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Seriously Playful and Playfully Serious: The Helpfulness of Humorous Parody

Michael Richard Lucas
Clemson University

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SERIOUSLY PLAYFUL AND PLAYFULLY SERIOUS: 
THE HELPFULNESS OF HUMOROUS PARODY

A Dissertation
Presented to
the Graduate School of
Clemson University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy
Rhetorics, Communication, and Information Design

by
Michael Richard Lucas
May 2014

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ABSTRACT

In the following work I create and define the parameters for a specific form of humorous parody. I highlight specific problematic narrative figures that circulate the public sphere and reinforce our serious narrative expectations. However, I demonstrate how critical public pedagogies are able to disrupt these problematic narrative expectations. Humorous parodic narratives are especially equipped to help us in such situations when they work as a critical public/classroom pedagogy, a form of critical rhetoric, and a form of mass narrative therapy. These findings are supported by a rhetorical analysis of these parodic narratives, as I expand upon their ability to provide a practical model for how to create/analyze narratives both inside/outside of the classroom. Because these parodic narratives serve as an impetus for creative inquiry, I focus specifically on the importance of humor and play within the classroom and within practices of self-narration.
DEDICATION

To my selves—for writing this. And everyone else. But not you. I don’t trust you yet.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank my family and friends for their love and support in this and all my endeavors. I feel very fortunate to have such lovely people in my life. I would like to say something funny and clever here, but I am fresh out of witticisms at the moment, and seeing as how my Dear Reader has so many tiresome pages left to read, I am sure you already regret having landed on this page, as most acknowledgement pages are a complete waste of time and are highly unoriginal; e.g., scholars thank their significant others, pets, favorite prostitutes, insignificant others, famous dead people they have never met but want to align themselves with, and (the absolute worse) their family and friends!!!

But look at me, just writing away when you want to get on with the main course! How rude. My sincerest apologies, Dear Reader; however, while I am at it, I might as well expand on the individuals/strange series of successes and failures that have led/driven me to write this dissertation.

I was born on February 17th, 1986 in Medford Oregon. From humble beginnings to even humbler endings, [ . . . ]

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1 Editor’s Note: I, Martin Tagamas, have redacted the following 300–odd pages that, while humorous and entertaining, do not appear to relate to the deceased scholar’s following body of scholarship.
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CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION: CAVEATS, CONFESIONS, CONFUSIONS, CONJECTORS, EXCUSES, EXIGENCIES, ETC.

I would have preferred to write a more thoroughly parodic dissertation, but I am aware of my academic surroundings, and I therefore must appear to respect that genre (to get a job, to impress others, to pay off my graduate student loans, etc.). Instead of writing either a purely academic dissertation or a purely parodic/entertaining dissertation, I will do both and. This is in keeping with the golden [un]rule of group comedy: saying “yes, and…” In doing both and I hope to provide you, my Dear Reader, with an interesting opportunity to say “yes, and…”

In short: it isn’t lost on me that throughout the following chapters I take a serious, straightforward tone; nevertheless, I want to ask my Dear Reader to forgive this performative contradiction in light of the fact that my final chapter will be a parodic short film that embodies the theories and speculations found in the chapters that precede it. This is perhaps a very weak excuse, but it is an excuse nonetheless. For those of us who agree that this is a weak excuse, this dissertation might still be able to retain our interest by the way in which I attempt to navigate such difficulties—more so than the result of such navigations themselves. If nothing else, the examples I use should provide us with an opportunity to LOL, chuckle, and snort.

Editor’s Note: The confusion of pronouns in person and number appears throughout this work, and I’ve attempted to correct it whenever I catch it, but unfortunately I am up against a deadline and fear much has gotten by me. I venture to guess that the deceased author struggles with pronouns in person and number because he cannot discern himself from his audience.
Not everything should be humorous, parodic, farcical, and playful. Parody should not become *the* predominate art form and we should not get rid of critique or argumentation in order to crack jokes. Throughout this dissertation I ramble on in great detail about the importance of humor’s helpfulness in generating a positive and creative atmosphere, but I wish to dispel what some might read as hippy-dippy naïveté. My old friend Søren Kierkegaard helps set the stage on which this drama plays out: “No one comes back from the dead; no one has come into the world without weeping. No one asks when one wants to come in; no one asks when one wants to go out” (26). We are surrounded by darkness on both sides but there is still much we can do in this [mean]time that we find our selves flung into.

To continue ‘in all seriousness,’ I acknowledge that anger and revenge can be powerful/helpful rhetorical stances to embody. They can provide an impetus for creativity and they can help us achieve long-term goals. A vengeful rhetorical stance *can* provide the exigency to take risks, thereby motivating us in unintended ways, even outside the initial, perhaps petty, rivalry. However, the further down the path of revenge we (yes, I’m problematically lumping you in with the me’s that I am) wander the more difficult it becomes for us to move outside the real or imagined rivalry and learn about our multipersonned/kairotic self ((more on this (too much on this?) later)). Both anger and revenge can prevent us from making further creative attempts, as we become afraid of failure and enslaved to our motivation for winning the rivalry, thereby further embedding our selves within a serious rhetorical stance. In an amendment to his earliest work, *The Birth of Tragedy*, which he later faults for placing too much importance on German
culture and seriousness, Friedrich Nietzsche tells both us and his younger self, “[... I would rather have you learn, first, the art of terrestrial comfort; teach you how to laugh—if that is, you really insist on remaining pessimists [...] you who aspire to greatness, learn how to laugh!” (14-15).

In the following work, which hopefully helps us learn/teach laughter, I am approaching parody as Henri Bergson approaches ‘the comic’: “our excuse for attacking the problem in our turn must lie in the fact that we shall not aim at imprisoning the comic spirit within a definition. We regard it, above all, as a living thing” (1). Because I view parody as a living thing (created by and for living people), a large sum of the written “academic” portions of this dissertation should not be perpetually forced to be inappropriately (un-kairoticly) parodic. Parody should be used artistically. Parody is an entry point: realizing the benefits of humorous parody will make us better able to understand other narratives and motives within communicative practices. Studying and participating in parody will offer us other alternatives beyond itself, which other forms of protest that are merely against dominating power structures cannot promise. In working in-between the serious and the playful we are able to escape the kind of paralyzing blind pessimism that critical thinking can often entail and the blind optimism that is purely creative but neither responsible, nor helpful.
Behind the Scenes of *Paraumhordyor*

*Paraumhordyor* is the term I have created to act as an obtuse ambassador for this dissertation. It is a ridiculous and inefficient combination of the terms “humor” and “parody.” It parades its self-importance in a totalitarian manner symptomatic of similar treatments in my line of work. The term demands the reader agree to its terms, thereby denying audience participation in order to tout the singular self-glory of its creator (me). I hope this term does not get adopted by any nomenclature, but rises and falls with this specific project in order to draw attention to the ridiculous nature of other “serious” projects that lack self-reflexivity and humor.

Scene 1: Inauthentic Philosophizing

I use the term *philosophizing* (*à la* Sancho Panza) instead of Philosophy in order to draw attention to the action itself and devalue any institutionalized/professional connotation, which at times can be convenient as a selection process for well written works, but which can also turn Philosophy into a religion. These are MY problems. Richard Lanham notes: “we [humanists] apply to our own writing a Platonic and Ramist theory of language which pretends that it is value-free” but all of this leads to “a great deal of self-centered, self-serving preaching and a great deal of self-satisfied practice” (“The ‘Q’ Question” 681). So instead of pretending that we can discard our emotions in favor of serious and deceivingly “objective” scholarly work, we should find more helpful

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3 Editor’s Note: As sections of this dissertation become academically serious and stale, I, Martin Tagamas encourage the reader to replace the word *paraumhordyor* with any other word, both for entertainment purposes and to see if something interesting happens.
ways of including our selves within our work. Otherwise we will continue to witness “how unhumanistic the humanities can be” (682). So under the guise of an academic text I work through my own personal problems—sometimes thinly veiled and sometimes buried deep bellow my conscious intentions. If this text is significant it is because I am working through personal/scholarly problems we all have to deal with. Do I have to explain all this? Shouldn’t it be assumed? When I did landscape construction in Bend, Oregon, my boss asked me, “What happens when you assume?” My response was typical: “It makes an ‘ass’ out of ‘u’ and ‘me’.” His response was humorously not typical: “No, you just get fired.”

We are not going to prevent mistakes or prevent others from taking rhetorizing stances that limit their ability to creatively/critically problem-solve. But we should maximize our understanding of how we are mistaken and find ways to recover faster. Once this becomes our *modus operandi* we can start highlighting processes (like humor and parody) that allow us to learn how to recover faster and *kairotically*. The ‘mistake prevention attitude’ is inauthentic: when we tell our students not to laugh at a racist/sexist/homophobic joke, we are being inauthentic because we laugh/have laughed at similar jokes. Our students are not turned-off by the stances we take against these problematic attitudes, they are turned-off by our inauthentic, unsustainable and preacherly rhetorizing stance. Therefore, they label us idealistic liberals. We should absolutely tell them *how/why* the joke is problematic, but we cannot pretend we do not understand why it is funny. Our puritanical fear of words is preventing us from being helpful, and it confuses the issue especially since, on the other hand, we accept
pornography as a substantial scholarly research topic (as well we should). The difficulty/contradiction lies, not in our moralistic codes (clearly), but in our defense of such “isms” that we are indebted to defend for professional/economic/political reasons and that we have come accustomed to define ourselves by.

A helpful shift occurs when we start to re-conceptualize our student/peer interaction as a brilliant artist approaching their audience. How do we treat our audience? The artists among us do not treat our audiences inauthentically: we always consider our audience’s multipersonned/kairotic self (a phrase that highlights the beautiful paradox we are), but we are only able to do this by acknowledging our own multipersonned/kairotic selves. As artists we don’t start out by saying, “I’m so smart and you should believe me,” we say, “I’m going to show you the confusion within me that I’ve seen in others, and through this artwork, I’m going to ask you if you deal with this confusion as well. Through this asking, you, like me, might be better equipped to deal with this confusion in other instances.” Anyone can criticize everyone and make them irrelevant, but not everyone can help anyone create something relevant. Not everyone can do this, not because only geniuses can, but because historically we have often been led to approach this process in the same serious manner in which we approach most situations.
A Short Story

(and where I drop this silly act of labeling portions of the text as “Scenes”)

In high school when me and friends got together we could talk nonsense for hours. Since then I have had the good fortune of finding many other likeminded individuals. However, I have always been a closet (maybe not so closeted at times) serious person. Throughout my life I have taken too many things way too seriously. I’m writing a dissertation—anyone who writes a dissertation is taking something way too seriously. Whenever anyone in this friend group would begin a long tirade (typically me, but perhaps my memory distorts) anyone in the group had the right/took it upon themselves to undermine the serious tone that the conversation was taking with some kind of wordplay, joke, or reintroduction of a reoccurring hilarity. This rupture was usually completely unforeseen by the speaker. Speaking for myself, whenever this happened it reminded me: my rant is for me; I am being unsociable; I am taking things way too seriously; I have been talking to be heard and I haven’t been talking to listen or to help the team takeoff in a funny/creative direction. And, looking back, 99.99% of the time, my agitations were uneducated, pointless, and thankfully non-representative of the persons I believe I want to be. In such highly motivated instances, Virginia Woolf states, “when a subject is highly controversial [. . .] one cannot hope to tell the truth” (4). But not truth in the sense of being absolutely correct. Thomas G. Rosenmeyer recognizes that the works of Heraclitus and Gorgias unconceal what straightforward, serious works attempt to keep concealed: “certain important realities [. . .] are not easily communicated; only riddles and paradoxes, the ambivalences of oracular utterance, will do justice to
So the purpose here and throughout this dissertation is to work towards what Victor J. Vitanza terms a “nonsynthesizing position” (209). This playful, nonsynthesizing rhetorizing stance that attempts to be neither true nor false differs from an approach that seeks absolute truth: the later depends on the illusion to make its point, and the former approach reveals the illusion to allow us a space to play within that illusion. Therefore, in studying these humorous parodies we can see how a rhetor/author/artist can create something that does not attempt to merely make others believe the rhetor’s own interpretation, but to start their audience on that path towards thinking. Heidegger differentiates the two:

Thinking is not knowing, but perhaps it is more essential than knowing, because it is closer to Being in that closeness which is concealed from afar. We do not know the essence of truth. Therefore it is necessary for us to ask about it and to be pressed toward this question so as to experience the minimal condition that must be fulfilled if we set out to dignify the essence of truth with a question. This condition is that we take up thinking (162).

This approach surpasses the momentary blindness of the immediate and the habitual which both work to disallow an evaluation by our other motives/selves outside of the singular rhetorizing stance we have haphazardly happened to embody. Lauren Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy* helps fill out this sketch, as Walter Shandy often acts the part of quintessential seriousness:
[. . .] he [Walter] was serious; -he was all uniformity; he was systematical, and, like all systematick reasoners [sic], he would move both heaven and earth, and twist and torture every thing in nature to support his hypothesis (38).

As far as I can tell, life will always revert back to the serious. Humorous interruptions aren’t always helpful and sometimes they are annoying when we need to “seriously” cathartically release the troubles weighing us down. But that doesn’t mean we can’t find ways to break from the uninspired, inauthentic, and powerless military march toward certainty without first consulting our creative faculties. The only way to achieve creative faculty is from listening to others: from others as others, and others within our selves.

Sarah Kofman asks us to re-conceptualize how we receive logos through Nietzsche’s Third Ear⁴, as it is

[. . .] the artistic ear which, positioning itself beyond metaphysical oppositions such as truth and falsehood, good and evil, depth and surface, clarity and obscurity, is capable of hearing (understanding) an incredible (unheard) language (Kofman 48).

Attempting to hear with this Third Ear, allows us to contemplate how we listen to logos, thereby revealing a continually reflexive process that simultaneously informs us of our selves and our surroundings. Jean-Luc Nancy he finds that, “to be listening is to be at the same time outside and inside, to be open from without and from within” (14). Because this Third Ear attempts to hear the unheard, we should learn how to speak to this ear, in

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⁴ Author’s Note: Both Nietzsche and Kofman gender-ize this Third Ear, and you can too, but I don’t.
order to help others become listeners of *logos*. If we can get out in front of the crashing wave made up of our preconceived notions of how the world works, if we can avoid stepping back into our well worn rhetorizing stances, then we have the opportunity to not merely reinforce our past, but to achieve the possibility of creative insight. Or at least, become aware of our struggle: “So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past” (Fitzgerald 190).

**Limiting Rhetorical Stances**

I will use the phrase *rhetorizing stance* throughout this dissertation, but what is a rhetorizing stance? I don’t know… anything we want it to be? It’s a placeholder that describes a dynamic range of actions. Our rhetorizing stances often do not become apparent (to us and others) until we are in a shouting match with a significant other, or receiving blowback from a Facebook post, etc. Leading up to these rhetorizing stances that we come to embody and disemboby are often imaginary conversations we have throughout our day with people who we have the potential of addressing or who we daydream about being able to address/readdress. We often only take up these rhetorizing stances within the imaginary conversations themselves without ever addressing an audience outside of these imaginary conversations. But just because embodying/disemboby rhetorizing stances can be highly imaginary does not mean that we can’t work with them, play with them, and better understand how to deal with our *inner-rhetorizing* (that is only momentarily non-outer-rhetorizing, if a distinction can be made at all).

Clearly these rhetorizing stances are not confined to Lloyd Bitzer’s laws for
‘rhetorical situations,’ as these rhetorizing stances can be imaginary; however, they always have the potential to be enacted within the public sphere. But Bitzer defines the rhetorical situation in the following light: “Not the rhetor and not persuasive intent, but the situation is the source and ground of rhetorical activity” (6). Examples of Bitzer’s “real” rhetorical situations include: “The Declaration of Independence, Lincoln’s Gettysburg Address, Churchill’s Address on Dunkirk, John F Kennedy’s Inaugural Address” (2). He then contrasts a “real” rhetorical situation, here the assassination and eulogy of President John F. Kennedy, with an “imaginary” rhetorical situation (that he asks us to imagine!):

In contrast, imagine a person spending his time writing eulogies of men and women who never existed: his speeches meet no rhetorical situation; they are summoned into existence not by real events, but by his own imagination (9).

The rhetorizing stances I speak of are socially contingent and are shaped by shared belief systems: moral, political, economical, etc. In those instances where we are visually illiterate, media illiterate, philosophically illiterate, rhetorically illiterate, and literally illiterate we will usually take on rhetorizing stances that are clichéd, limiting, and only reinforce what we already know; e.g., when we spout arguments informed by Fox News or MSNBC. Although these rhetorizing stances are not all political, we often gravitate toward embodying rhetorizing stances that are presented to us by well-established institutions at the intersection of knowledge, power, and discipline. In doing so, this leads us to establish narrative practices—and identify with figures—that align with the stances
presented to us by these institutions.

Exigency for this dissertation is created by the popularity of the serious rhetorizing stance in academia and in the public sphere that only allows for highly formulaic and clichéd argumentation and closes-off the possibility for creative insight; i.e., only allowing us to reinforce the stance we are already embedded within. When we have taken up this serious stance we are limited to a very narrow range of possible responses in order for us to remain non-contradictory and pursue a singular end-goal. When we must adhere to these restraints we are not likely to swap out for a different end-goal, or reverse/shift the path of our logical argumentation… even when doing so is more in keeping with our general self-interests!!! (enter, American Value Voters). The limiting serious stance can only be achieved if we are able to hide (from our audience and from our selves) the very contradictory and playful nature of logos itself. This particular serious rhetorizing stance is limiting, monological, logocentric, and vengeful and these are all components of the “serious rhetorizing stance” that I will be referring to throughout this dissertation. Luckily, we can wander in and out of these rhetorizing stances and humor and parody allow us to do this; they allow us to both critically and playfully engage our inner-rhetorizing.

Individuals and institutions (as well as our selves) demand that we embed our selves within these rhetorizing stances. I ask my students to do it every time they write a paper. I am doing it in this dissertation: agreeing with certain scholars and disagreeing with others in order to carve out my own space within the conversation and in order to get published, get a job, etc. So perhaps this serious rhetorizing stance will always be
necessary (?); nevertheless, this should not thwart our efforts to see what is possible when we move outside it (even if all we do is gesture towards something a future-someone-else/someone-else within myself might fully realize later).

Othering: How the Multipersonned/Kairotic Self Responsibly Roams

Our gesturing towards paraumhordyor will help that future someone else. Paraumhordyor provides a process in which we can let go of the rhetorizing positions we are attempting to hold onto; however, not merely letting go to gain an “objective” stance outside our selves or our motives. This break from our rhetorizing stance is not a distancing from our selves but an othering of our selves, i.e., the realization that we are othering our selves and others. This realization (often expressed through laughter) simultaneously helps us to understand the multipersonned and kairotic self that we are. I look to Gorgias’ understanding kairos (discussed in more detail in the following chapter), as this sense of time accounts for our ever-changing selves. This sense of time is not bound by linear progressions. We are able to glimpse our kairotic selves when we are at the office and realize we forgot our lunch. In a hopeless act of desperation, we dazedly open the office fridge and realize that one of our selves knew we were going to forget our lunch that day, and that self saved leftovers and put them in the office fridge. We become aware of our kairotic selves when we step outside our habitual linear progressions and rediscover how different we have been and how different we are going to be—like reading old love letters/break-up letters, we simultaneously know our selves more and less, but regardless we become curious. Martin Heidegger states that for the primordial
Greeks: “‘Time’ is here not a ‘series’ or ‘sequence’ of indifferent ‘now-points.’ Instead, time is something that in its way bears beings, releasing them and taking them back” (141). This stands in contradistinction to modernity where: “time becomes a ‘factor,’ i.e., a ‘worker’ that ‘works’ either ‘against’ or ‘for’ man, namely ‘against’ or in ‘favor’ of the calculation by means of which man makes plans to master beings and secure himself in them” (141).

Vitanza presents us with what he terms a “Nietzachean kairos” that is “reaching for the unmeasured” [Emphasis in original] (173), and for my purposes, I find this unmeasured-ness occurring within paraumhordyors’ [Emphasis not that original] ability, not to tell the truth, but to provide an impetus for creativity for others (without and within). In other words, the creative impetus we provide will always be ‘reaching for the unmeasured’ as it necessarily lies outside our own purview of what is possible. Vitanza’s concept of a “nonpositive affirmative” (176) can also be seen to work within the process I describe throughout this dissertation where creative play is necessary: these instances allow our selves to wander nomadically through motivated communication. As we do this we can re-affirm our nomadic ability to move, create, question, and think, without being asked to affirm our belief in one specific truth. We aren’t able to do this (without dissertations and paraumhordyors allowing/reminding us to do so) because we are not able to come to terms with the nomadic, hunter/gatherer sense of self we have left behind (but perhaps I only speak for myself?). We (my selves included) don’t quite trust (nor should we) the sedentary seriousness we create to guide our lives. This is evidenced by our inability to deal with uncertainty, mistakes, and failure; i.e., our inability to accept
our nomadic/barbaric selves: the self that has no rules or regulations to live by. How do we act responsibly/helpfully toward our selves and others? Unfortunately, a general reading of the history of human[un]kind shows us that just as often as our lack of rules have made us do horrible things, our all too certain belief in particular sets of rules have also led us to do horrible things. Vitanza warns us that “[. . .] we are not at home in our world/whirl of language. Any and every attempt to assume that we are has or will have created for human beings dangerous situations” (157).

*Kairotic* time find us taken by surprised laughter, wherein we instantly become more curious about our selves, and we wonder if others are as trans-dimensional as we are. This multipersonned/kairotic self is aware that their rhetorizing stance hinges on contingent situations. Through this awareness comes an understanding that we might disown this stance at a future date, yet we are still willing to do something interesting in the [mean]time. *Kairotic* time highlights the fact that the creation of difference is always an *action* done to others and our selves—an *othering* that can just as easily become undone. Through certain processes (a conversation, a joke, watching a film, changing our opinion, waking up from a drunken night of mayhem) we can glimpse how we are othering on a daily basis. In realizing how we are othering, we are not being subjective or objective, but taking a break from ‘one of the selves’ that a specific rhetorizing stance leads us to believe we are. In glimpsing the process of othering, we are able to not merely remain the subject of our own stance, but become aware of rhetorizing/narratizing options and the ability to do *both and.*
Humorous parody has a playful non-essentializing, nonsynthesizing, nonpositively affirming, and unmeasured relationship to representations, as it moves in an out of the *logos* used to present it, thereby attracting and improving our ability to listen with our Third ear. In contradistinction, Samuel Ijsseling finds that Plato and Aristotle, “stuck to literal expressions and did not tolerate confusion or obscurity” [Emphasis in original] (122). For Ijsseling, Nietzsche understood that man is, “not subject and origin nor centre and master of his own words” (112). In a way this is obvious: we do not create the language that we use, it has developed over time and through others, and therefore listening is an essential part of speaking. Ijsseling points out various historical examples of how speaking is often conceptualized as a listening, and concludes that “the other influences one’s speaking” (135), an obvious fact, but one that is often breezed over too quickly.

Aristotle’s lack of tolerance for obscurity leads him to exclude “others” in his work, and therefore the Third Ear of the listener, and therefore themselves. This occurs because Aristotle excludes playfulness, and as Richard Lanham notes, Aristotle and similar philosophizers demand that their listeners “identify a single fictional reality with reality itself” as opposed to asking them “to consider more than one reality but not an infinity of them” (18). Lanham believes a rhetorical stylist should invite the reader to both “look at words” and “through them” (30), or as Nietzsche might put it, “[. . .] grasp the significance of the need to look and yet go beyond that look” (143). Here the goal becomes helping the audience (that might also be our selves) understand how the medium itself functions. Therefore, Lanham finds it paramount for rhetorical stylists to call
“attention to their tricks [. . .] to warn us of the verbal deception at the heart of things [. . .] remind us that whatever order we see, we have at one stage or another imposed that man [sic] is imposing as well as imposed upon” (25).

Speculation without Expression

Making and sharing something for a wide-ranging audience is one of the best ways to practice engaging our inner-rhetorizing and listening to our multipersonned/kairotic self. This tests our ability to be helpful and allows us to question our standards of success and failure. Critical thinking without careful attention to diverse audience reception turns into narcissist academic masturbation. Working from the serious rhetorizing stance limits the speaker/writer/rhetor to providing critiques that only create a false sense of superiority for themselves without providing the audience with a positive atmosphere to create new works. This inauthentic philosophizing is allowed to exist when the multipersonned/kairotic self is silenced, as these selves allow us to listen to failure instead of negating it. The point of studying communication is to make everyone (including our selves) BETTER\(^5\) able to deal with the inevitable mistakes and failures of communication—not to merely/simply/only quote a lot of well-respected dead people.

All too often philosophizing leaves us with a mode of speculation without providing a mode of expression. In both serious academia and serious entertainment there is a problematic pursuit of knowledge: critical thinking is not balanced with creative thinking and \textit{vice versa}. All moments of critical speculation need a cathartic release.

\(^{5}\) Editor’s Note: I feel uncomfortable with the deceased author’s value judgments.
However, *expression* and *creativity* are (overtly/implicitly) criticized by critical academic discourses (at times rightly so) because they are often used as buzz words in our neoliberal/free-market/capitalist/production/consumption universe. *Paraumhordyor* offers us (at least, it has offered me) the ability to consider alternative spaces/rhetorizing stances that escape from the seriousness found in academia and entertainment. In part this task can only be accomplished via the disregard of others who are embedded in serious rhetorizing stances. As important as it is to attract and be celebrated by an audience, it is just as important to be rejected and dismissed by audiences. People who are embedded within their serious rhetorizing stances (so all of us at one point or another) won’t be offended by our project and they won’t bother to attack if they don’t find our project worth their time. So it is important to appear pointless or silly, if for nothing else, to momentarily escape from the demands that we imagine (perhaps justly so, but not necessarily) being placed on our selves by others who we imagine will judge us by the serious standards set by serious people in academia and entertainment. So I hope a good many of you find reading this dissertation a waste of time (at times both my serious self and playful self have thought it a waste of time to write). But *paraumhordyor* provides another option: invite those serious individuals into a playfully space where they can neither reject nor accept the work, but must consider the complications of their participation within that space.

Because *paraumhordyor* can work within the intersections of various academic disciplines, as well as in-between academia and entertainment it offers us the opportunity to re-think practices embedded within these institutions and make us BETTER equipped
to take on the tasks currently assigned to serious critique, argumentation, and theory-creation found in artizing, information designizing, rhetorizing, literaturizing, philosophizing, media productionizing, etc. Paraumhordyor provides a special location from where we can come to question our pursuit of knowledge: not just what we know, but our motives for wanting to know it. This process becomes vital the more the productive aspects of power combine with knowledge, discipline, and pleasure. An integral problem scholarship has always faced is the satisfaction gained from “knowing.” Unfortunately the fetishize-ation of knowing makes us lose our ability to listen—to hold off projecting our own motives onto the message being received. When we are only able to hear ‘that which will benefit us,’ we are limited to a very limiting way of othering. By considering speculation as a way to produce an expression that listens, we can start to conceptualize alternative practices of othering. Because critical speculation should not be considered without creative expression, the combination of both will be referred to in this dissertation as criteativical (critical/creative). Tee hee.

Helpfulness and Curiosity

This needs to stop⁶: “That professor is sooo mean! But… they are brilliant!”

When we get our kicks from embarrassing others for their mistakes it only reveals that we have not found a way (a mode of cathartic expression) to deal with the mistakes we ourselves have made. A student will forget the majority of what they learn in college, but if we teach them a way to deal with their failure and mistakes they will carry that with

⁶ Author’s Note: To be clear, constructing horribly constructed words won’t stop. That will continue. I’m going to beat that joke into the ground.
them the rest of their lives. Our ‘vengeful professor selves’ are only able to thrive in a society where knowledge, power, and discipline have converged on us, motivating us to take stances we wouldn’t take otherwise; i.e., making us think that in order to “get ahead” we need to act a certain way, or that “we were treated this way—why shouldn’t we return the favor?” I am not naïve. I am not saying we do not have to be an asshole towards certain people; unfortunately, we sometimes needs to be a jerk in order to gain the respect of jerks (jackass is the only language they speak). I am not saying that we do not need to self-advertise in order to get ahead, because we do. What I am saying is that these stances are neither natural nor inevitable.

*Helpfulness* is one of the many end goals for *paraumhordyor*: helping us be *criteativical* and helping us understand our multipersonned/kariotic selves. This helpfulness is defined in contradistinction to any philosophizing which attempts to eliminate mistakes in order to arrive at stable truths or abandons questions about the human condition in order to traffic in the purely abstract to everyone else’s expense. If helpfulness (as I am attempting to defined it) is the measuring stick than it doesn’t matter how true or false the project is, how much it represents reality, or how much it pretends to abandon rational/practical thought and conventions.

But I want to separate the term “helpful” from its’ problematic utilitarian connotation that can act as a sorting bin to separate useful humans from non-useful humans. I also want to drop the connotation of *charity*; i.e., “converting” the natives (via smallpox): charity assumes a top down power structure. I am referring to helpfulness that is accompanied by curiosity. The individual who is curious *and* helpful has a better
chance of avoiding hurting with their helpfulness. In discussing Vladimir Nabokov’s *Lolita*, Richard Rorty highlights Humbert Humbert’s incuriosity as he often fails to see the “[. . .] momentary iridescence and not just the underlying formal structure” (11).

Rorty finds a special importance in the ability of such works as *Lolita*, to “help us see the effects of our private idiosyncrasies on others” (141). These works reveal “our attempts at autonomy, our private obsessions with the achievement of a certain sort of perfection, may make us oblivious to the pain and humiliation we are causing” (141). This helpful and curious person has an ear for mistake-listening, not to immediately eliminate them before anyone else notices but to attempt to understand how/why they occurred in the first place. If we have a perfect memory of every interaction we have ever had (not sure if this is desirable) and have ethically developed past our current human condition, we don’t need to be curious. However, for the rest of us, curiosity provides us with yet another way to check ourselves. Scholarship can spark curiosity, documentary films can, and humor as well; e.g., when we are taken off-guard by a punchline we didn’t see coming and we dazedly gaze in a haze at how what we took for granted could be otherwise. If there is a “moral in tow” for such a complicated and purposefully morally-questionable work as *Lolita*, Rorty ventures to guess that it is this: “Notice what one is doing, and in particular to notice what people are saying. For it might turn out, it very often does turn out, that people are trying to tell you that they are suffering” (12). Helpfulness needs curiosity to help it listen; therefore, the term I will be using throughout this dissertation is a combination of “helpful” and “curiosity”: celphuriosity. You’re welcome.
Conjecture

My conjecture is that the meta-readerly narrative, and perhaps the writerly pre-metaphysical conditions by which pre-post-modern parodies disseminate knowledge as public pedagogies, resolves itself within a Heideggerian folding back into Third Meanings, to borrow a Barthes-ian expression. From here it should be obvious that in order to do this, I need to un-define the Ancient Greek term ΑΒΓΔΕΖΗ by separating it from its misleading Latin transition, and view it with pure Aryan eyes. While troping between the abject and the Kantian sublime, the digital copy of a copy—or a Platonic Chair in an Aristotelian dining hall, adjacent to a Burkean Parlor across the street from Habermas Café—is only able to be accessed/excessed through a discursive/terministic screen door. All sex is rape. All rap is sex and the best kind is performed in underground panopticons. Hip-hop and jazz are important because (metaphor). That’s W.A.C., yo.

This journey through a dig.it.all up site-scape allows us to re-perform our ungendered selves; e.g., a house of mirrors in a Butler-eqsue burlesque gender bender performance that itself has become a site for homogenization and pasteurization; e.g., Harvey Milk’s 2% march on Wall Street Marxism. Transeverything theory provides a rich yet highly under-researched opportunity to reach out to our druidian Derrida-ian otherness, which, taken in part with our dismantling of Cartesian Dueling Regulations of the 17th Century that worked only to profit the Monarch Rum sales while subjugating the minority of minor miners of East Colonialberg (before gentrification), offers at the very least an attempt to formulate a question. Social Justice. Multi-model. But perhaps this isn’t so much a question, as a place (place in the original Greek sense: it can be found on a
Topoi-graphic map) to start to fall asleep while pondering that question. Je ne parle pas français. Furthermore, transversely, consequently, and withsoeverhereforto, this Über-unconscious state of activist Oedipal mother killing and father loving through augmented video game reality, is something we need to take advantage of by studying it through simulacrum simulation using Geotagging and Google Analytics in Oculus Rift. Milton. Yesterday, I posted this on Twitter: “Current Traditionalism???” Perhaps, more succinctly for my purposes, this pre-nap-time question can be posed by Kristeva, that being of course, “How do we escape the double bind by researching BDSM?” In case I’ve done something incorrectly, I want to argue that all of this is merely a thought experiment in the mind of the ant you killed earlier (all is one and nothing). The actual dissertation is impossible to write. Drawing from the results of my qualitative ethnographic research, I want to performance-art draw the correlation that; *squid pro quo* seafood [sic]kness, Bruce Willis was dead the whole time; however, this has been under-researched because (noun). Mentioning John Waters and Philip Glass should impress you. Perhaps abhorrent to some epistemological pallets (yet not ruling out the possibility for a hermit/eunuch inquiry), I reformulate this attempt to pose a question (before I take a nap) of Beings’ non-well beings becomingness by introducing the figure of *hetero economicus* who, if we are to do a proper gemology, we’d find is consubstantiality a pre-post-post-human *flâneur-ing voyeur*. Pharmacon. Alfred Hitchcock. Have we never been mane-cient (ancient lions)? Male gaze. Helping the proletariat with their taxes. Did I mention Digital Manatees? Computers are the beginning or end of everything as we know it. Please publish this. I need to eat.
Fine, I’ll Be “Serious” Now

My conjecture is that specific humorous parodic narratives provide us with a playful space to critically reflect on our practices of self-narration, our motives within communication, and on the limiting and serious rhetorizing stances that are offered to us in the public sphere. These parodies provide a practical model for how to create/analyze narratives both inside/outside of the classroom, combine the serious and the playful, provide alternative practices of critique and argumentation, and increase creative inquiry and narrative/visual media literacy. A parodic narrative is able to accomplish this by working as a critical public/classroom pedagogy, a form of critical rhetoric, and a form of mass narrative therapy. In working in this way these parodies highlight systemic problems within “serious”/non-reflexive institutionalized discourse and critique, as well as the problematic narrative practices and rhetorical stances perpetuated by institutions that rely on narrative illiteracy, limit creative insight, and do not allow us to come to terms with the essentially mistaken nature of communication.

Chapter Outline

Chapter 1: Introduction: Caveats, Confessions, Confusions, Conjectures, Excuses, Exigencies, Etc.

You just read it.

Chapter 2: Defining Paraumhordyor

This chapter distinguishes parody as humorous and helpful within a context of major and minor texts on parody, texts that discuss similar comedic rhetorical devices,
and more general texts on humor. In contrasting my views of parody with others, as well as differentiating parody from similar comedic rhetorical devices, I delineate how the concept of parody functions throughout this dissertation, and how (in ideal situations) paraumhordyor could be enacted outside this dissertation. In order to do this I elaborate on the obstacles that prevent parody from reaching its full potential in helping in the classroom, helping as a public pedagogy, and helping our practices of self-narration.

Chapter 3: The Influence of Mass Narratives on Practices of Self-narration

In this chapter I provide an overview of research highlighting the essential role narrative plays in our daily lives and reference scholars Benedict Anderson, John Paul Eakin, Michel Foucault, and John Berger to provide examples of how narratives are problematically created and perpetuated within the public sphere. The work of Henri Bergson, Martin Heidegger and Michel De Certeau helps me demonstrate how the problematic aspects of these mass narratives create habitual and homogenized practices of self-narration for individuals. Todd May, Dan P. McAdams, and Steve Madigan help inform how I analyze specific practices of self-narration. To conclude I show how paraumhordyor can disrupt problematically habitual practices of self-narration.

Chapter 4: Paraumhordyor in Contemporary Visual Entertainment as Public Pedagogy and Mass Narrative Therapy

I utilize Henry Giroux’s concept of “public pedagogy” to show how specific examples of paraumhordyor are already occurring in popular forms of contemporary visual entertainment, and how they provide a form of mass narrative therapy for
individuals. I also analyze artifacts from contemporary television and Internet videos in relation to my Judgementationalization Rubric for Paraumhordytor. Working through some of the contemporary scholarship on these television programs, I shift away from viewing these shows as promoting political action and focus on their effects on the individuals practices of self-narration, and the ability of these shows to help the individual perform a self-parody of their own beliefs.

Chapter 5: Creativity Generated by Parody as a Method of Critical Rhetorical Invention

In this chapter I situate my research within what has already been done in rhetorical invention. One of my main arguments here is that paraumhordytor is able to generate creativity in the classroom as well as in the viewing of visual paraumhordyoric mass media narratives, so I therefore not limit my exploration of creativity to writing and argumentation. I redefine rhetorical invention under the guidelines of critical rhetoric and argue for the importance of humor in aiding creativity, as creativity needs a positive atmosphere where we can make mistakes. The creativity that paraumhordytor generates becomes crucial when thinking about our narrative practices, because we are able to think outside more obvious and dominating forms (perpetuated by our selves and mass media narratives) and discover/rediscover, invent/remember, different narratives about our selves.
Chapter 6: Classroom Pedagogy on Constructing Paraumhordyories

Here I use my Judgementationalization Rubric for Paraumhordyor to instruct others on how to create paraumhordyories. It will begin with a general argument supported by John Morreall, as to the importance of humor in the classroom, and then move more specifically to John J. Ruszkiewicz’s work to support my argument that paraumhordyor can work in the classroom as a pedagogical tool (especially in the process of rhetorical invention) in order to provide a critical yet creative opportunity for the students to interact with texts/media in a more meaningful way. My main argument here is that paraumhordyor aids both in analysis and composition in the classroom. I also use Hall, Gossett, and Vincelette to support my argument that paraumhordyor can aid classroom pedagogy in the digital age of online video sharing through amateur video remix. Drawing from my own Freshman Composition teaching experiences, I analyze parodic videos that my students have created to show the benefits of this assignment, and I also provide a practical framework describing what works and what doesn’t (a ‘how-to’ section) so that others can benefit from my pedagogical experiences.

Chapter 7: Paraumhordyoric Short Film

This chapter is a short film that will bring together everything that I have merely been describing, i.e., provide expression for my speculation, and therefore provides a heuristic approach that allows me to do more than provide a critical object but a post-critical object. This chapter also includes an a storyboard of the film as well as a script and will provide an example of the pre-production materials that I will be asking my
students to make. Creating this film allows me to escape a performative contradiction; i.e., not being able to do that which I am promoting. This *paraumhordyoric* short film informs my research as much as my research informs this short film and it uses my *Judgementationalization* Rubric for *Paraumhordyor* as a way of testing this rubric. Taking on this heuristic approach helped me determine if this is the way in which I want to advise others on how to make such works.
CHAPTER TWO

DEFINING PARAUMHORDYOR

Overview: Three Obstacles

The concept of parody has yielded a myriad of academic scholarship. Dwight Macdonald provides an extensive anthology of written parody in *From Chaucer to Beerbohm*, while many others have provided histories of parody\(^7\) as well as surveys of theories on parody\(^8\). A recently surge of scholarship on parody can be attributed to the increased popularity of parody and satire in the public sphere, *e.g.*, *The Colbert Report*, *The Daily Show*, and culture jamming in general. While many scholars have provided glimpses of parody’s helpfulness, some of parody’s most important elements are being overlooked or dismissed.

Within the academic scholarship on parody there are three obstacles preventing us from unlocking parody’s helpfulness or *celphuriosity* (helpful curiosity). The first obstacle preventing us from unlocking parody’s *celphuriosity* is that there is a serious bias in academia. Evidence of this serious bias presents itself whenever scholars take up a problematically serious rhetorizing stance and deny the humorous aspects of parody in order to restrict parody to a “serious” academic discourse. For instance, in order for parody to be taken seriously as an academic discourse, scholars often only deal with its ability to enable political change or focus on parody’s meta-fictional aspects and deny its

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\(^7\) Hutcheon provides the following list: “Courtney 1962, Eidson 1970; Freund 1981; Genette 1982; Hempel 1965; Householder 1944; Kitchin 1931; Koller 1956; Lotman 1973; Macdonald 1960; Markiewicz 1967; Monter 1968; Tuve 1970; Verweyen 1979; Weisstein 1966” (19).

\(^8\) Hutcheon cites: “Wolfgang Karrer (1977) and Winfried Freund (1981)” (20).
humorous aspects. Similarly, some scholars dismiss parody and humor because they do not consider them to be legitimate forms of serious academic study or artistic expression. But when we deny humor in academia and when we deny humor in parody, we aren’t taking advantage the benefits of humorous parody; i.e., \textit{paraumhordyor}.

The second obstacle preventing parody from being \textit{celphuriositful} is that parody is often problematically undifferentiated from—or is seen as secondary to—satire and irony. Satire is often championed for its ability to enable political action and in philosophizing irony beyond helpfulness; “serious” scholars often elevate irony above parody. Sometimes these mix-ups occur innocently enough: beforehand, scholars do not delineated how these comedic terms will be used in their work. While there can be significant overlap amongst these comedic terms, I will be defining parody, i.e., \textit{paraumhordyor}, in a specific way in order to illuminate specific practical applications for parody that would not present themselves if we were to be satisfied with the claim that ‘all these comedic terms are interchangeable’. In order to further distinguish \textit{paraumhordyor}, I will focus on parody that takes on conventions of popular narratives as its’ target, as opposed to specific individuals or institutions. I do this for three reasons: 1.) this does not close off crucial creative components for critical inquiry; 2.) this ‘alongside/not against’ approach lends itself more readily to a Foucault-ian understanding of power relations; 3.) this enables parody to be helpful for others. Along with this initial focus on conventions \textit{qua} target, I will also differentiate parody by comparing it to an ‘imitation of dynamic motive’ (Lanham) and a ‘critical rhetoric’ (McKerrow). I will then
contrast parody from the following forms: burlesque, ridicule, mock-epic, travesty, irony, satire, pranking, and culture jamming.

The third obstacle preventing parody from being *celphuriositful* is that the scholars working within these diverse fields (humor studizing, rhetorizing, philosophizing, communication studizing, media studizing, psychologizing, critical theorizing, etc.) are not aware of each other’s work. Often the scholar’s focus is so field-specific that they aren’t citing each other/major works on parody/scholars in humor studies. I will not be addressing this obstacle as explicitly as the other obstacles, but I hope that the writing of the dissertation itself (e.g., bringing these academic conversations together in one place for the first time, etc.) should remedy this.

**Humor is Essential for Parody to be *Celphuriositfulish* (Obstacle 1)**

*Rose and Hutcheon*

I will continue to define *paraumhordyor* throughout this chapter, but first it is necessary to address the debate between retaining or discarding the humorous aspects of parody and this most notably occurs between Margaret A. Rose and Linda Hutcheon. In *Parody: Ancient, Modern, and Post-Modern* (1993), Margaret A. Rose defines parody as a double-coded comedic device that dresses up within the conventions of its target, is self-reflexive, meta-fictional, reveals how the medium is working, and generates humor (272). In Wes Gehring’s *Parody as Film Genre*, he also finds that “[. . .] the fundamental goal of parody us to be *funny* (something that should never be lost on the scholar) [. . .]” (3). Throughout her book, Rose argues that parody should not be limited because of the
negative connotations that have been attached to the term by specific individuals in
specific time periods who (purposely or not) define parody alongside the burlesque or
view it as a form of ridicule that is purely destructive (272). For Rose, Hutcheon is
among scholars who “have reduced the traditional linkages of parody with comedy, so
that the distinguishing peculiarity of parody as a comic form of ‘double-coding’ has
conveniently gone missing via their apparently common use of the double or dual code”
(239).

This move by Hutcheon (and others) is informed by Fred W. Housholder Jr.’s
commonly sited work, “ΠΙΑΡΩ ΙΔ ΙΑ” that, in Rose’s opinion, contains an already
“questionable suggestion that [. . .] for scholiasts ‘the notion of humor’ was not regarded
as ‘essentially present in the word’” (239). Rose questions this claim by Householder and
uses arguments from F. J. Lelievere to prove that at its inception\(^9\) parody\(^{10}\) was not
merely used for ridicule, but also approached its target in a playful manner (23).

Throughout this piece Rose is responding to Linda Hutcheon’s attack in her *A
Hutcheon faults Rose’s “insistence on the presence of comic effect” as being “restrictive”
(21). Hutcheon elaborates and justifies her definition of parody:

> A more neutral definition of repetition with critical difference would allow
for the range of intent and effect possible in modern parodic works. Rose
is not alone in her limitation of the definition and function of parody [. . .]

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\(^9\) Author’s Note: For my work here it isn’t necessarily important if humor *was* integral to parody at
its inception, but I do think it is essential for parody to be humorous *now*.

\(^{10}\) Editor’s Note: I’d rather the author’s footnotes were funny every time, but I guess there is
nothing I can do about it at this point.
but it also reveals the problems that have to be considered if parody is to be given a meaning adequate to the art of today (21).

Only promoting the non-humorous forms of parody would be fine if studying the humorous aspects of parody (or humor in general) were widely accepted as a rigorous academic undertaking or if a serious bias in academia did not exist. Unfortunately, neither of those is true. If humorous parody was already widely known to provide insight on how to perform alternative forms of critique, argumentation, and practices of self-narration then it would be fine to limit our focus on the non-humorous forms of parody.

Rose also draws attention to Julia Kristeva’s interpretation of Bakhtin, as Kristeva limits Bakhtin’s carnival-istic laughter to serious, tragic laughter. Rose argues that, throughout Kirsteva’s work, she repeatedly downplays the parodic and comic elements that Bakhtin champions in order to promote the serious intertextual aspects. In-and-of-itself this isn’t a problem, but Rose argues that Kristeva’s work brought Bakhtin back into the academic spotlight (which is a good thing), but unfortunately, Kristeva did it in a way that downplayed the role of humor in parody (180). Again, this would be fine if we didn’t need the celphuriosity of paraumphordyor, but we do.

Although Hutcheon is calling Rose out for being too restrictive, Hutcheon is attempting to hide her own restrictive measures. One of Hutcheon’s motives for limiting parody to a serious discourse is that in re-defining parody she can draw in other mediums such as architecture in order to highlight how parody’s critical abilities are at work in these non-comical mediums (11). Extending parody to other mediums is highly beneficial
but this “serious” academic/artistic setting that Hutcheon wants to place parody within is much more restrictive than the comedic setting Rose places parody within. It begs the question: Why does Hutcheon bother with parody at all? Hutcheon states: “the kind of parody upon which I wish to focus is an integrated structural modeling process of revising, replaying, inverting, and ‘trans-contextualizing’ previous works of art” (11).

Who would benefit from this aside from art scholars? In highlighting certain aspects of the term (its’ self-reflexive properties) and downplaying others (its’ comedic role), she herself is imposing restrictions on the term in order to turn the study of parody into a “serious” discipline. This is one of many attempts to embed our selves within a serious rhetorizing stance at the expense of the comic and playful.

A Judgementationalization Rubric for Paraumhordyor

However, Hutcheon’s dismissal of humor is not completely unwarranted, as humor in general is not free from ethical dilemmas (although she doesn’t make this point), but I do not want to address these dilemmas and then proceed to create an “Ethics of Humor” or an “Ethics of Parody.” “Ethic” has a denotation that implies moral group consent (how do we receive this consent and who decides what is moral?) and a connotation that invokes religiosity. Rhetorizing scholar Richard A. Lanham is critical of specific humanist traditions that attempt to enact such problematic practices and calls for us to recognize that any “decision-making process” that a humanist like Peter Ramus (and others) might propose “has no built-in system of error-correction, of cybernetic control when human purpose, rationally arrived at, turns out to be wrong” (“The ‘Q’
Question” 693). Instead, Lanham finds that “motive balancing provides the means by which we can exercise social control over ourselves” (“The ‘Q’ Question” 693). Here and throughout, my goal is to highlight situations where we can practice this ‘motive balancing,’ e.g., interacting with a paraumhordyoric narrative.

That said, it is still necessary to discuss ethical-esque issues in order to provide some celphuriosiful organizing principle, measuring stick, or platform from which to judge forms of humor and parody (and of course paraumhordyor) in order to be able to practice/perform this ‘motive balancing’ outside this text. Therefore, I replace what could be termed an “Ethics of Parody” with an obtuse and completely undesirable phrase: A Judgementationalization Rubric for Paraumhordyor\textsuperscript{11}. Like so many of these other terms, I am hopeful that this phrase will not live on after the life of this work and join some elite academic country club for terms and phrases that should have died a long time ago. The only beautiful aspect of the phrase is that it implies a function, a doing, a process, and an application that has the possibility of eventually occurring outside this text through someone else; whereas, an “Ethic” sounds like an immovable boulder we are stuck underneath. But even in establishing a Judgementationalization Rubric, I proceed by gesturing toward my own “[. . .] fluidity and to the perspectival nature of any knowing” (4), as is advised by Diane Davis in Breaking Up At Totality. Nothing I lock down is solid; I temporarily hold these ideas together for us to do something with them. Fully

\textsuperscript{11} Editor’s Note: I, Martin Tagamas, want to warn the reader that the author will go on about this poorly named rubric for quite a few pages. But you can skip to page 154 to find a final version. I’m not sure why the author decided to bury it in a later chapter.
aware of the possibility of my own stupidity, I carry on under the mantra Davis pulls from Avital Ronell:

Ronell suggests that, given the omnipresence of stupidity, the ‘only possible ethical position’ would have to be: ‘I am stupid before the other’ (13). The best we can do, it seems, is nod vigorously in agreement, take a deep breath, and… still… get on with it (17).

Getting on with it… the most historically significant blow to humor (but also one of humor’s most formidable criticisms) comes from Plato when he lingers on the possibilities of evil in humor. This isn’t as misguided as it might seem, and scholars’ concern with humor qua evil is valid up to a certain point, but it is when these scholars then fail to address the benefits of humor that their criticism becomes problematic—a point that should accompany us as we wade through these troubled waters. In the work of contemporary philosophizer Ronald de Sousa’s “When is it Wrong to Laugh?” he wants to “exorcise the evil element in laughter,” by “giving it a name to distinguish it from wit and from mere amusement” (238), and he therefore borrows a Platonic term “phthonos” to describe “bad” humor. Plato applies the term phthonos, or “malicious envy” to “the kind of laughter typically experienced at some ridiculous spectacle” (Sousa 239). Yes, jokes can be malicious. Jokes can also be sexist, racist, homophobic, anti-social, demeaning, overly corrective/moralizing, used to reinforce power structures, etc. Jokes can be anything we want them to be. The point is not to create a formula/ethic for

\[\text{Author’s Note: In one of my undergraduate courses at Portland State University a certain English professor would always remind us that dogs smile to show their teeth.}\]

\[\text{Editor’s Note: Hey, nobody cares.}\]
everyone to follow that will get rid of these side effects, but to recognize the *kairotic*
moments when jokes avoid these side effects.

Sousa addresses this risky aspect of laughter that, I argue, hinges on an ability to
deal with a *kairotic* sense of time: “Like monarchs, we sometimes license fools to tell us
truths which our friends will be too well brought up to speak” (228). This is the difficult
terrain humor resides in—surrounded on both sides by seriousness and retaliation. What
to do? Sousa provides and then undermines a “common sense Ethics of laughter”:

   Laugh when it’s funny, grow up and stop snickering at dirty jokes, don’t
   laugh at cripples (unless you are one yourself), and *show respect*. To show
   respect means not to laugh, snicker, titter, chortle, giggle, or even chuckle
   when it’s Too Sad, when it would be Unkind to, when it would Offend a
   Sacred Memory, and when it might be taken to Insult a Mother, a Country,
   or a Religion. But a few precepts don’t add up to an Ethic. Can anything,
   indeed, properly be called the ‘Ethics of Laughter’? (228).

For the moment, if we place all high-level-philosophical-post-modern-speculation-and-
fancy-argumentation to the side, we can agree that in our own lives, the guidelines he
provides *work*. If an alien came to us in need of advice on how to deal with humor it
would be most helpful to provide them with the previous guidelines and tell them to go
from there.

   But nobody reading this will be satisfied with that explanation, and Sousa
provides a more highly evolved ethics of humor when he summarizes what Henri
Bergson’s ethics of humor might look like:
Comedy is mid-way between the Utilitarian perception of everyday life, and the essential perception of the world in itself which only art can claim to give us. In these terms we might explain the cognitive defect of laughter not merely as diverting our attention from ‘more serious things’, which in itself is meaningless, but in the necessary distortion and obfuscation of the world it purports to reveal, because of its reliance on generalities and stereotypes (245).

In sum, we can judge humor on its ability to reveal the falseness of ‘serious life’ and our reliance on stereotypes. Within this ethics of humor, bad humor would be that which does not do these things: it does not reveal to us anything about the serious life and it does not challenge our reliance on stereotypes.

Stereotypes are dealt with in greater detail by Joseph Boskin who also writes on the ethics of humor in his work, “The complicity of Humor: The Life and Death of Sambo.” Boskin states that, “stereotypes are so pertinacious that they can be dislodged only after a series of powerful assaults” (250). I will go on to argue that *paraumhordyor* is one such method of dislodgement, but here, Boskin gets at the genuinely difficult nature of stereotypes:

stereotyping has always allowed the individual to compartmentalize and this makes more comprehensible one’s own position in relation to other complexities. Stereotyping simplifies the process of perceiving other people and things (251).
We (mainly me here, as you haven’t said anything in quite awhile) could even go so far as to say that stereotyping is present in the basic application/understanding of language. This fundamental difficulty aside, we should also be cautious when attempting to get rid of what would appear to be obviously problematic stereotypes. In addressing the precarious position that the African-American figure of Sambo played in American culture, Boskin writes, “Not only were Afro-Americans perceived as the purveyors of laughter but they also served as the butt of comedy” (253), and he elaborates here:

Both the performer and the audience, then, are involved in a complicity of illusion [. . .] entrapped within the illusion, the stereotyped person runs the risk of succumbing to it [. . .] however, the opposite can also be true—that the victims understand fully well their emasculated position, and that their response only appears to be one of acceptance [. . .] stereotyped persons are forced into a diligent disguise in order to prevent their oppressors from understanding their reactions (260).

We are now in a quagmire of Foucault-ian power relations. To journey further into this swamp, I bring Ronald de Sousa back into the fray to complicate the previously provided Bergsonian-esque ethics of humor. He targets the two wobbly presuppositions this ethic rests on: “by eliminating stereotypes and simplifications, we can have direct access to the correct vision of reality and its singular contents” and that, “true reality—as opposed to utilitarian representations of reality—is captured by direct intuition. If this is to involve art, it must make no use of categories and stereotypes” (245).
Sousa’s concerns are not unwarranted; nonetheless, where he finds a dead-end, I want to apply paraumhordyor to assuage the sting brought on by the initially problematic nature of these presuppositions, thereby saving the best pieces of the mock-Bergson ethic. Parody dresses up within the conventions of the medium but it openly admits it dresses up within these conventions. Parody uses stereotypes but it openly admits to using stereotypes. In making the problematic conventions/stereotypes integral to its work, certain forms of parody (paraumhordyor) are able to snatch the rug out from underneath the serious tone necessary to establish the problematic stereotypes. The paraumhordyor breaks up the connection between the serious tone of the stereotype and the oppressed rhetorizing stance we can retreat into upon encountering this serious stereotype. This ‘breaking up’ creates a necessary opportunity for us to reflect on our relationship with the stereotype. When this occurs the stereotype is ineffective in both dominating over us in making us feel defeated or dominating over us by making us taking a knee-jerk defensive stance that can often only be falsely empowering, as it provides no options outside itself. In creating this opportunity for creative alternatives, paraumhordyors are able point to the possibility of a multiplicity of ethics outside itself; i.e., outside the initial ethical framework that the individual/audience brought to the table.

However, it is problematic to suppose that it is impossible for us to find strength in, or identify with, the stereotypes placed upon us. It is also problematic to suppose that art itself (which is a mimetic happening) does not use categories/stereotypes and is only created through “direct intuition” (as will be addressed later in my creativity section). As Sousa implies above, perhaps the ‘Utilitarian perception’ (so called objective) and ‘the
world which art claims to give us’ (so called subjective) collapse into each other: at some point it is impossible to distinguish which is which. However, we do not have to claim we are attempting to reveal “reality” when we use comedy to navigate these two worlds. Instead, comedy (especially parody) (especially paraumhordyor) allows us the ability to momentarily combine and collapse these two worlds: it allows us to play. We can have our cake and eat it too\textsuperscript{14} and we can start to sketch out precepts for a Judgementationalization Rubric for Paraumhordyor\textsuperscript{15}: 1.) humor should offer us the ability to kairotically move inside and outside of the rhetorizing stances that create a utilitarian perception of the everyday as well the as rhetorizing stances that create the perception of artistic/absurdist escapism; 2.) this kairotic movement should allow us to simultaneously accept/abandon and critically reflect/celebrate their self-identifying narrative practices; i.e., this movement should occur in close proximity to both the perception of their self-identifying narrative practices (so-called subjective) and apart from the perception of their self-identifying narrative practices (so-called objective).

To come at an ethics of humor from another direction, Diane Davis discusses the ethical nature of laughter, and in order to do this she defines the posthuman paradox:

we both make and/but are also (more so) made by History. We get into the most trouble and become the most dangerous in the instant we believe we’ve found a way out of the paradox, the instant we believe we’ve found a way to usher in a new Eden [Emphasis in original] (23).

\textsuperscript{14} Editor’s Note: Why would you buy cake if you couldn’t eat it? What kind of a monster would suggest such a thing?

\textsuperscript{15} Editor’s Note: It appears that the author hasn’t included these points in the final rubric. Possibly because they aren’t as catchy as the other items in the final rubric?
Davis then delineates problematic negative responses to this paradox:

Negation typically manifests itself in one of three ways a.) as Idealism, or a blatant refusal to respond [. . .] b.) as Modernism, or an exceedingly hopeful attempt to (re)construct the foundation that has been lost [. . .] c.) as what Peter Sloterdikj [. . .] calls cynicism, a hopeless and nihilistic experience of the noncenter as a loss [Emphasis in original] (24-5).

Sloterdikj also creates another position labeled the kynic, which Davis summarizes: “The kynic celebrates the meaninglessness of the world” (25). Davis then expands on a definition of the kynic by Slavoj Žižek, and she concludes that, “the kynic’s weapon is a devilish laughter, which cracks up, not only [at] the cynic’s sorrow but also [at] the idealist naïveté and the modernist’s hopes [Brackets in original]” (25). However, Davis creates another position, that of the affirmative response:

Affirmative responses resemble the cynical response inasmuch as they also celebrate the posthumanist paradox; however, they do not do so by fighting against meaning. Rather, affirmative responses view the nonfoundational state not as the loss of a foundation but as a space of overflow. The Some-Thing does not give way to a No-thing; rather it is exploded into a radical excess (25).

For Davis, “kairotic laughter” is an example of this affirmative response. She differentiates Gorgias’ understanding of kairos from Platonic notions of the same term. For the Platonic version: kairos is time that can be ordered into a sequence and can therefore be controlled to our advantage (27). But I do not dismiss this notion of time as
quickly as others might. If I dismiss this notion wholesale, how could I proceed to write this sentence? If I don’t believe in my own time management abilities then how have I survived grad school thus far? Maybe I am giving credit where credit isn’t due, but until I can bridge that impasse, I keep writing.

That said, it is obviously paramount to explore alternative perceptions of time, and Davis states that for Gorgian *kairos*:

> It is not the subject/speaker who gets to do the seizing in Gorgias’s epistemology; it is, rather, *kairos* that seizes time and overrules human logic. The *kairotic* moment names that instant when meaning-making is, in a flash, exposed as an operation inscribed in rather than opposed to play (27).

She then extends this to a new concept of laughter, *kairotic* laughter:

> this laughter is rather the most *absurd* response possible in any given situation. It respects no categorical distinctions and follows no social norms: it simply swoops in without warning, *sic* the body, and challenges the boundaries of the ego but taking it for a spin though everything that was negated for the sake of its formation [. . .] [it] escapes human reason’s categorizations; it is born of the remainder, which social norms hope to but never quite succeed at repressing or appropriating: this is not the controlled chuckle but the co(s)mic rhythm that laughs you (29.)

I can think of times when I’ve put the milk back on the counter and the cereal back in the fridge. Shortly after realizing my mistake, laughter erupted out in surprise. I laughed not
just at myself but also at the situation. I laughed in wonderment: “how does this not happen more often?” and “what thoughts had me so preoccupied that I made such a lapse in basic logic?”

I am not sure if this scenario is a working example of her kairotic laughter, but her descriptions of an affirmative response and kairotic laughter come close to describing aspects of my Judgementationalization Rubric for Paraumhordyor. However, the way in which the ‘radical excess’ (à la Henry Miller) and the ‘ssseizing of the body’ are treated/celebrated within this particular ‘rhet-comp/continental philosophizing’ tradition is problematic. This radical excess/seizing generates anxiety; it is anxiety. It is difficult for me to imagine people who actually want this anxiety inducing excess/seizing. I am not at ease with excess/seizing, and I know many people (especially in academia) are also not comfortable with it. Excess/seizing are diametrically opposed to what has made many of us successful in academia: being slightly anal retentive (not so slightly for some) and organizing the world (ordering our shit around) to represent our own self-image—an image that knowingly subjects itself to specific institutionalized traditions of the highest order. Do we really want to teach an excessive number of students in our undergrad courses? Do we count on them being seized by the course content without any effort/planning from us?

Do we really want too many choices? Do we really want too many hypothetical/rhetorical questions thrown at us at once? We need to refocus the question: how do we accept excess/being seized in a way that aids our ability to perform the task of othering whilst not being irresponsible. Moving aside the overly
dramatic/heroic/revolutionary/romantic/giddy phrasing that permeates this ‘rhet-comp/continental philosophizing’ tradition, I want to rework this affirmative response and kairotic laughter to make them helpful—sorry, celphuriositical. This radical excess/being seized can generate creativity and moments of insight, but it can also be disastrous for those of us who have no foundation to play with, i.e., we who aren’t able to set our selves apart from a foundation and look back in order to move forward.

However, Diane Davis smartly asks a very difficult question:

If what it means to be human in a posthumanist world is to be scattered and/or disidentity with no sub/stantial referential image, it is necessary that our question become: How will these disidentities share the world? (47).

We can start to answer this question by being better able to deal with the excess of person that we are, i.e., the multipersonned/kairotic self that we are, and our ability to deal with failure and a loss of control. Being able to be contradictory while being responsible, being able to disagree with oneself in a meaningful way (not just trivially in order to prove a point or play devils advocate) should be something we constantly practice and teach (and if the humanities were humane, we would be good at this… we are not).

All of this requires a person who has come to terms with their multipersonned/kairotic self. This is homo rhetorius! But this is not a flip-flopper or a salesman. This is someone who is able to peer through many different rhetorizing lenses and in doing so, choose a stance aided by a kairotic understanding of time, i.e., with an understanding that their rhetorizing stance will change and that they are only one factor
within a multitude of factors that determine their rhetorizing stance. Therefore my
Judgementationalization Rubric for Paraumhordyor must include the following:

paraumhordyor should acknowledge kairotic time in a Gorgian sense (the Platonic sense
is already assumed) and in doing so, the paraumhordyory should be celphuriositful in a
way that allows its audience to be better able to deal with a multiplicity of options. In
being better able to deal with a multiplicity of options the we will be capable of dealing
with our multipersoned self, which includes the self who is mis-taken/mis-seized by
kairos. Paraumhordyor offers one way for the individual/medium to hold together
disparate views in a way that does not immediately reinforce a singular serious self
(although this is one part of the multipersonned self) but instead allows us to experience
the multipersoned, or a multirhetorically positioned self long enough to engage in
insightful and critical creativity—sorry, criteativicalitivity. My Judgementationalization
Rubric for Paraumhordyor attempts to provide practical, albeit sketchy guidance, or
attempts to provide us with the ability to start asking the “right” questions, i.e., start
bringing in alternative ways of doing and thinking that aren’t solely reinforcing what we
already “know” to be “true.”

While the results of this Judgementationalization Rubric for Paraumhordyor
might lay outside the text, we are afforded tangible glimpses of these results in action:
when a stand-up comedian doesn’t retaliate at a heckler but quickly comes up with
something brilliant and insightful, when Steven Colbert doesn’t belittle a guest with
opposing views but improvs and provides both of them an opportunity to see the
ridiculousness of the situation, when Trey Parker and Matt Stone describe the highly
motivated, demanding, critical, yet highly playful atmosphere that the show *South Park* is created within—these instances provide evidence of this *Judgementationalization* Rubric for *Paraumphordyor* in action. By making and surrounding themselves with humor and parody these individuals have become well practiced: they are nimble, they have come to terms with their multipersonned/kairotic self enough to go out on a limb, make mistakes, and attempt alternative ways of othering.

**Morreall on Humor**

Whatever Hutcheon’s underlying motives for getting rid of the humor in parody, she is not alone in her quest to deny the importance of humor in academia, as many of us in academia place our selves within a serious rhetorizing stance at the expense of humor and play; denying humor and play in academic discourse is as highly problematic as it is widespread. Luckily, philosophzing scholar and humor studizing scholar John Morreall works against false assumptions about humor and delineates the relationship between philosophizing and humorizing by tracing discussions of humorizing through the works of predominant philosophizers. Morreall highlights a major problem in the relationship between philosophizing and humorizing: they got off on the wrong foot. Morreall states: “a good deal of the philosophical neglect of humor [. . .] can be attributed to a longstanding prejudice that began with Plato and Aristotle” (*Taking Laughter Seriously* ix) (as seen previously with Sousa and Plato’s “*phthonos*”).

Morreall explains that the “superiority theory” of humor started with Plato, was taken up by Aristotle, and continued all the way through to works of Hobbes and
Descartes. A central argument derived from the superiority theory is that we, “laugh from feelings of superiority over other people, or over our former position” (Taking Laughter Seriously 5). The notion that we only laugh because we feel superior to others is obviously problematic, but the later part of this theory (laughing at our selves) is actually quite useful, and Morreall finds the superiority theory reworked later (and for the better) by Henri Bergson, who shifts “the object of mockery” to “mechanical inelasticity,” and also adds a “social function” to laughter (Taking Laughter Seriously 117). Positive adaptations aside, the superiority theory still negatively colors our perception of humor, e.g., to this day Margaret Rose has to work against the misconception that parody is mere ridicule.

For Morreall, Plato generated three particularly problematic criticisms against humor that were later perpetuated by proponents of the superiority theory: 1.) “in humor we are exposed to something base, viz., human shortcomings, which can ‘rub off on us’;” 2.) “in laughing at a situation we lose control of our rational faculties and become silly and irresponsible;” 3.) “laughter is basically scorn, and so is antisocial and uncharitable” (Taking Laughter Seriously 85). Morreall then shows how these criticisms helped generate the various problematic stances taken against humor throughout the classical world, in other cultures, in the Bible (especially within the Puritan belief system), etc. Morreall finally arrives in our not so distant past wherein humor was relegated to an economic function: “a device for refreshing us to return to our work with more eagerness,” but devalued further as it should “not to be compared in value with tragedies” (Taking Laughter Seriously 86-8). Morreall also provides examples of humor being
outlawed in dictatorships, stating that, “a dictatorship requires simple blind obedience, preferably based on hero worship, but at least on fear, of the dictator. And the spirit of humor is incompatible with both hero worship and fear” (*Taking Laughter Seriously* 102). Morreall adds that,

> Humor is one of the best weapons against the procedure know as ‘brainwashing.’ The person trying to brainwash another is essentially trying to take away that person’s mental flexibility and capacity to think for himself, and implant in the person a single line of thought from which he will not deviate. But if the person can maintain his sense of humor, this will not happen (*Taking Laughter Seriously* 107).

Luckily there are two other theories of humor that have complicated the initial superiority theory of humor and can provide the public sphere with alternative approaches to humor. Morreall cites the incongruity theory championed by Francis Hutcheson, Immanuel Kant, Arthur Schopenhauer, William Hazlitt, and Søren Kierkegaard who find that incongruity is humor’s essential element. Another theory that challenges the superiority theory is the relief theory found in the work done by Herbert Spencer, Sigmund Freud, and Daniel Berlyne. Freud’s work is especially important here, as he maintains that the ability to provide catharsis is a defining characteristic of humor. In contemporary philosophizing Morreall, Michael Clark, Roger Scruton, and Mike W. Martin provide more nuanced perspectives on humor, and Morreall and Martin make two key points when they reflect on these traditional theories. First, Morreall hones in on a particular attitude found in philosophizing that prevents many of these philosophers
from providing an adequate account of humor: “[philosophizers consider their discipline] the serious discipline par excellence” (The Philosophy of Humor and Laughter 1). This serious bias has led to the situation that Mike W. Martin describes:

[. . .] classical philosophers [philosophizers] frequently gave serious attention to humor in the course of unfolding a general speculative theory of metaphysics, epistemology, or human nature. Within these contexts analyses of humor often ended up fitting the speculative theory better than they fit the phenomenon (172).

All too often these ‘rock star philosophers’ merely graft humor onto their already highly developed “serious scholarship,” which explains why their theories of humor now appear inadequate and artificial. It begs the question: “How/why were these academic proceedings ever deemed acceptable/adequate?” One of the benefits of studying humorizing, parodizing, and rhetorizing is that it allows us to reevaluate foundational academic practices, the process of knowledge creation/ownership in academia, the rhetorizing stances taken in academia, and the affects of these stances outside academia on the public sphere.

Morreall’s work provides insight into how specific philosophical trends can prevent us from understanding our world and our selves. This can occur most obviously when the same ‘hero/dictator worship’ is applied to a the non-playful philosopher who provides ‘singular lines of thought’ that their followers must adopt in order to join the club. In regards to humor’s effect on the individual, Morreall states: “The person who is serious about something tends to be single-minded regarding it, both in having
wholehearted devotion to it, and in not countenancing other evaluations of it” (*Taking Laughter Seriously* 122). But with the humorous attitude, “rather than feeling governed by the situation and obliged to look at it in only one way, we feel playful toward it [. . .]” (*Taking Laughter Seriously* 122). Because of this playful nature of humor, Morreall makes a bold statement: “The humorous attitude now begins to sound like what has traditionally been called ‘the philosophical attitude,’ and indeed the comparison is enlightening” (*Taking Laughter Seriously* 105). The strength of Morreall’s position is predicated on how humor helps the individual deal with mistakes:

> someone with a sense of humor is more imaginative and flexible in his [sic] general outlook, and so is less likely to get obsessed with any particular issues or approach to an issue. Such a person will be more open to suggestions from others, and so will be more approachable. The fact that a sense of humor keeps one from getting too self-centered or defensive about [sic] his [sic] ego also helps in this regard (*Taking Laughter Seriously* 116).

By moving away from the superiority theory of humor and by moving away from defining parody as pure ridicule, Morreall and Rose work against formidable traditions and offer crucial insights for my work here.
The *Celphuriositifulness* of *Paraumhordyor* for the Individual: play, imitation of dynamic motive, empathy, and agonistic debate

The most significant reason why I position myself amongst scholars who champion humor and who keep humor aligned with parody is because of the benefits humor can provide\(^\text{16}\). While Rose hints at the benefits of humor in parody, she doesn’t fully articulate them as elaborately as I will here, and I do so for very specific reasons. Morreall, Freud, Bakhtin, Lanham, and Bergson all find that humor allows us to play, and this play provides a cathartic release for us to temporarily break away from the serious rhetorizing stance.

Morreall addresses the general need to distance our selves from our everyday tasks and “simply enjoy attending to things and situations we perceive or imagine. And enjoying humor is one way to do this” (*Taking Laughter Seriously* 94). Freud also highlights the need for a break from our logocentric serious self. Freud states that, “‘Pleasure in nonsense’, as we may call it for short, is concealed in serious life” (153). Play is essential for children when they are learning a language, but Freud argues that this playful relationship with language is restricted in adulthood (as adults become *homo economicus*). However, jokes are able to bypass this censorship and restore the pleasure in playing with words and critical reasoning (212). Freud also finds that jokes encourage us to make wide-ranging associations outside the strictly serious, singular message (293). Because of this, jokes allow us to reach back into our past when we were less rigidly defined, and when we did not have to continually reinforce a singular serious narrative.

\(^{16}\) Author’s Note: More benefits of humor listed here: Morreall in *Taking Laughter Seriously* (94, 99, 102, 104,) and Freud’s *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious* (106, 147, 153).
Humor relieves us of the anxiety created by the demands (placed on us by our selves and others) to confine our selves to a neatly package, sellable, singular narrative.

Mikhail Bakhtin also describes the practice of contrasting the serious and the playful in order to reveal the one-sided serious nature of powerful institutions. Bakhtin finds that parodies and comedies performed during village carnivals offered villagers this dynamic perspective:

Seriousness had an official tone and was treated like all that was official. It oppressed, frightened, bound, lied, and wore the mask of hypocrisy [. . .] When its mask was dropped in the festive square and at the banquet table, another truth was heard in the form of laughter, foolishness, improprieties, curses, parodies, and travesties (*Rabelais and His World* 94).

Unlike the one-sided nature of the serious epic or tragic work, Bakhtin finds that in particular, parody as a genre is able to include a much richer experience:

[parodic-travestying] shows that a given straightforward generic word — epic or tragic— is one-sided, bounded, incapable of exhausting the object; the process of paroding forces us to experience those sides of the object that are not otherwise included in a given genre or a given style [. . .] (*The Dialogic Imagination* 55).

Rose articulates something similar here: “[parodies] criticise and refunctio less self-reflective works of fiction; to educate their own readers to a greater awareness of both the possibilities and limitations of fiction; and to create new works from old” (Rose 99).
The importance of humorous play is also argued for in Richard A. Lanham’s work, *The Motives of Eloquence*, where he finds it important to contrast serious and playful rhetorical elements (14). I argue that the comedic aspect of parody makes the interaction with parody’s target playful, and this is important because, as Lanham notes, we are able to construct a “rhetorical narrative” that offers “an imitation of dynamic motive” (14) that does not attempt to find resolution exclusively within the serious or exclusively within the playful but instead is able to do both by using “narrative or stylistic discontinuity” that “tends to turn in on itself and meditate on the limits of language” (12). By ‘turning on itself’ these narratives create a meditation on the “boundary conditions language sets to truth” (12). Lanham’s ‘imitation of dynamic motive’ is describing a process that does not abandon traditional means of communication but instead uses narrative continuity to create discontinuity, and turn the medium back on itself to unconceal how the medium is working. Davis also warns against the simplistic attempt to abandon reason by merely “privilege-flipping”:

‘Reason’ seems always to have been there, camouflaging its alliance with particular communal myths, quietly founding and funding atrocity. It would be silly of course, to argue instead for the Irrational (15).

In order for parody to complete or fill-out the one-sided serious rhetorizing stance and make it communicate with the context/tradition in which it operates, parody needs humor to take the original text to its logical absurdity (but in a communicable way) in order to enunciate the absurdity within the serious gestures of the original text, within the medium, and within *logos* in general. Parody responds to homogeneity with
homogeneity—but humor creates/is created by and signifies that moment when logic
breaks down and the possibility of absurdity is introduced. The original serious target is
incomplete and is only able to achieve its’ seriousness through a lack of self-reflexivity
that suppresses and silences its’ absurd nature (and the essentially absurd nature of
logos), thereby making its’ message appear natural, new, or at the very least neutral. In
using humor to create an easily recognizable deference between parody and its target, the
parody disallows the original text from fully slipping into the habitual narrative practices
of the individual and the community. Parody needs its comical elements in order to be
celphuriositful because, as Henri Bergson notes: “the ceremonial side of social life must,
therefore, always include a latent comic element, which is only waiting for an
opportunity to burst into full view” (17). Paraumhordyor allows us to practice becoming
aware of the possibility of this ‘burst’ and makes us better able to deal with other
surprises life sends our way.

The paraumhordyorist does not have to abandon responsibility (abandoning
conventions) to others (and others as themselves), but makes us better able to deal with
this responsibility, i.e., better able to be responsible/responsive in the face of kairotic
time and the act of othering. Morreall states that humor allows us to: “see that our own
personalities and actions have just as many incongruities in them as anyone else’s”
(Taking Laughter Seriously 128). Empathy is an awareness of othering and can only
occur once we have come to terms with inconsistencies within our selves. Cruelty (to our
selves and others) is derived from an inability to find a creative outlet for an
inconsistency within our selves and occurs when we only understand half of the failure in
others, i.e., cruelty is empathy that is missing a crucial step: self-laughter through the recognition that another’s failure has the possibility of kairoticly being our own. Cruelty is empathy half-baked. This recognition of othering that produces an empathic self-laughter is more likely to occur when we are more at ease with our multipersonned/kairotic self. I don’t mean empathy that claims to “know” the other, but empathy that is kairoticly created through an acknowledgement of othering. It is a curious and sociable empathy. Oh shit. Do I have to make another term emcuriable\textsuperscript{17}?

Paraumphordyoor’s empathy must be both curious and sociable in order to distinguish it from self-serving empathy. Both Freud and Bergson find that humor is essentially social. Freud makes distinctions between jokes and dreams, as jokes are bound by a “condition of intelligibility” with the possibility of being understood by another, whereas “a dream still remains a wish,” but “a joke is developed play” (222). This ‘condition of intelligibility’ is the same standard required by Lanham and Davis and it is the same standard required by the Judgementationalization Rubric for Paraumphordyoor. Jokes depend on a social context: whether communicating with another or communicating with another part of our multipersonned selves. In other words, this essential social element in paraumphordyoor can be present when we are all alone.

When humor is used in parody we gain the ability to practice playing within what would typically be risky/detrimental/vulnerable experiences. For example, when we are

\textsuperscript{17} Author’s Note: A similar dilemma to the one I currently find myself in: “I am this month one whole year older than I was this time twelve-month; and having got, as you perceive, almost into the middle of my fourth volume—and no farther than to my first day’s life—’tis demonstrative that I have three hundred and sixty-four days more life to write just now, than when I first set out; so that instead of advancing, as a common writer, in my work with what I have been doing at it—on the contrary, I am just thrown so many volumes back—[…]” (Sterne 207).
asked to critically reflect on our relationship to figures perpetuated by mass media, humor allows us to enter an atmosphere of play wherein we can turn our expectations, limitations, failures, and mistakes on their head and find creative ways of dealing with them. Morrell finds that within this atmosphere the individual is able to view both their inconstancies and shortcomings and also their successes, in a critical manner (Taking Laughter Seriously 104). It is crucial for us to have opportunities to play with our perceptions and motives in order to gain a wider view of our multipersonned/kairotic selves, thereby not remaining within a limited serious rhetorizing stance. Humor provides us with a celpuriositiful-balancing act that can defy both anxiety and hubris, allowing us to wander outside an Icarus-esque fate: flying too high or too low.

Humor can also help parody provide creative play in other risky/detrimental/vulnerable experiences, such as argumentation. In “Models of Democratic Deliberation: Pharmacodynamic Agonism in The Daily Show,” Kelly Wilz examines alternatives to the rhetorizing strategies found in our currently divisive political culture, as she wants to focus on rehumanizing processes of argumentation (78). Although more satirical than parodic, Wilz focuses on The Daily Show’s use of humor in argumentation and how it embodies “Nietzsche’s, Burke’s, and Hawhee’s conception of agonistic debate” (87). Wilz finds that Nietzsche argues that in order to understand human relations and how they function in this agonistic realm, we must realize that human relations aren’t reducible to words on paper—that human relations should be viewed as symbolic reactions, and that we should engage one another
through interpretive practices separating deed from doer, and by looking at our identities and political action as a constant process (81).

Whilz further rounds out this argument by providing a quote from Debra Hawhee:

“agonism is not merely a synonym for competition” [qtd. In Hawhee 185] (83), and then Wilz develops this agonistic form of argumentation alongside Kenneth Burke’s “courtship”:

In his model of courtship, each actor engages one another through strategies and tactics, but always the goal is a ‘transcending of social enstrangement.’ Here conflict and contestation is celebrated and the actors’ goal is to separate deed from doer; separate the argument from the actor to create connectivity enough to tolerate and deal with the differences. What we must do as critics, then, is uncover models of ‘courtship’ to further explore how connectivity can be created as to reduce the tendency of discourse to reduce to enemy relations, and how constructive rhetoric can be crafted through civil discourse, which is present in Jon Stewart’s interviews in The Daily Show” (83).

Diane Davis echoes these sentiments when elaborating on her own work: “Here, the desire is not to ‘argue well’ but rather to write differently, to make an/other kind of sense” (5). We should always attempt to get past the writer’s contradictions, inconsistencies, and our personal vendettas in order to see what they are able to do with the work (Please do!). And paraumhordyor allows us to practice doing this.

Once we become stuck in our serious rhetorizing stance no amount of debate will
dislodge us from our stance, because we are our stance. With humor as the backdrop for *The Daily Show*, Wilz notes that even though Stewart and some of his guests have very different opinions, “the interviews never regress into verbal assaults on each other’s character” (89). She also notes that “there are no winners or losers [. . .] this discourse of courtship involves a sort of reciprocity, or the vulnerability to being open to being persuaded” (90). For Wilz, the individuals on Stewart’s show embody a rhetorizing stance of “tolerance and contemplation,” and, to use a quote from R. L. Ivie, we can start to see how “people in political communities might transcend themselves enough to observer their foibles even while acting strategically toward one another” [qtd. in Ivie 279] (84). While *The Daily Show* is mainly satiric it has parodic elements, but regardless, Whilz recognizes that it is the humorous elements that prevent the show from wandering into to problematic areas. *Paraumhordyor* that fall within *Judgementationalization* Rubric for *Paraumhordyor* 18 must 19 act similarly to Wilz’s agonistic forms of argumentation and provide an alternative form of ‘strategic communication toward an other’ that bypasses the serious rhetorizing stance.

**Parody as a Legitimate Art Form and Discourse**

Humor aside, there are many obstacles preventing parody specifically from being *celphuriositiful* in the serious academic world. Similar to what Morreall with does with humor, G.D. Kiremidjian provides a telling history of how parody has been treated by

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18 Author’s Note: Is anyone keeping track of all the rules I’m making for the *Judgementationalization* Rubric for *Paraumhordyor*?

19 Editor’s Note: I wish the author were still alive so I could yell at him, “No, nobody has been keeping track! That’s your job!”
scholars. Although at times parody has suffered great criticism (rightfully so in some instances), Kiremidjian finds that “the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have done much to redeem parody” (232). Nevertheless, many scholars still only value parody for its ability to critique, and Kiremidjian thinks this “short-circuits any connection which might be made between the aesthetic character of parody and the aesthetic problems of modern art as a whole” (232). Although parody’s ability to critique is important, it is important that we not reduce parody to pure critique, especially critique that is mere ridicule.

One of the many stigmas preventing parody from being a considered a significant research topic or art form is that it isn’t creative: parody is merely imitative, not original, and therefore should not be taken seriously. However, this is a misconception propounded by romantic notions of a singular ‘creative genius’. For Kiremidjian these general misconceptions were created by Aristotle and others who find that art should imitate life, i.e., art reflects nature (233). But parody imitates art, so it is seen as we step removed from the process. However, if we are to depart from Aristotle’s narrow definition and devalue this art/nature binary, parody is no longer subservient to traditionally dominant art forms. So there are two misconceptions that need to be addressed here: 1.) the parodist uncreatively embodies the stance/gestures/poses of another; 2.) in hiding behind the serious, purely critical, and detached rhetorizing stance a scholar is not being creative but objective—they are merely bringing together other serious academic scholars in an academic paper.

Kiremidjian argues against those who view parody as a secondary art form and he establishes a general aesthetic theory of parody (particularly for literature). He delineates
parody’s essential relation to modern art and culture, as he aims to “[...] isolate parody as a legitimate art form, provide a basic framework within which we can consider a parodistic work, and disentangle it as a phenomenon from satire, travesty, and so forth” (241). Wes D. Gehring makes a similar argument in Parody as Film Genre:

The ‘creative criticism’ significance of parody is important to keep in mind, because the genre often has been considered as something less than important; it has been defined as a parasitic growth on true works of art [.. .] Yet it takes just as much creative talent to both perceive a given structure and then effectively parody it as it does to create a structure in the first place (4).

I want to take this further: it is not that parody is not parasitic, it is that all works are parasitic in one way or another; if nothing else, they are a parasite to their medium/language. But the serious works want to hide this fact, and they are able to do this by finding scapegoats, e.g., playful, humorous, parodic works that do not attempt to hide this aspect of themselves.

In order to view ‘parody as legitimate art form,’ we have to reevaluate the image of the tormented/creative genius who works from divine inspiration, as these images have been handed down to us from those who have consider themselves to be tormented/creative geniuses who work from divine inspiration. Conversely, creativity and inspiration never occur in a vacuum, and while this understanding of creativity is less romantic, it helps others gain a better understanding of the creative process than the image of a singular genius who pulls himself up by his bootstraps and overcomes all odds
all by himself (the very hero character parody usurps). “Serious” art is placed on a pedestal because it is seen to represent pure nature or raw emotion, but as noted by Kiremidjian, parody can “illuminate the difficulties which he artist has had with the recalcitrance of the subject matter [. . .] and in the hands of someone like Beerbohm, parody can be raised to a very high art” (240). If we are to break away from the overly simplistic dualities handed down to us by Plato, Aristotle, and others, we will have a more *celphuriositiful* way of understanding how art, creativity, and parody function. Furthermore, Kiremidjian argues that artists like Joyce and Mann use parody as a means of expressing the inexpressible situation; they capitalize on the paradoxical divorce between its parts to harmonize within art the corresponding schisms within the culture [. . .] and parody becomes a major mode of expression for a civilization in a state of transition and flux (241-2).

Parody highlights the impossibility of absolute forms and highlights the necessity of mistakes and imperfections. In doing so, parody reminds us of our mortality—exactly what we don’t want to remind the masses of if we are attempting to be immortal. In Season 5, Episode 10 (“Christmas Attack Zone”) of Tina Fey’s *30 Rock*, the character Tracey Jordan summarizes this difficulty as he is attempting to transform his public persona from a comedian to an award winning actor, “Nobody takes you seriously unless you are serious!” For both Kiremidjian and Gehring, parody is more than a secondary art form. I concur, but I want to go further and show how parody can improve our practices
of self-narration and not necessarily through “high art” but through mass media as well as classroom implementation.

Differentiating Parody (Obstacle 2):

Justification for Differentiation

Simon Dentith explains how the concept of parody is not representative of any specific political or moral stance, e.g., conservative or revolutionary. For Dentith, there is no essential feature that determines the direction of a parody’s attack. Instead, parody’s motivation is subjected to a time and a place, as well as the individuals who use it (28). He therefore argues for a more general definition of parody (9), because the word has taken on so many different meanings\(^\text{20}\) and is only working within a spectrum of closely related comedic rhetorical devices (6). Tamas Beneyi takes a similar position, and his caution here should be duly noted:

Instead of defining parody as a herald of literary change or as a signal of the impossibility of change, it is probably better not to marry it off to any particular creed or attitude. Parody is a literary mode or technique that is implicitly aware of the paradoxes and problems of literary change; moving somewhere between the two texts, never losing sight of either pole of the inside/outside dichotomy. Parody combines several potential attitudes towards the past: incorporating criticism into creation [. . .] it may emphasize the intention of breaking with the past [. . .] it may represent

\(^\text{20}\) Author’s Note: Rose also provides an important list on pages 280-283 that shows how varied the definitions of parody are.
nostalgia for the past, a reluctance to break away from the past [. . .] or stress hardships besting novelty or originality, the sense of the impossibility of a complete break with historical forms (95).

Parody’s ambiguity towards its’ target is a strength; however, we should not have to abandon our pursuit to understand how it currently functions in specific instances. So Dentith and Beneyi provide another dividing line in the academic conversation on parody: unlike Rose and Hutcheon, Dentith and Beneyi argue against separating parody from similar forms.

Refusing to define the term closes off important discussions and perhaps what Dentith and Beneyi are really working against is the notion that we can provide a “true” definition of parody or the most etymologically accurate definition of parody. Their caution is not unwarranted, but I am not claiming to provide the definitive definition of parody, and I still want to keep the relationship between parody and its target ambiguous. I approach the delineation of parody in a manner similar to Rose and in a manner similar to Wayne C. Booth, as he provides a similar modus operandi with his treatment of irony in The Concept of Irony. Both Rose and Booth display an awareness of the varied definitions and functions of these terms and both agree that we should proceed with caution in defining them. As seen earlier, Kiremidjian also wants to redefine parody in a way that enables it to be viewed as a legitimate art form. Similarly, Aaron Hess finds value in creating distinctions: “The three ideas of irony, parody, and satire, have considerable overlap between them; yet, to treat those as similar may miss the nuance of each” (154). So akin to these scholars, I find that differentiating the term from other
concepts should be not be judged in-and-of-itself but it should be judge on the provided outcomes for doing so.

Differentiating Paraumhordyor by its Targets

Defining the targets of *paraumhorydor* is one of the main ways in which *paraumhorydor* can be differentiated from other similar forms. To begin with, *paraumhorydor’s* targets are specific narrative conventions and figures that are perpetuated by mediums of mass communication, because, as Hutcheon notes, “it is conventions as well as individual works that are parodied” (13). Benyei terms this “generic parody” as opposed to critical parody or pure parody: “Generic parody, therefore, is aimed at the structural and narrative traits of the parodied genre as much as at recurrent elements of the dietetic world and the stylistic conventions of the form” (90). I focus on parody that targets conventions to avoid the problematic relationship that irony and satire can have with their target: irony negates its target, satire replaces its target, and parody is ambivalent towards its target. Rose credits this ambivalence to parody’s ability to be both alongside and against its target. From F. J. Lelievre’s work

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21 Author’s Note: Focusing on conventions prevents us from creating some of the more vicious forms of parody, satire, and irony. In going after the conventions, we do not dwell on the reality of the target or go after them personally; e.g., someone like Bill O’Reilly has to be smart enough (on some level, right?) to understand the positions he takes are problematic. In merely going after Bill O’Reilly the parodist would rely too heavily on the reality of the target, when the target itself is merely a caricature dressed up in certain conventions. In focusing on conventions, *paraumhordyor* escapes from the vendetta producing *ad hominem* attacks that some forms of parody take on. I want to be especially mindful here to use humor in this situation in order to create a positive atmosphere for the individual in the often times traumatic experience of having one’s worldview overturned. This also prevents the *paraumhordyorist* from the over simplistic approach of thinking that one is completely separate from the object of criticism, and instead promotes the realization that these problematic conventions are related to the way we ourselves narrativize the world around us.
“The Basis of Ancient Parody,” Rose highlights the “ambiguity of the prefix ‘para’ and its ability to describe both nearness and opposition [to its target]” (8). In Ulmer’s work, “Of a Parodic Tone Recently Adopted in Criticism” he also notices this aspect of parody: “it neither abandons nor usurps the place of its pretext, but accompanies it” (558). This provides an important distinction for Judgementationalization Rubric for Paraumhordyor: I want to focus on the interpretation of parody’s prefix “para,” as “near” or “accompanying,” it’s target, not “against” its target. As Rose states: “Both by definition (through the meaning if its prefix ‘para’) and structurally (through the inclusion within its own structure of the work it parodies), most parody worthy of the name is ambivalent towards its target” (51). This allows parody to be more flexible than irony and satire:

While most irony may be said to work with one code which conceals two messages, and most satire be described as sending one largely unequivocal message about its target to the reader through a single code. Parody not only contains at least two codes, but is potentially both ironic and satiric in that the object of its attack is both made a part of the parody and of its potentially ironic multiple messages and may be more specifically defined as a separate target than the object of irony (89).

In other words, parody uses “the preformed material of its ‘target’ as a constituent part of its own structure” whereas this is not an essential feature of satire, and this allows satire to “simply make fun of it as a target external to itself” (81-2). Irony and satire are allowed the convenience of operating apart from that which they are critical of, whereas parody
has to dress up within it—parody embodies its target, thereby including itself within the
critique. Rose explains in a diagram on page 89 how irony’s criticism depends on the
audience catching the authors meaning as it deletes its relationship with the other/original
text. This allows irony to devolve into cynicism: it provides a “knowing,” “intellectual”
smirk as opposed to a surprise, a smile, or a laugh. Irony attempts to delete the trace or
the wink that parody provides, thereby allowing us to be cruel to those who “don’t get it,”
as seen in the actions of a nihilistically jaded hipster. Davis also highlights the problem
with the “heavily invested laughter” (33) of homo seriosus and this snicker can be heard
throughout academia.

For satire the critique remains external; satire is able to remain at a distance from
its target and this leaves open the possibility for the critique to devolve into ridicule. The
satirist (as I define them) attempts to convey one message (the corrective, right message)
directed outward toward the audience; the parodist (as I define them) provides a
multiplicity of messages directed at the target, the audience, and back at themselves. For
Rose, parody’s “reflexive and ‘meta-fictional’ as well as comic and playful” nature, make
it “distinct from satire in which the author’s statements are only directed outwards to the
world of the reader” (36). In this way parody complicates “the satirist’s more
straightforward contrast of a reality to an ideal by showing a variety of conflicting ideals
or representations of reality” (Rose 90). While satire attempts to replace its target with
something better (implying that there are right and wrong answers), parody can remain
ambivalent to its target (whilst dressing up within its’ target), and allow the audience to
make something out of the humorous juxtaposition it creates. This is the self-reflexive nature of parody that Rose champions that allows for multiple-layers and interpretations.

Freud’s “sceptical jokes,” provide further precepts for my Judgementationalization Rubric for Paraumhordyor as well as my definition of authentic philosophizing, wherein we go after a central problem we are experiencing in the hopes that others are experiencing this same problem. Freud states that this kind of joke is, “pointing to a problem and is making use of the uncertainty of one of our commonest concepts” (138). This moves away from the superiority theory and a final feeling of superiority over others, and takes into account Foucault-ian power dynamics as well as Whilz’s agonistic argumentation: not narrowing the rhetorizing outcome into two options “us or them.” What these jokes are attacking is not, “a person or an institution but the certainty of our knowledge itself, one of speculative possessions” (138).

At their worst, irony, satire, and bad parody depend too heavily on the audience’s contextual/societal understanding of the target, which is why they often don’t age very well and are not understood by a wide-ranging audience. For instance, Gorgias’ trilema is still read and appreciated today because Gorgias establishes a parodic philosophizing tone. As quoted from Catherine Osborne’s Presocratic Philosophy: A Very Short Introduction, Gorgias states:

Language is that by means of which we communicate, but language is not the objects and things out there. So we don’t communicate the things out there to our neighbors. We communicate language, which is something other than the objects. And so just as what is seen could not come to be
something heard and vice versa, so also since the things themselves lie outside us, they could not come to be our language; but since they are not language, they cannot be communicated to another (131).

Thomas G. Rosenmeyer provides a summary of this passage: “nothing can be described: even if anything is apprehensible, it is inexpressible and incommunicable to one’s neighbor” (230). However, if “we don’t communicate the things out there to our neighbors,” then what Gorgias says is not communicable, but it is, insofar as language enables communication. We only have to know what overly serious proclamations are usually made by ‘philosophizing individuals’ to understand how the text is working and to ‘get’ the humor therein, or to grin at the paradox Gorgias has provided us with. To add to my Judgementationalization Rubric for Paraumhordyor: the paraumhordyoric work must be parodying logos itself.

A Critical Rhetoric that accounts for Creativity, Foucault-ian Power Dynamics, and Helpfulness

Sure, parody might not always have the aforementioned relationship to its target, and at times irony and satire might have this same “alongside” relationship with their target, but I am creating these distinctions in order to show how paraumhordyor can: 1.) provide more opportunities for creative insight for the audience; 2.) account for the complexities found in the productive aspects of power à la Foucault; and 3.) ground critique in celphuriosity. These benefits of paraumhordyor help me more clearly round out my Judgementationalization Rubric for Paraumhordyor; moreover, these benefits
align with features of what Raymie E. McKeerrow terms a “critical rhetoric,” thereby aligning rhetoric and humor studies.

Similar to what Morreall has done in humor studies, McKeerrow defines critical rhetoric in order to depart from a specific philosophical tradition established by Aristotle and others that limits rhetorizing’s full potential as an academic discourse (454). McKeerrow wants to “escape from the trivializing influence of universalists approaches” provided by Plato, Aristotle, Habermas, Perelman, and Toulmin who “preserve for rhetoric a subordinate role in the service of reason,” and instead he wants to “announce it in terms of a critical practice” (441). McKeerrow does this in order to recapture “the sense of rhetoric as contingent, of knowledge as doxastic, and of critique as performance” (145).

McKeerrow considers rhetorizing and criticism creative processes: “[critical rhetoric] places focus on the activity as a statement; the critic as inventor becomes arguer or advocate for an interpretation of the collected fragments” (458). McKeerrow draws from the work of Michael McGee to argue that this goes beyond “a simple speaker-audience interaction,” and instead highlights the process of pulling together “disparate scraps of discourse which, when constructed as an argument, serve to illuminate otherwise hidden or taken for granted social practices” (McKeerrow 451). This is the same process I view occurring in paraumhordyor: it is re-creation of a (not “the”) contingent original’s conventions (not the whole), all the while pulling in alien forms that provide opportunities for a variety of different perspectives to be realized. Paraumhordyor occupies an uneasy space for many of us: it tells us it’s old and new, original and
unoriginal. Here the critic *qua* inventor and performer generates a space for creative inquiry to inspire others by acknowledging and pointing to the very scraps they are pulling together to construct their argument. This self-reflexive critique makes the audience aware that the critique does not occur in a vacuum but within a dynamic and socially contingent context. Therefore, this critic/inventor (*crvenitoric?*) is no longer able to hide behind an impersonal mask of academic/political/moral seriousness, as McKerrow acknowledges: “critique is not detached and impersonal” (145).

In not remaining *against* its target and purely negative or critical, *paraumhordyor qua* critical rhetoric is able to allow for creative alternatives, as Rose states of parody, “This ambivalence may entail not only a mixture of criticism and sympathy for the parodied text, but also the creative expansion of it into something new” (51). *Paraumhordyor* can be critical of its target but it must embody and reproduce its’ target. This embodiment provides an opening for us as audience members to consider alternatives and to re-imagine the target and our relationship to it, thereby re-functioning the target into something new or perhaps helping us remember anew forgotten/undisclosed aspects of the target and our selves. So instead of pretending to not traffic within the problematic aspects of communication (as satire, irony, bad parody, and not so clever academics try to do), *paraumhordyor* dresses up within the same problematic aspects of communication not to transcend them, but to leave the possibility/task of transcendence up to the individual outside the narrative (you) through creative expansion. There is no transcendence within the *paraumhordyoric* narrative as it acts as a platform for creative and helpful repurposing.
The most effective way to undermine power structures is through creativity—not in the sense of creating new worlds from nothing—but in the sense of putting our selves within a creative context (with others) that offers up potential alternatives. McKerrow finds that this re-creation allows “[. . .] constructing an argument that identifies the integration of power and knowledge and delineates the role of power/knowledge in structuring social practices” (451). Therefore, (second reason) I want to define paraumhordyor by its relationship to its target and as a critical rhetoric, because I want to interpret the ‘in opposition with’ aspect of “para” through a Foucault-ian understanding of power relations. In Foucault’s *The History of Sexuality: Volume I* he famously states, “where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power” (95). Foucault’s influence on McKerrow’s work presents itself when McKerrow states: “[power] is not repressive, but productive—it is an active potentially positive force which creates social relations and sustains them through the appropriation of a discourse that ‘models’ the relations through its expression” (448). Therefore, the critical rhetorician’s goal is to reveal the “silent and often nondeliberate ways in which rhetoric conceals as much as it reveals through its relationship with power/knowledge” (145). Furthermore:

[critical rhetoric] seeks to unmask or demystify the discourse of power. The aim is to understand the integration of power/knowledge in society—what possibilities for change the integration invites or inhibits and what intervention strategies might be considered appropriate to effect social change (144-5).
Therefore, McKerrow fights against the philosophical tradition of making rhetorizing an “inquiry that ends in description,” as he wants critical rhetoric to end in the “transformation of the conditions of domination” (454) because rhetorizing’s ability to be creative is severally limited when it ends in mere description and oversimplified, clichéd, predetermined, and serious argumentation (lists of topoi).

If power is not merely disseminated through restrictive measures but also through positive and productive means (pleasure, knowledge, etc.) than the uncreative critic who operates through only negative, limiting, conservative, and purely critical argumentation will ultimately be ineffective in resisting power structures. Paraumhordyor is differentiated from the naïve critical stances (taken by culture jamming, satire, profs who are assholes, fundamental religious terrorists) because, as McKerrow notes of critical rhetoric,

   The orientation is shifted from an expression of ‘truth’ as the opposite of ‘false consciousness’ (and away from the naïve notion that laying bare the latter would inevitably move people toward revolution on the basis of a revealed truth) (449).

Too often the serious rhetorizing stance and the non-reflexive comedic forms contain this ‘corrective’ attitude that devolves into a preacherly rhetorizing stance. McKerrow also recognizes that such attitudes carry with them “modernist clichés,” i.e., “the myopic lenses of a predefined vision of the media as a ‘cultural wasteland,’ elitist standards of excellence” (451). The task of the paraumhordyorist/critical rhetorizer is not to define reality but to “call attention to the myth, and the manner in which it mediates between
contradictory impulses to action” (457). Paraumhordyor does not attack the reality of the problematic myth but the inherent (and perhaps latent) possible realities that the myth is attempting to generate. But the ‘calling attention to the myth’ that is done by the paraumhordyorist is a creative act, i.e., it is a criteatival act.

Therefore, to add to the Judgementationalization Rubric for Paraumhordyor: paraumhordyor qua critical rhetoric should not get wrapped up within the reality of the power structure itself (taking an eye for an eye) and only feast parasitically on its host, thereby only existing/remaining relevant till the host parishes. The ambiguous relationship paraumhordyors have with their targets (narrative conventions, figures, logos, and the medium itself) allows them to be helpful beyond the life of particular people or institutions, which change as rapidly as the people who encounter them on a daily basis. Paraumhordyors can avoid becoming dated and non-helpful, if they target conventions and practices that relate to a plethora of genres, cultures, and time periods.

The celphuriosityfulnessishness of paraumhordyor’s criteatival critique as a critical rhetoric highlights a general unhelpfulness in academic criticism and in the classroom. The root of paraumhordyor’s helpfulness—sorry celphuriosity-ness—is in its’ qualities of mediation (mentioned briefly previously): in mediating a text, the doubling, i.e., the reflection of the text on the text, creates the criteatival and humorous juxtaposition. In mediating and being mediated by a quoted text, parody is able to highlight how the medium itself is working, as nearly every scholar on contemporary parody has already mentioned, including Bakhtin: “parodic-travestying literature introduces the permanent corrective of laughter, of a critique on the one-sided seriousness
of the lofty direct word […]” (55). This is the ‘meta-fictional’ aspect of parody that Rose describes, drawing from a distinction made by Gilbert Ryle in *The Concept of the Mind*: “one function of meta-fiction […] is not only to show (in the sense of the describe or to assert) ‘that’ (as in the case with most ‘true or false’ statements), but to show ‘how’ the fictional work, and its depictions of truth and reality are constructed” (Rose 99).

Similarly, in her discussion about parody and the music of Edward Cone, Hutcheon finds that “the composition itself should be relied upon to reveal the methods of analysis needed for its comprehension” (3). In doing this, parody is better equipped to aid our understanding of how both the target and the medium are functioning. This comes close to what Michel de Certeau promotes:

[. . .] a science of the relationship that links everyday pursuits to particular circumstances […] this analysis […] will only be assisted in leading readers to uncover for themselves, in their own situation, their own tactics, their own creations, and their own initiatives (ix).

This central meta-fictional / “how to” / “do it yourself” ability of parody is the basis for the pedagogical strength of *paraumhordyor* (in the classroom and public sphere), as drawing *crieativical* attention to the process/construction itself allows others to copy and create, thereby (at the very least) taking a break from their passive habitual practices of self-narration.

*Paraumhordyor is celphuriosityful* because it places the critic within the criticism, and in doing so offers opportunities for self-deprecating humor. This self-deprecating humor is not self-insulting, but it is the self-acknowledgment of our
multipersonned/kairotic self: it is the attempt to target the critic’s own practices thereby not problematically negate or suppress the richness of our own personal experiences. This is the minimum that must be done if the paraumhordyorist wants to be authentic and if they don’t want to be dated immediately. Attempting to play with a problem “we all might have” the paraumhordyorist takes on the rhetorizing stance akin to stand-up comedians who riff on dating experiences, in-laws, etc. Paraumhordyor provides a helpful alternative to throwing others under the bus in order to grow our scholarly reputation with an inauthentic philosophizing.

It is paramount to undermine the sterile critical techniques passed down to us by those serious philosophizers (and their followers) who continually attempted to disconnect their local experiences from their “serious theories” consequently perpetuating preexisting power dynamics in academia and in the public sphere. Similarly put, McKerrow findings that critical theory should at least have the potential to provide practical insights into our social situations, but “Whether the critique establishes a social judgment about ‘what to do’ as a result of the analysis, it must nonetheless serve to identify the possibilities of future action available to participants” (442).

It is not necessarily important that we derive results from the critique, i.e., that it provides us with a 5-point plan on how to live our lives, but what is important is the number of helpful (celphuriositful) possibilities it generates for the audience/student (even if none of them are capitalized on). These ‘future actions’ can only come into being through repeatedly encouraging our audience to be creative (be creative!). In this context, critique is judged by its ability to be helpful to others and to open up possibilities instead of
closing them off in order to deliver a monological truth. In placing creativity as the end
goal of rhetorizing discourse, McKerrow’s critical rhetoric and my paraumhordyor
become helpful—sorry, celphuriositful-ish.

Burlesque, Ridicule, Mock-Epic, Travesty

Not only should paraumhordyor be defined by its relationship to its target and as
a critical rhetoric, but also parody in general needs to be differentiated from similar
comedic rhetorical devices. Many negative connotations have been attached to parody as
it has been mixed and mangled with other comic devices throughout history. These
devices share similar aspects with parody but fail to be as celphuriositful. Burlesque,
ridicule, mock-epic, and travesty all fall into this first category of devices/genres, as each
one lacks essential elements that make parody more robust.

As seen earlier, Rose argues for parody’s central features (comedic, meta-
fictional, double-coded, etc.) to not be dismissed because of connotations that have been
attached to the term. In regards to the burlesque, she argues that, “ancient concepts and
uses of parody related it to applications which were both meta-fictional and comic,” but
that “modern theories of parody have seen it reduced to the burlesque, so that, while its
use in meta-fiction continued, it was largely unrecognized as parody there” (272). This
process has continued into

late-modern theories of parody from the 1960’s and after have tended to
emphasize with the powerlessness or the nihilistic character of its comic
factors, or its meta-fictional or intertextual aspects, but not both the comic
as understood as something positive and the meta-fictional or the intertextual at the same time (Rose 272).

Rose also distinguishes parody from Bakhtin’s definitions that trap parody within the realm of folk humor, thereby placing too strong an emphasis on parody’s ridiculing aspects, which, as seen earlier, was unfortunately perpetuated by Julia Kristeva’s interpretation of Bakhtin:

Whatever Bakhtin’s reasons for emphasizing the importance of folk humor and its ridiculing forms of the 1930s and later may have been, one major problem with the majority of Bakhtin’s analysis is the maintenance of a concept of parody as carnivalesque folk mockery or ridicule together with extrapolations from that concept, and analyses of more complex parody works, where such a concept is inadequate for either the type of formal or stylistic parody involved, or the type of subject-matter it is supposed to reflect (158).

An important reason for distinguishing parody from these closely related forms is because folk humor, burlesque, pure ridicule, mock-epic, and travesty often depend on overly simplified treatments of power relations, i.e., a mere reversal of high and low culture:

[. . .] the complicated structure of the more sophisticated parody—in which the target text may not only be satirized but also refashioned—nonetheless demonstrates a more subtle (though still comic) use of other literary works than is implied by the term burlesque, or even by the term

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‘mock-epic’ when the word ‘mock’ is used in the sense of ‘mockery’, ‘ridicule’, or ‘spoof’ (29).

While these similar comedic rhetorical devices are not limited to my previous treatment of them, historically and by and large, they lack parody’s ability to be comic and meta-fictional and intertextual and self-reflexive and accommodate complicated power relations.

Pranking and Culture Jamming

A less prominent debate, but one that is important to address is the differentiation between parody and culture jamming. In “Pranking Rhetoric: ‘culture Jamming’ as Media Activism,” I find Christine Harold’s move to elevate culture jamming above parody problematic. Harold comes close to articulating my views on several related issues in regards to parody, but one of the main reasons her analysis of parody falls short is because she doesn’t display an awareness of the work done on parody by Margaret Rose and others, and she doesn’t recognize key differences between Juvenalian Satire and humorous parody.

Harold is only able to elevate pranking above parody by providing a very limiting definition of parody and this is evident in the main examples of parody she uses: Ad parodies from an activist culture jamming group called Adbusters. The problem here is that I wouldn’t consider Adbusters parodists, in fact I would place them alongside her examples of pranksters: the Situationists, Joey Skaggs, R ®Mark, The Barbie Liberation Organization, the Biotic Baking Brigade, and the American Legacy Foundation’s Truth
I agree with her that *Adbusters* is for the most part ineffective, trendy, unsustainable, and is problematically corrective/authoritative. However, these “pranksters” that she champions are guilty of the same charges. If she were to use better examples of parody, such as *The Onion* or *Tim and Eric*, her differentiation that parodists are corrective, negative, and preacher-ly when pranksters aren’t, would fall apart.

Harold also doesn’t recognize that the prankster’s rhetoricizing stance is highly romantic and very politically motivated. Because of these overly sentimental romantic and political stances, these pranksters never effectively revolt against the powers at large, but instead end up reinforcing these power structures. All these pranksters are still working on a large (abstract, idealistic, romantic) political level, wanting to blame “the man,” when they should be focusing on the practices perpetuated by these institutions and the not-so-obvious productive aspects of power as described by Foucault. Instead, they flash shades of conspiracy theory in their attempt to stop the masses (who apparently have no agency) from being brainwashed.

Seen in this light, the *Adbusters* and pranksters are one in the same. However a parodist who uses humor can escape the same problematic situations that Harold *claims* the pranksters are able to escape, but which the pranksters inevitably fall back into: they want to get rid of an institutionalized reality in order to institutionalize their own reality. As seen previously, this is the problem satire can run into when it takes on a preacherly/moralizing rhetoricizing stance. Instead, if Harold were to focus on the personal, instead of on large romantic political gestures, she would perhaps find more value in parody. In short, Harold falls into the trap laid out by the serious bias: in order for
parody/pranking to be taken seriously there needs to be political justification, i.e., it needs to “do” something political. But if we move the focus to the personal with the end result of creatively/critically (critically) engaging with practices of self-narration then this whole model starts to fall apart.

Contemporary Conversations on Irony

One of the major differentiations between parody and irony is that irony and unhelpful parody can be humorless, i.e., irony doesn’t make its “trick” as readily apparent to a wide audience. Rose states:

[. . .] whereas [. . .] the difference between the ‘apparent’ message of the ironist’s code and its ‘real’ message is generally left concealed for the recipient of the irony to decipher, the parodist usually combines and then comically (and thus, noticeably) contrasts a quoted text or work with a new context, contrasting Code B of the parodied text with Code A of the parody text, with the aim of producing laughter from the recognition of their incongruity (88).

Rose’s differentiation between irony and parody holds up much better than the distinctions drawn by many other academics, e.g., Tamas Benyei.

A significant division within the academic discussion on irony and parody occurs between Beneyi and G. D. Kirmidjan. Benyei wants to curb Kiremidjian’s argument that parody can be a viable aesthetic form capable of expressing content that is otherwise non-expressible in any other art form:
Kiremidjian, typically, tries to legitimate parody as an aesthetically valuable form of art positing a kind of ‘original parody,’ which he claims is the only means of expressing modes of experience that will otherwise not yield to form (95).

However, like Kiremidjian, I believe parody can often express ‘that which can’t be expressed by any other form.’ While I agree in general with Benyai’s caution in defining parody, Kiremidjian is not trying to ‘marry parody off to any particular creed or attitude.’ Kiremidjian is working against dominating traditions in order to provide us with a helpful view of parody and his larger purpose was to work against the perception that the parodist’s task of embodying another work as original or creative. It is difficult to decipher how Benyai is not inversely ‘marrying parody off to a particular creed’ by denying parody’s ability to be an important art form and also by differentiating parody from irony. The motive for these moves finally become clear when Benyei elevates irony above parody: “Irony [. . .] is a broader concept, a structure of thought that intimates the reversibility of views, concepts, things. It is when it explicitly refers to texts that it invariably and inevitably becomes contaminated with parody [Emphasis added]” (117).

Perhaps Benyei places irony above parody to align himself with a traditionally serious philosophical stance? I agree that a major differentiating feature between parody and irony is that parody has a much closer relation to its’ target text, but I draw a different conclusion. Beneyi perceives irony’s textual contamination as a disadvantage, while I see parody’s close relationship to its’ target text as a strength: it grounds the discussion, philosophizing, and general critique, i.e., it makes the critique respond to a
social context while also being just as absurd or more absurd than irony. Unfortunately, because irony has been the prized comedic form of serious philosophizing it has been surrounded by obfuscating langue that makes it unnecessarily confusing, less absurd, and far less comical than parody. This is conveniently put on display throughout Benyei’s overview of other scholars’ work on irony: 104-109.

Perhaps it should not be surprising that overall, Benyei’s work avoids drawing connections between parody and humor. Here, a serious rhetorizing stance is at play yet again. In one of the only moments when Beneyi mentions humor, he finds it more closely related to parody, but he does so in order to diminish parody to a form of entertainment (which he sees as a weakness, but I don’t):

One obvious point of similarity lies in the fact that both parody and irony seem to depend on effects that are more or less comic for their success. In parody’s case, the comic quality is perhaps more evident; parody is unable to function unless it ensures by textual means that the target text is properly recognized by the reader; to facilitate recognition [...] parody foregrounds the most typical and therefore most vulnerable elements of the target text, usually by caricaturing and exaggerating them (110).

However, in stating this he misses something that Rose and others rightfully note—irony lends itself to misreadings. Trouble arises when Benyei then combines irony and parody here: “both parody and irony are deceptions that expose themselves as deceptions, since otherwise they could easily pass unnoticed” (111). But if parody relies more heavily on caricature and exaggeration, wouldn’t parody be less likely to be misread than irony?
Irony risks flying over people’s heads (especially higher level “serious” academic irony), but parody (*paraumhordyor*) through comedic exaggeration and caricature makes it essential and obvious to be noticed as such.

Therefore, a major difference between irony and parody is the audience they address: irony assumes/demands a well-read audience (something that Benyei would perhaps find as a strength), but parody (especially *paraumhordyor*) doesn’t rely as heavily on this well-read audience because it doesn’t depend as heavily on allusions to people, places, and things outside the text or contradictions buried deep inside the text. Because parody targets conventions and a foundational belief in seriousness, it is able to work in a general way so the audience can more readily recognize parody is occurring and often learn about the original through the parody itself.

This same lack of attention to humor is what prevents Richard Rorty from being able to bridge the gap between private irony and public solidarity in his work *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (120). Rorty’s examples of irony draw from the work of the “serious” writers/scholars Proust, Heidegger, and Nietzsche instead of generally accessible comedic writers/performers. Through parody and humor, these other comedic writers/performers can be more accessible and entertaining for a general audience and can offer alternative approaches that might be able to combine the public liberal hope and private irony. In only focusing on highly abstract theories of irony provided by serious philosophizing, scholars like Beneyi and Rorty rely too heavily on specialized readings to disrupt peoples’ problematic assumptions. With parody the ‘buy-in’ for our perceptions to be challenged is much less, i.e., we don’t have to learn a specialized academic
language in order for us to participate in the philosophizing and self-reflection that parody can provide; we only need a basic understanding of social norms and communicative practices in order to find humor within the work and to be offered alternative viewpoints.

Contemporary Conversations on Satire

The previously mentioned preacherly rhetorizing stance that satire can take is disrupted by the absurdity inherent in the comedic aspects of *paraumhordyor*. Often when we use satire, we hide in a serious rhetorizing stance while at the same time creating an external ‘anything goes’ façade. This satirist is able to play by the rules they themselves have made: “I’m just playing a game; I’m not serious,” at one moment and then at the next moment, “I’m being serious, you should do what I say because I am right.” This of course falls outside the purview of my *Judgementationalization* Rubric for *Paraumhordyor*.

Another common problem in the relationship between satire and parody arises out of the work done by Aaron Hess and Wes Gehring. It appears as if both Hess and Gehring want to deny parody’s ability to perform social critique. In their own way, they both arrive at a similar conclusion: satire is able to provide social critique while parody remains aloof. Although neither goes as far as to say this, this aloofness leads to the assumption that parody is nihilistic and self-serving, and I want to jump out in front of these arguments. Hess is channeling arguments by Zoe Durick in differentiating parody and satire: “Parody is about textual form and genre; satire is about social commentary”
Wes Gehring differentiates the two in a similar fashion while citing yet another source, Joseph A. Dane: “‘parody deals with literary [or cinematic] norms (collective understanding of a text or genre), while satire deals with social norms’” (5). While I agree with the general thrust of these distinctions, I don’t want to limit general parody’s ability to provide social commentary or address social norms: the social commentary is done differently in parody than in satire.

An important distinction to keep in mind is that while satire (and less evolved parodies) might provide a more obvious social critique (attacking public figures and institutions), parody (paraumhordyor) can have a social impact even though its focus is on conventions and practices. First, I want to dismantle the false dichotomy that splits ‘critique of literary conventions’ from ‘critique on social norms’: parody provides social critique through taking on literary conventions whereas satire mainly focuses on social critique without providing the audience with a critique on the literary conventions. If satire did so, it would grounded its’ critique, involve the its’ own stance, and allow the audience to deal with narratives outside those provided by the satire. But then this satire would be something else—it would be a paraumhordyor.

Parody creates social commentary in a less problematic way than satire typically does. The prescriptive impulse in satire makes it appear to have more bite in its critique and provide a stronger call to action, but parody should not be denied its ability to enact social change. Paraumhordyor enacts this change on a more individualized basis but perhaps with less visible effects: as mentioned earlier, it generates creative possibilities but these aren’t always acted upon by the audience/individual.
CHAPTER THREE
NARRATING OUR SELVES

Introducing Narrative: A Narrated Introduction

Since the advent of mass media, our practices of self-narration are no longer influenced by our immediate community but by institutions and individuals whom we will never meet. This allows for a radically more expansive exchange of ideas but can be problematic when this process creates stereotypical figures and homogenized practices of self-narration that limit our ability to perform creative self-narration, wherein we are provided alternatives that go beyond a mere reinforcement of overarching/overbearing narrative expectations.

In specific locations such as academia, narrative literacy is valued, promoted, and perhaps continues to improve. But thus far, we have not improved upon our ability to increase narrative literacy in the public sphere; e.g., copycat killers, poor people voting against their best interests, media influencing eating disorders, etc. The promotion of stereotypical monological narratives of “perfection” and “free will” permeate our motives as members of a neoliberal society that constantly demands and rewards our sloganizing narratives and our ability to be able to constantly demonstrate our nauseating usefulness to our selves and others.

Mass media narratives serve as public pedagogies that circulate the public sphere and encourage us to take up rhetorizing stances within narrative frameworks that demand

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22 Author’s Note: Apologies for the lack of neologisms in this chapter.
23 Editor’s Note: Thank God.
astonishingly clichéd narrative expectations (in rivalry, in romance, etc.). Even in academia and within the humanities (where narrative literacy is our game), we still have no idea how to apply our narrative findings in ways that will enhance and improve our practices of self-narration. We self-narrate in ways that do not help us deal with mistakes and our ever-dynamic multipersonned/kairotic selves. We are just as bad at dealing with highly motivated communication as we always have been, as we fail to gain a wider understanding of how the information we receive relates to a wider sense of our selves; i.e., an imperfect, indefinable, contradictory self that will changed drastically from situation to situation. In other words: a wider sense of self that understands ‘this too shall pass,’ that we will be something different from what we are and be able to enjoy this fact.

Perhaps we narrativize too much and too easily? Perhaps we read into situations too much? Perhaps we need to question our abilities to narrate our own lives? If we can hold off, if we can prevent the knee-jerk reaction to take a rhetorizing stance in relation to our questionable narrative expectations then we might be able to go beyond simple misunderstandings that turn into wars. We will then be able to engage, evaluate, and respond to our own inner-power dynamics; i.e., our inner self-surveillance systems that hold us accountable to our overarching/overbearing narrative expectations. For example we can evaluate our revenge narratives, etc. (and the narrative expectations they work toward), from dominating our lives long past their expiration date for being helpful/necessary/pertinent. This is necessary in order to prevent hard and fast overarch/overbearing narratives from forming that prevent us from adjusting to dynamic situations occurring in front of us. We often hold on to the unhelpful
overarching/overbearing narratives because we mistakenly believe they are the ones that provide us meaning/pleasure. The goal here is to be able to both break up the tiresome and problematic narratives we say about our selves but also to stop projecting onto others the narratives we that believe they are saying about us. In doing so we will gain the curiosity that breaks up the parameters we place on other peoples’ characters and the stories we tell about them.

As we globally disseminate Western narrative practices (another form of imperialism) we exponentially perpetuate unhelpful understandings of success and perfection. This is what creates exigency for this chapter. In a tech-crazy society it becomes more and more glaringly obvious that we value the speed of communication, the variety of platforms for communication, and the ability to communicate from more locations—over the quality of the communication. Postmodernity has put “prescriptive practices” on hold; well, that is, it has put prescriptive practices on hold that might help others, all the while profiting the professors who ascribe to traditions within. However, what we need is not a prescription, nor a falling back into purely objective/empirical/modernity; what we need is a way to shift our understanding of narrative and motivated communication that is both palatable for academia and helpful outside it. For it is not that prescription does not occur, it just happens at a much more local level; i.e., the prescription is forced on students and colleagues in order to propel/springboard academic rock stars to the top while simultaneously acting as a general excuse for them to be unhelpful.
A Narrated Overview of Narrated Narration (narritivizationly speaking, of course)

Alasdair MacIntyre finds that humans are a “story-telling animal” (201) and that we “understand our own lives in terms of narratives” (197). Walter R. Fisher (founder of narrative theory) wants to add “homo narrons” to the list of metaphors “representing the essential nature of human beings” (6), and he proposes a “narrative paradigm” that has “relevance to real as well as fictive worlds” (2). Paul Ricoeur asks, “do not human lives become more readable when they are interpreted in function of the stories people tell about themselves?” (73). Hayden White states that, “to raise the question of the nature of narrative is to invite reflection on the very nature of culture and, possibly, even on the nature of humanity itself” (5).

In so many words: narratives are essential to the way in which we envision ourselves and the world around us. Evidence of our need to narrate readily presents itself in all aspects of Western cultures (especially today), but this need may also be a defining characteristic for cultures everywhere. However, I want to focus on specific and current practices of self-narration that are informed by Western mass media industries, but that can be disrupted by paraumhordytor. Many scholars from various disciplines have studied the importance of narrative in human interactions, the importance of narrative on identity formation, and the effects of mass narratives on individuals. I want to focus particularly on how we can help our selves with practices of self-narration through creating helpful mass narratives/public pedagogies that don’t merely provide a truth (that will come and go) but provide us with an opportunity to analyze the narrative expectations that inform our inner-self surveillance systems, thereby offering us an opportunity to respond to the
positive dimensions of power, as described by Foucault. Therefore, I want to focus on the following: narrative end-points or narrative expectations, the narrative practices we use to work toward these end points/expectations, and the ‘jolts’ that allow us to reflect on our practices of self-narration. As opposed to whole narratives that encompass our lives (that most scholars agree are problematic), these end points/expectations can readily present themselves; i.e., we are able to “see” them occur. Through paraumhordyor we can address these narrative expectations in a much more creative way than we can when they are reveled to us in their often embarrassing and perhaps tragic forms. These narrative end-points can remain unchecked when we lack a variety of robust influences to check them; i.e., we are unable to access their multipersonned/kairotic selves. We can and should create helpful and multi-voiced mass narratives that are able to disrupt hegemonic/homogeneous assumptions, not by being cryptic avant-garde art, but by working within the same hegemonic/homogeneous narratives whilst remaining playful and enjoyable.

**Narrating the Self, and How!**

Paul John Eakin provides a helpful overview of how individuals are constituted through narration, and also brings together important academic discussions on what is meant by self-narration. Eakin finds that narrative plays an essential role in the construction of our identities: “autobiography is not merely something we read in a book; rather, as a discourse of identity, delivered bit by bit in the stories we tell our selves day in and day out, autobiography structures our living” (4). However, Galen Strawson
argues that narrative identity is a passing academic craze and that individuals only use discontinuous narrative practices to make sense of their lives. Strawson finds that he has nothing in common with himself and the self he was as a child, so he concludes that there is no overarching narrative tying our life together (433). However, Eakin argues that, “For Strawson it seems to follow, then, that if your sense of identity is discontinuous, you will be indifferent to narrative formulations of your identity’s story” (9). But this doesn’t appear to follow for most people. By addressing Strawson’s “styles of temporal being” (430); i.e., Episodic and Diachronic, Eakin finds it is easier to argue for how we are a little bit of both than to argue for how we are either one or the other24:

I think most people probably believe in continuous identity [Diachronic] at some level, and they probably think of their lives in developmental terms [. . .] If you ask them, though, about the extent to which they can call up the past, about whether they can actually rehabit earlier periods of their lives [. . .] I suspect that many of these previously unreflecting Diachronics would admit to being Episodics too (12-13).

But no matter whether we claim to be more Episodic or Diachronic, it is important to note that we take “a narrative interest in their [life] experience” (13).

Furthermore, Strawson’s Episodic individual who lives ‘in the now’ might only sound good on paper, as the examples of people who actually live like this are very sobering. Eakin draws on psychologist Oliver Sack’s patient, Mr. Thompson “whose memory had been gravely damaged by Korsakoff’s syndrome” (14). This individual had

24 Editor’s Note: This appears to be a missed opportunity for the deceased author to use his reoccurring quip about both and.
no concept of who he was, as he had to continually “‘make himself (and his world) up every moment’” (14). Like Alzheimer’s disease, the majority of us wouldn’t wish this upon our selves, let alone anyone close to us. Perhaps the Western self is too heavily invested in narrative, and we unwittingly devalue the quality of life for those suffering from such syndromes as Korsakoff’s Alzheimer’s. Nevertheless, it is foolhardy to ignore the fact that we do devalue lives without narration.

Episodic living could be radically freeing, but this might also be terrifying and sad. Regardless, of where the arguments fall, what could Strawson and others actually desire in purely episodic living? Maybe what we want is to be able to abandon the responsibility, or anxiety, or guilt that comes with creating our selves through narrative? Maybe if we had a non-essentializing capacity to episodically self-narrate our lives than our narratives wouldn’t have to add up to the overly logical/normalized self-narrative we feel we must tell about our selves? If this is what we want then we should abandon the episodic/diachronic debate and evaluate self-narration practices on their ability to either close off, or open up, helpful possibilities for our selves. Perhaps this is what we really want when we defy diachronic overarching narratives: the ability of these narratives to become so deeply rooted that we no longer have the option to become something other than what we continually reinforce our selves to be, especially if this is not what we want.

For these reasons it is important for us to adopt Eakin’s previously mentioned concept of ‘narrative interest’; i.e, interests and motives that express/reveal themselves though narrative. In shifting our focus from length of narration to the narrative interest invested, the analysis of self-narration can be far more dynamic: it makes no difference
whether the narrative is real/fake, potential/incarnate, fleeting/all encompassing, spontaneous/highly constructed, or part of an episodic/diachronic system. What matters is the effect they have on us; i.e., the power it holds over our narrative expectations, the helpfulness of the policing it performs, and allowing us to better understand our *kairotic* self. We can then ask if the narrative is increasing our literacies and creative capacities, and we can also ask if it is allowing us to understand narratives beyond it/our own narratives.

To further round out this nuanced approach, is the work of psychologist Dan P. McAdams. He provides a “life story” model where he finds that “people living in modern societies provide their lives within unity and purpose by constructing internalized and evolving narratives of the self” (100). McAdams connects narrative with desires, intentions, goals, and motives and states that we construct narratives to “organize and convey these motivated action sequences extended in time” (104). While the terms *narrative* and *self-narration* might still seem vague, Eakin’s notion of ‘narrative interests’ and McAdams phrase ‘motivated action sequences extended in time’ helps solidify the vision of narrative that I will be using throughout this piece (further qualifiers to come). These are not complete or whole stories, and they are neither essentializing nor completely stable. Our self-narratives (our self-narrated nature, which is not essentially our selves) work within a matrix of motives that are tied to a temporal understanding of our lives. Because our narrative practices are motivated by our desire for temporal unity and purpose, McAdams claims that, “we choose the events that we consider most important for defining who are,” and we do this in order to make sense of “the present as
we survey the past and anticipate the future” (110). It is this anticipation of the future that creates narrative expectation or a narrative ‘end-point’. So by narrative expectation, I mean those narratives surrounding us (told by our selves, others, and mass media) that can be used to help us in our quest for ‘unity and purpose.’ Whether they are able to accomplish this task is another matter entirely, but our narrative interests are directed toward a narrative expectation.

An important qualifier comes from Todd May in his “Narrative Conceptions of the Self.” May states that “to have a narrative self-conception, then, is rarely to have an explicit story that one uses to organize the moments of one’s life […]” (57). In other words, our life is never reducible to narrative. Todd continues:

we do not always narrate our own story; often, we just live it. However we do not live it alone. We are social beings, and although we often don’t tell our stories to ourselves directly, many of those around us will tell them to us. Of course they rarely tell us our whole story (“Narrative Conceptions…” 65).

In May’s *Narrative Values and Life’s Meaningfulness* he also provides a more nuanced perspective on the act of narrative-izing our lives with his concept of “narrative values”: these values are attached to lives not because of what happens at a particular moment, but because they are thematic characterizations of the lives themselves. They stretch diachronically across the trajectories of these people’s lives (20).
Narrative values and narrative interests cannot be expected to be stable: they cannot be asked to sum up our life trajectory (even though they try to make sense of our trajectory), nor can they be asked to consistently be aligned with our life trajectory. We who work through our narrative values and narrative interests can often be unaware of the fact we are subscribing to them (or we suppress the fact). While this concept of narrative values doesn’t reduce our lives to narrative, it also doesn’t deny that we often use narrative to make sense of our lives:

   The objectivity of narrative values, then, lies in their being embedded in a space of reasons, reasons, that are not reducible to what people happen to believe at a given moment [. . .] So while it is almost certainly the case that the objectivity of narrative values cannot be grounded in any realist commitments, this does not entail that we cannot have a robust sense of objectivity associated with the normative realm of these values (*Narrative Values*... 29).

This ‘space of reasons’ is context-specific and influenced by a plethora of dynamic factors; e.g., social, cultural, linguistic, personal, etc. Therefore, the best we can do with these narrative values is try to work with them within that context and with a *kairotic* understanding that the person, the reason, and the narrative can all change.

   However, we still have means of addressing this ‘space of reasons’: this ‘robust sense of objectivity’ can in part be provided through the mediums by which we communicate. In other words, there are ways in which we can “catch” our selves narrating; we can still deal with our practices of self-narration based on how our narrative
values/interests/expectations present themselves (sometimes surprisingly), and they present themselves through various mediums (but not always in the same manner): in talking with a friend, in re-reading our diary, in rooting for the hero in a movie and becoming aware of our affinity to this character, etc. Here we are able to trace motives, plot/character development, etc. It is still possible and helpful to work on our practices of self-narration even if we don’t see the narratives we create as whole, or if we are unable to achieve a universally objective baseline. Narrative values and narrative interests that help construct narrative expectation can therefore can be disrupted; e.g., by paraumhordyor.

These disruptive instances (later, termed ‘jolts’) tell us something about our motives within narrative, no matter how big/small or real/imaginary these narratives are. This is why I find it highly problematic when Strawson claims he “cannot access pervious identity states; he cannot reexperience or reinhabit them” (9). While we might not be able to place our selves back into our previous identity states (obviously?), we are still offered the means to reflect on who we have become/who we are becoming/who we want to be. I am not saying that people do this well or that this practice isn’t problematic, but it is difficult to say that it doesn’t exist: who hasn’t commiserated with a friend who has recently broken up with a significant-other and spoken through their own past experiences in order to help? For better or worse, we see evidence our previous selves, previous narratives, or rhetorizing stances all the time. If we claim people don’t have sustained narrative interests/values then we have no way of helping them deal with the overarching/overbearing narrative expectations they have constructed that inform
decisions ranging from the every day to the exceptional; we have no way to help them deal with the inconsistencies within their narrative expectations, their inability to deal with openness/failure, and their inability to access their multipersonned/kairotic selves. Whether or not we can do this, we should at least try to do this. What else can we do? This is not a rhetorical question; Dear Reader, I’m literally asking you.

Mass Media Narratives

Mass media narratives provide a key space where we can study and scrutinize these narrative practices with. So before I return to personal practices of self-narration, I will highlight the potential influence of mass media narratives that circulate our public sphere. In his text *The Master Switch*, Tim Wu (influenced by Laurence Lessig) traces the history of modern American communications systems and highlights this history as a cycle from *open systems* whose contributors are hobbyist to *closed systems* dominated by the information industry’s monopolizing moguls. Wu provides valuable insights into America’s information industry with a de-romanticized history of each major technological breakthrough in modern communications (telephone, radio, television, film, and the internet). Wu wants to show how the past and present [. . .] information industries—the defining business ventures of our time—have from their inception been subject to the same cycle of rise and fall, imperial consolidation and dispersion, and that the time has come when we must pay attention (30).
While this historic cycle may not shock anyone, perhaps our blasé acceptance should be alarming when we consider the central role narrative plays in our lives and can influence everything from who we marry to how we vote for Presidents. I mention Wu’s work here to highlight how on a merely technical/logistical level, problems can occur with narratives that circulate the public sphere today.

In considering Benedict Anderson’s work, *Imagined Communities*, it easy for us to see how these same technical/logistical difficulties were present even at the advent of mass media practices. Benedict uses the term “imagined communities” to describe how mass media creates a sense of community, and how through mass media these “imaginary” communities can have “real” effects on people. These imagined communities are imagined because, as Anderson states, “the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (6). Anderson finds that there are particular narrative mechanisms that enable this:

[. . .] two forms of imagining which first flowered in Europe in the eighteenth century: the novel and the newspaper. For these forms provided the technical means for ‘re-presenting’ the kind of imagined community that is the nation (25).

In particular, the newspaper creates an “extraordinary mass ceremony” wherein reading the newspaper:

[. . .] is performed in silent privacy in the lair of the skull. Yet each communicant is well aware that the ceremony he performs is being
replicated simultaneously by thousands (or millions) of others of whose existence he is confident, yet of whose identity he has no the slightest notion. Furthermore, this ceremony is incessantly repeated at daily or half-daily intervals throughout the calendar (35).

The physical reality of the newspaper (or today the TV, social media platform, etc.) brings together mass numbers of people, thereby normalizing what they read/view/consume/interact with, and how they read/view/consume/interact (and even their perception of time!).

Again this does not rule out the possibility for us to maintain agency throughout the process and obtain a unique experience. However, by and large, and over deep time, practices become normalized within society. This wouldn’t be significant if it weren’t for the fact that normalized narrative practices are able to create a sense of nationalism that citizens are willing to die for, and the same is true for religions, cults, gangs, etc. We would be hard-pressed to find instances of nationalist/religious/etc. pride within groups of people who do not share narrative practices. We could take this even further: nations/religions/etc. do not exist without mass narratives.

Aside from the more obvious difficulties that mass narratives provide, there are also more subtle, often undetected problems with mass narratives. In America On Edge, Henry Giroux finds that in the United States, mass media outlets act as influential educational sites and that the majority of citizens turn to popular entertainment (not academia) to provide them with models of how to conduct the social aspects of their lives:
The media in most advance industrial countries are now the most powerful pedagogical force for framing issues, offering the languages to decipher them, and providing the subject positions that enable people to understand their relationship to others and the larger world (18).

Furthermore, even if the mass narrative is seemingly benign, the very delivery circumscribes value, as noted by Giroux: “Disney as both a corporate power and a powerful educational force [. . .] has enormous influence in deciding what information children have access to in a variety of educational sites” (3). I am not an absolutist, and I do not believe Giroux is either, so it is therefore important to note that there is an outside to this ‘popular entertainment education’; i.e., this education is not all encompassing and United States citizens can certainly provide their own alternative platforms. Some citizens may never even come in contact with this ‘popular entertainment education’; e.g., Amish peoples who do not interact with modern technology. However, just because this education is not all encompassing does not mean we should underscore its influence.

**Problematic Mass Narratives**

**Foucault and the Productive Dimensions of Power**

The work of Michel Foucault allows us to move into even more specific examples of problematic narratives of the self. In *Discipline and Punish, The History of Sexuality Volume 1*, and *The Birth of Bio Politics*, Foucault calls attention to figures (the delinquent, the sexual deviant, *homo economicus*) that have been created by institutions at the intersection of knowledge, power, and discipline. While the delinquent and the
sexual deviant figures are accompanied by a mass narrative, Foucault does not connect the figure *homo economicus* to an educational mass narrative in *The Birth of Biopolitics*. Because Foucault does not do this explicitly, I would like to bring out the way in which mass media narratives about the delinquent and *homo economicus* are central to their construction and circulation in the public sphere, and therefore central to the way in which we come to define ourselves in relation to each figure. We define/align our practices of self-narration with or against these figures, thereby perpetuating the reality and production of these figures. Foucault finds mass narratives in place to teach individuals about the figures and highlights the educational role (as seen earlier with Giroux) of these narratives. By focusing on the educational role of mass narratives, we can bypass some of the more obvious, conspiratorial, and ineffective approaches that merely work to divide everything into an “us” vs. “them.”

In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault finds that the older forms of juridico-discursive discipline used public torture and execution to teach its spectators that the smallest crime could be punished: “The aim was to make an example, not only making people aware that the slightest offense was likely to be punished, but by arousing feelings of terror by the spectacle of power letting its anger fall upon the guilty person” (58). As an instrument of education, Foucault likens the spectacle to a book, highlighting its narrative qualities:

[. . .]the publicity of punishment [. . .] must open up a book to be read [. . .] This legible lesson, this ritual recoding, must be repeated as often as
possible; the punishments must be schooled rather than a festival; an ever-open book rather than a ceremony (111).

Here, the difference between a festival and a book emphasizes the need for the narrative to be accessible, convenient, and read repeatedly. This is pursued further when Foucault envisions this punishment/lesson as a fable: “but the essential point, in all these real or magnified severities, is that they should all, according to a strict economy, teach a lesson: that each punishment should be a fable” (113). As with children’s fables, this lesson relies on seemingly natural, normal, overarching narratives that are familiar to the individual and that can therefore be easily projected onto. All of these elements lead to the ease at which the narrative can become accepted by the individual who is looking at the singular moral or lesson to be learned, instead of the constructed nature of the process and the context in which the narrative circulates.

We could argue that Foucault is only using these narrative elements (‘lesson,’ ‘education,’ ‘book,’ ‘fable’) as metaphors; however, Foucault provides a literal example with the “festival of the departing convicts” that perpetuates the “old ceremonies of the scaffold,” and in this popular spectacle, “famous characters or traditional types were recognized” (259). This procession acted (like the scaffold) as a public ceremony informing the masses:

[Spectators] sought to rediscover the face of the criminals who had had their glory; broadsheets recalled the crimes of those one saw pass; newspapers provided their names and recounted their lives [. . .] like programmes for spectators. People also came to examine different types of
criminals [. . .] it was a game of masquerades and marionettes [. . .] for more educated eyes, something of an empirical ethnography of crime (259).

However, this spectacle was no longer of a limiting nature, working to discourage identification with the delinquent. As practices of discipline intersect practices of knowledge and power, the criminals themselves (our selves) start(ed) to embrace and enhance these narrative practices: “the convicts themselves responded to this game, displaying their crimes and enacting their misdeeds: this was one of the functions of tattooing, a vignette of their deeds or their fate” (260). In this way aspects of the delinquent can be learned, perpetuated, and normalized, paradoxically becoming socially acceptable as practices of self-narration and identity building.

This is where the positive dimensions of power can start to take hold: a knowledge of our identity (self-image), even a criminal one, provides pleasure, and is reinforced by those in power, but also by our selves (both those who committed a crime, and those who might commit a crime in the future; i.e., anyone). The delinquent starts being produced before and outside the crime itself by a narrative they can be aligned with. Foucault states:

behind the offender, to whom the investigation of the facts may attribute responsibility for an offence, stands the delinquent whose slow formation is shown in a biographical investigation. The introduction of the ‘biographical’ is important in the history of penalty. Because it establishes the ‘criminal’ as existing before the crime and even outside it. And for this
reason a psychological causality, duplicating the judicial attribution of responsibility, confuses its effects (252).

These biographical accounts are separate from us (but they can always be deployed to define our selves) and preexist our selves because the narrative about the delinquent figure, or narrative expectations associated with the delinquent figure, can conveniently be embodied by anyone. Here again, the positive dimensions of power produce knowledge of the delinquent and vice versa: “thus a ‘positive’ knowledge of the delinquents and their species, very different from the juridical definition of offences and their circumstances, is gradually established” (254). Therefore, it can now become pleasurable to seek out these distinctions; i.e., it becomes a game where we can be reward via our knowledge of the delinquent and we can also be rewarded via our self-disciplinary practices in relation to the delinquent: enter, television crime drama; e.g., CSI, NCSI25, ad nauseam. So in Discipline and Punish the delinquent figure becomes perpetuated in biography form, and delinquents themselves allow the positive dimensions of power to play upon themselves. Therefore, discipline is no longer doled out merely in the juridical, limiting manner; however, the limiting and negating manner never fully goes away.

The Panopticon and Self-Surveillance

The positive aspects of power, knowledge, and discipline are also seen in Discipline and Punish when Foucault establishes his now well-known concept of

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25 Editor’s Note: Hey, I like those shows, asshole.
panopticism. This concept derives from Jeremy Bentham’s architectural plans to place an ‘all-seeing’ central tower in the middle of an outlying circular structure that houses the cells of prisoners, patients, etc. Bentham’s Panopticon would allow for 24-7 completely anonymous surveillance from the central tower in the middle to the cells; i.e., the prisoners wouldn’t be able to see who (if anyone) was in the middle tower, but the middle tower could potentially watch them all the time (202). This panopticon (as Bentham envisioned it) was never built, so whether or not this particular structure had a direct influence on people is irrelevant. However, the concept of self-surveillance at this intersection of discipline, power, and knowledge (that perhaps encourage the Panopticon to be envisioned) is relevant, especially in our heavily surveyed (by cameras, census poles, focus groups) society, and its effects on practices of self-narration are far more impactful than if Panopticon actually existed.

The production of the delinquent figure through mass narrative creates another kind of panopticism: in contrasting our selves to or against the delinquent (who is created and perpetuated by institutions that utilize discipline, power, and knowledge) we attempt to normalize our selves in relation to the delinquent. So as we perform a surveillance on others (judging them in relation to various norms, one of them being the delinquent), we are also performing a self-surveillance on our selves in order to position our selves within the gradients of these figures. Foucault states:

he [sic, etc.] who is subjected to the field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in
which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection (202-3).

The mass narratives, the figures they perpetuate and narrative expectations they demand, act as Panopticons as they occupy the inner circle, the god’s eye, their invisibility dependent on their escape into the neutralized/naturalized conventions of the medium.

Michel de Certeau also uses the analogy of an overlooking visual apparatus. Certeau finds that the cityscape or “‘seeing the whole’ [… ] to be a solar Eye, looking down like a god” and this is related to a “‘fiction of knowledge’: “this lust to be a viewpoint and nothing more” (92). Certeau also notes that

The desire to see the city preceded the means of satisfying it. Medieval or Renaissance painters represented the city as seen in a perspective that no eye had yet enjoyed. This fiction already made the medieval spectator into a celestial eye. It created gods (92).

We compare/align our selves to the narrative expectations that, in part, we our selves have placed within the middle tower/overlooking the city, and we discipline our selves in relation to the narrative expectations that have been created by these figures. We borrow from authoritative voices, figures, and institutions that we act with/within/against and we come up with our own imagined patchwork policeman who we succumb to, or react against. This done no matter how necessary/unnecessary or helpful/detrimental the outcome and no matter how well this policing fits within the context that we are currently working within: no matter how far from our multipersonned/kairotic selves we have become. We constantly tell our story to an audience of policemen in the inner
circle/overlooking the city who is asking us to align our selves with these narrative expectations. Although telling this narrative to these figures in the inner-circle is a continual process, we usually only rely on very stereotypical versions of people that we envision in this circle; i.e., people qua figures (even if they happen to be real living people!). Considering the figures who constitute this audience is often avoided and this prevents us from successfully interacting with others who are obviously unaware that we are responding to an audience other than them. Unfortunately these problems don’t just occur in a vacuum but within a culture that is increasingly unable to listen/cope with mistakes in communication. Individuals within this culture (us) often have problems admitting/revealing motives because they are half-baked: they only circulate within dominant narrative expectations that protect these motives from our other selves which would provide context, or dissent. It is working at this level of self-surveillance that I see the most promise, as getting the mass media industry to change their practices might be somewhat difficult. But performing an analysis of our own inner-rhetorizing allows us with one location to start (and this will be developed further at the end of this chapter).

Although it might be easy for us to understand how this ‘self-surveillance via the productive aspects of power’ can turn problematic (limiting us from doing what we want to do/who we want to be), it can be difficult for us to dismiss the activity of self-surveillance wholesale. We all have some variation of a ‘Racist Thanksgiving Uncle’ or a ‘Polemic Diner Party Friend’ who we wished would practice more self-surveillance. The difficulty arises with the acknowledgement that some self-surveillance is necessary (as far as human/social evolution has come along) and separating self-surveillance from self-
reflective thought can also get tricky: although the former is encouraged by political and moral institutions and the later encouraged by academic, psychological, and artistic institutions, both can be easily institutionalized.

It is because this self-surveillance is used for a variety of different tasks (not all of them unhelpful/detrimental in and of themselves) that makes the productive aspects of power of so widespread and seemingly benign. Linda McDowell channels Foucault in order to address perceptions of bio power and sexuality in her work *Gender, Identity and Place*. McDowell succinctly describes how the productive characteristics of power become woven into discourses of knowledge and discipline,

[. . .] through positive regulations concerned with [. . .] improving living standards and health. Thus the regulation of sexuality operates not only through state controls but also by what he [Foucault] termed the self-surveillance of individual behavior (49-50).

The negative/limiting/disciplining aspects are not always easy for us to distinguish from the positive/productive/pleasurable ones and are often one in the same; e.g., celebrating our sexual identity is only done in relation to the power structures that disallowed this in the first place.

We embody the surveillance that institutionalized power structures promote because we derive pleasure from discipline and knowledge, and the self-surveillance used in defining our relation to the delinquent is also used for other purposes that might not be as problematic:
The Panopticon […] has a role of amplification; although it arranges power, although it is intended to make it more economic and more effective, it does so not for power itself, nor the immediate salvation of a threatened society: its aim is to strengthen the social forces – to increase production, to develop the economy, spread education, raise the level of public morality; to increase and multiply (208).

Therefore, discipline can be seen as useful and productive:

This is what discipline fixes; it arrests or regulates movements; it clears up confusion; it dissipates compact groupings of individuals wandering about the country in unpredictable ways; it establishes calculated distributions (219).

This major shift in the way individuals in the public sphere are able to embody the figures perpetuated by mass media is also present in the construction of homo economicus. But first, I want to show how homo economicus is produced by the neo-liberal economic analysis of social behavior.

*Homo Economicus* in Visual Narration

Foucault highlights how different discourses/institutions produce practices that come to define the individual and in neoliberalism, economic practices define the individual’s identity. One of the main concerns raised by Foucault here is the neoliberalist move to bring everything under economic analysis: “these economic analyses of the neo-liberals […] attempt to decipher traditionally non-economic social
behavior in economic terms” (The Birth of Bio Politics 246). The concern is that over time our social behavior will only operate within economic models (thereby accepting the same problems these models face) and Foucault states that the function of this generalization of the ‘enterprise form’ [. . .] involves extending the economic model of supply and demand and of investment-cost-profit so as to make it a model of social relations and of existence itself, a form of relationship of the individual to himself, time, those around him, the group, and the family (242).

As this ‘enterprise form’ takes over the individual’s social behavior, another figure forms: homo economicus. Foucault finds neoliberals working toward “not a supermarket society, but an enterprise society. The homo economicus sought after is not the man [sic, etc.] of exchange or man the consumer; he is the man of enterprise and production” (147). In order for this enterprising self to exist in this neoliberal society, the ‘private’ social aspects of our lives life must reinforce our image of our selves as entrepreneurs of our selves and of human capital: “the individual’s life itself—with his [sic, etc.] relationships to his private property, for example, with his family, household, insurance, and retirement—must make him into a sort of permanent and multiple enterprise” (241). Once this occurs then the neoliberal order has succeeded in making social policy respond to economic policy. However successful neoliberalism has been, this does not mean it is inevitable, and connecting Foucault’s homo economicus to its narrative construction by mass media, is a step towards dealing with this narrative.

Even though much changes in the movement from the juridico-discursive
disciplinary techniques working on individuals, to statistics working on populations in biopolitics, the common link that doesn’t go away (even though the mediums might change) is the use of the fable to inform people (or populations) of the figure. While Foucault doesn’t provide a mass narrative to educate the population about *homo economicus* in *The Birth of Biopolitics*, this figure could not circulate the public sphere without a mass narrative. Because this mass narrative is missing we have been unable to recognize that *homo economicus* has become a predominantly visual creature.

The practices of looking that will come to define and perpetuate the image of *homo economicus* developed alongside the economic shifts and the shifts in personal identification that Foucault finds taking place in the move from a ‘supermarket society’ to ‘enterprise society’. Once mass media turns predominantly visual, these practices of looking (both inward and outward) come to solidify and normalize *homo economicus* in visual narratives and culminate in the rise of, and need for, television, movies, advertising, and now social media. The logics, concerns, and narrative expectations that are filtered through an economic mindset now determine social relations to a degree that has perhaps never been seen before, or at least, has never been so unapologetically transparent (at least to some of us). The increase in economic factors determining social relations is able to appear normal (and therefore unproblematic as they fade into the background of our daily lives) because of the increasing presence of *homo economicus* in visual narratives that circulate the public sphere.

These images of *homo economicus* appear in advertisements, TV shows, movies, etc., and dominate identity construction as they serve as a fable for the advancement of
the Milton Friedman brand of neoliberalism (unbeknownst or beknownst to the creator of the narrative). The figure of *homo economicus* is disseminated through visual narratives and technologies that reinforce a sense of immediacy, singularity, and a sense of self that wants to eliminate mistakes in order to work towards highly constructed (though appearing natural), homogenous (though appearing individualistic), problematic narrative expectations. Immediate evidence of this: How many overweight/non-photogenic Presidents have we had lately? How many Presidents have we had lately that didn’t go to an Ivy-League school? The point is that we are reaching a point of stifling perfection that is unable to deal with the essentially mistaken aspects of communication. Being able to see the way in which *homo economicus*’ mass narratives visually inform us allows us the possibility to create/participate in alternative practices of self-narration outside the influence of a figure like *homo economicus*.

I would like to fill in this lack of a mass narrative in *The Birth of Biopolitics* with arguments put forth in John Berger’s *Ways of Seeing*. Through this work we can glimpse the carefully constructed (purposefully or sometimes not) image of *homo economicus* in advertising. Artist, critic, and scholar, John Berger examines visual practices adherent in European oil painting from roughly 1500-1900 as they transfer over to television and print advertising (84). Through Berger’s assessment of practices in European oil painting (139) we can start to trace the visual construction of *homo economics* to photographic practices in advertising. And this is not too difficult to imagine: they both exist at specific institutionalized intersections of power, knowledge, discipline, pleasure, and the visual world. Both oil painting and advertising allow us to take pleasure, not just from owning
the art work or consumer product, but in knowing about the product; i.e., how much we saved in purchasing it, where we can get it made better, how much better it is than other products. Pleasure is also mutually derived from both genres by disciplining our selves to earn the product, rationalizing to our selves about how much we deserve the product (usually through some form of entitlement narrative: race/wealth/hereditary superiority or manifest destiny), and gaining social/economical capital/power through the ownership of the product. All of these pleasures are intricately derived form homo economicus' narrative expectations. Berger states:

oil painting, before it was anything else, was a celebration of private property. As an art-form it derived from the principle that you are what you have. It is a mistake to think of publicity ['advertising,' in the American sense] supplanting the visual art of post-Renaissance Europe; it is the last moribund form of that art (139).

However, the object of pleasure shifts when we move from oil paintings to advertisements: the image of homo economicus qua ‘individual enterprise’ continues to be rapidly disseminated, but what doesn’t increase is the ability of the masses to actually own the luxury items presented through advertisements, and be thusly rewarded for being an enterprise. Here the narrative expectation remains the same; however, the means to legitimately achieve these expectations is radically disproportionate. The motives of homo economicus to style our self-image based on economic factors engulfs the masses; however, we (myself at least) cannot obtain and derive pleasure from luxury, so instead we often take pleasure in the pursuit of owning nice things—or perhaps more accurately
put, we take pleasure in the narrative of pursuit, regardless of how incomparable the nice things we obtain are to those that are obtained by others fortunate enough to live luxurious lives.

The case against advertisements shouldn’t be overstated though. The production and perpetuation of *homo economicus* is rampant in a multitude of popular mediums and genres that circulate the public sphere, but advertisements provide a very direct way to see all these elements at work. One Chevy truck ad provides a telling example (watch at playfullyserious.com). In this commercial a man’s neighbor asks him what he does. Clips show various activities performed by this man that are mediated through his ownership of this particular truck. Now, remove the advertisement’s assumed claim that it is selling a truck, and an image and educational fable of *homo economicus* emerges: the man is an enterprise with the ability to increase both his social/economic capital (at once), so long as he views himself as a producer (of fun, of purpose, of transportation, of love) by way of consumption. The relation of fun and fulfillment is equated to a rapid succession of tasks the man does that brings meaning to his life.

Obviously the viewer is not brainwashed into purchasing the Chevy truck, but these *homo economicus* narrative values are perpetuated, regardless of what is being advertised. It is only in looking at this advertisement as a fable that we are able to see the effects it could have on the way we see ourselves and therefore, live out our daily lives. Only a few short hours after viewing this commercial we might completely forget what the make/model was. And obviously we will not start acting like *homo economicus* once we see this advertisement; however, the remnants of the *homo economicus* narrative will
live on. Because we are *homo narrons*, we still remember the narrative values instilled: we remember the plot, the character’s defining features, and their ability to function as a *homo economicus* and meet the narrative expectations that narrative perpetuates. It is these narrative elements that are remembered and embodied, and therefore normalized and perpetuated. This would not be as problematic if this process wasn’t multiplied by every time we encounter similar narratives throughout our day. In doing so, narrative expectations become established, and we can be lead to only look for success/failure within these narrow narrative expectations.

But rhetorically, the ad appeals to an innate human need to be active, to “do,” to explore, to make happen, and reinforce our existence/role in the universe. This is very attractive. Isn’t *homo economicus* merely gumption, determination, and the human spirit itself? *Homo economicus* works hard, accomplishes much, is well organized, and because they look for economic value in all aspects of their life they don’t waste pointless time on people who provide them with no return. They view themselves as an economy and therefore are able to responsibly provide for others close to them. Like Jack and Avery on *30 Rock* (watch footage at playfullyserious.com), they don’t suffer fools gladly and this prevents them from getting caught up in pointless squabbles. This is in an incredibly seductive narrative to live indeed (at least, it sounds seductive to me). However, like Jack Donaghy there will always be Liz Lemons, who render the Jack Donaghys of the world useless, reminding them of their mortality and the mistaken, uncontrollable side of life. The Liz Lemons save the day when the Donaghys equate themselves to an economic system and only see their own singular and narrow efforts as the explanation for their
success or failure, when they are working within a dynamic context the whole time! The project here is not to banish the *homo economicus* part of us but to break them from their singular nature and problematic/uncreative/limiting narrative expectations: remind them of their multipersonned/kairotic selves.

Even if we can manage to paint *homo economicus* in helpful light, it is still problematic for *homo economicus* to attach itself to character traits such as hard work, diligence, and care, as a free-market capitalism only encourages these traits to capitalize on our menial and pointless work that does not necessarily enhance the quality of our lives in the ways we assume it does. We can see this played out in our daily lives through Facebook updates where we proudly proclaim our perpetual business as we “drank so much coffee to stay up studying for a test,” etc. We go through phases where we equate being “busy all the time” to self-importance and self-accomplishment and when we multitask to do all things at once, but perhaps not well. This is how *homo economicus’* narrative expectations often work against the very principles and goals that we believe we are achieving; e.g., in purchasing the Chevy truck and going into debt over it, we are not producing more value and more economic opportunities for our selves, we are severely limiting not only economic mobility but mental mobility, spiritual mobility, and literal mobility (we can’t move from our house, go on vacation etc.). In the end the house wins: the market has reduced us to a docile, illiterate consumer who believes that through consumption we are doing the very thing we are not doing: increasing mobility and increasing our options; i.e., creatively producing and reinventing our world in a way that helps us!
In order for this to happen *homo economicus* must work in unison with *homo seriosus*. Grand, overarching/overbearing narratives can only be sustained by a *homo economicus/seriosus* character with both limited and high-stakes narrative expectations (the worst of both worlds). The economic person is always a serious person who lives in a world of constant competition and who is always looking for an edge over rivals. As seen in current political campaigns and pop music: humor and play are void in these worlds as *homo seriosus* relies on normalcy for acceptance. Both society and our *homo economicus/seriosus* selves demand that we put on the *appearance* of being rational (and sometimes, I too succeed). We are often rewarded for appearing to act fashionably rationally and we are often punished, diagnosed, and scapegoated for acting unfashionably irrationally. Richard Lanham defines the “Western self” as made up of the serious self, *homo seriosus*, in relation to *homo rhetoricus*, the playful self (6). Lanham surmises that the serious perception of self has thrived from Plato onward because: “It provided a brilliant education in politics and the social surface [. . .], acting in the city’s business [. . .], provided training in the mechanisms of identity [. . .] it specialized less in knowledge than in the way knowledge is held [. . ]” (6-7). Lanham states,

Perhaps the serious premises have thrived because they flatter us. The rhetorical view does not [. . ] Rhetoric’s real crime, one is often led to suspect, is its candid acknowledgement of the rhetorical aspects of ‘serious’ life. The concept of a central self, true or not, flatters man [*sic*, etc.] immensely. It gives him an identity outside time and change that he sees nowhere else in the sublunary universe (7).
Nietzsche cites Socrates as “[. . .] the prototype for an entirely new mode of existence. He is the great exemplar of that theoretical man [. . .]” (92). For Nietzsche this serious/theoretical self is differentiated from the artist:

[. . .] while the artist, having unveiled the truth garment by garment, remains with his gazed fixed on what is still hidden, theoretical man [sic]
takes delight in the cast of garments and finds his highest satisfaction in the unveiling process itself, which proves to him his own power (92).

And when knowledge, power, and discipline all combine to provide the individual with their main source of pleasure, it isn’t difficult to see how problematic this theoretical self can be, if they remain unchecked. A perfect example of this is Laurence Sterne’s Walter Shandy.

McDowell succinctly summarizes and brings together various theorists to describe the body as a geographical site that is continually under construction. She finds that individuals are placed under a lot of pressure to conform to fixed identities that are socially constructed as normal: “a rational, bounded self is so dominant in Western thought” (47). Michel de Certeau touches on this difficulty when he states, “only a rationalized cell travels [. . .] This order, and organizational system, the quietude of certain reason, is the condition of both a railway car’s and a text’s movement from one place to another” (111). We don’t want playful language in the following situation: “Look out! Tornado heading our way!” Here exclusion of the playful is helpful. These special situations aside, we often exclude in an attempt to get at the serious (get to the bottom of things), when it isn’t being demanded from us at all. We often make harsh
judgments and act in a serious way when the situation or people around us aren’t asking us to do so: “Do you know what I think about her dress…” As we all live at the intersection of knowledge, discipline, and pleasure, we habitually take up rhetorizing stances only to make our selves feel better, but that are ultimately unsustainable when it comes to the very task they are used for. What is needed are alternative ways to break us from our *homo economicus/seriosus* selves when we habitually/impulsively begin adhere to the narrative expectations these figures perpetuate.

If we don’t have the opportunity to engage in playful narratives and only work to achieve the appearance of being rational/serious, we resort to narrative tactics to describe our selves (to our selves and others) that attempt to get rid of all traces of (what we perceive to be) the non-rational. The narrative practices concerning exceptional, serious events; e.g. weddings, job promotions, etc, can be molded (intentionally or unintentionally) by dominant institutions, e.g., Churches, Facebook, etc. These exceptional narratives then exclude other narratives about the self (they are either never formed or they are forgotten). Once these serious practices of self-narration become normalized it becomes difficult to see their construction.

This impulsive drive this drive toward ‘a rational identity at the expense of what we determine to be an irrational identity’ can become habitual, counter-productive, problematic, and motivated by dominant narratives we want to align our selves with. This difficulty to move outside our own utilitarian motives and not simply view the world in relation to our own ‘rational’ needs is evidenced by many. Martin Heidegger states, “The correct use of the power of judgement is determined in reference to what assures man’s
self-certainty” (57). Henri Bergson finds that “The INDIVIDUALITY of thing or beings escapes us, unless it is materially to our advantage to perceive it” (53). And Michel de Certeau touches on this difficulty by stating that “only a rationalized cell travels [. . .] This order, and organizational system, the quietude of certain reason, is the condition of both a railway car’s and a text’s movement from one place to another” (111). Particular to narrative practices, McAdams also finds that modernity requires people to become experts at crafting culturally and intellectually acceptable self-narratives, even though most people understand that the self is “complex and multifaceted” (115). For McAdams this “strong urge” to create a narrative identity that is “more or less unified and purposeful within the discordant cultural parameters,” is encouraged by “media to everyday discourse” (115). Jerome Bruner also highlights the multipersonned aspects of our human experience:

Perhaps it is a literary exaggeration to call our multiple inner voices characters. But they are there to be heard, trying to come to terms with each other, sometimes at loggerheads. An extensive self-making narrative will try to speak for them all, but we know already that no single story can do that (85).

Nietzsche speaks of “two interacting artistic impulses, the Apollonian and the Dionysiac” that represent the gods Apollo and Dionysus; however, he finds fault with the Ancient Greek playwright Euripides who worked to “eliminate from tragedy the primitive and pervasive Dionysiac element” (77). Nietzsche asks,
Once it was no longer begotten by music, in the mysterious Dionysiac twilight, what form could drama conceivably take? Only that of the dramatized epic, an Apollonian form which precluded tragic effect (77).

What Nietzsche wants to redeem here is the chorus of the dithyramb (sung in honor of Dionysus) in Ancient Greek Tragedy: “the chorus is a living wall against the onset of reality because it depicts reality more truthfully and more completely than does civilized man, who ordinarily considers himself the only reality” (53). Nietzsche describes tragedy very differently from how we typically think of it today, as he separates it from epic narratives and the moralistic fables that it has become intertwined with. However, I want to move even one step further and view the results of such a phenomena as Dionysiac tragedy as separate from the context Nietzsche places it within; i.e., I want to detach the effects of Dionysiac tragedy from Nietzsche’s historical progression of Greek tragedy redeemed by German music in order to align these effects with what is occurring in forms of humorous parody that are able to speak to the multipersonned/kairotic self. Nietzsche himself nearly made this connection:

Aristophanes’ sure instinct was doubtless right when he lumped together Socrates, the Euripidean drama, and the music of the new dithyrambic poets, castigating them indifferently as symptoms of a degenerate culture. In the new dithyramb, music is degraded to the imitative portrayal of phenomena, such as battles or storms at sea [. . .] (105).
However, I want to make this connection explicit because humorous parody provides a more appropriate home for these results to be realized. The effects that Nietzsche finds in this form of tragedy work just as well to summarize the effects of *paraumhordyors*:

Dionysiac art [. . .] wishes to convince us of the eternal delight of existence, but it insists that we look for this delight not in the phenomena but behind them. It makes us realize that everything that is generated, must be prepared to face its painful dissolution. It forces us to gaze into the horror of individual existence, yet without being turned to stone by the vision: a metaphysical solace momentarily lifts us above the whirl of shifting phenomena (103).

*Paraumhordyors* show us how to take an ephemeral rhetorizing stance in the face of heavily motivated communication and allow us to survive the communication, motivations, and rhetorizing stance, without being swept up in them or attaching too much significants to them; e.g., use the rhetorizing stance to define our life’s narrative. It shows us how to take up a helpful (to our selves and others) *kairotic*ly rhetorizing stance without having to decide to be ultimately optimistic or pessimistic. Similarly the Dionysiac art that Nietzsche describes, like the *paraumhordyors* I describe, don’t attempt to reside on one side of the binary or the other, choosing to do *either or* but *both and*. Nietzsche asks how the viewer of such tragedy go on, “[. . .] how is it possible for him [sic] to remain unshattered? How can he bear, shut in the paltry glass bell of his individuality, to hear the echoes of innumerable cries of weal and woe” (127). His answer is that, “[. . .] the Apollonian spirit rescues us from the Dionysiac universality and makes
us attend, delightedly, to individual forms” (128), and he adds that “To understand tragic myth we must see it as Dionysiac wisdom made concrete through Apollonian artifice” (132). In other words it must do both and: be seriously playful and playfully serious.

When we have these alternative selves (but not an irreconcilable multiplicity; e.g., schizophrenia) to draw from we can then get a more well rounded view, our actions will be more informed—not free from mistakes but able to be aware of a wider-variety of possible mistakes. Perhaps this is analogous to the lesson I’ve learned from my academic career so far: we don’t necessarily become any smarter, but we are able to recognize and deal with the common mistakes of the discourse, narrative, etc. It is in the ability to make/find new mistakes that we are able to “level-up,” but this is not progressive because at every level we can always revert to a previous mistake.

Helpful Mass Narratives:

Narrative Therapy as Public Pedagogy

These narrative values/interests/expectations can be highly individualistic, as they are influenced through personal trials and tribulations. However, they can also be stereotypical as mass media provides a location wherein the majority of our narrative expectations are highly influenced. Even the means of achieving these expectations can be directed through mass media entities; e.g., social media provides a narrow means through which to narrate our lives. While the individual has several boundaries that mass media’s influence cannot cross, it is difficult to argue that these mass narratives have no
influence. There is a need to question our narrative expectations because, while we are constantly working to build our narrative identities, Eakin notes that:

for the most part, we are not left to our own devices when we talk about ourselves, for protocols exist for many of the kinds of self-narration we may need to use—in churches, in courtrooms, in meetings of Alcoholics Anonymous, and so forth. Institutions even produce manuals stipulating the kinds of stories they want us to tell (29).

While Eakin finds our identities constructed by the narratives we tell about our selves (both to our selves and others), these autobiographical practices fade into the background as they become habitual (4). These narrative practices become invisible as they are normalized through habit and it is here where we lose an understanding of our motives for our narrative expectations; we can forget what it is we wanted, yet we often retain the narrative expectation and still work to achieve it without sufficient evaluation. This is how internal power structures can dominate our practices of self-narration and how we can loose agency to our overarching narrative expectations.

Because we are continually asked (both by our selves and others) to narrativize our place in the world around us, it can become difficult to make adjustments to what have become habitual/impulsive *homo economicus/seriosus* narrative expectations and autobiographical practices. The difficulty in making adjustments to what has become habitual is discussed by philosophizers Pierre Bourdieu, Martin Heidegger, Henry Bergson, and Michel De Certeau. Bourdieu talks about “orienting practices” that become embedded in “the most automatic gestures of the most insignificant techniques of the
body” but which communicate social divisions (466). For Heidegger the difficulty in seeing the “closest,” is perpetuated by our confidence in our control over it (135). Bergson states that our “inattention to self” leads to “rigidity” and a failure to “look around” (52). He therefore asks, “how can a man fashion his personality after that of another if he does not first study others as well as himself?” (52). This study of the relation of the self to our surroundings is what Certeau terms a “science of singularity,” which would be “a science of the relationship that links everyday pursuits to particular circumstances” (ix).

Performing this ‘science of singularity’ is necessary because of the essentially homogeneous nature of narrative. The ‘rigidity’ and ‘failure to look around’ and make adjustments to that which is ‘closest’ is due in part because narrative (and language/communication in general) depend on cultural homogeneity. Linda Hutcheon points out: “it is clear that literary norms depend upon some degree of social and cultural homogeneity” (77) and “in order to question either literary or social norms, a writer has to be able to assume a certain cultural homogeneity” (79). It is because of the homogeneity in our compulsory utilitarian/homo economicus/seriosus habits that it can become difficult to view our relationship to the narratives we embody as they become concealed by familiarity.

While difficult, it is not impossible to escape the grasp of narrative practices influenced by homo economicus/seriosus. As was mentioned earlier, we are still able to work with narratives and are fortunately able to disrupt our habitual and utilitarian practices of self-narration. We are able to do this on and objective-ish (but not universal)
level, as we can analyze the physical record found in the mediums through which we communicate in order to gain some kind of understanding of our narrative practices. Eakin finds that while we often don’t give our practices of self-narration much thought, “because, after years of practice, we do it so well,” when these self-narratives are disrupted, “we can be jolted into awareness of the central role it plays in organizing our social world (Eakin 4).

Narrative therapy is one such discipline that focuses on providing such a ‘jolt’ for us in order to reorient our selves to our more personal narrative situation and allow us to question our narrative expectations. Narrative therapy works to bring out narratives that have been marginalized by dominant overarching/overbearing narratives, and I find it is one such site that allows us to better align our selves with our narrative expectations by creating a distance between our selves and our expectations and allowing us to evaluate our narrative expectations. Narrative therapy is a psychological practice that was founded in the 70’s by Australian psychologist Michael White and his colleague, New Zealand psychologist, David Epston. Steve Madigan, who received his training from White and Epston, has written an introduction and overview of this practice, titled Narrative Therapy. In this text he shows how narrative therapy is a community discourse that is influenced by poststructuralist theory. I argue that although narrative therapy has been influenced by critical theory, I see the potential for narrative therapy to now influence many different disciplines within the humanities.

In practice, narrative therapy works to recover alternative multi-voiced narratives within us that have been silenced by institutionalized diagnoses (Narrative Therapy 65).
White and Epston’s narrative therapy places ‘the self’ at the center of its discourse by breaking away from the generalizing nature of “psychology’s more formalized description of personhood” (8). Madigan states that narrative therapy is based on “a person’s story, the influences that shaped this story, and the right to tell this story from multiple perspectives” (17). These alternative stories resist the control that dominant groups have on defining what it is to be normal (19-21). Because of this, the problems with self-narration that we might be having “are viewed as relational, contextual, interpretive, and situated within the dominant discourse, expression, response, and cultural norms” (80-1). Therefore, in narrative therapy the therapist’s primary job is to, “help people re-remember, reclaim, and re-invent a richer, thicker, and more meaningful alternative story” (159) than the detrimental ones we have been telling about our selves and that have been reinforced by dominate institutions and other traditional psychological practices. Madigan reminds us that it wasn’t until 1974 when the American Psychiatric Association dropped homosexuality from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (30).

In order to counter the institutionalized definitions found in patients’ files, narrative therapy utilizes different writing and naming practices, such as community based “therapeutic letter-writing campaign” (117), as well as “leagues,” like the Vancouver Anti-Anorexia/Bulimia League (129-131). Madigan also provides an example of ‘re-authoring conversations,’ that allow the patient to reveal, “stories that could not have been predicted through a telling of the dominant problem of the story” (81). In this way we are re-historicizing our selves. With one of the examples he provides the
therapists ask the patient to “write a letter to members of the family/community [...] and asks them to assist in a temporal re-remembering” (119). In doing this, the patient rediscovers a narrative history about themselves that has been lost, forgotten, or taken over by dominating narratives. This technique recovers forgotten histories of our selves that are based on our immediate community’s remembering, as opposed to our own problematic remembering, and opposed to large narratives that come down from dominant institutions; e.g., from mass media.

This analysis of inner-conversation habits in narrative therapy (discussed in detail in the following chapter) is important because we rhetorizers hardly ever consider inner-rhetorizing. This can be attributed to the serious bias that wants to divide the academic into subject/object in order to remove our selves and our “unscientific” thoughts/personal mistakes from our study instead of embracing them. For my work, I want to address this inner-rhetorizing by connecting these problematic habits back to where they are largely perpetuated: the homogenized narratives perpetuated by mass media. In other words, I want to find ways in which these counterviewing questions can be asked by a form of public pedagogy.

Henry Giroux provides us with yet another way in which we can view mass media working on us, and this is through the practice of public pedagogy: the way in which popular media can work to educate us in a helpful manner that allows us to deal with a wider variety of narratives outside the narrative presented to us. In other words, we are able to increase our social/visual literacy in watching these programs; e.g., PBS, NOVA,
Sesame Street, Discovery Channel, MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses), distance education, The Kahn Academy, etc. Giroux finds that,

Public pedagogy can be used as a powerful resource for engaging people in robust forms of dialogue and activism […] educators and others also need literacies that enable people to critically analyze the new electronic technologies that are shaping everyday life through the popular media (4).

So aside from narrative therapy practices, there are other ways in which dominant narratives circulating in the public sphere can be disrupted so that we can reflect on the narratives we tell about our selves and those narratives that have become forgotten. Constructing “texts” (novels, films, internet videos, TV shows, newspapers, etc.) that take all these aspects into consideration would allow us a space where we can play with the dominant narratives perpetuated in the public sphere, come to better understand our inner-rhetorizing moves, and thereby avoid the problematic exclusion of our personal history that informs us of who we are and what we want to be. In creating mass narratives in this manner we won’t simply be playing catch-up with problematic narrative habits, but will have these problematic habits in mind when the mass narratives are created. The disruption between our selves and the mass narrative must occur within the homogenous forms themselves. I would also like to widen the scope of narrative therapy to include more of us that can be helped through such practices, not just those of us who are suffering from more severe mental problems (although obviously not excluding those of us who are).
Sytske Kok’s “The Chinese Wall” (Netherlands 2002)

Although in Chapter Five I will argue that paraumhordyors are exemplary public pedagogies that can act as a narrative therapy, another example of a public pedagogy that takes on the aspects of narrative therapy is a short film by Sytske Kok titled, The Chinese Wall (Netherlands 2002). In this short film an older lady (the main character) is dining by herself in a Chinese restaurant on her birthday. As she sits pondering her life, her inner monologue provides personal reflections on her life (past and present), and the judgments she is making about the people around her in the restaurant. But as the film progresses the viewer is able to see how these judgments of others are often based on her own past experiences and the people she use to know. So the viewer is able to see the creation of new opinions about the people around her, as well as the motivations behind creating these opinions. At the end of the film the viewer gets to see how the conclusions she was drawing about the people around her were completely false. The man and the women are not a married couple struggling to keep their marriage alive, as she had originally surmised (thinking about her own failed marriage), but were in fact a brother and sister, the brother trying to make his sister feel better about something by taking her out to eat. The group of young people was not a group of students who study “computers,” but were an ice skating club, and her misread of a romantic narrative involving an unfortunate love triangle in the group was skewed by her own experience with being young and in love. The “brat” child eating with his parents wasn’t gloomy for no reason at all, as she remembered her own child had been, but because he is crippled (we just couldn’t see the wheel chair until later).
When all of this is revealed, surprise is generated within the viewer because of the fact that it was so easy to go along with the judgments the main character is making: her opinions are clever, insightful, witty, in many cases could be true, and these judgments respond to generalizations that the viewer has also probably made about people in the past. In every instance it is revealed that she misdiagnosis everyone, but the viewer goes along because the main character appears intelligent and confident, and she appeals to our *homo economicus/seriosus* narrative expectations. The viewer (and us as viewer) is complicit in these false judgments and this allows the viewer the ability to reflect on how they fell into the practice of habitual and compulsory judging based on stereotypes and generalizations. Their reflection on the judgments they made while watching the film can lead them to reflect on these same judgments they make in their daily lives.

This film therefore aligns itself with one of Michael White’s narrative therapy techniques: the “therapeutic method of externalizing internalized problem conversations.” This technique focuses on the question: “Is the talk about the problem gaining more influence over the person or is the person’s talk gaining more influence over the problem?” (*Narrative Therapy* 18). Within this practice the therapist works to bring out the internalized narratives that we continually tell our selves that are problematic, unhelpful, and I argue that make us unable to deal with out multipersonned/kariotic selves. In being guided through *The Chinese Wall* by the main character’s inner monologue, the viewer participates in her judgments and problematically internalized narratives. Once these problematic narratives are turned on themselves, and therefore externalized, we gain distance from these judgments and are able to analyze them, no
longer as an essential part of our selves and our own personal narrative, but as socially and culturally constructed, as well as belonging to a habitual/impulsive *homo economicus/seriosus* narrative interests.

This short film is able perform a ‘therapeutic method of externalizing internalized problem conversations’ as narrative therapy, but for a larger audience than, for instance, the letter writing practices of narrative therapy. Therefore, this short film is able to bring us in an intimate way by working in the opposite direction: instead of addressing the our particularities (as narrative therapy would work to do) it presents the problematic/dominant/homogenized narrative, the we are led to accept it, and then when this narrative is turned on itself, we realize our attachment to the problematic/dominant/homogenized narrative, and we are forced to reflect on our own local situation (at least, I did). Public pedagogies like this (and more so, examples of *paraumhordyor*) take on aspects of narrative therapy and are able to traffic within the problem in order to reveal the problem. Unlike the problematic narratives, they do not end in a reinforcement of norms, but challenge us to be creative, to look for alternatives, and gain a wider-view of our selves.
CHAPTER FOUR

PARAUMHORDYOR FUNCTIONING AS A MASS NARRATIVE THERAPY IN CONTEMPORARY VISUAL ENTERTAINMENT

Helpful Public Pedagogies

In the previous chapter, the short film *The Chinese Wall* served as an example of a public pedagogy acting as a narrative therapy. In this chapter I want to show how *paraumhordyors* can also accomplish this task, but in a much more dynamic way and for a wider audience. *Paraumhordyors* can provide the “jolt” described by Eakin and this jolt occurs within the context of the problematic narrative practices themselves, and this is due to parody’s ability to work within cultural homogeneity. A brief and incomplete list that will be expanded upon in later in this chapter: Woody Allen’s film *Zelig!*, Rob Corddry’s television series *Children’s Hospital*, and Sarah Silverman’s YouTube short *Perfect Night*. Dwight Macdonald explains: “good parody” balances “sophistication and provinciality,” and the later is needed “because the audience must be homogeneous enough to get the point” (567). Parodic forms of contemporary visual entertainment can address this homogeneous audience in ways that other discourses cannot: the rigid *homo economicus/seriosus* person within us often does not have the patience/time/head-space to take in the nuanced lessons provided by scholarly work on self-narration and identity. The utilitarian stance we often take prevents us from seeing how the lessons these discourses provide relate to our everyday lives, and instead we only place them alongside other far-fetched academic theories. The opposite is also true: our utilitarian self often
only “sees” the abstract academic theory in relation to a very limited perception of our selves (we are a female therefore a feminist, or not a feminist because we are male) and the same result occurs if there is no comedic element working to allow us to break from a purely utilitarian perspective. It is therefore important for parody to dress up within the problematic narratives themselves, in order to be taken in by the habitual and utilitarian mind, in order to disrupt it.

As seen in the previous chapter, Anderson and Giroux point out the problematic aspects of mass media, but I also want to look at the ways in which using the same means of communication can be productive and, instead of reinforcing homogenized narratives, offer the opportunity for creativity outside these narratives. Parody is best suited to provide the rupture that Eakin talks about here: “what we say about ourselves in passing is usually swept away [. . .] and it takes a rupture in the normal unfolding of everyday life to bring it into view and remind us of its value as identity’s bedrock” (7). In order to re/discover narratives about our selves, paraumhordyors in the form of contemporary visual entertainment provide a space where the viewer/reader (we) can enter into and expand our narrative practices through play and creative experimentation. This becomes necessary because we all can’t perform the community-type practices prescribed by narrative therapy (restraints on time, location, lack of community, etc.). However, the same effects can be obtained through other means, such a public pedagogy that utilizes parody, which is one of the qualifications of a paraumhordyor (more qualifications to be fleshed out later).
As seen previously, dominant and overarching narratives produced by mass media teach the us what is normal. However, if mass narratives are going to continue to inform our self-narration practices, it is necessary to also view the positive educational possibilities of mass narratives, and Giroux labels this positive aspect of mass narrative construction as “public pedagogy,” that provides “literacies that enable people to critically analyze the new electronic technologies that are shaping everyday life through the popular media” (4). The forms of public pedagogy that would enable this would require the use of a mass media narrative that is self-reflexive, aware of its social consequences, and concerned with the way in which narratives affect us. It should be noted that just because a mass media narrative is a public pedagogy, this doesn’t make it unproblematic, because there are obviously many problematic public pedagogies as well; e.g., how Bill O’Reilly’s attempts to “educate” his audience. Therefore, I am focusing on a very specific form of public pedagogy that takes into account all the specific aspects I will be working with: creativity, self-reflexivity, aiding our inner-conversation habits, and promoting literacy across mediums. Viewing parody as public pedagogy would do just this, and many have viewed the comic forms of satire, irony, and parody is performing this mass educational role.
Contemporary Positions on Comedic Rhetorical Forms in the Public Sphere

McClennen and Baym

There are already working examples of public pedagogies utilizing humorous rhetorical devices in contemporary comedic “fake” news shows, e.g., *The Colbert Report*, and these shows help us analyze and construct the narratives we tell about ourselves, to our selves and others. In *The Colbert Report*, host Stephen Colbert parodies rightwing ultra-conservative pundits; e.g., Bill O’Reilly. By dressing up within this character and the narrative practices this character perpetuates, Colbert is able to highlight the constructed nature of these practices, thereby allowing the viewer to reflect on their relationship with both the media and their own practices of self-narration.

Sophia McClennen places *The Colbert Report* within the context of a public pedagogy by first summarizing Giroux’s argument that, “education increasingly takes place via the mass media, the movie theater, and other forms of popular culture,” as opposed to the classroom, news, and the home (71). Therefore, McClennen finds that shows like *The Colbert Report*, don’t merely entertain their audience, but also encourage us to participate in critical engagements within the public sphere: “satire deserves greater attention as one of the most significant forms of critical public pedagogy in operation today” (73). Although McClennen uses the term satire in her work, often the way in which she uses the term functions more like my definition of parody than definitions of satire (more on this later). However, the strength of McClennen’s position is in recognizing how the use of comedic forms in *The Colbert Report* allows the show to operate as a form public pedagogy. In doing so, McClennen finds a way around the over-
determined false dichotomies that are continually reinforced by our media and political discourse: democrat v. republican, liberal v. conservative, apathetic non-participation v. overzealous participation that reinforces problematic stereotypes. Because of this she is able to highlight one of the main successes of The Colbert Report itself: it reflects everything back onto the audience, where the potential for change exists. The show does this even on a literal level through fan participation activities; e.g., editing specific Wikipedia pages competing in green-screen challenges, asking viewers to donate to special charities, etc. (160). This generates creativity by offering alternative perspectives that might help younger generations reinvasion and rethink the way in which we should approach argumentation in the public sphere.

However, there are several instances in McClennen’s text where specific arguments need to be more fully articulated. For instance when championing The Colbert Report over South Park, the helpfulness of both shows lies not necessarily in transferring “fake” politics to “real” politics (which McClennen criticizes South Park for not doing), or humorous discourse to “serious” discourse, but allowing their viewers a chance for reflection and encouraging the shows viewers to create new ways of doing and thinking, be they political or otherwise. A lack of distinction between parody and satire in the work adds to such confusion, as focusing on the satiric and not parodic properties of The Colbert Report, can distract us from the real helpfulness of the show. For instance, when McClennen champions the way in which Colbert has, “suggested that truthiness [a popular tool for FOX pundits] had severely limited the possibilities for truth based on evidence, reasoned consideration, and assessment of the facts” (123). But here I would
not suggest that we should blindly opine for ‘truth based on evidence, reasoned consideration, and assessment of the facts’—this would be a rhetorizing stance that a satire might problematically take. Instead I would rather promote a discourse that encourages curiosity, and this is the real strength of *The Colbert Report* and *South Park*: not in “correcting” the way things are (which would only repeat the problem) but encouraging curiosity. This is what McClennen herself promotes elsewhere: “the show does not give answers, but it does use satire to help viewers critique the information we receive and the process by which we receive it” (181).

McClennen is not alone in recognizing the important role comic news shows like *The Colbert Report* now play in the public sphere. Due to the steady rise of shows like *The Daily Show, The Colbert Report, and The Onion* etc., there has been a boom in scholarly publications on the ability of satire, irony, and parody to encourage political awareness in the public sphere. One such collection of works is titled *Satire TV* and is edited by Jonathan Gray, Jeffery P. Jones, and Ethan Thompson. Unlike McClennen, Geoffrey Baym’s chapter specifically addresses parody and is titled “Stephen Colbert’s Parody of the Postmodern.” Baym’s focus in this work is to “explore how *The Colbert Report* works as an emergent form of political media and to consider its contribution to contemporary political discourse” (126). Like McClennen, a post 9-11 environment is at the forefront of his analysis, and both tend to focus on parody’s (satire for McClennen) effect on our current crisis in journalism. Baym also analyzes particular segments and features of *The Colbert Report*, and he discusses how through parody, these allow the viewer to gain insightful into their interactions with news media. Although McClennen’s
treatment is much more detailed in regards to *The Colbert Report* (as it is a whole book and not just a chapter), and she is mainly referring to satire rather than parody (although parody might fit her analysis better), both of them shine great insight onto *The Colbert Report*’s ability to escape problematic postmodern traps that have been utilized by Rightwing Conservatives, especially in the rhetoric of “truthiness.”

For Baym “truthiness” does more than point out the ridiculousness of using feelings over facts:

> The critique here runs deeper than simply pointing fingers at those who privilege opinion over fact. Rather, *The Colbert Report* confronts the wider postmodern deconstruction of the very grammar of fact [. . .] He invokes the postmodern argument that objective reality is inaccessible and that facts themselves are social constructs (135).

However, Baym problematically aligns postmodernism too closely with pathos-heavy conservative politicians, as he provides an overly simplistic version of postmodernism, or perhaps more to the point, an all too simplistic championing of modernism: “Underlying the humor here is commentary on a *postmodern episteme* that celebrates individual perception over objective truth, emotional inclination over rational knowledge, and political expediency over reasoned argument” (137). But it is not till the end of the piece, when Baym finally comes out with his anti-postmodern stance:

> At the heart of *The Colbert Report* lies a consistent concern for the vitality of democratic practice in a postmodern age. His notions of truthiness and wikiality provide a modernist point of agitation against dominant political
inclinations to reject objective inquiry and intellectual engagement in favor of a hollow political spectacle (138).

Baym ends with this statement, which is a plea for the world to return to a better time (if that time period ever existed):

Colbert helps us realize the implications of a postmodern episteme: he constructs a powerful view of what public speech and democratic politics have already become if we truly have abandon modernity’s commitments to objectivity, rationality, and accountability (142).

McClenne and others (seen in the next section) provide a more helpful account of the complicated nature of these comic news shows, and provide a much more helpful outlook. Like Baym, McClenen provides the post-9-11 context into which The Colbert Report appeared. At this time there was both limited public access to information and limited public interest in the issues. However, comedy, in particular satire, was (and still is) one of the few ways “through which it was possible to encourage the public to reflect critically on these issues” (41). McClenen makes the case that the ability of citizens to participate in the public sphere was being limited by the rise in right-wing fundamentalisms (46), the increasing influence of neoliberal economic policy brought on by Regan and Thatcher in the 80’s (44), and the culture of fear brought on by the war on terror (57). However, The Colbert Report is able to provide alternative narratives and therefore reinvigorate the public sphere by “using satire to open up a space for debate and deliberation about the state of the nation and it practices,” and this creates “a sense of empowerment among his views by reaffirming their ability to shape public discourse and
influence politics” (43-44). McClennen finds this especially important, owing to the paralysis that poststructuralist and deconstructionist thought has had on the Left: “U.S. critical thought has led to a wariness, if not an outright disavowal, of foundational ideas” that might counteract the Right-wing fundamentalisms (51). Therefore, “the left’s hesitancy in advocating a political vision has made it easy for the right to appropriate the left’s language at the service of the right’s own agenda” (52). However, for McClennen, The Colbert Report is able to escape this postmodern paralysis, not because it secretly has a modernist agenda as Baym claims, but because it devalues its importance at appropriate moments through self-parody and humility, in order to not merely replace and perpetuate problematic representations, but leave it up to the viewer to decide for ourselves. For example, the bullet points in “The Word” are not always critical, but vary from “silly to incisive,” and this creates a “destabilizing effect” that thereby requires the audience to “produce their own active and engaged interpretation and analysis” (135). By encouraging audience participation (examples on page 135) McClennen insightfully articulates how Colbert is able to escape the Left’s ‘problematic postmodern situation’ that revolves around the circular notion that “if words are always insufficient or repressive” then we are unable to “argue against the way the right misused them” (126). Therefore, reducing The Colbert Report to the already rigid literary debate between modernism and postmodernism, is highly problematic, and makes us miss the most important aspects of The Colbert Report.
Spicer, Self, Wilz, Hess, and Hariman

In *The Daily Show and Rhetoric*, edited by Trisha Goodnow, the majority of the essays focus on how satire is used rhetorically in *The Daily Show*, as satire is the predominant comedic rhetorical device used in the show. As many note, and as I mentioned previously, there has been a boom in academic works published about *The Daily Show*, and Goodnow (xii), Wilz (86), and Wiesman (131) provide extensive lists of these publications. However, as Penian Wiesman states in “We Frame to Please [. . .],” typically these works simply praise the “*The Daily Show*’s encouraging contributions to political communication and journalism, domains that are perceived to be in crisis” (132). Although these domains might be in crisis, I am not going to focus on them here. However, there are several key threads that run through particular essays that involve viewing *The Daily Show* as a positive alternative to purely serious critique (as seen in the work of McClennen in Baym) that is able to humanize the process of critique and approaches rhetorizing not just as an argumentative form where there are winners and losers, but as a possibility for creativity, similarly to how McKerrow describes a critical rhetoric functioning. From this collection I will focus on the essays written by Robert N. Spicer, John W. Self, Kelly Wilz, Aaron Hess, and (in a similar vein, but not in this collection) Robert Hariman.

In “Before and After The Daily Show [. . .],” Robert N. Spicer points out that while *The Daily Show* is able to critique journalism and mass media it

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26 Author’s Note: And while *The Colbert Report* is mainly parodic, it would be foolish and pointless to argue that these lines aren’t blurred at times in both shows, as both shows often utilize various comedic rhetorical devices.

27 Editor’s Note: Sorry, I haven’t been paying attention. I apologize for any mistakes that may have occurred since my last footnote.
[. . .] never becomes fully integrated within those systems; it is a position at which Stewart can step within the space of politics in order to swipe at it and then step back out to keep himself and his show at an arms length distance from it all (26).

It is this in-between space that makes the show pertinent. However, Spicer provides a warning throughout (citing Hart and Hartelius) that satirical shows can lose their critical message when re-appropriated, and that they themselves can easily be re-appropriated by the very entities they critique (30, 31, 34, 35). This warning would be relevant if we lived within a dynamic public sphere where competing political stances provided well-developed and culturally aware rhetorizing stances.

The problem is that our current public sphere is radically imbalanced: conservative republicans accept it as a badge of honor to be culturally ignorant, anti-intellectual, and media-illiterate. I can’t think of any instance where the best of these popular satirical/parodic shows (The Daily Show, The Colbert Report, The Onion) have been successfully/humorously re-appropriated or have ‘been had’ by either a serious news entity or a humorous conservative republican pundit (if one exists). The problem is that these programs make fun of themselves better than anyone else can, and they also apologize when they make mistakes. Taking these shows ‘to task’ also becomes difficult when we take into account that these shows often critique Leftist stances better than any Right-wing media outlet, as well as mock their own stances as “fake” news organizations. So this warning that may be relevant in other time periods and with other programs, falls
short here, especially if we are asked to provide examples of successful re-appropriations (see Hess later for similar arguments).

Similar to Spicer’s argument, John W. Self cites Gring-Pemple and Watson who say that irony and satire fall short of effective argumentation for three reasons: it is “inescapably polyvalent,” “Viewers may have alternative readings,” and that these forms lead to a *reduction ad absurdum* “‘which may encourage some readers to accept moderate forms’” (70). I don’t view these features drawbacks, but even so, Self counters with a much broader and more helpful understanding of argumentation that opens up the rhetorizing possibilities of satire in *The Daily Show*. For Self, there are four strengths in viewing satire (and humor in general 73) as an argumentative strategy. The first strength is that “satire gives an argument presence” (70), or in other words, satire grabs our attention and brings the topic to the forefront of our attention. Self continues: “the second strength of satire as argument is catharsis for the audience member” (71). Self provides an example where, “As Stewart vented his anger, he effectively vented our anger as well” (72). The third strength is that “the potency of the arguments, develops out of this notion of catharsis,” (72); in other words, because the “arguments are based on the common values between arguer and audience,” it allows for “catharsis to occur” (73). And lastly, satire qua argumentation does in fact have “a persuasive effect beyond the confederates” (72); i.e., beyond the self-selecting audience who follow *The Daily Show*. Self mentions later that this ability of humor “creates a desire to share what we find funny with others” (73) and highlights humor’s share-ability and sociality. This can be seen when *The Daily Show* is featured on newscasts, or when clips are posted on Facebook or sent out in mass
emails. In all of these instances, the show reaches beyond its traditional viewership. Self also points out that satire is an “enthymematic form of argument which requires audience participation” (74), which is yet another way in which The Daily Show encourages creativity beyond itself: the viewer is continually asked to supply the missing pieces of the joke/reference, thereby, enhancing their cultural/media literacy through a perpetual invitation to look at context. In other words, this show does not force-feed its viewer facts but continually asks them to make wide-ranging associations through allusions, word play, etc. Self’s work here helps us better understand how humor and satire can provide alternative forms of argumentation in the public sphere outside traditional, and perhaps worn out, argumentative strategies.

Kelly Wilz also wants to move away from typical/traditional forms of argumentation. For Wilz, The Daily Show is one such alternative that is able to rehumanize this process as it “emulates a model of democratic interaction that falls in line with Nietzsche’s, Burke’s and Hawhee’s conception of agonistic debate” (87). In this agonistic realm, “human relations aren’t reducible to words on paper,” (81), and, I would add, not reducible to the literal transaction of words, or languages in any medium. When we fail to look at the context surrounding individual statements we are unable to take into account the speaker’s multipersonned/kairotic self. Unfortunately, we are often limited to a literal interpretation and we have to respond immediately. We are also limited by our own shortsighted and temporary opinions. Wars are started by the slightest misunderstandings: an unconscious gesture, a slip of the tongue, etc. We are not allowed the time to respond kairotically, and therefore we engage in argumentation that is both
harmful and pointless (but at least you are doing *both and* and not just *either or*. High Five!). If we are able to ‘transcended social enstrangement’ (*paraumhordyor* allows us the ability to practice this) then we can avoid a knee jerk march to war in our personal lives.

Wilz highlights Burke’s attempt to find ways to “construct human relations so they don’t default to warring relations” through his “‘comic correctives’ that work as a rhetorizing response to “victimization which occurs through oversimplification” (82). This same oversimplification prevents us from understanding our multipersonned/kairotic selves. When our *homo economicus/seriosus* selves are so heavily invested in overarching narratives of success it is very difficult for us to distance our selves from the rhetorizing stances we believe define us. To ‘separate deed from doer’ becomes difficult when we project so much of our identities in a doer form, believing that we are imposing upon our grand narrative when it is the other way around; our grand narrative is enslaving us to power structures we willingly celebrate!

Like pervious scholars, Wilz delineates the tricky position Stewart occupies, but unlike Spicer, she keys-in on what differentiates Stewart from others who engage in this typically problematic discourse: Stewart changes his views when proven wrong and works with humility (84). Wilz finds Stewart embodying the notion that a comic corrective provides, “tolerance and contemplation, ‘by exploring how people in political communities might transcend themselves enough to observer their foibles even while acting strategically toward one another’” (84). Wilz notes that even though Stewart and some of his guests have very different opinions, “the interviews never regress into verbal
assaults on each other’s character” (89). She also notes that “there are no winners or losers [. . .] this discourse of courtship involves a sort of reciprocity, or the vulnerability to being open to being persuaded” (90). In summation, Wilz states:

_The Daily Show_ reminds us that just as we construct ideas that differences will result in warring relations, this model provides a corrective to that position. This model suggests that just as we create certain myths, we also have the ability to create new myths, ways of interacting and being in the world with one another (90).

Aaron Hess focuses on the self-parodic aspects of _The Daily Show_. Hess also provides a nuanced take on argumentation by viewing _The Daily Show_ as using arguments that target “elements of the modern journalism era of infotainment and punditry through personality” (93). The key word is personality: Stewart’s own personality is able to shine through the homogenized debates by the use of self-parody, humility, and comedy. Similar to what these previous scholars have argued, Hess states:

_The Daily Show_ enjoys a dual role of being comedy and being a critique of the news industry. When targets of the critique attempt to argue back at the program based upon the latter, Jon Stewart rests upon the former as the central premise of the show (94).

And this is often the loudest accusation made by critiques of these comedic news programs: Stewart is having his cake and eating it too! He’s not adhering to a rigid set of principles! But this presupposes that there are winners and losers, as well as a solid “reality” from which the “highly principled” news organizations work from... which very
clearly no longer exists (for the most part), if it ever did. It’s as if Stewart himself was the first to blur the lines between entertainment and news; no surprise here, he wasn’t, and he is definitely not the only one to do so (I’m looking at you Fox and Friends).

However, Hess finds that there is something more interesting going on, more than just a pundit being difficult for the sake of being difficult. Hess states, “The Daily Show itself is remarkably immune to arguments against its production of satire, largely due to its ability to engage in self-parody and carnivalesque as a form of argumentation scheme” (97). Hess continues:

[. . .] parody, as a form within the carnival, is pointed at the self as well as others. When used strategically, self-parody through an argumentative form of carnival can bolster the critique [. . .] The aim of the critique is in all directions, and especially upon the self (101).

This self-parody technique is able to pull the rug out from underneath those who want fix Stewart in a rhetorizing stance, so that they can place themselves in a rhetorizing stance of opposition. This self-parody spreads out the “standards of evaluation” in “all directions” (102), thereby creating a space that derails a fast retreat back into our typical rhetorizing stances: “Arguing back at a program that dismisses even its own content is unlikely to be successful” (109), which is why we are hard-pressed to find successful instances of individuals/institutions uprooting these comedic news shows. The issues and motives are still present in the interactions that occur on the show, but now the participants must deal with these issues and motives and with each other, without their
bumper sticker rhetorizing stances. Perhaps nothing results from this encounter, but the possibility of creatively dealing with these problems is increased.

Similar to Wilz, Hess finds Stewart’s ability to use humor to critique himself and others humanizes a typically dehumanized discourse. Humor allows the critique to be poignant because it creates an open atmosphere allowing the audience/us to venture further in questioning our selves and our world, more so than in a strictly critical process. So instead of focusing on the political impact or what this show means in a larger journalistic context, it is vital for us to focus on the fact that Stewart utilizes humor and humility at the right time, when non-helpful satirists and parodists fail to do this. It is not just that Stewart uses satire, because as seen in Chapter Two, satire can often lead to a problematic moralistically righteous rhetoric stance, it is the way in which he uses satire that is important, and the previously mentioned ways in which he does this aligns with my definition of paraumhordyor.

The stances these comedic “fake” news shows occupy tells us a lot about our current political and academic atmosphere, our own approaches to argumentation and critique, and most importantly the importance humor plays within these areas. The important position humor plays is highlighted when considering how difficult it is to for an “opponent” to respond to a self-parodic, well constructed, informed, and thought-provoking humorous piece. However, it is all too easy to respond to single dimension argumentation: it will always carry with it the limited one-sided seriousness that is asking to be further filled-in by comedic voices. Outside the arena of an agonistic courtship; i.e. in a winner/looser scheme, the only result is a never-ending back and forth that disallows
a helpful understanding of our *kairotic* sense of self, and instead obsesses over the limited scope of the topic at hand, thereby negating the possibility for creativity and self-reflection: where the actual potential for growth lies.

In order to respond to a well-constructed *paraumhordyor*, we must be witty, culturally aware, media-literate, have a great concern and understanding of humanity, humility, and a good relationship with failure: essentially the very same version of our selves who would construct and appreciate a *paraumhordyor*. This is why there have been few (if any) successful rebuttals to shows like *The Daily Show, The Colbert Report*, or *The Onion* (as Hess notes on 107) that have occurred outside these same programs, as they self-reflect upon themselves. A negative response to these shows from a serious rhetorizing stance is always already a clichéd: these shows are only funny and they aren’t serious enough. These responses will always fall flat, because once the cat is out of the bag; i.e., once the dormant comedic element that was accompanying the serious message (à la Bergson) presents itself, it is difficult to ignore the demolition of the battlefield itself. The purpose here is not to defeat our enemy but to eliminate everyone’s ability to fight.

One of the reasons why these shows are able to bypass antagonistic debate in favor of playful agonistic courtship is through the deployment of the comic in tandem with a dash of surrealism, or the bizarre, or a *reductio ad absurdum*. Hess states, “*The Daily Show*’s ‘reality’ is one that is quite fake, or at least surreal” (99). Self says something similar: “Satire does not demand, nor does it seek, objectivity” (69). This is further supported by Hess in *Breaking News: A Postmodern Rhetorical Analysis of The*
Daily Show: “Burke (1945) sees irony as dialectic, which ‘requires that all the sub-certainties be considered as neither true nor false, but contributory’ (155). So it is this aspect of absurdity in concert with agonistic argumentation and comedy that shows us how to deal with our motives in communication differently.

In “Political Parody and Public Culture,” Hariman provides a nice bridge between the previously mention scholars who discuss the effects of parody and satire on the public sphere and specific discourses, and my focus on parody’s effects on the individual’s narrative practices. Hariman delineates two “truths” in our modern world: the “first truth” which is to “know the world scientifically and so to master it technologically” and the “second truth” which is to “know ourselves as we are most human, speaking and scheming, always fallibly” (265). In working within the realm of the second truth, we will be better equipped to deal with the first truth, as it allows us to gain a better understanding of our motives and our relationship to failure. The second truth is best achieved by working towards a better relationship with our multipersonned/kairotic self, thereby allowing us to be creative, flexible, and self-aware. For Hariman, parody places stereotypical/serious/monological narratives within a broader context in which they operate: “By articulating, comparing, judging, brokering, and synthesizing the varied discourses of their society, citizens become better equipped to negotiate plural interests based on realistic accounts of self, other, and a world of change” (259). Hariman expands on this:

Duplication of speakers, styles, and genres provides a unique way to see ourselves as creatures of our own making. This can happen through
mirrors, pedagogical exercise, mechanical reproduction, or other means; parody makes this technique into an art form. As a culture forms around that art and those it mocks, a structure of feeling develops. That structure turns into what might otherwise be a frightening experience—seeing the world being replicated—and makes it enjoyable (261-2).

As mentioned previously, having our worlds turned upside-down is not always enjoyable; therefore it is important for humor to provide, what Hariman terms, that “liberating moment” (similar to Eakin’s ‘jolts’) when we are able to see that “perception is actually a projection, how projections become reality, and how people make it through this maze by stumbling forward in slapstick performances of their own making” (262). Realizing that perception can be a projection is not a very pleasant experience: the fall of our idols, mid-life crisis, realizing our personal motives have prevented us from making well tempered decisions, etc. The humor involved in parody allows us to take a break from our serious selves, and open our selves up for creative opportunities, and therefore allow us to gain agency in the way we project and perceive.

Parody in Contemporary Visual Entertainment

Helping in the Realm of the Personal

While the previous scholars argue that these “fake” comedic news shows act as public pedagogies in ways that educate us about media, politics, and the public sphere, I will bring in less well-known examples, and show how it is possible for them to help us deal with our problematic inner-conversational habits that are influenced by narrative
expectations created and perpetuated by homo economicus/seriosus figures generated by serious and anti-reflexive mass media narratives that limit narrative literacy. I want to focus on a paraumhordyor’s ability to open up a space for personal reflection that is also creative. While the previously mentioned ‘fake’ comedic news shows do a good job of opening up an alternative space for agonistic rhetorizing to occur, I want to shift our focus to shows that work more explicitly on the personal, have a wider range of parodic subjects, and are more inline with my Judgementationalization Rubric for Paraumhordyor.

A Final-ish Judgementationalization Rubric for Paraumhordyor

As stated in Chapter Two, this Judgementationalization Rubric for Paraumhordyor attempts to provide practical, albeit sketchy guidance, but I will provide specific scenes from various forms of pre-made paraumhordyors that exemplifying each point listed in the Judgementationalization rubric. The goal here is not just to create a checklist for others to judge parodies by (I doubt anyone would do this anyway), but to put in one place all the vital qualities necessary (as far as I can tell) to create/evaluate a mass narrative in order to best understand our kairotic/multipersonned self.\footnote{Editor’s Note: It seems as if our dead author has created the concept of a kairotic/multipersonned self and is now telling us how to achieve the thing that he himself has created? I’ve only been skimming though, so I might be missing something here.}

The paraumhordyor\footnote{Editor’s Note: Remember when I told you to replace the dead author’s ‘para-whatever word’ with anything you’d like in order to make this interesting? Start replacing.} must: 1.) be funny and work on an obviously comical level; 2.) target clichéd, serious, homogeneous narrative conventions; 3.) re-create its target as an amalgamation of several points of critique; 4.) fill-in the strictly serious target with
play, nonsense, and surrealism that completes the one-dimensional figures that the original perpetuates; 5.) must parody *logos* itself, thereby engaging in self-parody; 6.) maintain an ‘alongside’ relationship with its target (not “against”); 7.) address a wide-ranging and non-specialized audience; 8.) provide the blueprint for its own construction.

1.) *Paraumhordyors* are funny. Parody (as well as argumentation and critique) is only able to achieve the best results when it establishes a space of play and the easiest way to do this is through humor. These parodies work on an obviously comical level and in doing so they are highly entertaining. Parody needs humor in order to be helpful and avoid an antagonistic critique of the target. Humor allows the parody to take the original text to its logical absurdity (but in a communicable way) in order to enunciate the absurdity within the serious gestures of the original text, within the medium, and within *logos* itself.

2.) The targets of *paraumhordyors* are clichéd, homogeneous narrative conventions that are serious, one-sided, and monological and enforce dominant and overarching *homo economicus/serious* ideals that are found in popular narratives and genres and perpetuated by mediums of mass communication. By focusing on these targets the parody complicates stereotypical and limiting perceptions of the self, reveals the construction of the serious or monological message, and challenges our reliance on stereotypes and unhelpful perceptions of the serious self. In doing so *paraumhordyor* allows the
audience/us an opportunity to come to terms with the self-surveillance we are placing ourselves under.

3.) *Paraumhordyors* may focus on specific or well-known individuals/institutions as their target in order to present an easily recognizable starting point (and should). However, the targets should never remain singular but should either develop into, or start out as, an amalgamation of several other points of critique. This reflects Gehring’s sixth characteristic of a “compounding phenomenon” (13). Here there is not merely a recreation of the original’s conventions, figures, etc., but should pull in of alien forms (non-obvious doubles, other popular references) from wide-ranging genres, cultures, and time periods in order to provide opportunities for a variety of non-obvious connections to be realized. *Paraumhordyors* should also bring in obviously false information/depictions of the character, to make the audience aware of the fact that the figure is already highly constructed. In other words the *paraumhordyor* must be able to teach the viewer the reference (even if they don’t know it) at the same time that it jokes about it. The narrative conventions and figures that are targeted are done so in a way that does not reinforce the reality of the convention/figure.

4.) *Paraumhordyors* fill in the strictly serious target with play, nonsense, and surrealism that completes the one-dimensional figures that the original perpetuates. However, the absurdity that the *paraumhordyor* brings in shouldn’t turn so antagonistic to the viewer that the piece turns completely incoherent and unhelpful. For as *paraumhordyors*
function like one of Lanham’s ‘imitation of dynamic motive,’ they do so by not attempting to find resolution exclusively within the serious or exclusively within the playful, but instead they are able to do both by using “narrative or stylistic discontinuity” that “tends to turn in on itself and meditate on the limits of language” (12). By ‘turning on itself’ these narratives create a meditation on the “boundary conditions language sets to truth” (12). Lanham’s ‘imitation of dynamic motive’ is describing a process that does not abandon traditional means of communication but instead uses narrative continuity to create discontinuity, and turn the medium back on itself to unconceal how the medium is working.

5.) The paraumhordyor must be parodying logos itself, thereby engaging in self-parody. It is not enough for the work to poke fun at the failure of one, but instead should highlight the possible failure of the medium, or of logic itself. Freud’s “sceptical jokes,” and my definition of authentic philosophizing inform this approach. Freud states that this kind of joke is, “pointing to a problem and is making use of the uncertainty of one of our commonest concepts” (138). What these jokes are attacking is not, “a person or an institution but the certainty of our knowledge itself, one of speculative possessions” (138). This moves away from the superiority theory of humor.

6.) Because paraumhordyors parody logos itself, act as a form of critical rhetoric, a form of Wilz’s agonistic argumentation, and display and understanding of Foucaultian power relations they do not get wrapped up within the power structure of a rivalry (taking an eye
Paraumhordyors maintain an ‘alongside’ relationship with their target not “against” their target. This also allows us to get outside the particular and narrow debate, which some audience’s might not be knowledgeable or concerned with. By not getting stuck within the narrow confines of a rivalry, the paraumhordyor provides more opportunities for creative insight for the audience. Paraumhordyors deny a narrowing of rhetorizing stances into two options “us or them.” Acting as Wilz’s agonistic forms of argumentation they must provide an alternative form of ‘strategic communication toward an other’ that bypasses the serious rhetorizing stance.

7.) Paraumhordyors must also address a non-specialized audience, as they don’t rely on jargon (or if they do, they simultaneously define that jargon), and do not rely on facts being “true” or not. One of Wes Gehring’s major characteristics of film parody is that “parody should be funny even without viewer expertise on the subject under comic attack” (2). Doing this in concert with pluralizing their target, not strictly reside within the serious or the playful, and taking into account a Foucaultian account of power structures, allows them to remain helpful and avoid becoming dated and non-helpful (non-kairotic). They don’t merely feast parasitically on their target, thereby only existing/remaining relevant till the host parishes. The ambiguous relationship paraumhordyors have with their targets allows them to be helpful beyond the life of particular people or institutions, which change as rapidly as their audience (doesn’t take into account a kairotic sense of time).
8.) Paraumhordyors function as one of Ulmer’s euretics as they provide the blueprint for their own construction within the lesson itself. As Rose, mentions, parody should refunction less self-reflective works of fiction to educate their own readers to a greater awareness of both the possibilities and limitations of fiction. The self-reflective nature of paraumhordyors is achieved when ‘we qua paraumhordyist’ dress up within our targets, thereby including our selves within the critique. In doing so the we generate a space for creative inquiry to inspire others by acknowledging and pointing to the very pieces we are pulling together to construct the argument/critique present in the paraumhordyor. This central meta-fictional / “how to” / “do it yourself” ability of parody is the basis for the pedagogical strength of paraumhordyor (in the classroom and public sphere), as drawing criteativical attention to the process/construction itself allows others to copy and create, thereby (at the very least) taking a break from their passive habitual practices of self-narration. We reveal our own tricks, include our selves as a target, are self-reflexive and self-parodic, and expose how the medium itself is working. Put differently by Gerhing, these parodies are also “films about moviemaking” (15).

**Mediums Featuring Paraumhordyors**

Before I analyze visual artifacts according to my Judgementationalization Rubric for Paraumhordyor, I want to discuss the visual mediums in which paraumhordyors operate. I focus on contemporary popular visual entertainment within American culture because: 1.) I want to focus on how parody is currently interacting with new technologies and platforms (e.g., Netflix and YouTube), 2.) if problematic narratives are occurring
within a medium than the parody should also occur within the same medium, 3.) I want to focus on the performative and entertaining aspects of mass visual parody as opposed to the static written word in order to find parodies that literally embody a critical rhetoric that is a performance, 4.) I want to focus on parody in our culture because of its global cultural influence, and therefore it is more important for me to find ways to undermine it with its own conventions.

To provide some historical context it is important to first turn to film. Wes D. Gehring who states, “parody has been a mainstream part of American film comedy since the beginning,” e.g. Mack Sennett parodying D.W. Griffith (2). Gehring provides great historical information and finds that the genre of American film parody started a rebirth of sorts in the 1960s: “[. . .] the genre [parody] had a special 1960s turning point” and quoting Smurthwaite and Gelder who state that, “not until the sixties was it generally accepted that the American cinema is made up of genres”” making them ripe for parody, and the reason we became aware of these genres was by and part due to the rise of academic courses offered on film studies (17-18). He also credits the rise of French New Wave cinema, the rise of the auteur theory that helped group genres together and director’s styles that could then be parodied (18), the popularity of James Bond films that lent themselves to parody (20 and 22), and a rise in general “antiestablishment activity” (21). He concludes by stating that, “Parody developments since the watershed 1960s, especially when coupled with the video revolution, continue to encourage the ever-greater film awareness of the general audience” (23). Examples of films that fit my
Judgementationalization Rubric for Paraumhordyor include: Zelig!, Best in Show, and Tim and Eric’s Billion Dollar Movie.

Television is a very popular medium in American culture and recently it has been made even more accessible (Netflix, Amazon, YouTube, free sites). Television is also episodic, allowing for breaks and pauses that are more conducive to a perpetually active home audience than film. Therefore, television is an especially important place for me to focus on how paraumhordyors are working. Examples of television shows that fit my Judgementationalization Rubric for Paraumhordyor are Robot Chicken (2005-Present), The Colbert Report (2005-Present), 30 Rock (2006-2013), Tim and Eric Awesome Show Great Job! (2007-Present), Children’s Hospital (2008-Present), Comedy Bang! Bang! (2011-2013), Burning Love (2012), Key and Peele (2012), and The Kroll Show (2013-Present).

Similarly, Internet viewership is so massive that it is also important to include popular online videos in my project. Examples of online videos that fit my Judgementationalization Rubric for Paraumhordyor are The Lonely Island (2001-Present), The Onion (2006-Present), Leslie and the LY’s (2006-Present), Bad Lip Reading (2011-Present), and Jash (2012-Present). In Chapter Six I will address short videos from amateur digital video creators, but professionals run the previously mentioned YouTube sites. Either way, the accessibility and share-ability of these online videos makes them all the more important to understand.
Examples of Paraumhordyors

In the following sections I will bring in a scene/scenes from contemporary examples of paraumhordyors working within the previously mentioned mediums and explain how each one is fulfilling each of the points listed in the Judgementationalization Rubric for Paraumhordyor. I do this in order to further illustrate how paraumhordyors function and to provide working examples of how we can construct/analyze similar works (all examples can be viewed at playfullyserious.com\textsuperscript{30}).

Obviously comical (1): Burning Love

Even if the viewer isn’t familiar with the popular Bachelor (2002-present)/Bachelorette (2008-present) television series that Burning Love (2012-2013) is targeting, the show is working on an obviously comical level. In Season 1, Episode 1 (2012), after a smash-cut sequence introducing us to the obviously stereotyped and single-dimension women vying for the bachelor Mark Orlando’s heart (one being a pregnant flight attendant), the show’s host walks out of the mansion, addresses the camera and says, “In the real world, most men would be vilified for dating twenty women at once, but honey child, this ain’t the real world.” It is the compression of themes and the honest directness in acknowledging a larger social context (that would be avoided in the actual shows) that creates humor here and allows the viewer to be in on the joke. Even without an understanding of the original shows that this paraumhordyor targets, the humor is able to be understood because it goes beyond a mere critique of these shows,

\textsuperscript{30} Editor’s Note: Okay, I went to the website and these are pretty funny. I guess this hasn’t been a total waste of my time.
and also comments on reality television in general, as well as problematic notions of romantic love that are not only prevalent in our time period but have existed for some time.

Targeting Homogeneous Narrative Conventions (2): Tim and Eric

In Tim and Eric’s “Prices” segment from their show *Tim and Eric Awesome Show Great Job* (2007-2011), they provide an excellent example of a paraumhordyor dressing up within the conventions of a serious narrative. They construct a mise en scène to parody local television commercials, and Tim and Eric both attempt to persuade the viewer that their “prices” are better than other’s prices. This segment is obviously not targeting a specific local business, but targets the conventions typically used in such commercials, as well as the clichéd conventions used in marketing in general. The running punchline is that neither of them mentions any products, but only focus on the prices themselves; e.g., Eric claims “I’ve got $19.99 for sale for $20.00.” They use tacky green-screened backgrounds and pop-ups, as well as contrived business-esque gestures and tones in order to draw attention to these formulaic conventions and the motives behind using them.

Target is an Amalgamation (3): The Kroll Show

The titles for *The Kroll Show* provide a good example of how the target can be an amalgamation from different sources. In the show’s titles there is a rapid cut of show titles made out of everything from other television shows such as *Seinfeld* to Snickers wrappers. Perhaps an even more poignant example is a sketch in Season 1, Episode 5,
titled, “Can I Finish?” The sketch is about a show, *Can I Finish?*, that dresses up within a variety of different shows but particularly ESPN’s *Around the Horn*. The original show is a sports show where the host, Tony Reali, listens to various sports reporters across the country who are shown in a row in separate windows. These reporters are awarded points from the host for making good arguments, but can be silenced or given the solo opportunity to speak. They often speak over each other and argue vehemently over something that, in the grand scheme of things, is typically unimportant. However, *Can I Finish?* isn’t a talk show about sports, as it also parodies news shows such as *Crossfire*, *Hardball*, or various other ‘pundit panel’ shows on Fox. *Can I Finish?* accomplished this by bringing in various subject matter and copying other shows’ conventions as well. *Can I Finish?* brings in several sources into one target in order to highlight how difficult it is to say anything worthwhile within similar show formats.

**Filling-in the Serious target with Non-Sense (4): The Lonely Island’s “Bottle Cap”**

This digital short by The Lonely Island, dresses up within the conventions of an independent film trailer: multiple ‘film festival olive branches’ appear and fade away, somber music plays, slow paced cuts create a “serious” atmosphere, the color palate is muted, it features humble locations and famous actors attempting to gain artistic cred, etc. The “serious” narrative that the target, a typical independent film, is attempting to convey is disrupted by what would usually be a passing and whimsical trope: the main actress, Bottle Cap (Andy Samberg), is rolling her hand in the wind out of a car window (which we see in the opening shots). Instead this trailer leads us to believe that this film’s main
narrative plot will focus exclusively on this trope. A clearly abusive father says, “Now I’ve been hearing you’ve been flip flopping your hand around in the air like some kind of idiot!” To which his daughter, Bottle Cap replies, “I’m leaving!” Here, the narrative and technical conventions of the serious independent film genre (which has become homogenous) are brought out through an absurd fixation on an empty narrative trope.

Must parody logos itself (5): Comedy Bang! Bang!

The show Comedy Bang! Bang! is not mocking talk shows themselves but highlighting the absurdity of conversation, while at the same time having a conversation; i.e., carrying out interviews with guests. One example where logic itself is being spoofed occurs every time the host, Scott Aukerman, introduces himself. Right after Aukerman introduces himself, a title will come up on the screen that phonetically resemble his name but is never his actual name. For example in Season 1, Episode 1, he introduces himself and the name reads “Stop Tacoman.” This is one of the milder logical disconnects that occur on the show, as it is filled with non-sequiturs between the host, the bandleader, the guests, and the fictional characters that pop in and out of the show. The plot and motives within the show often provide no foundation aside from comedic play within the space of a “talk show.” By overplaying common conventions to a point of absurdity, the show often makes use of “anti-humor,” that is, a form of humor that is deliberately not funny, or to put it another way, the joke is so obvious that only a hack would deliver it. In this same episode, when interviewing Zach Galifianakis, Scott asks, “So Zach, have you ever been crossing the street and seen a woman so beautiful that your jaw just dropped?” To
which Zach responds with long drawn out laughter (clearly not responding to the question). Scott asks, “Zach, you’re zoning out there buddy, what’s going on? Zach replies, “I was just imagining if dogs could talk.” In this scene and others there is clearly a lack of conversation that highlights the potential lack of conversation that might occur on actual talk shows. However, even through all this Scott still talks to famous comedians and the show is still funny and entertaining. So even in throwing out the “reality” of conversation, the show is still worth watching because of the anti-conversations that they have. The show is parodying the ability to make meaning in-and-of-itself.

Maintain ‘Alongside’ Relationship with Target (6): Sarah Silverman’s “Perfect Night”

In this parody of a “going out party anthem,” Silverman creates a music video that doesn’t necessarily work against these cheesy, overdone songs, but instead, reveals how they take themselves too seriously, and she does this by celebrating “staying in.” So she takes all the energy, hype, and narrative/musical conventions used to construct the target music-videos and transfers them onto a very different set of circumstances, which is supported by the form of the video, the music, and the lyrics. Silverman is shot in a medium close-up with the wind blowing in her hair. She is heavily lit, as in a “glamour shot,” and moves in semi-slow motion. Over a heavy dance beat she sings: “Tonight is the night I’m going to celebrate. Stay at home, order in, watch a movie, than masturbate.” She does this, not to protest “going out” in-and-of-itself, but she highlights the ridiculousness of a song trying to get an audience hyped up to go out, uncreatively tapping into something that people enjoy regardless. In it’s very form the song
acknowledges the catchiness of “going out” songs and even features the rapper Will.i.am who participated in making similar “serious” “going out” songs with The Black Eyed Peas. However, the song doesn’t closely follow any particular song, just the general style, and therefore is able to escape a too literal and pessimistic critique.

Address a non-specialized audience (7): Key and Peele

In Season 4, Episode 1 of Key and Peele, Key and Peele (both part African-American) are sitting in a dive-bar dressed as “red-necks.” They keep setting up the points they are about to make with the typical racist phrases, “Now I don’t know if this makes me racists but…” and “Everyone is thinking it, but blame me if you want to for saying it.” However, they follow these conversational set ups and interludes with positive “facts” about oppressed and minority groups in the United States. The viewer doesn’t have to know the facts, or know the groups of individuals under discussion to understand and appreciate the critique and the humor provided. The facts and statistics they provide might even be wrong, or even transitory, but the purpose of the sketch is valuable long after these “truths” about the way minorities are treated disappear. The fact that they are black men pretending to be white men signals humor and the “non-reality” of the situation. Therefore, the construction of the sketch and the construction of the stereotypical phrases they almost say (but don’t) help the viewer reflect on the narrow-minded and racist rhetorizing stances that accompany these phrases.
Providing the Blueprint for its Own Construction (8): Children’s Hospital

*Children’s Hospital* provides the blueprint for the shows narrative construction in many ways. The show generally abandons logical connections that are present in the traditional shows that serve as its targets; e.g. *E.R.*, *Grey’s Anatomy*, *Law and Order*, *CSI*, etc. In doing so the construction of *Children’s Hospital* is continually revealed and put into question. This show educates the viewer on how these plots and narrative conventions are constructed by doing them “wrong.” For instance, Season 5 opens with the characters making all-too-obvious medical jokes and then looking at the camera and winking. This season also takes place on a fake United States Military base in Japan, but for no apparent reason at all, other than it appears that the shows producers wanted to mix things up to bring in viewers (a common plot technique in popular shows that have run out of new ideas). In Season 1, Episode 2, Lake Bell’s character does the typical “walk through the hall while inner-monologue plays” narrative trope, and the constructed nature of this trope is revealed due to the ridiculousness of her musings, as well as the fact that another nurse joins her for a few seconds and we get both of their contemplative inner-monologues overlapping, destroying the reality of the convention. In Season 2, Episode 6 (middle of the season), the viewer doesn’t get another episode of *Children’s Hospital* but instead a show titled *News Readers* (parody of 60mins among other shows), which is taking an “in-depth” look at the pretend “last” episode of *Children’s Hospital*. The characters in *Children’s Hospital* now play fake “real” characters that talk about their time on the show.
Paraumhordyor qua Mass Narrative Therapy

These eight features of paraumhordyor allow it to act as a mass narrative therapy. As mentioned in the previous chapter, one of Michael White’s narrative therapy techniques is the ‘therapeutic method of externalizing internalized problem conversations.’ Within this practice the therapist works to bring out the problematic and unhelpful internalized narratives we continually tell our selves. These conversations are influenced by dominant, overarching narratives that don’t allow us to deal with our multipersonned/kairotic selves. The paraumhordyor “hooks” the audience by appealing to homogeneous conventions/motives/attitudes and then reveal our relationship to this particular text as well as to narrative conventions and figures outside the text, and the motives that we may have attached our selves to that are presented by these homogeneous narratives. Through humor the experience is playful and generates further curiosity and creativity, as we are able to gain an externalized view of our problematically internalized narratives. In his article, “Counterviewing Injurious Speech Acts,” Madigan highlights eight inner-conversational habits that are problematic for the individual 1.) self-surveillance/audience, 2.) illegitimacy, 4.) invidious comparison, 3.) escalating fear, 5.) internalized bickering, 6.) hopelessness, 7.) perfection, 8.) paralyzing guilt. (“Counterviewing” 3).

While Madigan focuses on individuals struggling under the oppression of institutionalized titles such as depression, I want to also highlight how narrative therapy can be helpful to those of us who don’t think they need help due to the “success” they believe they are achieving. I find that all of the following problematic inner-
conversational habits are products of narrative expectations created and perpetuated by \textit{homo economicus/seriosus} figures and the overarching narrative expectations that these narrative figures generate. These narrative expectations plague both those of us who are overzealous as well as those of us who are defeated, because both these modes of being are unhelpfully responding to failure and mistakes, but on different ends of the spectrum.

These eight inner-conversational habits are accompanied by a series of “counterviewing questions” that highlight the individual’s relationship with these problematic self-narration habits. I won’t focus on each set of counterviewing questions, nor will I focus on each conversational habit, because by focusing on the first one here, we will be able to address the other problematic habits as well as other habits not listed here. Of the first problematic inner-conversational habit, Madigan states: “This habit connects and directs us towards what we think the other who we think is watching us thinks about us – within the problems’ negative storied frame about us” (4).

\textit{Paraumhordyor} should allow the audience to question: “What/who is constituting an audience to this particular problematised view of yourself? Who is the spokesperson? What are they saying?” (“Counterviewing” 4). Once these questions are asked about the audience we are “speaking” to, or who we believe is judging our decisions, we can then take a step back and evaluate our relationship to these audiences. Do these audiences make us feel illegitimate (Madigan’s second problematized conversational point)? Does the speech toward the audience hold us to unrealistic standards of perfection (Madigan’s seventh problematized conversational point)? Does this unrealistic standard of perfection
make us listless or does it make us overzealous? And do either of these outcomes perpetuate revenge narratives or reinforce power structures (inner, outer, both)?

After gaining distance from their problematic inner-rhetorizing, we gain a better view of our multipersonned/kairotic selves that then allows us to address our relationship with others: others as our selves and others outside our selves. Just as it is important to understand the relationship to our inner-audience or inner audience member, it is just as important to then reevaluate if this interaction has any bearing on others. For example, we are now aware of the conversation we have been having with an audience member, so that then when we interact with this audience member outside of our own inner-conversation with them, we now have a more nuanced barometer to judge the interaction: was I merely projecting onto this individual or does this individual genuinely deserve the revenge narrative I have constructed about us?

Paraumhordyors that adhere to my Judgementationalization Rubric for Paraumhordyor (self-reflexive, use a double code, are meta-fictional, and are able to hold together disparate elements like the serious and the playful) offer one way for us to not merely reinforce a singular serious self (although this is one part of the multipersonned self), but instead allow us to experience a multi-rhetorically positioned self long enough to engage in insightful and critical creativity. Paraumhordyor allows us to come to terms with our multipersonned/kairotic selves by allowing us to peer through many different rhetorizing lenses and in doing so, choose a stance aided by a kairotic understanding of time; i.e., with an understanding that our rhetorizing stance will change and that our rhetorizing stances are only one factor within a multitude of factors that determine who
we are. This allows us to be better able to be responsible/responsive in the face of kairotic time and the act of othering.
CHAPTER FIVE

CRITÉATIVICAL ATMOSPHERES OF PLAY ENABLED BY PARAUMHORDYOR

Paraumhordyors enable us to make wide-ranging associations that allow us to reconsider our practices of self-narration. These parodic narratives should enable us (as well as student or audience member) to be creative, and instead of merely interpret a monological message, we should be encouraged to create something out of it. Through humor, parody is able to place us in the playful mood necessary for sustainable creative inquiry, and because parody is multi-coded it appeals to the multipersonned/kairotic self (which is necessarily a creative self) and in doing so, it offers more perspectives then the messages produced by the limiting serious rhetorizing stance.

There are several approaches to creativity that I will use throughout this chapter, and I will write under the influence of theorists in technology, social media, and rhetorical invention, but I will also draw from filmmakers, neuroscientists, and observations sprouting out from my own creative experiences. One of my main goals is to break down the false dichotomy that sets up creativity as the antithesis of analytical thinking, which is further evidence of a serious bias in academia and the public sphere. The best way to dissolve these dichotomies is to demonstrate how “analytical thinkers” are creative, how “creative thinkers” are analytic; i.e., how serious people are playful and how playful people are serious. The waters must be muddied. In order to break down the creative/analytic dichotomy we must see that our academic work is creative. Even though we are quoting others, addressing “real” academic debates, and perhaps even conducting
empirical research, we are still “making it up.” In order to understand how to create a positive atmosphere in which to create new works (for others and our selves), we need to be creative, we need to be making, we need to be aware that we are making our selves, and that the making of our selves is a creative project. On the flipside, this is not an invitation to abandon technical prowess, and it is never helpful to reinvent the wheel; e.g., allow kindergarten students to choose their curriculum, or conceding arguments to conservative pundits on Fox News to because they “feel” correct, etc. I do not believe that technical prowess and quality control need to be abandoned in order to be creative.

Many scholars in various disciplines have noted the important role creativity plays in society. For instance, rhetorical invention has always been concerned with our ability to generate creative arguments. However, in the field of rhetorizing, creativity has (unfortunately) predominately been thought of through the lens of our ability to generate arguments. Richard E. Young’s essay “Concepts of Art and the Teaching of Writing” sets the stage for some of the major developments that have occurred in the way rhetorizers have dealt with the role of creativity in rhetorical invention. Young delineates the debate between John Genung and Gordon Rohman, who argue against and for (respectively) the creative process being a part of rhetorical instruction. Young finds that the school of “new rhetoric,” comes out of Rohman’s emphasis on the creative aspects of rhetorical invention. But even this new rhetoric is spilt between “new romantics” (e.g., James Miller, William Coles) and the “new classicists” (e.g., Edward Corbett, Francis Christensen). The new romantics favor aleatory procedures and emphasize the writing instructor’s role as a creative facilitator. The new classicists believe that artistic talent is
not achieved by chance but by habitual practice (Young 194-8). Paraumhordyors break
down these distinctions. Paraumhordyors generate creativity by acting as heuristic
method (more so a euretic method, as seen later), but one that does not strictly reside in
either the new romantics or new classicist camps: paraumhordyor is the purposeful
(therefore practiced and habitual) undoing of purposeful procedures (therefore providing
aleatory creative moments for the audience). Furthermore, while the emphasis is typically
placed on writing in these debates, I am not limiting my exploration of creativity to
writing and argumentation, because my main argument is that parody is able to generate
creativity in the classroom as well as in the viewing of visual parodic mass media
narratives.

Rhetorical invention provides a starting point; however, as seen previously with
the work of Ramie McKerrow, I want to rethink rhetoric as a critical rhetoric, and view
rhetorizing as a way to creatively understand the motivating impulses behind
communication, not just as a way to invent arguments. Or put differently, I want to open
up the stage for alternative actors and arguments by including those arguments that occur
when we are othering our selves and other others. Therefore the question I am attempting
to solve is, how can rhetorical invention, that is, the ability to creatively respond to highly
motivated and invested communication, can allow us to create/analyze narratives that
take into account our multipersonned/kairotic selves.

Humor allows us to begin to answer this question. John Morreall states that
The artists and the humorist, if they are doing their job well, will surprise
us, and often surprise themselves. In art one of the most common ways of
praising someone’s work is to say that he or she ‘saw things in a new way.’ And are words like ‘imaginative,’ ‘creative,’ ‘inventive,’ and ‘original’ [. . .] part of the delight we feel in this use of our imagination is the feeling of liberation it brings. Instead of following well-worn mental paths of attention and thought, we switch to new paths, notice things we didn’t notice before, and countenance possibilities, and even, absurdities, as easily as actualities (Taking Laughter Seriously 91).

Specific to parody, Margaret Rose finds the enablement of creativity as the main goal: parody should enable what she terms a “creative expansion” (50). The creativity that paraumhordyors generate becomes crucial when considering our narrative practices, as we are able to think outside the more obvious dominant forms (perpetuated by our selves and mass media narratives) and discover/rediscover, invent/remember, different narratives about our selves. Exigency is also generated by problematic perceptions of what critique should be that fester within specific locations in academia and the public sphere which attempt to bring the battlefield into the realm of thoughtful inquiry where it doesn’t belong. Or to cast this in another light, in our society where we often view the world through a homo economicus/seriosus narrative lens, we do not have the multipersonned/kairotic sense of self necessary to conduct a playful agonistic courtship during highly motivated/invested communication that would allow us to depart from merely attempting to prove the rightness of our stance and the wrongness of others’ stances in order to invent rhetorizing moves that enable creativity for our selves and for others.
Additionally, the stereotype of the creative genius is also problematic. Rhetorizer James Miller branches out a bit from this view by drawing from the work of biologist E.W. Sinnott in order to support his claim that, “imagination and creativity are not the faculties of the few, the attributes of the rare geniuses of the human race. They are rather the faculties and attributes of all” (74). Linda Hutcheon also works against this romantic notion of creativity and draws from Foucault to make the point that “the entire concept of artist or author as an original instigator of meaning is only a privileged moment of individualization in the history of art” (4). Similar to G. D. Kirmidjan in my second chapter, Hutcheon addresses how this romantic notion has hurt parody as an art form, “In this light, it is likely that the Romantic rejection of parodic forms as parasitic reflected a growing capitalistic ethic that made literature into a commodity to be owned by an individual” (4). The all too popular homo economicus/seriosus approach to creativity described here, prevents the criteativical atmospheres of play that are enabled by paraumhordyor to form and aid with our understanding of our multipersonned/kairotic selves.

In Making is Connecting David Gauntlett draws from perhaps the most prominent creative scholar, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi who interviewed and researched prominent creative geniuses. However, like this other scholars, Gauntlett notes that although the notion of the great creative genius has flaws, Csikszentmihalyi’s approach was nuanced in recognizing that, “the thing we call creativity emerges from a particular supportive environment” (14). This is why we should be concerned with creating atmospheres and environments for creativity in what we produce: one person telling us what to do doesn’t
enable creativity, but a place, a mindset, an environment the individual can act within does this. Gauntlett defines our creative selves as being one aspect of Csikszentmihalyi’s triad: creativity occurs in a “culture that contains symbolic rules, a person who brings novelty into the symbolic domain, and a field of experts who recognize and validate the innovation” (14). Therefore, this is not a single creative genius but a matrix with three major components (more on this later). There is a substantial shift that occurs when we look at the creative process as such: we are no longer looking for that individual creative genius who works through divine intervention. That individual might very well exist, but what makes them a creative genius isn't that they’ve received a message from a divine being. Instead, they are carefully listening to a multitude of voices who all offer opinions on the design. We who create a kairotic user experience (more on this later) do not attempt to replicate the divine voice, but attempt to create a multi-voiced work that doesn’t silence our audience in order to prove our arguments. Here, the creative geniuses that we are do not design to philosophize anymore than we design to listen.

Moving Beyond Argumentation and Critique Toward an Impetus to Create

Rhetorical invention should help us create dynamic narratives (not just arguments) that promote both creativity, as well as the narrative literacy. As is stated in guideline eight of my Judgementationalization Rubric for Paraumhordyor, a paraumhordyor should provide the blueprint of its own construction to open up a space for creative play and self-reflexivity. This approach focuses on creating, not a rhetorizing artifact for others to interpret (or decode, if you are a student in the humanities reading an
obfuscatingly opaque and poorly written work\textsuperscript{31}), but creating an object qua impetus for creativity. Gregory Ulmer borrows approaches from experimental art in order to collide hermeneutics and critique into a \textit{euretic}. The practice of \textit{euretics} departs from straightforward communication, and allows us to come to terms with the aleatory features in a rhetorizing/educationizing discourse. Ulmer defines \textit{euretics} as

a cognitive practice coming into formation as an alternative to (not opposed to, but supplementing) hermeneutics and critique. The term, related to ‘Eureka! I found it!,’ is synonymous with thinking as discovery rather than as interpretation (‘The Euretics of Alice’s Valise’ 4).

In approaching ‘thinking as discovery’ Ulmer finds that the goal is not to “stop with analysis or comparative scholarship” but to conduct “such scholarship in preparation for the design of a rhetoric/poetics leading to the production of a new work” (\textit{Heuretics} 4). For Ulmer this allows the audience other options outside of focusing solely on what the “author means,” and instead provides the impetus to “make something out of it” (‘The Euretics…’ 4). Similarly, in the \textit{Tropics of Discourse} by Hayden White, he views discourse as “both interpretive and preinterpretive, it is always as much about the nature of interpretation itself as it is about the subject matter which is the manifest occasions of its own elaboration” (4). With this in mind, the goal of the \textit{paraumhordyorist} shifts away from championing interpretation over subject matter and shifts towards troping in-between the two to show us how we “arrived at this opinion” (4).

\textsuperscript{31} Editor’s Note: You mean like this one?
In reconceiving a public/classroom pedagogy in this manner, we are able to move away from creating a limiting, scolding, and vengeful pedagogy, and instead make a multi-voiced kairotically relevant atmosphere of play that is criteativical (critical and creative) and adaptable to our different selves and situations. This approach coincides with McKerrow’s ‘critical rhetoric’ that fights against the philosophical tradition of making rhetorizing an “inquiry that ends in description,” and instead wants it to end in the “transformation of the conditions of domination” (454). Therefore, McKerrow and Ulmer view rhetorizing and criticismizing as creativeizing processes, as do Spicer, Self, Wilz, Hess, and Hariman (seen earlier): rhetoric and criticism are not just argumentative discourses where there are winners and losers, but they should provide a possibility for creativity. There is an art to combining critique and creativity that few in academia have mastered, mainly because we aren’t being asked to master it. How do we open up a world for someone and simultaneously avoid making them feel small? If we don’t believe that the target of our criticism will thank us afterwards\(^{32}\) than we should reassess whether or not we have provided them with enough of a creative experience for them to start searching for possible solutions.

In using a multi-voiced parodic narrative, the \textit{paraumhordyorist} is able to get outside providing a monological truth, and instead provide an opportunity for others (within and without) to be creative, make something out of it, and help aid their specific situations. This process depends heavily on the \textit{paraumhordyorist} being aware of their multipersonned/kairotic selves, and their ability to provide an authentic philosophizing.

\(^{32}\) Editor’s Note: Dear Author, I won’t be thanking you, even if you were alive.
In constructing this kind of experience/atmosphere, the *paraumhordyorist* cannot possibly know exactly what will aid the individual’s situation, but a *paraumhordyor* allows for this unintentional reading from the start, as it encourages a multiplicity of messages directed in all different directions but all directed towards a *crit[ive]* [ical] end (which is not an end at all). The *paraumhordyor* renders the *homo economicus/seriosus* narrative conventions and practices ridiculous and therefore asks us to look elsewhere, but when we are searching elsewhere, we reflect on our selves and our narrative practices in a playful and creative way. *Paraumhordyor* (as an entertaining fiction as well as process of critique) allows the *paraumhordyorist* to leave the text open for audience interaction and provides them with a space to recognize their own limitations, prejudices, and idiosyncrasies.

By positioning themselves within the text of their targets, *paraumhordyorists* (we) take(s) on the work of others (who we can’t “know”) and than we deliver it to an audience (at times also us) who will undoubtedly interpret it differently, perhaps going beyond what the *paraumhordyorist* knows, and therefore beyond mere critique. The *paraumhordyorist* is able to go beyond what they “know,” by educating/reminding their audience how the narrative is functioning, so that the individual can deal with the narrative conventions outside the confines of the *paraumhordyorist’s* own narrative. In doing so, the parodist is able to mindfully include the outside of the work within the work: the audience, the unknown, the unintentional, the nonlogical, and the other. By including the outside in the work, the parodist can make the impossible, possible: others will generate ideas that are beyond what is currently possible. In this way, a
paraumhordyorist is able to leave the unfinished within the finished work (more on this later); parody is able to provide a complete message that is at all times incomplete and invites others to fill it in. Like jokes, a paraumhordyor provides an enthymeme, but not an argumentative or restrictive enthymeme, instead a creative enthymeme that exists within an atmosphere of play. Within this criteativical atmosphere that favors play and possibility, the text becomes truer, not in the sense of absolute truth, but true to life outside the text, as it helps the audience discover something new about our selves and the world around us. However, this journey might not occur if the reader is put-off from the beginning, or if the reader can’t find entry points into a diatribe created by an individual lacking a multipersonned/kairotic sense of self. This alternative ‘celphuriosity approach’ encourages creativity within the audience outside of the paraumhordyorist original intentions.

By creating an atmosphere of creativity the paraumhordyorist can work within what Michel de Certeau proposes as a “science of singularity”:

a science of the relationship that links everyday pursuits to particular circumstances [. . .] this analysis [. . .] will only be assisted in leading readers to uncover for themselves, in their own situation, their own tactics, their own creations, and their own initiatives (ix).

As a science of singularity, we the audience are allowed the space to bring in our own experiences to the work. This allows us to remember the unimportant and the forgotten moments that occur when we are not looking—when we are only focused on our

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33 Editor’s Note: After reading this I, Martin Tagamas, have attempted to redact the majority of the offensive material, but again I was up against a submission deadline, so I cannot say for certain if I did.
exceptional and limiting narrative expectations. With constant moves ‘outside’ the text, *paraumhordyors*, like the ones previously analyzed in Chapter Four, provide us with the ability to practice thinking creatively: the humor provides jumps in logic that imitate, and generate moments of insight; e.g., *Eureka!* moments. Therefore, this allows us to practice our creative thinking abilities by challenging us to search for non-obvious answers, offer us the ability to critically recognize when these jumps in logic are problematic, and allows us to practice our cognitive flexibility. In this way a *paraumhordyor* qua public pedagogy is able to generate a *criteativical* atmosphere.

*Play-aumhordyor*

As mentioned in the introduction, the dichotomy between creative thinking and critical thinking is a false one, perhaps in part because we do not have a dynamic understanding of play. Like Ulmer, Bernstein provides options outside pure entertainment or pure critique: “in the end, you don’t have to choose between enthusiasm [. . .] and systematization” (840). Bernstein calls into question the basis of serious critique, and faults these practices for paving over artistic expression that can provide the individual with the ability to deal with problems the serious critique claims to fix. He also embraces process and the inevitable fallibility of communication, which explains his attempt to include mistakes and comedic elements within the work: “poetics must necessarily involve error [. . .] the issue of error is transformed for me into a question of humor [. . .] so that the error is made explicit as part of the process” (833-4). By including purposeful mistakes within the artistic work or essay, we are able to provide the multi-coded and
self-reflexive properties apparent in parody that undercut the singular seriousness of the
message. But again, the purposeful mistake embedded within the comedic moment is not
inserted in the narrative in order to make people unable to communicate or to turn
everything into a farcical “anything goes” situation: “humor, insofar as it destabilizes any
unitary message, seems to undermine truth and authority. But that doesn’t mean this
approach to critical discourse eliminates the possibility of truthfulness or good faith or
communication” (854). Here, Bernstein echoes Lanham and Ulmer’s commitment to a
‘both and’ approach, instead of ‘either or’ or ‘neither nor’ approaches, and this ‘both and’
approach is essential for parody, humor, creativity, and learning.

Frank J. D’Angelo also uses this ‘both and’ approach when considering logical
and nonlogical topics for rhetorical invention. Although many rhetorizers have focused
on logical processes of invention, D’Angelo finds that these should be considered
alongside alternative processes:

Rhetoric for the most part, has concerned itself primarily with logical
thought processes related to problem solving. But psychological studies of
autistic behavior, research on psychedelic drugs, studies on creativity, and
Freudian dream theory all suggest that nonlogical mental processes play a
major role in thinking (D’Angelo 47).

In order to incorporate these nonlogical modes into a theory of invention he breaks up the
nonlogical topics into categories: imagining, symbolizing, free association, nonlogical
repetition, condensation, displacement, and transformation. D’Angelo does not want to
dismiss processes like ‘imagining,’ because these nonlogical processes allow for
unintended invention and for mistakes to play a roll in the process of invention. Ulmer (also influenced by Freud and the unconscious) utilizes similar ideas with his concept of ‘applied grammatology’: “the philosopher, and especially the teacher of applied grammatology, must learn like the poets and revolutionary scientists to explore the frivolities of chance” (*Applied Grammatology* 28). This is notion reoccurs throughout Ulmer’s work: “as the history of science shows, experiment teaches as much or more by failure than as by success” (*Heretics* 39). Within a creative atmosphere, chance and mistakes are essential: collisions between the serious and playful, and the logical and nonlogical must occur.

In line with my use of the term *play*, Miguel Sicart views play as an “idea of creativity and expression” that should occur in “reaction to the instrumentalization, mechanistic thinking on play championed by postmodern culture industries” and is an “invocation of play as a struggle against efficiency, seriousness, and technical determinism” (5). Sicart points out that this understanding of play is responding to our current needs, which might sift at some point, but for the time being play, as defined previously, is important because it allows us to “explore who we are and what we can say. Play frees us from the moral conventions but makes them still present, so we are aware of their weight, presence, and importance” (5). Sicart’s next descriptions of play can also be read as the functions of a *paraumhordyor*:

play can also reveal our conventions, assumptions, biases, and dislikes. In disrupting the normal state of affairs by being playful, we can go beyond fun when we appropriate a context with the intention of playing with and
within it. And in that move, we reveal the inner workings of the context that we inhabit (15).

A key distinction between play and other modes of being is that, “Play has a purpose of its own, but the purpose is not fixed” and Sicart also notes that play is creative and personal (17). It is not surprising that these pedagogical tools of play, humor, and parody, have not been implemented to their full potential, because American universities and corporations measure success through a *homo economicus/seriosus* mentality. But if we are to move outside the very narrow narrative expectations this mentality measures against, we can see that logic and reason do not always have to be subjugated to an all encompassing utilitarian purposefulness; as Morreall states, “surely we can use reason not only for inquiry and to guide our lives, but also for the occasional game of chess and even to play with our perceptions and imaginings, as in humor” (*Taking Laughter Seriously* 99). Even though I find very practical reasons for implementing parody into the classroom, this kind of play is often in-and-of-itself beneficial: “Human beings seem to have a basic need for playing, not just with conventions of conversation, but with all conventions [. . .]” (118). Without having to have a major political, philosophical, or corporate achievement in hand afterwards, play and humor are one way of escaping the dominating modes of motivation in our lives.

As mentioned previously David Gauntlett puts forth Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi’s triad of cultural symbols, innovative individual, and recognition of experts as necessary for the creative process. While the individual’s work must be recognized by others in order to be deemed innovated in a larger public sense, this is not the scale that I am
working with here. And Gauntlett states that the “strong emphasis on the end product, and the judgment of others” that this approach relies on, is problematic, and he wants to focus on creativity more as a process (17). So while the process is crucial for Gauntlett, the end results shouldn’t be set to strict *homo economicus/seriosus* standards:

people can survive without silly entertainment, flowers, gloves, or songs, if they have to. But it’s the fact that people have made a choice – to make something themselves rather than just consume what’s given by the big suppliers – that is significant (19).

Making this choice to play and create is significant, as Gauntlett reflects my sentiments when he brings up the point that promoting/understanding creativity is paramount, but it isn’t treated as such. He references his own experiences when he is presenting his research to academics who “see themselves as ‘critical’ and ‘political’ scholars”:

I get the definite feeling that they think that what I’m doing is, at best, a sweet kind of sideshow. Amplified slightly, it leads to a whole new way of looking at things, and potentially to a real political shift in how we deal with the world (19).

Understanding our creative process and practicing our creative faculties “helps us to build *resilience* [. . .] and the creative capacity to deal with significant changes” (20). Whether encouraging others to make their own *paraumhordyors* (addressed in following chapter) or encouraging others to creativity reevaluate their narrative practices, through play and humor *paraumhordyors* enable this same resiliency.
Humor Provides a Creative Atmosphere

The ability to make mistakes and listen to what those mistakes are telling us is critical to the process of creativity and taking advantage of chance and being able to positively deal with mistakes, failure, and the unintended is much easier to do within a positive atmosphere. This is why the humorous and playful components of a paraumhordyor enable creative problem solving. In the documentary 6 Days to Air: The Making of South Park, the writers of the television show South Park describe the creative process behind perhaps one of the most creative, yet socially pertinent shows to date. From the writing of each episode to the final animation process, this documentary takes the viewer behind the scenes of the highly demanding process of creating a South Park episode in six days. Trey Parker and Matt Stone create the show in this way because they want each weekly episode to be topical and relevant. Matt talks about the initial creative process: “it’s a safe place [the writer’s room]. For all the good ideas we get, there’s like a hundred not so good ones.” After a short clip of the writers spit-balling ideas back and forth, Matt continues: “And you got to feel safe to say, ‘Well what about this…?’ And people go ‘Eh,’ and you go, ‘OK,’ I didn’t take any offense, you don’t like my idea [. . .] It’s weirdly vulnerable” (6 Days to Air). Show writer Susan Arneson says, I’ve had friends who have worked at other shows, and if you say something that doesn’t work they’re like, ‘Eh that sucks, you suck, you’re not funny,’ and with these guys it’s a very kind room (6 Days to Air).

The documentary then shows clips of the writers during the process: everyone is chiming in, joking around, and they are not afraid to take chances or be too ridiculous. Although
the rest of the documentary depicts the intense process of bringing each episode into fruition, it is important to note that in the inventive stages (but elsewhere as well), the people involved need to be in an atmosphere where they can make mistakes and creatively think through ideas while having fun. My argument is that humor and parody are able to help us practice dealing with these typically negative experiences (making mistakes, not being understood, dealing with unintentional consequences) in a positive atmosphere that encourages creative thinking, and that this later helps us deal with communication failures in serious situations as well.

My own creative experiences corroborate the South Park writers’ statements that a positive, playful atmosphere is crucial during the creative stages. When I write a song (for example), I first attempt to capture the initial source of inspiration. This attempt to capture the melodic moment of insight is typically done by singing very quietly into my phone in a bathroom, so that the people I’m with don’t think I’m crazy. There is no critic present and there need not be one: this is not a developed argument I am presenting. It is possibility, excitement, and play. Maybe a month or two later (sometimes much longer) I will have a moment to re-listen, perhaps when I am thinking about several songs that could come together on an album. Yet again I must be able to silence the harsh critic within me and find that golden nugget within the very poorly recorded sounds blaring back at me from my phone. My first reaction is usually a smile and sometimes an eruption of laughter at the non-sense words and the cheesy melodies used to hold together a larger concept or vibe, but I hear the original intent through the poor execution that was necessary to get the ball rolling on a possible song.
The song must be developed further, either attempting to capture the original essence or realizing that the essence is shit, but something else is going on that is far more interesting. Even in these more critical stages, the *homo economicus/seriosus* critic—that wants to wrap us and our creative product into one single sellable package—must be silenced. If I had to put my name behind the original poorly recorded melody then I would have never sung it in the first place. An essential aspect here is to be able to abandon the original essence (no matter how “you” it is) at the appropriate time and this takes a better understanding of *kairotic* time. What will another of our selves think of this? What are we setting our selves up for? What we are responding to—perhaps a motivation we are hiding from our selves that only needs to be articulated for us to realize how we relate or unrelated to it? Better musicians than I (there are many) and jazz soloists are able to do this on a much higher level as they are able to “test drive” their melody against more critics, more styles, more historically relevant moments, and a more developed musical past (songs they’ve played and written), etc., and all in their head and all at once.

Film artist Bruce Conner describes a similar creative process to my song writing example and a creative process I often use when editing found footage myself. This process provides another great example of how to listen to mistakes and evaluate them before trying to get rid of them. For his found footage films he explains:

> I snip out small parts of films and collect them on a larger reel. Sometimes when I tail-end one bit of the film onto another, I’ll find a relationship that
I would have never thought about consciously—because it doesn’t create a logical continuity, or it doesn’t fit my concept of how to edit a film (139). The mistake is one way in which our project becomes unique; i.e., keeping the mistake within the work is one way to diverge from what others have done, and from what we our selves had planned to happen. When our serious logical selves start-in on a creative endeavor it often occurs within a predetermined mimetic space. But taking advantage of the unplanned and unknown allows for a new insight into the process: for our selves in relation to the project but then for others who will see our work. The goal is to get the artist to this spot when they are comfortable enough to make mistakes and listen to them as opposed to try and hide them. Obviously not glorifying the mistake, but seeing it understanding it and seeing if it can fit in with the original plan and make it “work.”

The benefits of this positive (or at least non-hostile) atmosphere that enables creative problem solving are highlighted by the work of cognitive neuroscientists Mark Beeman and John Kounios. Beeman and Kounios study the phenomena of insight or the “eureka moment” that is often described in stories about famous inventors. They say that this eureka moment is possible through cognitive flexibility, or the ability to switch from the right brain (creative) to left brain (analytic), which shouldn’t be surprising as both are necessary for the creative process, just as creative thinkers must be analytic and analytic thinkers must be creative. In “The Aha! Moment: The Cognitive Neuroscience of Insight” they find that the phenomena of “insight” or the “eureka moment” is important because it traverses so many different parts of our daily lives:
Aside from yielding the solution to a problem, insight can also yield the understanding of a joke or metaphor, the identification of an object in an ambiguous or blurry picture, or a realization about oneself (210). In all of these instances the mind needs to make a non-obvious, wide-ranging association that undermines typical, habitual, dominant, and negative associations. They argue that a creative approach is necessary in these instances, “because insight involves a conceptual reorganization that results in a new, nonobvious interpretation” (210).

Beeman’s research also shows that in order to think creatively we need to be in a positive mood. In, “A Brain Mechanism for Facilitation of Insight by Positive Affect,” Beeman et al, found that individuals were able to solve more “insight problems” if they were in a positive mood: “positive affect (PA) specifically facilitates people’s ability to solve creative or ‘insight problems,’ i.e., problems that are more often solved with insight [. . .]” (2-3). Because cognitive flexibility is more likely to occur in a positive mood, parody needs humor in order to construct a creative atmosphere. In their study, they showed participants comedic movies before these participants took insight tests. For the insight test they had to make a non-obvious connection in order to solve insight puzzles that purposefully hide an obvious answer. The results determined that those who watched the movies scored higher on the insight tests. They also put forth conclusions reached in other studies about PA that found it “enhanced cognitive flexibility,” it promoted “a more global scope of attention” as it was able to provide “access to distant or unusual associations,” and that it also enhanced “selection of different perspectives” (3). In using a humorous parody to question our narrative identity, we are able to make wide-ranging
associations, strengthen their cognitive flexibility, and think through their problems creatively (not purely critically). Creativity is necessary in order to escape the utilitarian impulse to view our lives within the narrow parameters of our *homo economicus/seriosus* selves.

Morreall finds all these elements operating similarly: “Humorous writing, for instance, is writing that can shift perspective, even to the most unusual points of view [. . .]” (*Taking Laughter Seriously* 96). Freud takes a similar approach, specifically in regards to jokes, as they make use of “a method of linking things up which is rejected and studiously avoided by serious thought” (147). Jokes allow us to sharpen our cognitive flexibility and narrative literacy because the structure of the joke hides something obvious. We as audience laugh at the joke because of the wide-ranging association needed in order to see something that should have been obvious. The hidden punchline was always there but we were using the wrong/serious logic to find it. Our laugh shakes us from the *homo economicus/seriosus* self who, in all its pomp and circumstance, was unable to solve the simplest riddle. The comic’s task is to hide things in plan view and then reveal them. This exercise opens up the range of our consciousness and the possibility for our cognitive capabilities to detach from the obvious logical habitual modes in which we think. Freud argues that jokes bypass censorship and restore the pleasure in playing with words and thoughts that is lost in adulthood, and that they also allow for wide ranging associations (212 and 293). In this way, jokes allow us to reach back into a past when we were less rigidly defined, when we did not have to continually reinforce a singular narrative that has currently become solidified.
However, in contrast to these findings on PA, Beeman et al discovered that:

[. . .] negative affect states such as anxiety and depression have been associated with deficits in attentional and cognitive control mechanisms [. . .] Therefore, anxiety in particular should impede cognitive flexibility, problem restructuring, and insight solving (3).

This is not too surprising, as everyone has experienced being put on the spot in a hostile environment and having not been able to remember some of the most basic facts they have memorized by heart. Luckily these facts and witty comebacks come rushing back into our brains when we are trying to go to sleep, later that night. Without humor in parody, parody would not necessarily provide the viewer with a playful and creative atmosphere. Parody without humor leaves the viewer in a state of self-reflexivity, but without a playful, creative, and positive atmosphere. Self-reflexivity without a positive atmosphere leads to narcissism, anxiety, being overly critical, internalizing emotions to be used later for revenge, etc., and these moods are detrimental to creativity and our self-narration practices. These moods are also detrimental for further creative processes as they encourage us to approach creativity with the problematic narrative expectation that “I’m going to sit down, make no mistakes, and create the best _____ that has ever been made.”

Within the cri-teatvical atmospheres of play enabled by paraumhordyor, we are able to go further in questioning our narrative practices, thereby aiding our day-to-day interactions, and this is a goal for Lanham as well, who finds that “rhetorical literary works” are “therapeutic, aiming to heal” (32). John Poulakos says something similar
when he proposes that we can help others when their perceptions of actuality frustrate them: when they “dream of being other” and want to be elsewhere, yet are bound to where they already are (43). This situation asks the rhetorizers and paraumphordyrist to create: “new thoughts, new insights, and new ideas” (44). This creative atmosphere is necessary because it provides “new ways to perceive ourselves and the world,” and this becomes necessary because “things with which we are familiar condition our responses and restrict our actions” (44). Paraumphordyors allow a space for an audience to play with their identity and take chances they typically would be afraid to take in “real” life.

Embodying a parodic narrative, or living vicariously through a parodic character, allows for an imitated performance, which is important because, as Lanham says, “if you don’t dramatize your own creative pleasure, you may mistake your creation for reality itself” (61). Therefore, we must look to paraumphordyor narratives (and others) that provide a view of our exaggerated selves: caricatures and conventions of self-narration and identity building that are taken to their logical absurdities. This view of our selves and the relationship to the narratives we encounter on a daily basis becomes necessary at times when,

[. . .] we ascribe to ourselves too durable and preexistent a self and think our ‘reality’ the only one there is. In such moods, we need a comic counterpressure, and thus change roles, go away on a trip, move in a different society (Lanham 32).

It is this element of choice that is so important: choosing to create, or choosing which rhetorizing stance to embody (or choosing not to embody one). It is not as necessary for
us to actually have a choice, as it is for us to feel like we have a choice. As Erik Erikson finds, people at the very least need to feel like they are in control of their ability to self-narrate their lives (111-113). As in the beginning stages of the creative process I previously drew up, it doesn’t matter if the song is good, or even if it is originally from my own head. As long as I believe for an instant that it is good or that it is coming from me, then I have something to work with; i.e., it opens up the possibility for the initial inspiration to lead to something good and original, because I have something to work with. We need to feel as if we have options and are in control of choosing or not choosing to narrate our lives, because eventually, through this creative process, we actually will be.

Because humorous parody enables creative thinking, we are able to gain this positive sense of control (in the midst of a lack of control), whilst still productively questioning the narratives we construct. Creativity enables agency within the audience, turning us not merely into consumers, but into active participants in the narrative construction of our lives.

Creativity should not always be thought of as a step forward, because it may often occur by stepping backwards into our selves—occurring when an overarching/demanding narrative expectation is lifted, thereby allowing us to see the world from alternative multiple views. This runs counter to romantic narratives of creative genius: the hero creator ventures forward into the vacuous wild nothing, tames it, and brings back his findings. But we are the vacuous wild nothing. Breaking from the habitual, dominant, and overarching narratives provides the audience with a creative space to ‘deal with it.’ The rhetorizing stylist qua paraumhordyorist does not create a narrative in order to make
others believe a singular truth, but provides a parodic narrative in order to start others on the path towards thinking about their relationship to their narrative practices. Parody opens up possibilities, as opposed to the strictly serious message that demands a belief in its singular narrative, which is automatically restrictive. If the goal is to increase the audiences’ narrative/cultural literacies, then it isn’t necessary for the paraumhordyorist to hide their relationship to the audience or the audiences’ relationship to the narrative, and this thereby creates criteativical atmosphere of play. The necessary playful atmosphere for creativity trumps the self-imposed hierarchical power structure that is necessary for an audience to be convinced of a singular truth. As Nietzsche says in Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks: “not hubris but the ever self-renewing impulse to play, calls new worlds into being” (62).

A Kairotic User Experience

A kairotic user experience anticipates others’ (within and without our selves) creative needs and acknowledges that our work has the possibility of aiding others’ creativity (also within our selves through further viewings/readings later). Delineating this kairotic user experience here will provide practical application for the theoretical points made in pervious sections. This can be further defined by pulling together several similar themes running through the scholarship provided by designer scholars Jon Kolko and Bill Buxton; social media theorists Clay Shirky, Tharon Howard, and Sturken and Cartwright; and technology theorist Brenda Laurel. Their work allows us a better understanding of how to maximize possibilities for creative interactions via the mediums
through which we interact, but not just through the technological mediums or consumer products, but also through all forms of communication.

Bill Buxton provides a great way to conceptualize a creative user experience, or what I term, a *kairotic user experience*. As Buxton notes, “[sketches] suggest and explore rather than confirm,” they “don’t ‘tell,’ they ‘suggest’” (113). Buxton’s notion of sketching allows an open conversation between the user, design, and designer over time. This open conversation is allowed because the sketch does not present itself as a solution, closing off opportunities outside its orbital pull: “the physical sketch is critical to the process, but it is the vehicle, not the destination, and ironically, it is the ambiguity in the drawing that is the key mechanism that helps us find our way” (117). In this ambiguity the designer is able to “leave big enough holes” (115), that allow “room for improvement and refinement” (113).

Buxton helps me formulate a question here: How can the finished product maintain the status of a sketch, providing a “catalyst to stimulate new and different interpretations” (115)? I pose this question not to suggest we abandon finished projects or that our designs should only be half-baked, but to discover a way to transmit the creative process inherent in a sketch, to the user. This strategy is an important part of the finished product because the designer, like the *paraumhordyist* earlier, cannot know everything (maybe anything?) about their user/audience. In the sketching stage, the designers’ shortcomings are brought forward and made apparent to them. Suwa and Tversky elaborate on this point:
By examining the externalizations, designers can spot problems they may not have anticipated. More than that, they can see new features and relations among elements that they have drawn, ones not intended in the original sketch. These unintended discoveries promote new ideas and refine current ones (341-3)

If this stage helps the designer “reperceive” (Buxton 117) their intentions, can it do the same for the user? Can it help them reperceive their relationship with the design, the medium, and the designer’s intentions? Sketching is the crucial moment before the design becomes a finished product, because it is at this time, “in the product pipeline when one can actually afford to play, explore, learn, and really try and gain a deep understanding of the undertaking” (139). But again, the sketch must move towards a finished product; it must adhere to a common language that the user can understand. The design cannot remain within the obscurity of the sketch stage, because it might be completely inaccessible to the user.

Designs, texts, films, speeches, lectures, etc., that function as paraumhordyors provide an opportunity for us to discover how parts of the sketching experience can be communicated to the user (also us) in order to encourage creativity and expose the assumptions of the creator (also us). Paraumhordyors provide an opportunity to discover how to allow for holes within the finished work and ambiguities that the user can fill-in and solve on their own, creating something better from the creators design, something that the designer themselves could not see. This process helps lead to a better
understanding of the design, because “understanding the rationale for a decision is [...] a wonderful remedy to being a prisoner of your own decisions” (149).

Similar to Buxton, Jon Kolko places emphasis on an openness within the finished product, and argues that in doing so, humanity is present within the design itself. Here, Kolko presents us with a very useful question: “Can our Interaction Design solutions encourage users to be creative?” (110). The designers he champions are those who work “without ever losing sight of the most important facet of design: humanity” (12). This awareness is echoed throughout when Kolko reminds us that “the user is not like me,” and that “the more one knows about a topic the more one forgets what it is like not to know” (48). A designer can place humanity within the design by following two important principles provided by Kolko: the design is a dialogue and it is important to continue this dialogue over time.

In order to create “humanity” within a design, I agree with Kolko: we must consider the end product (a shoe, computer, policy, film, syllabus) as a means of communication. Interaction Design should be a dialogue between designer and user, as well as product and user. It’s as if the end product should be a medium (within a medium) through which dialogue can be transmitted. Kolko communicates this throughout his work: “this communication is not a monologue. It is a dialogue” (100), “design languages become a connector” (101), and “meaning is not simply projected or found but instead created and shared through engagement with the artificial” (120). What allows for this kind of dialogue is the attention that must be given to a fourth dimension, time, as Kolko concludes: “the designer speaks, and the user speaks back. Over time the communication
becomes involved” (11). In order for a designer to utilize the dimension of time in a helpful manner they must see that “there is rarely a definitive declaration of ‘beginning’ or ‘ending’” (58) to the creative process. Therefore, a linear sense of time doesn’t help us here, as we need a kairotic sense of time; i.e., a sense of time that is able to retain both the initial design process and the user experience in one view. The design must be open to constant revisions and adaptations in order to accommodate the user’s needs and this is the same space Buxton describes with a “sketch.”

However, this process is in opposition to the process that typically occurs today. According to Kolko, most companies choose to get their “internal criticism” from “public relations or external product reviews” (58). Kolko differentiates between the all too common benchmark used by corporate America of a “quality assurance level,” and the assessment that he thinks must occur at the level of “user and project” (58). Sturken and Cartwright help illustrate this problem of unhelpful feedback by posing the question, “what art would look like if it were reduced by audience ratings and opinion polls” (59). Now that we have that image in mind, it is fairly easy to discern “just how shallow opinion polls can be in providing an image of the tastes of viewers” (59). This thought experiment provides a key lesson: the design should not merely try to conform to what the status quo accepts, because the status quo is only informed by what is currently available. It doesn’t do much good to tell people what they want and then ask them what they want. Teachers should also be on guard against this approach, and studying paraumhordyor allows us to conceive alternative possibilities (more on this in the next chapter).
A better approach would be to open up a dialogue, not with the purpose of reinforcing a stereotype, but to help understand the possible problematic aspects of the design. What is missing in the above example is what Kolko refers to as “a poetic interaction”; i.e. an interaction that “should encourage a state of mindfulness” (107). In this state of mindfulness “flow” becomes possible, wherein “people become too involved in their activities to worry about protecting their self-image or their ego” (109). This is in conflict with the modus operandi of most entertainment and consumer products: appeal to consumers’ self-image or ego and reinforce dominant overarching narratives in order to make the consumer believe they need to purchase the product. It is easy to appeal to this homo economicus/seriosus self, because people are interested and invested in a sense of self. For instance, in the realm of professionalization, we get pleasure out of purpose; e.g., being a medical doctor. In order to obtain this sense of purpose as medical doctor, we must continually reinforce the fact that we are a doctor. Others around us reinforce this image because they don’t want people who aren’t trained medical professionals treating them for our illnesses. As patients we don’t want to be on the operating table when our surgeon has an existential crisis, wherein they cannot perceive themselves as a surgeon anymore. However, in our neoliberal society we take this image of our professional selves too far, even when it isn’t asked of us, just as we take up serious rhetorizing stances when nobody but our own homo economicus/seriosus selves is demanding it.

Clay Shirky addresses the problem with professionalizing information industries when our “professional self-definition” turns into “self-delusion” (57). This delusion
occurs when these “professionals become gatekeepers” who enforce norms, not because of pressure from customers, “but by other professionals in the same business” (57). This of course, neglects the user experience, and the dialogue between designer and user that is so essential to Kolko’s concept of Interaction Design. So there appears to be a crucial tipping point once these information technologies appear to be successful (success viewed through a *homo economicus/seriosus* lens): the members of these institutions tend to, “equate provisional solutions to particular problems with deep truths about the world” (Shirky 59). So the trick is recognizing when this occurs: at what point is there more emphasis on securing professional identity than on the implementation of innovative ways to solve problems? Devices that function as *paraumhordys* help expose that tipping point.

Innovation isn’t always what it appears to be, and these scholars also provide a necessary limit to the possibilities of new information technologies. Shirky notes that “broadcast media was between one sender and many recipients, and the recipients couldn’t talk back,” but now the web allows for a “many-to-many” conversation (87). But he also is mindful that this does not appear to have solved major communication problems. While the Internet makes interactive technology possible, there are still limiting factors that reduce the Internet to revolving around those who are “famous” (91). This is obvious: a person cannot read the blogs of everyone who has read their blog. Shirky notes that if we are all “famous” and nobody is reading what others are writing, then “scale alone will kill conversation” (95). Tharon Howard also realizes these limitations: “the time needed to give attention to anything is a fundamental condition of
reality. You can’t make more time, and we humans only have so much attention” (221).

Because of this, Howard appears here to echoes Ulmer’s notion of an *euretic*:

> what online communities of the future have to sell is the promise that they will enhance the literacies of their membership—the promise that they’ll provide their members with the disciplining necessary to be successful

(223)

Howard reflects Kolko’s sentiments as well: “Communities and networks of the future will need to market themselves based on their ability to help members make more creative and better-informed decisions rather than the size of their user base” (200).

In Kolko’s interpretation of Interaction Design, and with what I am terming a *kairotic user experience*, the designer doesn’t merely talk *at* the person because, “the creation lies dormant until the ‘user’ honestly understands the beauty of what has been designed” (Kolko 11). In order to prevent the design from reinforcing a stereotype about the user or the world they live in, there must be an impetus for creativity, as Kolko sates: “in order to realize the state of awareness [. . .] an element of challenge must be present” (110).

Brenda Laurel borrows a notion from Berlot Brecht that corroborates Kolko’s idea that the creation can only be activated through a more developed interaction:

> “catharsis is not complete until the audience members take what they have assimilated from the representation and put it to work in their lives” (31). In both instances Laurel and Kolko recognize the need for an audience or user, to assimilate the representation or design in a much more meaningful way than what is usually considered in our consumer society. Similar to the creative process I described earlier Laurel finds that in “symbolic
thinking and representation-making [. . .] imagination is a shortcut through the process of trial and error” (29). In bouncing ideas off of a multitude of imaginary or real critics inside our head, we are able to perform (at least) an initial trial and error process before having to perform in front of others. There are also wide ranging “mood swings” from “seriousness” to “fooling around” when we are making a creative decision (25). Therefore an interface needs to accommodate these unexpected yet very helpful occurrences.

Both Laurel and Kolko also view the interface or design, as a place for dialogue between designer and user, or performer and audience: “a person participates in a representation that is not the same as real life but which has real world effects or consequences” (31). Laurel provides an example of how the communication can become more like a dialogue which is aimed at,

[. . .] designing human-computer interfaces so that they offer means for establishing common ground (‘grounding’) that are similar to those that people use is human-to-human conversation—for example, interruptions, questions, utterances, and gestures that indicate whether something is being understood (4).

This “grounding” or meeting point must therefore be considered more carefully if it is to allow for these (again) unexpected, yet very helpful, occurrences (Too repetitive? Beating a dead horse?) that interrupt the direct “natural/mechanical” flow and (like jokes) ask the reader to take a step back from the text and view its construction and context. These

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34 Editor’s Note: I’m not sure if these are the dead author’s notes that he forgot to take out or if he is addressing the reader. Please email me at martintagamas@fakeemail.edu if you have an opinion.
same occurrences are what *paraumhordyors* allow for (mistakes, etc.) in going beyond a mere message to be consumed by the audience before they move on to their next meal. Creative action is what allows for these representations (that have real world consequences) to be assimilated: “participants learn what language to speak by noticing what is understood; they learn what objects are and what they do by playing with them” (Laurel 18).

Similar to Kolko’s “a poetic interaction,” Laurel discusses a state of unaware/awareness, wherein the audience member of a movie becomes so invested in it that they forget to not think creatively: “When you are engrossed in one [a movie], you forget about the projector, and you may even lose awareness of your own body” (16). This might appear to contradict a call to action, to be creative, and to make. Furthermore, these “suspensions of disbelief” are usually cast in a negative light within the humanities via Marxist scholars; however, as with *paraumhordyor* the suspension does not remain a suspension but drifts in and out, thereby producing self-reflexive moments that increase narrative literacy. These instances provide a possible break from the constant reaffirmation of a stereotypical self-image or the ego stroking that most products, advertisements, and entertainment are trying to capitalize on. If the designer, rhetor, or *paraumhordyorist* provides a *kairotic user experience* by adding an ‘element of challenge’ or play within this moment of suspension, it becomes possible to not merely reinforce our habitual self-image, but remind us to look elsewhere and become more creative; i.e., to eventually act, create, and make, now that we have been inspired.
We need to construct mass media narratives that function as public pedagogies because we need to provide a space for others (without and within) to play with their practices of identity creation/perpetuation and take chances vicariously through narrative that they would not take in “real” life. But without the humor and absurdity present in a \textit{paraumhordyor}, the audience is more likely to take the message at face value and attempt to live vicariously through characters presented by the narrative without questioning this process, thereby adopting the narrative expectations the narrative perpetuates. The valued stance should be that of being rhetorically non-stanced (I almost said non-sensed here!)—not in a negative, fatalistic, non-\textit{celphuriosity} way, but in a way that allows us the ability to creatively embrace various rhetorizing stances if the occasion should demand it. The space for sustained creative inquiry most be kept free from over-bearing monological narrative expectations, as our multipersonned/\textit{kairotic} needs to be both creative and humorous.
CHAPTER SIX

ALTERNATIVE PRACTICES OF CREATING AND CRITIQUING:
HOW PARAUMHORDYORS BRIDGE THE GAP BETWEEN
PUBLIC AND CLASSROOM PEDAGOGY

The Importance of Humor and Play in the Classroom

John Morreall doesn’t merely argue that humor has been treated poorly by philosophers philosophizer historically, he also wants to see humor treated with more respect here and now, particularly in the classroom: “If teachers paid more attention to humor [. . . ] they would also find that it is most useful in getting students to see more aesthetically and creatively” (96-7). However, because of academia’s serious bias, humor hasn’t been utilized to its full potential, and Morreall points to the fact that the teachers themselves are “[. . . ] relatively humorless. They don’t show flexibility in their perspective on the material they teach, or in their interactions with students, because as people they are basically inflexible” (97). Of course this isn’t always true, but by and large, Morreall’s assessment isn’t far off the mark. This is easy to see if we take a journey into the upper-levels of academia wherein those of us who are serious and are able to obsess about very specific things ((that the rest of the world (even close friends and relations) might not find important)) are rewarded.

As academia becomes more and more corporatized, we are expected to take on the narrative practices of a homo economicus/seriosus, thereby perpetually attempting to
adhere to a normalized narrative projection, wherein even the most rebellious projections peel away to reveal a contrived attempt to conform (albeit through non-conforming but in a very institutionalized manner). While containing the possibility of alternative thinking, in a corporate academic environment these theoretical discourses and “isms” become, for the most part, another way to advertise our selves. The most humorous teachers reign in humor and play due to pressures (real or imagined) to act in a less humorous way, as a serious bias in academia deems humor and play unimportant. These pressures can be brought on by not being paid enough to spend more time adding humor and play to the classroom experience, a lack of department funding causing internal competition and the need to impress and appear “normal” in order to move up the academic/corporate ladder, and by general uncertainties caused by working in the humanities in the United States (a neoliberal society) that (for political reasons) does not value the humanities. I hope I am being overly dramatic here and that this isn’t the world we live in. Regardless, this reality is neither inevitable nor absolute.

Morreall echoes these difficulties placed on educators, as he finds that it takes more of an effort for a teacher to integrate humor and play because

[. . .] the teacher will no longer be able to present his or her material as neat chunks of knowledge which can be understood in only one way, nor to present trains of thought which move inexorably from a given point to a pre-established conclusion (98).

Here the students will no longer be “mere receivers of prepackaged information” but they will be “curious, playful, creative human beings, who experiment with ideas,
occasionally ask outlandish questions” (98). While it currently might take more of an effort for people to be funny, comfortable in their own skin, and have a healthy relationship with mistakes and failure, it doesn’t mean that it will always be this way. But from this standpoint it is not bizarre that humor hasn’t been integrated into academia in a meaningful way; however, I want to argue that it should be, and parody is a very easy and practical way to do this especially within the humanities. Implementing parodic practices into academia is necessary because, as Morreall states, “if we are genuinely interested not just in the transmission of facts and skills, but in the education of full human beings, then I think that we have no choice but to integrate humor into the learning experience” (98).

Beneficial for Critical Analysis

The pedagogical aspects of *paraumhordyors* allow them to successfully traverse the space that separates the classroom from the public sphere, thereby allowing *paraumhordyors* to function as critical public/classroom pedagogies. As seen previously in the work of Henry Giroux and Ramie McKerrow, critical public pedagogies help us view mass media as a source of our narrative practices/expectations. Therefore, educators need to provide/create “literacies that enable people to critically analyze the new electronic technologies that are shaping everyday life through the popular media” (Giroux 4). As mentioned in point eight from my *Judgementationalization* Rubric for *Paraumhordyors* in Chapter Four, the parody should serve as a public pedagogy that functions as an Ulmer-ian *euretic* providing the blueprint for its own construction within the narrative itself. As *paraumhordyors* dress up within their targets they draw attention
to their construction in order to educate their own audience/students on the possibilities and limitations of the narrative fiction. By drawing *criticativical* attention to the process/construction itself, *paraumhordyors* validate a creative process of ‘copying and altering’ that capitalistic societies work to denounce in order to further perpetuate problematic myths about the creative process and reinforce the concept of original ownership. In validating this creative process and encourage others to copy and create (as described in Chapter Five), at the very least, individuals are encouraged to take a break from their *passive* habitual practices of self-narration. In Chapter Three Eakin argued that although we are constantly working to build our narrative identities, “we are not left to our own devices when we talk about ourselves” (29). This is why we constantly need to highlight the educational function of mass media, as recognized by Giroux: “The media in most advance industrial countries are now the most powerful pedagogical force for framing issues” (18). It is crucial to keep this in mind for two reasons: 1.) to be on guard against the pedagogical approaches mass media provides; 2.) to steal the pedagogical approaches that work.

To continue developing arguments by Robert Hariman presented in Chapter Four, Hariman highlights parody’s effects in the public sphere and extends Bakhtin’s insights on parody “from the literary genre to the broader field of the public sphere” (253). Hariman finds that, through parody, “the weight of authority is converted into an image, resistance and other kinds of response become more available to more people” (254). Furthermore and in-keeping with previously mentioned scholars, Hariman is making
connections between the comic forms (here parody) and rhetorizing. Drawing from Rose’s definition of parody, he notes the similarity between parody and rhetoric:

‘Parody may be defined in general terms as *the comic refunctioning of performed linguistic or artistic material.*’ With the change of a single word, this could be a definition of rhetoric, that is, of *the strategic refunctioning of performed linguistic or artistic material* [Emphasis in original] (250).

Hariman also states

Equally important is the manner in which parody negotiates the division of labor between performance and spectatorship. One might describe parody as the modality that provides a rhetorical education for spectators. Parody is a tried and true technique for learning the conventions of any genre [. . .] (264).

Parody’s ability to target any genre for educational purposes further aligns it with the helpful pedagogical aspects of rhetorical analysis, as parody can “take any discourse outside of its given context of assertion and assent to show how things could be otherwise” (Hariman 260). Parodizing and rhetorizing can function in a transdisciplinary manner and re-appropriate other discourses and genres to tell us more than these discourses could on their own. But *paraunhordyors* have the added benefit of being able to additionally tell us more about themselves as well as other discourses and genres. Hariman proceeds to show how parody is able to refunction other discourses: “parodic
form casts direct discourse into a carnivalesque spectatorship” and in regards to audience, this is then

[. . .] offered to anyone who might be played for a laugh, that is, anyone in the most wide-open, mixed-up, unfettered public audience, rather than for peer-review, formal deliberation, or informed consent [. . .] (255-6)

In this context, “meaning now is that which can be offered to a profoundly mixed crowd, which in turn mandates the mixing of the direct discourses themselves” (256). This performance of ‘externalizing meaning’ is crucial, not for merely revealing how narrative conventions are working, but also because “externalization reveals that world exceeds discourse” and that the discourse “falls short in its totalizing claims” (256). Hariman notes that, “all public discourse externalizes a cast of characters, but only parody so radically reveals that there are actors behind the masks” (256). And he elaborates on this by stating that:

[. . .] each parody presents an image of the public culture, whereas each direct discourse is an attempt to remake the culture in its own image. In sum, the long-term effect of a public culture alive with parody is an irreverent democratization of the conventions of public discourse, which in turn keeps public speech closer to its audiences and their experiences of the public world (258).

It is important to note that institutions do not exclusively inform the individual’s experiences and that the individual’s agency and experiences traverse beyond homogenized cultural codes. Paraumhordyors provide us way in which this fact can be
realized, or put differently; *paraumhordyors* are one way in which we can remind ourselves that there is always an outside to discourse.

To bring the discussion back to classroom implementation is to highlight our current problematic approach to classroom pedagogy. Morreall finds that literature studies is the predominant discourse that focuses on humor; however,

[. . .] even when teachers admit the existence of humor in literature, they often overlook a good deal of it because they think of humor as particular genre of literature—humorous writing is too often thought of as the kind of writing found in comedies (and in ‘comic relief’ scenes in tragedies) and in the prose of a handful of writers like Mark Twain (94).

Hopefully my analysis of current *paraumhordyors* in the previous chapter provides a much more updated and dynamic list of humorous texts to engage in. In considering the pedagogical importance of these public *paraumhordyors* we will be able to understand how/why they are effective pedagogical tools and then bring these findings into the classroom. But on the whole, I agree with Morreall: humor studies are not taught at all, or confined to special topics within literature courses to be breezed over on the way to some more “serious” matter (e.g., identity politics).

*Paraumhordyors* are one way of being able to import humor into the classroom and combine the playful with the productive as well as and the critical with the creative. One major area of focus in the Freshman Composition courses I taught at Clemson University was rhetoric and argumentation in the public sphere. A hot bed for social conservatism in an already conservative state of South Carolina, Clemson (predominantly
a S.T.E.M. school) attracts students with very specific and conspicuous Christian (of the American Fundamentalist/Baptist brand) and conservative beliefs. As freshman, Fox News and their conservative parents inform many of these students’ worldviews. As I was quite possibly their first interaction with critical and socially conscious thought, I learned very quickly that addressing possibly contentious issues in the public sphere couldn’t be done head-on. One of the many tricks I learned was introducing topics via *paraumhordyors*. For instance, *The Colbert Report* provided a very helpful and informative lens from which the students could view a wide variety of topics from Super PAC’s, to foreign policy, and abortion/women’s rights. Immediately the stereotypical responses to these issues were rendered ineffective; i.e., after watching these videos the students knew that their Fox News talking points wouldn’t gain any traction. These *paraumhordyoric* videos did all the heavy lifting for me: bypassing the students’ built up (but uninformed) surface-level and stereotypical opinions so that they could understand the logical structure of argumentation taking place and the rhetorizing moves therein. For the most part, I was able to forgo direct conflict, and I myself was able to avoid having to retreat back into the rhetorizing stance of a stereotypical overly intellectual liberal arts professor. These *paraumhordyoric* videos were able to ‘set the tone’ of the conversation while still addressing very real and important “serious” issues. So does *paraumhordyor* function in shows like *The Colbert Report* to disallow problematic narratives circulating the public sphere to gain absolute authority, but *paraumhordyors* function this same way on a local level in the classroom.
Wes D. Gehring uses a term similar to Rose’s “creative expansion,” as he states that a “creative criticism” approach is utilized in the courses he teaches on film parody as they

[. . .] are sometimes used to better define specific genres under discussion. Along the same lines, one better understands Griffith after viewing Sennett parodies of his work. Moreover, such parodies also provide a historical tenor of the time. In the case of Griffith, Sennett’s period parodies demonstrate the initial popularity of this serious artist and also anticipate how Griffith could become passé during the roaring 1920s Jazz Age, when he seemed incapable of moving beyond the nineteenth-century melodramatic structure that Sennett spoofed (3-4).

Screening parodies in the classroom helps the students make sense of a specific moment in history by providing insights into the historical context in which the films operated. Without parody to comically round out or complete/complicate the serious nature of Griffith’s work, we could walk away with a false sense of ‘the way things were’ in that time period, without realizing there was much more going on. In the same way people will excuse an older relative for being sexist/racists/homophobic/etc., as it was ‘a different time,’ parodic films that supply a fuller context are able to provide a retort: not everyone was drinking the Kool-Aid back then, and therefore the time period does not excuse ignorance and hatred. Working with paraumhordyors allows students to more fully realize other genres, as they bring out the conventions of the genre/time period; i.e., by watching paraumhordyors the students are able to see the form and content deployed
by other genres/time periods that would otherwise remain latent and unarticulated. The student is now provided with the agency to determine whether they still appreciate the work, and they are provided the impetus to judge whether the work is as important as it is purported to be, etc. In this way, parody, play, and humor allow the student to develop their own tastes. Viewing parodies provides a fun way to show our students what is cliché in a way that isn’t overly (perhaps unattractively) critical/mean, but that still allows them to move past the all too easy/tempting shortcuts/unoriginal tropes.

Beneficial for Creating

Humor should not merely serve as an object of study but it needs to be expanded into a tool to create with, as well as a form of helpful argumentation and critique inside and outside the classroom. Similarly, parody should also not be limited to writing, but also implemented in the creation of multimedia. Although Morreall and these previous scholars mainly focus on writing, he still brings up a helpful point, in that “the more a student learns to appreciate humor in writing, therefore, the more he or she will be able to appreciate some of the best qualities of good writing in general” (96). Paraumhordyors are especially well equipped to perform this task because, as mentioned previously, they can bring any genre into their critique, even parody. This same logic can be applied to our students’ multimedia work: the goal is to go beyond merely exposing students to humor and parody and instead provide a course where they will improve their ability to analyze/create within any genre of writing or multimedia, be it playful or serious. This
line of argumentation can also be seen in the work done by Kiremidjian, who wants parody to be seen as the legitimate art form:

Some of the most important novelists since 1700 began their writing by experimenting with parodistic styles and forms [. . .] This experimentation is of more than passing significance, suggesting an important element in the origins of the novelist’s creative and imaginative processes (232).

Kirmidjian finds that most highly skilled artists, whom society considers creative geniuses, often start out by creating parodies and many artists never fully/truly depart from this practice (e.g., Shakespeare). I want to elaborate on this by arguing that in assigning the construction of a parodies, the novice is able to practice dealing with the form and the content on a much more self-reflective, more socially/genre aware level. This also allows them to understand what is “good” and “bad” (perhaps even helpful?) about the original work, and through tweaking the form and content to create an original work, they are able to develop their own voice outside the original work. Through this parodic/creative assignment (multimedia projects or traditional/written), students are able to not merely reinvent the wheel; they are responding to a social context, and they are provided with a prompt to get them creating (see previous chapter for similar thoughts on creativity). While the students are performing a paraumhordyor, they are subjected to the same rigorous production standards that the original demands and are expected to ‘level-up’—surpassing those with an entry-level skill set. But at the same time, they are attempting to morph the content into something that speaks to their own local universe. The students should undertake this challenge, not to necessarily make something better
than the original, or even to critique the original in order to surpass it (as they can parody something they enjoy not just something that they disagree with), but to find possible helpful alternatives based on their own local narrative experiences and practices.

Parody’s ability to balance critique and creativity makes it an essential tool in the classroom. Although some students might not be able to create the biting critique that some instructors champion, John J. Ruszkiewicz finds that these recreations will still establish, “some other instructive relationship between the major work and their imitative exploration of it” (694). Because student parodies generate this inevitable multiplicity of responses, parody is able to encourage both creativity and critical engagement. Ruszkiewicz list the benefits generated from this process:

[Students will] produce works and commentary that are potentially more instructive about the themes, character, and craft of the literature they have studied than the conventional term paper. And vastly more entertaining (701).

Therefore, this exploration provides a pedagogical experience for the educators themselves. Similarly, Ulmer states:

The challenge is to implement a pedagogy of invention from which the institution itself can learn which could affect the frame itself, reorganizing the boundaries of knowledge. The first step in this process of self-education is to design an assignment capable of producing results that surprise the instructors as much as the students (3).

We need to be creating works in the classroom that have the chance of
educating/providing unexpected insights for professors, students, and the students’ communities. This is the only way academic discourse can improve our personal narrative practices, as well as communication in the public sphere.

We must both analyze as well as create in order to exercise our critical thinking skills. It is paramount to not merely analyze and view these paraumhordyoric works in class and at home, but to create them our selves. Creativity enables agency within us, turning us not merely into a consumer, but into an active participant in the narrative construction of our lives. David Gauntlett explains that while teaching, he felt something was missing in not giving students “anything very interesting to do” (4). In asking students to make something, Gauntlett argues that

[. . .] going through the physical process of making something—such as a video, a drawing, a decorated box, or a Lego model—an individual is given the opportunity to reflect, and make their thoughts feelings or experiences manifest and tangible (4). In doing so, we are able to “generate insights which would most likely not have emerged through direct conversation” (4). Through this creative process one is able to keep the critical/intellectualizing/philosophizing/theorizing aspects of our selves in check: by both making and philosophizing we are able to be criteativical; i.e., we don’t move as far away from knowing, doing, and making in a celphuriosity manner. Our current approach within the humanities creates exigency: as is seen with The Colbert Report and The Daily Show; scholars often ‘cash in’ on specific works of entertainment in order to publish and further their own careers without genuinely progressing our public understanding of the
work. In other words, the work still functions as it always has, regardless of what a scholar says about it, and the general public proceeds as if nothing occurred. Consider filmmaker Steven Spielberg or Alfred Hitchcock consulting a Continental Philosophizer on how to make a film. While this might make for great sketch-comedy, it’s clear how this encounter could turn problematic. This is not to say that these filmmakers don’t read or consult Continental Philosophizing, nor is it to say that this brand of philosophizing has nothing to contribute to film. The point is that once we wander too far from the source, we shouldn’t deny that we have. Analogously, we will learn very little about music if we read album reviews on popular music review websites. It often becomes painfully clear that many of these reviews are written by people who are bitter that they themselves can’t make money playing music. In their attempt to create a work of art out of their eloquently worded critique, they misunderstand their purpose and their audience. The best example of this problematic collision comes to us from The Jimmy Kimmel Show’s featured segment “Celebrities Read Mean Tweets.” As the name suggests, celebrities read randomly selected mean Tweets about them, thereby drawing humor and attention to the ridiculous hatred and pointlessness of unsolicited Internet critique. However, I don’t want to overstate my case; over time it is beneficial to build a body of work that critiques problematic narrative practices (it’s what I’m doing here!). I also don’t want to overstate my case, if it appears that I am championing the creation of digital video parodies over writing essays: essays are important in the current academic context and we would be remiss to not improve our students ability to write essays and communicate through the written word. After all, someone needs to write the scripts for
these digital video parodies! The *both and* approach is necessary here and that is why I include both written and digital assignments the course that represents this dissertation (as seen below).

However, merely critiquing without providing an atmosphere for creativity and play doesn’t help our audience/students/selves deal with these problematic narrative practices. Therefore, I want to press us to question the procedure of using these works of art and entertainment to merely further our academic career, and I would like to see what happens when instead, we encourage scholars and students to make something our selves and add to the creative work in a more dynamic way; i.e., a work that isn’t merely a formulaic critique which doesn’t induce play, creativity, or allow us to get in touch with our multipersonned/kairotic self. Gauntlett promotes our ability to exercise our creative powers, and he emphasizes ‘making’s’ ability to connect:

> Making is connecting because you have to connect things together (materials, ideas, or both) to make something new; making is connecting because acts of creativity usually involve, at some point, a social dimension and connect us with other people; and making is connecting because through making things and sharing them in the world, we increase our engagement and connection with our social and physical environments (2).

By creating a *paraumphordyor* the student is able to participate in the playful construction of their narrative practices, and in utilizing and creating *paraumphordyors* in a classroom, the instructor is able to tap into the *communal* aspects of creativity, again leading away
from the problematic aspects of self-reflexivity, as well as the singularity of a serious, one-dimensional essay. The social aspects of creativity connect us, which is key when our worlds are being turned on their heads. Critique needs creativity, as it is only through making that we is able to understand the nature of the object of study: the subject/object relationship is undermined/blurred through the creative process. Through making we are able to enter the silence; we are able to make a better guess as to what would be helpful for others, as we listen to the others within our selves. The (un)finished product tells us how good our initial guess was, only when we continue to listen, and only if we are still motivated to make again, to make improvements on the initial attempt in a kairotic user experience (see previous chapter for further details). Unfortunately the second, third, millionth attempt is never made because the first attempt was seen as a “failure.” And in our failure-averse society, we can start to see the possibility of a general decrease in creative expression. Homo economicus/seriosus’ method for dealing with failure is to become more economic and serious.

Making is essential for understanding. There is a marked difference between the individual who listens to a song and an individual who could potentially play that song—the later is afforded more possibilities; e.g., they are able to analyze and interact with the song within a wider context, perhaps even mentally editing/altering the song while listening. A humorous and playful atmosphere further encourages people to attempt to do this on their own, serving as a sustainable impetus for creativity. Although I am concerned with creating technically sound digital videos in the course described later, paraumhordyors have the ability to spark a creative experience within the viewer that
does not merely/necessarily result in an end product, but also a new conception of their narrative practices. So even if the end result does not meet the educator’s demands, at the very least, the student is still able to gain insight from the process.

Paraumhordyors allow the students to be creative and playful, but this does not detract from the complexity/rigor of the work: in dealing with parody the students are just as engaged in the themes of the works as they would be if they responded with a more straightforward, traditional essay. But again, this is not limited to writing (Ruszkiewicz’s pedagogical context), and E. Ashley Hall et al, provide crucial insights into how parody can aid classroom pedagogy in our digital age by creating remixed YouTube parodies:

[. . .] instead of being passively engaged with the texts picked out for them by instructors or publishers, in which they may have little-to-no interest, students bring their experiences with popular video into the classroom, positioning themselves as stakeholders in the selection of course content (191).

So by allowing creative assignments where students are asked to create their own paraumhordyoric videos, the instructor can bridge the gap between entertainment and academia, provide critical and creative opportunities, allow the students to work with narratives that matter to them, and develop the students’ visual/narrative literacy across mediums.

While E. Ashley Hall et al view YouTube as a site for composition, it is vital to also understand how the platform; i.e., YouTube and the social media sites used to disseminate the students/amateurs’ YouTube videos, act as a framework for composing.
YouTube (and the Internet in general) is not a democratizing agent of change, unless the content being produced somehow improves narrative/visual literacy and generates *critically* creative curiosity (like a *paraumhordyor*). While this always remains a possibility, by and large, YouTube is much better in a local sense. Instead of setting sights on ‘going viral’ or effecting national narratives or politics, instructors and student video creators would be better off focusing on the *process* of creating something and releasing it/sharing it with a potentially wide-ranging audience. This provides a pedagogical challenge: we must attempt to anticipate multiple audiences who come to YouTube/social media sites with specific expectations for Internet video spectatorship and this places restraints on production time/quality, form, and content. In understanding this process and what it takes to create within specific genres of Internet spectatorship, the instructors and students will gain a better understanding of their current media-scape, as well as a better understand of how/why these genres differ from other formats.

This *critically* process will provide an indispensible opportunity for the students to relate these practices back to how they are dealing with narrative in their daily lives; e.g., how the narrative conventions of mass media permeate their practices of self-narration, as well as how they themselves share video/online content through social media and how this relates to the production of their Internet identity (which has a direct impact on the way in which they narrate their lives!). *Paraumhordyors* enable the students/amateurs cultural/narrative agency: by creating a *paraumhordyor* the student is able to take back their culture from corporate/institutionalized entities that attempt to tell them what their culture is, even if their close friends/peers are their only audience. To
take this even further: it is highly beneficial for the amateur student to create a
paraumhordyoric digital production, even if they are creating it for a largely imaginary
audience. To harken back to Chapter Three, sometimes these imaginary audiences that
the amateur/student addresses are more important than an easily/clearly recognizable
external source. In fact, acknowledging beforehand that they will not be able to directly
address or contact the source of their critique can free them from becoming wrapped up
within a revenge narrative that prevents them from getting beyond their initial critique of
the institutionalized narrative practices, thereby gaining a perception of agency through
their response. It is important to remember that problematic inner-narrative practices can
often be a more dominating/restricting source of power than more “real” sources of
power (the police, etc.).

Additionally, these paraumhordyors allow students and amateurs the opportunity
to engage in self-parody; i.e., represent themselves and the cultures they belong to in a
comic/critical fashion. The creative process necessary to construct these paraumhordyors
is vital for students/amateurs to become acquainted (in a playful way) with sending a part
of themselves out into the world for others (and others within themselves later or in a
different context) to critique. In becoming acquainted with this process in a playful
setting the student/amateur is able to see the results and adjust. Through the creative
process people are able to engage in their social environments; e.g., in making a video on
YouTube, people are able to communicate their ideas and get feedback that they
otherwise would not be able to obtain (particularly, local feedback through the social
media outlets that they share their work through). While validation can certainly occur
‘out there’ by a recognized institution (and in the classroom by their peers and instructor), the individual themselves can provide the validation necessary to keep them going, by having an awareness of their multipersonned/kairotic self, perhaps not validating the innovation, but in not being so critical as to stop attempting to be innovative. The individual with a strong sense of their multipersonned/kairotic selves is able to, not blindly believe that they never fail, but have a better relationship with failure and understand when/how their opinions will/can change. They understand that the project, creation, essay, dissertation, etc., was another part of them, another way of thinking that was bound to the context in that place in time. The more the individual engages in a playful and creative process the more the context they will have to judge against (more work to look back on and see what “worked”), the more “taste” they will have generated, and the better able they are to deal with failure and be able to validate (but also be critical of) their work.

But a point of clarification: all of the above doesn’t merely benefit the creation of digital video paraumhordyors; i.e., the goal isn’t merely to make more students create paraumhordyors or other creative works (this is the task of Art Departments). The process is valuable because it highlights what’s missing from the students’ traditional/written assignments/essays. When the instructor is able to fluctuate between the paraumhordyoric digital video and a traditional essay, they can then ask the students to compare and contrast the various processes involved. In doing so they are then able to push the students to critically reflect on why these two practices are different. What inner and outer demands where the students responding to in these assignments? Which
demands are unavoidable? Which demands were self-imposed/appear to not be as important now? In following through with this exercise both the students and the instructor are able to generate insights into the process and collectively analyze what strategies/conventions should be retained or discarded in order to make the discourse more helpful and responsive.

**DIY/Amateur Digital Video Production**

Commenting on the pedagogical approaches taken in modern western cultures in general, Gauntlett states that while there was a lot of “innovative pedagogical thinking in the 1960s and 1970s, school education has tended to settle around a model where a body of knowledge is input into students who are tested on their grasp of it at a later point” (9). He then goes on to show how the implementation of a “National Curriculum (from 1988)” in the UK and the “‘No Child Left Behind’ legislation introduced in 2001-2” in America both provided the same results: “test scores might seem to rise, but many critical groups argue that the quality of learning sinks” (9). Perhaps it is no coincidence that Gauntlett also finds that “the twentieth century was emphatically the era of ‘sit back and be told; media’” (9). Nietzsche agrees:

> Our whole modern world is caught in the net of Alexandrian culture and recognizes as its ideal the man of theory, equipped with the highest cognitive powers, working in the service of science, and whose archetype and progenitor is Socrates. All our pedagogic devices are oriented toward this ideal. Any type of existence that deviates from this model has a hard
struggle and lives, at best, on sufferance. It is a rather frightening thought that for centuries the only form of educated man [sic but true] to be found was the scholar (109).

In a similar vein, Gauntlett is influence by the work of Ivan Illich who proposed that while institutionalized education may have been implemented with the best intentions, there comes a certain point when it turns into “machines to deliver schooling—conformity to rules, and memorization of a set body of knowledge without necessarily learning or understanding—which is then measured as an end itself” (Gauntlett 163). The main problem here is as Gauntlett phrases it, “Schools aim to create people who can do well in school tests, but not people who can think for themselves” (164). To elaborate on this further and perhaps make this concept less abstract, I take the notion of ‘thinking for our selves’ to mean that we have grasped hold of a way of thinking (not “knowing), a modus operandi, structure, or influence (physical or not), that allows us to be able to create, recreate, generate, alternative ways of looking at something, and being able to edit our selves when we appear to have lost our curiosity or helpfulness. Often times our friends and family provide this service, but books, films, travel destinations (a paraumhordyor, perhaps?), etc., are all capable of serving this function. But whatever this source is, it is not merely a monological one-time-lesson that only helps within a specific context and does not take into account our multipersonned/kairotic self. To provide a clichéd but appropriate proverb (dropping the conservative republican connotation it has recently absorbed): “If you give a person a fish, you will feed them for a day, but if you teach the person to fish, you will feed them for a life time.” To ‘think for
our selves’ is to be able to enter any discourse and be able to eventually find our way. While the initial language barriers, etc., may offer initial setbacks, being able to ‘think for our selves’ eventually wins the day. ‘Thinking for our selves’ must therefore occur within a space where we have a much better relationship with failure and are able to self-generate a space of play in wide-ranging situations. As Gauntlett states, “Perhaps their [institutionalized schools] cruelest manipulation is that they lead people to believe that they are unable to do things for themselves [. . .]” (164).

Growing up in the North West (30mins outside of Portland, OR) I had constant exposure to “Do It Yourself” culture. There is a running joke that everyone who attends Portland State University is a part-time student because they don’t want college to interfere with their possible/future musical, acting, beer brewing, bicycle company starting, novel writing, organic farming, hiking boot designing careers. Although far from the typical Portland Hipster, my father decided to add another story to our house with just the help of (mainly) me and my older brother (both in junior high school at the time), an electrician friend, and a buddy of his that was a roofer. While I have created a couple short films that have been accepted into international film festivals, I never took a course in digital video editing; I learned everything I know about video making through creating it myself and Googling ‘how to’ YouTube videos. While this DIY culture might be “in the water” some places, it is not heavily promoted for the most part. We need only to reference the blowback that upstarts like AirBnB and Uber faced in our “free” market capitalistic society to understand why there is an invested interest in preventing DIY culture and creativity from running rampant. We humans have always been homo DIY-
icus-es, and I have no fear of that person ever diminishing completely from our multipersonned self. Illich’s concepts shouldn’t be overstated: we don’t only teach our students to memorize facts for test, and there are many wonderful teachers out there who go above and beyond and genuinely create helpful change in the student’s lives. But I feel a definite need to encourage our students to see the value in approaching digital technology less as consumers and more as self-producers. I am always shocked at how many people problematically conflate ‘social media consumption’ with ‘tech-savvy-ness’ and by creating and analyzing paraumhordyors in the classroom we are able to bring this issue to the forefront of our pedagogical concerns.

E. Ashley Hall et al and Gauntlett both recognize the special ability of the Internet, and Gauntlett states: “I’ve always liked making things, but they didn’t have an audience. With the Web, making writings, photographs, drawings—and indeed websites themselves—available to the world was so easy” (3). Again, while not a democratizing agent in-and-of-itself, the Internet still offers a lot of possibilities for sharing content to non-traditional audiences that never existed before. Lawrence Lessig contrasts “‘Read/Only’ cultures with ‘Read/Write’ cultures” (28). The former culture is “less practiced in performance, or amateur creativity, and more comfortable [. . .] with simple consumption” (28). However, in the later,

[. . .] ordinary citizens ‘read’ their culture by listening to it or by reading representations [. . .] this reading, however, is not enough. Instead, they [. . .] add to the culture they read by creating and re-creating the culture around them (28).
While the later is obviously preferable from an academic standpoint, Lessig shows appropriate caution and reminds us that “nonprofessional creativity” won’t necessarily/luckily take over but that “its significance and place within ordinary society would change” (28-9). I say luckily because we have to remind our selves that we don’t always want to watch amateur digital videos. I see a connection here between Lessig’s “RO” and “RW” cultures, and Bolter and Grusin’s terms “immediacy” and “hypermediacy,” in their work Remediation. Immediacy can be seen in transparent representations that take advantage of “linear perspective, erasure, and automaticity” (33). On the other hand, Hypermediacy “makes us aware of the medium or media (in sometimes subtle and sometimes obvious ways) and reminds us of our desire for immediacy” (35). Roland Barthes comes to a similar conclusion when it comes to “readerly” or “writerly” texts. In this work he offers two parallel readings of a short story by Balzac titled Sarrasine. One is at the surface: the story, themes or what he refers to as the “readerly” text. The other is submerged and operates under the assumed codes and conventions, which the readerly text takes for granted. Similar to these other scholars, Gauntlet makes a similar distinction between a “‘making and doing’ culture” and “the passivity of the ‘sit back’ model” (11). So in a RW culture hypermediacy, writerly texts, and ‘making and doing’ would be encouraged, in that, the people of this culture would want to see the inner workings of the medium in order to learn how to create on their own. The RO culture appears to be more in line with immediacy, readerly texts, and the ‘sit back’ model wherein the medium is taken at face value and we do not attempt to understand how the medium is functioning.
While I doubt we could ever fully inhabit either side of the previously proposed dichotomy, paramount to understanding how a medium functions (in a RW culture practicing hypermediacy and producing writerly texts), is remixing the representations it presents, as Lessig states: “whether text or beyond text, remix is collage; it comes from combining elements of RO culture; it succeeds by leveraging the meaning created by the reference to build something new” (77). Ultimately, *paraumhordyors* are a remixed collage in form and/or in content. This concept of remix is an important part of RW cultures, because it “invites a wider community to participate; it makes participation more compelling” (82). However, Lessig reminds us that there is, “nothing essentially new in remix” because it is “the same sort of stuff we’ve always done with words [...] it is how we talk all the time” (82). But we need constant reminders of this insight, both inside and outside the classroom, and works that function like *paraumhordyors* provide this reminder. Lessig judges remixed media by the following yardstick: they succeed when they “show others something new; they fail when they are trite or derivative” (82). A point a clarification here: while parody is based on an original source, it still has the potential to convey the personal and the particular, and the challenge in doing this is what makes it so inviting as a classroom assignment.

As an academic writer, what I have just done in the previous paragraph is not only acceptable, but one of the main ways in which our discourse functions: through quoting others. Lessig brings up an very important point that “the freedom to quote, and to build upon, the words of others is taken for granted by everyone who writes” yet we cannot do the same for a “remixed” piece of music or video clip, used for the same purpose:
“whether justified or not, the norms governing these forms of expression are far more restrictive then the norms governing text” (54). The difficulty is twofold: there are strict copyright laws on entertainment in the public sphere (so corporations can turn an extra buck, not to protect artists), and a serious bias in academia, so remixing media is not thought of as a intellectually rigorous endeavor either. However, in a R/W culture, remixed texts, meta-texts, writerly texts, hypermediacy, and narratives that function in a manner similar to paraumhordyors are able to bridge the gap between public pedagogy and the highly theorized and researched areas of narrative identity in academia. This problematic gap creates exigency in two ways: 1.) the task of creating the majority of popular narratives is left to advertisers and the entertainment industry who are not necessarily concerned with the problematic aspects of narrative identity creation; 2.) while these academic discourses on narrative aid our understanding of our relationship to narrative practices, they do not work within the popular narratives themselves (where the problem is occurring), and therefore only work to play ‘catch-up,’ instead of informing the creation of these narratives. Therefore, it is necessary to construct narratives that function like paraumhordyors that allow us the ability to momentarily move outside the dominant narratives perpetuated in the public sphere, and in doing so, view our relationship to these narratives.

DIY Internet videos made by amateurs/students contain the possibility of serving as both local and public pedagogies that both inform themselves through making them and also inform their professors, as well as their peers, family and friends. Agency can be gained and a shift in power can occur through the share-ability of online digital video
paraumhordyors. Amateurs/students can produce parodies of large budget productions and refunctio them to make the original target respond to a more complex and socially/culturally aware context. Examples of these are easy to find (can be viewed at playfullyserious.com), ranging from responses to Miley Cyrus’ “Wrecking Ball” music video to political campaign ads. This is one way in which paraumhordyors help highlight our current situation: these large budget productions are not spending enough time and energy on making dynamic works that help us understand our multipersonned/kairotic selves. Through amateur paraumhordyors, individuals are able to respond to the narrative norms that are being pushed upon them, and do so in a social way that makes their critique accessible to others.

However, the target does not have to be a major production, it can also respond to our own immediate cultural experiences, as is seen in The Rap Battle Parody’s by YouTube user DeshawnRaw Hoopla (that my students introduced me to). In this series of amateur productions, a handheld camera captures a staged parodic rap battle, wherein rapper Supa Hot Fire!!! takes on competitors and defeats challengers, not through his comically weak raps, but because his crew is the loudest and because they go crazy after every turn he takes. It is obvious that the creators of these videos appreciate and celebrate rap, but want to poke fun at the all too common practice of positively judging the rapper by how loudly their crew supports them. With these parodies of both mainstream productions or the features of our smaller community, this accessibility and share-ability means that the critique can act as a cathartic release for the producers and their audience, or as a public pedagogy for others who would not have considered the problematic
narrative aspects of large budget productions. It also means that there are an ever increasing number of creative critics out there whose messages will be far more widespread and perhaps far more ‘industry corrective,’ than a *New York Times* film review, even though the parody as a *paraumhordyor* could be more playful and less scathing.

**My First-Hand Experience and Student Examples**

The classroom itself provides a middle ground for a lot of these disparate worlds to collide. In teaching parodizing and humorizing alongside rhetorizing and digital communicationizing within the public sphere, students are able to offer their own suggestions, keep the professors informed as to what is currently going on right now. This provides an opportunity for the professors to come into contact with the narratives that are affecting their students’ lives, as opposed to just guessing (or not even making the attempt at all) with the mindset that their students don’t even know what narratives are effecting their lives. This openness and energy-inducing experience lends itself nicely to students having a stake in the learning process. In doing so the professor doesn’t have to problematically separate entertainment and academia (often encouraged by both camps) because doing this prevents us from creating narratives that help the individual’s narrative practices. By not allowing our students to work within the transdisciplinary world of parody and digital entertainment (e.g. remixing films and sharing them on YouTube, entering films into film festivals) we are limiting our students’ literacy across mediums and their communication skills across academic disciplines. Those who take an
‘academic serious bias’ against this transdisciplinary pedagogy operate under two common misconceptions within Rhetorizing and Compositionizing/English departments:

1.) there isn’t a technical need for this type of media composition to be taught by us because students have grown up with this technology and through some magical osmosis they somehow understand the fundamental skills necessary to construct a watchable digital video; and 2.) other departments are better suited to teach the construction of creative narratives. While other departments (film productionizing, digital artizing) teach media production, they rarely utilize the academic work on narrative done in Englishizing, Rhetorizing, Philosophizing, and Psychologizing and this is very limiting and detrimental to the finished products as well as the student’s creative experience.

These classes are also not required courses for those not majoring in such topics, while course like Freshman Compositionizing are required (for the most part).

While teaching Freshman Compositionizing at Clemson University, there was a multimedia assignment at the end of the year where the students work in groups to create a project that includes different media. By and large, most groups choose to do a video, and in my experience (although I offered a wide variety of examples) students gravitated toward making parodies. It is not difficult to understand why they choose this option and it is not difficult to see the value in the assignment: 1.) creating a parody enables them to have fun; 2.) they are able to apply their knowledge of rhetorizing conventions (taught earlier in the course) to both their parody and the original text/media they are analyzing (they are required to use rhetorizing terms in describing their work to the class at the end); 3.) making a funny parodic video allows them to create something that they will
want to share and that is easily shareable (via YouTube); 4.) it allows them to address problematic representations on a wide spectrum ranging from media they like to media they dislike (either allowing them to be critical of what they like or act as a catharsis if it is something they dislike), but ultimately that they are familiar with, and therefore (as in writing a traditional essay), they tend to be more invested in something they care about.

Another important aspect of this assignment is that it carries with it an exigency to make their audience of classmates laugh, as we screen/critique these videos in class at the end. Therefore, each group must have a good understanding of audience, as well as the formal aspects of creating a multimedia work. With humor as the end goal, this limits their critique from going over the top into conspiracy theories, because the parody grounds the criticism in addressing the narratizing/rhetorizing conventions found in texts, films, videos, and genres that are occurring in socially dynamic public sphere. Another way parody reigns in their critique is that it allows for self-parody and self-critique as well: while many of the students in the group are being critical of certain aspects of their target, but the target might be one that, overall, they actually like (because they are critiquing what they know), and this allows them a fun, playful opportunity to challenge and evaluate their own tastes.

There are two revealing examples of my previous students’ Freshman Composition Multimedia Assignments that provide further evidence of the importance of such an assignment (both viewable at playfullyserious.com). In each of these examples the students took two very different routes: the first group literally acted out a parody of a Parking Wars episode set on Clemson University’s campus, and the other group voiced-
over original footage of *The Notebook* in order to provide a more realistic version of romance. While there are several great examples, I choose these two because they are among some of the best technically sound and immediately recognizable parodies that are easy to describe here. This will hopefully demonstrate the practical application of my philosophizing on parody, as well as provide insights for other teachers who want to implement these practices.

The aforementioned benefits of *paraumhordyor* are present in *Clemson Parking Wars* as this video provides a cathartic release for the students who are upset with Clemson Parking Services, which notoriously tickets anything and everything as much as possible on a campus that lacks sufficient parking spaces. The titles for the video are taken right from the actual *Parking Wars* television show but are edited to specifically represent a local version of the show. These embellishments are highly encouraged as they allow the students to deconstruct, in order to reconstruct, the mass media narrative. Staging comedic and over exaggerated scenarios where parkers are upset, as well as fake interviews with overzealous Parking Services employees, works to undermine the typical stances taken by both: the people who are parking need to be better prepared and the parking service employees need to tone down fines and the frequency of those fines. While not a direct/overbearing critique of the *Parking Wars* show, this parody is able highlight the ridiculous fact that 1.) this is an actual show, and that 2.) as a society we haven’t figured out a better way to commute.

In the voiced-over version of *The Notebook*, the students dressed up within their target by taking on the voices of the main actors in a pivotal and highly dramatic scene.
Anyone familiar with the books of recently divorced novelist Nicolas Sparks knows that this film (based off his novel) portrays very stereotypical messages of “true love” and romance. The students cleverly swapped out the dramatic narrative of the scene and replaced it with an argument about how the male lead left the toilet seat up, and the female lead unknowingly fell in the toilet when she sat down. The long drawn out conversation moves from typical ‘passive aggressive couple-speak’ to an all-out yelling match wherein (as in real life), a very small insignificant issue grows from a molehill into a mountain. In creating this parody the students had to first recognize how the typical romance films they watch often pass over very real problems couples encounter. By disrupting overarching, dominant narrative expectations in romance, the students aren’t demanding that we should all stop watching these films, but they and their peers gain agency in realizing when they themselves are being unrealistic and when it is okay for them to get lost in a dream.
CHAPTER SEVEN

ADVICE FROM SOMEONE WHO KNOWS:

THE LIFE OF PHILIP MURRAY SPRINGER (SHORT FILM)

This chapter can be accessed by visiting my dissertations’ website: playfullyserious.com. Here, Dear Reader/Potential Future Viewer, you will be able to watch the short film I created from/for this dissertation, and you will be able to find the pre-production materials (script/storyboard) as well. You must supply your own popcorn.
Academic speculation by itself lacks the energy and share-ability that is present in an entertaining *paraumhordyoric* narrative, that I argue, accomplishes the same task, yet for a wider audience and with better results. *Paraumhordyor* allows for a more socially inclusive critique of culture and social conventions that doesn’t end in pessimism and is not as narrow as a serious critique. It also demands that the individual providing the critique can actually *do* what they are critiquing. In being able to ‘do the thing itself,’ the *paraumhordyorist* is grounded within the conventions, and therefore the same problems the “original” faced, thereby not allowing the critique the luxury of responding in a narrower academic medium without the same audience-demands on the piece.

*Paraumhordyor*’s ability to work within popular narrative conventions is important because these narrative practices are shaping the way we construct and practice our identities. Because these mass narratives almost essentially misrepresent our own local experiences, *paraumhordyor* become pertinent in considering our relationship to these narratives. *Paraumhordyor* challenge our narrative literacy at the same time they teach narrative literacy. The humor and the absurdity found in parody encourage a space of play and creativity that is necessary in order for us to make wide-ranging associations about our own practices of self-narration, thereby obtaining the narrative literacy and creative license necessary to look at our selves through multiple perspectives.

Studying rhetorizing and humorizing might not allow us to win arguments in any
situation, but they do make us aware of overly simplistic rhetorizing stances and make us cautious to take up these stances before receiving and evaluating crucial details. In studying rhetorizing and humorizing we are able to practice understanding what specific narrative expectations and rhetorizing stances can lead to, how the stances themselves can determine how we interact with the world, and how we can search for alternatives. But both humorizing and rhetorizing have suffered at the hands of “serious” philosophizing. However, and perhaps consequently, both humorizing and rhetorizing are well suited to analyze and resist dominating power structures that encourage the normalization of habits and practices. The ‘serious bias’ in academia appears when academics embed themselves within a serious rhetorizing stance and place more importance on the search for ultimate truths/or the search for an advantageous stance over others, rather than working toward being helpful to others: our students, our audiences, our peers, and our selves.

35 Author’s Note: All this standing is making my tired; I think I’ll take that nap now.
36 Editor’s Note: Thousands of pages and finally a joke???? And the lowest form of comedy: vague wordplay!
Appendix B

Syllabus for Future Course

Course Title:

Parody, Play, and Personal Narrative: sounds like a personal problem

Teaching Philosophizing

My teaching philosophizing lays the foundation for this course, as I find that in studying communication (through narrative, media, rhetorical moves, etc.) our communication practices should improve. This teaching philosophizing does both judge outcomes by our ability to write, speak, and think more effectively (although this is also a goal), and allow us to deal with miscommunication and uncertainty within communication. First and foremost, Literaturizing, Rhetoricizing, and Compositionizing are discourses that allow us the ability to think critically about narrative, and they, unlike any other discipline, can provide us with the means to create and live better narratives. In other words, if through our own research we aren’t making progress in this regard, and if in our teaching, our students do not feel as if our course is helping them in this regard, then we need to re-evaluate what we are doing. Institutions at the intersection of knowledge, power, and discipline (à la Foucault) award and promote those of us who are “serious” and who, instead of exploring mistakes, want to get rid of them. It is not a coincidence that both a lack of humor and a lack of an ability to deal with mistaken communication have run rampant in scholarly work since time immemorial. However, as
many have wrongly assumed, this does not lead to an “anything goes” situation, especially not in my classroom.

My pedagogical approach hinges on the belief that pushing students to high levels of technical competency is not mutually exclusive from providing them with opportunities for personal creative expression, nor is it mutually exclusive from providing them with a space for them to come to terms with their narratively constructed selves (plural on purpose, in case you forgot). For instance, in my First-Year Composition and 20th–21st Century Literature courses at Clemson, I teach traditional writing and researching techniques. However, influenced by the Heidegger-ian departure from Cartesian Dualism (that problematically splits subject and object), I don’t want my students to falsely assume they are able to negate themselves from the scholarly essay they are writing. Instead I ask them to embrace their personal participation in academic writing. I always encourage my students to pick topics that motivate and interest them personally and find a way to make a scholarly essay out of these interests. The result of what I have termed “engaged writing” is a higher quality paper because the students care more and see the paper as the beginning of future research. However, I always want to make them mindful of problematically extrapolating results beyond the scope of their arguments; i.e., keeping them mindful of what is necessary in qualitative or quantitative studies in the social sciences (valuable in their own right).

Built into my teaching philosophizing is a necessary element of creativity. Aristotle informs my procedure here with his triad of knowing (research), doing (teaching), and making (creative production). I find it important for academic critique to
be put in motion; i.e., academic critique needs a creative output. I have creative opportunities built into my classroom experiences whenever possible. I want to both hone my students’ traditional academic skills, and I want to teach them professional digital media production skills, as it is vital for them to be able to respond to the digital mediums that influence them and that they participate with on a daily basis. The “share-ability” of their work allows them to move forward academically and professionally, as well as personally, as they are able to take pride in a finished product that will live on beyond the course itself, unlike a final course paper that only the professor will read.

Course description

The two major functions of this course is to 1.) study and analyze, and 2.) play and create. This course would be supported by three major theoretical strands: parody/humor, personal narrative/narrative theory, and habitual/social power structures. In particular, we will focus on autobiography: why/how we narrate our lives, and how comedy, parody, and play are able to highlight narrative practices in popular entertainment and aid our own narrative practices. In order to do this we will sample a variety of contemporary literary forms: novels, essays, short stories, films, and television shows. The transdisciplinary nature of this course will benefit any student in arts and humanities (and obviously any other student), as it would help them both analyze and create finished works, thereby broadening their talents/narrative literacies in academia, industry, and in their own personal life. I would encourage students from Englishizing, Rhetoricizing and Compositionizing, Psychologizing, Sociologizing, Media Studizing,
Artizing, Theaterizing, and Communication Studizing to participate in this course, as it would benefit all of them in their own particular fields of study. The student’s assignments also attest to the transdisciplinary nature of the course: the students would be asked to write a traditional essay as well as create a *paraumhordyoric* work. Although we will be working with traditional academic formats (reading/writing essays, novels, etc.), there will also be an emphasis on emerging/non-traditional formats (viewing/creating online video, TV, film, performance art etc.)

**Importance of Course**

This course is important both because of its inclusive transdisciplinary nature, and because *paraumhordyoric* allows the students a great way to both critique and create. The use of *paraumhordyoric* in the classroom generates positive energy through humor that allows the students to have fun with their critique. This positive energy is also generated in the making of a creative finished product: they are making something that they can share with others, and this means they will be more invested in their work and they will put more effort into it. By utilizing parody, this course will allow the students to perform a critique on a much wider spectrum than in a traditional course; e.g., including self-parody, or parodying something that they like. These benefits lead to a better classroom experience and a better classroom experience leads to a more positive view of the humanities and a sense of solidarity. A course like this will allow other professors and students to rethink the classroom learning experience.
Encouraging students to make these parodic videos alongside traditional essays will enable us/challenge us to bring together the best of what academia and entertainment have to offer. The fissures between the two are not completely unwarranted, but by bringing these worlds together, we can make our students better prepared to deal with mistakes in communication and raise their level of media/narrative literacy. In educating them on how to make these parodic videos, they can then retroactively educate others (including their professors). By posting their videos online they are able to communicate the themes addressed in the course, and it allows those lessons in the classroom to permeate into a larger public consciousness.

Course Objectives and Outcomes

One of the primary objectives of this course is to provide students with important critical thinking skills necessary to perform close readings of texts in a variety of literary genres (written and visual). These careful analyses of texts benefit the student’s narrative literacies both inside the classroom (essays, literary works) and outside of the classroom (Facebook, sitcoms, ads). In order to insure these course objectives, each student will need to display a working knowledge of the theoretical aspects of the course and perform a close reading of one of the literary pieces (text, film, etc.) from the course. Through the practice of close reading, students will gain an understanding of the generic, cultural, and historical conventions of contemporary literature. They will also cultivate reading skills that will allow them to draw connections between texts and to articulate ideas and arguments about narrative construction/perpetuation in general. Therefore, the student
who can successfully engage at the level of analysis required in this course will be notably better at reading any other type of text, whether academic, informal, or professional.

In addition, this student will gain insight into the art of creative self-expression in both traditional and nontraditional formats. They will use the skills and lessons learned through traditional academic analysis, to help guide their construction of a paraumhordyoric digital video that they will create at the end of the year. The objective here is that they will be able to create a finished work that implements and complements their theoretical understandings, thereby allowing them to both reinforce and/or question these theoretical understandings. This will allow the students to grapple with the abstract theoretical concepts they have written about in traditional essay form and communicate this understanding to a wider audience outside of academia. In doing so they will also gain a better understanding of the theoretical concepts because they must deal with them outside of their original jargon-laden context. The end outcome will be a rigorous, professional finished media product that they can share within academia and outside academia with their friends, family, and industry.

Course Texts

The readings for this course will represent the three theoretical strands running through the course. The first would be parody and humor and for that I would use Margret A. Rose’s Parody Ancient, Modern, and Post-modern, Simon Dentith’s Parody: A New Critical Idiom, Henri Bergson’s Laughter: An Essay on the Meaning of the Comic
(excerpts), Freud’s *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious* (excerpts), and E.
Ashley Hall et al “Parody, Penalty, and Pedagogy.” These would each provide crucial
approaches to understanding parody: Rose with the history or the word and
differentiating parody amongst other comedic devices; Dentith with understanding how
parody can be used in literature; and Hall in understanding how parody can be used in
digital video creation. More generally for humor, Freud and Bergson’s provide
theoretical grounding and technical understandings of humor. The second strand would
be a philosophical look at the habitual, as well as social power structures with an
emphasis on how media affects our daily lives. For this I would use Michel de Certeau’s
*The Practice of Everyday Life*, Michel Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish*, Linda
McDowell’s *Gender, Identity, and Place: Understanding Feminist Geographies*, Virginia
Woolf’s, “On Being Ill,” and John Berger’s *Ways of Seeing*, as it provides insights into
how visual narratives inform everyday life and it also provides a critical look at media
production. There is a helpful amount of overlap within these readings that will allow my
students to make crucial connections; e.g., Bergson’s and Hall’s previously stated work
that also address these issues. The third strand revolves around narrative and I would
bring in Douglas McAdams’ article, “The psychology of life stories,” and Paul John
Eakin *Living Autobiographically: How We Create Identity in Narrative*.

I would also provide popular forms of contemporary parodic “texts” i.e.; novels,
television shows, online videos, and films for the class to analyze and these works that
will also guide us in the making of our own parody. For more traditional literary works I
would have my students read Laurence Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy* (excerpts), Jack
Handey’s *Fuzzy Memories*, and David Sedaris’ *Naked*. For television shows we would screen *30 Rock* (Crt. Fey, Tina. 2006-2013), *Burning Love* (Crt. Erica Oyama 2012-Present), and *Children’s Hospital* (Crt. Corddry, Rob 2008-Present), *The Kroll Show* (Crt. Kroll, Nick), Key and Peele (Crt Key and Peele 2012), and the internet videos we would screen would come from the following YouTube Channels: *Jash, The Lonely Island, The Onion, Bad Lip Reading, Leslie and the LY’s*. I would also consider screening one or two of the following films: *Waiting For Guffman* (Dir. Guest, Christopher 1997), *Sleep Walk with Me* (Dir. Birbiglia, Mike 2012), *The Chinese Wall* (De Chinese murr) (Dir. Kok, Sytske 2002), *Tristram Shandy: A Cock and Bull Story* (Dir. Winterbottom, Michael 2005), and *Zelig!* (Dir. Allen, Woody 1983).

**Assignments**

Part of my students’ grade would be comprised on an essay (6-8 pages) in MLA format that will make analytical arguments using close readings of specific sections that the student will choose from the course’s literary works. The purpose of this essay is to gain a deeper understanding of the literary work by being able to articulate details about the narrative; i.e., rhetorizing moves, formal aspects, allusions, patterns that develop with characters and themes, etc. Here the students will practice their ability to find a language/entry point into the literary work. Next they will be required to elaborate on their close reading by applying arguments from the theoretical readings to support their arguments, and they will also apply the rhetorizing terminology and
literarizing terminology learned in the course. Here, they will argue how a concept discussed in a theoretical work from the course readings comes to life in the literary work, and then they will argue for why this is significant. The goal of this requirement is to make the student better able to articulate the importance of the literary work outside the obvious benefits in a classroom setting. The last and final requirement is that they must make and argument as to how the first two aspects (close reading and theoretical application) have allowed them to give insight on their own practices of self-narration and the self-narration practices of others.

More specifically, the students’ essays will be assessed in the following areas: 1.) a brief overview of the whole work and introduce the sections of text that they will focus on, as well as a brief summary of the theory(s) and theorist(s) they are going to use to support their arguments; 2.) a clear thesis statement that is continually supported throughout the paper that provides a well developed and unique argument about how a particular aspect of the text is functioning and what this means in relation to the narrative practices of others and themselves; 3.) use literary and rhetorizing terminology in their close reading and use the specific theoretical concepts of other scholars; 4.) provide evidence to support their arguments from both the literary text and the theoretical text(s) using proper MLA citations; 5.) analyze the evidence in order to prove its relation to the theoretical concept, and describe the significance of this in regards to (for example) literature in general, humor, self-narration, etc; 6.) once the following are satisfied they should be able to draw conclusions as to how the work is both socially/culturally significant and assess how/why the work effects our narrative practices.
For the next major assignment in the course the students will work in groups to produce a digital video parody. I must approve the project beforehand and it will amount to the time spent working on a final paper. Perhaps one of the most significant standards (although informal) that will shape the project is the ability for the finished product to entertain the other students in the class and perhaps get them to laugh. We will be screening every group’s project three separate times: in the very rough cut stage, as a rough cut, and the final cut. After each screening the whole class can weigh-in, providing suggestions and offering critique. Trying to entertain and make their peers (and others outside the classroom) laugh will help reign in their critique, so that they don’t overstate their claims, or do an oversimplified, Freshman-esque, cringe-making attack on corporate America, for example, or the dangers of smoking cigarettes, among other “banned” argumentative essay topics. With this added pressure to be entertaining and funny, the students will have to take time to understand their rhetorizing situation and create their finished project accordingly, as opposed to a traditional paper where the student is only practicing for a single audience member: the professor. Additionally, they will have to address aspects of personal narrative; i.e., one of their main goals for this creative work will be to help others with their practices of self-narration. With this as a motivating factor, the piece will hopefully shy away from an overly argumentative polemic.

The critique will also be grounded by the fact that they have to deal with real-world texts as targets, and as a group, they must decide on a mass media message they want to critique, which will provide an opportunity for the students in the group to work out their differences of opinion and tastes in entertainment. Some students in the group
might not want to go after certain representations because they like them and this will challenge others in the group to provide reasons why the representation should be critiqued, not just because they think it’s dumb. On the flipside, the students who like the representation will learn how to be critical of it and question what it is they like about it. Either way, gaining this common ground will be important for all.

The challenge for the digital video parody will be to follow the seven guidelines I have set out in my Judgementationalization Rubric for Paraumhordyor: 1.) be funny and work on an obviously comical level; 2.) target clichéd, serious, homogeneous narrative conventions; 3.) re-create its target as an amalgamation of several points of critique; 4.) fill-in the strictly serious target with play, nonsense, and surrealism that completes the one-dimensional figures that the original perpetuates; 5.) must parody logos itself, thereby engaging in self-parody; 6.) maintain an ‘alongside’ relationship with its target (not “against”); 7.) address a wide-ranging and non-specialized audience; 8.) provide the blueprint for its own construction. While these are goals to strive for, the digital video parody will be graded more specifically on the following eight criteria: 1.) it responds to the course readings or is it informed by theoretical approaches learned in the course; 2.) the video’s rationale is obvious and it is clear what the target of the parody is; 3.) the critique that the parody puts forth is convincing, attention grabbing, and original; 4.) the video shows a careful consideration of pathos, logos, ethos, kairos, audience, persona, and the rhetorical triangle; 5.) the parodic video demonstrates a high level of social awareness and avoids oversimplified value judgments; 6.) the formal aspects work to enhance the general message and do not detract from the message; i.e., every element.
(acting, camera work, editing, audio, etc.) has a discernible point that brings out the central themes; 7.) the video parody effectively uses comedic elements and is entertaining; 8.) the video works to provide the viewer with alternative perspectives on the practice of self-narration, or identity creation, or highlights problematic stereotypes/narratives that circulate in the public sphere.

While this course will further my students’ abilities to respond to the demands of academia, they will also hone their skills in the field of media/creative production through this final project. This objective is enforced by the industry standard they will be held to in the making of their creative project; e.g., for preproduction they will be creating storyboards, writing scripts, and making shot sheets; in production they will be working with lighting, blocking, directing, acting, and cinematography; and in post production they will be using professional software in editing, creating visual effects, and in mixing audio. In working in groups for this project they gain experience in working with a team, and they will also acquire the communication skills necessary in the workplace. This group work will also allow each of them to lend their specific academic backgrounds and creative skills to the project (e.g., writing, historical research, costuming, set design/art, etc.), making for a higher quality finished work than if they were to create a media project on their own. The project has to be preapproved by the instructor and it has to utilize course themes/response to the course readings, which shouldn’t be difficult as the themes and readings address a wide-variety of topics. The point of this project is for the students to work their own personal interests into a
theoretically challenging, yet professional finished product that will live on beyond the course itself and help them deal with their own personal narrative practices.

Aside from these two major assignments there will also be 10 weekly 150 word written responses due. The point of these responses is not to write something that no one will ever read again, but to serve as a place to start generating ideas for their paper, as well as generate points of conversation in classroom discussion, so that if all else fails (the creative juices aren’t flowing), the student will have something to contribute should I call on them to respond to the weekly readings (which I will do every class, eventually calling on everyone multiple times before the semester is over). However, during the first part of every class the students will partner up beforehand and for ten minutes they will share their written response with another person. There will also be two quizzes given at the beginning of the semester on literarizing/rhetorizing terminology and on major theoretical schools. This is done in place of quizzes on the readings, and I find it important to memorize these terms, as they will help the students approach texts inside and outside this course.

Justification for Course

There is a twofold justification for this course: 1.) it is able to bring humor into the classroom in a very practical manner; 2.) it is able to make rhetorizing/cultural critique fun and insightful. As mentioned earlier, Morreall highlights the difficulty some professors might face if they bring humor and play in to the classroom: there will be no formulaic grounding to which the professor can fall back on, i.e., professors will have to
field obscure questions that challenge the planned lecture or presentation. Morreall finds that the dynamic space of play and experimentation that humor provides leaves hierarchical power structures exposed. This would be fine if students had a flexible, well-adjusted professor, but unfortunately not all of us can pull that off. I find that this leads into another complication in bringing humor into the classroom: many professors aren’t comfortable teaching, let alone being funny while doing it. It takes a person who is comfortable with making mistakes (as all comics must be) and this description excludes many of us. That’s not to say that it is impossible for academics to fit this description, but people in academia are rewarded for proving that their work is intellectually rigorous. In short, academia rewards and accepts into its ranks a certain type of person, who might also be funny and well adjusted, but these are not traits that are rewarded. Even the witty and playful among us often don’t let that side of them show in an academic context, and often for good reasons: success in the humanities depends on our reputation and when there is a lot of competition for jobs those who appear fringe (the wrong brand of fringe) are out of luck (as academia becomes more and more corporatized).

However difficult the situation might seem, there are very practical ways around some of these problems, and my course provides several solutions to the problems previously mentioned. One fear perpetuated by an academic serious bias is that bringing humor into the classroom creates an ‘anything goes type situation.’ While there is a time and a place for serious task driven work, using humorous texts, as well as allowing the students to create humorous projects, will allow teachers to balance an otherwise traditional class structure with humor. Given traditional academic procedures, it is not
difficult to understand our current situation, but parody provides a very practical way to bring humor into the classroom. Parody does not disregard serious critique but it rounds it out, making it more complete. By bringing in theoretical readings that address humor, as well as literature and visual media that is humorous, the professors themselves don’t necessarily have to provide the humor. They can also bring in humor without themselves being funny, because the assignments require the students to at least attempt to be funny.

Similarly, while tech savvy professors might be growing in number, I don’t even think it is essential that instructors for this course need to be creative media geniuses. As many professors might be wary of new technology and the process of creating digital videos, I would like my work to provide them with the guidelines and standards for which they can evaluate such projects, even if they themselves aren’t as well verse in digital video creation. We allow professors to teach courses on literature and writing, even though they themselves are not professional authors of fiction. Therefore, if we provide professors with the right tools to teach, they can teach this courses like mine, even though they might not be proficient in specific aspects of digital media production.

As I’ve argued previously, my course brings together many different academic disciplines as well as academia and industry. In extending parody into a tool to create with, we still allow all the great things we love about traditional English Literature Studizing, Cultural Studizing, Critical Theorizing, Rhetorizing, Compositionizing, Philosophizing, and Media Studizing etc. to be translated into the digital age, and not in an obfuscating, abstract way, but in a very practical way. As seen in my course, the goal
is to have students create well-informed, socially responsible representations in the public sphere, and I venture to guess that this is something many would agree is beneficial. My course challenges the current rigid system and if it catches on, these approaches will provide our departments with more leverage and agency, while also providing our students with the same benefits.
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