary style, including an interview, journal entries and a series of letters.

Griffin and Sabine by Nick Bantock is a love story written as a series of hand-painted postcards and letters.

Where Rainbows End by Cecelia Ahern is written in the form of letters, e-mails, instant messages, newspaper articles, etc.

World War Z: An Oral History of the Zombie War (2006) by Max Brooks, is a series of interviews from various survivors of a zombie apocalypse.

Diary of a Wimpy Kid (2007) by Jeff Kinney is a series of fiction books written in the form a diary, including hand-written notes and cartoon drawings.

The White Tiger (2008) by Aravind Adiga winner of the 40th Man Booker Prize in 2008, is a novel in the form of letters written by an Indian villager to the Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao.

The Martian (2011) by Andy Weir is written as a collection of video journal entries for each Martian day (sol) by the protagonist on Mars, and sometimes by main characters on Earth and on the space station Hermes.

The Lawgiver (2012) by Herman Wouk. The last novel of one of America's great novelists written when he was 97 years old. Through documents it depicts an attempt to make a film about the biblical Moses. It is composed of traditional communications such as letters, memos, and articles, as well as utilizing more contemporary means like emails, text messages and Skype transcripts. Perhaps one of the great contemporary examples of the epistolary novel.

Multi-personal Narrator

While epistolary novels invite “cool” reader participation by providing the narrator via documents or letters, the device of hiding the narrator provides another device for creating cool novels. Perhaps one of the best examples of this appears in Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* (1927) in the famous chapter 5 “Brown stocking” scene. In part of this scene we are in the consciousness of some observer who is not identified.

The scene provides an entire chapter called “The Brown Stocking” in Erich Auerbach's brilliant *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* (1953, Princeton University Press). Auerbach begins the chapter by analyzing a particularly baffling passage from early in the novel. It comes in the midst of the scene in which Mrs. Ramsay is measuring a stocking against her son James's leg.

“Never did anybody look so sad. Bitter and black, half-way down, in the darkness, in the shaft which ran from the sunlight to the depths, perhaps a tear formed: a tear fell: the waters swayed this way and that, received it, and were at rest. Never did anybody look so sad.”

Auerbach is puzzled by this passage and asks “Who is speaking in this paragraph? Who is looking at Mrs. Ramsay here, who concludes that never did anybody look so sad? Who is expressing these doubtful, obscure suppositions? – about the tear which – perhaps – forms and falls in the dark, about the water swaying this way and that, receiving it, and then returning to rest? There is no one near the window in the room but Mrs. Ramsay and James. It cannot be either of them, nor the ‘people’ who begin to speak in the next paragraph. Perhaps it is the author. However, if that be so, the author certainly does not

speak like one who has a knowledge of his characters – in this case Mrs. Ramsay – and who, out of knowledge, can describe the personality and momentary state of mind objectively and with certainty.”

Rather than regarding this lack of objective authorial perspective as an artistic fault, Auerbach sees it as the key to the style of *To the Lighthouse* and to modernist literature in general.

As Auerbach notes, “No one is certain of anything here: it is all mere supposition, glances cast by one person upon another whose enigma he cannot solve.” He notes that “We are not taken into Virginia Woolf’s confidence and allowed to share her knowledge of Mrs. Ramsay’s character as it is reflected in and as it affects various figures in the novel” the nameless spirits which assume certain things about a tear, the people who wonder about her.” He concluded that what is unique about Woolf’s style is the absence of a fixed authoritative authorial perspective that might tell us the absolute truth. Instead, in *To the Lighthouse* there are multiple overlapping perspectives, each of which is allowed to have its say, and none of which can claim to be absolutely true.” As Auerbach observes, there is “not one order and one interpretation, but many.”

This is something new in literary history for Auerbach. He notes, “Goethe or Keller, Dickens or Meredith, Balzac or Zola told us out of their certain knowledge what their characters did, what they felt and thought while doing it, and how their actions and thoughts were to be interpreted. They knew everything about their characters. The author, with his knowledge of an objective truth, never abdicated his position as the final and governing authority.” However, in Woolf Auerbach notes, “The writer as narrator of objective facts has almost completely vanished; almost everything stated appears by way of reflection in the consciousness of the dramatic personae.”

In Woolf, however, “The writer as narrator of objective facts has almost completely vanished; almost everything stated appears by way of reflection in the consciousnesses of the dramatic personae” Auerbach names this tendency the “multi-personal representation of consciousness” and it is one of the defining traits of modernist literary style.

(Thanks to the website The Brown Stocking for some of the above. It offers an excellent analysis of *To the Lighthouse* arguing that the new multi-personal narrator is the key to understanding the breakthrough style of the novel. The site gives homage to Auerbach’s book. See the site at <http://brownstocking.org>)

The Unreliable Narrator

Another aspect of the “cool” novel is the device of the unreliable narrator. In literature, an unreliable narrator is a character who tells a story with a lack of credibility. There are different types of unreliable narrators and the presence of one can be revealed to readers in varying ways - sometimes immediately, sometimes gradually, and sometimes later in the story when a plot twist leaves us wondering if we’ve maybe been a little *too* trusting.

The term “unreliable narrator” was first coined by literary critic Wayne C. Booth in his 1961 book, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*. It’s a literary device that writers have been putting to good use for much longer than the past 80 years. For example, Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Tell-Tale Heart” (1843) utilizes this storytelling tool, as does Emily Bronte’s *Wuthering Heights* (1847).

Novels using unreliable narrators make us question our own perceptions and can create a lot of grey areas that blur the lines of reality, allowing us to come to our own conclusions. These fallible narrators can also create tension by keeping readers on their toes, wondering if there’s more under the surface, and reading between the lines to decipher what that is.

Perhaps one of the greatest practitioners of the unreliable narrator style is crime writer Jim Thompson and particularly his famous *The Killer Inside Me* (1952). The story is told through the eyes of its protagonist, Lou Ford, a 29-year-old deputy sheriff in a small Texas town. Ford appears to be a regular, small-town cop leading an unremarkable existence; beneath this facade, however, he is a cunning, depraved sociopath with sadistic sexual tastes. Ford’s main outlet for his dark urges is the relatively benign habit of deliberately needling people with clichés and platitudes despite their obvious boredom: “If there’s anything worse than a bore,” says Lou, “it’s a corny bore.”

The main character has a mental condition that holds two or more viewpoints of the world in perpetual holding patterns so that one viewpoint never is able to dominate for very long. These viewpoints constantly battle each other in relating the narrative of the story.

In the June 15, 2010 *Village Voice*, critic J. Hoberman discusses how Lou Ford is an unreliable narrator noting “Thompson’s fearsome tale is recounted in the first-person by a blatantly unreliable narrator. Foisting himself on the world as a gentlemanly, platitude-spouting Jimmy Stewart type, Lou Ford is less a character than an act, or a joke on the reader. The ease with which the killer-cop outwits the other characters is matched only by the apparent rationality with which this self-conscious psychopath explicates his increasingly brutal crimes or self-diagnoses what he melodramatically terms ‘the sickness.’ There’s a sense that Ford not only scripts the story but directs the action. Thompson’s novel is a Möbius strip in which nothing its calculating protagonist says can be taken at face value. Ford’s cheerful personality is a façade that encompasses an unfathomable void.”

Types of Unreliable Narrators

1) Deliberately Unreliable: Narrators Who are Aware of Their Deception

This type of narrator is intentionally lying to the reader because, well, they can. They have your attention, the point of view is theirs, and they'll choose what to do with it, regardless of any "responsibility" they might have to the reader.

An example of this type of unreliable narrator is *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* by Agatha Christie. While some fallible storytellers may lack credibility because they deliver false or skewed information, others are untrustworthy because of the information that they omit. They leave out key pieces of information without which the reader is left in the dark. This is the case in *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*, whose narrator - Dr. Sheppard - is one of the most classic unreliable examples.

Dr. Sheppard takes us through Poirot's investigation into the murder of Roger Ackroyd. He is genial and rather neutral throughout the story, seeming to explain the events as they happened without bias. Only at the end is it revealed that this voice we have allowed to carry us through the novel is actually the voice of the murderer. Sheppard also reveals at the end that he started writing the manuscript with the intention of documenting Poirot's failure. Therefore, the entire manuscript is based on a detailed lie by omission or a 100% deliberate deception.

2) Evasively Unreliable: Narrators Who Unconsciously Alter the Truth

The motivations for this kind of narrator are often quite muddy. Sometimes it's simple self-preservation, other times it's slightly more manipulative. Sometimes the narrator isn't even aware they are twisting the truth until later in the book. Their unreliability often stems from the need to tell the story in a way that justifies something, and their stories are often embellished or watered down. These kinds of contradictory characters whose mindsets aren't clear can keep readers anxiously waiting for the narrator's moment of clarity, drawing their own conclusions all the while.

An example of this type of unreliable narrator is the novel *Life of Pi* by Yann Martel. At the end of the novel, when Pi wraps up his fantastical story of being stranded at sea with a group of animals, we hear another version of his story - where the animals are replaced by humans, and the events are much more tragic and disturbing. Pi never concretely confirms which story is true: is the first version simply a coping mechanism or is the second version simply to placate the unbelieving cops? Readers are faced with the choice to pick which story they believe, as the narrator does not make it clear - and even if he did specify which version is the true one, would we believe him?

3) Naively Unreliable: Narrators Who Are Honest but Lack all the Information

Unlike the previous two types, this type of narrator is not unreliable on purpose - they simply lack a traditional, "greater understanding." This kind of unreliability can allow the reader to view your story with fresh eyes. The narrator's "unorthodox" interpretations might only provide us with partial explanations of what's going on, forcing us to dig a little deeper and connect the dots. These naive narrators can also encourage readers to take more significant notice of things we might've taken for granted.

An example of this type of unreliable narrator is the young boy Jack in the book *The Room* by Emma Donoghue. Five-year-old Jack is an often-quoted example of an unknowingly unreliable narrator. Jack is not withholding information from the reader or providing false information. He simply reports the facts as he sees them. However, as a child, his accounts often lack insight into the implications of what is happening around him. Because of this, even though Jack's voice is a poignantly honest one, his narration is not a source of information that can be taken at face value.

Another example of the naive unreliable narrator is the popular *Forrest Gump* by Winston Groom. Forrest is not deliberately unreliable in order to pull the wool over the readers' eyes or to "save face." From the outset, we are aware that Forrest doesn't comprehend things like the "average" person does, and we're aware that we might not be able to take everything he says at face value. This is confirmed when Forrest begins detailing his life, which is peppered with stories about major events from history that he was apparently intimately involved in. We can't be certain that he's not telling the truth, but it would be quite the life if he is.

(Thanks to the Reedsy Blog partly for information above. See the blog at <https://blog.reedsy.com/unreliable-narrator/>)

Cool Education

Alexander Kuskis

“Marshall McLuhan as Educationist: Institutional Learning in the Postliterate Era”
Explorations in Media Ecology
Volume 10 Numbers 3 and 4
Gonzaga University

Cool pedagogy is a term that I originated, although the idea derives from McLuhan’s distinction between a hot and a cool medium, which he explained for *Playboy Magazine*: “A hot medium excludes and a cool medium includes; hot media are low in participation, or completion, by the audience and cool media are high in participation” (McLuhan, 1969).

McLuhan argued that pedagogy should be “cool” so as to invite learner participation, interaction, and involvement, which were not the traditional transmission of knowledge in classrooms via lectures, and books. In one of his letters, McLuhan quotes Francis Bacon on the desirability of teaching “broken knowledge” because: “... aphorisms, representing a knowledge broken, do invite men to inquire farther; whereas Methods, carrying the show of a total” do not. (Molinaro, McLuhan, & Toye, 1987, p. 444).

Teachers shouldn’t try to tell everything about any subject being studied, but rather should allow learners to discover portions of the topic for themselves. McLuhan advocated discovery learning, whereby students would find things out for themselves by working collaboratively on topics that interested them.

Cool Theater

Immersive theater mixes food, drink and environmental staging
to lure audiences that eschew Broadway

Gordon Cox
Variety - 4/23/13

Call it experiential; call it immersive; call it event theater. It's usually a snarl of logistical challenges. There's no set financial model for making it viable. The work itself is often impossible to describe.

And a growing number of legiters think it's the next big thing. Often staged in unorthodox locations and already commonplace overseas, the shows typically feature long runs, lower margins, purpose-built venues and added revenue streams — such as food and drink.

“It's really on the cutting edge of what people want theater to become,” says producer Howard Kagan of his upcoming commercial transfer of “Natasha, Pierre and the Great Comet of 1812,” a rock opera that improbably mixes Tolstoy, contempo musical idioms and an environmental staging in a Russian supper-club setting that serves pierogis and vodka. “It becomes relevant and desirable and fun for a huge array of demographics that don't necessarily think they'll turn out for a Broadway show.”

Adds La Jolla Playhouse a.d. Christopher Ashley, “I think this kind of work is the next huge wave of growth in the American theater.”

* * *

“Natasha, Pierre and the Great Comet of 1812”

One part environmental staging in a Russian supper club, one part modern-day music and one part the story (taken from a small seg of “War and Peace”) of a young Moscow woman who's seduced by a devious Casanova while waiting for her husband to return from the front lines. WHERE: Kazino, a specially constructed and designed space on a lot in Manhattan's Meatpacking District.

“Sleep No More”

Punchdrunk's genre-bending, noirish dance-theater retelling of “Macbeth,” staged over five floors in a meticulously set-dressed venue in which masked auds roam at will while the performers enact the tale all around them. In addition to the bar where theatergoers start the show, there's also a rooftop watering hole and restaurant. WHERE: The McKittrick Hotel, not actually a hotel but the show's custom-renovated space in a former nightclub in west Chelsea, Manhattan.

* * *

Then She Fell
Immersive Theater
Opens March 9, closes July 28, 2013
The Kingsland Ward at St. John's
195 Maujer St., Brooklyn, N.Y.

Then She Fell is a fully immersive, multi-sensory experience in which only 15 audience members per performance explore a dreamscape where every alcove, corner, and corridor has been transformed into lushly designed world. Inspired by the life and writings of Lewis Carroll, it offers an Alice-like experience for audience members as they explore the rooms, often by themselves, in order to discover hidden scenes; encounter performers one-on-one; unearth clues that illuminate a shrouded history; use skeleton keys to gain access to guarded secrets; and imbibe elixirs custom designed by one of NYC's foremost mixologists.

Performances begin promptly, and there is absolutely no late admittance. There are no refunds. Admittance is strictly limited to audience members 21 years of age and over; all audience members must bring valid government-issued photo IDs. The performance lasts roughly 2 hours without intermission. Because of the immersive nature of this piece, audiences may be standing for several minutes at a time over the course of the performance. Audiences are encouraged to wear comfortable shoes. This performance is not recommended for audience members who are not comfortable standing, walking, or being alone.

* * *

The New Yorker
Goings On About Town

Third Rail Projects recently moved its wildly imaginative multimedia theatre-dance piece from a single-level hospital to a creaky three-story school building, now dressed to be a mental ward in Wonderland. There are even more nooks and crannies to snoop around in, skeleton key in hand, looking for clues about the nature of the relationship between Lewis Carroll and his young muse Alice Liddell. Fifteen audience members per show are led through a maze of cockeyed spaces and left in small rooms with actors playing the White Rabbit or the Mad Hatter or the Red Queen, who might wordlessly offer a tiny, yummy alcoholic drink poured from a vial and then orchestrate an anxiety-provoking but exciting theatrical encounter: silently eat a tangerine with Alice; lie down in a little bed while the White Queen nestles beside you, telling a haunting bedtime story. Lucky theatregoers get to join the tea party, where chocolate is served and spoons fly. Wonderfully written, directed, and choreographed by Zach Morris, Tom Pearson, and Jennine Willett, in collaboration with the company.

Cool as Spreadability

Cool Messages are Spreadable
Hot Messages are Sticky

Cool messages and content are more likely to be shared online than non-spreadable messages. The argument is: If it doesn't spread, it's dead. For things to live online, people have to share it socially. They also have to make it their own — which can be as participatory as just passing a YouTube clip on as a link or making a copycat video themselves.

The days of corporate control over media content and its distribution have been replaced by the age of what the digital media industries have called “user-generated content.” Spreadable Media maps these fundamental changes and gives readers a comprehensive look into the rise of participatory culture, from internet memes to presidential tweets.

The authors challenge our notions of what goes “viral” and how by examining factors such as the nature of audience engagement and the environment of participation, and by contrasting the concepts of “stickiness” or aggregating attention in centralized places with “spreadability” or dispersing content widely through both formal and informal networks. The former has often been the measure of media success in the online world, but the latter describes the actual ways content travels through social media. The concept of spreadability explores the internal tensions businesses face as they adapt to this new, spreadable, communication reality and argues for the need to shift from “hearing” to “listening” in corporate culture.

Spreadable Media provides a clear understanding of how people are spreading ideas and the implications these activities have for business, politics, and everyday life, both on- and offline.

“The concept of spreadable media rests on the distinction between distribution (the top-down spread of media content as captured in the broadcast paradigm) and circulation (a hybrid system where content spreads as a result of a series of informal transactions between commercial and non-commercial participants. Spreadable media is media which travels across media platforms at least in part because the people take it in their own hands and share it with their social networks.” Henry Jenkins

Spreadability & Stickiness

Cool content allows the chance for spreadability while hot content creates stickiness that fights spreadability. Stickiness seeks to attract and hold the attention of site visitors; Spreadability seeks to motivate and facilitate the efforts of fans and enthusiasts to “spread” the word.

Stickiness depends on concentrating the attention of all interested parties on a specific site or through a specific channel; spreadability seeks to expand consumer awareness by dispersing the content across many potential points of contact.

Stickiness depends on creating a unified consumer experience as consumers enter into branded spaces; spreadability depends on creating a diversified experience as brands enter into the spaces where people already live and interact.

Stickiness depends on prestructured interactivity to shape visitor experiences; spreadability relies on open-ended participation as diversely motivated but deeply engaged consumers retrofit content to the contours of different niche communities.

Stickiness typically tracks the migrations of individual consumers within a site; Spreadability maps the flow of ideas through social networks.

Under stickiness, a sales force markets to consumers; under spreadability, grassroots intermediaries become advocates for brands.

Stickiness is a logical outgrowth of the shift from broadcasting's push model to the web's pull model; spreadability restores some aspects of the push model through relying on consumers to circulate the content within their own communities.

Under stickiness, producers, marketers, and consumers are separate and distinct roles; spreadability depends on increased collaboration across and even a blurring of the distinction between these roles.

Stickiness depends on a finite number of channels for communicating with consumers; spreadability takes for granted an almost infinite number of often localized and many times temporary networks through which media content circulates.

Online social networks provide mechanisms which allow trusted recommendations to spread across different but intersecting communities of interest, which blur the boundaries between virtual and real world social interactions, and which allow consumers to assert stronger social ties with brands, stars, and media properties.

Participatory culture allows consumers to take media in their own hands, not simply selecting content from the menu of available options, but also producing their own media, often in explicit response to previously circulating materials.

The Hot Cliché

“The first man who compared woman to a rose was a poet, the second, an imbecile.”

Gerard de Nerval

The common belief in clichés is that they are not a cool literary device, inviting user participation to complete their meaning, but rather hot devices allowing for no participation. While clichés do not allow participation in their meaning, they allow the user participation in the community that uses the particular cliché. They allow for the communion aspect of communication rather than the transmission aspect.

The great communications scholar James Carey, though, notes that the word communication has really two means one is transmission and the other is communication. While clichés allow little participation by the user in the transmission of new information, they do allow for participation in the community using the cliché who are familiar with its symbolism. As sociologist Ryan J. Stark observes in *www.Jaconlinejournal.net*:

“When the writer uses a cliché, the writer participates in a kind of recognizable cultural substratum. Admittedly, as a commonplace expression, the cliché does not create new epistemic insights, and it does not give rise to tremendous aesthetic pleasure. What the cliché does accomplish in discourse is a sometimes slight, sometimes powerful connective pathos, or what Kenneth Burke referred to similarly as identification with others. On a very basic level, the use of a cliché generates such connection with others through the reflective enactment of a shared discourse practice.”

* * *

“The words cliché and stereotype have a good deal in common. Both come from French, both were originally printers’ terms, and both have come to take on somewhat negative meanings in modern use. Their original meanings are essentially synonymous, referring to printing blocks from which numerous prints could be made. In fact, *cliché* means *stereotype* in French. Their modern meanings, however, are quite distinct. *Cliché* is today overwhelmingly encountered in reference to something hackneyed, such as an overly familiar or commonplace phrase, theme, or expression. *Stereotype* is most frequently now employed to refer to an often unfair and untrue belief that many people have about all people or things with a particular characteristic.”

Origin and Etymology of cliché - French, literally, printer's stereotype, from past participle of *clicher* to stereotype, of imitative origin.

“A phrase or expression that has been used so often that it is no longer original or interesting. Something that is so commonly used in books, stories, etc., that it is no longer effective.”

Merriam-Webster Dictionary

A trite, stereotyped expression; a sentence or phrase, usually expressing a popular or common thought or idea, that has lost originality, ingenuity, and impact by long overuse, as *sadder but wiser*, or *strong as an ox*.

“All examples of Cliché are expressions that were once new and fresh. They won popularity in public and hence have been used so extensively that such expressions now sound boring and at times irritable due to the fact that they have lost their original color. For instance, the phrase “as red as a rose” must have been a fresh and innovative expression at some point in time but today it is considered universally as a cliché and does not sound good to be used in everyday formal writing.”

www.literarydevices.net

* * *

Anton C. Zijderveld, a Dutch sociologist, throws light on the function of a cliché in the following extract taken from his treatise “On Clichés”: “A cliché is a traditional form of human expression (in words, thoughts, emotions, gestures, acts) which—due to repetitive use in social life—has lost its original, often ingenious heuristic power. Although it thus fails positively to contribute meaning to social interactions and communication, it does function socially, since it manages to stimulate behavior (cognition, emotion, volition, action), while it avoids reflection on meanings.”

“Shaking up a society's clichés is as hazardous an enterprise as trying to overthrow its institutions.”

“When a society modernizes, “... the art of conversation is increasingly forgotten. Instead, modern man has become a virtuoso in chatter” (e.g. chit-chat at parties, TV chat shows). People phone instead of writing letters [RT: but they do send emails]. “In this chatter there is no room for reflection.”

Clichés have the “capacity to by-pass reflection and to thus unconsciously work on the mind, while excluding potential relativizations” (by which people could weigh their worth and value).

The appearance of a stranger, who isn't familiar with a group's clichés, can sometimes dampen the tyranny of those clichés.

It manages to stimulate behavior ... while it avoids reflection on meanings

When among acquaintances, friends, colleagues and family members, we feel almost compelled to interact and talk." We can only manage to do this "if the bulk of it runs off automatically, i.e. without cognition and emotive effort, and with little psychic investment."

Clichés (like jokes), in response to difficulties or problems of someone near to us, are not answers - the best they can do is strengthen the morale of the group.

* * *

“As a well-known expression, the cliché is a type of commonplace in a culture’s discourse. Kurt Spellmeyer writes about ‘substratums’ in discourse, places that ‘enable participants to recognize what they hold in common’ (267). When the writer uses a cliché, the writer participates in a kind of recognizable cultural substratum. Admittedly, as a commonplace expression, the cliché does not create new epistemic insights, and it does not give rise to tremendous aesthetic pleasure. What the cliché does accomplish in discourse is a sometimes slight, sometimes powerful connective pathos, or what Kenneth Burke referred to similarly as identification with others. On a very basic level, the use of a cliché generates such connection with others through the reflective enactment of a shared discourse practice. This cultural and ethical dimension of the cliché complicates most, if not all, of the advice about clichés in college writing handbooks and rhetorics.”

“Cliches and Composition Theory”

Ryan J. Stark

www.JAOnlinejournal.com

Propaganda as Hot

Thought Reform and the Psychology of Totalism: A Study of Brainwashing in China

Robert J. Lifton

Chapter 22: Ideological Totalism

Loading the Language

The language of the totalist environment is characterized by the thought-terminating cliché. The most far-reaching and complex of human problems are compressed into brief, highly reductive, definitive-sounding phrases, easily memorized and easily expressed. These become the start and finish of any ideological analysis. In thought reform, for instance, the phrase "bourgeois mentality" is used to encompass and critically dismiss ordinarily troublesome concerns like the quest for individual expression, the exploration of alternative ideas, and the search for perspective and balance in political judgments. And in addition to their function as interpretive shortcuts, these clichés become what Richard Weaver has called "ultimate terms": either "god terms," representative of ultimate good; or "devil terms," representative of ultimate evil. In thought reform, "progress," "progressive," "liberation," "proletarian standpoints" and "the dialectic of history" fall into the former category; "capitalist," "imperialist," "exploiting classes," and "bourgeois" (mentality, liberalism, morality, superstition, greed) of course fall into the latter. Totalist language, then, is repetitiously centered on all-encompassing jargon, prematurely abstract, highly categorical, relentlessly judging, and to anyone but its most devoted advocate, deadly dull: in Lionel Trilling's phrase, "the language of non-thought."

To be sure, this kind of language exists to some degree within any cultural or organizational group, and all systems of belief depend upon it. It is in part an expression of unity and exclusiveness: as Edward Sapir put it, "'He talks like us' is equivalent to saying 'He is one of us'." The loading is much more extreme in ideological totalism, however, since the jargon expresses the claimed certitudes of the sacred science. Also involved is an underlying assumption that language -- like all other human products -- can be owned and operated by the Movement. No compunctions are felt about manipulating or loading it in any fashion; the only consideration is its usefulness to the cause.

For an individual person, the effect of the language of ideological totalism can be summed up in one word: constriction. He is, so to speak, linguistically deprived; and since language is so central to all human experience, his capacities for thinking and feeling are immensely narrowed. This is what Hu meant when he said, "using the same pattern of words for so long . . . you feel chained." Actually, not everyone exposed feels chained, but in effect everyone is profoundly confined by these verbal fetters. As in other aspects of totalism, this loading may provide an initial sense of in sight and security,

eventually followed by uneasiness. This uneasiness may result in a retreat into a rigid orthodoxy in which an individual shouts the ideological jargon all the louder in order to demonstrate his conformity, hide his own dilemma and his despair, and protect himself from the fear and guilt he would feel should he attempt to use words and phrases other than the correct ones. Or else he may adopt a complex pattern of inner division, and dutifully produce the expected clichés in public performances while in his private moments he searches for more meaningful avenues of expression. Either way, his imagination becomes increasingly dissociated from his actual life experiences and may even tend to atrophy from disuse.

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About John Frain

John grew up in Los Angeles and has a BA from UCLA and JD from Loyola Law School. He has had a career as a marketing executive and entrepreneur and has been involved in a number of business ventures via GreatHouse and Midnight Oil Studios. See his [LinkedIn profile](#) for additional info.

He is former Board Member and Marketing Director for the [Palm Springs Writers Guild](#) and founder of the [Desert Screenwriting Group](#) which evolved into [Desert Screenwriting Guild](#). He is the author of four books and many published essays, articles and short stories. His book *Battle of Symbols* was published by Daimon Verlag (Zurich) and his book *Spirit Catcher: The Life & Art of John Coltrane* received the Best Biography Award from the Small Press Association. His most recent book is *Londonderry Farewell* co-authored with Tom McKeown.

He has had a long-term interest in symbolism and is considered a leading authority in this area. His major writings on symbolism are published on [Symbolism.Org](#) site. He was a consultant on symbolism for the film *DaVinci Code* and wrote a popular column titled "[Script Symbology](#)" for *Script Magazine*, the world's leading screenplay magazine. He is a former board member of the Upper Arlington Arts Commission and is presently is a board member of LettuceWork, an organization that provides work for adults with autism.
