

Hypertext demands the development of a new rhetoric—a revival of the classical, rhetorical form that provided a paradigm from which to think about and analyze modes of communication.¹ According to Aristotle, rhetoric functions as a general paradigm able to observe the persuasive about any given topic.² Many theorists, including Richard Lanham, acknowledge the need for a new rhetorical paradigm in the age of digital technology.³ Electronic technology returns us to the basic rhetorical model that formed the fundamental pattern of Western education over 2,500 years ago. According to Richard Lanham, “We can, then, think of electronic prose as moving back toward the world of oral rhetoric.”⁴ The movement from linear print to associational hypertext necessitates a new rhetorical mode of analysis because, as with rhetoric, hypertext works in the realm of probabilities, rather than print, which follows syllogistic proofs leading to conclusive ends.⁵ Hypertext might not be able to engage in a line-driven, philosophical argument, but it functions according to the rules of rhetorical argument, where an accumulation of words and images persuade the reader to adopt an attitude or a course of action.⁶ Specifically, Gregory Ulmer outlines a form of hyper rhetoric, where he unites writing and intuition. This hyper rhetoric is similar to Aristotle’s rhetoric, where the enthymeme brings together speaking and the intuition of the audience. Both hypertext and the enthymeme enable a cooperative relationship between analysis and intuition, which is what Ulmer calls for in his hyper rhetoric.⁷ This conception of hyper rhetoric provides a philosophical paradigm from which to conduct an overarching analysis of the hypertext and a technical paradigm, whereby the rhetorical tool, the enthymeme, is used to

¹ George A. Kennedy, *Classical Rhetoric and Its Christian and Secular Tradition from Ancient to Modern Times* (Chapel Hill: UP of North Carolina, 1980) 66.

² Aristotle, *On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse*, trans. George A. Kennedy (New York: Oxford UP, 1991) 37.

³ Richard A. Lanham, *The Electronic Word: Democracy, Technology and the Arts* (Chicago, UP of Chicago, 1993) 274.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 24, 74.

⁵ James H. McBurney, “The Place of the Enthymeme in Rhetorical Theory,” *Speech Monographs* 3 (1936): 49-74, Rpt. *Landmark Essays*, ed. Edward Schiappa (Davis: Hermagoras, 1994) 185.

⁶ David Kolb, “Socrates and the Labyrinth,” *Hyper/Text/Theory*, ed. George P. Landow (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1994) 328.

⁷ Gregory L. Ulmer, “The Miranda Warnings: An Experiment in Hyper rhetoric,” *Hyper/text/theory*, ed. George P. Landow (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1994) 346, 349.

examine the theory behind the hypertext link.⁸ This new rhetoric involves links as “rhetorical moves,” which imply choices, reveal assumptions and have effects on the meaning of connections between nodes in hypertext.⁹

The goal of this study is to prompt connections between current and past “texts,” analyzing how the logic governing hypertext and its associational links is similar to the logic pattern underlying Aristotle’s enthymeme. Consequently, the logic of hypertext might be defined in the discursive realm more clearly than in the literary realm. Further, this examination attempts to combat the notion that it is accurate to assume that the reader will not create a logical connection between links when one is not explicitly stated. It seems obvious then that the links in hypertext symbolize an unstated premise that both the reader and the author agree upon; therefore, that logical premise does not need to be explicitly stated, allowing an unstated connection through a link to lead the reader to another premise. Thus, this study attempts to demonstrate that the hypertext author inserts a link in the text where he believes the audience understands the logical connection, as the audience understands the unstated, but agreed upon, logical jump in Aristotle’s enthymeme. In order to explore the future of rhetoric in the new technological medium of hypertext as similar to the Aristotelian invention scheme of the enthymeme, one must first understand the definition of the enthymeme, the definition of the link, and, finally, the unique role of argument as it functions through the link in a hypertext document.

Aristotle’s system of rhetorical invention continues to serve as the essential basis of modern theory of argument in speaking and writing. According to Aristotle, “Enthymemes are the ordinary way in which men express their reasoning.”¹⁰ Specifically, the enthymeme acts as a deductive tool of invention in order to provide a model from which to “syllogize about every

⁸ Kennedy. *op. cit.*, np.

⁹ Nicholas C. Burbules, “Rhetorics of the Web: Hyperreading and Critical Literacy,” *Page to Screen*, ed. Ilana Snyder (London: Routledge, 1998) 117.

¹⁰ Aristotle. *On Rhetoric*. *op. cit.*, 298.

proposed problem on the basis of generally accepted opinions.”¹¹ The enthymeme is based on probabilities, signs, and examples, and its successful construction is accomplished through the interaction of speaker and audience.¹² Enthymemes are derived from probabilities (eikota) and signs (semeia). Those based on probabilities are drawn from things that either are or seem to be true, and enthymemes using signs result from things that are generally or in part true.¹³ In addition, enthymemes founded on probabilities present arguments that attempt to account for the fact or principle maintained by assigning a reason for the being of a fact, and those using signs supply reasons for acknowledging the being of a fact.¹⁴ Since the enthymeme is probable in nature, it produces an argument with “formal inconclusiveness.” To demonstrate this inconclusiveness, theorist H.L. Mansel, contends that while an accumulation of enthymemes may all be “*logically* worthless,” they may amount to “a *moral* certainty.”¹⁵

Where the syllogism is complete in all its parts, the enthymeme is incomplete, where one of its premises or a conclusion is invariably missing.¹⁶ According to Aristotle, “for if one of these [premises] is known, it does not have to be stated, since the hearer supplies it.”¹⁷ The premises that compose an enthymeme are usually based on the unstated, shared beliefs between the speaker and the audience, which are used as evidence to secure the acceptance of other propositions.¹⁸ According to rhetorical theorist Lloyd Bitzer, “What is of great rhetorical importance...is that the premises of enthymemes be supplied by the audience,” where the audience provides the missing materials of the rhetorical arguments at the proper moment, provided the orator is skillful.¹⁹ Further, Edward Cope notes that there is no need for the rhetorician to state all of his premises because if the propositions are “already well known—being popular and current maxims and

¹¹ Aristotle, *Topics*, ed. Jonathan Barnes, vol. 1 (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1984) 289-90.

¹² Lloyd F. Bitzer, “Aristotle’s Enthymeme Revisited,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 45 (1959): 408.

¹³ Aristotle. *On Rhetoric*. op. cit., 43, 212.

¹⁴ McBurney. op. cit., 175.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 183.

¹⁶ Aristotle. *On Rhetoric*. op. cit., 315.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 42.

opinions, and generally accepted rules and principles...—there is no occasion to state it at all; the listener will supply it for himself.”²⁰

Since enthymemes are formed out of premises supplied by the audience, “they have the virtue of being self-persuasive.”²¹ Thus, depending on the skill of the orator, the audience helps to construct the rhetorical proofs by which it is persuaded. Richard Lanham acknowledges that the interactive audience of oral, rhetorical tradition has returned with the creation of hypertext.²² According to rhetorical theorist Lloyd Bitzer, “enthymemes occur only when speaker and audience jointly produce them;” thus, enthymemes unite speaker and audience through the process of joint production and provide “the strongest possible proof.”²³

In order to know how the link functions in a hypertext, one must understand the general definition of hypertext, where the logical connections between elements are primarily associative rather than syllogistic, as in traditional, written text.²⁴ One implication of this associative logic is that hypertext is situated in a larger context, one shared by author and many readers, where, ideally, a common understanding exists regarding the legitimacy of associational links between nodes. Specifically, a hypertext is composed of a network of links between words, ideas and sources that has neither a center nor an end.²⁵ It is a “nonlinear means of electronic expression in which the textual surface is given a third dimension by embedding further kinds of information beneath the surface.”²⁶ As David Kolb suggests, hypertext might be thought of “as a net of linear texts [nodes] confronting one another [through links] in a kind of endless expansion.”²⁷

¹⁸ McBurney. op. cit., 181.

¹⁹ Bitzer. op. cit., 407.

²⁰ Edward M. Cope, *An Introduction to Aristotle's Rhetoric* (London: Macmillan, 1867) 158.

²¹ Bitzer. op. cit., 408.

²² Lanham. op. cit., 76.

²³ Ibid., 408.

²⁴ John M. Slatin, “Reading Hypertext: Order and Coherence in a New Medium,” *College English* 52 (1990): 876.

²⁵ Ilana Snyder, “Beyond the Hype: Reassessing Hypertext,” *Page to Screen*, ed. Ilana Snyder (London: Routledge, 1998) 127.

²⁶ Lanham. op. cit., 94.

²⁷ Kolb. op. cit., 329.

Furthermore, movement through a hypertext document requires predictive measures, where the reader, in order to make a decision intelligently, “must be able to make reliable predictions about the consequences of particular choices.”²⁸ The reader makes several predictions, especially about what kind of material might be activated by a particular link. Furthermore, the reader makes an assumption about the closeness of the relationship between the current node and the material linked to it. This necessary assumption is due to the fact that relations between the components of hyperdocuments are not always spelled out. Thus, the reader must make the connection from link to link, and the author is only authorized to leave this connection up to the reader if he believes the reader holds a similar connective assumption as himself.²⁹ While some suggest that this might cause the reader to get lost or become disoriented, the reader and the author should be given more credit for making the commonly understood connection between nodes and from link to link.

Since hypertext is based on associative logic, the link functions as the means to an association. The link is defined as “the elemental structure that represents a hypertext as a semic web of meaningful relations.”³⁰ As a structural element, the link plays a role in hypertext parallel to that of sequence in conventional text. As such, “these identifiers carry an enormous burden...[as they are] asked to do the kind of explanatory work that ordinarily takes several sentences or paragraphs.”³¹ Links also function as the *movement* that turns information into knowledge.³² Specifically, linking responds to a suspension of textual connection, where the segments connected through linking facilitate the production of a seamless whole.³³ Furthermore,

²⁸ Slatin. op. cit., 877.

²⁹ Ibid., 875, 880.

³⁰ Burbules. op. cit., 105.

³¹ Slatin. op. cit., 877-78.

³² Burbules. op. cit., 109.

³³ Gretchen Barbatsis, Michael Fegan, and Kenneth Hansen, “The Performance of Cyberspace: An Exploration into Computer-Mediated Reality,” 26 Oct. 2001: 1-23 (printed)
<<http://www.ascusc.org/jcmc/vol5/issue1/barbatsis.html>>, 16.

the inevitability of repetition in a hypertext document demonstrates how link choices represent decision points in reading that are significant in determining what the text becomes.³⁴

Not only does the link function as the structural unit guiding a hypertext document, but the link is also associated with the structural elements in the human mind. According to theorist Douglas Hofstadter, “the perception of relatedness is a defining characteristic--perhaps *the* defining characteristic—of intelligent behavior.”³⁵ Hypertext embodies the idea of relatedness, “for everything in hypertext depends on linkage, upon connectivity between and among the various elements in the system.”³⁶ The link is then an external representation of an internal process that functions to “*simulate* the connections in the mind of the author or reader.”³⁷

Through his definition of hypertext as a verbal medium, John Slatin presumes a connection between the enthymeme and the link by recognizing that the structure of hypertext might be defined through discursive logic more clearly than through literary logic.³⁸ Using the concept of “links,” one can begin to understand how discursive form works within hypertext to frame ideas a certain way.³⁹ Dennis Cali defines this alternative logic of hypertext as “the logic of the link,” where it functions as “an associative logic—an architecture of reasoning comprised of intertextual pathways and networks which accords meanings on the basis of the points of cross-referencing between words or ideas.”⁴⁰ Hypertext relies on the connective nature of associative logic, as it works to dissolve disjunctions, which lends itself to the discursive realm of argument and a time-present audience.⁴¹

In addition to the discursive logic defining the structure of hypertext, Nicholas Burbules asserts that links function as tools of rhetoric, where they serve as non-neutral, “rhetorical

³⁴ Adrian Miles, “Realism and a General Economy of the Link,” *Currents in Electronic Literacy* (2001), 10 Dec. 2001 <<http://www.cwrl.utexas.edu/currents/fall01/miles/index.html>>.

³⁵ Slatin. op. cit., 877.

³⁶ Ibid., 877.

³⁷ Ibid., 877.

³⁸ Ibid., 871.

³⁹ Dennis D. Cali, “The Logic of the Link: the Associative Paradigm in Communication Criticism,” *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 17 (2000): 1-15 (printed), 8.

moves.”⁴² This classification follows George Kennedy’s technical definition of rhetoric, where, in this case, the enthymeme is used to examine the theory behind the hypertext link. Similarly, according to Adrian Miles, “links appear to share many qualities of performative speech acts.”⁴³ Just as links carry the reader from node to node, rhetorical tropes, as employed in the enthymeme, move an audience from one premise to another. A thoughtful reader asks why links are made from certain points and not others; additionally, the reader asks what types of connection links actualize between nodes. Specifically, Nicholas Burbules demonstrates how different forms of links describe distinct associational connections. For example, the metaphoric link functions as an uni-dimensional comparison between seemingly dissimilar nodes. Burbules contends, “Weblinks can be read as metaphors when apparently unrelated textual points are associated,” causing the reader to make his own connection and think about the two concepts in a different way.⁴⁴ Additionally, the traditional rhetorical trope, the synecdoche, functions as a link when a part of something is used to reference the whole. With the link, this category identifies relations of categorical inclusion among nodes. Important to understand is the power embedded in the link where, “the power to register superordinate categories to which particulars are subsumed is a special way of influencing people’s conceptual and normative thinking.”⁴⁵ Finally, the link may be defined by the sequence or cause-and-effect trope, where associations suggesting “this and then that” or “this because of that” imply beliefs about the world.⁴⁶ Since the association occurs through the unstated assumption of the link, these connections are not clarified, only manifested, and left to the reader to explain to himself.

The link in hypertext also has a logical function, similar to the traditional holding embedded in the enthymeme. As the enthymeme is still a logical form, the link also follows a

⁴⁰ Ibid., 5.

⁴¹ Ibid., 9.

⁴² Ibid., 117.

⁴³ Miles. op. cit., np.

⁴⁴ Burbules. op. cit., 110-111.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 112.

form of logic, whereby the implied connection is a one-way street, similar to the component of traditional logic that Aristotle retains in his enthymeme. In traditional logic, “if A, then B” does not allow the construction “if B, then A.” Similarly, in the logic of the link, one can progress through the implied connections with authorial legitimacy, but one cannot denote the same legitimacy to an altered or backward connection. While one can return from a linked page to the page from which the link originated, the logical relationship between connections is not necessarily reciprocal. As Nicholas Burbules recognizes, “the semic significance implied by the link from A to B does not necessarily accompany the return from B to A.”⁴⁷

Wolfgang Iser’s description of blanks lends itself to both hypertext’s links and the enthymeme’s assumptions in that they all function as “unseen joints of the text,” indicating that “the different segments of the text are to be connected, even though the text itself does not say so.”⁴⁸ Iser defines the existence of a blank, or a gap, where there is “an abrupt juxtaposition of segments, there must automatically be a blank.”⁴⁹ Terry Harpold establishes the link’s place within the gap definition by asserting that the link substitutes closure for the space of the gap between the threads in a hypertext.⁵⁰ Consequently, Iser asserts, “when the schemata and perspectives have been *linked* together [in hypertext and in the enthymeme], the blank’s disappear.”⁵¹ These blanks then “necessitate a connecting equivalence which will enable the reader to discover...[that which] underlies the disconnected segments and...links them up into a new unit of meaning.”⁵²

According to Gretchen Barbatsis, the hyperlink and the disconnection between premises in an enthymeme:

⁴⁶ Ibid., 115.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 105.

⁴⁸ Wolfgang Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1978) 183.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 195.

⁵⁰ Rita Raley, “Reveal Codes: Hypertext and Performance,” *Postmodern Culture* 12 (2001): 49.

⁵¹ Iser. op. cit., 183.

⁵² Ibid., 185.

...overtly marks or labels a textual 'gap' as a 'gap,' announcing, in effect: *this is an edit point, a place where connectability between textual segments -- or texts-as-segments-- is suspended because something is missing; it is up to you to figure it out; you may do so by continuing with this perspective, or you may engage an alternative perspective by activating the link.*⁵³

The gaps in the text are essentially blanks which the reader or audience must fill in. Iser recognizes, "the blanks leave open the connections between perspectives in the text, and so spur the reader into coordinating these perspectives.... [The blanks also] induce the reader to perform basic operations *within* the text."⁵⁴ The reader of hypertext and the audience of the enthymeme must supply the "not given" information to determine the significance of the given information.⁵⁵ The coordination process is performed by the reader in the movement from node to node through links; it is performed by the audience in the movement from one premise to another premise through the understood assumption. Consequently, it is up to the reader to make the connection between nodes in hypertext, as it is up to the audience to share in the common, unstated assumptions appealed to by the orator in the enthymeme.

Likewise, according to philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty, "The lack of a sign can itself be a sign; expression does not consist in the fact that there is an element of language to fit every element of meaning, but in the fact that language influences language—an influence that suddenly shifts in the direction of the meaning of the language."⁵⁶ The lack of a stated connection between nodes of texts or premises in the enthymeme is itself a sign that this connection is readily available in the reader's or audience's common understanding. As the nodes and the general premises influence one another, the reader and the audience find that the interaction of nodes and premises creates the coherent meaning in a text. Nodes and other media that are linked in a

⁵³ Barbatsis. op. cit., 8.

⁵⁴ Iser. op. cit., 169.

⁵⁵ Barbatsis. op. cit., 8.

hypertext, realize their meaning in relation to each other, similar to the interaction of premises in the enthymeme.⁵⁷ Accordingly, Merleau-Ponty contends, “Language is meaningful when, instead of copying the thought, it allows itself to be broken up and then reconstituted by the thought.”⁵⁸ Therefore, instead of stating the explicit connection, the speaker of the enthymeme and the author of the hypertext allow the audience or the reader to reconstruct the connection between the language themselves, stimulating the meaning-making process. As illustrated by Rita Raley, the connection between the link and the enthymeme resides in their invitation to involve the audience: “In the moments of waiting, as one waits for speech to emerge through a stammer and wants to speak for, to fill the gap and complete the utterance, there is an implicit invitation for the link to be written for, to be written through, to be reloaded, to be completed.”⁵⁹

Both hypertext’s links and the enthymeme’s arguments attain logic significance through the unstated connections between nodes and premises. Nicholas Burbules reasons, “the link-event becomes invisible,” which is parallel to the assumption’s lack of presence in the enthymeme.⁶⁰ There is an implied connection that a link expresses, which determines the meaning of the juxtaposition of two seemingly related texts, just as the audience supplies the implied connection in the enthymeme.⁶¹

“The interactivity of hyperlinks adds a distinctive kind of meaning-making gap to a computer-based text.”⁶² The gap marked by a hyperlink indicates a “suspension of connectability between textual segments,” while simultaneously forming “a condition for the connection to be

⁵⁶ Iser. op. cit., 169.

⁵⁷ Raley. op. cit., 51.

⁵⁸ Iser. op. cit., 169.

⁵⁹ Raley. op. cit., 51.

⁶⁰ Burbules. op. cit., 104.

⁶¹ Ibid., 105.

⁶² Barbatsis. op. cit., 7.

established.”⁶³ Specifically, “By marking the suspension of connectability in bold relief, then, gaps with an interactive quality foreground the ‘reading’ or meaning making act itself.”⁶⁴

According to Wolfgang Iser, the hypertext’s reader or the orator’s audience:

...is drawn into the events and made to supply what is meant from what is not said. What *is* said only appears to take on significance as a reference to what *is not* said; it is the implications and not the statements that give shape and weight to the meaning... [Specifically, meaning in text is]...a process set in motion...by a mutually restrictive and magnifying interaction between the explicit and the implicit, between revelation and concealment, [where].... What is concealed spurs the reader into action; but this action is also controlled by what is revealed; the explicit in its turn is transformed when the implicit has been brought to light.⁶⁵

The gaps create in the reader and the audience a desire to build consistency between segments of a text in their imagination.⁶⁶ Thus, the link, like the enthymeme, draws the reader and the audience into the text by providing the gap to insert a connection, without stating one explicitly. The nature of the human mind prefers that the author or speaker leave something for it to supply, rather than believing that the mind must be instructed completely.⁶⁷ Many theorists, such as Nicholas Burbules, note the cognitive importance of the gap for moving information to knowledge in the reader's mind.⁶⁸

As Gretchen Barbatsis reasons:

Materially, the ‘given information’ of a ‘text’ could be the content of its word...though the significance of this content is not in what it represents, but

⁶³ Iser. *op. cit.*, 195.

⁶⁴ Barbatsis. *op. cit.*, 7.

⁶⁵ Iser. *op. cit.*, 168-9.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 185.

⁶⁷ Aristotle. *On Rhetoric*. *op. cit.*, 297.

rather in the implications of what it does *not* represent. Importantly, then, this conception of a textual structure indicates that its vacancies are not merely empty spaces. Instead, like the interior of a room, they are the articulated negative volume of empty space.⁶⁹

This negative space is a pivotal property of the connection between reader and text. The interactive quality of a hyperlink offers the reader a choice of alternative textual perspectives as stimuli for acts of meaning making. In other words, while a textual structure foreshadows its ideational object, it must be through a process of stimulating acts of ideation that it is brought forth, clearly describing the function of the hypertext's link and the enthymeme's unstated assumption.⁷⁰

While the author and the orator might leave it up to the reader and audience to make connections and describe the meaning of a text, Gretchen Barbatsis and others caution, "While the gap provides the occasion for projection, it does not leave it wholly to an interpreter to select a projected meaning."⁷¹ Nicholas Burbules further identifies the responsibility hypertext linking requires to select and order information in particular ways, encouraging certain interpretations and excluding others.⁷² Likewise, Aristotle demands the speaker be ethically responsible by using a rational appeal to the audience: "on whatever subject there is need to speak or reason, it is necessary to have the facts belonging to that subject."⁷³ The author of hypertext also must establish credibility with the reader by taking responsibility for "the particular links they create, where and how they create them, and the larger network of information sources to which they are related."⁷⁴ Similarly, meaning making through connections in hypertext and in the enthymeme

⁶⁸ Burbules. op. cit., 109.

⁶⁹ Barbatsis. op. cit., 6.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 6.

⁷¹ Ibid., 8.

⁷² Burbules. op. cit., 117-8.

⁷³ Aristotle. *On Rhetoric*. op. cit., 187.

⁷⁴ Burbules. Op. cit., 118.

only works if the author is skillful in allowing the reader to make connections between nodes and premises. Furthermore, according to George Landow in his “The Rhetoric of Hypermedia,” the author of hypertext must insert clarity and intelligibility around linked sources and destinations. This supplies readers of hypertext with an indication of “where they can find links and then...where those links will lead them and why they are led there.”⁷⁵

Wolfgang Iser defines this authorial responsibility as the dual function a negative space performs, where it necessitates a connection and exercises guidance as to what the connection ought to be.⁷⁶ Specifically, the text must control the reader’s and the audience’s activity in an indeterminate, intangible way. While the connection is exercised by the text in the ability to link, the connection is not in the text; rather, the connection is in the *movement* from the text through the link to the linked text.⁷⁷ Furthermore, links define where an author will allow the reader to travel and where they will not; thus the links function as boundaries, limiting the scope of the space.⁷⁸ The hypertext author, as with the speaker using the enthymeme, must narrowly control associations he asks readers and the audience to make, as argument in hypertext and in the enthymeme does not imply free association. Instead, the rhetorical construction of arguments suggests a constraining apportionment, where, as described by J. Tovey, the web of hypertext “is recognized as having a center, a focal point from which a web is constructed.”⁷⁹

Wolfgang Iser seeks to define how the connection between nodes, like the premises in an enthymeme, can be sufficiently controlled to prevent purely arbitrary subjectivity. To resolve this possible problem, Iser relies on the intertextuality and entire arguments of text, where a textual segment “does not carry its own determinacy within itself, but will gain this in relation to other

⁷⁵ George P. Landow, “The Rhetoric of Hypermedia: Some Rules for Authors,” *Hypermedia and Literary Studies*, eds. Paul Delany and George P. Landow (Cambridge: MIT UP, 1994) 96.

⁷⁶ Barbatsis. op. cit., 8.

⁷⁷ Iser. op. cit., 167-8.

⁷⁸ Burbules. op. cit., 106.

⁷⁹ J. Tovey, “Organizing Features of Hypertext: Some Rhetorical and Practical Elements,” *Journal of Business and Technical Communication* 12 (1998): 374.

segments.”⁸⁰ Specifically, each textual segment is not sufficient to give the whole its total meaning; the complete meaning is ultimately determined by the position of the text between other texts.⁸¹ Iser’s rationale can easily be attributed to the dependency of premises on the entire argument to define the enthymeme’s ultimate meaning.

Through his theory of the gap, Wolfgang Iser establishes the connection between the link and the enthymeme. Both the link and the enthymeme rely on existing knowledge to allow the reader or the audience to fill in the gap. The existence of gaps and the need to build consistency in one’s mind, “showed that the textual schemata invoked existing knowledge and also offered specific information through which the intended—but not given—object could be conceived.”⁸² Since the node is “an integrated and self-sufficient unit,” the reader should be able to make the connection between this “complete thought” and another “complete thought” simply by the repertoire of knowledge and experience that the writer and reader both share.⁸³

Additionally, the link and the enthymeme provide the reader and the audience a choice for moving through an argument. In the enthymeme, the dialectician gives his audience a choice between two or more assumptive pathways, and this is similar to the choice the reader has between links and associational pathways in the hypertext document.⁸⁴ Similarly, in both the enthymeme and the hypertext, the reader and the audience have the choice of whether or not to activate a link, thereby choosing whether or not to engage in a shift of perspective.⁸⁵ As Gretchen Barbatsis acknowledges, “In formulating understanding, a reader has a sense-making choice as to whether or not to incorporate a new perspective as well as in selecting which, from among various potential perspectives, to add.”⁸⁶ The enthymeme must begin with premises held by the audience, in order to persuade by having the audience view a conclusion as probable from the

⁸⁰ Iser. *op. cit.*, 195.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 195.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 185.

⁸³ Slatin. *op. cit.*, 878.

⁸⁴ Bitzer. *op. cit.*, 404.

⁸⁵ Barbatsis. *op. cit.*, 9.

premises to which it subscribes. Similarly, the hypertext link requires that the reader subscribe to assumptions that allow him to understand the connection implicit in the movement from one node to the next.⁸⁷

According to Aristotle, one must use modes of persuasion and argument notions possessed by everyone, as “one should not speak on the basis of all opinions but of those held by an identified group...the judges or those whom they respect, and the fact that what is said seems true should be clear to all or most people.”⁸⁸ Similarly, authors in hypertext must insert links where a common audience might hold a universal assumption. Thus, both the hypertext author and the dialectical speaker appeal to assumptions already held by his audience, for “the real determinant of an enthymeme is what a popular audience will understand.”⁸⁹ Hypertext draws on the knowledge possessed by the audience, just as the enthymeme depends on the knowledge shared between the speaker and the audience.⁹⁰ Furthermore, the main requirement for an enthymeme is that a pathway be apparent and generally admitted, which is what John Slatin argues must occur between nodes in a hypertext, to ensure that the audience shares a somewhat common knowledge of the associational links between the nodes of text. Finally, the unstated assumption the speaker relies upon in the enthymeme is part of the larger system of living and experience that the speaker and the audience share; thus, its connection does not need to be explicitly stated, as the connection between nodes is not explicitly stated, but implied by the link.⁹¹

Just as the function of the link is to combine related nodes, the function of the unstated assumption in the enthymeme is to combine premises. According to Wolfgang Iser, “the need for

⁸⁶ Ibid., 9.

⁸⁷ Bitzer. op. cit., 405.

⁸⁸ Aristotle. *On Rhetoric*. op. cit., 187.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 42.

⁹⁰ Walter J. Ong, *Orality and Literacy: Technologizing of the Word* (London: Routledge, 1982) 53.

⁹¹ Slatin. op. cit., 875, 878.

completion is replaced here by the need for combination.”⁹² The associational style of hypertext helps people see how remarks work with other remarks to establish an argument’s point, whether it is conclusive or inconclusive.⁹³

Yet another similarity between hypertext and the enthymeme is the notion of shared authorship. Readers share textual authorship with the hypertext creator as they negotiate the links they choose to activate and follow, which is similar to how the speaker and the audience share creation of the message in the enthymeme. Thus, hypertext and the enthymeme foster a kinship among units of thoughts and among the people who formulated those thoughts.⁹⁴ Consequently, there is no need for the hypertext author to situate everything in a linear pattern or to explain the association between nodes because he should be able to rely on the reader to make the connection, if it is one that a common reader would naturally make. Thus, the author is faced with making the links in his text such that the association is one that is commonly held, and thus can go unstated.

The nature of the enthymeme as continuous discourse by the speaker does not allow him to obtain premises from the audience; thus, he must draw premises for his proofs from propositions that members of his audience would supply if he were to ask.⁹⁵ Similarly, the author of the hypertext initially “publishes” his text relying on his perceptions of the connections that the audience might naturally supply. Granted, the author of hypertext can go back and modify his text, as the speaker can issue a retraction or modification of his speech, but the initial interpretation of the connections the audience will naturally make is consequential to the success of the argument. Hypertext, like speech, is an open and dynamic system, providing a place where the author and reader interact to create an always-evolving text.⁹⁶ Finally, “What is of great

⁹² Iser. *op. cit.*, 182.

⁹³ Cali. *op. cit.*, 8.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁹⁵ Bitzer. *op. cit.*, 408.

⁹⁶ Slatin. *op. cit.*, 876.

rhetorical importance...is that the premises of enthymemes be supplied by the audience.”⁹⁷ Similarly, in hypertext, what is of great importance is that the reader supplies the associations between links. Further, hypertext and the enthymeme aim to make the audience “self-sufficient for information, able to reach back in time and out in space for the ‘background’ needed to understand the ‘text’ at issue.”⁹⁸

Finally, the probable nature of a conclusion is present in both the hypertext and the enthymeme. A hypertext’s argument moves toward something, while never entirely reaching it because of its inconclusive nature.⁹⁹ As the enthymeme draws a probable and not certain assumption between arguments, so too does the link draw a probable assumption between the connection of two nodes that the author assumes will be similar among many people, but cannot be sure.¹⁰⁰

Thus, philosopher David Kolb examines how the shape of argument is changed through the connection between the enthymeme and the link, and he suggests that hypertext can accommodate types of arguments we would never encounter within the boundaries of print, which will enable writers to make associative connections between diverse disciplines and genres.¹⁰¹ Further, Jane Douglas asserts that hypertext can offer readers “texts that are thematically unified without being organized linearly, statements that metamorphose into questions or a series of qualifications, [and] connections between the universal and the familiar that become problematic the deeper we delve into a text.”¹⁰² Similar to their use in an

⁹⁷ Bitzer. op. cit., 407.

⁹⁸ Lanham. op. cit., 133.

⁹⁹ Randy Bass, “The Expressive Shapes of Arguments and Artifacts,” *American Quarterly* 51 (1999): 282.

¹⁰⁰ Bitzer. op. cit., 400.

¹⁰¹ Jane Yellowless Douglas, “Will the Most Reflexive Relativist Please Stand up: Hypertext, Argument and Relativism,” *Page to Screen*, ed. Ilana Snyder (London: Routledge, 1998) 157.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 157.

enthymeme, hypertext authors can nest qualifications within propositions, assigning significance to certain levels of text according to their position within the argument.¹⁰³

Hypertext creates an argumentative environment in which an author's larger premise is sustained, even though his argument might not unfold in a strictly linear way.¹⁰⁴ According to Randy Bass, "The argument inscribes itself onto the evidence and the artifacts themselves become crossing points for the multiple threads of [the author's] argument," essentially changing the possible ways that evidence can function in relation to the whole argument.¹⁰⁵ Further, the capacity to interconnect argument with archives works well to demonstrate the compatibility between argument and the primary documents it references as evidence.¹⁰⁶

The possibilities of argument are expanded greatly through hypertext, as hypertext carries on an argument at several levels simultaneously. Hypertext allows the arguer to express degrees of complexity, contingency and indeterminacy that are essential to argumentative inquiry; yet, those are stymied in linear, determinate, conclusive print logic. Hypertext also affords the possibility to represent a single artifact in a multiplicity of contexts and argumentative constructions. Essentially, hypertext moves argument from "the straitened 'either/or' world that print has come to represent and into a universe where the 'and/and/and' is always possible."¹⁰⁷ Additionally, one of the promising directions for hypertextual rhetoric is to literalize the reciprocity that stems from "the way that artifactual complexity leads to an argument, and then how the argument traces itself back onto the artifacts in their deployment as evidence."¹⁰⁸

Even though hypertext does not assert a definitive conclusion, it still has the power to make a claim on an individual, and claims need not take the form of single propositions within

¹⁰³ Ibid., 157-8.

¹⁰⁴ Bass. op. cit., 278.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 279-80.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 281.

¹⁰⁷ Douglas. op. cit., 154-55.

¹⁰⁸ Bass. op. cit., 280.

argumentative lines.¹⁰⁹ Jane Douglas supports philosopher David Kolb's argument: "Philosophy's exemplary texts...are hardly textbook examples of linear, analytic reasoning. Plato's dialogues replicate the give-and-take of conversation, and, if they end up settling on a definitive reading...they often get there by visiting a welter of tangential spaces."¹¹⁰ Douglas demonstrates how traditional logical inquiry is not so far from hypertext. The significance of classic philosophical texts, including Plato, Aristotle, Hegel, Kant, does not rest on the ability to locate their claims definitely "but on the works' having opened up new territory for thought."¹¹¹ Questions endure, while answers to those questions may change according to the times, and hypertext is very good for asking questions.¹¹²

More specifically, the hypertext link asserts its own argument style. Links can embody the standard moves of argumentation—making claims, giving backing, contesting claims, raising questions, stating alternatives—and they may also have other forms, as they may be elements in many motions at the same time.¹¹³ In addressing a text, an audience must know what sort of place it is in, and this place is not established by the argument line, but it is a presupposition that the audience comes to the argument with the tools to "read" the argument. As Aristotle contended, an argument must be anchored in premises that are true because "things that are true and primitive are convincing on the strength not of anything else but of themselves."¹¹⁴

The links between nodes represent one advantage offered by the hypertextual medium over linear writing, as they allow the representation of the mutually interdependent web of concepts at play. Even more importantly, hypertext allows the author to avoid subordinating complex primary materials to a single interpretation.¹¹⁵

¹⁰⁹ Kolb. *op. cit.*, 340.

¹¹⁰ Douglas. *op. cit.*, 153.

¹¹¹ Kolb. *op. cit.*, 340.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 340.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 324, 332.

¹¹⁴ Aristotle. *Topics*. *op. cit.*, 167.

¹¹⁵ Bass. *op. cit.*, 279-80.

According to David Kolb, “argument and fluidity are always linked...the argumentative line is surrounded by a fluid discourse in which there is no fixed primacies and no firm meta-levels, because in that discourse such things get established.... Hypertext seems to be a medium in which this fluid discourse could flourish.”¹¹⁶ Similarly, according to Georg Friedrich Hegel, “the transition from one category to another turns out to be an aspect of a larger transition, which turns out to be a moment in a yet larger movement, and so on up to the major movement of the system, which takes the form of a circle, not of a line with a beginning and end.”¹¹⁷ Hegel’s theory can be used to demonstrate how nodes “derive their identity from their relation to each other but also how that relation in turn depends for its identity and stability on its insertion in a larger exchange, and so on.”¹¹⁸ The link, in this sense, serves to arrange into an interdependent whole the set of contexts and categories that are the preconditions of argument. Hegel claimed that ideas were connected by interdependencies, which were too complex to be represented adequately by simple, logical demonstrations. Further, demonstrating hypertext’s form in logical argument, philosopher L. Wittgenstein, in his *Philosophical Investigations*, believed that reducing his ideas to fit syllogistic forms would reduce their complexity. Wittgenstein sought rather “to crisscross it [the detailed landscape of his ideas] in a multitude of directions, so that the same sketches of specific cases would reappear in multiple contexts, analyzed from different perspectives.”¹¹⁹

Hypertext then involves a new rhetoric, the rhetoric of association, a philosophical paradigm from which to conduct an overarching analysis of hypertext, which can be demonstrated through Aristotle’s enthymeme, a rhetorical tool used to examine the theory behind the hypertext link.¹²⁰ Hypertext might not be able to engage in a line-driven philosophical argument, but it functions according to the rules of rhetorical argument, where an accumulation of

¹¹⁶ Kolb. op. cit., 331.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 331.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 332.

¹¹⁹ Douglas. op. cit., 153-4.

words and images persuade the reader to adopt an attitude or a course of action.¹²¹ Ultimately, “the convergence of technology, democratization and the return of rhetoric provide the dominant reality for the arts and letters in our time.”¹²² The challenge to new writers in the hypertext medium will be, according to Jay Bolter, “to build, in place of a single argument, a structure of possibilities.”¹²³ This new hyperrhetoric will attempt to resolve the historic dichotomy between opinion prose and scientific argument, where argument conventions will merge with the new inference path of hypertext, highlighting patterns of similarity and proximity.¹²⁴ Finally, it is in this movement that arguments emerge, according to how the audience fills in the gaps constructed by the author to involve the audience in the meaning-making process of this new medium of text, thought and argument.

¹²⁰ Gregory L. Ulmer, *Heuretics: The Logic of Invention* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1994) 34.

¹²¹ Kolb. op. cit., 328.

¹²² Lanham. op. cit., 221.

¹²³ Jay David Bolter, *Writing Space: The Computer, Hypertext, and the History of Writing* (Hillsdale, N.J.: Erlbaum, 1991) 119.

¹²⁴ Gregory L. Ulmer, “A Response to Twelve Blue by Michael Joyce,” *Postmodern Culture* 8 (1997): 1-8 (printed), 6,8.