

This article was downloaded by: [Kent State University Library]

On: 14 April 2009

Access details: Access Details: [subscription number 906514239]

Publisher Routledge

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



Rhetoric Society Quarterly

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~content=t716100769>

Urban Mappings: A Rhetoric of the Network

Jeff Rice ^a

^a University of Missouri, Columbia, MO, USA

Online Publication Date: 01 March 2008

To cite this Article Rice, Jeff(2008)'Urban Mappings: A Rhetoric of the Network',Rhetoric Society Quarterly,38:2,198 — 218

To link to this Article: DOI: 10.1080/02773940801958438

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02773940801958438>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Full terms and conditions of use: <http://www.informaworld.com/terms-and-conditions-of-access.pdf>

This article may be used for research, teaching and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, re-distribution, re-selling, loan or sub-licensing, systematic supply or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The accuracy of any instructions, formulae and drug doses should be independently verified with primary sources. The publisher shall not be liable for any loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.

Urban Mappings: A Rhetoric of the Network

Jeff Rice

This article outlines a rhetoric of digital mapping through the specific example of Detroit, Michigan. In particular, the essay challenges representational mapping by offering a database driven rhetoric. This rhetoric, the essay argues, offers possibilities for new media invention and arrangement practices.

I am the databank. I am the self organized machine.

—China Miéville, *Perdido Street Station*

Navigation

A 15 December 2005 *Saturday Night Live* pre-recorded skit entitled “Lazy Sunday” featured comics Chris Parnell and Andy Samberg as urban New Yorkers who rap about their day in the city and subsequent decision to see the film *The Chronicles of Narnia*.¹ At one point in the sketch, the comics must figure out the best route to the movie theater. They debate which online service is best.

“I prefer MapQuest!”
“That’s a good one, too.”
“Google Maps is the best.”
“True dat.”
“Double true!”

In this brief exchange, the characters emphasize the role mapping services such as MapQuest and Google Maps play in the navigation of online and physical spaces. These services attempt to provide ways to navigate the vast network of information that the Web has emerged into, and that is, as well, reflected in the material world of shops, streets, homes, and other physical

¹See http://www.nbc.com/Video/videos/snl_1432_narnia.shtml.

Dr. Jeff Rice is Assistant Professor of English and Director of Composition, The University of Missouri, 107 Tate Hall, Columbia, MO 65203, USA. E-mail: ricejr@missouri.edu

locales. These services arrange space in order to facilitate meaningful and productive navigation. These services, in other words, employ specific types of informational arrangements for the purpose of invention. In particular, these services showcase new ways space, in the age of new media, affects inventive practices.

The role of online mapping in the arrangement of information cannot be deemed insignificant. One 2006 estimate proposes that “the number of navigation systems, whether in cars, portable devices or in cell phones, sold in North America will increase nearly 50% from 4.5 million in 2006 to 6.7 million next year [2007] and to 25 million by 2011” (Gopwani). The invention and sales of new types of phones, PDAs, computers, GPS systems, and other devices make the *SNL* skit more than a joke: these devices reflect the way space and technology are merging. The Internet—as a giant hypertextual space—foregrounds this process. “Our symbolic environment is, by and large,” Manuel Castells contends, “structured by this flexible, inclusive hypertext, in which many people surf each day. The virtuality of this text is in fact a fundamental dimension of reality, providing the symbols and icons from which we think and thus exist” (13). Symbolic and iconic moments make up new spaces for habitation by creating large databases that users draw from. “The Web has gone map mad,” a recent *Forbes* article on online mapping begins. “Ever since Google released easy-to-use software tools for its nifty on-screen maps of streets and satellite images a year ago, fans have set off an explosion of creative overlaps, adding their own useful and sometimes quirky data” (Bahree). All of this “data”—symbolic, iconic, personal—generates an evolving definition of spatial mapping, one that negotiates fixed spaces (streets) as well as ephemeral spaces (quirky data).

Databases are the territories where such mappings occur. Google Maps and Map Quest are, in fact, databases; they store and assemble vast amounts of information hosted by their own and related services. In response to this activity, one might speculate that databases—as part of a larger body often called new media—are providing an emerging rhetoric regarding how to map space as well as how to move through places. That rhetoric is enacted by both a given system (like Google Maps) and the rhetor who engages with the system (the user). Where oration, memory palaces, basic argumentation, the general category of print, and other types of new media have provided such rhetorical guidance for spatial arrangements and invention previously, online mapping adds new dimensions to how we navigate and arrange space in order to construct new and alternative meanings. “The problems of technology attract little theoretical or practical attention from traditional rhetoricians, who regard words as the subject matter of their art,” Richard

Buchanan points out (185). Databases might provide a place to attract more attention for rhetorical arrangement and invention; they might provide a place to explore how digital spaces expand the role of words in arrangement and invention. Databases might provide insight into how we arrange and invent within a variety of spaces, from the physical to the conceptual.

My claim that databases are generating an emerging rhetoric speaks to both new media expectations as well as traditional rhetorical concerns regarding arrangement, delivery, and place. Such a rhetoric speaks to traditional and emerging concerns with invention. The database, exemplified in the online mapping service, gathers spaces of information (streets, routes, places), arranges information (brings them together in an interface), and delivers that information for a given audience for a specific situation (like someone attempting to find the best route to a movie theater). Although print-based maps (maps of cities, maps of countries, maps of campuses, maps of shopping centers, and so on) have always done such work, the database-driven map offers some new challenges because the amount of information used to create the map, the amount of information one must navigate, the various positions one can navigate from, and the number of opportunities for arrangement have increased dramatically. Exploring the database as a rhetorical challenge can expand as well as complicate new media expectations of spatial arrangement in terms of invention. Because rhetoric has always been concerned with questions of information organization, spatial arrangement, and place, in the age of new media it has become necessary to consider the role of the database. An exploration of the database as rhetoric is both a conceptual gesture (physical spaces like a city or local site are generalized to non-physical spaces such as idea formations) as well as a theoretical one (what are the possibilities of database-driven acts?). Before beginning that exploration, however, I want to place database-driven rhetorics into proximity and context with some of the traditional issues arrangement poses for rhetorical production.

Ramist Arrangement and Invention as Technology

To begin, the database provides a contemporary version of what Richard Enos calls the Ciceronian concern with arrangement, that it “provides a structure, an architecture for the creation of ideas” (109). As Enos argues, the structured arrangement of ideas is central to the invention process. Drawing on Cicero, Enos notes that “ideas must be appropriate not only to the situation but also to the proper place within the discourse” (109). The “ideas” in the *SNL* example—however simplistic they might at first sound—include how to get from one place to another in the most efficient

manner possible. In the definition of invention Enos draws on, where structure is the dominant feature and every item within that structure has its proper place, “The rhetor examines a preexisting inventory of ‘stock arguments’ and ‘commonplaces’ to select those that are most appropriate to the situation at hand” (Miller 131). In the Ramist approach to such organizational arrangements—as described by Walter Ong, who acknowledges the Ciceronian influence on Ramus—arrangement is the logical process of navigating categorical places or *topoi* so that the most efficient way towards understanding an argument or position can be displayed. Ramist arrangement consists of a visual process in which one “sees” how spaces are already ordered and navigated (i.e., the mapping of information is already in place; one learns their taxonomies by their visual demonstrations). “One *looks* for things in order to find them; one *comes* upon them” (Ong 114). Again, invention works with what is already in its supposed place. Or, as Ong strongly critiques Ramism for adhering to this principle, “it is a rhetoric which has renounced any possibility of invention” (288).

As Ong describes Ramism, new media affect spatial movement’s influence on invention practices. An analogy might propose that the online mapping service is for twenty-first century culture what the book was for the sixteenth century. “Ramus’ notion of method is not only a product of the humanism that sponsors both printing and the topical logics, but also is thought of (by Ramus) as an arrangement of material in a book” (Ong 311). This version of arrangement, Ong argues, affected the spatial layout of a page (as opposed to the oral organization of a speech), but it did so in such a way as to create rigid hierarchies and taxonomies. The structuring of the page affected the structuring of ideas, often emphasizing outlines, grids, and tables as arrangement devices. “The origins of Ramism,” Ong argues, “are tied up with the increased use of spatial models in dealing with the processes of thought and communication” (314). Through such arrangements, discursive places, physical places, and even one’s own place within a given rhetorical structure were seen as separate and distinct. Ramism set a specific standard for invention that required the personal and the so-called objective to be arranged separately. Just as the page’s layout divided places, so too, the Ramist argument went, should the rhetorical arrangements of a given topic.

The database, too, structures spatially, but not in the same way as a Ramist or Ciceronian legacy might require.² Instead of spatializing place and space

²Space limitations prevent a complete demonstration of Ramism today; however, it is worth noting that many contemporary textbooks still teach a Ramist-based pedagogy that emphasizes the outline as a way to arrange information.

in terms of the outline or grid, so that items remain in their separate places, the database leaves open how information might be navigated or finally arranged by not dictating the exact structure of the arrangement. Thus, as the *SNL* example suggests, one might choose between two types of database operations, each of which map the route to the movie theater differently. As Aristotle might have noted, each database addresses “how the parts of a speech must be arranged” (3.1.1). Still, Aristotle, like those who come after him, argues, “it is not enough to have a supply of things to say, but it is also necessary to say it in the right way” (3.1.2). In Book 2 of *The Rhetoric*, some of Aristotle’s quest for a right ordering sounds very much like someone navigating a database of information. In one discussion regarding how much knowledge one needs to argue a convincing point, for instance, Aristotle poses the following example of needing data.

Or [how could we] praise [the Athenians] if we did not know about the sea battle at Salamis or the fight at Marathon, or [how could we praise the Spartans without knowing] the things done by the Children of Heracles or something of that sort? (2.22.6)

To navigate all of this information as prelude to constructing a solid argument, one would need access to and control of a database of ideas: what kind of forces do the Athenians have; how large or small are such forces; who are their allies? One would need a metaphoric online mapping system to arrange the material and employ it as a “right path” toward some sort of understanding or new rhetorical composition. In the Aristotelian model, that path, however, can only follow one topic (place) at a time because only in one place, Aristotle claims, ideas are to be found. When inventing, Aristotle notes, the rhetor must “have selected statements about what is possible and most suited to the subject” (2.22.10). Because online mapping deals with selecting more than one subject at more than one time, it might not be too far off to propose that finding the “best route” to any given place of information, as Google Maps provides, has become a more complex version of “finding the best argument,” identifying the “best delivery of information,” or following Aristotle’s canonical definition, “[seeing] the available means of persuasion” (1.2.1). I am interested in extending this definition and position to a more contemporary understanding of arrangement that anticipates new media’s influence on invention. In that sense, my introduction of the database into traditional Ramist and Aristotelian concepts approaches Carolyn Miller’s notion of “novelty” in topos-bound invention. Miller describes the *topoi* in a manner that resembles what databases do.

The Aristotelian topos of degree, or of ways and means, suggests a conceptual shape or realm where one may find—or create—a detail, a connection, a pattern that was not anticipated deductively by the topos itself. The topos is conceptual space without fully specified or specifiable contents; it is a region of productive uncertainty. It is a “problem space,” but rather than circumscribing or delimiting the problem, rather than being a dosed space or container within which one searches, it is a space, or a located perspective, from which one searches. (Miller 141)

Following Miller, I extend this thinking via the notion of the database concept, the search. To search, one must move outside of “selected” choices or pre-arranged spaces so that spaces, indeed, are not closed, nor are they separated. To search, as Google Maps must always do as it and its users navigate information, one moves through places and spaces rather than set them up in fixed data structures.

Traveling Spaces

As my introductory example suggests, we might consider Aristotle’s quasi-recommendation of a database as an initial way around the Ramist pre-ordered divisions of spatial arrangements so that the Google Maps example can be expanded on. I am, of course, not the first person to make the analogy between traveling to places and places of discussion. Edward Casey’s *The Fate of Place* offers an exhaustive study of place and invention, from the fixed moment of invention (thesis) to the deterritorialization of place proposed by Deleuze and Guattari. Early in his study, Casey draws attention to Aristotle’s rejection of place’s relationship to movement (despite Aristotle’s emphasis on accumulating a considerable amount of information to move through). “Since a minimal requirement of place is to be selfsame—to be the *same* place for different things located in it—Aristotle must add to the first definition the rider that place cannot itself be changing or moving: it must be ‘unchangeable’” (55). Regarding pedagogy, Gregory Clark challenges the Aristotelian assumption (which resembles somewhat the Ramist model) by connecting rhetoric and writing to movement. In particular, Clark utilizes the metaphor of travel, arguing for

ways that avoid the theoretical and ethical problems of rhetorical territoriality by exploring the possibility of locating the kinds of collectivities that are formed by interacting writers and readers in a concept of expansive space through which, in their interactions, they travel. (12)

I see the *SNL* anecdote, then, as an extension of Clark’s concerns. Clark’s metaphor of travel is an attempt to work around territorializations of space

(the ways a writer may fixate too strongly on a concept or body of information). “How can we get our students to write and read, metaphorically at least, on the road?” Clark asks (20). Without limiting the idea of travel, represented here in terms of the database and mapping, to just students, Clark’s question can be situated as one relevant to new media. I want to suggest that the types of interactions Clark calls for can be found in a database-driven rhetoric initially suggested by a late night comedy routine.

In that way, I am thinking about how ideas are spatialized, how they are put into proximity to one another in ways that a topics-driven rhetorical production does not entirely account for (like limiting physical space to just a street or intersection). “In a rhetorical sense, there has to be more commonality than proximity to enable constructive discursive exchange,” Clark argues (13). In other words, when writing of the city, for instance, there has to be more to spatial arrangements than just seeing city markers as next to one another. For place to not be “unchangeable” as Casey’s critique of Aristotle highlights, spatial arrangements much allow for movement. Arrangements cannot be spatialized in the Ramist sense—as fixed orderings—but they must, instead, be “interactions.” Invention, then, serves to generate interactions among a given arrangement. I imagine this kind of invention as something similar to what Miller calls a “problem space.” The “search” aspect she focuses on is a type of movement through meanings. There exists a space “from which one searches,” but one can also search within one’s space.

Greg Dickinson, too, explores the roles commonality and proximity play in navigating and traveling through space. In his rhetorical analysis of Old Pasadena as a place of nostalgia, Dickinson evokes de Certeau’s well known figure of the rhetorical traveler, whose “walks” generate rhetorical turns and movements. “The walking of passers-by offers a series of turns (tours) and detours that can be compared to ‘turns of phrase’ or ‘stylistic figures.’ There is a rhetoric of walking” (de Certeau 100). Dickinson translates this movement as a postmodern gesture where “consumers, grabbing a bit of style from here, a bit from there, can appropriate, even revel in the myriad choices available” (13). In calls like the one Dickinson makes, the traveler is pastiche-artist, cutting and pasting, combining, and appropriating. Through such acts, Dickinson writes, the rhetor creates “a stylized invention of the self” (21). Dickinson suggests that spatial recombinations affect a sense of self mostly through an engagement with memory (his example constitutes the places of memory associated with a small, California town, and how nostalgia controls memory). Continuing with the traveling metaphor suggested by both *SNL* and Clark, I wonder, though, how a changing self might not be

limited to just the rhetor (speaker or writer) but may include the space itself as well as any number of interactions between the space and the individual. Even in the brief *SNL* anecdote a similar point is being made: New York is understood by the characters as a shifting self dependent on which Google Maps route a given user follows or sees as indicative of “New York.” And Google Maps itself sees New York as a shifting series of spaces and how they may or may not intersect. Both the program and the user generate an object called “New York.” In that sense, what I am calling a database-rhetoric is not only what may allow a speaker, writer, or rhetor to change or evoke different notions of self through various arrangements; it is also a way for a composition (and I use that word broadly) to be “stylized” in a “myriad” number of ways as well. It is a way to stylize a broader concept of rhetoric through one’s ability to arrange many spaces at once. And as I will demonstrate shortly, it is a way to rethink how a given space—such as the city one lives and works in—may create various networked, rhetorical possibilities. Arrangement is not supplanted by invention in this process. The two are interacting. The two are networked.

An Economy of Presence

My turn to a mapping program—an online tool that gives directions—may seem like an odd choice for discussing new media and rhetorical production. Yet following Clark’s and Dickinson’s work on rhetoric, space, and movement, I see an exigence for further exploring how invention situated within a database structure affects a specific kind of identity—whether that identity involves how New York or any other city is organized or even how one conceptualizes a given text as a database. To continue with this notion, I turn to William Mitchell whose work involves space and digital production “within the framework of a new *economy of presence*” (*e-topia* 129). Mitchell’s phrase foregrounds the difficult choices that are made when navigating online information, choices that have complicated the famous Microsoft slogan “Where do you want to go today?” In the world of online navigation, I may be able to go to more than one place at the same time; I may be able to see a given space as more than one set of data. In the economy of presence, Mitchell writes, we have “the means to interact with one another both locally and remotely, both synchronously and asynchronously, and in all possible combinations of these” (*e-topia* 135). In the economy of presence, we have the means to be both communal and proximal, to shift identities—ours as well as spaces we encounter—as we engage with these types of interactions.

Online mapping makes that presence felt by drawing on a number of discursive places at once. In *The Postmodern Condition*, Jean François Lyotard suggested a similar computer-based future (pre-Web) in which databases would control expression and thus shift how ideas are spatialized. That control comes with a warning regarding how information is arranged and delivered. “Along with the hegemony of computers,” Lyotard writes, “comes a certain logic, and therefore a certain set of prescriptions determining which statements are accepted as ‘knowledge’ statements” (4). Like Clark, Lyotard is concerned with the question of commonality and proximity and how “knowledge” (one kind of identity) is challenged through information shifts (where they are common, proximate, or in some other position in the database). In particular, Lyotard offers a rhetorical caveat regarding how individuals treat information within a given database.

If education must not only provide for the reproduction of skills, but also for their progress, then it follows that the transmission of knowledge should not be limited to the transmission of information, but should include training in all of the procedures that can increase one’s ability to connect the fields jealousy guarded from one another by the traditional organization of knowledge. (52)

In the database, Lyotard argues, informational proximity should be used not to keep ideas apart, but rather to allow their connectivity even when those connections come from different bodies (disciplinary, ideological, compositional), often in unanticipated ways. This connectivity is encouraged by imagination. “This capacity to articulate what used to be separate can be called imagination” (Lyotard 52). In this sense, having an adequate amount of information about Athenian war practices or a California town is not, in itself, enough if it only acts to maintain only one kind of identity. Following Lyotard’s definition of database rhetorics, one must be able to imagine ways to connect information that previous set-ups have not yet allowed for. One must, in a metaphoric sense, travel through the information, going “from the territorial to the transient” (Clark 12).

I introduce Lyotard’s concept of the database because one of his often cited claims is that the database replaces narrative constructions, especially “grand narratives” regarding a variety of cultural, ideological, political, and other issues. The grand narrative “determines in a single stroke what one must say in order to be heard, what one must listen to in order to speak, and what role one must listen to in order to speak” (Lyotard 21). We recognize these narratives as, among others, literacy, democracy, Marxism, and, in the case of places and cities, urban planning and urban renewal. Like a representational map or a Ramist chart, the grand narrative evokes a

totalizing space that does not allow for rhetorical turns, memory associations, spatial searches, or travel metaphors. Place, more or less, is unchangeable (i.e., literacy is the fulfillment of certain conventions accepted by school systems and public demand; democracy accommodates only specific activities connected to voting or expression, and so on). A grand narrative is a pre-set map; it totalizes space much as a Ramist spatial model does or the Ciceronian notion of structure allows.

I experience one particular grand narrative in the place I work: Detroit, Michigan. In the popular press, conversations, and economic forecasts, Detroit's identity is framed by one particular grand narrative, its status as a city of ruins. The city, this narrative tells us, suffers from a lack of investment, is plagued by racial division, and is perpetually on the verge of an economic revival it can never achieve. The rhetorical construction—or we might say, mapping—of Detroit is unchangeable. One does not metaphorically travel through Detroit via this narrative; one encounters “boundaries that define [a] common territory” (Clark 14). One only needs to say “Detroit” and, despite what may or may not exist in the city or its metro area, the city of ruins is the narrative one typically draws on in order to visualize or describe the city. One is bound to describe a fixed identity we have communally named “Detroit.”

“Description,” Henri Lefebvre notes, “is unable to explain certain *social relations*—apparently abstract with respect to the given and the ‘lived’—which appear concrete but are only immediate” (Lefebvre 46). Lefebvre’s argument, similar to Clark’s and Dickinson’s, is that spaces and places embody relationships that totalizing and grand narratives cannot accommodate. The totalizing narrative—whether it is a Marxist critique of economic disparity or an over-romanticized vision of urban renewal—can create what Lefebvre calls “the blind field,” the moment “we focus attentively on the new field, the urban, but we see it with eyes, with concepts, that were shaped by the practices and theories of industrialization” (29). The blind field indicates a rhetorical construction of place that—despite the amount of information drawn on to create that construction—is not allowed to change. In other words, it is the opposite of Mitchell’s concept of the economy of presence. While the economy of presence is meant to open up space, the blind field closes space. In Lefebvre’s critique of the blind field, he writes,

The urban (urban space, urban landscape) remains unseen. *We* still don’t see it. Is it simply that our eye has been shaped (misshaped) by the earlier landscape so it can no longer see a new space? Is it that our way of seeing has been cultivated by village spaces, by the bulk of factories, by the monuments of past eras? Yes, but there’s more to it than that. It’s not just

a question of lack of education, but of occlusion. We see things incompletely. How many people perceive “perspective,” angles and contours, volumes, straight and curved lines, but are unable to perceive or conceive multiple paths, complex spaces? (29)

One does not have to be blind to realize that Detroit suffers from economic crisis. Collapsed buildings, empty store fronts, white flight, poor schools, and under-staffed law enforcement are all conditions of that crisis. To speak of a blind field is not to deny the very real material conditions people live within. Repeating the narrative of these conditions, however, has done little to change them because their legitimacy is based on one perspective located in one space. Some of the best writing on Detroit reflects such limitations; its rhetoric always fixates on this crisis. “Since 1950, Detroit has lost nearly a million people and hundreds of fascinating jobs,” Thomas Sugrue begins his detailed history of Detroit and race relationships. “Vast areas of the city, once teeming with life, now stand abandoned” (Sugrue 3). “Nothing fundamental has changed in Detroit because the forces that controlled the city prior to 1967 still control the city and the nation,” Dan Georgakas and Marvin Surkin write in their account of labor and race relationships, *Detroit: I Do Mind Dying. A Study in Urban Revolution* (5–6). “The historical closure of Fordism as a model of socio-economic progress spelled the demise of Detroit, once the proud origin of modern industrial development” Patrik Schumacher and Christian Rogner argue as well (48). I could go on.

Because I am interested in working with an economy of presence, and because I am interested in expanding the understandings of spatial arrangements I introduced earlier, I need to find a way to move out of this fixed place of meaning. Thus, I also include Lefebvre’s instruction to alter perceptions of space. Further reminding audiences of the grand narrative of Detroit has not changed or altered how we—the supposed audiences—communally map the city. The perspectives we bring to a place, that which we use to frame or create a place, I am arguing, must engage with multiple paths, complexity, and relationships when grand narratives fail to do anything but serve as reminders and, therefore, keep possibilities *unseen*. These perspectives, I learn from Lyotard, should be imaginary and they should be—as the economy of presence suggests—networks.

The network can serve as a metaphoric extension of Clark’s writing as travel or Miller’s topoi as search because of how it moves information in complex ways, how it shifts perspectives, and how it functions in imaginary ways. Networks, as described by forces as diverse as physics, computer science, and Actor-Network-Theory, are bodies of relationships that shift as new bodies are introduced or subtracted. Networks are found in personal relationships,

textual readings, political issues, the Web, and elsewhere. “Network is a concept, not a thing out there,” Bruno Latour argues (131). Latour’s point is that the power of networks comes not from the identification of certain “things” and how they connect, but from the process of connections themselves. Generalized to a “thing” like a city space or map, the emphasis shifts from pure analysis or representation to working with the types of connections that may or may not be generated within the space’s various processes. The emphasis, in other words, is rhetorical as it teaches another perspective regarding how spaces are organized, arranged, and delivered. “[Network] is a tool to help describe something, not what is being described,” Latour adds (131). As a tool, the network can be employed in ways other rhetorical tools associated with space (memory palaces, outlines, monuments) have been used. And like other database spaces motivated by new media, such as a Google Maps, networks allow us to arrange information without the requirement that such arrangements remain unchangeable. Indeed, Latour’s point is that the network is always shifting and changing as new kinds of informational relationships are established and discovered (an echo of Lyotard’s concerns without the stress on power). To engage with a database rhetoric that begins from the exigence of space and place (as many of my previous examples have done), I need to travel through the various networked spaces that comprise, for me, Detroit.

To Detroit

For some time now, I have imagined Detroit as a networked city. That statement can partly be explained by following up on my initial interest in the *SNL* skit as well as my interest in Clark’s metaphor of travel as a type of rhetoric. Detroit, like any major city, is composed of a variety of institutions, buildings, homes, and other physical entities that make up its urban locale. To understand a specific type of relationship between such places, residents and visitors often turn to digital maps for assistance. I am no different. Like the skit’s characters, I can *describe* how I might take out my laptop, pull up Google Maps in my browser, and identify a way to get to work. If I were to replace the *SNL* characters with myself, and if I were to use Google Maps to locate the best route from my home to my place of employment at 5057 Woodward Avenue, Detroit, Michigan, I would be directed to head East on 8 Mile, follow I-75 South for six miles, and to exit at Warren Avenue. Based on the data Google Maps has collected (traffic, mileage, available highways), this route is determined to be the “best way” to arrive at Wayne State University. Google Maps provides a rhetoric of efficiency. But I do

not take this route. Instead, I follow the less efficient way to work, down Woodward Avenue and into the New Center. The speed limit is lower. The traffic is slower. Sometimes cars stop in the middle of the road for no reason. There are traffic lights along the way. Construction feels like a permanent feature (usually one or two lanes are closed in any given direction). What would take 7–10 minutes on I-75 takes 15–17 minutes down Woodward.

There is more to this anecdote than the issue of speed. Like the Van de Water family's 1920s' road trip Clark describes, how "life lived on the road transformed their conception of America and their own identity within it," I am interested in this road, Woodward, and its ability to affect any number of identities it might generate via a database (Clark 13). The database Google Maps draws on in order to predict travel is not the same database I encounter nor that I use as I drive down Woodward. Instead of collecting speed limit markers or the number of traffic lights Woodward hosts into my database, I assemble the sights, sounds, people, places, and other features of the neighborhoods I travel through (Highland Park, Boston Edison, New Center), some of which are appealing (The Temple Beth El synagogue, the Fisher Building), some of which are not (the impoverished strip of run-down businesses within Highland Park, the various check cashing storefronts, empty fields, the Normandie flop house). The trip itself can be easy (the right time of day producing fewer cars) or frustrating (traffic congestion; construction, cars stopped in the middle of the street). The route is accompanied by history (the Model T factory, the General Motors Building,

Downloaded By: [Kent State University Library] At: 01:17 14 April 2009

Google Maps

Web Images Groups News Froogle Maps more »

Ferndale, MI 5057 Woodward Detroit, MI Get Directions

Search the map Find businesses Get directions

Help

Maps Print Email Link to this page

Map Satellite Hybrid

Start address: Ferndale, MI 48220

End address: 5057 Woodward Ave Detroit, MI 48202

Distance: 10.5 mi (about 16 mins)

Reverse directions

1. Head east from W Marshall St - go 0.2 mi
2. Turn right at Pinecrest Dr - go 0.6 mi
3. Bear left at 8 Mile Rd W - go 2.2 mi
4. Continue on 8 Mile Rd E - go 0.4 mi
5. Turn right - go 77 ft
6. Take the I-75 S ramp to (I-94) - go 6.2 mi
7. Take exit 53A to Warren Ave - go 0.3 mi
8. Turn right at Warren Ave E - go 0.5 mi
9. Turn right at Woodward Ave - go 246 ft
10. Arrive at 5057 Woodward Ave Detroit, MI 48202

These directions are for planning purposes only. You may find that construction projects, traffic, or other events may cause road conditions to differ from the map results.

Map data ©2006 NAVTEQ™

Martin Luther King Jr.'s pre-Washington 1963 march) and new construction (various condos, the Youth Center, a new fast food restaurant). Each item is noted and stored in my database; each item can be drawn on to generate meaning.

These items comprise the informational scheme I construct to make something called "Detroit." These "physical" places, however, are not all that I assemble as I drive down Woodward. I also assemble communal and proximal places of meaning, most of which build up like a never ending list of moments. In addition to what I see or notice, I hear song titles from popular music ("Detroit Rock City" by KISS, "Detroit Bound Blues" by Blind Arthur Blake, "Cadillac Assembly Line" by Albert King), snippets from fiction (a line from Philip Dick's sci-fi novel *A Scanner Darkly*, "He sat looking at the empty cup; it was a china mug. Turning it over, he discovered printing on the bottom, and cracked glaze. The mug looked old, but it had been made in Detroit"), obscure references (as in Tom Waits's "Spare Parts I": "So I combed back my Detroit, jacked up my pegs, I wiped my Stacy Adams and I jackknifed my legs"), a sudden reminder that Malcolm X's nickname at one point in his life was "Detroit Red," a boast from the film *Four Brothers* ("This is Detroit; in case you all forgot"), and the mocking of the city's technological legacies (Eminem shouting out in "Without Me": "Nobody listens to techno!"). As I travel Woodward, I notice a new retail strip going up or, at times, I pay attention to the arabesque design of the New Center Liquor Store, or I notice that the grocery store in the Model T Shopping Center has changed names. These moments are emotional as much as they are informational. Am I angry with the destruction of the second Motown building or do I wonder if the Aknartoons Bakery will ever be rebuilt? Do I link the Maccabees building I work in with the university's overall plans of expansion (projects like TechTown, new parking structures, or a new dorm), or do I imagine how the recording of *The Lone Ranger*³ occurred somewhere near where my office now is? What does one choice teach me that the other does not? How do I navigate these spaces of imagination, history, space, and other features?

These moments I assemble are a database, a database that is personalized. In some ways, Lefebvre anticipated the need for such personalized networks of information—what he calls "knowledge"—particularly in regards to the problem of how to understand space within a computerized culture. "Should we feed all the data for a given problem to a computer?" he asks (59). It is

³The radio show was once recorded in the Maccabees Building, the building where the Department of English now resides.

not enough to only feed personalized data into this map I am constructing; I must find its relationship to other places, moments, people, and things. Thus, I turn to very specific places as well in order to flesh out my database further, spaces like those that border Woodward and Wayne State University. Engaging with Dickinson's call for "turns" and "detours," my network might require me to *turn* off of Woodward and engage with Detroit and Wayne State University's own vision of feeding data into a computer: TechTown.⁴ TechTown represents twenty-one businesses concentrated in a twelve block area surrounding Wayne State University. TechTown is bordered by three major roads: I-94, the Lodge Freeway, and Woodward Avenue. Like many urban renewal projects, TechTown imagines space as a mix of technology, commerce, and urban living. According to the TechTown narrative, its presence in the urban setting tells Detroit's story in familiar ways: financial improvement, new jobs, new opportunities.

TechTown is creating an entrepreneurial village with global impact. As an incubator, we provide the support and access to capital needed to build high tech companies. The TechTown organization also serves as a developer, facilitating commercial and residential projects. ("What is TechTown")

Despite its rhetorical emphasis on technological investment, TechTown does not resemble the database set-ups projected by other technology projects like Google Maps or MapQuest. Indeed, as a rhetorical mapping of space, TechTown's narrative resembles the grand narratives that fail to accommodate intricacies, quirks, details, and personalized knowledge databases offer. Little in the TechTown narrative, we might add, is drawn from the flexible database one might call "Detroit" (i.e., the assemblage of moments and citations like the one I briefly noted for myself). One of TechTown's main projects is the learning initiative called "Bizdom U,"⁵ an entrepreneur boot camp that provides free tuition to students who hopefully will become Detroit's investors of tomorrow. Bizdom U, and its general curriculum of leadership courses in management and positive thinking tell a familiar story regarding investment procedures. Bizdom U is not a gimmick; it is a real effort to shape an economic identity for Detroit. Its rhetoric draws on the familiar tropes of the investment narrative: "innovative ideas," "real world training," "empowerment," and "milestones." If these are the best materials available

⁴<http://www.techtownwsu.org/>

⁵See both Bizdom U's "out Us" site (<http://www.bizdom.org/program/>) and TechTown's news report (<http://www.techtownwsu.org/techtown/news/detail.asp?ContentId=D666D97F-CFB3-42BC-965D-24A0BCFD4D10&bk=%2Ftechtown%2Fnews%2Findex%2Easp>)

for persuasion (such as how to make Detroit better or how to convince people to invest themselves in the city), their “right ordering” will only result in an already anticipated narrative or blind field. One might even offer the same observation regarding Aristotle’s requirements for advising the Athenian war initiative. How much “right ordering” based on grand narratives or anticipated questions will lead to an eventual blind view and ignore a space’s possibilities? How does a grand narrative of space, of which TechTown is one example, limit database potential? This is not a critique I offer, but a reminder of how such narratives have served as the basis of Detroit’s identity (and consequently other spaces’ identities) for a long time and still have not changed such an identity. The TechTown-styled narrative, to return to Ramist arrangement, sees and works with what is already there (i.e., financial investment) to produce something called Detroit. It does so by excluding, among other things, personal interaction with space; that is, it excludes certain kinds of rhetorical relationships. It excludes a specific way of inventing new relationships.

Saying that is also a reminder that identities are comprised of relationships, not empty topoi (like the key phrases TechTown relies on). A *Detroit News* article quotes TechTown’s executive director, Howard Bell, as commenting on the specific relationships the project plans for this strip of land adjacent to Wayne State “Ultimately we want to build a community where people live, they work and they play” (Bunkley n.p.). Bell’s comment, as admirable as it is, is a familiar one to urban investment. It assumes that a series of relationships may be generated by locating a nexus among capital and pleasurable activities. That kind of mapping, however, risks reducing information relationships to pre-established, unchangeable topoi of meaning even when technology is introduced. Placing work and home in proximate relationship to one another is a fairly recognizable narrative for how to contribute to urban renewal. Adding “tech” to the mix does not change this common relationship nor does it recognize the database’s role.⁶

Networked Mappings

“Who is going to demonstrate that the ‘language of the city,’ to the extent that it’s a language, coincides with ALGOL, Syntol, or FORTRAN, the languages of machines, and that this translation is not a betrayal? Doesn’t the

⁶The narrative I compose here was written while I worked at Wayne State University. Although I no longer work in Detroit, the narrative still has value for the points I am making as well as the larger project on rhetoric, Detroit, and networks that I am currently working on.

machine risk becoming an instrument in the hands of pressure groups and politicians?" Lefebvre asks (59). Cities, in general, have already been placed in the hands of specialized groups; housing, investment, and commercial ventures are often dictated by such groups. In Detroit, TechTown is no exception to this process. And such groups, with or without technology (although technology is often at the forefront of their urban planning) fall back on grand narratives of renewal and rejuvenation in order to map the city's spaces. Neither I, nor anybody else, should reject the call for urban renewal, particularly for cities, like Detroit, that are in need of some kind of change. I do, however, point to the limitations of the call when its database is minimal and fixed. My driving anecdote's importance is not that I produce a different representation of Detroit (which I have not yet done here) nor is it that I give Detroit a new identity (which I also have not yet done). Its importance is that the kind of arrangement the anecdote hints at can allow the rhetor to create a variety of both. That I join the anecdote with the existing narrative of Detroit is also important, for in this network I am not rejecting a relationship with what I find displeasing; instead, I am looking for new types of communal and proximate relationships. I have only mapped out a small portion of what such a network might entail and what it might produce. My intent, then, is to follow Latour's understanding of the network as a shifting identity. If I were to write a complete version of what I create called "Detroit," it still would not demonstrate the rhetorical potential of the database because that "identity" I create will easily change when I substitute new items in my database (whether driving down Woodward or whether engaging in another kind of activity). My intent is to show the potential of the database for invention, not to totalize it, fix it in one space, nor to create a grand narrative of a given space.

In response to limited databases, I return to my anecdote. Despite the informational overload I feel as I assemble these items (the citations I noted along with the neighborhoods I pass, the histories I recall, the personal moments I experienced, like the time I was at a given restaurant or the recent story I heard about a specific building), they are part of an overall identity I name Detroit; they comprise *my* network. While the network feels egocentric, it is, in fact, a shifting identity based on the individual or individuals who construct it. It is a spatial knowledge made out of the communal relationships between the personal and place. This identity is uneasy (I do not know what moment or reference goes where) as well as pleasurable (many of these moments enhance my understanding of Detroit). This identity is not a constant; it is a variable that depends on how I access my database. In what I create, it is difficult to tell what, returning to Enos, is appropriate

for what situation. I can assemble these items—and others—in a variety of ways and produce more than one way to get to Detroit as well as more than one kind of Detroit.

Saying that is not a dismissal of Google Maps' services, but an acknowledgment of how database-driven information takes several forms—from the efficient to the difficult to understand, from the impersonal routing of spaces to the highly personalized (and some might argue, eccentric) spaces of encounter and cultural exposure. Reimagining database mapping so that the “digital” mapping popularized by online services also includes other types of databases extends a rhetorical understanding and production of space and creates a vast network of various forces simultaneously working together (online, communal, personal, cultural). “Contemporary urban experience combined with the growth of consumer culture makes the maintenance of stable, coherent identities difficult,” Dickinson notes (1). My anecdote about driving down Woodward is meant to highlight just how unstable one simple act can be: driving to work can affect a spatial identity (what is Detroit) depending on the type of database I make, draw from, and arrange.

“At every instant,” Kevin Lynch begins his canonical *The Image of the City*, “there is more than the eye can see, more than the ear can hear, a setting or a view waiting to be explored. Nothing is experienced by itself, but always in relation to its surroundings, the sequences of events leading up to it, the memory of past-experiences.” The influence of online mapping takes a fairly familiar position like Lynch's and further pushes us to recognize the relationships that comprise meanings in spaces. “Every citizen has had long associations with some part of his city, and his image is soaked in memories and meanings” (Lynch 1). Gilles Deleuze foregrounded such associations in a great deal of his work; notably, Deleuze notes how associations and sensations form blocs from which meaning is generated (Deleuze 167). Deleuze notes that meaning is not just in the thing itself but in the various relationships that connect or disconnect with/from a given space. “A map of relations among rubrics,” is how Jennifer Daryl Slack describes Deleuze's concept, “but a map as large as the territory, a map that is the territory, a map that exceeds what habits of representation could conceivably comprehend, a map in which the rubrics fold on to one another to create complexity and possibility” (Slack 136). In other words, my Detroit is a map that is more than streets or boulevards. It is more than the accumulation of common places (topoi). It is more than a sweeping narrative of progress or decline. It is a complexity and possibility constructed out of, among other things, sensations. It is also, therefore, a metaphoric endeavor as much as

it is a project to reimagine a specific city or urban space. What I say about Detroit I could say about any other space: a composition, a rhetorical act, a school, a historical moment, a person, a situation, a genre, and so on. The network I call Detroit serves, too, as a moving entity: a concern with Detroit and with mapping space in general. What I learn is that a database map is a network of complex and possible meanings that extend from communal moments as well as personal associations.

And in that acknowledgement, I recognize that when we speak of technology and mapping, we speak of different, yet complementary, rhetorical systems. Despite its novelty and its convenience, Google Maps still cannot fully accommodate the network I construct. That point does not make Google Maps “wrong,” but it does ask that I consider networks, space, and navigation further so that personalized data also is included. Google Maps’s potential is in how we generalize from it, not how we codify it. The personalization of data extends and complicates traditional applications of rhetorical tools like memory so that other forces and spaces—like sensations, citations, quirky data, and so on—are included as well. In place of retelling narratives of space, particularly those that are the scope of grand narratives (such as the economic in Detroit’s case), I am interested in the complex interchanges of data that make up a given spatial relationship, and how we might engage with those exchanges for urban planning, rhetorical production, and technological applications—areas I see in relationship to one another. I see that complexity in the examples I have briefly described including my brief description of traveling to and from Detroit. “The moment of complexity,” Marc Taylor writes, “is the point at which self-organizing systems emerge to create new patterns of coherence and structures of relation” (24). My own anecdote about Woodward Avenue is meant as a first step for beginning this process. To go “to Detroit,” in my anecdote is not just to leave my home and arrive at a destination in the middle of the city. It is also to share a series of images and moments along the way that are stored, processed, and eventually used to create a personalized database of space where each element engages another in a variety of ways. Through the sharing of data, these engagements cause me to form a meaning. This engagement, I note, is a network directing my understanding and invention of space. This engagement is rhetorical for how it allows my understandings to always be shifting and changing, to always be arranged and delivered in a myriad of ways, in a variety of contexts.

That I draw from a very personal experience of one space—Detroit—should not distract from the more generalizable issues of space, databases, and networks. In fact, personal space, as Lynch notes, is a fundamental

component of spatial navigation. Lynch also argues that there is no one way to navigate space. "It now seems unlikely that there is any mystic 'instinct' of way-finding. Rather there is a consistent use and organization of definite sensory cues from the external environment" (Lynch 3). Although Lynch downplays these personal meanings in favor of what he calls "public images," the network requires that public meanings (like a city's history or the location of a street or the stories told about it) be connected to personal moments as well. Such connections provide the beginning of a new urbanism and a new rhetorical mapping of that urbanism.

Acknowledgment

I thank the editor and two anonymous reviewers for their very helpful comments and suggestions on this article.

References

- Bahree, Megha. "Map Mania." *Forbes.com*. 5 June 2006. 26 July 2006. <<http://www.forbes.com/business/global/2006/0605/062.html>>
- Buchanan, Richard. "Design and the New Rhetoric: Productive Arts in the Philosophy of Culture." *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 34.3 (2001): 183–206.
- Bunkley, Nick. "Urban Village Taking Shape." March 14, 2006. *The Detroit News* 25 July 2006. <<http://www.detnews.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20060314/BIZ/603140344/1001>>
- Casey, Edward S. *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History*. Berkeley: University Press of California, 1998.
- Castells, Manuel. "Materials for an Exploratory Theory of the Networked Society." *British Journal of Sociology* 51.1 (2000): 5–24.
- Clark, Gregory. "Writing as Travel, or Rhetoric on the Road." *College Composition and Communication* 49.1 (1998): 4–23.
- De Certeau, Michel. *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Trans. Steven F. Rendall. Berkeley: University Press of California, 1984.
- Deleuze, Gilles and Félix Guattari. *What is Philosophy?* New York: Columbia University Press, 1994.
- Dickinson, Greg. "Memories for Sale: Nostalgia and the Construction of Identity in Old Pasadena." *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 83.1 (1997): 1–27.
- Enos, Richard. "Ciceronian Dispositio as an Architecture for Creativity." *Rhetoric Review* 4.1 (1985): 108–110.
- Gopwani, Jewel. "Navigating Technology: Map Mission." *Detroit Free Press* May 26, 2006.
- Georgakas, Dan and Marvin Surkin. *Detroit: I Do Mind Dying. A Study in Urban Revolution*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press Classics, 1998.
- Kennedy, George A. Trans. *Aristotle On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civil Discourse*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1991.

- Latour, Bruno. *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2005.
- Lefebvre, Henri. *The Urban Revolution*. Trans. Robert Bononno. Minneapolis: University Press of Minnesota, 2003.
- Lynch, Kevin. *The Image of the City*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1960.
- Lyotard, Jean-François. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*. Trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi. Minneapolis, MN: University Press of Minnesota, 1997.
- Miller, Carolyn. "The Aristotelian Topos: Hunting for Novelty." *Rereading Aristotle's Rhetoric*. Eds. Alan G. Gross and Arthur E. Walzer. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2000. 130–146.
- Mitchell, William J. *E-topia: Urban Life, Jim—But Not as We Know It*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1999.
- Ong, Walter J. *Ramus, Method, and the Decay of Dialogue*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983.
- Schumacher, Patrik and Christian Rogner. "After Ford." *Stalking Detroit*. Eds. Georgia Daskalakis, Charles Waldheim, and Jason Young. Barcelona: Actar, 2001. 48–56.
- Slack, Jennifer Daryl. "Logic of Sensation." *Gilles Deleuze: Key Concepts*. Ed. Charles Stivale. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005.
- Sugrue, Thomas. *The Origins of the Urban Crisis: Race and Inequality in Postwar Detroit*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1998.
- "What is TechTown." TechTown. 15 March 2007. <<http://www.techtownwsu.org/techtown/>>