De visualium rhetoricorum natura: Design, art, culture, text

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De visualium rhetoricorum natura:
Design, art, culture, text

by

George William Standifer Jr.

A dissertation submitted to the graduate faculty
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Major: Rhetoric and Professional Communication

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The student author, whose presentation of the scholarship herein was approved by the program of study committee, is solely responsible for the content of this dissertation. The Graduate College will ensure this dissertation is globally accessible and will not permit alterations after a degree is conferred.

Iowa State University
Ames, Iowa
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ABSTRACT

With the rise of multimedia, communication took a decidedly visual turn. And while many disciplines such as design, media studies, marketing, and art history have sought to analyze and explain visuals through various academic lenses, an emphasis on the culturally situated nature of visual language, on how visuals behave within visual discourse communities, has just begun to emerge. This field of study, visual rhetoric, collates traditional rhetoric’s abundance of persuasive resources with the systematic analysis of visual elements in order to understand how visuals persuade their audiences. But even with visual rhetoric’s growth in the past few decades, research into how visuals enact and sustain groups of people has not received adequate scholarly attention. Growing out of the increase in visual content, a realization that all visuals are contextually and culturally embedded, and the rising need to understand the rhetorical processes involved, the articles in this dissertation respond to this gap in the research by explicitly addressing how visual language functions in forming and sustaining community identity. In particular, my dissertation demonstrates how three visual discourse communities use distinct visual languages to help shape their individual group character. To do this, I employ three different visual methodological frameworks—iconology, Piercian semiotics, and social semiotics—that best explain each visual discourse community’s artifact.

In chapter two, I analyze a non-alphabetic historical register, a Sioux winter count, using iconology in order to comprehend its historicity. In chapter three, I employ Piercian semiotics to detail how text operates iconically within an advertisement and a poem. And in chapter four, I examine four minor league baseball hat logos using the social semiotic perspective to glean how professional designers visualize their intended community. These articles all focus on how the visual language distinct visual discourse communities use explains, expresses, details, and
perpetuates the cultural and social beliefs of their intended audiences. As such, this dissertation adds new insights into visual rhetoric’s ability to explain how communities (audiences) use visual codes to bind themselves together.
CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

“It is by sight that we discern darkness.”
–Aristotle, *De Anima*, Book III, 425b, p. 5

Cultures exist within discourse communities that express shared beliefs. Defined by John Swales (1990), discourse communities are “sociorhetorical networks that form in order to work towards sets of common goals” (p. 9). These networks employ genres—recognizable classes of communicative purposes—to achieve their shared intent. Primarily researched through written and oral communication, these discourse communities are defined by how groups interact through language. However, discourse communities use more than written and verbal ways to convey their meanings; they interact on multiple levels to create patterns of shared meaning. In order to get a complete picture of discourse communities, therefore, we need to account for how other communicative processes work inside these groups. One such fundamental aspect of group communication is the visual. If we can paint the discourse community with a broader stroke by including the visual, then we will be better able to rhetorically analyze their visual forms and meanings from the wider social and cultural context. In short, to more fully know a culture we need to know its visual language: its visual discourse community.

Defined by Kostelnick and Hassett (2003), visual discourse communities “are the key social formations that enable users to structure visual language” (p. 3) and that “provide the social force that shapes the raw materials of visual language into conventional codes and enables members to deploy, interpret, and sustain those codes as part of that collective enterprise” (p. 24). These conventions manifest within disciplines, organizations, and cultures. For example, chemists learn the visual language of molecules, how they are represented, with the various
atoms depicted as colored spheres, connected to other colored spheres with lines denoting the bond between the atoms. The visual language of discourse communities also arises in organizations. For instance, the US military uses insignias to specify rank. These visual symbols are well known to the visual discourse community of the military, but the civilian public might not be aware of the distinct meaning each insignia bears, leading to gradations of understanding. Visual conventions also occur within cultures. A good example is ancient Greek vases. Successive Greek culture is dated by the visual conventions and styles each era produced. The Geometric period (900-700 BCE) artisans primarily used repetition of mathematical patterns to decorate their vases, while the Archaic period (700-480 BCE) involved adding colored glazes to vases (Hurwit, 1992, p. 282). The Classical period of Athens (500-320 BCE) is best illustrated by the metopes of the Parthenon, whose shapes reflected a turn toward three dimensional sculptural concerns (p. 353). Regardless of how and when visual discourse community members socially arrange, their visual conventions of distinct styles, representations, and meanings pervade their visual communication.

In this dissertation, I seek to add to our understanding of the unique visual languages groups use to visually identify with one another. In expanding our understanding of distinct visual discourse communities, my dissertation adds to scholarship by demonstrating how three groups of people use distinct visual languages to help shape their individual group identity. To do this, I employ three different visual methodologies—social semiotics, semiotics, and iconology—that best explain each visual discourse community’s artifact.

Almost a quarter of a century ago, W. J. T. Mitchell (1995) deemed our world as undergoing a “pictorial turn,” where “pictures form a point of peculiar friction and discomfort across a broad range of intellectual inquiry” (pp. 11–13). Undeniably, this move toward visuals
has only accelerated in the last decade with an increase in internet bandwidth and the mass
creation of visuals through widely disseminated publishing software. Complicating the pictorial
turn even further, research has shown that vision is the most dominant sense, comprising around
80% of our sensory input (Ripley & Politzer, 2010, p. 215). So our tendency to rely on our eyes
for information, coupled with a dramatic rise in visual input and output, necessitates
investigating how visual codes create meaning socially and culturally within visual discourse
communities.

Accordingly, my dissertation first looks at the growing importance culture (audience) has
played in the history of professional visual communication, then I review the increasing
scholastic and pedagogical importance of visual literacy; after, I compare and contrast major
critical methodologies of visual inquiry. In the next three chapters, I analyze three separate visual
artifacts using three different visual rhetorical methodologies. My first analysis uses iconology to
explore how the Sioux people sustained and remembered their history and culture without having
a written language or numbers. The second analysis concerns text itself. A more traditional
semiotic analysis informs its interpretations of how text itself is a visual artifact. I start my
analysis by very briefly exploring how letterforms imbue meaning within distinct visual
discourse communities; I then critique artifacts whose text operates visually: a television
commercial, then a poem. Each of these instances where the visual nature of text complements
the words’ semantic meaning seeks to show how text itself is a visual sign denoting culturally
signified properties above its mere definition, signifying how peoples communally group
together around instantiations of text. The third analysis looks at how minor league baseball hats,
through the social semiotic lens, reflect cultural values embedded within the symbols
representing each team. Finally, my dissertation concludes with the advantages and challenges
methodological inquiry brings to visual rhetoric, along with future considerations and trajectories. As such, this dissertation adds new insights into visual rhetoric’s ability to explain how communities (audiences) use visual codes (genres and conventions) to bind themselves together.

In order to do this, I presuppose two, aesthetical and rhetorical, tenets of visual study. First, visuals can be accurately, or at least adequately, represented through written and/or spoken language. For even as written and verbal language categorically confine the way we speak about the world, they offer chances to define experience through prefabricated terms that help people communicate with one another. Said another way, words cannot express the initial impression one feels when first viewing a persuasive visual artifact, a sensation termed the aesthetic, yet language allows for conceptualizing perception, beauty, fascination, even epiphany.

Second, visual conventions and visual genres are historical, social, and learned (Kostelnick 2016, p. 192; Kostelnick & Hassett, 2003, p. 17; Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 2). The visible form of a convention collectively gets invented, integrated, shaped, constructed, stabilized, imitated, propagated, sustained, transformed, destabilized, and/or degraded over time by visual discourse communities. Inherently rhetorical and historical, visual conventions and genres require audiences be taught and enculturated into these visual social conventions and genres. In short, visual language evolves because it is situated in, embodies, and engenders the values of the visual cultural communities it serves: in order to be persuasive, then, visual language must meet audience expectations, and vice versa. However, it must be kept in mind that the history of visual language use is dynamic since conventions—socially constructed, commonly deployed styles within specific visual discourse communities at distinct historical time periods—appear invisible because they seem natural to their audiences; also, these
conventions, their codes, and the genres they embody exist on a continuum between fixed and flexible, allowing novelty and standards to concurrently operate within specific visual discourse communities.

For instance, most organizations develop a specific logo that carries its brand name. This logo is very fixed in its size, shape, form, color, typeface, and arrangement; this currency of status is given ethos by its users and those who are familiar with it and routinely use it. The codes and conventions of the logo, however, can be flouted in certain instances where a comparison or contrast is being made between the fixed form and the more flexible form. Pepsi’s logo (figure 1) illustrates how visual conventions and genres change over time. The older version (1940) (figure 2) of Pepsi’s logo reflects a font similar in color and movement to Coca-Cola’s, whereas the modern logo (figure 1) marks a drastic change in font (deleting the “cola” and using a sans serif), color (adding white and blue), and the circle symbol (the white inside the circle above “pepsi” resembles a smile) reiterates the circles in the repeated letter “p” below it. Visual conventions are also social (designed for ethos within specific visual discourse communities), and in the modern Pepsi logo (figure 1), we can see how the red, white, and blue may create a pathos appeal to patriotism for a US audience. And finally, visual conventions are learned, as unfamiliar audiences come to recognize the logo after seeing it somewhere else (figure 3). The sign overlooking the East River in New York City, seen now as nostalgic, appeals
to both the ethos of longevity and as a branding mechanism during its creation. In essence, visual rhetoric is central to penetrating embedded and embodied representations of cultural values.

Yet, the valuing of culture (audience) in understanding visual artifacts has only recently begun. Indeed, recognizing that audiences induce visual conventions and genres has just started to take hold. In the centuries preceding this change, visual communication slowly advanced past Platonic notions of ideal forms that valued the mind—universal, ideal, non-rhetorical—over bodily notions of subjectivity, cultural difference, and personal affect. Accordingly, I will first discuss the significance of how visual language has progressed by analyzing historical epochs of visual rhetoric in Western communication and their conventions in order to better understand our present and future state.

**Ancient, Medieval, Renaissance, and Enlightenment**

Plato famously recognized a philosophical split between the material (senses) and the mental (reasoning), commonly referred to as the mind-body problem or the Cartesian duality. Likewise, visual communication has had to grapple with this apparent bifurcation. Beginning at least with Aristotle’s and Longinus’ concept of *phantasia*, or visualization, visual rhetoric was seen as a rhetorical method of “image-production” through speech that “is extremely productive of grandeur, magnificence and urgency” (Bizzell & Herzberg, 2001, p. 356). The desire for the rhetor to make the audience “see” should, if successful, invoke the audience into action. And even though the ancient view of visual rhetoric was decidedly verbal, it still sought to persuade through visual delivery. During medieval times, the *point-based* grid system was used for
representational and symbolic ends by connecting the physical world with the spiritual. In essence, the manipulation of perspective of coordinates led viewers to see both the real and heavenly (Platonic) existences simultaneously (Williamson, 1989, p. 172–173). With the rise of secularization during the Renaissance, a new conception of space, the field-based grid, took over, whose examples include the Mercator map (p. 175). Finally, Rene Descartes, with his creation of the scientific method in 1637, laid out a path for the space-based grid to adopt an analytical geometric view by defining, numerically, coordinate positions in space (p. 176). All of these changes in the grid reflected an increase of secular culture in Europe after the Middle Ages that included increased literacy (through the printing press), mobility (the Crusades, Marco Polo, Age of Exploration), education, longevity, knowledge of natural sciences, and art.

An example of the changing—and eclectic—social and visual culture during the Enlightenment was Diderot and d’Alembert’s (1751–1765) *The Encyclopedie* that used sixteenth century’s rendering perspective (three dimensional), exploded views, symbolic codes, and cutaways in drawings as a “referential mode of representation” (Kostelnick, 2012, p. 444) in order to disseminate knowledge to an emerging intellectual and political public. These techniques reflect evolving social, historical, and learned trends including cultural, stylized, technical, gender, and decorative aspects. In breaking established visual norms, they democratized knowledge by incorporating human figure agency, visual narratives, and pastoral and picturesque aesthetics (foreshadowing the Romantic Age) of the time (p. 443). Their use of both established conventions from an earlier era, and their breaking with conventions to establish more egalitarian visuals typifies the evolution of data visualization historically and socially. In short, during the Age of Enlightenment, the Scientific Revolution bolstered data visualization that took some visual conventions from previous eras but that also added elements that appealed
to a broader audience; however, these data visuals reflect more of science’s rise—a growing belief in observation, reason, and mathematical certainty—including disciplinary specializations such as civil engineering than it did general society. The next evolution in the use of visual language in professional communication began when design began to shift focus onto groups of people (statistics), money (finance), and societal trends (social sciences) during the rise of the modern nation state; yet the Cartesian approach still held sway as the scientific method became more ensconced in the Western mindset, circumscribing the possibility of a culturally unique audience point of view.

**Victorian Era**

In the first part of the 19th century, social, cultural, and technological advances such as the Industrial Revolution in Europe (1820s in England) led to, according to Michael Friendly, “all of the modern forms of statistical graphics and thematic cartography” (p. 8). Because of these rapid changes, new forms of graphics and cartography arose to meet the demand of more educated, knowledgeable, and scientific audiences. However, the Cartesian mind still dominated design. And one of those designers was William Playfair who is credited with developing line graphs, comparative bar charts, pie charts, and circle diagrams (p. 8). His introduction of simultaneous visual comparison of data inspired new data designs, including an early Venn diagram and the coxcomb diagram made famous by the nurse Florence Nightingale (1858) who employed it to improve cleanliness among British soldiers in Crimea. Playfair stands as an important progenitor of the golden age of statistical graphics, even as he assumed audience considerations to be universal.
The second half of the 19th century is termed the “golden age” of data display (circa 1850-1900) (Friendly, 2008, p. 8). As the creator of one of the greatest technical visuals of its era, Charles Minard’s illustration of Napoleon’s march across Russia demonstrates how visuals can contain a great deal of data without incorporating audience expectations, epitomizing the ascendency of visual thinking and exploration (p. 11) vis-à-vis unique cultural codes. Friendly summarizes the reasons why this era produced such an explosion of contributions to data visualization, including “the systematic data collection by state agencies, the rise of popularity of statistical and visual thinking, and the enabling developments of technological innovations” (Friendly, 2016, p. 221). Likewise, Florence Nightingale’s wind rose chart, also called a coxcomb or polar chart, helped change perceptions of the medical field through updating primarily discursive forms, and generating data designs that altered how visuals can act as agents of social change, all without audience deliberation.

Playfair, Minard, and Nightingale all were products of their culture, their time, and their own exigencies. These exigencies cannot be separated from the commonly held knowledge of the time, and in this way exigency begets learned awareness. But in evolution centripetal and centrifugal forces necessitate change. And this change comes at the turn of the century in the form of logical positivism or the idea that we can ever gain as a people—socially, technologically, and scientifically—through the universal language of empirical (mathematical) verifiability: Modernism. As such, this apotheosizing of the Cartesian duality marks the apex for Platonic thinking.
Modernism

In the early 20th century, the institutionalization of the modern industrial age shifted human production into technological industries that required new knowledge, skill, and training on a mass scale. Alongside this industrial change arose the idea that a universal language of a solely empirical nature was needed. Naturally, the rhetorical nature of visual language altered as well, but this time by seeking to dispel audience interpretations altogether by introducing a universal design theory via Otto Neurath’s isotypes and Gestalt psychologists’ discoveries of perceptual principles, conceiving an aesthetic unburdened by past conventions, perceptually pure, minimalist, and objective (Kostelnick, 2008, p. 119). Logical positivism deified vision as “the universal faculty of perception” (Lupton, 1986, p. 145). Isotypes, according to Neurath, would make culture unnecessary by not using language (interpretation) as its medium, but merely perception.

In order to affix seeing into the universal, Neurath held to “Gestalt esthetics” that posited “universal ground for artistic judgment” (p. 149). According to Lupton: “Neurath hoped to…unite humanity through one ordered, universally readable language of vision,” and since “vision is the saving link between language and nature…pictorial signs would provide a universal bridge between the symbolic, generic language and direct, empirical experience” (p. 145). Lupton argues that Neurath’s goal was to create visuals (signs) that were absolute, neutral, and fixed, transcending cultural signification devoid of cultural (contextual) aesthetics. One manifestation of this process was “pictural statistics,” where numbers had but one interpretation. Moreover, “Isotype figures are both icons and indexes” (p. 150), empirically representing both the literal (icon) and figurative (index) sign itself. Now, though Neurath’s Isotype fell short of the “subordination of individual and national interests to the needs of the international
community,” Isotypes appear, to us, as factual, nonconventional, self-evident, and consistent (p. 153). In essence, Neurath’s logical positivism’s rational, cognitive-perceptual approach acts non-rhetorically by assuming universal, Platonic-like perfection in image perception.

Like Isotypes, Gestalt psychologists sought to supersede rhetoric by decoding the universal nature of perception, especially visual perception. As Schriver (1997) states, “a major objective of the Gestalt psychologists was to explain why the world looks the way it does to ordinary people in natural settings” (p. 303). In an attempt “to seem free of rhetoric” (Kinross, 1989, p. 143), modernists sought a rhetoric of neutrality in text design “through the means of typography, typeface, type style, rules, dotleaders, symbols, spaces, and color” (p. 135). The German and British sans serif typefaces developed during the modernist period “sought to cater to the needs of the modern world” (p. 136), but they differed in that the British typeface, Gill Sans, tried to counter the “more rationally, geometrically conceived, new German sans serifs” (p. 136). The modernist attitude toward universality of form and meaning continues into this day with serif fonts like Helvetica and isomorphic signage such as the handicap symbol, but a social rhetoric emphasizing contradiction, anti-rationality, and fierce defense of cultural eccentricity began to prevail after WWII.

**Post Modernism**

Like most social and intellectual movements throughout history, modernism was sharply contrasted in the next generation. Termed the “late eclectic period” by Joseph Margolis, postmodernism radically left Modernism’s structural emphasis in order to embrace obfuscation (Williamson, 1989, p. 181), idiosyncrasy, and individuality, oftentimes at the expense of clarity and logic. This movement sought, in part, to establish subjective ontology as more supreme than
the epistemology that had lorded over Western society since the empiricism of the Enlightenment (Descartes, Bacon, Locke, etc.) by embracing phenomenological tenets such as rejecting Kantian notions of our inability to perceive absolute reality, combining the Cartesian cogito (mind-body split), and opposing the linguistic turn (the notion of creating an ideal language whose propositions would match reality).

Barthes’s semiotic approach (1977) reflects this changing trend towards accepting subjective senses as the only possible way to experience absolute reality when in Rhetoric of the Image he posits that “a veritable ontology of signification” could explain how images create and limit meaning to specific audiences. This conception parallels Merleau-Ponty’s assertion that all knowledge (empirical and intellectual), experience, and consciousness must flow through a body, or in other words, consciousness is always consciousness of something, as Edmund Husserl argued; essentially, phenomenology sought to combine mind and body by asserting that the only truth (ontology) that can be experienced is via the senses, and so objective reality does not exist. Postmodernism embraces this doctrine and takes it further with its ludic resistance to the linguistic turn by exalting the “pleasure of chaos” as being “a combination of independent units locked in unreadable conflict” (Arnheim, 1971, p. 13). In adopting phenomenological ontology, postmodernism endorsed cultural relativism: the notion that audience interpretation carries supreme ontological merit; and in so doing, postmodernism affirmed social and cultural values and beliefs of visual discourse communities.

Barton and Barton (1993) channel this skepticism of ontological absolutism when they analyze how maps legitimate, exclude, and institutionalize power relations by privileging salient properties of social and cultural hierarchies. They offer a counter to these ideological practices by enacting a postmodern viewpoint that favors denaturalizing and destabilizing traditional
exclusionary visual designs to the benefit of the disempowered. In so doing, Barton and Barton espouse “eclecticism over homogeneity” that “tends toward the fragmentary and the local” (p. 76). Naturally, audience requirements and expectations take hold as visual identities become more fluid, democratized, and contradictory.

Like Barton and Barton’s analysis of maps, Kostelnick (2008) discusses the complexity and contradiction of clarity in the last 50 years of data displays through the lens of visual rhetoric. Noting the historical progression of data displays from statistical, empirical, and scientific beginnings, through adaptation of data visualization for rhetorical situations of context, purpose, and audience, to the social enculturation of data display conventions, and finally to the postmodern empowering of audience through active, participatory adapting of the data design to match audience needs, Kostelnick illustrates how data design has evolved into “an aesthetic experience” (p. 128). This aesthetic experience continues into present day visualization by complementarily integrating algorithmic audiences that transcend the human body.

**Episensory**

The internet has altered our views of audiences with the use of algorithms. The progress of visual language to incorporate audience qualities has now begun to look at the Cartesian mind of the computer as an audience. Gallagher (2017) discusses teaching code writing to an “algorithmic audience” (p. 25) as algorithms are used for gleaning information from the Web. And just as visual discourse communities exert influence of the content, style, and design of visual language, so “the influence of an algorithm parallels the influence of [a] discourse community” (p. 29). These algorithmic audiences have accelerated the involvement of distinct visual discourse communities in our interconnected world.
In addition to algorithmic audiences, this new paradigm includes participatory interactivity of audiences. This will result in the dynamic combination of the universal mind (algorithms and computer-generated holograms) [noumenal] with the subjective body (senses) [phenomenal]. An example of this new approach is user experience (UX) which prioritizes audiences’ needs, desires, and expectations, while concurrently building designs iteratively and collaboratively by assimilating new information, both computer and human, into its latest versions. This theory and practice of visual rhetoric deifies audiences above any universality, though without discounting the a priori gestalt laws of perception. In this manner, the episensory will combine fine and applied design (art) together through both front end (UX) audience input and back end algorithmic demands. This fusing the rational with the aesthetic will echo Arnheim’s (1971) view on art: “its uniqueness consist in being able to interpret human experience” (p. ix). Episensory design will also follow arts’ historical trajectory of “growth of true cultural achievement” (p. ix) that simultaneously strives to perfect audience concerns on, above, and after the senses, plus computerized, universal concerns in addition to, over, and attached to human senses. The resulting episensory aesthetic will convey, better than ever before, a holistic experience for persuasive affect, a single poem, a universalis re.

Clearly, visual study involves audiences. Correspondingly, teaching visual communication necessitates valuing audience input. In presupposing two tenets—language can sufficiently express visuals (aesthetical), and visual artifacts intrinsically tie together visual discourse communities (rhetorical)—I have briefly illustrated that there is a historically complex relationship between viewer and visual artifact. This complexity is reflected in the pedagogical scholarship devoted to visual communication in the classroom. I will now discuss a literature
review in which I outline visual rhetoric’s increasingly important role in scholarly conversations about visual literacy and pedagogy.

**Literature Review**

By studying different visual discourse communities’ language, we come to a better understanding of our own visual communication strategies. These strategies impact scholarship and pedagogy by fundamentally changing how we research and teach visual rhetoric. Hence, this literature review looks at visual literacy and pedagogy, explores the role visual analysis occupies in technical and professional communication, composition, and rhetoric classrooms, and details the challenges facing visual instruction, including technological, industrial, and academic changes.

Successful visual communication endeavors to show a good story, yet in order to narrate well, a visual must pithily convey its meaning. However, the optimal means to accomplish this task remain open to interpretation by scholars, educators, and theorists. A notable early scholar and proponent of visual education, Rudolf Arnheim (1969), contended almost 50 years ago that “an indispensable part of any educator’s preparation” should be “the systematic training of visual sensitivity” (p. 315). Moreover, scholars of rhetoric and professional communication have echoed Arnheim’s sentiment, with Bernhardt (1986) prognosticating that pedagogy excluding visual communication will become “increasingly irrelevant” (p. 77), and Brumberger and Northcut (2013) similarly arguing that the goal of visual communication pedagogy should be “visual literacy,” defined as “looking, seeing, thinking, and producing” (p. 3) so as to “equip students with the concepts and tools to think about design as a culturally situated problem-solving process” (p. 5). And finally, “to be effective at designing visual communication, students
must not only be knowledgeable about principles and practices of design and able to communicate rhetorically, but they also must understand and practice different approaches to problem solving” (Carnegie, 2013, p. 36). In essence, these scholars believe that visual literacy is absolutely necessary.

Considerable scholarship has been devoted to the increasing role visual analysis plays in the classroom. Studies have detailed how and what visual design should be taught (Graham, Hannigan, & Curran, 2005; George, 2002; Welch, Lee, & Shuman, 2010), multimodality in composition (Knight, 2013; Kress, 2003; Stroupe, 2000), visual design principles (Kimball, 2013; Buchanan, 1995), the rhetoric of design (Buchanan, 1985; Ehses, 1984; Ashwin, 1984), and towards a pedagogy of visual rhetoric (Hill, 2003). Each of these articles can help instructors locate techniques and underpin them with pedagogical frameworks to aid articulating visual communication to their students. Still, the question must be asked as to why there is such varied scholarship about visual communication in teaching. The answer can partially be found in what Kostelnick (2008) terms a “pluralistic approach” where differing pedagogical techniques are needed to account for the varied cultural and rhetorical “acts” when analyzing and creating visuals:

Although visual rhetoric always begins with a designer shaping visual language for a specific audience and purpose and culminates with a reader interpreting that language in a specific situation…that specific rhetorical act is embedded in a much larger and more social set of rhetorical circumstances. Visual language develops with discourse communities that enculturate its members in its conventional codes, and those codes embody cultural values and norms, including aesthetics. (p. 215)
These rhetorical acts manifest through mediums at specific times, locations, versions, and situations. In short, modern visual rhetoric functions in our world through apparati simultaneously allowing for mass creation and distribution of visual information while imposing limitations such as visual genre standardization, that is, giving the audience what it expects.

Presently, these apparati most often take shape within technology and its ability to generate multimodal pathways of knowledge delivery for large audiences. Ironically, teachers of English have accepted and embraced visual language’s power when, in 2005, the NCTE Executive Committee approved the position statement on multimodal literacies, beginning, “Integration of multiple modes of communication and expression can enhance or transform the meaning of the work beyond illustration or decoration.” This statement marked a significant moment in an ongoing set of discussions about the role of technology in the ways we ought to teach writing skills and the increasingly pivotal role that multimodality has played in the rhetoric and composition classroom. As a discipline, rhetoric and composition was coming to terms with the significance of digital technologies, new media, and calls for multimodality (Werner, 2017; Yancey, 2004; Selfe, 1999). Despite these efforts, many challenges still exist, such as how to handle professional development for the teaching of multimodal composition (DePalma & Alexander, 2015; Arola, 2010; Leverenz, 2008). In fact, most instructors of multimodal composition reported being primarily self-taught when it comes to the technologies needed (Anderson et. al., 2006). Over the past decade, however, scholars have worked diligently to continue to develop ways of talking about, learning about, and using digital tools and multimodal communication.

One such application of this increase in multimodal communication both inside and outside the classroom is document design, which is a growing field (Brumberger, 2007), where
Document design is defined as a synthesis of words and images that create and develop an argument or a narrative (Schriver, 1997). Document design has come to dominate modern professional writing because it is a mixture of visual and multimodal avenues using both visual and verbal logic to persuade (Brumberger, 2007). Moreover, a growing consensus of professional communicators has shown that visual communication is essential for their daily work. A full 78% of professional communicators design documents as part of their job (Brumberger, 2007). Yet, the pace of instruction in document design, and visual communication in general, lacks the speed of design’s growth in the private sector.

A growing awareness of visual communication’s importance in professional communication has generated many articles and books addressing visually oriented research (Brasseur, 2003; Kimball & Kostelnick, 2016; Kostelnick & Hassett, 2003). Such research promotes understanding how visuality operates within professional and technical settings. Correspondingly, educators have sought to incorporate—pedagogically—relevant research in visual communication so as to develop coursework and programs that will help prepare students for their professional roles involving visually persuasive documents and images. In this vein, Allen and Benninghoff (2004) have argued that technical and professional communication programs need to continually adopt teaching methodologies that stay current with visual analysis pedagogies within professional communication.

**Three Visual Rhetoric Methodologies**

In order to best serve teachers of multimodality, scholars often turn to methodologically driven, salient artifacts to frame aspects of study and subsequently help populate and inform the larger, deductive disciplinary scope. Formal rhetoric, as a modern discipline, performs criticisms
using various methodologies such as feminist, metaphoric, genre, dramatistic, and classical criticism, and then it applies those methodologies to artifacts suitable for inquiry. Visual rhetoric is no different. In visual rhetoric, many lenses can be deployed depending on the nature of what is to be examined, and what question is to be asked. The following section briefly outlines the three methodologies of visual rhetorical criticism that I will use: iconology, semiotics, and social semiotics.

**Iconology**

First known as an art criticism tool, iconology began as practical handbooks of emblems and other symbolic elements of Renaissance art, first arriving in the late 1500’s (Howells & Negreiros, 2012, p. 33). According to its popular proponent, Edwin Panofsky, iconology “concerns itself with the subject matter or meaning of works of art” (p. 24), toward which he created a tri-layered system to organize the analysis and to communicate differing levels of meaning. These levels move from factual to symbolic, to representational of “national, social, educational and cultural background” of the artist (p. 24). Critically, these three layers of meaning derive from the audiences who view the artistic artifacts.

Iconology as a visual analytical framework concerns itself with similar ideas as the Parisian semiotic method, as they both highlight the layered meanings inherent in visual artifacts, discussing the representational or denotative layer and the symbolic or connotative layer, with the difference being that iconology concentrates on historical context, visual content, intertextual comparison, and documentary research (Van Leeuwen, 2004, p. 101). For this reason, iconology represents a good framework for analyzing historical art work and other visual artifacts from the past, for it is not possible to acquire audience knowledge of how signs were interpreted at that
time. Especially since artwork from the past carries open and “disguised symbols” (p. 109) whose meaning requires knowledge of the era and culture in which it was created, iconology privileges historical inlay, complete with religious, social, and cultural motifs.

More recently, with its greater emphasis on audience considerations, visual rhetorical iconological criticism has focused on the historical situation of the time the artifact was created that, according to Lester C. Olson (1987), details “the ambiguities of appeals for agreement among people whose interests, concerns, values, feelings, and expectations may be in conflict” (p. 333). This framework for analyzing visual artifacts does not concentrate on explicit grammatical criteria (social semiotic), but rather, it discusses the historical contexts and exigencies surrounding the visual artifact. In his notes, Olson makes clear that his notion of iconology expands Panofsky’s definition in that it “is taken to mean the study of visual representations in general…because this (Olson’s) definition facilitates rhetorical analysis at the most fundamental level of symbol or representation” (p. 349). Owing to this definition, broad similarities exist between iconology and rhetorical iconology, such as the use of motifs “to denote an image that recurs in a series of distinct visual works” (p. 349) and the application of historical situatedness. However, in rhetorical iconological criticism, audiences come into focus. In this way, Olson takes a decidedly rhetorical approach when he states “that symbols are by nature rhetorical to the extent that they promote identification” (p. 350). With this scaffolding, Olson takes iconology into the domain of rhetoric, adding to the set of frameworks employable to the visual rhetorician for analysis of visual works that are embedded in historical contexts and that suggest motifs whose recurrence allows the reconstruction of audience impressions in situ.
Semiotics

Originating with the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure (1988), semiotics, or semiology, developed to explain how language worked. He showed that language communicates through signs (or signals), composed of word (signifier) and the word’s meaning (signified), where many signifiers (such as “dog,” “chien,” and “perro”) can mean the same thing, and so signs, to Saussure, are arbitrary. Using Saussure, later semioticians applied signs to non-textual material, seeking to investigate and explain culture beyond written and spoken discourse, and they found that the notion of a purely arbitrary relationship between signal (signifier) and signification began to dissolve; the materiality of the sign, i.e. the signifier, was seen to develop connotations that were framed within cultural codes and possessed historical characteristics. In addition to scholars such as Valentin Voloshinov (1973), who argued that the sign has material properties, and Claude Lévi-Strauss (1962), who asserted that the sign inherently contains connotations that are part of cultural codes, Roland Barthes (1977) sought to illustrate how non-textual images concurrently exhibit their signified within their signifier.

In his essay, *Rhetoric of the image*, Barthes explores the “ontology of the process of signification” of an advertisement in. Purposefully, he limits his analysis solely to the visuals contained in the advertisement in order to show “the signification of the image is undoubtedly intentional” (p. 32). He posits that the third sign, the message, or the signification, of the advertisement, “is precisely that the relation between signified and signifier is quasi-tautological” (p. 36). Here Barthes claims that the form and the meaning are closely related (tautological meaning that there is repetition), signaling his break from Saussure’s belief that form and meaning are not connected, and also foreshadowing Kress and Van Leeuwen’s assertion that the meaning is fully contained within its form. Later, Barthes expands this thesis by saying, “all
images are polysemous; they imply, underlying their signifiers, a “floating chain” of signifieds, the reader able to choose some and ignore others” (p. 39). These signifieds are framed within specific cultural codes. When dealing with images, Barthes asserts that inherent, to varying degrees, within a signifier is its signified, interpreted by the reader through societal, cultural, and/or ideological premises to represent what is to be believed.

**Social Semiotics**

However, Barthes’ approach, and similarly John Berger’s (1973), see bourgeois ideology underlying culture, and thus see what they want to see (Howells & Negreiros, 2012, p. 126); as such, personal pretenses cloud Barthes’s and Berger’s analysis. In its place arose a new framework using semiotics that values the cultural and social embeddedness of visual artifacts through their semiotic potential (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 8), “in relation to the sign-maker and the context in which the sign is produced” (p. 9). They advocate a social semiotic approach to analyzing visual images. This framework assumes fully motivated signs that are “conjunctions of signifiers (forms) and signifieds (meanings)” (p. 8). These motivated signs “require that participants make their message maximally understandable in a particular context” in order to be understood using “a minimal effort of interpretation” (p. 13). This socially-oriented view of visual language echoes visual rhetoricians—such as Buchanan (1989), who argues that design’s (a thought or plan) architectonic is rhetoric (an art of thought about and for an audience) (p. 108)—by combining rhetoric and design, “where the term rhetoric focuses on the social relations which obtain in the process of communication, and the term design focuses of the arrangement of the available semiotic resources in the making of the representation as a message” (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 219). This “grammar of visual design” seeks to
explain, rhetorically, “how people produce and communicate meaning in specific social settings” (p. 266) through spatial configurations and compositional elements.

**Conclusion**

Visuality dominates our multimodal world. By looking from the perspective of a visual discourse community, an enculturated collective of visual identity, we can better understand each other. In this introduction, I have shown that audience impressions are critically important when analyzing a visual artifact. The rise of the Western audience’s authority to enact, sustain, or degrade visual conventions and styles parallels the history of Western professional communication, broadly, and also juxtaposes the scientific positivism that gave rise to universal, gestalt principles of perception, specifically. Together, audience senses, mental perceptual principles, and specific methodological frameworks combine to help us discover the meanings visuals emit. And in so doing, teachers of visual communication can answer the call to increase visual literacy by incorporating visual pedagogies that shed light upon the hidden ways we identify with one another.

**Works Cited**


CHAPTER 2

LONE DOG’S WINTER COUNT: AN ICONOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

This chapter examines history experienced as a graphic register, answering the call Boone (2012) urges, namely to study “historical registers that employ figural and/or abstractly conventional signs to signify meaning” (p. 211). These non-alphabetic histories authoritatively recorded the community discourse of their past, originating within the collective memory of a visual community. By understanding the framework this group used to “conceptualize and record the past” (p. 212), scholars can recreate the social structure to analyze how communities of people sustained cultural sovereignty in the face of transformative and challenging circumstances. In order to properly discuss a non-alphabetic historical register, I use the visual methodology of iconology. This type of inquiry allows for three levels of artistic and historical interpretation: the graphic and oral expressional tier (representational), the conventional layer that denotes how the artifact was culturally produced and interpreted at the time of use (iconographical symbolism), and ultimately, the unconscious layer that comparatively situates the artifact to reveal the basic cultural assumptions and attitudes conveyed at that time (iconological symbolism).

Because this historical form of keeping time has no textual language or number, the account (name) of each year was visually recorded using a single graphic image and orally remembered. These events, I argue, strengthened communal bonds through visually reinforcing a collective narrative. Using Lone Dog’s Sioux winter count as artifact (figure 1), I will show how the events depicted typify the struggle (wars, diseases), endurance (White encroachment on lands), and ultimate regeneration (horses, food, and population growth) that the Northern Plains tribes experienced from 1800-1871. And since the use of historical events to define a group is a
fundamental marker of society, yet the means and methods each group uses to remember those events varies, a study of a non-alphabetic historical record will highlight, through visual representation and memory, how an indigenous people used coded symbolism to perpetuate their sovereignty.

In order to help me accurately portray the cultural implications of my interpretation, I look to Native American iconological scholars such as Green (2013) who culturally interprets modern Kiowa perspectives on imprisoned Kiowa drawings (p. 294); Job (2009) who shows how the animal form of the salamander iconographically symbolized renewal of the soul within Native Americans burial sites (p. 79); and Keyser and Klassen’s (2001) formal ethnographic study of Plains Indian rock art (p. 33). These studies illustrate how historical visual materials are studied with iconology, allowing researchers to combine Native American cultural knowledge and considerations of authorship, time, and audience with visual interpretation. Yet no
scholarship exists looking at Native American winter counts from the iconological perspective. I will fill this scholarly gap by looking at Lone Dog’s winter count with this lens in order to demonstrate the power of visual symbols to unify, explain, and perpetuate a community. These contextual symbols and their respective verbal translations help unify groups through visually and verbally remembering a shared history. This chapter’s methodology employs this perspective, arguing that Lone Dog’s winter count demonstrates Sioux conventions while revealing the attitudes of this people. Specifically, my analysis will examine the primary visual culture of the 19th century Sioux using the top quadrant of Lone Dog’s Sioux winter count to illustrate the cohesive power of visuals in culturally uniting a people through shared experiences over time, and in so doing, help stabilize society through teaching youths their own history, demarcating customs and mores from other groups, and even catalyzing group metamorphosis in the changing times, culminating in a liberatory message of communal power, endurance, and connectivity over colonial rule.

The article begins with a brief description of what a winter count is, how it helps generate ethnic identity, what the winter count and history itself means to the Sioux, and how the winter count is spiritually understood in the Sioux worldview. Then after briefly defining the iconological methodology, I analyze four images (years) from each of the four lines of the top quadrant, discussing their visual representation, cultural meaning, and underlying cultural assumptions and beliefs. Finally, I close with considerations for future studies and research.

**Background**

The Sioux lived in small bands (extended family, up to a community of around 200 people) called tiospayes on the Northern Plains of the United States. “A camp was composed of two or more husbanded tipi households, and one or more camps formed a band (a tiospaye). A band
generally camped together during the winter. A group of related bands formed a tribe” (Gibbon, 2012, p. 101). When the bands camped together in the winter, each tiospaye recorded the most memorable event of the previous year visually on their winter counts and recounted the tales in functional and performative stories (Rudy, 2013, p. 7) from memory; this shared vision enabled communities to retain their identity by perpetuating history through the non-linguistic, coded symbols of the band. These winter counts “focus on the collective experiences of the band and thus bear witness to its persistence across generations. They record battles won or lost, times of plenty or hardship, and even weather extremes, all critical to the group” (Tovias, 2014, p. 100). In fact, Larson (2007) contends that a “way to imagine the tribal notion of history is as a recollection of various events that impacted groups of people” (p. 515). Consequently, tribal history focused on community effects and not personal or individual actions. And as Phinney and Ong (2007) have pointed out, this emphasis on communal remembrance generates “ethnic identity” that is an important contributor to an individual’s well-being; individuals derive positive self-attitudes from belonging to groups that are meaningful to them...This process of ethnic identity formation involves the construction over time of one’s sense of self as a group member and of one’s attitudes and understandings associated with group membership. (p. 275)

By recording communal history, the Sioux helped construct their tribal identity. This sharing of history for the sake of the group illustrates what Ella Doloria spoke about the Sioux, namely that they value “friendship, fellowship, alliance, [and] understanding (mutual)” (Garner, 2003, p. 681). These cultural qualities reflected Sioux attitudes that upon adoption would lead to group
membership, and subsequently, ethnic identity for new group members. This ethnic identity helped form the Sioux tiospaye.

To the Sioux, history is sacred. It is *wakan*. A Sioux proverb warns, a people without a history is like wind on the buffalo grass. To the Sioux, history is not just about the past, it concerns the present since it “is preceded, accompanied, and followed by an ever present, sacred dimension which is outside the realm of human time” (Walker, 1982, p. 113). During their buffalo-hunting days, the Sioux remembered time by using figures and symbols (p. 107), and measured history through natural phenomenon. Visually arranged to show a year’s relation to other years, the Sioux winter counts marked the first snowfall of each winter with a single symbol that represented the most important event of the previous year. This symbol was agreed to represent the event considered the most memorable to the group. The maker of the count was charged to add a new symbol every winter to the count inside each camp’s tiospaye. The count keeper also was tasked with orally describing the symbol’s history and significance when teaching and instructing the band. This task was an honor, for the Sioux today still keep winter counts, and the relatives of those who did in the past show how important the counts were for the community and for the descendants of count keepers.

The granddaughter of winter count keeper Theresa Yellow Lodge, Yellow Lodge Woman, recalls that her grandmother made three winter counts, and when asked about what the winter counts meant to her, she responded, “I really love who I am…hearing stories about our winter count it had everything to do with who I am. It makes me proud of my history” (Lakota Winter Counts, 2003, interview). Like Yellow Lodge Woman, Pepper Young, a descendant of a Sioux winter count keeper, equates winter counts to a collective people’s freedom: “When you talk about sovereignty as a people, you need to have a land base, you need to have a culture, you
need to have a language” (Lakota Winter Counts, 2003, interview). These two contemporary voices echo the importance of the winter counts to the tiospaye’s cultural sovereignty.

During the years of Lone Dog’s winter count, Sioux life suffered profound changes. Driven from their ancestral home, decimated by disease, and facing an encroaching white population, the Sioux adeptly persevered as a community having adapted quickly to Northern Plains life. The ties of kinship that held Sioux groups together socially during this period were generated, performed, sustained, and reinforced by their shared visual symbols imbued with time and cultural values embodying their culture and its remembrance. To the Sioux, history is not fact-based but rather contextual and happening now: “Historical fact was valued not according to its chronological accuracy but according to its relevance to the people…The message of the anecdote was more significant than the details” (Walker, 1982, pp. 112–113). The symbols expressing years are mnemonic devices for recalling stories surrounding those symbols, for the count keeper could not only recall the name of the year, but integrate “stories of all kinds into their oral repertoires…stories of battles, natural catastrophes, encounters with the spirits, and every kind of entertaining tale…In this way history was kept current and relevant” (p. 112). Winter count pictographs denote figurative meaning, not portraiture or objectivity; they seek to actively narrate the memorable events of the Sioux such as wars, disease, celestial occurrences, and religious ceremonies according to the message to be delivered at that specific time of its recounting. The Sioux understood time in this linear way (events) but recorded their observations based upon the seasons. In essence, they “understood winter counts specifically and time generally as simultaneously linear and cyclical, as multiple and dictated by the cycles of nature” (Wells, 2015, p. 6). Seeing history as necessary, reoccurring, and unique, winter counts offer a glimpse into how people recorded time.
The Smithsonian’s winter count for Lone Dog (figure 1) registers as one of the most famous of the Sioux’s winter counts because of its aesthetics, detail, longevity, and abundance. At least 15 versions are known to exist, adding to its provenance as an important artifact. As a whole, the count forms a spiral that is chronologically arranged from the inside out. The count begins with 1800-1801 in the center and twists out to the final year, 1870-1871 counterclockwise. Noticeably, the spiraling pattern of the count does not travel the normal Sioux route of clockwise (right-to-left; Sun wise). In opposing the circumambulation of the Sun, which informs sacred Sioux religious rituals such as the medicine wheel and the Sun dance, Lone Dog’s winter count is read counterclockwise. This suggests a backwards movement visually through time. In short, the count defies time and as such can be considered wakan, mysterious. Moreover, as a religious artifact, the count optically enacts spiritual symbolism recognizable to the Sioux as carrying agency for Sioux sovereignty and power by culturally bonding backwards through time. Since humans are a symbolic race, we create, according to Mircea Eliade, religious symbolism in the form of “a hierophany,” “a manifestation of the sacred” (Steinmetz, 2004, p. 4). To the Sioux, history itself is sacred (Walker, 1982, p. 113). The winter count and its pictographs, by extension, are also a hierophany, for the visuals possess religious significance through their historical meaning in Sioux culture. The spiral entries, defining time, must then be understood in terms of the spiritual rites they represent.

This centrifugal spin suggests a reversal of time, where the audience members would be transported into the past of their people. And stepping into the past, they see themselves inside the actions, events, and participants of the count. “The winter count presupposes that the group protagonist of the history—the people who do the stealing of horses and the making of peace—is understood to be the group whose history it is” (Boone, 2012, p. 222). The narrative of reversing
time by a counterclockwise movement concerns not only the past but also the audience present at
the time when the count would have been performed. Symbols transformed into stories. As Lone
Dog’s count got closer to the present year, the count keeper would have told stories within
stories. Each year’s story would have culminated into a grand narrative to Lone Dog’s audience:
the Sioux have experienced great hardship and struggle, but as a people have grown strong again.
The conclusion of this grand narrative can be perceived most clearly in the top quadrant of the
count (figure 2). This area typifies the struggles endured by the Siouan people, and by personal
experience, given its close proximity to the actual present, individual Sioux audience members’
lives. The top quadrant reads from right to left, deals with regeneration, strife, and success, and
symbolically represents the north.

The north quadrant speaks about the unfolding transformations occurring within Sioux
culture during the nineteenth century. The north cardinal direction also plays a prominent role in
Sioux religious symbolism. Bearing natural qualities attributable to the cardinal north direction,
the Sioux term the north Waziya (the old man), and his grandson Waziyata (the north wind). These forces possess great powers. In the buffalo-hunting days, these spirits protected the buffalo spiritually and had the ability to will their arrival or disappearance (National Park Service, Black Hills). Waziyata is characterized by the cold, harsh winds of the winter season. These winds cleanse. “If someone has the ability to face these winds like the buffalo with its head into the storm, they have learned patience and endurance. Generally, this direction stands for hardships and discomfort to people. Therefore, north represents the trials people must endure and the cleansing they must undergo” (Akta Lakota Museum). To gain patience and endurance from strife and hardship embodied the Sioux way. Black Elk, on speaking of releasing the soul, prays to the north, “O You, Thunder-being, there where Waziah has his lodge, who comes with the purifying winds, and who guards the health of the people…Help us” (Brown, 1964, p. 20). Waziyata is represented by the color red. This direction is also known as the Tatanka Oyate meaning Buffalo Nation who brings to the Sioux their laws, beliefs, and teachings. These teachings provide the basis for Lakota identity and importance of living a good, productive life (Bear Shield et. al., 2000). In equating the societal customs with changing seasons, the Sioux spiritually connected with the natural world. These symbolic events coincide with the northern section of Lone Dog’s winter count in that both seek to teach how strife and suffering can be overcome through communal endurance and patience.

Lone Dog’s account also mirrors the spiritual movement of a collective transcending hardship. Like today, the Sioux during their buffalo-hunting days believed that all things contained spirit and were their own peoples. Even now, Steinmetz (1998) notes, “Belief in spirits is an important dynamic in the practice of traditional Lakota religion today” (p. 43). The spirits within the winter count speak of a necessary restructuring of Sioux society during that time. And
to the Sioux of that time, the count had spirit, especially since it still resonates within the Sioux communities.

Methodology

Since visual rhetoric addresses how artifacts persuade optically, it must employ a methodological approach to ascertain audience impressions. With historical artifacts, audience reactions require in situ reconstruction. A fitting methodology that well suits past artifacts is iconology (also called iconography, the difference being that iconography focuses on historical paintings while iconology focuses on all other historical visual media) (Sandywell, 2017, p. 333). Iconology combines the formal analysis of images with extensive use of external sources and ethnographic analogy. First developed by Edwin Panofsky (1955), iconology analyzes human records that emerge “from the stream of time” (p. 5) and which carry “intention” (p. 10). Such a critical approach to visual analysis concerns itself with cultural symbolism of the past, where much of the symbolic meaning lies hidden, or rather unknown, to those outside of that time period and visual discourse community.

Iconology characterizes three distinct layers of visual meaning: representational meaning, iconographical symbolism, and iconological symbolism. The first aspect to analyze in an iconological study is the representational (van Leeuwen & Jewitt, 2004, p. 100). Similar to Barthes’ “denotation,” this layer seeks to recognize “what is represented on the basis of our practical experience” (p. 100). In a similar way, Howells and Negreiros (2012) speak of the first level of iconography as possessing “natural” subject matter, which is called the “primary” level, that is then “subdivided into the “factual” and the “expressional” sections” (p. 25). In other words, what you see is what you get. A key to this section, however, is that “we do not need any inside cultural, conventional, or art historical knowledge” (p. 25). To further clarify this point,
van Leeuwen and Jewitt (2004) contend that Hermeren (1969) can help breakdown how this can be accomplished: use the title of the artifact, identify the artifact based upon background research, refer to other similar images, and identify the artifact based on verbal description (p. 102). The second level to study is the iconographical symbolism that illustrates the cultural conventions and beliefs of the time. Panofsky (1955) defines this step as decoding and interpreting the artifact (p. 7). Here, the artifact undergoes cultural immersion to delineate how the codes operated at that time to that audience. And finally, the iconological symbolism detects and compares the “cultural relativity” (p. 7) through analysis of the worldviews extracted from the first two steps. Accordingly, this final step is considered the ultimate goal of iconology as it illustrates the unconscious processes encapsulating cultural attitudes and assumptions. To Panofsky, the third step, iconological symbolism, is used to “ascertain those underlying principles which reveal the basic attitude of a nation, a period, a class, a religious or philosophical persuasion” (p. 56). Resembling the Barthian’ myth, this analytical section seeks to find out what is not talked about, or what is seen as given in certain social and cultural situations.

Analysis

I have selected sixteen representative entries, four from each row of the top quadrant, as indicative of the salient events occurring to the Sioux during their four temporal progressions through the Northern cardinal direction of space on Lone Dog’s winter count. These symbols fall into five major areas: war, disease, horses, whites, and spirituality. I use Mallery in my interpretations of these entries because his published writings and notes that he collected in the field serve as the most original source available for Lone Dog’s winter count (Greene & Thornton, 2007, p. ix). Moreover, his interpretations of most years mirror other winter count
interpretations of similar years, such as Ben Kindle’s winter count and Flame’s winter count. The re-occurrence of these groups of symbols functionally and symbolically reveals the tiospaye’s cultural values and beliefs. For instance, the symbol for the horse is repeated four times in this quadrant, while spirituality is present in at least five symbols. Beginning in the bottom right and ending in the top left, the count’s cardinal direction location also frames the narrative within the winter season, full of strife and regeneration.

Read from right to left, the first line of the winter count (figure 3) is from 1801-1804. The first two years show the struggles the Sioux endured with 30 Sioux killed in 1801 and a smallpox outbreak in 1802. In 1801, Mallery’s interpretation reads, “thirty Dakotas were killed by Crow Indians. The device consists of thirty parallel black lines in three columns, the outer lines being unified. Such black lines always signify the death of Dakotas killed by their enemies” (1886, p. 273). The Crow tribe, even though it uses the same language as the Sioux, is continually at war with the Sioux in Lone Dog’s winter count. From the first entry here to the last entry in 1871, when the Crow are surrounded, this Sioux enemy iconographically symbolizes the constant warfare between the tribes during this time, and eventually, how the Sioux defeated the Crow.

Iconologically, the first and last entries dealing with the Crow illustrates the tension between indigenous peoples competing for diminishing resources, land, and wealth brought on, in part, by the European settler’s encroachment.
The European influence would again strike the next year (1802), where the count shows the head and body of a person covered in red blotches. Mallery’s interpretation starkly reads, “the smallpox broke out in the tribe.” Apart from their representational value, both years also illustrate the hard times the indigenous people endured during the great epidemics that swept across the United States. As one example, 1802’s smallpox epidemic decimated the indigenous inhabitants of the Northern Plains, but it affected the Sioux less than the more settled tribes such as the Arikaras and the Mandans because “Sioux organization was more flexible, allowing them to break up at the first signs of infection. Hence, Sioux population numbers rebounded more quickly...As a consequence of the epidemics...Sioux power increased” (van de Logt, 2015, p. 58). Though the Sioux suffered greatly in these epidemics, there was a silver lining since they were more mobile and scattered, lessening the effects of a widespread epidemic. Yet still, the epidemics not only eroded individuals and families, it “also compromised the strength of entire communities” (Hodge, 2012, p. 390). The iconographical symbolism of the epidemic, namely a human figure with red blotches, both characterized the disease’s red rash outbreak, but also connotes the red color of the winter quadrant, Waziya, illustrating to its audience, in part through its red color, that winter has arrived and brought its sufferings. In contrast, the next symbols represent the coming of the horse, and within two years the red blotches on the diseased human figure now appear to be black curves on a horse figure, symbolically denoting that the Sioux have survived the winter quadrant for another rotation, being blessed with horses with shoes on and with curly-hair. These horses, however, were not gifted to the Sioux, but rather stolen from whites and from the Crow tribe.

The Sioux’s mobility was intrinsically tied to the horse. First brought by the Spanish to Mexico in the 1500s, the horse allowed the Sioux to cover great distances to hunt, trade, and
make war. The horse also supplied food when necessary. The entry for 1803 is of an upside horseshoe. Here, Mallery’s definition reads, “Sioux sees horses with shoes on for the first time,” while the collector’s note adds commentary: “A Dakota stole horses with shoes on, i.e. stole them either directly from the whites or from some other Indians who had before obtained them from whites, as the Indians never shoe their horses.” The technology of iron making and shoe fitting for horses was unknown to the Sioux. Finding horses with shoes on made the horses even more valuable, for they could trod over rougher terrain for longer periods and transport people and supplies over greater distances.

The Sioux’s fortune continued to improve with the next year’s entry: “They stole some curly horses from the Crows” (1803). Known to still be in existence on the plains, the curly horse marked a spiritual turning point for the Sioux of the first decade of the 1800s. This visual device would become a major symbol on Lone Dog’s winter count, and it signified the tribal tension with the Crows along with illustrating the Sioux’s willingness to reward thievery as the most remarkable event of that year. Sioux life is changing rapidly in the early part of the nineteenth century with exposure to new diseases, technologies, and means of travel.

The second line of Lone Dog’s winter count that passes through the northern quadrant comprises the years 1819–1822 (figure 4). These symbols again begin with suffering the Sioux endured with 1819 reading “the measles broke out and many died.” The similarity between this

![Figure 4: Lone Dog’s winter count 1819-1822](image-url)
outbreak’s symbol and the one for 1801 is noticeable, and gets attributed to either the lack of skill Lone Dog possessed to tell the difference between the two eruptive diseases (Mallery, 1886, p. 277), or it was because the Sioux “used the same term for smallpox, measles, chicken pox, and other rash-producing diseases” (Sundstrom, 1997, p. 310). Either way, the symbol mirrors the earlier one for smallpox, while also giving insight into the harsh world of the Sioux during this time. Iconographically, these entries show that the Sioux suffered an epidemic periodically, maybe even every six years (p. 308), that resulted in sweeping changes to Sioux society. The depopulation that arose during this epidemic of measles portend the next year’s symbol, a trading post.

The event most memorable to Lone Dog’s tiospaye for 1820 was the building of a trading post. Mallery’s entry reads, “Another trading store was built, this time by Louis La Conte, at Fort Pierre, Dakota.” The collector notes that the timber used to build this store was especially rotten. The visual device used to represent the store has horizontal black lines separated by large gaps, with a thick black diagonal line signifying smoke from a fire. The horizontal black lines resemble the vertical lines from the first entry, where the black line symbolizes the death of Sioux. Likewise, this symbol iconographically would culturally remind the Sioux of the white man’s predatory, antagonist intentions toward those to whom he seeks to sell his wares. Iconologically this image calls forth the encroachment of white people onto Sioux land, while also characterizing the complex relationship indigenous people shared with settlers and traders. The traders brought new materials and technologies to the Indians, and the Sioux had a robust trading network with tribes and whites alike after the decline of the more sedentary tribes of the Arikara and Mandan due to epidemics (Goldfrank, 1943, p. 73). In subtle contrast to the year when a trading store was opened, 1819, the next year at first appears to be another trading store
as the thick black lines run parallel, and there is a diagonal line ascending from the top of the structure. The year reads, “The trader, La Conte, gave Two Arrow a war dress for his bravery.” As this definition seems inadequate to account for the same trading store being represented with horizontal lines, other winter counts that share a similar visual symbol will help solve the mystery. The Swan’s count says, “Two Arrows built himself a dirt medicine lodge;” while No Ears’ winter count reads, “Two Arrows had a magical tipi fastener”; American Horse’s count says, “The Dakotas made medicine in a built house” (Greene & Thorton, 2007, p. 166–169).

Three of the other winter counts see 1820 as an event where medicine was made.

Iconographically, the different interpretations of the visual symbol for that year suggest the bands knew about Two Arrows but were unsure about what exactly occurred, perhaps because some of the bands were not present when the event took place. Regardless, the iconographical symbolism of this image underscores the lack of definitive knowledge available during this time resulting with the winter counts’ requiring textual translation. Iconologically, the apparent disagreement of the symbol’s meaning between different winter counts suggest a growing level of distrust among the bands, and potentially, a growing Sioux desire to hide their spiritual activities (of making medicine) from the whites through visual deception. The fact that this year’s symbol rests squarely at the top center of this line also connotes its importance in the winter count. Not surprisingly, the symbol for the year above it, 1842, in the next line also deals with making medicine, but this time to bring the buffalo back. Moreover, the visual significance of the top line directly above the previous two symbols, 1869, also resembles the horned head of the buffalo image on the tipi, visually mimicking the symbol below it, but this time it is a full bodied bull, suggesting that the medicine has finally worked and now food is plentiful.
1822 is the last symbol on the second line of Lone Dog’s northern quadrant and is of a red star with a trailing line down and slightly curved to the right. The year reads, “the falling to earth of a very brilliant meteor.” The red star, looming large in the top-left part of the symbol again reiterates the red of Waziyata and also seems to show the motion of the falling star down to the middle of the image and then dropping in black to the bottom of the image. Although it cannot be known exactly how the Sioux during this time interpreted celestial events such as meteors since they had no written language and left few clues or artifacts (Hollabaugh & Indiana University, 2017, p. 41), according to some Sioux, stars represented their ancestors (Biird, 2012, para. 25). Iconographically, some Sioux viewers would have seen this as a sign from their families. Even more culturally important was the Sioux myth which told of a great hero, “Fallen Star,” that “was said to be a member of the Cloud People and to be a special protector of the Lakota” (Biird, 2012, para. 27). So, Sioux ethnic members of the time would potentially have translated this phenomenon as a sign of their protector, possibly as a result of the medicine Two Arrows made the year before, 1842. Iconologically, the falling star image could typify the spiritual significance of the winter count not only as a record of events, but of a religious sentiment of prayer fulfillment. This is reinforced by the backwards motion of the count’s years in the northern quadrant possessing mythic, community binding powers of wakan. The directionality of the passing years, right-to-left, opposite to those of the English-reading culture, suggests spiritual guidance and aid to the Sioux.

The third time Lone Dog’s winter count enters into the northern quadrant is in the first half of the 1840s. In figure 5, the first picture is a horse that faces to the left, where the denoted meaning states that “Feather-in-the-Ear stole 30 spotted ponies,” while the connoted meaning represents a blessing for the Sioux as the horse was central to their way of life after having been
forced to move to the northern plains in the early nineteenth century. This symbol recalls the year 1802 and 1803 that also are represented by horses. The horses here though are red. Mallery (1886), the collector, adds cultural detail: “A successful theft of horses, demanding skill, patience, and daring, is generally considered by the Plains Indians to be of equal merit with the taking of scalps. Indeed, the successful horse thief is more popular than a mere warrior, on account of the riches gained by the tribe, wealth until lately being generally estimated in ponies as the unit of value” (p. 281). Iconographically, these ponies illustrate the growing wealth of the Sioux as measured in their currency of horses. While iconologically, it also shows the waxing power of the Sioux over their rivals as it seems quite a feat for one person alone, Feather-in-the-Ear, to be able to steal thirty ponies.

Skipping a year from the count, 1843’s symbol is again centered in the middle of the northern quadrant of Lone Dog’s winter count and likewise concerns the spiritual realm, only this time directly. Its meaning reads, “The Sans Arc made medicine to bring the buffalo.” Here the symbol visualizes a buffalo skull imprinted on a tepee. Without the verbal material, this symbol would be hard to discern for those unfamiliar to Sioux culture. However, its contextual reference to the religious actions of Sioux, whose place on the complete winter count is center-top, concerns the very survival of the Sioux, for buffalo supplied the major meat staple, clothing, and other necessities of existence on the harsh northern plains. Iconographically, this image
typifies camp life, teaching the young and reminding parents of their people’s struggle to find sufficient food for their tiospaye, along with their eventual deliverance from Waziya’s cleansing winds by spirituality and prayer. It also foreshadows the ending of the buffalo days in the late 1840s with the buffalo skull now used to make medicine. Iconologically, the coded symbol for making medicine to make the buffalo come illustrates how cultures survive without meat, what they hold dear spiritually, and the cultural expectations of the next generation’s response to Waziyata’s reign when the winter count rolls back around into winter again.

After the repetition of the tepee for 1844 that denotes the deep snow and potentially suggests that the medicine from the previous year is still working, the line continues onto a symbol resembling a deer or elk again facing left (1845). Following along the spiritual path, the representational content of the symbol shows that the medicine performed two years before worked: “buffalo meat was plentiful.” Iconographically, this coded symbol again typifies camp life of the Sioux tiospaye. Once the buffalo meat had been cut, it was left out to dry on poles and trees. Iconologically, these successive symbols lead the audience to believe not only in the power of their religion, but also in their way of life as buffalo-hunters and free people living in their traditional ways; in other words, Wakan Tanka has bestowed gifts for the suffering they have endured. The Sioux’s patience and endurance paid off with plenty, and this turn of the count suggests its audience also gained in strength.

In the final years of Lone Dog’s winter count, the latter half of the 1860s, the winter count had again spiraled into the fourth quadrant. Four of these years (figure 6) saw the Sioux experience many hardships, but also many triumphs. The first year marks a red flag, left facing, emblematic of Waziya. Iconographically, Sioux audience members would have had mixed feeling about flags as “flag imagery in Plains Indian art did not appear until the onset of the
reservation era. In other words, this profound artistic innovation was borne from incredibly harsh interethnic relations, in which Lakota artisans, as well as their counterparts in other Plains Indian tribes, used material culture and the flag motif as a highly visible element within a larger strategy for survival as sovereign nations” (Schmittou & Logan, 2002, p. 580). Here the prescribed meaning says, “Many flags were given them by the Peace Commission.” The collector’s note adds further detail: “The flag refers to the visit of…Generals Sherman, Terry, and other prominent military and civil officers…Resulting in the Dakota treaty of 1868” (Mallery, 1886, pp. 285–286). The trusting of whites to uphold their side of the treaty, however, seems to be encoded in the flag symbol for 1868. For

within a climate of such distrust, art proved to be an effective venue through which

Indian artists in the Great Plains could safely deceive white solders and resident civilians. In doing so they undoubtedly gained a desperately needed sense of cohesion and solidarity during the closing decades of the nineteenth century, which proved to be a period of unparalleled turmoil, oppression, and shock for Native peoples. (Schmittou & Logan, 2002, p. 580)

The Sioux, it seems, knew that the United States would not uphold their side of the treaty by their use of the left-facing red flag for 1868.
Iconologically, this treaty, though technically referring to the short-lived treaty Sherman got in 1867 for the railroad, metaphorically could be narrated as the Treaty of 1868, where the wild Sioux under Crazy Horse, Red Cloud, and others were still making war in central Montana to preserve their freedom and way-of-life, and the US government had to capitulate forts in that area. As Doane Robinson puts it, “It is the only instance in the history of the United States where the government has gone to war and afterwards negotiated a peace conceding everything demanded by the enemy and exacting nothing in return” (cited in Ambrose, 2003, p. 307). This treaty’s terms, which allowed the Sioux all the territory in South Dakota west of the Missouri river, was never enforced and has often been at the heart of Sioux angst (American Indian Movement) to uphold it.

The symbol for 1869 resembles a left-facing buffalo. The caption reads, “Texas cattle were brought into the country.” Not coincidentally, at that time, the Sioux called the cow a spotted buffalo. Here again, the Sioux rejoice at having ample food supplies. This beef was paid for and issued by the US Government for the Native Americans starving on their reservations. Iconographically, this symbol can be narrated from the Sioux perspective by aligning the medicine of the buffalo tepee and the Two Arrows medicine hut from the second line. In essence, the starving north has given food to its devoted people, saving them from death.

The next year, 1870, Lone Dog’s tiospaye remembered an eclipse of the Sun. The symbol is represented as two red stars in the upper left, with a large black circle below and to the right. These stars reflect the falling star from 1822, but now the star has doubled, are much larger, and are not showing motion. Iconographically, this symbol represents another religious aspect of Sioux spirituality. The stars, according to Sioux astronomy, are where the ancestors and heroes dwell, looking over their kin from above (Bird, 2012, para. 25). To Lone Dog’s audience, the
two red stars at the top left of the darkened circle continue the right to left movement of the winter count, and figuratively resemble Sioux relatives. Seeing stars during the day could be used to instruct younger Sioux audiences in religious matters. This interpretation would have bolstered the young members into believing that their dead relatives, ancestors, and heroes kept a keen watch over them even when the living could not see them.

In the final entry, 1871, Mallery’s interpretation reads, “The Unkpapas had a battle with the Crows, the former losing it is said, 14, and killing 29 out of 30 of the latter.” Mallery notes, “The crow fort is shown as nearly surrounded, and bullets, not arrows or lances are flying. This is the first instance in this chart in which any combat or killing is portrayed where guns explicitly appear to be used by Indians” (Mallery, 1886, p. 287). Iconographically, the children who knew the winter count, and thus their own history, had overtaken their ancient enemy through population, wealth, and technology. In so doing, they showcase the wealth they have garnered by avoiding decimation by the epidemics, acquiring currency through stealing horses, and most importantly, using modern weapons of warfare. It appears a band of Sioux, the Unkpapas, has finally brought the historical spiral back to its origin in 1801. For the Sioux, the stars from the previous year have now become the Sioux themselves, bigger than the circular object in the center, figuratively recreating the Sun dance, while juxtaposing the first entry of 1801 (15 Sioux killed) by killing the Crow. This metaphorical explosion of Sioux identity reaffirms their cohesion as one people having survived Waziyat’a’s most recent cleansing, north winds. Iconologically, with spiritual, and bodily renewal, the Sioux would, five years later, deal the greatest defeat to the US army at Little Big Horn.
Conclusion

I have intended to show how visuals sustain community identity over a long stretch of time. This particular study has sought to illustrate how a visual historical record generates a people’s metamorphosis by perpetuating its unique identity. In answering the call of Boone (2012) to explore non-alphabetic historical registers, this study has filled the scholarly gap of looking at a Native American winter count from an iconological perspective. Given that archival translation was the only way these coded symbols became meaningfully defined, the iconological perspective helped frame what is visually presented (representational meaning), how those symbols conveyed meaning at that time (iconographical symbolism), and what that tells us about their shared worldview (iconological symbolism). In using the iconological analytical methodology, this analysis will help lay the groundwork for a deeper look at the relationship among visuals, symbolic codes, and their cultural power of distinct historical and communal rhetoricity.

This analysis has sought to look at Lone Dog’s winter count from three perspectives to inform its meaning in its time and now. Since contextual signs and resources of visual artifacts have profound, but oftentimes, obscure meanings finding meaning in historical artifacts, especially those devoid of text or number, is an even more daunting task. The various layers of interpretation might make this artifact seem puzzling and confusing, but to the people for which it was intended, it was clear: this is who we are, what we believe, and what we remember. And by analyzing how one culture employed visual symbols to maintain their way-of-life in the face of overwhelmingly difficult circumstances and profound changes socially, culturally, and technologically, this analysis has shown how visual discourse communities speak their own visual rhetoric, empowering their poets and artists into historians. Furthermore, the question
should be asked as to how other cultures have employed the arts to create, enact, and maintain their historical, ethnic identity in transitional periods. Future studies could look at other non-alphabetic historical registers incorporating the poetic memory these images evoked in the count keeper.

Moreover, more research should be conducted to ascertain the legitimacy and accuracy of the interpretations provided by Mallery in 1886. The questionable authorship of this winter count in particular remains unresearched as the Smithsonian does not even have a tangible record of it, but rather merely possesses a drawing made by Mallery of the original Lone Dog count, which has never surfaced. On a related note, since the count goes for over 70 years, it is not surprising that it was passed down from father to son to continue the tiospaye’s history and culture. In lieu of these facts, the count could also be considered dually authored, allowing for even greater interpretation of the count keeper’s own artistic and cultural attitudes to flourish when recounting the years. Since it is known that the younger Lone Dog (Chi-no-sa) rode with the hostile Sitting Bull camp in the 1870s (Greene & Thorton, 2007, p. 17), future studies could research how the elder Lone Dog (Shunka Ishnala) and the younger Lone Dog (Chi-no-sa) influenced what the winter count meant for the tiospaye at different times. Finally, an analysis of the entire winter count should be undertaken to get a more complete understanding of this remarkable artifact.

Works Cited


CHAPTER 3
AN AD AND A POEM:
RHETORICAL ICONICITY IN IMAGETEXTS
AND TEXTIMAGES

Semiotics is the study of sign systems, where the union of signifier (visual expression) and signified (content) create signification (meaning). Piercian semiotics attests to three relationships between expression and content: the icon, the index, and the symbol (Peirce, 2014, p. 102–103). The icon directly represents some quality of meaning in its shape or form (hand gripping an object), while the index refers back to its referent but does not take its resemblance (a pointing hand). Finally, in a symbolic relationship, a signifier does not resemble nor refer back to its referent, and so delivers its meaning only through cultural knowledge (thumbs up). It follows that text functions as a sign system, where visual expression and content co-create the meaning. And since words often solely function as a medium of ideas, most scholars rightly put text in the symbolic column. However, here I will argue that text also functions iconically because of its inalienably physical and optical nature.

Although text is visual (Mitchell, 1994, p. 113) and material (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 1997, p. 258), the embodied and graphic nature of written language often goes unnoticed. The shape of words—the orthographic sequencing of letters—appears invisible because, conventionally, words carry meaning through symbolic representation, not through their shape or form. Moreover, design theory has sought to minimize types’ interference with reading by striving for “statuesque transparency” (Brighurst, 2013, p. 18) and invisibility (Warde, 1932, p. 1). But, text reveals itself when conveying a visual sense to the reader such as in upper case letters (Gessman, 1975, p. 15), ALL CAPS (Miller, 1994, p. xiv), typography (Kimball and Hawkins, 2007; Mackiewicz, 2005; Antonetti, 1999), rhetoricity of letterforms (Wyatt &
DeVoss, 2018, p. xiii; Brumberger, 2003), visual morphemes (Bolinger, 1946), and poetry (Borkent, 2014; Greve, 2004, Gross, 1997; Berry, 1989; Viglionese, 1985). In sum as a visual sign system, written language holds some autonomy as an icon and not just as a symbol.

In this chapter, I show two instances—a commercial and a poem—when text operates iconically on a large visual discourse community through the medium of television, and on a small visual discourse community through written poetry. Through both of these instances where the graphical nature of text becomes meaningful, I will show how iconically functioning text dramatizes the cultural values and beliefs of its audiences. In order to accomplish this, I employ W. J. T. Mitchell’s concept of the imagetext.

Mitchell (2015) defines the imagetext as the complimentary combination of image and text. Continuing the centuries-old philosophical debate about the relationship between an image and text, Mitchell contends that the concept of the imagetext “is the convergence point of semiotics, the theory of signs, and aesthetics, the theory of the senses. It is the place where the eye and the ear encounter the logical, analogical, and cognitive relations that give rise to meaning in the first place” (p. 47). Owing to imagetext’s ability to transcend the apparent opposition of picture and writing, scholars have used the imagetext to help study how fictional, literary maps integrate a dialectic of meaning (Bushell, 2016, p. 190); to define genres—comic strips, caricatures, works of art, or illustrations—where imagetext occurs (Sarapik, 2009, p. 284); and, to explain the poetry of Chlebnikov (Greve, 2004). Using the framework of the imagetext allows me to illustrate how textual material may be visually considered within a specific visual discourse community. Consequently, by situating the two imagetext artifacts culturally, I seek to add to visual rhetoric methodologies’ armamentarium by analyzing texts that invite reading the graphic nature of written language, a new literacy.
This new literacy, as defined by Kravchenko (2009) and Olson (2004), sees text as more than just graphically representing some aspect of the linguistic knowledge of language speakers (Chomsky, 1986). Kravchenko and Olson see literacy as the ability to interpret and create cultural contexts. They assert that text mediates knowledge as categorized shared experience, which they call background knowledge. In turn, our interpretative abilities—literacy—rely upon this background knowledge to form and develop communities (Kravchenko, 2009, pp. 543–545) and even create our understanding of knowledge (science) and ourselves (psychology), a “logocentrism” that pervades our world (Olson, 1994, p. 19). Using this more expansive, classical approach to literacy, Olson defines literacy not as learning to read letters or memorize definitions of words but of understanding contextual meaning (p. 18). Similarly, this chapter argues for a new literacy that takes into account the inalienably visual nature of text, a way of viewing text rhetorically through investigating how its graphic nature informs the meaning-making process of its visual discourse community.

Toward this end, I begin by briefly looking at the visual historical origin of three letters (figures 1-3); in illustrating the iconic history of these three letters, I show how Western text bears an inalienable connection with sight; termed “glyph,” the Roman alphabet letterforms represent visual marks that have an agreed upon social use. Though these letters are oftentimes considered symbols that do not align with their visual intention, here, I argue that sometimes these glyphs are manipulated for rhetorical effect. These rhetorical effects, I argue, align with iconic qualities, or intrinsic expressions, that directly arise for the shape of the letterforms. I then quickly look at typographic research illustrating the rhetorical effects of
typeface. After, I use Berger (1977), McLuhan (1967), and Burke (1966, 1954, 1950) to inform my imagetext analysis of a television commercial that is geared for a large visual discourse community; finally, I employ Borkent (2104), Greve (2004), Gross (1997), Berry (1989), and Viglionese (1985) to help analyze how a meticulously crafted text—written for a specialized, small visual discourse community—inverts the imagetext into the textimage, where the primacy of text iconically merges with its graphical referent.

**Letterforms**

The beginning of our modern alphabet traces back to Bronze Age Proto-Sinaitic inscription, where Egyptian hieroglyphs were adapted to represent individual sounds (Naveh, 1982, pp. 23–24; Diringer, 1977, p. 22). Three good examples of letters that began as visual representations are the A, the M, and the O (figures 1-3). The A transformed from originally being an ox head, over time being turned down. Likewise, the M illustrated water, while the O visually mirrored the eye. Even though now these letters belie their natural origin, the fact that they began as visible, natural objects suggest that in certain instances they can be employed to echo the intrinsic visuality letters exhibit.
Fast forwarding more than three millennia, letters were standardized into type, gaining more powerful and nuanced rhetorical effects through the specialization and standardization of letterforms (typefaces). From Gutenberg’s movable type in the 1440s up until the eighteenth century, typefaces remained relatively unchanged (Wyatt & DeVoss, 2018, p. 8). Then in 1790, Bodoni developed a new letterform whose style conveyed such “attitude, one might say, that it can no longer be consumed neutrally” (Antonetti, 1999, p. 53). The attitude that carries Bodoni’s letterform has branched into many other typefaces, so much so that, for one hundred years, scholars have researched the rhetorical characteristics of typefaces (Poffenberger & Franken, 1923; Ovink, 1938; Zachrisson, 1965; Rowe, 1982; Lewis & Walker, 1989). More recently, Brumberger (2003) showed that readers connect typeface with persona (p. 227), and genders view typefaces differently (p. 230). Likewise, Mackiewicz (2005) studied how various typefaces collaborate with document tone (p. 293) using typeface anatomy (figure 4). Her findings show that readers imbue typographic features (figure 4) with emotional traits such as professionalism and friendliness; and, markers of typeface professionalism, vis friendliness, carry more balanced terminals and moderate transitions between thick-thin ratios and weights. Clearly, letters embody iconicity. In the following two sections, I will use two examples of how letterforms function as icons in our modern society. The first study details a television commercial while the second explicates a poem.

**Belsomra Commercial**

The World Series, Major League Baseball’s championship series, has entertained its fans for over a hundred years. With the rise of television, it has garnered an even greater viewership. As admirers of professional baseball watch the last rites of the season, advertisers see potential
revenue. And although not as well known for its commercials as the Super Bowl, the World Series offers advertisers a broad swath (14.5 million) of disposably wealthy sports consumers who are primarily male and older (Nielsen, 2015). Unable to attend in person, most of the visual discourse community watches the games on televisions or laptops. This medium of electricity displaces time and space (McLuhan, 1967, p. 16) extending familial and local relations (p. 14), while breeding and nurturing the American dream (p. 72). In this environment, a sleeping drug commercial comes on (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=km4s9NAYCVc). This commercial features two biorhythmic pet personifications of the female protagonist, a dog and a cat, whose bodies form the words “wake” and “sleep” respectively. The grey dog (figure 5) is furry and hyper, while the white cat (figure 6) is soft, cuddly, and at ease. These text-animals’ personalities, colors, and actions simultaneously define their word-body while typifying the main character’s internal struggle—and eventual resolution with the help of the sleeping drug—to control her natural sleep-wake cycles. In so doing, the advertisement surreally combines what is happening in the protagonist’s mind symbolically with the iconically functioning pet-words involved in her day-to-day life.

In its surrealism, the commercial resembles Apple’s 1984 commercial, where similarly, “an imaginative kind of rhetoric that gains assent through affect, fantasy, [and] the appreciation
of form” (Scott, 1991, p. 68) is used. Here, fantastical shapes (word-pets) visually explain the effects of the sleeping pill through their form (word) and behavior (animal). The commercial uses these text-animals to illustrate how the sleeping pill, Belsomra, works on the main character. Here, the two animated words behave as imagetexts, complimentarily combining text and image. These word-pet imagetexts convey physically and psychologically that the main character can control her biorhythmic cycles of wake and sleep—with Belsomra—the same way that she handles her animals. These word-pets visually bolster and explain the auditory messages in the commercial, helping the audience see what the drug does. And given that over 79 million households in the United States own a dog or cat, the imagetexts consubstantially persuade (Burke, 1950, p. 21) their visual discourse community through the medium of television (McLuhan, 1967, p. 8) that they need Belsomra to achieve the enviousness of glamour (Berger, 1977, p. 134). In this section, I will show how the commercial persuades its visual discourse community by aligning the commercial’s rhetorical exigency (sleeplessness)—though its iconic use of text—to the glamour this drug aims to generate. In so doing, I show that
imagetexts can function persuasively as advertisements, changing the visual discourse community into visual discourse consumers.

Persuasion arises from the “situational patterns” we discern, with which we are familiar (Burke, 1954, p. 35). Moreover, identification occurs spontaneously, intuitively, and unconsciously when audiences recognize places, events, and causes with which they are accustomed (Burke, 1966, p. 301). In the Belsomra commercial, the setting is a suburban, Victorian house, a setting that the visual discourse community would find familiar. Likewise, the main character is situated within the prototypical American lifestyle, complete with pets, a loving partner, even cooking out. All of this stage production entices the audience to see themselves in the main characters, to become envious of them.

Within this prototypical middle-class American home, Merck, the drug maker, creates buyer envy of the protagonists’ lifestyle; in turn, the visual discourse consumers will have the envy of others if they use Belsomra. This envy is tied to the lifestyle presented in the commercial and is “made glamorous by the product or opportunity it is trying to sell” (Berger, 1977, p. 132). In the Belsomra commercial, after being prescribed the drug, the protagonist’s mindset becomes happy (through smiling), content (the loving relationship with a partner), and peaceful (quietude of the house) as a result of having well-rested nights; consequently, if the visual discourse consumer gets Belsomra, they will also have this lifestyle, and so will be loved and envied by others. In essence, advertisers steal the self-love of the audience in order to sell it back to them for the “price of the product” (p. 134). Once the visual discourse consumers see themselves in the characters, the imagetext pets help dramatize and explain how the product works.

As the commercial begins, the screen cuts to a Victorian bedroom at night with a middle-aged woman lying in bed. She puts down her book and looks at her feet where a soft, furry, white
cat slowly lifts and stretches as a male narrator softly intimates, *Sleep* (:03) The viewer instantly notices that as the cat stretches it reads Sleep. This animal-word personifies the act of sleeping. Then a calm, male voice asks, *remember when sleep welcomed you like a friend?* (:06) as she picks up Sleep and hugs it lovingly. The narrator continues as the camera cuts to her looking under her bed and in the attic for the sleep-cat: *then it became more elusive, but why?* (:12). In the dark, cloth-covering-the-Victorian-chairs attic, she sees a dog bothering the sleep-cat (figure 7). This dog is grey, lively, and embodies Wake. The narrator again, *insomnia, it may affect the wake neurotransmitters in your brain, disrupting your wake and sleep messages* (:19). Here the ad reinforces the verbal message with the imagetext pets, where the sleep-cat is being disturbed in the dark attic—metaphorically, the brain—by wake-dog. The imagetexts function as visual cues that augment the ad’s reasoning since the audience would find consubstantiality in dogs bothering cats.

When the sleep-deprived wife sees the sleep-cat playing with the wake-dog, she smiles, and the audience sees the logo for Belsomra on a white background. *Belsomra is a prescription medicine for adults who have trouble falling or staying asleep* (:21). The ad then breaks into her leading wake-dog to its bed (with Belsomra written on the side of the pet bed) (figure 8) as the narrator appeals to the logos of science, *Belsomra is thought to turn down wake messages by*
targeting and inhibiting the action of orexin, a neurotransmitter that plays a central role in sending wake messages to your brain, only Belsomra works this way (:29) At this time sleep-cat jumps up into her bed as she again lovingly embraces it. The use of imagetext pets within this setting help the visual discourse consumer see the drug’s action and invite consubstantiality with the main character’s envious lifestyle. According to the U.S. marketing leader for insomnia at Merck, Doug Black, the ad justified using a mechanism of action (MOA) to persuade the audience that their drug works differently than the other sleeping pills currently on the market since Belsomra was a “very late entrant into the market” (fiercepharma, 2015). This creative MOA strategy helped make the biochemical action accessible to a lay audience through setting and the use of imagetexts, informing its visual discourse consumers by visually entertaining and bolstering the commercial’s verbal messages.

Foreshadowing the ad’s inevitable dark turn into the drug’s side effects, the commercial switches to the brightness of a sunny morning, and a soft-voiced, female narrator begins the warnings, do not take Belsomra if you have narcolepsy. When taking Belsomra do not drive or operate heavy machinery (:48). She is opening the door to the bright, new day, getting ready to walk wake-dog outside while sleep-cat lazily meanders inside the house. Walking, eating,
driving, or engaging in other activities while asleep without remembering it the next day, have been reported (:52), the female voiceover admits, as the protagonist goes and gets the paper with wake-dog and sees her smiling neighbor. Continuing the analysis of the image, in figure 9, centered, sleep cat—confined, longing, silhouetted in darkness—with whom she stops to chat as they both laugh and smile (figure 9). Again, the audience identifies with this character as being glamorous and envies her life because of her neighborly rapport, thereby eliciting the desire for the drug.

The commercial continues, ironically, by showing her strolling with her wake-dog down the avenue sidewalk as the voiceover confesses, *The temporary inability to move while falling asleep or attempting to wake up and temporary leg weakness have also been reported* (1:07) as she climbs the stairs. Here, the advertiser visually contradicts the spoken side effects by having her walk the dog and climb up the stairs while describing the side effects. She then re-enters her bedroom as wake-dog follows her and sees sleep-cat waiting at the foot of her bed. She gently picks up sleep-cat as wake-dog obeyingly gets into its Belsomra pet bed. The final cut reveals her sleeping soundly with sleep-cat cuddled between her arms, with her husband asleep beside her, and *Aaaaaahhhhh Sllllleeeeeeeppppp* (1:24), the male narrator refreshingly sighs in closing.
In order to sell its drug, this Belsomra commercial puts forth the problem of sleep deprivation to a woman who—after being prescribed Belsomra—now lives an envious life, complete with a loving husband, a manicured Victorian home in the suburbs, friendly neighbors, and loving and loyal pets. These pets—iconically representing imagetexts—give the audience insight into what Belsomra will do for them after taking it. Should the audience choose to take Belsomra, the commercial promises through the protagonist’s envious lifestyle, that their own natural sleep-wake cycles will be as easy to control as their own household pets. The biorhythmic action words of sleep and wake literally embody the household pets of cat and dog in this commercial. The imagetext generated functions iconically as a word, bodily as an animal, and metaphorically as a biochemical example. Apparently, the commercial worked as Belsomra is “forecast to be the highest selling insomnia drug by 2023, generating 7 million sales of approximately $458.6 million” (Healthcare.GlobalData, 2015). With this creative reimagining of what text can represent, the Belsomra ad was a big hit.

Poetry

In 1986, W. J. T. Mitchell called for studying “artistic practice in relation to the embattled boundary between texts and images” (p. 154) as opposed to relying on theory. He posited exploring artistic works that “take us beyond the boundaries” (p. 154) in order to “understand the full complexity of either verbal or visual art” (p. 155). Less than ten years later, Mitchell (1994) declared “pure” text as the quintessential blending of text and image:

“Pure” texts incorporate visibility quite literally the moment they are written or printed in visible form. Viewed from either side, from the standpoint of the visual or the verbal, the
medium of writing deconstructs the possibility of a pure image or pure text, along with the opposition between the “literal” (letters) and the “figurative” (pictures) on which it depends. Writing, in its physical, graphic form, is an inseparable suturing of the visual and the verbal, the “imagetext” incarnate. (p. 95)

Since the artistically written word comprises the archetypal imagetext, a poem should help reveal where the boundaries between text and image actually exist. Here, I will show that a poem’s words can iconically supplement the words’ semantic meanings through their visual, graphic lettering use. To help interpret the meanings that are generated in fusing word and image, I use the concept of the imagetext, or rather the textimage, to “expose the social structure of representation as an activity and relationship of power/knowledge/desire—representation as something done to something, with something, by someone, for someone” (Mitchell, 1994, p. 180). In short, a poem carries intrinsic ties with the graphic, visual nature of text, and the fact that it is well known to a small visual discourse community of poetry readers is evidenced by the abundant scholarship on how poets use the inherent visuality of text to blend textimage meanings.

After the Second World War, poetry sought to widen its breath of meaning by synthesizing with art; most notably, the Concrete Poetry movement sought, broadly, to combine visual art and poetry (figure 10). More than a half-century later, researchers of poetics now study the combined textual and visual elements of poetry. For example, Gross (1997) employs Pierce’s
semiotic theory along with eye-tracking software to explain how poems “generate meaning on both the symbolic and the iconic level” (p. 15); and, Borkent (2014) uses post-structuralist reader-response theory to help delineate asemic alphabetic poetry “through correlative cognitive responses” (p. 9). Furthermore, Viglionese (1985) has looked at how poetry uses “the union of visual expression and content” to make signification “visually motivated or iconic” in the case of recent Italian poets; Greve (2004) has analyzed Chlebnikov’s poetry as “a visual expression of the inner” form of letters, “consciously apply[ing] some kind of iconic meaning to the letters” (p. 139); and, Berry (1989) investigated how various modes of 20th century free verse “take shape on the page” (p. 90). All of these scholars sought to decipher how poetics integrates the visual, presupposing that some poets have consciously endeavored to include visuality in their word usage. In like manner, I explore how Mary Oliver’s poem “August” uses visual aspects of words to complement her semantic meaning. Mary Oliver, I offer, incorporates both the visuality of the Concrete poetry movement and the Asemic poetry movement of the modern day. Historically, Oliver represents the cusp of poetry’s marked change into pure visuality (Asemic poetry), where no semantic content exists from earlier poetic strivings of supplementing the words’ meaning with the visual shape of the poem (Concrete poetry). Moreover, Oliver defines free verse as focusing more on the optical nature of written poetry than on the oral speaking of the poem, which she claims traditional, metrical poetry sought; in essence, Oliver argues that free verse changed how the poem is understood:
Turning the line, in free verse, is associated not only with the necessary decision at each turn (since the poem is not following any imposed order), but it also has much to do with the visual presentation on the page. Free verse came into fashion just as the availability of books was becoming widespread, and the practice of reading poems with one’s eyes, and listening to them silently, was taking precedence over the oral tradition. (Oliver, 1994, p. 56)

Manipulating text for artistic purposes, however, did not begin in the last hundred years. For centuries, poets have exploited the likeness and interchangeability of words to suit their purposes.

Written poetry must be read and therefore visualized. Throughout the ages, poets consciously manipulate language, its form, context, meaning and shape, sometimes to a heavily visual degree in the case of pattern poetry to broaden and deepen a poem’s meaning. And although patterned poetry, especially by George Herbert (figure 2) will instantly resonate with perusers of poesy, there are more nuanced methods with which poets have opted to use the visual field to bolster the poetic content. An example can be found in Herbert’s mentor and fellow metaphysical poet, John Donne. Here, the word’s placement in the text, its syntactical position, functions iconically to add depth and meaning to the speaker’s confusion.

In Donne’s Holy Sonnet 14 (1896), a syntactic jumbling occurs at the sentence level, “Batter my heart three person’d God; for, you.” The poet inverts the direct object and the predicate at the end of line seven: “[I] Labour to’ admit you, but Oh, to no end, / Reason your viceroy in mee, mee should defend” (p. 22).

I, like an usurp’d town to another due,

Labor to admit you, but oh, to no end;
Reason, your viceroy in me, me should defend,

But is captiv'd, and proves weak or untrue. (lines 5–8)

On first reading, the reader might be perplexed as to why the “mee” is not “I,” but with further retrospection, the “mee” grammatically satisfies its function as the object: “Reason…should defend (mee).” The visual rearranging reinforces the meaning, for the speaker illustrates how reason come from God “proves weak and untrue” (line 8). This paradox, with its inverted syntax, visually underscores the speaker’s overall confusion as to how God should save him, in part, by confusing the order of words, yet it also foreshadows the speaker’s eventual capitulation, or denouement of the paradox, by fulfilling the end line rhyme, “end” and “defend.” This is further reiterated in the concluding of the Petrarchan rhyming pattern, resulting in the sonnet’s volta, or turn, exacerbating the speaker’s agony to experience the fulfillment of God without being “betroth’d unto your enemie” (10). Through the visual reordering of words, Donne subtly argues “reason,” in its budding, pre-Enlightenment form, cannot break the speaker from the paradox of living without the desire for sin.

In addition to iconically altering the syntax for effect, poets have also made use of the intrinsic visual-connectivity certain words share. For example, an Emily Dickinson poem’s first stanza reads,

The Soul selects her own society

Then shuts the door;

On her divine Majority

Obtrude no more (1-4).

As opposed to Donne’s syntactical inversion, Dickinson uses similar, visual parts of words to reinforce meaning. By fracturing words into their alphabetic and syllabic parts then re-expressing
them using similar words, she liberates the lines from hackneyed paronomasia. She repeats the first letter of the first two and last two lines, while ending the lines with similar “parts” of previous end line words, “ociety” with “urity;” and “oor” with “ore.” This internal patterning, or recycling of words that bear a natural, optical resemblance through their shared letters, however, is not solely for novel, auditory effect (her famous off rhyme or slant rhyme), it is also visual since letters exhibit visible commonalities with other letters. The letter “o” in the poem is overly represented and central to the speaker’s message. This “o” magnifies the speaker’s mental state through its visual connotations, for the “o” represents the circle: completion, fulfillment and closure. Visually, the closed circles concentrically reaffirm her beliefs, growing stronger as the diction becomes more assured, culminating with the speaker telling all outsiders to “Obtrude no more.” The “o,” representing closure, also implies fulfillment, an ethos of personal authority to select whom the speaker will.

Conversely at the end, the poem speaks of isolation and a prison-like confinement after the speaker, in line 10, commands to “choose one”; “Then close the valves of her attention / Like stone” (lines 11-12). In stopping the one-way attention, Dickinson returns to the long “o,” implying that the same letter now represents loss, emptiness, or even cold zero, potentially suggesting that “her” “Soul,” though complete, now rests sealed, heavy and round like “stone.”

**Rock and Stone**

In Oliver’s (1994) *A Poetry Handbook*, she teaches “the thoughtful machinery of the poem” (p. 2) to students, readers, and writers of poetry. In her chapter “Sound,” she offers insights between the words rock and stone: “In my mind’s eye I see the weather-softened roundness of stone, the juts and angled edges of rock” (pp. 23-24). In comparing the two words
themselves, “rock” and “stone,” share similar looking letters, whose shapes impress readers with culturally representative connotations since both words mean a concreted mass. By superimposing the words around the central vowel “o” and interchanging the letters, “r” gets contrasted with “st” while “ck” is opposed to “ne.”

Looking at the letters for “rock,” we see the “r” is one-sided (right, top quadrant) in its departure from a single vertical line, and it is pointing to the right at x-height level, suggesting a one-legged table or an incomplete “n;” likewise “c,” insinuating an incomplete “o” and a forward flow to the right, couples with “k,” also facing right with two sharp lines and a straight angle at the end, to embody the precarious rigidity of a rock’s state. The “s” in “stone,” however, is flowing and solid, vertically supporting the “t” after it, and the “n” resembles the “c” of “rock” turned down, muting it, while the “e” seems the antithesis of “k” because it curls in on its self and completes its own line in contrast to “k” of “rock,” which does not have a curve but rather an angle. The letters of the words themselves, viewed as images in Oliver’s mind’s eye, suggest an elevated, deeper understanding of the connotative nature of the words “rock” and “stone” through their inherent visuality.

Moreover, using Oliver’s definitions of “rock” and “stone,” respectively, her lettering and denotation visually bolster her meaning: “juts and angled edges” for “rock” and “weather-softerned roundness” for “stone.” Looking at the individual letters describing “rock”—“juts and angled edges”—out of a total of eighteen letters, there are ten letters that break the x-height; seven are ascenders (t, d, l, d, f, k) and three are descenders (j, g, g) (figure 12); moreover, the proximity of the x-height breakers to each other (j and t, g and l, d and g) suggest sharp ends and jaggedness, as in “j[u]t,” “gl,” and “dg” because the descenders are contrasted almost
immediately with the ascenders and vice versa, visually illustrating how the “rock” spikes up and down in succession; their connectivity also shows that these letters are not scattered outcroppings of “rock,” but rather intrinsically sharp angled.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Words used to describe a concreted mass</th>
<th>Oliver’s definition of each word</th>
<th>Ascenders</th>
<th>Descenders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>rock</td>
<td>juts and angled edges</td>
<td>t, d, l, d, f, k</td>
<td>j, g, g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stone</td>
<td>weather-softened roundness</td>
<td>t, h, f, t, d, d</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 1: Oliver’s iconic use of lettering to resemble the connotative definitions of "a concreted mass"*

In opposition to the “rock’s” qualities, Oliver’s description of “stone,” “weather-softened roundness,” contains twenty-four letters, of which only six break the x-height (th, ft, d, d) (figure 13) (table 1); these letters are all ascenders, with four of the six together, suggesting a glabrescent visual image. The sketch of *stone* uses only six letters that deviate from the x-height compared to eight in the description of *rock*, plus these six letters all travel the same direction, up, and in the case of “th” and “ft” imply a gradual shift from the x-height, for the “t” of “th” acts as a rung, easing the climb to the top of the “h,” while the “f” of “ft” domes the circular nature of the *stone* at its top with “t” supporting the looping cupola of the “f” on its way back down to the x-height.

It is no accident that Oliver uses symbols mimicking the natural world. Later on in *A Poetry Handbook*, Oliver espouses poetry’s origination: “the natural world has always been the great warehouse of symbolic imagery. Poetry is one of the ancient arts, and it began, as did all the fine arts, within the original wilderness of the earth…*remembering in words*” (p. 106). She
then recounts “A body of literature, as it is called” in order to show that the artistically written word “is a formal construct mirroring all of life” (p. 107). But, Oliver is not a Romantic in the classic, male sense, according to McNew (1989): “At its most intense her poetry aims to peer beneath the constructions of culture and reason that burden us with an alienated consciousness to celebrate the primitive, mystical visions…a dream of oneness with a maternal earth-womb” (p. 75). Oliver does not seek to find identity in transcending nature as Wordsworth sought, nor does she desire to separate herself from objects of the world, but rather she seeks renewal and transformation in the natural cycles, releasing her own individuality to the great turning of the earth. Oliver’s primitive visions of transforming in and with nature serve as the foundation and repository of her poetic language. This “warehouse” of images populates her poems with the literal and figurative language of nature.

**Textimages in “August”**

_The critic must at last stand as mute though contented before a true poem as before an acorn or a vine leaf. The perfect work of art is received again into the bosom of nature whence its material proceeded, and that criticism which can only detect its unnaturalness has no longer any office to fulfill._

_Henry David Thoreau, Journal Volume One_ (Thoreau, 1966, p. 252)

The opening poem of Oliver’s Pulitzer Prize-winning poetry book, *American Primitive*, is titled “August.” Because of its capitalization as the title, the reader might first think this defines the month of August, when “blackberries hang / swollen.” But a second definition underscores the natural simplicity of the first, namely the adjective “august,” meaning “marked by majestic dignity or grandeur” (OED). This duality is recursive throughout her book, from the title down to the lettering, for she, paradoxically, is both an individual who “speaks as an outsider to [the alienating effects of a white, imperialist culture that destroys the ecological balances of creatures and rivers]” and “part of a natural vastness that subsumes her human individuality” (p. 66); she is
both an “American” in the “manifest destiny” way, and a “Primitive” for whom nature is an “articulated and conscious subject” (p. 67). Indeed the poem itself seems to take place temporally from “all day” in the second stanza to “(i)n the dark” that begins the second and final sentence of the poem; this metamorphosis of time shadows the speaker’s own change within the poem and also is scalable to the entire work, for this book’s first poem begins with the calendar month “August” and concludes with the poem “The Gardens,” which takes place in “summer:” “It was / summer on earth / so the prayer / I whispered was to no / god but another / creature like me” (Oliver, 1983, p. 85). Beginning in “August,” the speaker’s transformation in the book invokes a readership that Kunitz argues is interested in the “blessings of the natural world” (as cited in Oliver, 1983, p. 90). Moreover, Oliver’s visual discourse community identifies with the speaker’s desire to return to a more primitive state, underscoring their weariness with capitalistic stressors; where, the readers want to escape into a simpler way of life, devoid of “thinking” (line 6) that allows them some mental peace. This peace, Oliver shows, resides in letting go of the frustrations of modern life and embracing the wholeness of the natural world.

AUGUST

When the blackberries hang
swollen in the woods, in the brambles
nobody owns, I spend

all day among the high
branches, reaching
my ripped arms, thinking

of nothing, cramming
the black honey of summer
into my mouth; all day my body

accepts what it is. In the dark
creeks that run by there is
this thick paw of my life darting among
the black bells, the leaves; there is
this happy tongue. (Oliver, 1983, p. 3)

The first tercet of “August” unfolds in duality and paradox: the speaker is in a place “nobody owns” which is full of “swollen” “blackberries,” a fruit oftentimes bittersweet and always thorny. The double lettering visually suggests these “blackberries” are, one, numerous and “hang[ing]” by the reiteration of “rr;” and two, they are plump: “oo” in “woods” in addition to illustrating that they are, three, up: “ll” (figure 14); this visual similarity is further reinforced by the use of “o” five times [nine times counting the “b” and “d’] in the second and third line (figure 15). Plus, the first word of the poem “August” is “When,” while the first word of the second line is “swollen.” The unchanged letters “w” and “en” (of “When” and “swollen”) act as catalysts as the “h” is replaced by “oll” and an “s” is added at the beginning, connoting plurality. Visually, the “h” separates to form two vertical stems: “ll,” while the “o” resembles the lower half of the “h,” and the “o” “ll” represents a textimage reinterpretation of “h” (re-envisioning the letter “h” as three letters), implying the large size, number, and spatial position of the berries (figure 16). The similar end line “an” of “hang” and “am” of “brambles” of the first two lines visually suggest the doubling of the “n” and as such the roughness and density of the bushes where the berries “hang” (figure 16). As the poem progresses, the third line reiterates the three “o”s but they are now separated by three letters that break the x-height, “b” and “dy;” this implies there are more berries, but that they are on different “branches,” or more distant from one another (figure 15).
Ending the first tercet are two financial words (“owns and “spends”) that suggest pecuniary interest, developing the sonnet’s intrinsic issue, namely that of aggrandizing the tension felt by the speaker between American capitalism and a more natural state of foraging. This is stressed with the repetition of three letters “w, “e,” and “n.” Here, “When” and “swollen” become “owns” and “spend” (figure 17). They are divided from one another by a comma, implying that the speaker still has the modern world in mind, but now she sees true wealth as residing in ownerless nature.

The pastoral feel of this stanza is disrupted at its close by “I spend,” foreshadowed by the paradox of “nobody owns,” implying the speaker is human at this point. Moreover, “I spend” is an enjambment. This enhances the main clause by diminishing the natural closure sought at the end of the first tercet, while it simultaneously introduces the speaker, “I,” but cuts off the direct object of her verb “spend.” The resulting paradoxical duality is visually reinforced by the “pend” mimicking the “hang” and “bramb” (figure 18) of the previous end line words; noticeably, transforming the “b” and “h” to a “p,” the “a” to an “e,” and “g” and “b” to a “d” (in each of the end line words) (table 2) all underscore the anthropomorphic transformation beginning to occur to the speaker. Even more, the denotation of the word “spend,” which means to “use up” and “consume wastefully,” reiterates the enjambment’s itself, a strictly visual poetic device familiar to poetry readers.
Textimages transformation from first and second line to third line

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Original Word</th>
<th>Ascenders to descender</th>
<th>Broken construction</th>
<th>Catalyst letter</th>
<th>Descender to ascenders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>hang (line 1)</td>
<td>h</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>g</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>brambles (line 2)</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>a</td>
<td>m</td>
<td>b</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>spend (line 3)</td>
<td>p</td>
<td>e</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>d</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Textimage letterform transformations illustrating change in speaker

But these iterations do not stop with the end of the first stanza. The first words of the second stanza are “all day among.” Representing a new stanza, the catalyst “w” (from “when,” “swollen,” and “owns”) has been flipped into an “m” while retaining the vowel “o” to show the new tercet is both similar and different from the one above it. Likewise, the “ll” has doubled again with “all” from “swollen.” Indeed, “mon” of “among” is also similar to “own” in the previous stanza (figure 19), implying a shift of the speaker’s priorities from worldly to naturalistic.

Interpreting the textimage letterform changes from the first to the second tercet, the vowel “a” has now become dominant—five of the seven words of lines four and five use the vowel “a,”—replacing the dominant vowel “o” of the previous tercet, but keeping the “a” from “hang” and “brambles,” possibly suggesting the visual look of the blackberries now as smaller since “a” has smaller counter than the “o.” In contrast, the end of all three lines of stanza two use another vowel, “i,” to turn to “ig,” “in,” and “in:” “high,” “reaching,” and “thinking,” echoing the previous stanza’s use of the pronoun “I,” along with its civilized regards of “owns” and “spend.” This clustering of
the vowel “i” reflects the “I” at the end of the first stanza and reminds the reader of who is performing the present participial action.

Both words of the fifth line, “branches, reaching,” of the second tercet reuse the letters “r,” “a,” “n,” “c,” and “e.” These combinations suggest unity, though at the same time, separated by a comma, they harken back to the previous stanza’s third line’s use of the comma: “nobody owns, I spend”; the third line of the second tercet (line 6) also uses the comma in a similar way, but this time it is preceded by “my ripped arms;” “my” fulfills the inverted “w” used in the first stanza, while the “y” of “my” counterpoises the “nobody” in the same vertical position within the third line of the previous tercet. The “ripped arms” of the speaker illustrate, through the doubling of the consonant “p,” the struggle the speaker endures to get the berries from the thorns, possibly by having to perform the visual action of the letter “p” twice, or by visually suggesting the location of the plump berries (the counter in “p”) in the squat brambles (the descender of “p” dipping below the x-height) while “arms” reiterate “among” (from line four), and the “a,” “r,” “n,” and “s” from line five (figure 20); “reaching” her “arms” “among” the “branches” share common lettering properties that further elucidate the speaker’s actions and unify the reader’s visual impression of the speaker’s effort to get blackberries; this playful reinterpretation of certain letters manifest and line up vertically on successive lines with “owns,” “among,” “arms,” and “cramming, finally resulting in the satisfying “mm.” Each of these words cascades downward through their shared...
and similarly looking letters, and they suggest the subtle changes occurring within the speaker herself, the auditory response from getting pricked by thorns all day: “argh.”

Finishing off the second tercet is another enjambment: “my ripped arms, thinking” (line 6). This final word mirrors the enjambment above, “I spend” (line 3). Visually, the “i” repeats from “I spend” in line three, to “high” in line four, “reaching” in line five, “ripped” and “thinking” in line six, “nothing” and “cramming” in line seven, and unexpectedly, absent in line eight, which connotes that the speaker was still a *homo sapiens* when “thinking” (line six), but is now making her transition from controlling nature to enjoying the fruits of it: “mming” (line 7) and “mm” (line 8) (figure 21).

In turn, her transition becomes evident in the next tercet:

```
of nothing, cramming
the black honey of summer
into my mouth; all day my body (lines 7-9).
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Connecting the last word of second tercet and the first line of the third tercet reads “thinking / of nothing” (lines 6-7). This participial phrase reflects the enjambment of the tercet preceding it—I spend—and acts to compound the sonnet’s main issue, specifically, that in order to be fully renewed, the speaker must not only escape social systems, but must dispel “thinking” itself. Oliver’s readers identify with this since they themselves know the thinking poetry itself requires in its explication. The stanza break between tercet two and three is used by Oliver to illustrate
when change occurs, for the speaker is not “thinking” at all now; pausing the eye for a brief moment by inserting a stanza break suspends the reader’s knowledge of what the speaker is “thinking;” then by revealing that the speaker is really “thinking / of nothing,” the poet subtly guides the reader visually through her transformation (figure 22). This parallels her visual discourse community’s desire for mental pleasure and peace.

In the third tercet, the “of nothing” visually reiterates the “nobody” from line three, “my body” from line nine, and “into my mouth” in line ten. This use of the “o” shows the reader the change the speaker is undergoing, from classifying landownership to “cramming” (line 7) food down the throat, Oliver is visually connoting both a more animalistic approach to eating than someone in a civilized society, and the pleasure received from this “mm;” this “cramming” not only reflects the “arms” from the last stanza (figure 20), it also shows that the speaker has finally found enough blackberries to consume after struggling through “the brambles” with “ripped arms.” The “mm” of “cramming” also illustrates how good the berries taste, with line eight ending with “summer,” extending the sensation with its double consonant repetition. “The black honey” of line eight represents a paradox, for honey is not black, yet this paradox reveals that the speaker might be turning into a black bear by showing that it does not know the difference between “blackberries” and “honey” because it is no longer “thinking” (line 6). The next line, the last of the third tercet, highlights the accelerating change.
the speaker is undergoing when it says, “into my mouth; all day my body” (line 9). The close of day is approaching and no longer is the speaker an “I” but now is a “body.”

And while the visually alliterative “mouth” uses the “on” from “honey” directly above it in line eight, “all day” is also repeated from line four. The stanza closes with a new, independent clause: “all day my body” then continues into the next tercet “accepts what it is” (lines 9-10). This stanza break again illustrates change in the speaker, but this time, Oliver’s punctuation reinforces how large of a change has occurred to the speaker by using a terse clause, which breaks the stanza, to close the first sentence: “into my mouth; all day my body / accepts what it is. In the dark” (lines 9-10). Not only is Oliver using the semicolon to conclude the long first half of change the speaker has undergone (lines 1-9), but she also breaks the stanza to reveal “accept”ance of the metamorphosis in line ten before the second sentence begins.

The major change into a “primitive” then happens with the beginning of the last tercet and represents the volta: “accepts what it is. In the dark / creeks that run by there is / this thick paw of my life darting among” (lines 10-12). The metamorphosis is complete; this is suggested by the turning of “day” (lines 4, 9) into “night” (line 10) and “arms” (line 6) into “paw” (line 12) (figure 23). Visually, the letters follow this conversion: the double “cc” within “accepts” implies a forward movement through its visual nature and its repetition, reinforcing the meaning of the word, and since the double “cc” has

When the blackberries hang swollen in the woods, in the brambles nobody owns, I spend

all day among the high branches, reaching
my ripped arms, thinking

of nothing, cramming
the black honey of summer
into my mouth; all day my body

accepts what it is. In the dark
creeks that run by there is
this thick paw of my life darting among

the black bells, the leaves; there is
this happy tongue.

Figure 23: Synecdochic transformation of speaker
not been used previously in the poem, it also shows the newness of the speaker’s condition; since the letter combination in line ten does not match up to the previous lines, the new letter clusters, “pts,” “hat,” and “ark” also prove that the speaker is experiencing new sensations not found in the poem before. In addition to the new lettering iterations, the speaker no longer refers to herself with the first-person pronoun, but now with the third person pronoun, “it,” also exposing her mutation; and finally, the capitulation occurs “in the dark” which ends the line, appearing to be hidden from the symbolic “light” of civilization and knowledge, potentially denoting that reason is gone, and merely instinct remains. Line eleven continues to expound on the changes the speaker is undergoing by using “creeks” which mirrors to “accepts” in that it has double letters in the middle, and it uses “c” “e” and “s” while transforming the “pts” (implying softness) to the hard “k,” (figure 24) while “that” is vertically below its reiteration of “what” followed up with “there is” which shares “the” and “is” with its first iteration above, “In the” (line 10) (figure 16). Line twelve hastens and strengthens the speaker’s conversion by using a synecdoche, “this thick paw of my life,” in place of “I” (line 3) or “it” (line 10). No longer is there even a hand reaching for the blackberries, but a hairy appendage. Moreover, the lettering embodies the speaker’s change in the use of “darting” which is directly below “in the dark” (line 10), suggesting that the harshness of the transformation has subsided into the “ting;” furthermore, “darting” connotes playfulness, possibly since the beast is now satiated.

And finally ending her American sonnet with a couplet, “the black bells, the leaves; there is / this happy tongue” (lines 13-14), Oliver culminates her poem with the total and complete change from a human being, separated from nature, into a “primitive” who, without reason and thinking, in the dark, rests comfortably in the “leaves” with a “happy tongue.” Likewise, “there is” from line eleven is repeated in line thirteen to express the completeness of the change, and
since it is at the end of the line, it also conveys the sense of acceptance the speaker has with her metamorphosis, for “there is / this happy tongue” ends the sonnet as its own independent clause, separated by the second semicolon in the work, reiterating lines nine and ten but with even more conciseness. Further illustrating her contentedness, the poem’s last line is “this happy tongue” (line 14). Also the shortest line of the poem, this third synecdoche reiterates the “paw” from line twelve and the “arms” from line six, but the lettering also takes account of the “among” at the end of the last tercet, using “o,” “n,” and “g” but in a new order. And in contrast to “ripped arms” in line six, “this happy tongue” completes the pleasurable attainment of “primitive” status for the speaker, and it presents the reverse enlightenment that is contained within her title, *American Primitive*. The sonnet’s last word, “tongue,” alludes to many things including smiling, speaking, singing and compounds the paradoxical, yet necessary journey every human takes from an individual to a unified being.

Holistically, Mary Oliver maximized her aesthetic effect by using words in “August” not only to convey the denotational and connotational meanings, but also to visually express their relationship to her poetic sentiment. She says, “In the center / of every petal / is a letter” (McNew, 1989, p. 66). Naturally, Mary Oliver combines the organic beauty of flowers with the alphabet. In essence, Mary Oliver exploits the visual affinity and inherent interchangeability of letters to help deepen the reader’s understanding and appreciation of her work, fostering a more profound sense of the interactions between her and nature and concurrently mitigating the false divide separating them. The illusory, fabricated delineation breaking language from its iconicity is to be dispelled in Mary Oliver’s work. In assuming the poet carefully chooses her words, Mary Oliver’s use of letters to enhance the meaning, quality, and depth of her poetry is evident. In “August,” the speaker transforms from an individual concerned with societal details into a
holistic part of a greater whole, “a natural vastness that subsumes her human individuality” (p. 66). Together deriving from the visual suggestions expressed within the “center / of every petal,” Oliver’s natural iconicity helps not only articulate the explication of the poem but also epitomizes American Primitive’s entire motif, namely that we are the natural world.

**Conclusion**

Text functions iconically in specific situations where the visuality of text becomes known to the reader. I have explored how the history of our alphabet originates in natural, visual forms; then I looked at two instances where text behaves iconically on its visual discourse community. In the first instance, I detailed how a large visual discourse community transforms into visual discourse consumers when viewing an advertisement that uses household pets as moving words denoting biorhythmic patterns. Similarly, I have shown how poetry uses iconic representations of letters to bolster its semantic meaning, and in the case of Oliver’s poetry, to infer natural shapes and patterns that visually express the speaker’s transformation. Overall, I have sought to show that text is iconic and not just symbolic as a visual sign system.

Future research could find instances of text behaving iconically in other advertisements or by different poets. Moreover, research could potentially establish iconic text as a convention or a genre to specific visual discourse communities, exploring how they anticipate its appearance, construct its meaning, and perpetuate its style. This type of analysis could consider using quantitative measures and eye-tracking to ascertain audience impressions and reactions. Moreover, by studying the professional design of typography, the essential reasons for constructing letterforms whose anatomies reveal the designers’ own expectations and cultural values ascribed to the features of a specific typeface, or font family, the interpretation of typeface
features could benefit from understanding the rhetorical intent of a designer, and by extension, the visual discourse community for which it was created.

Works Cited


CHAPTER 4

CASE STUDY OF FOUR MILB HOME HAT LOGOS:
A SOCIAL SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS

“You can observe alot by just watching.”
Yogi Berra

Introduction

Athletic spectatorship is at least as old as the Olympian games of ancient Greece. Just as now, athletes performed on behalf of their geographic area, or representative city-state. In professional sports today, competitors most likely do not come from the city for which they play, but the figurative, epideitic appeal of their cultural value functions to strengthen the bond fans feel for, and hopefully with, the athletes representing their team. Yet in some sports like minor league baseball (MiLB), the players enter and leave so often that multiple means of attracting fans are necessary to sustain a community’s involvement. On top of having little control over its players, minor league baseball also has to contend with other factors such as stadium concerns, fan recognition, and shifting consumer desires (increase in football viewership, technological means of delivery) in order to stay a money-making venture. To help make minor league baseball teams financially viable, owners turn to marketing. Marketing is the study, identification, and strategic use of consumer appeals to brand the product or experience onto the buyer.

Sports marketing seeks to brand spectators by creating social connections between the team and the fans, persuading them to positively identify with the organization. Research investigating how social identity forms for a sports team has looked into branding baseball and religion (Butterworth, 2011); studying local history as a branding strategy for MiLB (Lachowetz
et al., 2009); associating pre- and in-game activities with successful community relations of Japanese baseball (Yoshida et al., 2015); correlating successful brand association with fan internalization (Biscaia et al., 2009, p. 30); researching how social causes aid team identification (Lee & Ferreira, 2011); and, comparing how brand extension affects parent corporations in Korean baseball (Walsh et al., 2015). Continuing these studies into how sports branding and social identity interweave, this chapter visually examines four minor league baseball hats as a case study using social semiotic analytical techniques to ascertain how they function both to bring their community together and conversely to differentiate themselves from other teams.

I will analyze four twenty-first century American baseball teams’ use of colors and logos on home-field hats in order to show how the branding of a community’s sports team operates through symbolic affinity to localized identities. Since the professional design of sports teams’ logos reveals how the creators envisioned their target audiences’ values, beliefs, and identities, this chapter looks at these visual artifacts from a rhetorical standpoint, ultimately unpacking how these symbols reflect perceived culturally endeared qualities. In so doing, this analysis will illustrate how professional design, marketing, and sport intersect at visual rhetoric.

I first recount a brief history of baseball and its ties to the national character, focusing on how it allows for vicarious fulfillment of the American dream. Then I describe the methodological framework of social semiotic analysis as put forth by Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006); next, I analyze the four MiLB home field baseball hats based upon the three metafunctions of social semiotics with associative design elements, rhetorical strategies, and visual grammar. Finally, I close with future studies and limitations.
Background

Since its founding, the United States has struggled with inequality. This inequality permeates the fabric of the national character, and though the Declaration of Independence states otherwise, Americans live unequal existences. Baseball, America’s pastime, likewise grapples with inequality, seeking to mitigate the sometimes blatant divide between those who have and those who have not, except that in minor league baseball the inequality is not financially nor even racially discriminatory, its divide exists between those who possess a natural, physical talent for the game and those who do not. Still, minor league baseball offers fans respite, and a chance to root for those whose talents in playing baseball supersede their own. Baseball’s capacity to transcend inequality derives from its fans vicariously associating themselves with the talent of their team’s players, and the perceived equality minor league baseball gives fans has reflected America’s ever-changing cultural landscape since its inception.

From trying to rid itself of discriminatory practices to the corporatization of its business model, baseball and modern America grew up together. Their common histories share a post-Civil War nation’s search for a truly national identity, “the need to comprehend what constituted wholly American values beyond just regional, economic, and social distinctions, the remnants of a fractious” past (Rosenberg, 2012, p. 1). Designating baseball as part of the national identity was endorsed by Walt Whitman in 1888 when he said, “base-ball is our game: the American game: I connect it with our national character” (Whitman, 2002, p. 37). Gaining a national identity, though, began locally.

Many of the first baseball teams formed around social and geographic identities. Goldstein (1989) describes early baseball teams as “centered in particular trades, workplaces, or neighborhoods” (p. 3). These localized teams developed into competitive groups who vied for
victory over their neighbors. In order to win, these teams had to have the best talent, and this mirrored the Gilded Age’s desire to achieve the American Dream. “The American Dream promotes equal opportunity based on work ethic and dedication; however, this dream is realistically limited by an individual’s inherent level of skill or intelligence and their family’s race, wealth, and reputation” (p. 4). The rise of the professionalization of baseball, i.e. the increase of specialization of players, also paralleled America’s Gilded Age of rising industrialization and corporatization. The identity of baseball changed as the country changed, yet minor league baseball held on to its local roots. These local roots allow for the imagined equality of fans in cheering for their hometown team.

Minor league baseball teams are linked with their communities: “a minor league franchise is part of a city or town’s civic identity. Like the game of baseball itself, it represents continuity between the past and present. It offers wholesome family entertainment, a modest boost to the local economy, and an intimacy between fan and player that long ago disappeared from the majors” (Lamb, 2002, p. 156). Unlike the major leagues, minor league baseball is not restricted to large metropolitan areas. In fact, minor league baseball’s role as a development organization requires many teams. Most of these teams reside in American cities of medium size (around 100K), where citizens do not have to travel far to see a professional baseball game. In order to garner support for these local teams, owners and advertisers seek to instill a sense of identity-ownership in the local fans by designating emblems, or logos, that the audience would recognize.

Marketing researchers call this “brand awareness” (Dwyer et al., 2011, p. 57). They suggest that when creating and designing a brand, professionals should research local history and traditions, integrate “target consumer identification elements, the unique attributes of the
community/local market and the organization’s overall objectives” (p. 57). In sum, the symbolic meanings should reflect “an aspect of the consumer’s social identity” (p. 57). The visual nature of these symbols, then, should be unique, identifiable, and colorful in order to brand the hometown fan with a civic pride of entertaining equality; such equality derives from the admiration the fans give to the players, and by extension the team. And even though the players most likely are from other areas of the country or the world, the fact that they don the emblems, colors, and logos of the hometown team imply that they figuratively belong to that community. Considering that over 37 million fans attended a minor league baseball game last year (Knight, 2018, para. 15), it seems Americans carry the civic pride of their minor league baseball team.

**Methodology**

All visual communication is coded, and these codes explicitly express cultural and societal perspectives. Yet these codes are not always prescriptive analogs to gain expertise in, or in some cases, even follow, since it cannot be assumed that all communicative parties have “mastered the code” enough “to connect the same meaning [signified] to the same sounds or graphic patterns [signifier]” (Jewitt & Oyama, 2004, p. 134). So instead of referring to codes, social semiotics appropriately deems visual communication as containing resources that can accommodate, lend, and fuel multiple meanings (signs). The social semiotic method assumes visual elements garner meaning from these resources, and most importantly, that these resources are fully motivated. Where a fully motivated resource involves both producer and viewer striving for “communication [that] requires participants make their message maximally understandable in a particular context” (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 13). These messages will, hopefully, “require a minimal effort of interpretation” (p. 13) from each other. The fully motivated
resources constituting signs inherently exist within embedded, symbolic systems. Visual rhetoric concerns itself with how these signs operate through distinct artifacts within nomoi.

The social semiotic approach put forth by Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) posits exploring images from “the structured social, political and communicative dimensions” (p. 20). To do so, this analysis method supposes three metafunctions of visual language: the ideational, the interpersonal, and the compositional. Where the ideational (representational) metafunction describes narrative features such as vectors (p. 71) and actors. These actors and vectors may “fuse to different degrees” (p. 59). Actors appear to be involved (transactional) or disengaged (non-transactional) (p. 63) and indicate directionality (p. 59) and a “goal” (p. 64). “The goal is the participant at whom or which the vector is directed, hence it is also the participant to whom or which the action is done, or at whom or which the action is aimed” (64). Through the visual, syntactic patterns and symbolic attributes of the representational elements, a narrative can be gleaned.

The second metafunction, the interpersonal, accounts for the resources involved in the relation between viewer and the producer of the artifact. When producer and viewer are absent from one another, Kress and Van Leeuwen (2006) claim that understanding the social interactions and relations between the producer and viewer rests “on competencies shared by producers and viewers” of the visually encoded communication (p. 115). Because the producer and viewer are not face-to-face, the social relation created by the image is represented and not enacted. So the image can take on a figurative value rather than being interpreted as realistic. Moreover, how the image or actor “contacts” the viewer, its offer (p. 119) or demand (p. 118) and its distance from the viewer (p. 125) all help interrogate the viewer-producer relation.
This metafunction also accounts for the ethos, or credibility, of the image as seen from a social perspective. Here, the term “modality” is used to define the “truth value” of the visual statement from the viewpoint of a particular visual group’s values and beliefs (p. 155). Moreover, modality is interpersonal because it “produces shared truths” aligning viewers with some propositions and distancing viewers from others (p. 156). These “shared truths” also manifest as color, where color can encode a naturalistic or artificial modality. Overall, representations of truth and value judgments inform the interpersonal metafunction and allow for fertile analyses of audience receptions and producers’ intent.

Finally, the compositional metafunction is composed of information value, framing, and salience. Information value refers to the “placement of elements endow[ing] them with the specific informational values attached to the various zones of the image: left and right, top and bottom, centre and margin” (p. 177). The framing aspect describes “the presence or absence of framing devices [that] disconnect or connect elements of the image, signifying that they belong or do not belong together in some sense” (p. 177); for instance, the absence of a frame “stresses group identity” (p. 203); while “salience” involves a complex of factors including size, sharpness, tonal contrast, color contrasts, placement in the visual field, perspective, and other cultural aspects such as “potent cultural symbols” (p. 202). In sum, the compositional metafunction collects representations and interactions to form a complete communicative event.

**Analysis**

Minor league baseball consists of “farm” teams that hierarchically represent major league teams. These minor league teams are composed of players who want to make it to the big league baseball clubs (The Show). Each team has a contract with one of the 30 major league teams to
help “grow” players; but collectively, they have divisions and leagues of their own where they compete for regional and national titles. When players are judged to be “ready” for the higher minor leagues, they move up the organization till they reach the major leagues. I will analyze these four logos, detailing out a comparison and contrast between them within each metafunction.

**Ideational Metafunction**

The ideational metafunction of social semiotics speaks to the visual narrative being formed by vectors, actors, and goals. In each hat, vector and actor combine to form a goal. As such, actor and vector work synergistically to convey the team narrative. These team narratives converge with the larger goal of minor league baseball as a whole, namely twofold: win on the field and in ticket sales.

All four hats have a single image cast in the middle of a baseball cap, meant to be worn with the image facing forward above the face of the wearer. Players of these teams wear these caps when they play at their home stadium, signifying a direct connection with the city for which they play. Each logo carries a distinct narrative identity through its vectors and actors. Beginning with the Las Vegas 51s (figures 1 and 2), which coincidentally just changed their name last month to the Aviators, the logo exhibits the gestalt law of multistability. This law illustrates how, perceptually, many images simultaneously exist, but only one can be seen at a time. The 51s’ hat logo of an alien (actor) also doubles as a baseball (vector), and triples as a baseball park (vector), with its curved outfield fence and V-angled bottom following the facial features of the alien
actor. The actor’s skull resembles an elongated baseball, using the curvilinear vector of baseball stitches across the top of the brow. This curved vector is reinforced by the other elliptical vectors of the mouth, eyes, and head itself. Furthermore, with the curved shadow casting over the actor’s left eye and being shaded by the actor’s right eye, the gestalt law of continuation echoes the curvilinear vector of a baseball pervading this logo. Also reinforcing the arcing vectors are the dark eyes, where the elliptical whites of the eyes are symmetrically placed in the top back of the eyes, at the same time illustrating the light facing the actor is from above (outer space), resembling an incoming baseball, and representing first and third base of a baseball field.

Contrasting the curvilinear vectors of the actor’s mouth, head, and eyes, triangles form the actor’s nostrils. The symmetrical nostrils help counter the curved facial features and also help focus and move the eye from the eyes to the nose to the horizontally elliptical mouth. The nostrils also are seen as home plate, with its rectilinear design. Below the nostrils is an horizontally elongated mouth. This mouth again uses the law of multistability to double as a baseball bat that has hit the stitched baseball as shown by the grey-shaded area of the face toward the viewer.

Like the 51s, the El Paso Chihuahuas’ logo (figures 3 and 4) possesses an actor and vectors. The name of the team doubles as both a breed of dog and the Mexican state directly
south of the United States border at El Paso. Looking at vectors of the actor, the lines are straight and spiked, unlike the curved vectors of the Las Vegas 51s’ logo. The straight-lined vectors in this actor appear in the ears as both scars and the shadows cast by the earlobe, the teeth, scar over the left eye, on the brow, by the pointy ears, and most prominently, in the spiked collar. These lines end in sharp points, narrating the actor as on edge. By breaking the gestalt law of symmetry, the sharp lines, especially the scars on the left eye and right ear, show this actor has had many battles, and is unbalanced. The darkness of the vectors also contrasts the black beneath the eyes, doubling as the dark chalk baseball players use to keep the sun out of their eyes. The whites of the actor’s eyes show the light is coming from its top left with the circles of white light mimicking baseballs. Finally, contrasting the sharp vectors is the white circle at the bottom of the actor’s image. The actor’s round dog tag reveals “EP” written in an old Western font. This signifies that the actor “belongs” to El Paso, whose circular contrast suggests that the ballplayers and the city have a distinct, master-pet, relationship.

Likewise in the Midwest league, the Cedar Rapid Kernels’ home field hat (figures 5 and 6) also exhibits vectors and an actor. The vectors forming the logo of the Kernels hat are smoother than those of the El Paso Chihuahuas, appearing more natural with wispy curls and wavy lines. Here, these vectors form ripening corn. The actor is the corn cob itself, composed on its exterior by straight lines resembling a baseball bat, and
internally with curved lines that form a face at the top of the cob and that double as both the face’s chin and the trademark from the bat in the middle. Again, this logo use the gestalt law of multistability to show more than one image at the same time. Here the logo is a baseball bat, an actor, and a corn cob. The actor wears a red hat that also doubles as the reddening tassels of the ripe corn cob blowing in the Midwest wind. As an actor, the bat looks like a farmer, with his distinctive red hat, metaphorically harkening back to the red barns of the Midwest farmer. This red hat protrudes to the actor’s left, curled to block the early and late sun, as both baseball player and farmer have to contend with being outside all day in the summer. The red hat is echoed by the curved lower portion of the actor, outlining the grip of a baseball bat. The lush, wispy green surrounding the actor both cloaks him and resembles the letter K.

Finally, the Omaha Storm Chasers’ home field hat (figures 7 and 8) has vectors similar to all three other hats. It has a sharp dark line at the bottom, pointing down, representing a cyclone touching the ground. It also has curvilinear vectors like Las Vegas’s hat, but this time in a much more chaotic manner. The logo also resembles the flowing, natural vectors of Cedar Rapids’ Kernels logo. And like all the other logos, this one uses the law of multistability to make itself more than one image. The actor is a tornado, an anthropomorphic
individual with arms, and a hit baseball. The diagonal, brown vector of the logo reiterates the bat from the Kernels, but this time is caught in between the upraised side of the mouth and the left eye of the actor, mirroring the action of hitting a baseball. The red stitches above and below the bat metaphorically show the baseball getting hit so hard that it no longer is circular; this in turn causes the bat to crack as illustrated by the sharp black streak on the head of the bat. This bat head doubles as the nose of the anthropomorphic actor. The tornado actor here is reinforced by the zigzag vectors in its left eye and in the angled arms, signifying the lightning coming from inside the actor and visible on the outside of the twister. The sharp vectors are countered by the curled vectors at the top of the image, suggesting the “O” of Omaha. However, these curls are not connected together, and so end in sharp horns.

While it is clear that these logos were professionally designed, it is equally clear that they share common goals as images, namely to increase attendance at home games and to win games. The collective narrative of these logos argues for an on-field character of gritty toughness that fights to win for the hometown fans, reinforcing localized community identity. In this next section, I will show how the interactions of producer and viewer spotlight cultural conventions of baseball fans, American citizens, and financially invested parties.

Interpersonal Metafunction

Just as in the ideational, the interpersonal metafunction of interpreting these four hats’ helps reveal communication strategies. Namely, the messages that these hats intend are made to
be maximally understandable to the viewers’ own socially accepted meanings. The viewers’
context, in this study, concerns minor league baseball team hats’ colors and logos, which should
clearly be identifiable to their hometown fans. Looking at these four hats with the interpersonal
metafunction, it is evident that all of them gaze at the viewer (demand), are at a close shot
(intimate/personal), and rest at an eye level angle (equality). Furthermore, the combination of
these qualities makes these hat credible to their fans (modality) because they align with audience
expectations and conventions when viewing a baseball game. The logos themselves visually
contain local truth-values derived from four main categories: mythic, industrial/commercial,
geographic/natural, and social. The logos that visually bedeck the team when playing at home
illustrate how the producers seek to persuade viewers to watch the game. First, I will look at the
professional research that goes into making these hats persuasive to a specific, well-known
audience, then I will breakdown how the hats’ logos connect with the hometown fans to produce
truth-value.

The role of these logos is brand recognition from an advertising perspective. In other
words, the team owners want the fans to have the most fun and entertaining experience while
watching America’s pastime. In this sense, the figurative symbols of these hats act as advertising
icons. The advertising icon, Hope (2003) postulates, “is the basic strategy of pictorial
advertising. [It is the] appropriation of familiar symbolic icons” to aid consumerism strategies (p.
162). These symbolic icons are chosen after researching the local customs, beliefs, and
traditions. Plan B Branding, a company that has redesigned many minor league baseball logos,
discussed their method when being interviewed:

we spend so much time getting to know the clubs we're working with. It's a disservice to
the fans to dream up the fan experience without having any knowledge of what that
When we get hired by a club, the first role that we assume is that of investigators. We immerse ourselves in the culture, visiting mom-and-pop restaurants and local hangouts, talking to everyone we possibly can to figure out where they're coming from. We need to be able to effectively tell the team's story in a way everyone can relate to. (Hill, 2007, para. 14 and 15)

Like Plan B Branding, marketing strategies revolve around getting the fans to come out to the ballgame. In 2009, the Savannah Sand Gnats initiated a new marketing strategy of “building a strong local identity” (Lachowetz et al., 2009, p. 226). This method of appealing to the fans was directed at minor league baseball’s target market: “families with parents between the ages of 20-40 with one or two young children. We package ourselves as family entertainment at an affordable price. People in that age bracket seem to be the ones who come out, spend money and enjoy it more” (p. 225). Clearly, marketers know their audience and want to appeal to them through as many channels as possible, including visual means.

These visual means include the logo the teams use. Ideally, minor league baseball hats exhibit qualities derived from the hometown in which they play. These contextual “visual pointers” (Kress & Van Leeuwen, 2006, p. 107) seek to identify with the hometown audience through four categories:

1. Mythic (Area 51s)
2. Industrial/Commercial (corn)
3. Geographical/Natural (Chihuahua dogs, the Mexican state, cyclonic storms)
4. Social (storm chasers, dogs, tourism)

Las Vegas’s minor league baseball team is named the 51s because Area 51 is located near Rachel, Nevada, which is around 80 miles north of Las Vegas. This area is infamous for
supposedly having a UFO testing facility complete with alien bodies. As of this writing, this team has changed its name to the Aviators, which would put it in the second category, but other minor league baseball teams, such as the Dayton Dragons still reside in the mythic category.

The local symbolism of the minor league teams continues with what the towns produce (or used to produce). Cedar Rapids Kernels is an example of this. This symbol is of an open corn stalk, with the corn cob actually anthropomorphized as both a man and a bat. Since Iowa grows a large amount of corn, this symbol would be easily recognizable to its city’s inhabitants. The natural and social aspects of these logos are also familiar to their local area. The Mexican state of Chihuahua is across the border from El Paso, Texas, while Omaha, and the Midwest in general is famed for its tornados. Finally, minor league baseball teams resemble the social aspects of their city or region. These include chasing storms in the Midwest, which expresses courage, and owning a pet. While owning a pet is hardly dangerous, the Chihuahua dog juxtaposes its small size with its ferocity. Each of these modalities of local truth help embed positive associations between producer and viewer. Yet, categorizing localized themes to be employed in naming a minor league baseball team is just one step marketers use to brand fans.

Like all humans, baseball fans are adept at reading facial features. All of the logos gaze at the viewer, demanding their attention, by having a close-up shot at eye-level to the viewer. Their expressions each carry attributes suitable for a sports game, such as fighting in the case of the Chihuahuas and Storm Chasers, grit in the Kernels, and quiet endurance in the 51s. Moreover, these qualities show up in the facial features of each logo. For example all four logos’ eyes convey a sense of gritty determination, audacity, slyness, and in the case of the 51s, extra-planetary gaze. In the case of the El Paso Chihuahuas, the eyes are red with passion or anger. Furthermore, with the Cedar Rapids Kernels, the eyes are almost shut, demonstrating a
confidence but also as a glare to the opponent. Finally, the Omaha Storm Chasers’ eyes snarl with fury while inside the left pupil is a lightning bolt displaying the power and energy inside. Moreover, the mouth region of the logos augments the eyes’ expressions in El Paso’s logo of feral animosity, in the smug assurance of the Cedar Rapids Kernels, and in the perturbed bat-mouth of the Omaha Storm Chasers. The expressive logos of these hats denote not only how the team will play on the field, they also invite the fans to participate in these expressions, as baseball is a game where the fan can interact with the players and even the game itself.

Lastly, color has a large impact on the interpersonal metafunction. Since color imbues teams with certain cultural traits, it is an important visual contributor to the producer-viewer relationship. This can most easily be gleaned from the gestalt ground colors surrounding the images, and even the brim colors. The basic gestalt of figure-ground occurs in these hats. As described by Rudolf Arnheim (1969) in *Art and Visual Perception*, figure-ground serves to explain the two-dimensionality of an image in terms of space where “one of them has to be boundless; the directly visible part of the other has to be smaller and confined” (p. 228). The “ground” acting as the backdrop of these hats has a single solid color per hat, which is then figured with a unique graphical image well contrasted from its background.

The hat colors resemble the color conventions of the major league team to which they have been or were associated, creating a common visual identity. The Cedar Rapids Kernels’ background color is the same as the Minnesota Twins, for whom they are an A-level farm team. The color is “Twins Navy” (http://teamcolorcodes.com/minnesota-twins-color-codes/). This color matches the background of the Kernels hat making a figurative connection between the two teams. Likewise, the Omaha Storm Chasers’ background is a royal blue, matching their earlier parent organization, the Kansas City Royals colors. The El Paso Chihuahua’s ground color
resembles the San Diego Padres’ brown color, while the Las Vegas 51s’ main color mirrors its parent major league organization of the Los Angeles Dodgers. The admixture of the unique logos’ interpersonal features with the underlying parent team’s affiliation helps firmly establish both a city’s unique baseball identity and its larger family.

**Compositional Metafunction**

The compositional metafunction expresses informational value, framing, and salience. The informational value derives from the visual placement of elements within the expected visual path of the viewer. This aspect of the compositional metafunction presupposes that certain cultures “read” a certain way, and in a certain direction. So, value can be placed on those elements in areas of visual cultural convention. Framing “indicates that elements of a composition can either be given separate identities, or represented as belonging together. [This] can be achieved through framelines (which may be thick or thin), through empty space between elements, but also through contrasts of color or form, or any other visual feature [that] can be visually signified” (Jewitt & Oyama, 2004, p. 149–150). While salience is defined as “anything that can make a given element stand out from its surroundings” (p. 150). This includes “placement in the foreground or background, relative size, contrasts in tonal color, differences in sharpness, etc.” (p. 177). All of these elements are present in the four baseball hats. The most obvious way is through the figure-ground each exhibits with reference to its parent organization, as listed above in the interpersonal metafunction. However, elements within the logos also help compose the overall communicative message both individually and as a group.

The visual placement of elements within the El Paso logo (figures 3 and 4) illustrate how the vertical placement of the letters “EP” express more than just a dog tag. The center bottom
placement, framed by a white circle, signifies town ownership just as a dog tag would tell how to contact its owner if it runs away. Especially given that the El Paso mascot is named Chico, not EP, means the dog tag, at the center bottom of the logo, holds a foundational meaning.

The center bottom of the Omaha Storm Chasers’ cap has a spike at this location. But unlike the El Paso dog tag, the placement of the sharp angle at the bottom center does not signify a foundation, it implies a quickness and unpredictability. Juxtaposed with the right-angled, flexed limbs on either side, the whirling forehead and the piercing bottom form a vertical alignment of conical shape creating a balance of fury and dexterity.

The informational value of the Cedar Rapid’s Kernels also possesses a strong vertical alignment, but this time it is rigidly straight and the top middle part of the logo displays the most prominent feature: the face. Here, the green leaves of corn in the right half of the logo metaphorically form the letter “K,” standing in for the name of the team, Kernels. The splitting into two halves of the logo suggests equal importance for each informational pole: baseball and corn.

The framing of certain elements within a visual composition highlight their meaning or use. In the case of these four caps, all of them have a bolded line surrounding their entire image, separating it from the ground color saturating the rest of the cap. These bolded fences at once make the logo, and therefore the team, unique among the solid background color of the parent organization, as they, conversely, also group each logo together as representing a league composed of teams competing in the same sport. These bolded lines further serve as a boundary layer between the team and all the other baseball teams due to the fact that the logo is on an article of clothing that all baseball players—at all levels—must wear during a game.
Further strengthening the ties and differences between the logos is the salience of the colors and shapes making up the images. The red, yellow, and green contrast in color of the Cedar Rapid’s Kernels drawn in naturalistic, recognizable forms attracts the attention of the viewer as does the ovum nature of the Las Vegas 51s’ logo. The blue, silver, black, and white of this logo harkens back to Nevada’s motto: The Silver State. The salience of the oval silver stands out among audiences for its resemblance as a silver coin. However, the relative sharpness of the eyes, and their exceedingly large size compared to the entire image, help to take the luster off the rest of the logo. In El Paso’s logo, the red outline signifying the separation between the ball club and the parent organization reinforces the familiar snarl and growl of a Chihuahua dog, typifying why the dog deserves a spiked lease. Lastly, the splitting of the baseball tornado with a brown bat in Omaha Storm Chaser’s logo, with its diagonal slant, likewise cuts the logo in two, implying bat speed and offensive prowess. The contrast of shapes between the conical twister and the longitudinal bat also suggest that the team is exciting.

**Conclusion**

In this essay, I have shown how four minor league baseball caps’ logos store a great deal of information that most likely goes unnoticed by the audience cheering for their team. Using the social semiotic analytical method allowed me to peer inside the visual persuasive qualities that professional design creates and that marketing deploys to increase audience connectivity to the product. And while audiences can come to the ballpark and enjoy a local baseball game solely for entertainment, the work that goes into crafting an identity to bind fans together is a large-scale undertaking, involving many professions, including business, marketing, design, and scholarship to make the game so lovable to so many fans.
Given that these four minor league teams’ logos strive to collate localized community meaning, their efforts also reveal the thoughts, feelings, ethics and cultural mores a city perceivedly values. This line of thinking accords with the history of the game as it began within small groups of people that wanted to get some exercise and compete against their peers. It follows that the nature of baseball is, and always will be, local. The figurative adornment we make players wear when playing for our team underscores an America that rewards physical endeavors by, most simply, watching them play a game. According to Ken Burns (1994), baseball is a throwback to a pre-Industrial age, pastoral game, played on a field, where all that matters is getting home. Like America itself, baseball rewards talent and hard work. It promotes players by merit, reflecting the work ethic and dreams of its fans. It involves the fans like no other sports game does, in that audiences can bring gloves, catch foul balls and home runs, and keep them. The intimate nature of localized, professional baseball has many appeals on top of fan interaction with the soon-to-be-famous players. The parents can let their kids play safely with other kids or teach them the game as it is played in front of them. They can take part in the many in-game activities that permeate the minor league game, or they could just sit back, have a beer, and relax outside next to a field. Designers realize that baseball is tied to the national fabric, and by having local teams, the tradition of going to a game on a hot summer night remains possible for a large swath of the American population.

The great American pastime of baseball is our original entertainment; it holds some of our earliest memories as children and brings back nostalgic memories of bygone eras; the owners, advertisers, and designers want to continue this tradition by creating memorable, unique, and local identities that fans can come together to cheer on. These four hats support this concept. Each hat illustrates that baseball is still the American pastime, where families can have
wholesome entertainment. In the same vein, the American nomoi of self-independence requires that Americans fight for what they think is right, but that also we can come together to help each other out in times of need. These hats convey this sense through their scrappy but semi-comic appearance. The ethos of winning, to Americans, is important, but these baseball logos also say that it is more important to have fun while trying to win, and in this cultural insight, Americans seek to win with sportsmanship.

Finally, given the steady attendance of minor league baseball games for over fifty years, American proudly identify with minor league baseball, sharing commonalities of meaning across racial, ethnic, social, and economic lines. A recent study by Walsh et al. (2018) that studied why teams rebrand revealed that there were five common themes: nostalgia, regional pride, modernization, fan feedback, and rebirth. Though these five themes do not directly address minor league baseball, it is evident that the business of rebranding always involves the fans. The regional pride theme, as suggested by Walsh (2018), argues for connecting the area with appropriate “names, colors, and/or logo designs” in order to display their regional pride. I have suggested four main categories that could fall into Walsh’s (2018) theme of regional pride: mythic, commercial/industrial, geographic/natural, and social. The connection Americans have with home is complex and deeply felt. As human beings, we share a common desire to be around our family, living and deceased. Part of that desire is a sense of belonging to a place and a people. Minor league baseball fans are proud of where they grew up and where they raise their children. They are proud of their history and myths, their industrial production, the natural world, and most importantly, the community in which they reside.
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CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

“To see is always to see from somewhere, is it not?”
Maurice Merleau-Ponty

Visuality does not exist outside of someone sensing it. It follows that visual experience always bears the mark of time, place, and person. With our proclivity to congregate and our need to communicate, visual expressions arose within groups that shared familiar customs, geographic areas, and worldviews. These expressions helped demarcate one group from another. Yet the complexities of group interactions, methods of expression, and perception itself that generate such unique ways of communicating also prove challenging to understand for anyone outside the group. Addressing these complexities is one of the major goals of visual rhetoric. By so doing, visual rhetoric centralizes communication from a humanistic point of view. Since one of the intrinsic precepts of rhetoric is empathy (Kostelnick, 2019, p. 4), researching how humans communicate contributes to the scholarship broadly detailing the rhetorical appeals and persuasive techniques used by distinctive groups and, specifically, to the growing body of work describing how visual discourse communities create, sustain, and perpetuate their particular identity. By making audience analysis paramount, visual rhetoric approaches communicative events differently than media studies, art history, and aesthetics. As such, visual rhetoric is a unique domain of inquiry.

In this dissertation, I have shown how visual culture, ethnohistory, cultural studies, semiotics, writing, marketing, poetry, sports advertising, Native American studies, design, and business can profit by integrating visual rhetoric. Because rhetoric as a discipline focuses on an audiences’ communicative framework of appeals and persuasion and not on actual content, it
requires source material. I have illustrated how many disciplines’ visual content can help build a sturdy foundation of inquiry to further both the humanistic goal of rhetoric and discipline-specific aims when the social and cultural beliefs and values of audiences become the principle subject of study. In like manner, scholars can interrogate how visuals help construct social identity while simultaneously identifying how and why visual discourse communities construct visuals.

In this dissertation, I have investigated three visual artifacts using this humanistic approach in order to glean the similarities of visual identity creation by detailing how each group differs in generating and sustaining their exclusive character. Although the Sioux winter count and the minor league baseball hats share no discursive text, more importantly, they differ in that one organically developed to historically define a people while the hat logos artificially elicit and engender a fabricated group identity. In direct contrast, chapter three explores how text itself sometimes behaves as an image to enact its social function of banding together like-minded people. All of these artifacts share an inherent visuality that is localized within a specific visual discourse community, and so must be interpreted to ascertain their individual influence promoting a collective identity.

To frame these visual artifacts socially, an interpretative lens is required. These lenses help parse the visual features then reconnect them with their suggested social meaning. The three methodologies I chose highlight particular, salient aspects of study. In the case of Lone Dog’s winter count, the iconological methodology was picked because of its emphasis on comprehending historicity. In chapter three, Piercian semiotics best fit analyzing text due to its tripartite explication of a signifier’s relationship to the signified: icon, index, and symbol.
Finally, chapter four detailed four minor league baseball hat logos using the social semiotic perspective since the images were professionally designed to visually enculturate fans.

We must put to words what is composed of image. In order to do so, we must assume that, for one, words carry the full meaning and expression of what we are viewing; and conversely, two, we must admit, as Heraclitus, that we cannot experience the same river twice. Both of these warnings serve to remind us to be cautious about what we ascribe to visual rhetoric, with its emphasis on audience impressions and conventions, for if we researchers are not the intended audiences, we must interpret the communicative event as cultural outsiders. Consequently, the charge of conjecture could be made if we stray away from evidentiary claims. The circumspection we gain as researchers from heeding these warnings will help make our findings credible to a skeptical, google-armed readership, where, it appears, anyone can accurately “read” an image. Nevertheless, at present visual rhetoric is budding.

Works Cited
