

8-2019

A New Materialist Rhetoric: Theorizing Movement from a Rhetorical Ethnography of Hiking

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**A NEW MATERIALIST RHETORIC: THEORIZING MOVEMENT FROM
A RHETORICAL ETHNOGRAPHY OF HIKING**

By

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A DISSERTATION

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

(in Communication)

The Graduate School

The University of Maine

August 2019

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**A NEW MATERIALIST RHETORIC: THEORIZING MOVEMENT FROM
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An Abstract of the Dissertation Presented
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In the field of rhetoric, conventional concepts of movement depend on dialectical theories of materiality that posit matter is not rhetorical until acted upon by human sign or symbol systems. New materialist philosophy, which considers the dynamism of matter without situating materiality in dialectical relationship to language, provides a theoretical context for reconceptualizing the rhetoricity of movement. Working from a nondialectical approach to materiality, this dissertation theorizes how movement functions rhetorically, specifically within cultural practices of hiking. For this project, I participated in 15+ hikes at state and national parks in Maine, and generated a multimodal archive of 1,000+ audio, photo, and video recordings, focused on the ways that hikers interact with environments. Across three core chapters that combine ethnographic experience with new materialism, I argue that movement is a rhetorical process of world-making. First, I trace Michel de Certeau's semiological theory of walking, using the new materialist concept of biogram and a rugged hike at Mount Katahdin to analyze affective experiences of embodied movement. Then, drawing from a slippery hike at Acadia National Park and Erin

Manning's philosophy of movement, I intervene in Kenneth Burke's dialectical ontology of nonsymbolic motion and symbolic action, and reconsider what it means for human bodies to live in a world of flux. Finally, in an ethnographic case study with outdoors reporter Aislinn Sarnacki at Borestone Mountain Audubon Sanctuary, I explore the ways in which the movement of hiking enabled and constrained her journalistic practice. Taken together, this research offers new possibilities for understanding movement as integral to rhetoricity, for developing the field's engagement with affect and materiality, and for engaging the archival poetics of rhetorical ethnography.

DEDICATION

*“Even as we mourn those whom we have lost,
they live on in the memories of those who
follow in their footsteps.”*

– Tim Ingold and Jo Lee Vergunst

It is with a heavy heart that I dedicate my dissertation to my grandmothers who, during the course of my graduate studies at the University of Maine, sadly passed away.

For Grandma Connie Picciotto (1915-2016), who would gently hold my hands in hers whenever we were together: Your presence is still strong with me today.

For Nana Ruth Bartholomew (1923-2016), who welcomed me into the Bartholomew family with open arms: Blessings and love, plus a spoonful of sugar (or two).

For Baba Eva Hucko (1925-2018), who always walked with me at our family parties after eating those hearty, Ukrainian meals: Your company I continue to keep, just as much as your sarcasm. Baba, your “Jackass” is now a Doctor.

Grandma, Nana, and Baba—I am forever grateful for your guidance, wisdom, and love. Here’s to following in your footsteps.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I thank my advisor Dr. Nathan Stormer who has guided me through my doctoral program at the University of Maine and mentored me in the field of rhetoric. Through your classes, our weekly meetings, and several conferences, as well as various walks around campus, you have transformed the way I think. Thank you for opening my research and teaching to new paths and possibilities.

Similarly, I thank the members of my advisory committee who I have been honored to study with and learn from throughout my doctoral program. Dr. Bridie McGreavy, thank you for inspiring me with your contagious curiosity and creativity, for teaching me to develop a consistent practice of writing, and for entertaining my dry humor. Dr. Kristin Langellier, thank you for teaching me to focus on the body, which has deeply changed the ways I think, write, and move. Dr. Carla Billitteri, thank you for teaching me to “metabolize” ideas in and through my writing, and Dr. Kirsten Jacobson, thank you for teaching me to question the experience of space and the art of communication.

I also acknowledge and thank the people who have participated in the research for my dissertation, including the campers and thru-hikers at Baxter State Park, the day hikers at Acadia National Park, plus a host of friends and family who have generously shared their time and stories. Special thanks to Aislinn Sarnacki and Derek Runnells for participating in this study and for teaching me about moss, mushrooms, and outdoor recreation in Maine.

Although focused on hiking, my project also involved a participant observation at a public forum that took place in Bangor, Maine. Special thanks to Tyler Kidder from GrowSmart Maine who helped coordinate the details of my visit, and Erik da Silva from

the Bicycle Coalition of Maine who allowed me to videotape his walkability audit of downtown Bangor.

In addition, I thank my peers and faculty at the University of Maine, especially those in the Departments of Communication and Journalism, English, and Philosophy, who have inspired and supported my wandering research interests over the years. Special thanks to my doctoral cohort, Dr. Mark Congdon and Dana Carver-Bialer, who have provided much encouragement since day one of my doctoral program.

I also thank the writing group that met regularly at Le Club in Fogler Library. In your good company, I developed initial drafts of my dissertation. Special thanks to Tyler Quiring, Abby Roche, Tony Sutton, Molly Miller, and Kevin Duffy as well as Jenn Chiarell: May your mugs be ever full and your hearts fuller still.

Additional thanks to Kevin, Tyler, and Tony who graciously reviewed early drafts of chapters two, three, and four of my dissertation. Your feedback has been extremely helpful, your friendship even more so.

I also thank Dr. Bride McGreavy and Dr. Holly Schreiber for providing substantial feedback on early drafts of chapters two and three in graduate seminars.

In my final semester, Dr. Liliana Herakova, Dr. Laura Rickard, Abby Roche, and Kaylie Reese helped me persevere in the thick of dissertation writing and editing. Through our weekly meetings, you have taught me so much about writing, teaching, and life, and inspired me with hope in the crunchiest of crunch times.

Also in my final semester, I was frequently interrupted with jokes, music, and conversation from Clinton Spaulding and Michael Clay. Thank you for teaching me to pause from all the work and for instigating my deadpan delivery.

To my students in Visual Communication and Rhetorical Theory, thank you for joining me on various hikes at the DeMeritt Forest Trail System and for participating in class discussions of campus mobility. Your coursework and curiosity has animated my own research process.

And lastly, a hearty thank-you to Kristen Libby and Cheryl St. Louis, whose friendship and baked goods I have greatly enjoyed this past year in Dunn Hall.

Outside of academia, I am deeply grateful for the friendship of April and Dave, Jodi and Rodney, Gary and Hillary, Steve, Amanda, and Everett, and George. Through our many hikes and art walks, pizzas and game nights, beers and cheese plates, you have provided community and support when Amy and I needed it most; thank you.

I wholeheartedly thank the Picciotto, Bartholomew, and Martin families for their unending love and support. To Paula, Peter, Laura, and Sarah, and John Mackowiak, Jr., thank you for believing in me and inspiring me to do my best. To Tim, Linda, Molly, Amanda, Ryan, Abbie, and Lucas, thank you for your prayers and encouragement. You all remind me what matters most in life, and I love you more than words can say.

Finally, and most importantly, I thank my wife Amy who has walked each step of my doctoral program with me and provided abundant hope, energy, and support along the way. I am forever grateful for the gift of your love.

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION



Figure 1: Ridge. Ellen hikes through fog along Norumbega Mountain.

“We’re at a definite clearing,” Ellen observed as she wandered from the wooded trail to the open ridge.¹ “But it might not be the best term,” she laughed, “because we’re

¹ See Appendix F for Transcript of “Definite Clearing” Interview. Research participants are identified by pseudonyms.

surrounded by fog.” As we hiked Norumbega Mountain Trail in Acadia National Park, a dense fog was rolling inland from the ocean, filling the landscape with a mist so thick it was difficult to see more than a few strides in any direction. Against the dark pines lining the ridge individual particles of cloud gliding through the air became visible. “You can see it move,” I remarked, astounded by the sight of drifting fog. A gust of wind sent the particles into a frenzy, and birds hovering about the trees began to chirp. “I can feel it move,” Ellen replied. After a few steps in silence she added, “It’s interesting with the fog moving. You can see it in the puddles, the reflection of the sky moving or the fog moving, but you can’t really see the sky.” Another cool breeze swept over the mountain. “I guess you can feel it, though.”

In this transitory event from a rhetorical ethnography of hiking, Ellen paces out her relationship with the world, making sense of and coming to terms with the environment through which she walks. Her feelings, thoughts, and statements migrate and change from step to step, transforming a “definite” perception into a speculative “guess,” embodying “the sense of wonder that comes from riding the crest of the world’s continued birth.”² As reflected in Ellen’s walk, footwork is not just a technique of transportation from point a to point b; instead, it “convokes a qualitative difference” along the way.³ More than displacement, ambulation is “a mode of making the world as well as being in it.”⁴ This dissertation explores the concept of hiking as world-making and considers the possibilities and limitations of theorizing movement in relation to rhetoric. From fieldwork in outdoor

² Ingold, *Being Alive*, 74.

³ Massumi, *Parables*, 2.

⁴ Solnit, *Wanderlust*, 29.

recreation, I inquire how hikers like Ellen participate in the world's becoming through embodied forms of movement and mobility.

Movement's relationship to rhetoric is a growing concern in rhetorical theory and criticism, as scholars engage with concepts of materiality in different contexts. In rhetorical criticism for example, there is burgeoning interest in studying how people physically interact with places like national parks, memorial sites, residential areas, and retail establishments.⁵ Specifically in outdoor recreational contexts rhetoricians are analyzing different aspects of interactions between hikers and environments such as perceptions of landscape, identity and community formation, and ideologies of wilderness.⁶ In rhetorical critiques of walking and hiking, "movement" is generally understood as a semiotic activity in which people make meaning from embodied experience, "a sort of material discourse, a physical symbol."⁷ This semiological concept of movement derives from Michel de Certeau's widely cited essay "Walking in the City" in *The Practice of Everyday Life*. In what has now become a touchstone for rhetoricians interested in movement and mobility, de Certeau argues: "The act of walking is to the urban system what the speech act is to language."⁸ Inspired by de Certeau, the materiality of movement is commonly defined by contemporary rhetorical scholars in terms of semiotic or linguistic performance.

De Certeau's concept of ambulation taps into a larger theoretical issue in rhetorical studies about the relationship between movement and language. Tropes like "material

⁵ Blair, Jeppeson, and Pucci Jr., "Public Memorializing;" Dickinson, Ott, and Aoki, "Spaces of Remembering;" Dickinson, "Joe's Rhetoric;" Topinka, "Resisting the Fixity."

⁶ Zagacki and Gallagher, "Rhetoric and Materiality;" Conley and Mullen, "Righting the Commons;" Senda-Cook, "Rugged Practices;" Senda-Cook, "Materializing Tensions;" Schmitt, "Mounting Tensions."

⁷ Senda-Cook, "Rugged Practices," 132.

⁸ De Certeau, "Walking," 97.

discourse” and “physical symbol,” as referenced above, equivocate a dialectical relationship between matter and meaning. This dialectic runs deep in the field of rhetoric, a discipline that has historically studied the persuasive use of language. If de Certeau is a touchstone for rhetorical critiques of walking and hiking, Kenneth Burke is one for rhetorical theories of movement. Notably, Burke situates motion at the center of all things, including human embodiment, language, and society.⁹ From his perspective, reality is composed of material processes, or “nonsymbolic motions,” such as fog drifting, birds hovering, bodies breathing, and planets turning. Nonsymbolic motion itself preconditions language and rhetoric, though Burke argues that motion fundamentally differs in kind from linguistic and rhetorical processes—what he calls “symbolic actions.” Like de Certeau, Burke himself is responding to a larger theoretical context and not initiating so much as redeploying the material-symbolic dialectic, but Burkean theory largely shapes how many rhetoricians often wield this distinction.¹⁰ Part of the task in conceptualizing the materiality of movement, I believe, involves a transcendence of the Burkean tradition that situates motion in dialectical opposition to language.

Analyzing walking and hiking via de Certeau and Burke is a contemporary concern arising from rhetoric’s longstanding history of studying movement. An intellectual survey of rhetoric’s historical engagement with movement would be its own project but it is important to recognize that contemporary studies tap into this broader history. In Ancient

⁹ Burke, “Motion/Action;” Crable, “Symbolizing Motion;” Hawhee, “Language as Sensuous;” Hawhee, *Moving Bodies*; Kraemer, “Between Motion.”

¹⁰ Hawhee, *Moving Bodies*; Mays, Rivers, and Sharp-Hoskins, *Kenneth Burke*; Barnett, *Rhetorical Realism*. On the larger historical and theoretical context of dialectical materialism, see for example Latour, *Modern*; Coole and Frost, “Introducing;” and Rogers, “Overcoming.”

Greece for example, Sophists were mobile, itinerant, nomadic philosophers of rhetoric, and Aristotle had founded what came to be known as the Peripatetic school that interlinked practices of thinking and walking.¹¹ Education in rhetoric also took place next to and in observation of gymnasiums where athletes trained for physical competitions, thereby cultivating “deep relations between rhetoric and athletics,” a relationship Debra Hawhee calls “bodily arts.”¹² Furthermore, as Scot Barnett notes, ancient and classical rhetoricians understood rhetoric in terms of persuasion, which fostered philosophical reflection on how “beings move and are moved by one another.”¹³ Augustine for instance organized the study of rhetoric into three main offices—“either to teach, or to give pleasure, or to move”—and elaborated “movement” as persuasion in a way that serves a more general function of rhetorical activity, possibly encompassing the other two.¹⁴ If according to this ancient tradition being persuaded is being moved, then it is worth considering how moving itself is persuasive, which is not entirely unlike the contemporary focus on walking and hiking.

Rhetorical critiques of ambulation and outdoor recreation can also be connected to the field’s burgeoning engagement with social and historical movements. In an inaugural essay from the 1950s on historical movement rhetoric, Leland Griffin argues the term “*movement* is for us the significant word; and in particular, that part of the connotative baggage of the word which implies change, conveys the quality of dynamism.”¹⁵ Building on Leland’s foundational research, scholars since the mid-to-late twentieth century have analyzed rhetorics of historical movements like Black Power, the civil rights movement,

¹¹ Solint, *Wanderlust* 14-16.

¹² Hawhee, *Bodily Arts*, 6.

¹³ Barnett, *Rhetorical Realism*, 93.

¹⁴ Augustine, *Christian Doctrine*, 87.

¹⁵ Griffin, “Historical Movements,” 185; emphasis in original.

and the women's rights movement, studying how bodies in the streets work to produce social change and bring about social justice.¹⁶ As one of the largest subfields in rhetoric today, social movement research considers a confluence mobility, meaning, and materiality in a variety of contexts, from forming coalitions to advocate for LGBTQ and immigrant rights at the United States-Mexico border to resisting hegemonic forces in everyday spaces through vernacular discourse.¹⁷ Collectively, in different rhetorical sites and practices, these studies emphasize how moving bodies move the nation.

Despite the historical significance the concept of movement plays in the study of rhetoric, the field's conventional emphasis on language, not unlike the dense fog at Norumbega, obscures this rich history from view. As Hawhee has argued, rhetoric's linguistic emphasis creates a "body bind" in which movement, sensation, and embodiment get constrained in contemporary rhetorical analysis.¹⁸ Such is the case with de Certeau and Burke who subtly subjugate the dynamism of movement to semiosis and symbolicity. In the legacy of de Certeau, movement is a signifying system that generates meaning for human bodies through acts of enunciation; and in the Burkean tradition, movement is the precondition for humans to use language and act rhetorically, although motion itself is not "active" until imbued with symbols. De Certeau's "walking rhetoric" and Burke's "nonsymbolic motion" raise a crucial question for contemporary rhetorical studies: Why must movement be defined relative to language in order to access its relationship to rhetoric? This dissertation explores the rhetoricity of movement without presupposing that

¹⁶ Jensen, "Analyzing Social Movement."

¹⁷ See for example Chávez, *Queer Migration Politics*; Hauser, *Vernacular Voices*; Stevens and Malesh, *Active Voices*.

¹⁸ Hawhee, *Moving Bodies*, 6-7; see also Hawhee, *Bodily Arts*; Hawhee, "Sensorium."

movement is a form of language like de Certeau's walking rhetoric or exists in dialectical opposition to language like Burke's motion-action polarity. Greater appreciation for movements like hiking as rhetorically active world-making, I argue, requires intervention into the complicated dialectics of motion and action, of matter and meaning, that characterize so much scholarship in the field of rhetoric today.

To intervene in dialectical understandings of movement within rhetorical studies and hiking contexts, this dissertation employs a theoretical and methodological framework informed by new materialist philosophy and rhetorical ethnography. In this introductory chapter, I highlight how both new materialist thought and ethnographic experience can mutually assist rhetoric in theorizing the world-making potential of movement.

New Materialist Rhetoric

New materialist philosophy can be particularly useful for conceptualizing how movement rhetorically makes worlds because new materialisms embrace the dynamism of matter without privileging the role of language relative to materiality. "New materialism," Laurie Gries writes, "is an ontological project in that it challenges scholars to rethink our underlying beliefs about existence and particularly our attitudes toward and our relationships with matter."¹⁹ New materialist philosophy informed by Alfred North Whitehead, Donna Haraway, and Bruno Latour argues that all things from puffs of cloud to wooded trails and human bodies exist in flux or process.²⁰ "Understood as process," Justine Wells and colleagues write, "the 'material' evokes not so much discrete,

¹⁹ Gries, *Still Life*, 5.

²⁰ Whitehead, *Modes*; Haraway, *Staying*; Latour, *Modern Shaviro*, *Universe*; Coole and Frost, *New Materialisms*; Barnett, *Rhetorical Realism*.

perceivable physical entities—whether trees, cars, rocks, subatomic particles—but rather the energies at work in the ongoing constitutions of such things.”²¹ This way of thinking about reality in terms of energy, process, and flux, Diana Coole and Samantha Frost explain, “conceives of matter itself as lively or exhibiting agency.”²² Matter no longer needs to measure up to language; it already goes and its going is a mode of action. In emphasizing what Karen Barad calls the “performativity” of matter, new materialist philosophy “allows matter its due as an active participant in the world’s becoming.”²³

Rhetoricians are currently taking up new materialist ontologies in a variety of contexts, such as digging clams in mudflats, crafting beer at microbreweries, and tracking images across the internet.²⁴ By exploring these and other material processes relative to rhetoric, scholars are questioning conventional ideas about human life and society. “What is at stake here,” Coole and Frost claim, “is nothing less than a challenge to some of the most basic assumptions that have underpinned the modern world, including its normative sense of the human and its beliefs about human agency.”²⁵ In confronting the dynamism of matter, rhetoricians are grappling with the humanistic conceits that have historically underpinned rhetorical studies, namely the idea that human beings are unique because they use language to rhetorically produce change in the world.²⁶ Critiquing a human-centered approach to ontology, Steven Shaviro argues, “is urgently needed at a time when we face

²¹ Wells, McGreavy, Senda-Cook, and McHendry, “Introduction.”

²² Coole and Frost, “Introducing,” 7.

²³ Barad, “Posthumanist Performativity,” 803.

²⁴ Stormer and McGreavy, “Thinking Ecologically;” Pflugfelder, “Rhetoric’s New Materialism;” Gries, *Still Life*.

²⁵ Coole and Frost, “Introducing,” 4.

²⁶ Barnett, *Rhetorical Realism*; Stormer, “Rhetoric’s Diverse Materiality;” Rickert, *Ambient Rhetoric*; Davis, *Inessential Solidarity*; Rivers, “Deep Ambivalence.”

the prospect of ecological catastrophe and when we are forced to recognize that the fate of humanity is deeply intertwined with the fates of all sorts of other entities.”²⁷ New materialist philosophy provides rhetoricians a means of intervening in anthropocentrism, which poses an ethical question about living within a materially diverse world.

Ethics is an important consideration for rhetoricians studying movement because, as Nathaniel Rivers writes, there is “no way of moving that does not leave marks.”²⁸ The potential of movement to “leave marks” is a critical issue for instance within outdoor recreational contexts, as park systems enact “Leave No Trace” programs aiming to prevent visitors from damaging the nonhuman ecosystems through which they hike.²⁹ With varying degrees of awareness, hikers negotiate the ethical tension of physically changing the environment as they move about the park. Likewise, people traversing other places such as stores, memorials, and countries also encounter the potential to mark (and be marked by) the environments through which they move. Theoretically, if movement as *world-making* is also *world-marking*, then rhetoric must consider its ethicality as well as its performativity. As Diane Davis has argued, the rhetorical ability to affect and respond to other entities is an ethical charge embedded in ontology itself.³⁰ New materialist philosophy can assist in further exploring the ethical possibilities of movement, since new materialisms study the affective relationships between diverse entities including nonhuman

²⁷ Shaviro, *Universe*, 1.

²⁸ Rivers, “Better Footprints,” 186.

²⁹ Conley and Mullen, “Righting the Commons,” 185-186; Schmitt, “Mounting Tensions,” 422-423. See also Senda-Cook, “Materializing Tensions.”

³⁰ Davis, *Inessential Solidarity*. See also Rickert, *Ambient Rhetoric*; Stormer, “Rhetoric’s Diverse Materiality;” Barnett, *Rhetorical Realism*.

and nonlinguistic beings.³¹ According to Barnett, this new materialist emphasis on nonlinguistic and nonhuman modes of rhetorical interaction “expands the range of ethical concern, compelling us [human beings] to find ways to accommodate and care for others that share being with us.”³²

In addition to exploring ethical and ontological issues in rhetoric, Gries asserts “new materialism is also a methodological project,” focused on “developing new modes of analysis.”³³ Gries for example developed a new materialist methodology of iconographic tracking to study circulations of visual rhetoric. Other new materialist scholars are integrating phenomenological methods that examine, as Coole and Frost explain, “the active, self-transformative, practical aspects of corporeality as it participates in relationships of power.”³⁴ Phenomenological approaches to new materialism resonate with recent innovations in rhetorical field methods where scholars are similarly analyzing different forms of material rhetoric.³⁵ Ethnographic studies of rhetoric have long been embraced what Dwight Conquergood called an “*embodied practice*,” “an intensely sensuous way of knowing.”³⁶ As guiding methodological concepts for ethnographic research, sensation and embodiment have received renewed attention from contemporary rhetoricians interested in materiality. For instance, Wells and colleagues claim that a

³¹ Coole and Frost, “Introducing,” Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*; Stormer and McGreavy, “Thinking Ecologically.”

³² Barnett, *Rhetorical Realism*, 15.

³³ Gries, *Still Life*, 5.

³⁴ Coole and Frost, “Introducing,” 19.

³⁵ See for example Middleton, Hess, Senda-Cook, and Endres, *Participatory Critical Rhetoric*, 72-76; Landau, “Feeling Rhetorical Critics;” McHendry, Jr., Middleton, Endres, Senda-Cook, and O’Byrne, “Rhetorical Critic(ism)’s Body;” McGreavy, “Intertidal Poetry;” Conquergood, “Rethinking Ethnography;” LeMesurier, “Somatic Metaphors;” Hess, “Critical-Rhetorical Ethnography.”

³⁶ Conquergood, “Rethinking Ethnography,” 180; emphasis in original.

critical attunement to material rhetoric “can be at least partially cultivated through intimate, sensorial involvement with objects, realms, places, and bodies.”³⁷ Similarly, Candice Rai argues that “sustained inhabitation,” which requires one’s “presence, immersion, engagement, and embodiment” within rhetorical fields of activity broadly defined, can further cultivate one’s awareness of materiality.³⁸ Collaborating with Caroline Gottschalk Druschke, Rai further conceptualizes ethnographic methods in terms of “being there” for rhetorical activities.³⁹ And lastly, as Guy McHendry, Jr., and colleagues reveal, the emplaced and embodied practice of rhetorical fieldwork physically opens researchers “to the inscriptions and lashings encountered when we are sensitive to the immanent flows of desire present in the field.”⁴⁰ Attentive to material (and materializing) intersections of body, place, and sensation, this dissertation integrates new materialism with rhetorical field methods to study movement and mobility within the context of outdoor recreation.

A Rhetorical Ethnography of Hiking

Interest in the study of outdoor recreation is burgeoning across the humanities in areas such as communication, anthropology, geography, and history, among others, as researchers examine different facets of hiking practice, culture, and ideology.⁴¹ Scholarship

³⁷ Wells, McGreavy, Senda-Cook, McHendry, Jr., “Introduction,” 20.

³⁸ Rai, *Democracy’s Lot*, 17.

³⁹ Rai and Druschke, “Being There.”

⁴⁰ McHendry, Jr., Middleton, Endres, Senda-Cook, and O’Byrne, “Rhetorical Critic(ism)’s Body,” 302.

⁴¹ See for example Berg, “‘Conquer Myself;’” Carbaugh and Rudnick, “Which Place;” Cronon, “Trouble with Wilderness;” Drennig, “Taking a Hike;” Edensor, “Walking in the British Countryside;” Ingold, *Being Alive*; Ingold and Vergunst, *Ways of Walking*; Lorimer and Lund, “Performing Facts;” Solnit, *Wanderlust*; Urry, *Mobilities*; Wylie, “Single Day’s Walking.”

in rhetoric, performance, and environmental communication in particular focuses on the role of landscapes in shaping outdoor recreational experiences, addressing what Kenneth Zagacki and Victoria Gallagher call “spaces of attention.”⁴² Samantha Senda-Cook and Casey Schmitt for example utilize rhetorical field methods to analyze how environmental conditions and technologies like maps and trails influence hikers’ embodied experiences of landscape and ideological perceptions of wilderness.⁴³ Drawing largely on the legacy of de Certeau to study cultural acts of hiking, these scholars open rhetorical consideration of “the ways in which individuals are encouraged and discouraged to move through particular spaces.”⁴⁴ Rhetorical analysis of hiker movement and mobility can be further enriched by new materialist philosophy and ethnographic research to explore the world-making capacities of outdoor recreation and how, in the words of Tim Ingold, “landscapes are woven into life, and lives are woven into the landscape.”⁴⁵

Through the figure of hiking, rhetoric has great potential to address the material dynamism of movement and mobility. Contemporary rhetorical critiques of hiking tend to emphasize the ideological significance of outdoor recreational practice. Historically, hiking is a recent form of leisure activity in European and American societies, and has since its development in the eighteenth century assumed ideological importance in terms

⁴² See for example Zagacki and Gallagher, “Rhetoric and Materiality,” 172; Conley and Mullen, “Righting the Commons;” Gray, “Trail Mix;” McGill, “Reading the Valley;” Senda-Cook, “Rugged Practices;” Senda-Cook, “Materializing Tensions;” Schmitt, “Mounting Tensions;” Terry and Vartabedian, “Alone but Together.”

⁴³ Senda-Cook, “Rugged Practices;” Senda-Cook, “Materializing Tensions;” Schmitt, “Mounting Tensions.”

⁴⁴ Schmitt, “Mounting Tensions,” 420.

⁴⁵ Ingold, “Culture on the Ground,” 47.

of “scenic tourism” and the so-called “wilderness experience.”⁴⁶ Rhetoricians like Donovan Conley and Lawrence Mullen have examined the rhetorical tropes of “sublimity” and “nature” that hikers use to construct meaning and ideology about outdoor recreational environments while scholars like Senda-Cook have analyzed how hikers cultivate identity and ideology through rhetorical practices of walking, such as staying on the trail or veering off and wearing footwear or going barefoot.⁴⁷ Although rhetoricians are well prepared to analyze what hikers ideologically signify or symbolize of their embodied experiences, they are less equipped to analyze what Tim Edensor calls “a kaleidoscope of intermingling thoughts, experiences and sensations” produced by the “continually shifting” dynamics of hiking.⁴⁸ That hikers embody movement to experience specific environments invites closer consideration of the materiality of their mobile encounters as well as the sense of exposure entailed in their openness to being physically affected by those environments. Thus, unlike a traditional ethnography, the focus of this dissertation is not a refinement on the cultural analysis of hiking or its ideological significance relative to ideas of nature or outdoor recreation, although those concerns are not irrelevant to the present study. Instead, my rhetorical fieldwork emphasizes the material, affective, “continually shifting” qualities and dynamics of outdoor recreational practice, such as the introductory photo and narrative about Ellen’s contingent experience of the fog at Norumbega.

Moreover, when framed explicitly in terms of scenic tourism or wilderness experience, the ideological values attributed to the activity of hiking can obscure the

⁴⁶ Solnit, *Wanderlust*, 81-103; Urry, *Mobilities*, 77-87; Cronon, “Trouble with Wilderness;” Drennig, “Taking a Hike.”

⁴⁷ Conley and Mullen, “Righting the Commons;” Senda-Cook, “Rugged Practices.”

⁴⁸ Edensor, “Walking through Ruins,” 136.

material complexity of embodied movement itself. In particular, dialectical frameworks of wilderness and society, nature and culture, and human and nonhuman potentially overdetermine the embodied act of hiking in relation to ideology, which can impede as much as it empowers rhetorical critique. When each move gets interpreted through dialectical frames of nature or culture, human or environment, opportunities for analyzing the contingencies, emergences, and relationships of the movement itself are lost. Jonathan Gray's performance of "Trail Mix" argues for "muddying" the dialectical categories of nature and culture that conventionally permeate critical scholarship about outdoor recreation. The metaphor of "muddying" itself invokes a more affective, sensuous, experiential notion of hiking as world-making that this dissertation does not take for granted. How to conceptualize the "muddiness" of hiking in a way that does not reinforce the dialectical thought it also critiques is a challenge appropriate for a new materialist rhetoric that embraces nondialectical relationships.⁴⁹

Locally in Maine, outdoor recreation is a crucial component of the state's identity, culture, and economy, and in 2017 Ellen and I were two of a record-breaking 3.5 million visitors to Acadia National Park. As Senda-Cook describes, many people who visit national parks like Acadia or Zion—let alone state and local parks—do not necessarily call what they do there "hiking," nor do they identify themselves as "hikers."⁵⁰ "Regardless of definitions," she explains, "walking is one of the most common outdoor recreation activities because it is the foundation for other activities such as backpacking, skiing, and

⁴⁹ Rickert, *Ambient Rhetoric*; Stormer and McGreavy, "Thinking Ecologically;" Cheah, "Nondialectical Materialism;" McGreavy, Wells, Senda-Cook, and McHendry, Jr., *Tracing Rhetoric*.

⁵⁰ Senda-Cook, "Rugged Practices," 138.

snow-shoeing.”⁵¹ Similarly, as John Urry argues, ambulation is “a component of almost all other modes of movement,” since “in a way all movement involves intermittent walking.”⁵² This is all the more reason not to begin with the cultural identification of hiking as a starting point and instead focus directly on the many movements and mobilities enacted in outdoor recreational practices of hiking, which might otherwise fade to the background of both hiker experience and rhetorical critique.

Approved by the Institutional Review Board, my rhetorical ethnography of hiking entailed a multifaceted approach to studying movement and mobility.⁵³ My fieldwork included three main components: (a) a general ethnography in which I interviewed, walked, and hiked with friends and colleagues; (b) a focused ethnography in which I interviewed and hiked with prominent author and outdoors reporter Aislinn Sarnacki; and (c) a participant observation at a public forum about walkability issues in Maine. These components were not sequential stages but overlapping elements that mutually informed one another and the overall the project. Methodologically, this multifaceted approach was designed specifically to enable comparisons and contrasts of different mobility systems and mobile experiences in different settings, functioning as a meta-mobile method that allowed for the project itself to move and change over time.

From 2017 to 2018 I participated in 15+ hikes at various trail and park systems including for example Acadia National Park, Baxter State Park, and Lily Bay State Park,

⁵¹ Senda-Cook, “Rugged Practices,” 138.

⁵² Urry, *Mobilities*, 63.

⁵³ See Appendix A for IRB Approval; Appendix B for Informed Consent for Hiking Project; Appendix C for Informed Consent for Journalism Project; Appendix D for Interview Protocol for Journalism Project; and Appendix E for Informed Consent for Walkability Project.

in Maine, as well as the White Mountain National Forest in New Hampshire. From this fieldwork, I generated a multimodal research archive of 1,000+ audio, photo, and video recordings that documented different aspects of outdoor recreational experience. Each chapter of the dissertation works with a particular hike and incorporates a selection of archival materials. Chapters one, three, and five examine a day-hike with Ellen at Norumbega Mountain Trail at Acadia; chapter two joins a group of thru-hikers and friends at Mount Katahdin in Baxter; and chapter four is a case study with Aislinn Sarnacki at Borestone Mountain Audubon Sanctuary. I chose to work the hikes at Norumbega and Katahdin into the dissertation because those hikes were marked by extreme weather conditions, which itself shaped how I understood and analyzed the physical ability of bodies to move about environments. I also chose to include the hike with Aislinn in order to explore how bodily movement impacts the potential for documentary practice and knowledge production, in relation to both ethnography and journalism.

My approach to ethnographic and documentary practice, which was deeply informed by innovations in rhetorical field methods and sensory ethnography, quite literally emphasized the muddiness and shifting dynamics of hiking.⁵⁴ As I discuss more in the fifth and final chapter of the dissertation, I developed and iterated ethnographic, documentary, and archival practices to think with and about walking and hiking through the course of doing this project. Methodologically, the aim was not to represent experiences

⁵⁴ Middleton, Hess, Senda-Cook, and Endres, *Participatory Critical Rhetoric*, 72-76; Landau, “Feeling Rhetorical Critics;” McHendry, Jr., Middleton, Endres, Senda-Cook, and O’Byrne, “Rhetorical Critic(ism)’s Body;” McGreavy, “Intertidal Poetry;” LeMesurier, “Somatic Metaphors;” Rai, *Democracy’s Lot*; Pink, *Doing Sensory Ethnography*.

of movement and mobility but to create with them and through them.⁵⁵ As mentioned above, the rhetorical fieldwork for this project is not purposed to produce a traditional ethnography in the sense of studying a particular people or a particular place, which would be a different project altogether, but to think about the materiality of movement enacted in the context of hiking. In other words, this dissertation reverses the conventional emphasis of fieldwork, which typically uses movement to study culture, to instead use a cultural form to study movement. The result is a conceptual dissertation that, as illustrated by this chapter's photo and vignette about Ellen's hike at Acadia, lets fieldwork lead in the task of theorizing the rhetoricity of movement.

Chapter Summaries

By combining fieldwork, theory, and philosophy, this project addresses a foundational question in rhetoric about what it means to be a critic. Rhetoricians, especially rhetorical ethnographers, need to move as research processes often demand different forms of travel, mobility, and transportation, intermittent phases of passage and stoppage, as well as various speeds, rhythms, punctuations, and trajectories. Instead of backgrounding these and other movements in their analyses, a new materialist rhetoric would bring them to the fore. Yet how to do so is a challenge, given rhetoric's dialectical trappings which conventionally oppose matter from meaning, motion from action. In order to problematize the many moves of rhetorical fieldwork, one must first contend with the problem of dialectics itself. Chapters two and three critically engage the dialectical thought of de Certeau's walking rhetoric and Burke's nonsymbolic motion. By articulating a

⁵⁵ Barad, "Posthumanist Performativity."

nondialectical concept of movement, these chapters set the stage for a new materialist analysis of the rhetoricity of hiking, which chapter four explores in terms of the footwork of fieldwork.

In chapter two, entitled “Mobilizing Tensions: Hiking as Biogrammatic Activity,” I review de Certeau’s legacy in rhetorical criticism, focused on the concept of “tension.” Tension is a vernacular expression of struggle or conflict, which scholars in environmental communication, performance, and rhetoric commonly use to describe material conditions of outdoor recreational practice. Inspired by de Certeau’s semiological understanding of walking, scholars use the concept of tension to analyze the meanings generated by embodied acts of hiking, often framed in dialectical power relationships like nature-culture or wilderness-society. Using the new materialist concept of “biogram,” as developed by Brian Massumi and Erin Manning, I rethink tension in terms of the ecological forces that enable and constrain one’s ongoing experience of movement.⁵⁶ A biogrammatic approach to hiking, I argue, calls attention to the relational intensities of embodied movement which are not only or necessarily expressed in dialectical form. To articulate this new materialist concept of biogram, I draw upon ethnographic experiences at Mount Katahdin in Baxter State Park in Maine, intermixing videos and stories from the hike to creatively perform biograms of tension throughout the chapter itself.

Named “Being in Motion: From Dialectical to Biogrammatic Materialisms,” chapter three explores a deeper philosophical issue presupposed by chapter two’s engagement with dialectical and biogrammatic concepts of movement. The chapter examines Burke’s dialectic of nonsymbolic motion and symbolic action, which I argue

⁵⁶ Massumi, *Parables*; Manning, *Relationescapes*.

operates behind the scenes of de Certeau's walking rhetoric, shaping the way many rhetoricians today understand movement and mobility relative to language. Burke makes for a complicated case study of dialectical materialism because, as Hawhee and others have shown, over the course of his career Burke works and reworks the interrelationship of movement, body, and language in different ways. This chapter traces the dialectical grammar with which Burke strategically, albeit ambiguously, conceptualizes nonsymbolic motion as the other of symbolic action and therefore rhetoric. Expelled from rhetoric, Burke's motion can only become rhetorically active if touched by human will or symbol. The biogram intervenes in the Burkean tradition to reconceptualize the rhetorical dynamism of matter. In this chapter, I draw upon Manning's concept of preacceleration, which she uses to describe the incipency of movement, to rethink the rhetoricity of motion. This theoretical and ontological shift from Burke to Manning, from the dialectical to the biogrammatic, has implications for how rhetoricians engage with movement and mobility in the context of ethics. To problematize issues of ethics, ontology, and rhetoric from the perspective of motion, I discuss an ethnographic event in which Ellen spontaneously slipped on Norumbega Mountain Trail.

If chapters two and three read from the head down, chapter four reads from the feet up, as I put the new materialist concepts of biogram and preacceleration to use in a case study of hiking with Aislinn Sarnacki, a prominent outdoors reporter in Maine. Called "Footwork as Fieldwork: Documenting Hiking at Borestone Mountain," the chapter analyzes the rhetorical nexus of how, during the same hike, Aislinn practiced journalism and I practiced ethnography. Special attention in the analysis is given to the different ways of moving (or not moving) that affected the potential of our respective documentary

practices as well as the experiential possibilities of the hike itself. In addition to biogram and preacceleration, three other new materialist concepts guide this rhetorical analysis, including passage, which names the continuity of movement; event, which refers to the production of novelty within passage; and interval, which designates the liminal experiences between events. Localized in Aislinn's journalistic practice, these concepts consider different dynamics of footwork in particular and movement in general relative to documentary work and the production of knowledge.

The fifth and final chapter, "Lures for Thought: Archival Affects, Mobility Systems, and Aesthetic Rhetoric," explores possible implications and extensions of the research on movement articulated in this dissertation. "Lures" serve as a guiding metaphor throughout the dissertation, but especially in this chapter for describing the sense in which movements are cultivated into being. First, reflecting on my rhetorical-ethnographic research, I inquire how the creation and use of an extensive multimodal research archive is itself a form of world-making. Second, thinking about outdoor recreational practice and culture, I explore what it might look like for rhetorical critics to implement the concepts of biogram and preacceleration in future studies of mobility systems. And finally, focusing on the idea that movement makes and marks the world, I consider the possibilities of an aesthetic rhetoric inflected by new materialist theory.

CHAPTER 2
MOBILIZING TENSIONS:
HIKING AS BIOGRAMMATIC ACTIVITY

Video 1: Baxter Peak. Embodied video of the author summiting Mount Katahdin.

Arriving at the summit, Brittany and Melissa culminated their six-month thru-hike, followed closely by their friends Travis and Catherine who joined the duo for their final mountain.⁵⁷ Just ahead of the group sat a large a wooden sign that read: “KATAHDIN. Baxter Peak. Elevation 5,267 Feet. Northern Terminus of the Appalachian Trail.” One hiker had just mounted the sign and gave a thumbs-up while another snapped a photo. “There is cultural value in the ability to see,” I wrote in my field notes, “to see from above, to see the earth below, the landscape and sky stretched out toward the distant horizon.” Ann and I lagged a few strides behind the group, exhausted from the rigorous climb and astonished by the dramatic view of the surrounding landscape. Moments ago, the mountain had been enveloped by a thick cloud that made it near impossible to see more than 10 yards in any direction. But as our group ascended to the summit, the cloud lifted off the terrain and the atmosphere became intensely sunny and clear. Taking in the scenery, I accidentally stubbed my boot on a rock, before quickly regaining balance and joining the group by an overlook.

In the field of rhetoric, scholars are analyzing how people make sense of places like Mount Katahdin, developing new concepts and methods to study the ways hikers interact

⁵⁷ Research participants are identified by pseudonyms.

with outdoor recreational environments.⁵⁸ Concerned with the meanings that people make of landscapes, rhetorical critics often discuss embodied acts of hiking in connection to ideologies of nature and culture—a connection Donovan Conley and Lawrence Mullen call the “nexus of public narrative and individual nerve endings.”⁵⁹ This nexus is especially relevant at Baxter State Park which in the words of Percival Baxter aims to “forever be kept and remain in the natural wild state,” even as the park hosts 70,000 visitors and 15,000 thru-hikers every year.⁶⁰ Rhetorical critics such as Samantha Senda-Cook and Casey Schmitt examine the intersection of wilderness ideology, park management, and hiker experience at places like Baxter using the concept of “tension.”⁶¹ Tension typically refers to dialectical problems or conflicts—what Schmitt calls “dual modes of engagement that are simultaneously at play”—that hikers negotiate in park systems, such as dialectics of trail safety and risk, environmental preservation and hiker accessibility, or official and unofficial pathways.⁶² The concept of tension affords a material understanding of outdoor recreational practice but could be further developed to address the affective dimensions of hiking experience, specifically the intensities of embodied movement like the feeling of stumbling onto dramatic views at Baxter Peak, walking through thick clouds in the Tableland, or clambering up rugged boulders of Hunt Trail.⁶³

⁵⁸ Conley and Mullen, “Righting the Commons;” Zagacki and Gallagher, “Rhetoric and Materiality;” Senda-Cook, “Rugged Practices;” Senda-Cook, “Materializing Tensions;” Schmitt, “Mounting Tensions.

⁵⁹ Conley and Mullen, “Righting the Commons,” 194.

⁶⁰ Baxter State Park, “History;” Sarnacki, “Peak Pressure;” Miller, “Baxter State Park.”

⁶¹ Senda-Cook, “Materializing Tensions;” Schmitt, “Mounting Tensions.”

⁶² Schmitt, “Mounting Tensions” 424.

⁶³ Manning, *Relationescapes*, 125-127.

In studying intensive experiences of hiking, this project is part of a broader effort in rhetorical studies to analyze affect, movement, and materiality in relation to rhetoric.⁶⁴ Debra Hawhee contends that historically rhetorical scholarship “has a tendency to freeze bodies, to analyze them for their symbolic properties, thereby evacuating and ignoring their capacity to sense and to move.”⁶⁵ In denying bodies movement and sensation, rhetorical analysis stops bodies in their tracks, turning them into static figures that rhetoricians can read and interpret in relation to symbols or meaning. This conventional understanding of bodies as symbolic reflects an ancient paradox of movement articulated by the philosopher Zeno in which an arrow shot by an archer fails to overcome the infinite points along its trajectory and becomes motionless midair. What prevents the arrow from hitting its mark, as Brian Massumi argues, is actually Zeno’s way of thinking about movement in relation to reality.⁶⁶ Zeno divides the world into separate points through which the arrow must pass before continuing its travels, effectively stopping the arrow—or in this case the body—from moving through space and time. If bodies of hikers are frozen in position like Zeno’s arrow, then rhetoricians are not analyzing movements so much as they are analyzing stoppages. Movement becomes a background to fixity and meaning, a pattern drawn retrospectively between points but the dynamism of the pattern itself—its intensity—is lost.

⁶⁴ See for example Hawhee, *Moving Bodies*; Davis, *Inessential Solidarity*; Rickert, *Ambient Rhetoric*; Gries, *Still Life*; McGreavy, Wells, McHendry, Jr., and Senda-Cook, *Tracing Rhetoric*.

⁶⁵ Hawhee, *Moving Bodies*, 7.

⁶⁶ Massumi, *Parables*, 6.

Among many in rhetorical and cultural studies, Hawhee and Massumi are recuperating the materiality of movement.⁶⁷ Hawhee for instance engages Kenneth Burke's theory of human embodiment, which I discuss more in the next chapter, to conceptualize "the body as a vital, connective, mobile, and transformational force, a force that exceeds—even as it bends and bends with—discourse."⁶⁸ For Hawhee, bodies are not stuck like Zeno's arrow but alive with motion, teeming with energy and pulsing with rhythm. Massumi works from process philosophies of Alfred North Whitehead, Gilles Deleuze, and Félix Guattari, who similarly envision the world in terms of energy, rhythm, and movement.⁶⁹ Like Hawhee and Burke, Massumi argues the materiality of movement "bumps 'being' straight into becoming," making the "phase-shift of the body," its process and potential, available for rhetorical analysis.⁷⁰ In contrast to the fixity of Zeno's reality, these scholars present a more dynamic world in which bodies are continually moving and being moved, affecting and being affected, changing and being changed. "When we are no longer still," Erin Manning writes, also informed by Whitehead and Deleuze, "the world lives differently."⁷¹

The shift from fixity to dynamism requires a shift in thinking about the rhetorical concept of "tension." Tension derives from the Latin *tendere*, a medical term for the physical condition of being stretched or strained. Given notions of stretching and straining, it is no surprise that rhetoricians utilize "tension" to analyze embodied movement, as the

⁶⁷ See for example Manning, *Relationescapes*; Gries, *Still Life*; Ingold, *Being Alive*; Stormer, "Rhetoric's Diverse Materiality;" Coole and Frost, *New Materialisms*.

⁶⁸ Hawhee, *Moving Bodies*, 7.

⁶⁹ Whitehead, *Modes*; Shaviro, *Universe*.

⁷⁰ Massumi, *Parables*, 5.

⁷¹ Manning, *Relationescapes*, 15.

term evokes a sense of conflict or struggle. Kenneth Zagacki and Victoria Gallagher argue the material relationship between human bodies and natural landscapes is itself one of “tension.”⁷² In outdoor recreational contexts, Senda-Cook and Schmitt claim that as hikers perceive and navigate trail systems they negotiate tensions of safety-risk, access-preservation, strategy-tactic, and nature-culture.⁷³ These tensions consist of two forces that dialectically oppose each other, pushing and pulling against bodies stuck in states of struggle. The concept of tension, I argue, could rethink struggle in more ecological or ambient ways.⁷⁴ This conceptual shift would not dissolve or remove tension; instead, it would recast tension in relation to ontology as a quality of being in motion, akin to the dynamic struggle—the stretching and straining—of climbing Mount Katahdin.

To explore the rhetorical activity of hiking in terms of dynamic tension, I draw from rhetorical fieldwork at Baxter State Park in August 2017. As Senda-Cook and Schmitt argue, rhetorical field methods are amenable for studying tensions because they allow critics to analyze material aspects of outdoor recreational experience.⁷⁵ Further, according to Michael Middleton and colleagues, rhetorical field methods attend to “processual forms of rhetorical action,” which makes “in-the-moment experiences,” as well as the “spaces in between” them, available for rhetorical analysis.⁷⁶ Focused on in-the-moment and between-the-moment experiences of hiking Mount Katahdin, I study tensions in the “phase-shifts of bodies,” examining the materiality and the materialization of movement

⁷² Zagacki and Gallagher, “Rhetoric and Materiality,” 176, 186.

⁷³ Senda-Cook, “Materializing Tensions;” Schmitt, “Mounting Tensions.”

⁷⁴ Stormer and McGreavy, “Thinking Ecologically;” Rickert, *Ambient Rhetoric*.

⁷⁵ Senda-Cook, “Materializing Tensions,” 360-361; Schmitt, “Mounting Tensions,” 419, 428-429.

⁷⁶ Middleton, Senda-Cook, and Endres, “Articulating,” 387; Senda-Cook, Middleton, and Endres, “Interrogating,” 38.

and sensation.⁷⁷ To express this dynamism in my analysis, I adapt what Jamie Landau calls “feeling rhetoric,” a form of creative writing that “attend[s] to affective bodily sensations” to “bring forth the body of the critic as legitimate evidence.”⁷⁸ Specifically, the “feeling rhetoric” of this chapter combines ethnographic narratives and videos of hiking Katahdin to communicate a sense of embodiment and being in motion. I begin at Baxter Peak, then backtrack to Hunt Trail and the Tableland to show what Manning dubs “intensive passages” of hiking.⁷⁹ The aim of my multimodal feeling rhetoric is not to represent movement but to perform tension.

In backtracking from the summit to analyze rhetorical tensions of hiking, I retrace some of the steps taken by rhetoricians to conceptualize hiking as a rhetorical practice. One of the most influential voices in rhetorical critiques of hiking and walking is Michel de Certeau. His classic chapter from *The Practice of Everyday Life*, “Walking in the City,” in particular has significantly shaped how critics conceive of movement and mobility in relation to tension.⁸⁰ To rethink tension ontologically as becoming, one must contend with de Certeau’s legacy of studying ambulation in terms of speech and language. I argue that de Certeau’s linguistic concept of walking restricts the dynamism of movement in ways similar to Zeno’s immobilizing logic. To engage a more dynamic concept of tension, I shift from de Certeau to Manning and Massumi. Their concept of “biogram” as intensive experience of movement, I argue, offers an ecological approach to tension that emphasizes

⁷⁷ Massumi, *Parables*, 5.

⁷⁸ Landau, “Feeling Rhetorical Critics,” 81. See also Pink, *Doing Sensory Ethnography*.

⁷⁹ Manning, *Relationescapes*, 13, 126.

⁸⁰ De Certeau, “Walking,” 91-110.

the affective qualities of lived experience.⁸¹ Finally, I discuss broader implications of mobilizing tension and studying rhetoric biagrammatically.

Tension as Dialectical Conflict

Video 2: Hunt Trail. Embodied video of the author climbing Hunt Trail.

About three miles from Baxter Peak, Hunt Trail rises over 1,000 feet in less than a mile, requiring that hikers climb hand over foot assisted by iron rungs bolted into the mountain. Brittany, Melissa, and Travis sped up the cliff while Catherine, Ann, and I scaled at a much slower pace, taking our time with the difficult and dangerous conditions. Approaching the wall of granite in front of me, I spotted a white blaze and clasped onto part of the boulder with my hand. This boulder like the others around it was covered in bright green lichen but I could not discern its texture. My hands were numbed by the frigid gusts of wind whipping around the mountain at this elevation. I searched for another place to take hold of the rock, and then in a quick series of movements I leaned forward, planted one foot on a ledge, and kicked off the ground. My arms and legs swung into motion again, immediately repeating the same maneuvers, catapulting my body up another step before I had even finished this one. I was standing upright again, panting heavily from clambering up the mountainous trail. Unlike Baxter Peak this was no place to stop and enjoy the view. There was a constant pull, or tension, to continue the climb.

For many who study the rhetoric of ambulation, appreciating how affective experiences like climbing Hunt Trail and stumbling onto Baxter Peak function as

⁸¹ Massumi, *Parables*, 177-207; Manning, *Relationescapes*, 119-142.

“tensions” involves a return to Michel de Certeau’s “walking rhetoric.”⁸² Taking a semiological perspective of movement de Certeau argues, “The act of walking is to the urban system what the speech act is to language.”⁸³ De Certeau’s understanding of walking as speech has directly informed how rhetorical critics conceptualize walking in particular and movement in general. Examining the legacy of de Certeau’s walking rhetoric, I trace the development of tension as semiological concept of movement, one steeped in dialectical power relationships of nature and culture, strategy and tactic, materiality and symbolicity. This semiological, dialectical concept of tension, I argue, freezes the dynamic materiality of movement itself.

This static concept of tension can be traced back, in part, to a skyscraper in Manhattan. In *The Practice of Everyday Life*, de Certeau argues that one’s view atop the World Trade Center of pedestrians walking the streets below could not be more different than one’s lived experience of navigating the city on foot.⁸⁴ For De Certeau, walking is one of many mundane activities in which human bodies interact with urban environments. The practice of city walking is a privileged form of mobility manifested in daily movements like pacing along uneven sidewalks, weaving around cars, and navigating between buildings. Drawing on speech act theory, de Certeau claims walking is “a space of enunciation” in which the twists and turns of ambulation “spatializes” the city.⁸⁵ Spatialization is a creative practice, embodied in selective and stylized performances of footwork. “As an analytical tool,” Jessie Stewart and Greg Dickinson explain, “enunciation

⁸² De Certeau, “Walking,” 100.

⁸³ De Certeau, “Walking,” 97.

⁸⁴ De Certeau, “Walking,” 91-93.

⁸⁵ De Certeau, “Walking,” 98, 97.

allows de Certeau to posit a strong relationship between the users and their spaces” such that “the spaces become a language structure or a grammar and the use of the space becomes an enunciation—a ‘saying’—of the space.”⁸⁶ As Rebecca Solnit puts it: “A city is a language, a repository of possibilities, and walking is the act of speaking that language, of selecting from those possibilities.”⁸⁷ What de Certeau offers rhetorical criticism is thus a semiological concept of footwork, a practice of walking interpreted through the metaphor of speaking.

De Certeau’s linguistic approach to movement has an enduring legacy in rhetorical, cultural, and environmental studies. “For those in rhetoric,” John Ackerman argues, “*The Practice of Everyday Life*, and this chapter [“Walking in the City”] are probably the most read, taught, and adapted statements on the micropolitics of daily living.”⁸⁸ De Certeau’s concept of walking as enunciation, Ackerman suggests, provides rhetoricians a convenient way to critique intersections of body, space, and subjectivity. For example, Stewart and Dickinson deploy de Certeau’s “grammar of movement” to analyze the ways that shoppers enact agency in navigating the consumer spaces of malls.⁸⁹ At shopping centers pedestrians have the potential to “make their own suburban identities,” they argue, “through the tropes and turns of a ‘rhetoric of walking.’”⁹⁰ That footwork produces identity suggests that movement makes meaning and thereby participates in ideological as well as spatial structures. Robert Topinka makes a similar case in analyzing the embodied twists and turns of walkers in suburban neighborhoods. On the streets and sidewalks of residential areas

⁸⁶ Stewart and Dickinson, “Enunciating Locality,” 286.

⁸⁷ Solnit, *Wanderlust*, 213.

⁸⁸ Ackerman, “Walking,” 122.

⁸⁹ Stewart and Dickinson, “Enunciating Locality,” 286.

⁹⁰ Stewart and Dickinson, “Enunciating Locality,” 287.

“walking becomes a subtle manipulation of systems of order,” a potential force of resistance in which pedestrians “find agency by using space in unpredictable ways.”⁹¹ Embodying power through ambulation, walkers negotiate the spatial and ideological structures in which they live, and their footwork becomes symbolic of self and society.

Although de Certeau’s “primary focus is on the city,” Donovan Conley and Lawrence Mullen speculate “his urban-centrism can easily be extended to include the spaces that circumscribe the city.”⁹² By extending “[de Certeau’s] homology between speaking and walking to include also the expressive elements of *hiking*,” Conley and Mullen open consideration of how human bodies enunciate space in outdoor recreational environments.⁹³ As de Certeau’s walking rhetoric migrates from city streets, shopping centers, and suburban neighborhoods to park systems so does his semiological concept of movement. For example, working from de Certeau and Stewart and Dickinson, Samantha Senda-Cook analyzes how rhetorical practices of hiking produce symbols of identity and culture. She argues that hiking is “a form of speech act that develops into ‘a grammar of movement’” in which “mundane practices of moving throughout a place become meaningful symbols” that “can communicate identity and knowledge . . . as well as group boundaries and expectations.”⁹⁴ Similarly informed by de Certeau’s legacy, Casey Schmitt claims that “when movement is read as enunciation, it is a rhetorical act, an act of meaning-making, interpretation, and perpetuation of frames.”⁹⁵ In relocating de Certeau’s walking rhetoric from city streets to outdoor recreational environments, rhetoricians approach

⁹¹ Topinka, “Resisting the Fixity,” 80, 66.

⁹² Conley and Mullen, “Righting the Commons,” 198.

⁹³ Conley and Mullen, “Righting the Commons,” 198, emphasis in original.

⁹⁴ Senda-Cook, “Rugged Practices,” 137.

⁹⁵ Schmitt, “Mounting Tensions,” 427.

embodied acts of hiking through the lens of language, privileging symbolic aspects of meaning-making, identity, and culture in relation to the dynamic qualities of movement itself.

The rhetorical concept of “tension” emerges within this broader theoretical context of studying movement as the semiological enunciation of space. Here tensions are conceptualized as “terministic screens” or “interpretive frames” that shape how people make meaning of places like park systems, shopping centers, or neighborhoods.⁹⁶ As a “grammar of movement,” tension embeds walkers in dialectical positions of power that are oppositional and negotiated.⁹⁷ “To speak of a tension,” Schmitt writes, “is not to speak of an either-or scenario but rather to acknowledge the dual modes of engagement that are simultaneously at play.”⁹⁸ Given that walking is understood in the legacy of de Certeau as a linguistic act, rhetoricians use “tension” to analyze the dialectical production of meaning within fixed points—not following arcs, loops, or trajectories but isolating points of tension to stabilize the meaning-making of a place where movement is a kind of text. Tensions in outdoor recreational contexts affect how hikers make sense of complex intersections of body, space, and movement. Senda-Cook identifies dialectical tensions of access-preservation and safety-risk, and Schmitt elucidates a strategy-tactic tension and previews a host of other tensions, including nature-culture, place-nonplace, and listening-viewing.⁹⁹ Beyond this sampling of dialectical tensions, other prevalent tensions include sublimity-

⁹⁶ Senda-Cook, “Materializing Tensions,” 358; Schmitt, “Mounting Tensions,” 418-419.

⁹⁷ Stewart and Dickinson, “Enunciating Locality,” 286.

⁹⁸ Schmitt, “Mounting Tensions” 424.

⁹⁹ Schmitt, “Mounting Tensions,” 429.

banality, authenticity-degradation, human-nonhuman or human-nature, and materiality-symbolicity.¹⁰⁰

Dialectical tensions can benefit rhetorical critiques of space, power, and subjectivity. In outdoor recreational contexts for example, dialectical tensions help critics confront biopolitical intersections of hiker experience, park management, and wilderness ideology. For instance, Senda-Cook claims that maps and trails at Zion National Park “materialize tensions” between hiker accessibility and wildlife preservation as well as trail safety and risk. These dialectical tensions articulate biopolitical concerns about the relationship between park systems and individual hikers. “Guiding visitors with trails is effective for moving mass amounts of people in and through this park,” Senda-Cook writes, “which is what is needed during the busiest times of the year.”¹⁰¹ By efficiently governing the flow of bodies across trail systems in a way that also preserves surrounding wildlife, parks shape how hikers make meaning from landscapes. Building on Senda-Cook’s analysis, Schmitt claims that “tensions mount” as hikers navigate between official trails curated by park systems and unofficial paths worn into the ground over time by hiking communities.¹⁰² Extending de Certeau’s research on city walking, Schmitt identifies an underlying tension in outdoor recreational practice between “strategies” of control and “tactics” of resistance. Attentive to movement and perception, tensions of access-preservation, safety-risk, and strategy-tactic emphasize managerial conflicts between park

¹⁰⁰ Conley and Mullen, “Righting the Commons,” 181-183; Senda-Cook, “Rugged Practices,” 142; Zagacki and Gallagher, “Rhetoric and Materiality,” 186-188; Salvador, and Clarke, “Weyekin Principle,” 245.

¹⁰¹ Senda-Cook, “Materializing Tensions,” 368.

¹⁰² Schmitt, “Mounting Tensions,” 421-422.

systems and individual hikers that manifest in dialectically negotiated meanings about landscape.

This biopolitical process of negotiation was also evident in our group hike at Mount Katahdin. As documented in the video above, Baxter State Park lined its trail system with white blazes painted onto rocks. These blazes informed hikers about the routes they could follow to efficiently ascend the mountain, which materialized tensions between hiker accessibility and environmental preservation. In constituting Hunt Trail, such blazes communicated to hikers about where Baxter permitted and prohibited them from hiking. By guiding hikers in a specific direction up Hunt Trail, the blazes implicitly marked off other parts of the cliff as inaccessible to hikers, which could help to preserve the diverse wildlife at Baxter endangered by outdoor recreation. At the same time, these markings also enforced hiker safety during the dangerous climb. In making decisions about their movements, like how closely to follow the blazes or where to place their feet and hands on the boulders to help propel their body up the mountain, hikers enacted a degree of agency in their outdoor recreational practice, as Schmitt would say, relative to the park's prescription for ascending Katahdin. Strategy-tactic, safety-risk, and access-preservation tensions thereby worked within embodied experiences of hiking, shaping possible meanings hikers could and could not make about environments as they moved about the trail system.

Although a dominant “grammar of movement” in critiques of hiking and walking, dialectical tension can also constrain how rhetoricians engage with the dynamism of movement. For instance, in conceptualizing tension as “dual modes of engagement,” rhetoricians risk compounding myriad interactive forces into binary structures. Where is

the dialectic in leaning into a climb, kicking off the ground, launching into motion? Mobility is certainly tense, but not necessarily in dialectical or binary terms of nature and culture, freedom and control, or even body and environment. Mobilizing tensions function more like dynamic ecologies, or what Nathan Stormer calls “a congeries of moves and movements of mutually affecting, constituting entities, responses that course back and forth.”¹⁰³ An ecological approach to movement considers how fierce winds, rubberized boots, and lichen-covered boulders as well as symbols of identity and landscape rhetorically participate in the embodiment of hiking. The challenge for rhetoric is to embrace the ecological conditions of tension without freezing the body or the world from ongoing motions. This requires, I believe, transcending de Certeau’s semiological concept of movement as punctuated practice in favor of ecological or ambient concepts of movement that better engage with tensions as continuous, relational processes of moving and being moved. From this ecological approach to movement, the ongoing arcs, loops, and trajectories of movement themselves become important—not because they produce meaning in relation to dialectical oppositions but because they happen. They *matter*.

By valuing the meanings of rhetorical practice over its mobile, affective relations, rhetoric in the legacy of de Certeau articulates a static concept of movement. While rhetoricians understand the materiality of movement in connection to symbolicity, Ackerman argues they tend to “oscillate” away from the body’s “presence in the world” to the “meanings derived from that presence” without giving the body’s presence its due.¹⁰⁴ Before arriving at the semiological significance of ambulatory practice (as expressed in

¹⁰³ Stormer, “Rhetoric’s Diverse Materiality,” 310.

¹⁰⁴ Ackerman, “Walking,” 120, see also 122-125.

forms of identity or ideology, for example), Ackerman recommends rhetoricians linger in the intensive experience of embodied movement—an ecological experience he calls “sensorial travel.”¹⁰⁵ The concept of sensorial travel foregrounds affective experiences of tension as they ecologically materialize in the moment and between the moment of ongoing movements—a specific process that Manning and Massumi name “biograms.”¹⁰⁶ By engaging with biograms as an ecological grammar of tension, attuned to affective, intensive, processual experience, rhetoricians can transcend de Certeau’s legacy and Zeno’s paradox to conceptualize the materiality of movement.

Tension as Biogram

Video 3: Tableland Transition. Embodied video of the author approaching the Tableland.

Scaling the last boulder from the rugged cliff, I stepped onto level ground, and my knees shook under the pressure of standing upright again. Panting heavily, I trudged toward the other members of the group. They were huddled together, resting and preparing for our upcoming trek into the Tableland—the relatively flat terrain stretching about a mile before our final ascent to the summit. There, a massive cloud was rapidly taking form, bursting through the atmosphere. Harsh, freezing winds lashed against us, more powerful than during our climb of Hunt Trail. The group was hastily putting on extra layers of clothing—pants, jackets, hats, and gloves. I rubbed my hands together, trying to generate extra heat. That the rest of our hike, including Baxter Peak, would be enveloped by cloud

¹⁰⁵ Ackerman, “Walking,” 119.

¹⁰⁶ Massumi, *Parables*, 177-207; Manning, *Relationescapes*, 119-142.

seemed a collective but unspoken realization. “A sense of disappointment overcame me and the others,” I wrote in my field notes, “to travel all this way, and to end in cloud.”

The struggle of transitioning to the Tableland from Hunt Trail was an intensive experience of movement, which can also be explored as “biograms.” Biograms articulate a different “grammar of movement” than dialectical concepts of rhetorical tension, focusing more on affective, ecological qualities of embodied movement. In what follows I differentiate between dialectical and biogrammatic approaches to tension, and conceptualize acts of hiking in relation to new materialist notions of process and becoming.

To help frame this theoretical issue, consider how a dialectical concept of tension could be applied to analyze our group’s collective sense of disappointment as a dialectical conflict between our idealistic expectations of hiking and our material experience at the Tableland. Senda-Cook calls such conflicts “experiential degradation,” referring to the cultural value of authenticity that hikers perceive to be lost or violated in rhetorical practice.¹⁰⁷ Like other dialectical tensions, authenticity-degradation situates hikers in dialectical power relationships where two dominant forces contend over the quality of their outdoor recreational experience. Shifting from a dialectical to ecological grammar of tension, rhetorical criticism must address the diverse materialities that constitute embodied movement, not just two forces or binary structures. Senda-Cook and Schmitt allude to an ecological framework in claiming that environmental technologies, like maps and trails, communicate with hikers about possible ways to move and perceive the landscape. But in distilling this ecological communication to “dual modes of engagement,” they impose dialectical frameworks to analyze material processes of movement and perception—

¹⁰⁷ Senda-Cook, “Rugged Practices,” 130.

processes that, in their own right, are not only or necessarily understood as dialectical or binary.¹⁰⁸ “To think of matter outside the oppositions that have imprisoned it,” Pheng Cheah argues, in her theoretical critique of dialectical materialisms, “requires us to think of matter outside opposition itself, including the oppositions that most patently denote opposition,” like subject-object, nature-culture, as well as authenticity-degradation.¹⁰⁹

New materialist philosophies uncoil such oppositions, articulating power in ecological instead of dialectical relationships. In outdoor recreational contexts, this redistribution of power recasts the conventional roles of human and landscape or body and environment. Resisting this dialectical framework, Kathleen McGill, for instance, conceptualizes environments as “living theatres” in which “plants, wildlife, geology, climate, and topography respond to each other as players and audience,” and hikers “take their place as part of a much larger dynamic.”¹¹⁰ McGill’s perspective of hiking as an ecological performance resonates with Richard Rogers’ concept of “transhuman,” which also decenters the human in relation to nature, instead foregrounding “the interdependency of the entities involved in the sense that each is affected by the other.”¹¹¹ Similarly, Thomas Rickert’s concept of “ambience” critiques the dialectic of body and environment, “dissolv[ing] the neat boundary between the subject and the subject’s world.”¹¹² The new materialist concept of “biogram,” as developed by Brian Massumi and Erin Manning,

¹⁰⁸ Schmitt, “Mounting Tensions,” 424.

¹⁰⁹ Cheah, “Non-Dialectical Materialism,” 74.

¹¹⁰ McGill, “Reading the Valley,” 397, 399.

¹¹¹ Rogers, “Overcoming,” 264-265.

¹¹² Rickert, “House of Doing,” 911.

aligns with such concepts in thinking ecologically rather than dialectically about the body's affective, ambient, interdependent relationship with the world.¹¹³

In dissolving dialectical oppositions, the concept of biograms is primarily concerned with how a body—in this case a hiker—comes into being through ecological relationships with other mobile, mutable entities. Unlike Zeno's logic, which freezes reality into static images of embodied movement, the biogram conceptualizes the body in a world alive with motion. Rather than Zeno's "static body," Manning argues the concept of biogram imagines the "becoming-body," a body continuously moving and changing.¹¹⁴ My videos of hiking Mount Katahdin communicate a sense of this biogrammatic ontology, or becoming-body, in that hikers are already going when the video begins, and constantly shift around throughout the video, never really stopping or settling, being fully immersed in the ongoing activity of hiking. What Manning terms "becoming-body" is what Massumi terms "phase-shifts of the body;" both are processual rather than semiological concepts of movement. The biogram thus offers a theoretical shift from de Certeau's emphasis on the semiology of movement to movement itself, which does not exclude elements like symbols, identity, or ideology, but also does not overemphasize or privilege their relationship to the formation of lived experience. Instead, a biogrammatic approach attends to "intensive passages" and "sensorial travels," focusing on felt encounters with a dynamic world.¹¹⁵

As an ecological grammar of mobility, the biogram works within the phase-shifts of embodied movement, the liminal place between ongoing experience that affects how

¹¹³ See for example Massumi, *Parables*, 177-207; Manning, *Relationescapes*, 119-142.

¹¹⁴ Manning, *Relationescapes*, 124.

¹¹⁵ Manning, *Relationescapes*, 125-127; Ackerman, "Walking," 119.

future movements might or might not take form.¹¹⁶ “The biogram makes itself felt,” Erin Manning writes, “in the intensive passage from one intensity—one series—to another.”¹¹⁷ Senda-Cook and Schmitt convey a similar idea about the process of movement by conceptualizing tensions as “materializing” during the course of a hike. The concept of biogram, however, makes this materializing process more explicit, stressing the emergent forces and rhythms that constitute the intensive qualities of mobile experience. Approaching the Tableland from Hunt Trail, biograms work in the intervals of ongoing experience to facilitate physical transitions between scaling boulders, standing upright, and struggling to walk, adapting the possibilities of embodied movement relative to extreme winds and weather, changes in elevation and terrain, blazes lining the trail, and locations of other hikers. One treks into the wind, legs sore from the climb, trudging toward the plateau from the cliff, drawn to the other hikers of the group, sensing the temperature drop, concerned about the journey ahead. As ecological forces of transition, biograms express “the conjunction between the series . . . prolong[ing] what a body can do. Not what movement *is*, but what movement can *do*.”¹¹⁸ From a biogrammatic approach to hiking, tensions are material experiences of stretching the possibilities of movement toward its eventual becoming, its future enactment. In conjugating forces, rhythms, and series, tension is not necessarily shorthand for problems but more fundamentally about potentiality.

Biograms create the conditions for embodied movement, functioning as what Nathan Stormer and Bridie McGreavy call a “rhetorical capacity” that constitutes “the

¹¹⁶ Manning, *Relationescapes*, 123.

¹¹⁷ Manning, *Relationescapes*, 125.

¹¹⁸ Manning, *Relationescapes*, 126; emphasis in original.

limits of what can be done.”¹¹⁹ Biogrammatic tensions, as rhetorical capacities in the context of hiking, are constraints on the possibilities of outdoor recreational practice that enable specific bodily movements to actualize. Schmitt taps into this realm of potential when speculating that hikers have “the choice of making any one of an infinite number of movements,” further elaborating that hiking sometimes involves “sticking to the [National Park Service] trail at a regular pace, sometimes slowing to view or hear part of the environment, sometimes speeding up, sometimes doubling back to re-trace steps, and sometimes veering off the official trail entirely to follow a social trail to a particular peak or landmark.”¹²⁰ In sampling some of the infinite possibilities of outdoor recreational practice—for instance, in terms of speed, rhythm, direction, etc.—Schmitt provides a glimpse into what Massumi refers to as the “experiential overfill” of biograms.¹²¹ From Massumi’s perspective, biograms are “loaded with an excess of reality” that gets “fused in abstraction, ready for useful reaccess.”¹²² Biograms are abstract forms of the infinite variations of hiking that respond to the emergent material conditions of ongoing experience, constantly adapting the potential of how bodies can and cannot move, in relation to the ecologies of which they are a part. Tension in this biogrammatic sense does not refer to the state of being in conflict with the world, but a process of becoming continuously mobilized by it.

Mobilizations are invariably tense experiences, a stretching or straining felt by becoming-bodies in motion. From a biogrammatic approach, Manning argues that “what

¹¹⁹ Stormer and McGreavy, “Thinking Ecologically,” 5.

¹²⁰ Schmitt, “Mounting Tensions,” 424, 426.

¹²¹ Massumi, *Parables*, 190.

¹²² Massumi, *Parables*, 190.

is foregrounded is the affective tone of the event.”¹²³ For example, upon entering the Tableland, there was a collective sense of disappointment about the harsh weather, a feeling of urgency in needing layer on warmer clothing, as well as a rush of excitement about being on the verge of summiting Mount Katahdin and almost completing the hike. While a dialectical concept of tension could analyze this lively scene as a conflict of expectation-experience, safety-danger, or nature-culture, a biagrammatic concept of tension would address the felt anticipation of a future movement. At this particular juncture in our hike, the potential of what could and could not happen next was rapidly fading away, as the possibility of trekking into the cloud “lured” us into action. “A *lure* is anything that . . . addresses me from beyond,” Steven Shaviro writes, “hold[ing] forth the prospect of a difference.”¹²⁴ Biagrammatic tensions are rhetorical lures of movement, and as such they are not necessarily problems that are opposed and negotiated but propositions of difference that are felt and lived.¹²⁵

An ecological grammar of mobility, the biagrammatic concept of tension offers a radical understanding of embodied movement. In the tradition of de Certeau, rhetorical criticism interprets the human body as the agent of movement who makes decisions about where to go and how to get there, negotiating any conflicts or tensions that might emerge along the way. The biogram, however, reimagines hiking as an ecological performance, which as McGill claims, involves an ontological “shift that includes but does not privilege

¹²³ Manning, *Relationescapes*, 124.

¹²⁴ Shaviro, *Universe*, 54; emphasis in original.

¹²⁵ Lure is a term from the process philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead that addresses the notion of proposition. On propositions in Whiteheadian philosophy, see Debaise, *Nature as Event*; Stengers, *Thinking*; Shaviro, *Universe*; Cooper, “Listening to Strange.”

humans.”¹²⁶ As a radical alternative to conventional theories of embodied movement, the concept of biagrammatic tension argues that ecologies mobilize bodies, luring them into acts of hiking, thereby raising questions about what it means to study rhetoric as the affective process of being moved into movement.

Toward a Biagrammatic Approach to Rhetoric

Video 4: Tableland Hike. Time-lapse of group hike through the Tableland.

The cloud continued to slam into the mountain. Harsh gusts of wind tore across the Tableland. Exposed skin on my neck blotched from the extreme winds. The cloud blocked the sunlight. The temperature dropped. Snot poured from my nose. Thin strings attached to small wooden posts lined a narrow path along the ground. It was only wide enough for one person at a time. Our group morphed into a single-file line. Brittany led us through the cloud. The wind was deafening. We didn't talk. We rushed across the Tableland, wanting out. I put my head down to focus on Catherine's footsteps. They evaporated into the haze. I later wrote in my notes that she looked like a "shadow," a figure disappearing into the cloud. Becoming cloud.

According to the legacy of de Certeau, this chaotic trek through the Tableland enacts a dialectical tension of safety and risk. Like many other hikers who have encountered such unexpected weather at the Tableland, our group was exposed to dangerous conditions beyond our control, and had to figure out how to respond. This dialectical situation, where hikers negotiate safety and danger, taps into a broader

¹²⁶ McGill, "Reading the Valley," 391.

“ideology of wilderness” in which nature is opposed to hikers as an environment too extreme for human interaction—an ideology that attracts many to outdoor recreational sports like hiking for a sense of challenge, a sense of adventure.¹²⁷ The new materialist concept of biogram, however, resists such a quick, analytical jump to the ideological significance of mobile, ambulatory events. Rather than presuppose an opposition between human and nature, or safety and risk, the biogram focuses on the body’s ecological relationship with the world. This world certainly includes elements like trail design, park management, and ideologies themselves but does not privilege them over other forces that compose and recompose lived experience. A biogrammatic approach is not unlike my time-lapse of our group’s trek through the Tableland, blurring the boundaries of bodies, clouds, grass, sky, jackets, and rocks, creating a “transhuman phase-shift.” As an ecological grammar, biograms organize the flow of such transhuman movements, embedding the becoming-body in relational processes that are never complete or finished, always transitioning and transforming. The biogram thereby offers rhetorical criticism an ontology of movement that emphasizes dynamic encounters with the world.

Furthermore, in addressing the “nexus of public narrative and individual nerve endings,” the biogram analyzes ideology from within the ongoing flow of in-the-moment and between-the-moment experiences of materiality and materialization.¹²⁸ The biogram attends to “a sensing body in movement,” Manning writes, “a body that resists predefinition in terms of subjectivity.”¹²⁹ Similar to David Terry and Sarah Vartabedian, who argue that hikers “walk themselves into being,” the concept of biogram entertains ideology and

¹²⁷ Cronon, “Trouble with Wilderness;” Drennig, “Taking a Hike.”

¹²⁸ Conley and Mullen, “Righting the Commons,” 194.

¹²⁹ Manning, *Relationescapes*, 6.

subjectivity, as well as ontology, in terms of process, transition, and incipency.¹³⁰ The biogram specifically accesses “public narratives” through felt encounters with the world, such as experiencing wind burn on one’s neck as an “atmospheric body” living and moving in relationship to emergent weather patterns, or accidentally tripping over a rock as a “technological body” and not feeling pain in one’s toes, thanks to rubberized boots.¹³¹ Public narratives, ideologies, and subjectivities are not external to biograms; rather, they exist on the same plane of (trans)human experience as the ground, the weather, the temperature, and so on. All of these elements ecologically create fields of tension that constitute felt experiences of movement.

The concept of biogram also opens new possibilities for rhetorical field methods and participatory research methodologies where there is growing interest in studying affective, material, and ecological dimensions of rhetoric.¹³² The biogram is not a method per se, but an approach to method that foregrounds intensive qualities of lived experience. A biogrammatic approach to method troubles the conventional emphasis that critics place on the meaning of movement, bringing intensities, rhythms, and lures of mobility into focus. Movement does not need to be converted into forms of meaning; it is the indeterminate sense of tension that matters, as multiple factors rhetorically influence the next step, the next few minutes, the overall hike. If potential can only be understood once it resolves into dialectical or binary oppositions, a great deal of movement’s dynamism is lost in the service of making it operate like language and suitable for linguistic-style

¹³⁰ Terry and Vartabedian, “Alone but Together,” 437.

¹³¹ Manning, *Relationescapes*, 15, 24.

¹³² McGreavy, Wells, McHendry, and Senda-Cook, *Tracing Rhetoric*; McKinnon, Asen, Chávez, and Howard, *Text + Field*; Middleton, Hess, Endres, and Senda-Cook, *Participatory Critical Rhetoric*.

critique. Biograms as a guiding methodological concept allow rhetoricians to resist the reduction of movement to semiosis, not because semiological readings of movement are wrong or unproductive, but because they are not all that is there. One pays a price in terms of the richness to take advantage of what a de Certeau-inspired rhetorical analysis of movement offers.

Dialectical tensions restrict the fluidity of movement and limit the dynamism of embodied and emplaced experience, similar to the stop-and-go logic of Zeno's paradox. Part of the issue in analyzing the dynamism of movement is dialectical form itself, which constrains an ecology of interactive forces into binary structures or "dual modes of engagement."¹³³ The conceptual shift from dialectics to biograms in rhetorical criticism calls for a corresponding shift in rhetorical theory as well. In focusing on lived experience in the moment and between the moment, the biogram proposes a theory of aesthetic rhetoric—a rhetoric-in-the-making—that embraces the unending work of movement and mobility. Thinking nondialectically and biogrammatically about hiking emphasizes the rhetorical capacity of movement to make and remake worlds, a pun on the creativity of "outdoor re-creation."

Building on this chapter's biogrammatic critique of dialectical tensions, the next chapter further engages the issue of dialectics in relation to rhetoric, ontology, and ethics, focusing more broadly on the theoretical differences and implications of dialectical and biogrammatic approaches to movement. The semiological concept of movement derived from de Certeau has proven influential for rhetoric scholars because it aligns with a deeper theoretical assumption epitomized by Kenneth Burke's dialectical ontology of

¹³³ Schmitt, "Mounting Tensions," 424; Cheah, "Non-Dialectical Materialism."

nonsymbolic motion and symbolic action, which separates motion from rhetoric so that rhetoric can be explained as intentional symbol use. Burke's dialectic is a widely used and contested theory in the field of rhetoric, so that chapter contends with it as the representative anecdote of motion's removal from rhetoric and explores how Manning's new materialist philosophy of movement provides a possible rejoinder. To help ground this theoretical discussion, the chapter draws on an ambulatory interview from a rhetorical ethnography of hiking at Acadia National Park.

CHAPTER 3
BEING IN MOTION:
FROM DIALECTICAL TO BIOGRAMMATIC MATERIALISM



Figure 2: Trail. Ellen hikes Norumbega Mountain Trail.

In June 2017, I participated in a rhetorical ethnography of hiking with Ellen at Norumbega Mountain Trail in Acadia National Park.¹³⁴ Although typically crowded with tourists in the summer months, Acadia was unusually quiet that day due in part to the weather. A dense fog was drifting across Mount Desert Island from the Atlantic Ocean,

¹³⁴ Research participants are identified by pseudonyms.

making the wooded trail feel “creepy,” “eerie,” and “unlike Acadia” according to Ellen. As we hiked through the fog at Norumbega I noticed Ellen was taking her time walking about the trail, slowly scanning the slick terrain and cautiously planting her feet. “It’s wet so I’m looking for places that are flat, like, to step on,” she explained as she zigzagged over a puddle, “big enough for my foot, or most of my foot, or like covered in leaves, instead of stepping on, like, the rock.”¹³⁵ Carefully continuing her stride she added, “and I think the weather definitely influences what I’m looking for because—.” But before she could finish her statement she accidentally slipped. The rubber sole of her sneaker slid across a slick patch of granite and her body lurched forward. Then, almost as soon as she slipped she regained balance. “Exactly!” Ellen exclaimed, laughing about her misstep, “like if it was drier, I wouldn’t need to be like thinking about slipping, as much as I am right now.”

Although Ellen and I slipped many times during our hike at Norumbega, this particular one was unique insofar as it occurred while we were specifically discussing Ellen’s footwork. Here, Ellen was not just “thinking about slipping” but *talking about* “thinking about slipping” *while walking*. Her slip occurred as she was performing a series of carefully planned steps and using words to articulate her way of moving about the slick trail. Her slip can be understood as a biogram, a nexus of body, movement, language, and environment that organized the flow of her lived experience of slipping. According to Jo Lee Vergunst, slips like Ellen’s produce an “excess of movement” in which a person’s foot does not stop on the ground but “instead slips onwards,” such that “the rhythmical rolling motion of the foot is changed to fast-forward acceleration,” thereby speeding up the walker’s relationship with the world, which can be very dangerous, even fatal, in some

¹³⁵ See Appendix G for Transcript of “Thinking about Slipping” Interview.

circumstances.¹³⁶ Thinking biogrammatically about this particular event, Ellen was rushed into her next move along the trail, immediately imbalanced by the motion of slipping, and as this motion propelled her body through the environment, it created new possibilities of lived experience. While such moves are “unplanned and unwanted,” Vergunst claims that ambulatory accidents serve as “particularly pointed examples of becoming aware of what an environment is *really* like.”¹³⁷ Think of Ellen’s exclamation (“Exactly!”) as she renewed the simultaneous activities of hiking, thinking, and talking after regaining balance, materially changed by the slip.

As an accidental form of bodily motion, slipping poses a key issue for scholars theorizing rhetoric in relation to movement and mobility. “Walking,” Rebecca Solnit claims, “is the intentional act closest to the unwilled rhythms of the body, to breathing and the beating of the heart.”¹³⁸ At first glance, Ellen’s slip seems a different kind of ambulatory experience than her carefully planned steps; whereas the steps appear to be an intentional act of bodily movement, the slip appears to embody an unwilled rhythm, which articulates a problematic between “movement with intent” and “movement without intent.”¹³⁹ The issue that rhetoricians face in theorizing movement as rhetoric is human intentionality, in this case a person’s agency to make decisions about where to go and how to get there. The previous chapter addressed the issue of agency via Michel de Certeau’s legacy of studying ambulation as a kind of speech act.¹⁴⁰ Ambulatory accidents such as slipping and falling become enunciations of space in which hikers are situated between dialectical tensions like

¹³⁶ Vergunst, “Taking a Trip,” 110.

¹³⁷ Vergunst, “Taking a Trip,” 120, 114; emphasis in original.

¹³⁸ Solnit, *Wanderlust*, 5.

¹³⁹ Fleckenstein, “Minding Mind,” 31.

¹⁴⁰ De Certeau, “Walking.”

safety and risk.¹⁴¹ Conceptually, these oppositional forces push and pull on moving bodies, cultivating the production of meaning that hikers interpret and negotiate. Although environments physically participate in this meaning-making process, the agentic emphasis is on the human bodies that semiologically navigate, perceive, and enunciate those environments. This approach to studying hiking via de Certeau is very comfortable for rhetoricians already familiar with analyzing how people create meanings and identities. But on a theoretical level, the semiological concept of movement inspired by de Certeau presupposes that motion is expelled from rhetoric dialectically in order to conceive of rhetoric as symbolic action, a meaningful, intentional, and potentially ethical element of human life.

To rephrase the issue in terms of new materialist philosophy, movements like slipping, breathing, and pulsing are devoid of meaning until acted upon by an external, semiological force—then the nonsymbolic motions of the body transform into rhetorical activity.¹⁴² Only then does matter *matter*, as Karen Barad would say.¹⁴³ Rhetoric’s inertial concept of movement, exemplified in part by de Certeau’s walking rhetoric, is a historically situated symptom of Western materialism more broadly.¹⁴⁴ “The predominant sense of matter in modern Western culture,” Diana Coole argues, “has been that it is essentially passive stuff, set in motion by human agents who use it as a means of survival, modify it as a vehicle of aesthetic expression, and impose subjective meanings upon it.”¹⁴⁵

¹⁴¹ Senda-Cook, “Materializing Tensions.”

¹⁴² See for example Barad, “Posthumanist Performativity;” Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*; Coole and Frost, *New Materialisms*.

¹⁴³ Barad, “Posthumanist Performativity,” 801.

¹⁴⁴ Coole, “Inertia of Matter.”

¹⁴⁵ Coole, “Inertia of Matter,” 92.

Rhetoricians are currently engaging new materialist concepts to dispute humanistic materialisms that dialectically oppose inertial motion from human action, thereby developing new ways of theorizing matter in relation to rhetoric, language, and ethics.¹⁴⁶ Situated in this larger theoretical and historical context, de Certeau's legacy in conceptualizing movements as speech acts reflects what Scot Barnett calls the "humanists' inability to see matter as anything more than discourse or the effects of signification."¹⁴⁷ To see movement as more than a semiological process, as more than a speech act, symbol, or text, rhetoricians must take a step back from de Certeau to contend with the motion-action dialectic governing its humanistic theory of rhetorical agency.

Nowhere in the field of rhetoric is the motion-action dialectic at once more apparent and more ambiguous than the writings of Kenneth Burke. As Chris Mays and colleagues claim, Burke is a "humanist par excellence," "a towering figure in rhetorical studies" whose research on human embodiment still "inheres across rhetorical scholarship writ large."¹⁴⁸ In this regard, behind de Certeau's semiological concept of movement one finds Burke's theory of nonsymbolic motion and symbolic action. Burke's largely influential work dialectically opposes the human ability to act or make decisions from what he calls "sheer motion"—a dialectical theory that separates the symbolic from the nonsymbolic, the purposive from the accidental, the hike from the slip. Burke's motion-action polarity is the Dialectic of Dialectics. It lies "at the root of such distinctions as mind-body, spirit-matter,

¹⁴⁶ See for example Davis, *Inessential Solidarity*; Rickert, *Ambient Rhetoric*; Gries, *Still Life*; Pflugfelder, "Rhetoric's New Materialism;" Stormer, "Rhetoric's Diverse Materiality;" Stormer and McGreavy, "Thinking Ecologically;" Barnett, *Rhetorical Realism*.

¹⁴⁷ Barnett, *Rhetorical Realism*, 4.

¹⁴⁸ Mays, Rivers, and Sharp-Hoskins, "Introduction," 4, 3.

superstructure-substructure, and Descartes' dualism, thought and extension," Burke himself writes, "though no such terms quite match the motion-action pair."¹⁴⁹ Likewise, the dialectical tensions of nature-culture, strategy-tactic, and authenticity-degradation as discussed in the previous chapter would be mere subspecies of Burke's more encompassing, more foundational, theoretical polarity. However polarized and dialectical, Burkean theory also embraces the many ambiguities of human embodiment.¹⁵⁰ As noted in the previous chapter, Debra Hawhee explains that Burke conceptualizes "the body a vital, connective, mobile, and transformational force, a force that exceeds—even as it bends and bends with—discourse."¹⁵¹ The dialectical relationship that Burke imagines to exist between motion and action is undoubtedly dynamic and processual, and as Hawhee claims "complicates an easy separation between mind and body, body and culture, and . . . body and language."¹⁵² Burke's motion-action dialectic, I argue, is a strategically ambiguous device, a way of thinking about movement that allows Burke to lean on materiality in one context and symbolicity in another—in short, a binary that does not want to be a binary.

One catches a glimpse of Burke's ambiguous strategy, as he himself draws on the metaphor of ambulatory accidents to distinguish between nonsymbolic motion and symbolic action: "If one happened to stumble over an obstruction, that would not be an act, but a mere motion. However, one could convert even this sheer accident into something of an act if, in the course of falling, one suddenly *willed* his fall."¹⁵³ Like Ellen's slip at

¹⁴⁹ Burke, "Motion/Action," 809. See also Crable, "Symbolizing Motion," 122-124.

¹⁵⁰ Crable, "Symbolizing Motion;" Mays, Rivers, and Sharp-Hoskins, "Introduction;" Hawhee, *Moving Bodies*.

¹⁵¹ Hawhee, *Moving Bodies*, 7.

¹⁵² Hawhee, *Moving Bodies*, 2.

¹⁵³ Burke, *Grammar*, 14, emphasis in original.

Norumbega, Burke's metaphor of stumbling problematizes the notion of human intentionality. For Burke, human will or intent can transform the body's free-falling motion into action. This is the inertial quality of matter. By choosing to fall a person's ambulatory experience qualitatively changes. This choice, this action, "is *more than* motion; it is motion *plus*. The *plus* is purpose."¹⁵⁴ Burke's metaphor of stumbling thereby articulates an inertial, bifurcated reality in which a realm of purposive action is *added to* a realm of sheer motion. A parallel can be drawn from Burke's metaphor of stumbling to that of injury: "Did you ever do an injury to a friend by accident, in all poetic simplicity? Then conceive of this same injury as done by sly design," Burke writes, "and you are forthwith within the orbit of Rhetoric."¹⁵⁵ In Burkean theory, language, rhetoric, and ethics belong to an additional realm of material life, functioning as modes of symbolic action layered onto nonsymbolic ontology, onto being in motion.

Currently in rhetorical studies there is burgeoning interest in theorizing rhetoric from nondialectical approaches that already embed ethics in ontology rather than tack it on after the fact like Burke.¹⁵⁶ These approaches prioritize new materialist concepts of affect, movement, and ecology over humanist notions of choice and intentionality. As discussed in the last chapter, new materialist philosophies aim "to think of matter outside the oppositions that have imprisoned it," such as Burke's motion-action dialectic, which frames matter as sheer in contrast to the purposiveness of action.¹⁵⁷ New materialist theories of rhetoric specifically question the anthropocentric conceits of more conventional

¹⁵⁴ Heath, *Realism*, 136; emphasis added.

¹⁵⁵ Burke, *Rhetoric*, 37.

¹⁵⁶ See for example Barnett, *Rhetorical Realism*; Davis, *Inessential Solidarity*; Rickert, *Ambient Rhetoric*; Rivers, "Deep Ambivalence."

¹⁵⁷ Cheah, "Non-Dialectical Materialism," 74.

rhetorical theories that assume ethical choice-making is the distinguishing mark of humanity. Rather than restrict ethics to human decision-making, these theories open ethicality to the more-than-human world, and emphasize the fundamental ethical qualities of living in relationship with others. From this perspective, ethics is not an additional ingredient to ontology; it is an integral part of being itself. As Thomas Rickert writes, “Our ethics are not something exterior we bring in and deploy but rather a set of comportments that emerge from life as it is lived, from what we do, say, and make,” and by extension, *the ways we move*.¹⁵⁸

Situated in this broader theoretical context, I explore the possibility of rhetoric and ethics as being mutually embedded in bodily movements like hiking, slipping, and breathing. To assist in theorizing the rhetorical and ethical potential of being in motion, this chapter continues elaborating Erin Manning’s nondialectical philosophy of movement, especially her concepts of biogram and preacceleration. First Burkean theory is examined, then Manning’s philosophy, with the goal of analyzing how their respective concepts of movement relate to rhetoric, ontology, and ethics. As both scholars have written prolifically on issues of movement and mobility, this chapter primarily draws from Burke’s essay “(Nonsymbolic) Motion/(Symbolic) Action” and Manning’s book *Relationescapes: Movement, Art, Philosophy*.¹⁵⁹ From this inter-articulation of Burke and Manning, I argue for an understanding of movement as a rhetorical form of world-making.

¹⁵⁸ Rickert, *Ambient Rhetoric*, 223.

¹⁵⁹ Burke, “Motion/Action;” Manning, *Relationescapes*.

Burke's Dialectical Materialism

In *A Grammar of Motives*, Kenneth Burke conceptualizes “dialectics” as a form of thought that creates “contrasted orders” of reality and enacts three basic functions: division, merger, and transcendence.¹⁶⁰ Division refers to the act of polarizing things into dominant structures that oppose one another, and merger, the act of unifying things without such opposition. Put another way, Burke writes: “to treat two terms as differing in *degree* is to exemplify the principle of merger,” but “we exemplify the principle of division when treating such pairs as differences in *kind*.”¹⁶¹ In *Attitudes Toward History*, Burke considers transcendence a “bridging device” that intervenes in oppositional arrangements to provide a “way across” dialectical poles.¹⁶² For transcendence to occur, dialectical pairs require a “third term that will serve as the ground or medium of communication between opposing terms.”¹⁶³ In theorizing the human condition using a dialectical grammar, Burke enacts these three principles in different ways in different contexts, which produces ambiguity about the relationship he imagines to exist between motion and action. The title of Burke’s essay “(Nonsymbolic) Motion/(Symbolic) Action” intimates such ambiguity through its punctuation, as the slash and parentheses seem to differentiate one dialectical pole from the other, but as Debra Hawhee and Brian Crable argue, these marks also articulate a “connective force” that binds the two together.¹⁶⁴ I analyze ambiguity as a strategic function of Burke’s dialectical materialism in which he pulls action apart from motion in

¹⁶⁰ Burke, *Grammar*, 35, 420-406.

¹⁶¹ Burke, *Grammar*, 415; emphasis added.

¹⁶² Burke, *Attitudes*, 224-225.

¹⁶³ Burke, *Grammar*, 405.

¹⁶⁴ Hawhee, “Language as Sensuous,” 348; Crable, “Symbolizing Motion,” 122.

one context, then pushes them together in another, to ultimately frame the question of ethics in relation to (human) ontology.

In terms of division, Burke distinguishes humans from all other forms of life on the basis of symbolicity. He imagines the world alive with all sorts and scales of motion, such as molecules bonding, ants crawling, cars driving, trees growing, seas thrashing, weather changing, and planets rotating. Yet from his perspective, these material dynamisms exist in dialectical opposition to the “universe of discourse,” the additional world of symbolic action.¹⁶⁵ This discursive universe encompasses “modes of symbolicity as different as primitive speech, styles of music, painting, sculpture, dance, highly developed mathematical nomenclatures, traffic signals, road maps,” as well as hiking.¹⁶⁶ Burke argues this multimodal symbolic world is solely inhabited by human beings, as the “only typically symbol-using animal existing on earth is the human organism.”¹⁶⁷ Although he concedes animals like ants, bees, and dogs communicate through “intuitive signaling systems,” Burke claims there is a “second-level” or “reflexive” aspect to symbolicity in which people can “talk about themselves” but a dog “can’t bark a tract on barking.”¹⁶⁸ By preserving this second-level distinction between symbol-using and sign-using animals, Burke carves out a special place for humans in his ontology. In a characteristic expression of division, Burke writes: “Symbolicity involves not just a difference of *degree*, but a motivational difference in *kind*.”¹⁶⁹ This difference of kind rather than degree enables Burke to conceptualize how language produces “motives intrinsic to itself” that are “*not* reducible to terms of sheer

¹⁶⁵ Burke, “Motion/Action,” 814.

¹⁶⁶ Burke, “Motion/Action,” 809.

¹⁶⁷ Burke, “Motion/Action,” 810.

¹⁶⁸ Burke, “Motion/Action,” 810.

¹⁶⁹ Burke, “Motion/Action,” 815, 814; emphasis in original.

motion.”¹⁷⁰ In contrast to every other entity in existence, humans alone can act rather than move; they alone have the additional possibility of choice and purpose.

Burke articulates and rearticulates this particular ontological distinction—the human ability to act—in different contexts throughout his career, using language as “the” marker of humanity. “Dialectically considered,” Burke writes in *A Grammar of Motives* for instance, “men are not only in nature. The cultural accretions made possible by the language motive become a ‘second nature’ with them.”¹⁷¹ Burke’s ontological division between motion and action, between first nature and second nature, is an important theoretical distinction for rhetoricians. As Diane Davis explains, Burke’s rhetorical theory of identification presupposes a fundamental condition of division.¹⁷² “Identification is compensatory to division,” Burke writes in *A Rhetoric of Motives*, claiming, “If men [sic] were not apart from one another, there would be no need for the rhetorician to proclaim their unity.”¹⁷³ According to Davis, Burke’s conceptualization of rhetoric as identification suggests that “whenever Burke feels forced to make a decision, to lay out the ultimate order of things, he comes down on the side of ordinary divisiveness, and there is no other choice.”¹⁷⁴ Yet grammatically, tethered to Burke’s principle of division is the principle of merger; the two work in tandem. For Burke, division is a way of thinking about ontology that allows him to address the human condition in terms of *both* nonsymbolic motion *and* symbolic action. “Treating human *beings* as defined and distinguished as symbol-using and symbol-misusing animals,” Chris Mays and colleagues write, “sets the stage for

¹⁷⁰ Burke, “Motion/Action,” 813, 814; emphasis in original.

¹⁷¹ Burke, *Grammar*, 33.

¹⁷² Davis, *Inessential Solidarity*, 18-36.

¹⁷³ Burke, *Rhetoric*, 22.

¹⁷⁴ Davis, *Inessential Solidarity*.

Burke's rhetorical project," a project that is "particularly focused, if not fixated, upon the body."¹⁷⁵

From an originary division, Burke polarizes the human condition in terms of a "dual nature" that expresses the dialectical principle of merger.¹⁷⁶ One pole of human embodiment is motion, the nonsymbolic behaviors of the "body, in its nature as a sheerly physiological organism;" the other pole is action, the "modes of behavior made possible by the acquiring of a conventional, arbitrary symbol system."¹⁷⁷ Nonsymbolic behaviors constitute what Burke calls the "Self," an individuated entity, "more or less discrete, cut off from other bodies;" and symbolic behaviors constitute a collective or socialized dimension to the Self that Burke calls "Culture."¹⁷⁸ In Burkean theory, the individuated self in nonsymbolic motion is the foundation of life, to which symbolic action and collective culture are layered on as additional elements of being human. As Crable and Hawhee explain, Burke's concept of embodiment envelops *both* motion *and* action, self *and* culture, without reducing either one to the other.¹⁷⁹ From a grammatical perspective, this polarized conceptualization of embodiment presupposes and affirms the principle of division as it enacts the principle of merger. As Burke argues, "the polarity between the two realms [nonsymbolic motion and symbolic action] remains unbridgeable, and we [human beings] are thus composite creatures."¹⁸⁰ The "unbridgeable" motion-action division ambiguously merges in the "composition" of human embodiment. Exemplified

¹⁷⁵ Mays, Rivers, and Sharp-Hoskins, "Introduction," 2, 4; emphasis in original.

¹⁷⁶ Burke, "Motion/Action," 821.

¹⁷⁷ Burke, "Motion/Action," 809.

¹⁷⁸ Hawhee, *Moving Bodies*, 160, 161; Burke, "Motion/Action," 810, 813-814.

¹⁷⁹ Crable, "Symbolizing Motion;" Hawhee, *Moving Bodies*. See also Davis, *Inessential Solidarity*, 18-36.

¹⁸⁰ Burke, "Motion/Action," 830.

here is the strategic ambiguity of Burke's dialectical materialism, the way in which he pulls action apart from motion even as he pushes them together, to differentiate the human condition from other modes of being in the world.

One witnesses Burke perform this ambiguous strategy of both dividing and merging motion and action, for instance, when Burke writes about human beings in relation to animals and machines, which punctuated much of his work throughout the twentieth century. In *Permanence and Change* for example, Burke makes various reference to animals such as trout, grasshoppers, chickens, and mammoths to conceptualize the dynamism of the nonsymbolic dimensions of human embodiment.¹⁸¹ For Burke, as Hawhee observes, animals serve “as a way to reflect on bodily communication and bodily thought otherwise obscured by language in humans.”¹⁸² Likewise, Jeff Pruchnic claims that Burke's critical engagement with science and technology provides another means of reflection on the complexities of human bodies.¹⁸³ “Burke will argue that the difference among humans, animals, and machines is one of *kind* and not *degree*,” Pruchnic explains, noting a particular passage from Burke's essay “Mind, Body, Unconscious” in *Language as Symbolic Action* that highlights Burke's use of ambiguity in defining the ontological boundaries of the human: “Man [sic] differs qualitatively from other animals since they are too poor in symbolicity, just as man differs qualitatively from his machines, since these man-made caricatures of man are too poor in animality.”¹⁸⁴ From Burke's perspective, human bodies are composite creatures situated “between and betwixt the animal and the

¹⁸¹ Burke, *Permanence*; Hawhee, “Jungle Book.”

¹⁸² Hawhee, “Jungle Book,” 173.

¹⁸³ Pruchnic, “Rhetoric.”

¹⁸⁴ Burke, *Language*, 64; Pruchnic, “Rhetoric,” 276.

machine,” ambiguously connected to other entities that also serve as ontological markers of what humans are and are not.¹⁸⁵ The lines circumscribing the human, however, are Burke’s to draw.

In addition to merger and division, Burke enacts the principle of transcendence, incorporating a suite of intermediary terms that fulfill the grammatical function of a bridging device for otherwise “unbridgeable” ontologies of nonsymbolic motion and symbolic action.¹⁸⁶ In the *Grammar*, Burke writes that “by making for a transcendence of one term by its other,” dialecticians can make “the reversed ambiguous derivation of the term from its other as ancestral principle.”¹⁸⁷ With his motion-action dialectic, the reversible function of transcendence means that Burke can shift from motion to action as well as action to motion. Crable reads this ambiguity as a paradox in which “each term is founded on the other,” such that either dialectical pole can paradoxically serve as the grounds for transforming into the other.¹⁸⁸ By strategically managing the conditions of transcendence in either direction, Burke can articulate diverse qualities of what it means to be human. Depending on the context, he can use nonsymbolic motion to transcend into the symbolic realm, as he does with the term “sensation” in his narrative of human evolution, or he can employ symbolic action to make a reverse transcendence into the nonsymbolic realm, as he does with the term “attitude” in discussions of psychogenic illness.

To transcend from the nonsymbolic to the symbolic, Burke incorporates the intermediary term “sensation.” In his remarks on human evolution in “Motion/Action,”

¹⁸⁵ Pruchnic, “Rhetoric,” 277.

¹⁸⁶ Burke, “Motion/Action,” 815, 817, 829, 830. See also Hawhee, *Moving Bodies*, 156-167.

¹⁸⁷ Burke, *Grammar*, 38.

¹⁸⁸ Crable, “Symbolizing Motion,” 122.

Burke narrates a primal scene in which human bodies develop a sensuous capacity for language:

With regard to the theory of evolution, obviously critical conditions for the emergence of culture arose at that stage in the prehistoric past when our anthropoid ancestors underwent a momentous mutation. In their bodies (as physiological organisms in the realm of motion) there developed the ability to learn the kind of tribal idiom that is here meant by “symbolic action.” And thereby emerged what we might call a “mechanism” for the steps from nonsymbolic motion to symbolic action. Descartes, in his speculations on a possible bridge between his polar realms of “thought” and “extension,” proposed the possibility that a small gland in the brain, the pineal gland, might provide the medium. But with regard to the materials for an intermediate step between the realms of “motion” and “action” we need not look for so recondite a locus. The necessary materials are implicit in the physiological nature of sensation.¹⁸⁹

Stating the “obvious” about humanity’s transcendence into symbolicity, Burke frames “sensation” as a “mechanism” by which humans as “physiological organisms” originally acquired language.

It is relevant to note that in “Terministic Screens” Burke claims “the *ultimate* origins of language seem to me as mysterious as the origins of the universe itself. One must view it, I feel, simply as the ‘given.’”¹⁹⁰ Yet in “Motion/Action,” Burke feels compelled to entertain this very mystery, offering his own take on the origins of language, precisely to

¹⁸⁹ Burke, “Motion/Action,” 811.

¹⁹⁰ Burke, *Language*, 44; emphasis in original.

demarcate the essence of being human. In the *Grammar* Burke writes that “if one is seeking for the ‘essence’ of motives, one can only express such a search in the temporal terms of imaginative literature as a process of ‘going back’”—in this case to the origins of language.¹⁹¹ By “going back” to the original emergence of human language, Burke “temporizes the essence” of human beings.¹⁹² Language is no longer a given; Burke has constructed it as a transcendence of motion. Grammatically, this transcendence also enacts the principle of division insofar as Burke uses the origins of language as an ontological marker of what differentiates the human species from all other kinds of beings that, by implication, cannot make the same intermediate step into symbolicity.¹⁹³

To make the reversed transcendence, Burke employs the intermediary concept of “attitude.” A highly contested term in Burkean parlance, “attitude” typically refers to the incipency of symbolic action.¹⁹⁴ Attitudes are “products of symbolicity,” Burke writes, that prepare how humans will act in the future, but as forms of incipient action they already impact the physiological body in the here-and-now.¹⁹⁵ Attitudes shift from the symbolic realm into the nonsymbolic, then move back toward symbolicity as incipency. In “Motion/Action,” Burke exemplifies attitudinal transcendence through “psychogenic illness”: “if you received some information you believed in, and the information was highly disturbing, it would affect your bodily behavior, your blood pressure, respiration, heartbeat and the like quite as though the situation were actually so, though the information happened

¹⁹¹ Burke, *Grammar*, 430.

¹⁹² Burke, “Motion/Action,” 831; Burke, *Grammar*, 430.

¹⁹³ Mays, Rivers, and Sharp-Hoskins, “Introduction,” 2.

¹⁹⁴ Burke, “Motion/Action;” Hawhee, *Moving Bodies*; Kraemer, “Between Motion.”

¹⁹⁵ Burke, “Motion/Action,” 816.

to be in error.”¹⁹⁶ From Burke’s perspective, attitudes of psychogenic illness prepare human bodies to be sick, producing *symptoms* of disease from *symbols* of disease, even though the symbols “happen to be in error.” The misinformation crosses the ontological threshold of symbolicity to influence the nonsymbolic motions of the body, its beating heart and rushing blood, which physiologically adapt in relation to the “highly disturbing” news. Like the will that transforms an accidental slip into a purposive performance, an attitude transforms the nonsymbolic motions of illness into a symbolic act. Attitude as incipency, Don Kraemer writes, allows Burke to conceptualize embodied motions “verging into action,” thereby becoming *potentially active*.¹⁹⁷ Such transcendence constitutes a strategically ambiguous gradation between symbolic and nonsymbolic realms, grammatically forming a merger that muddles the motion-action division Burke otherwise insists on keeping.

In these brief examples of transcendence, merger, and division, Burke states the “obvious” about human embodiment, but his dialectical statements produce ontological ambiguities that strategically blur the very relationships he aims to articulate. In *Attitudes Toward History*, Burke compares such skilled maneuvering to the coin game “heads I win, tails you lose” in which a player can always win a match against an opponent by simply changing the rules of the game.¹⁹⁸ Reimagining this parlor trick as a theoretical device, Burke explains that “if things turn out one way, your system accounts for them—and if they turn out the opposite way, your system also accounts for them.”¹⁹⁹ Understood in this

¹⁹⁶ Burke, “Motion/Action,” 819.

¹⁹⁷ Kraemer, “Between Motion,” 157.

¹⁹⁸ Burke, *Attitudes*, 260-263.

¹⁹⁹ Burke, *Attitudes*, 260.

context, the motion-action dialectic is a “heads I win, tails you lose” device with which Burke shifts between grammatical principles of division, merger, and transcendence to provide what is, from his perspective, the most accurate account of the human condition against all other discourses that misconstrue his dialectical materialism.²⁰⁰ Such is the case in his contention with behavioral psychologists and social constructionists about what it means to be human, which not only displays the resiliency of his “heads I win, tails you lose” device, but also poses the question of ethics in relation to (human) ontology.²⁰¹

According to Burke, behaviorism collapses an essential difference between nonsymbolic motion and symbolic action that his dialectical materialism otherwise protects. From his perspective, behaviorism reduces the dual nature of human beings to mere physiological phenomena, sheer systems of stimulus-response. “[Its] basic methodological error,” Burke claims, is “its assumption that the distinction between the realms of action and motion is but a matter of *degree*, rather than a difference in *kind*.”²⁰² As Burke reads it, behaviorism dissolves the entire realm of symbolicity into motion, merging the complexities of language and linguistic motivation into the nonsymbolic behaviors of the body, which ultimately sacrifices notions of drama, rhetoric, and ethics from ontology—all of which Burke claims require symbolicity. Although he can similarly enact a merger like the behaviorists to explore the ambiguous gradations between motion and action, in this context Burke prefers division. He wants to keep symbolic action dialectically opposed and fundamentally irreducible to nonsymbolic motion because the

²⁰⁰ Crable, “Symbolizing Motion.”

²⁰¹ Burke, “Motion/Action,” 833-838; Crable, “Symbolizing Motion;” Pruchnic, “Rhetoric.”

²⁰² Burke, “Words as Deeds,” 165; emphasis in original.

dual nature of the human condition is on the line. In dialogue with the behaviorists, Burke separates action from motion to cultivate a space for rhetoricity and ethicality otherwise absent in behaviorism. In this case, rhetoric and ethics as modes of symbolic action are grammatically impossible without the theoretical presupposition that motion is ontologically sheer.²⁰³ Burke needs nonsymbolic motion to be distinctionless and deterministic in the discourse of behaviorism so that his dialectical materialism can construct the symbolic realm of human nature in terms of drama, rhetoric, and ethics.

The behaviorists were not alone in receiving an ethical critique from Burke, as Hawhee for example articulates a parallel though inverted Burkean critique of linguistic or social construction.²⁰⁴ If the “methodological error” of the behaviorists is the principle of merger, the error of the constructionists is division. Whereas the behaviorists dissolve symbolic action into nonsymbolic motion, the constructionists remove materiality from symbolicity, arguing that human reality is primarily, if not only, composed of language and culture. Dividing the symbolic from the nonsymbolic, Hawhee claims that this language-centered approach produces “disembodied” and “lifeless” analyses of human experience and culture by omitting bodily processes of sensation, movement, and individuation from analytical consideration.²⁰⁵ Burke, she argues, would merge the two together rather than pull them apart and thus provide a more accurate and robust depiction of the human condition. In this context, rhetoric and ethics would need to incorporate aspects of physiological, behavioral, sensuous motion instead of cutting them out of human embodiment altogether. Here, motion would be ambiguously integrated with rhetoric and

²⁰³ Crable, “Symbolizing Motion,” 122.

²⁰⁴ Hawhee, “Language as Sensuous.”

²⁰⁵ Hawhee, “Language as Sensuous,” 348.

ethics as a fundamental part of human experience, life, and society. And just like that the rules of the game change: heads Burke wins, tails the behaviorists and constructionists lose.

To strike an appropriately ambiguous balance in defining the dual nature of the human condition, Burke strategically manages the dialectical relationship of nonsymbolic motion and symbolic action using the grammatical functions of merger, division, and transcendence. On one hand, if Burke drops the ontological difference in “kind” between motion and action, then he forfeits the rhetorical and ethical potential of the human, dissolving symbolicity into the nonsymbolic realm, just like the behaviorists. And on the other hand, if Burke drops the possibility of merger, then he severs the material and behavioral realities of human life from rhetoric and ethics, just like the constructionists. Burke’s dialectical materialism works within these theoretical constraints, taking full advantage of division, merger, and transcendence, at times separating the symbolic, the rhetorical, and the ethical from nonsymbolic motion and other times folding them together, thereby keeping his dialectical philosophy of human embodiment consistent but nevertheless ambiguous. Understood as a “heads I win, tails you lose” device, Burke’s dialectical materialism is not satisfied with any other discourse of the human condition, unless ontology is specifically framed on his terms as *homo dialecticus*.²⁰⁶

From this perspective, new materialist philosophy would make an easy target for Burke. They seem to mirror the methodological error of the behaviorists in proposing “the difference between humans and animals, or even between sentient and nonsentient matter, is a question of *degree* more than of *kind*.”²⁰⁷ Playing another round of “heads I win tails

²⁰⁶ Burke, *Rhetoric*, 276; Davis, *Inessential Solidarity*, 23.

²⁰⁷ Coole and Frost, “Introducing,” 21; emphasis added.

you lose,” Burke needs only to shift from the principle of merger to division, and emphasize the fundamental opposition between symbolic action and nonsymbolic motion, between humans and nonhumans, to set the balance right again. However, in examining the strategic ambiguity of Burke’s dialectical materialism, I have allowed Burke to play a different game: “cards face up on the table.”²⁰⁸ In *Attitudes Toward History*, Burke describes “cards-face-up-on-the-table” as a form of theoretical critique in which one thinker traces another’s “heads-I-win-tails-you-lose” strategy, not to eliminate that person’s system of thought but to identify possibilities for theoretical transformation within it.²⁰⁹ In analyzing Burke’s dialectical materialism, I agree with Crable, Hawhee, Kraemer, Pruchnic, and many other rhetoricians who argue that Burke offers a rich and robust context for studying movement, sensation, and embodiment, though I also believe that rhetoric has potential to transcend Burke’s dialectical and humanistic constraints in theorizing the dynamism of motion. New materialist philosophy, I argue, can assist rhetoric in (re)conceptualizing the world-making capacities of movement and sensation, without eliminating or dismissing the prolific work that Burke has already done in these areas. By thinking nondialectically about matter, new materialisms do not presuppose a fundamental polarity or opposition between movement and language or between humans and nonhumans, yet they also do not reduce either one to the other, which opens new potential for studying the rhetoricity of motion.

Erin Manning’s nondialectical philosophy of movement, especially as articulated in *Relationescapes*, is a prime example of what new materialisms can offer rhetoric in terms of theorizing movement and mobility. In *Relationescapes*, Manning aims to “[unthink] the

²⁰⁸ Burke, *Attitudes*, 260.

²⁰⁹ Burke, *Attitudes*, 260-263.

dichotomies that populate our worlds,” such as motion-action, nature-culture, and subject-object, without dismissing or undermining dialectical concepts altogether.²¹⁰ Instead, as a radical transformation of s dialectical materialism, Manning’s biagrammatic materialism “allows us to approach [dialectical concepts] from another perspective: a shifting one” in which “the world lives differently.”²¹¹ The theoretical transformation from Burke’s dialectical materialism to Manning’s biagrammatic materialism can be grasped in the conceptual shift from incipiency as attitude to preacceleration.

Manning’s Biagrammatic Materialism

In her biagrammatic materialism, Erin Manning articulates motion as a world-making process, which I argue is fundamentally rhetorical. Her nondialectical approach to the dynamism of matter requires a rethinking of Burke’s depiction of motion as ontologically sheer and dialectically opposed to symbolicity, which has shaped much of the discourse about movement and mobility in rhetorical studies since the late twentieth century. Paired with her concept of biogram, Manning’s concept of preacceleration can help facilitate a theoretical shift away from Burke’s humanistic assumptions about motion and open up new consideration of what movement is and does. As discussed in the last chapter, biograms are intensive movements that organize the flow of lived experience, and they presuppose a form of incipience that Manning calls “preacceleration.” Preaccelerations are to biograms what mobilities are to movements. In a general sense, preacceleration encompasses the ways in which motion itself moves and changes, how

²¹⁰ Manning, *Relationescapes*, 14.

²¹¹ Manning, *Relationescapes*, 14-15.

biograms themselves come into being. By drawing out the theoretical transformation between Manning's and Burke's concepts of incipience, I argue for a broader ontological shift from dialectical to biogrammatic materialism.

Incipience can be broadly understood as “the beginning of a selection,” and Burke and Manning can be interpreted as emphasizing different processes of incipency.²¹² As previously discussed, Burke incorporates “attitude” as an intermediary term in his dialectical materialism to conceptualize how sheer motion becomes incipiently or potentially active. Attitudes produce gradation to the sheerness of motion that allows moving bodies to initiate the selective function of symbolicity. In Manning's vocabulary, what Burke calls “attitude” compares to “prearticulation,” or the transformation of embodied movement into articulated language.²¹³ Although similarly interested in prearticulation as the incipency of language, Manning “begins with the concept not of prearticulation but preacceleration.”²¹⁴ Preacceleration provides “a way of thinking the incipency of movement,” or how motion begins to select its next move.²¹⁵ This selection is “not a decision in the sense of an individual wanting to move,” Manning writes, but a “relational encounter” with the world that propels the body into motion.²¹⁶ “In the context of a movement,” she explains, “it is the virtual experience of a welling into movement that precedes actual displacement.”²¹⁷ Preacceleration as the incipient capacity of motion to actualize movement would be something of a misnomer for Burke, since he associates

²¹² Massumi, *Parables*, 30.

²¹³ Manning, *Relationescapes*, 5-6, 213-217; Manning, *Always More*, 158-159.

²¹⁴ Manning, *Relationescapes*, 5.

²¹⁵ Manning, *Relationescapes*, 14.

²¹⁶ Manning, *Relationescapes*, 54.

²¹⁷ Manning, *Always More*, 5.

choice-making with symbolicity and keeps motion sheer until imbued with attitude. Manning however does not claim motion is distinctionless nor does she theorize motion in dialectical opposition to action or require an intermediary concept like attitude to make motion active. Instead, working from a nondialectical perspective of movement, she argues that selection is immanent to materiality, which opens a mode of activity to motion that Burke theoretically restricts with his dialectical grammar of nonsymbolic motion and symbolic action.²¹⁸

The conceptual shift from incipience as attitude to preacceleration, I argue, requires a rethinking of motion as an aesthetic, relational, and ethical process. By foregrounding the virtuality or incipency of movement, preacceleration draws attention to the contingent creativity of motion. In Manning's biogrammatic materialism, movement "is no longer asked to express something outside it: movement becomes its own artwork."²¹⁹ Movement is an inventive activity, and preacceleration is "movement's capacity for invention."²²⁰ Manning exemplifies this inventive or creative capacity through figures like walking, dancing, painting, and film. For example, in the figure of walking, she explores how the ongoing actualization of footwork transforms the potential of ambulatory experience. "In the preacceleration of a step," she writes, "anything is possible. But as the step begins to actualize, there is no longer much potential for divergence: the foot will land where it lands," but its landing "reopen[s] toward the next incipient action."²²¹ As preaccelerated steps take form in reality, their specific movements shape the future possibilities of the

²¹⁸ For a related discussion about matter as selective and aesthetic, see Shaviro, *Universe*, 39-40.

²¹⁹ Manning, *Relationescapes*, 26.

²²⁰ Manning, *Relationescapes*, 18-19.

²²¹ Manning, *Relationescapes*, 7.

walk as well as the walker's ongoing relationship with the world. From Manning's perspective, the inventive work of preacceleration is never finished because each step, each move, fundamentally exists in transition to another stride, another movement. "Preacceleration: we are going, always already," Manning argues.²²² Of this aesthetic approach to ontology, John Urry writes "there is no stasis, only processes of creation and transformation. There is nothing before movement; movement expresses how things are."²²³ The ontological implication of Manning's concept of preacceleration is that incipency creates the conditions for being in motion.

In addition to foregrounding this aesthetic function of preacceleration, the shift from Burke to Manning requires a rethinking of relationality in motion. In his dialectical materialism, Burke articulates an individual-collective dialectic that isolates human bodies from one another based on "the centrality of the nervous system."²²⁴ According to Burke, only through symbolicity can discrete bodies enter into collective or social relationships, transcending from Self to Culture. In terms of ontology, Manning takes a more ecological approach to (human) embodiment than Burke, and claims that bodies are themselves relational entities composed of more-than-human multiplicities or collectivities.²²⁵ She specifically writes of bodies as "more-than-one" to stress the idea that "bodies individuate relationally" rather than discretely.²²⁶ "To collectively individuate is to acknowledge," Manning writes, "that all communities are made up of more (kinds of) bodies than we can

²²² Manning, *Relationescapes*, 14.

²²³ Urry, *Mobilities*, 33.

²²⁴ Burke, "Motion/Action," 813. See also Davis, *Inessential Solidarity*, 19-26.

²²⁵ See Manning, *Relationescapes*, 28, 95; Manning, *Politics of Touch*, xx; Manning, *Always More*; Mandradjieff, "Ballerina," 268.

²²⁶ Manning, *Relationescapes*, 66.

count.”²²⁷ From her perspective, the body exists “in relation to an associated milieu” and cannot be thought apart from other bodies and communities, from the world through which it moves.²²⁸ To further emphasize this sense of connection between body and world, Manning incorporates the term “movement-with” into her biagrammatic materialism.²²⁹ “To take the next step,” she writes, again utilizing the figure of walking, “is to move-with the world.”²³⁰ Moreover, Manning’s ecological approach to motion understands individual movements themselves as composed by other movements that preaccelerate them. “There is no movement,” she writes, “that is not nested within another movement.”²³¹ This idea of movements existing with and within other movements intensifies the relationality of motion. Manning’s biagrammatic materialism thus theorizes a deeply relational process in which many bodies and many movements *move together*.

As a collective experience of being-in-motion, bodily movement involves an immanent ethicality. In Manning’s biagrammatic materialism, the potential for ethics is embedded within motion itself rather than layered onto ontology as an additional, external, or symbolic element of bodily experience only applicable to human beings, as Burke would have it. Instead, Manning articulates what she calls an “ethics of encounter” or “ethics of relation,” which aims to cultivate greater sensibility or attunement of how different beings move together.²³² In attending to ethicality, Manning’s emphasis is “not explicitly for or toward the human, but with the world in its emergence,” “an ethics that is concerned with

²²⁷ Manning, *Politics of Touch*, xx.

²²⁸ Manning, *Relationescapes*, 138.

²²⁹ See Manning, *Relationescapes*, 29-30, 49, 54.

²³⁰ Manning, *Relationescapes*, 49.

²³¹ Manning, *Relationescapes*, 39.

²³² Manning, *Relationescapes*; Manning, *Always More*.

the associated milieu of relation.”²³³ “This ethics of relation,” she continues, “is the attentiveness, in the event [of movement], to its relational matrix, to the *how* of its composition.”²³⁴ A contrast from Burke’s humanistic conceptualization of ethics as dependent on symbolicity, Manning’s non-anthropocentric approach to ethics resonates with other contemporary efforts in rhetoric to theorize the ethical dimensions of ontology, such as Diane Davis’ “irreparable openness,” Thomas Rickert’s “ambient rhetoric,” and Scot Barnett’s “nonhuman care.”²³⁵ What Manning contributes to this burgeoning conversation about ethics, ontology, and rhetoric is a focus on being in motion. Preacceleration and biogram are key concepts for engaging with ethicality in this context, since they address notions of otherness and difference situated within the contingent incipencies and intensities of bodily movement.

As an example of what this theoretical shift from dialectical to biogrammatic materialisms looks like in practice, recall the introductory ethnographic narrative about Ellen slipping on Norumbega Mountain Trail as she was talking about thinking about slipping while walking. In Burke’s dialectical materialism, slipping would not be rhetorical or ethical unless some symbolic ingredient was ambiguously added to the unintended motion of Ellen’s body. If someone pushed her or if she willed a fall, then the slip would become more than a sheer accident; it would become an intentional act of rhetoric with ethical implications. From Manning’s biogrammatic materialism, the slip itself would be considered a rhetorical and ethical activity that transformed the associated milieu which preaccelerated it. Biogrammatically, what Ellen could and could not do in that moment of

²³³ Manning, *Always More*, 153, 152.

²³⁴ Manning, *Always More*, 156; emphasis in original.

²³⁵ Davis, *Inessential Solidarity*; Rickert, *Ambient Rhetoric*; Barnett, *Rhetorical Realism*.

the hike would have been physically conditioned by the motion of slipping. Unassisted by a shove or will to fall, the slip itself would have produced a biagrammatic tension that colored and constrained Ellen's comportment with the associated milieu, not only shaping the possibilities of her next immediate move to rebalance her body, but also her future bodily movements of taking the next step and continuing the hike. Thinking about bodily movement as collective individuation, the slip would have changed how Ellen related to the trail, the weather, the interview—the world of which she was a part.

In the form of Burke's motion-action polarity, dialectical materialism prevails in rhetorical studies of movement and mobility. Rhetorical analyses of hiking that conceptualize embodied movement as "a sort of material discourse, a physical symbol," or "an act of meaning-making, interpretation, and perpetuation of frames," reinforce more than de Certeau's semiological concept of movement; they wield Burke's ontological distinction between nonsymbolic motion and symbolic action, reading materiality as sheer, inertial matter until ambiguously mixed with human symbolicity.²³⁶ Manning's biagrammatic materialism transforms rhetoric's dialectics of movement, as she imagines motion to be a mode of activity in which matter moves and changes, with or without the will of human beings. Matter goes, and its going implies a rhetoricity and ethicality that Burke's dialectical ontology otherwise restricts. Manning's nondialectical approach to materiality affords rhetoricians an opportunity to consider the more-than-human incipency, creativity, and relationality of movement, the experiential lures, rhythms, and tonalities that emerge from being in motion. From this biagrammatic materialism, embodied practices of walking and hiking, slipping and falling, breathing and pulsing, have

²³⁶ Senda-Cook, "Rugged Practices," 132; Schmitt, "Mounting Tensions," 427.

rhetorical and ethical importance because such moves exist in preaccelerated relationships with other beings, with other movements.

Movements Moving Movements

It is no small step to Manning's concept of incipency as preacceleration from Burke's attitude, for each term enacts a particular mode of thinking about movement, bodies, and language in relation to the world more broadly. "The concepts that a philosopher produces depend on the problems to which he or she is responding," Steven Shaviro writes, "the difficulties that cry out to him or to her, demanding a response."²³⁷ The game of "heads-I-win-tails-you-lose" that Burke played with his motion-action dialectic was not just a response to what he saw as the theoretical inaccuracies of behavioral psychologists, social constructionists, and rhetorical critics. Instead, Burke was responding to—and preaccelerated by—the historical context in which he lived, a time of unprecedented violence, war, and change in the twentieth century. His dialectic is itself a kind of "equipment for living" aimed at cultivating a place for ethics in a world of flux.²³⁸ His ethics is fundamentally humanistic: it relies on a concept of human beings as language-using animals that produce change in the world through symbolic acts of decision-making and community-building. Symbolicity, that unique layer of ontology added onto sheer motion, is the point of intervention for Burke. He needs a distinction in *kind* to exist between the nonsymbolic and the symbolic—and for it to be strategically ambiguous, adaptable to a difference of *degree*—so that he can work and rework the issue of ethics in

²³⁷ Shaviro, *Universe*, 33.

²³⁸ Burke, *Philosophy*, 61, 293–304.

relation to human experience, life, and society. Burke's motion-action dialectic is, I believe, a way of preserving the potential for rhetoric as symbolic action to function ethically in a precarious world.

Burke is right to consider the human in relation to ethics, and his work is valuable because it allows rhetoricians to engage the issue of motion. Like Shaviro, Donna Haraway calls attention to the consequences of one's philosophical concepts: "It matters what thoughts think thoughts. It matters what knowledges know knowledges. It matters what relations relate relations. It matters what worlds world worlds. It matters what stories tell stories."²³⁹ In the context of his dialectical materialism, Burke thinks thoughts of kind and degree; he knows knowledges of human embodiment; he relates relations of drama, rhetoric, and ethics; and he worlds worlds of nonsymbolic motion and symbolic action. In doing so, Burke tells stories of inertial matter and human exceptionalism that must be examined and questioned if contemporary rhetoricians, living in a world that is no less violent or precarious than it was in the twentieth century, are to further develop Burke's theoretical tradition of studying movement, sensation, and embodiment.

New materialist philosophies in general and Manning's biagrammatic materialism in particular, I believe, are well equipped to contend with these inertial and humanistic conceits as they tell different stories about the world than Burke's dialectical materialism. Importantly, motion is not "sheer" for new materialists; instead, as Coole and Frost explain, motion "is always something more than 'mere' matter: an excess, force, vitality, relationality, or difference that renders matter active, self-creative, productive,

²³⁹ Haraway, *Staying*, 35.

unpredictable.”²⁴⁰ Theorizing matter as dynamic rather than inertial, new materialists problematize conventional notions of human agency reiterated by dialectical theories of materiality such as Burke’s. Whereas new materialist scholars like Jane Bennett “emphasize, even overemphasize, the agentic contributions of nonhuman forces (operating in nature, in the human body, and in human artifacts) in an attempt to counter the narcissistic reflex of human language and thought,” Manning intervenes in anthropocentrism by focusing primarily on *movement*.²⁴¹ Using nondialectical concepts of biogram and preacceleration, she draws attention to the ecological dynamism of motion, the intensities and incipencies flowing through the more-than-human bodies that shape human agency and the world more broadly. According to Manning’s biogrammatic materialism, motion is the rhetorical activity of matter—the aesthetic, relational, and ethical process of making and marking worlds in and through movement. With her focus on being in motion, Manning would thus paraphrase Haraway: *it matters what movements move movements*, for each move—each breath, each step, each hike—responds to and changes the associated milieu that welled it into existence.

It is one thing to suggest rhetoricians drop the dialectical opposition between nonsymbolic motion and symbolic action in favor of biogrammatic materialism; it is another to actually practice it. This nondialectical approach to materiality would change how rhetoricians understand movement and mobility within fieldwork as well as what conditions choice and intentionality in research contexts. The separation of research as action from the motions observed is undone, which changes the basic relationship of

²⁴⁰ Coole and Frost, “Introducing,” 9.

²⁴¹ Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, xvi.

observer and observed, critic and field, one of many ethical consequences of a nondialectical approach to materiality.²⁴² To explore the potential of biogrammatic materialism in relation to rhetorical field methods I return to hiking, this time to Borestone Mountain Audubon Sanctuary in Maine. If chapters two and three read “head-down” to address theoretical issues of movement and materiality, then chapter four reads “feet-up” to engage with biogram and preacceleration in rhetorical-ethnographic practice.

²⁴² Barad, “Posthumanist Performativity.”

CHAPTER 4

FOOTWORK AS FIELDWORK:

DOCUMENTING HIKING AT BORESTONE MOUNTAIN

Rhetoric in the legacy of Michel de Certeau treats the materiality of movement as dialectical tensions grounded in semiological processes of meaning-making. Tensions like nature-culture, access-preservation, and strategy-tactic exemplify larger a conceptual issue for rhetoric as it reconsiders its humanistic roots. Kenneth Burke's motion-action dialectic is a representative anecdote of how rhetoric grapples with humanism as it conceptualizes movement in relation to language and ethics. A biogrammatic approach conceptually frees movement from these semiological, dialectical, and humanistic constraints, instead configuring movement's intensities and incipencies as themselves rhetorically active. How one mobilizes this biogrammatic materialism to study rhetoric is far from clear, since prevailing methods have trouble avoiding the theoretical trappings of Burke and de Certeau, the dialectic of movement and meaning. One way to engage the question of biogrammatic rhetoric is considering what footwork has to do with fieldwork and how the materiality of movement can be accounted for within research processes.

My biogrammatic approach to fieldwork can be understood in relation to new forms of participatory research methods being developed across rhetoric, performance, and environmental communication where scholars are interested in studying material interactions between people and places.²⁴³ As scholars make strides metaphorically in

²⁴³ McKinnon, Ansen, Chávez, and Howard, *Text + Field*; Middleton, Hess, Endres, and Senda-Cook, *Participatory Critical Rhetoric*.

methodology, they are also taking steps physically in outdoor environments. Donal Carbaugh and Lisa Rudnick traveled the borderlands at Blackfoot Reservation and Glacier National Park; Kathleen McGill walked the “living theatre” of Gerbode Valley; Donovan Conley and Lawrence Mullen summited Turtlehead Peak in Red Rock Canyon; Samantha Senda-Cook hiked the rugged trails at Zion National Park; David Terry and Sarah Vartabedian backpacked a southern section of the Appalachian Trail; and Casey Schmitt trekked the “improvised footpaths” at the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore.²⁴⁴ Although interdisciplinary interest in participatory research has raised awareness about material dimensions of human-environment relations, it has minimally considered the footwork involved in the doing of fieldwork. One could dismiss ambulation as insignificant or supplementary to fieldwork, but like Tim Ingold and Jo Lee Vergunst, this chapter takes seriously the role of movement and mobility in ethnographic research processes.

In the field of anthropology, Ingold and Vergunst problematize the status of ambulation in participatory research methodologies. “Ethnographers,” they write, “are accustomed to carrying out much of their work on foot. But while living with a group of people usually means walking around with them, it is rare to find ethnography that reflects on walking itself.”²⁴⁵ From their perspective, walking is less a method than a mode of experience, enabling and constraining what and how ethnographers can learn of the people,

²⁴⁴ Carbaugh and Rudnick, “Which Place;” McGill, “Reading the Valley,” 397; Conley and Mullen, “Righting the Commons;” Senda-Cook, “Materializing Tensions;” Senda-Cook, “Rugged Practices;” Terry and Vartabedian, “Alone but Together;” Schmitt, “Mounting Tensions,” 419.

²⁴⁵ Ingold and Vergunst, “Introduction,” 3.

cultures, and discourses they study.²⁴⁶ “The movement of walking is itself a way of knowing,” such that “[one’s] knowledge of the environment is altered by [one’s] techniques of footwork.”²⁴⁷ The previous chapter on biogrammatic materialism addressed a similar idea, in exploring how ambulatory accidents like slipping constitute “particularly pointed examples of becoming aware of what an environment is *really* like.”²⁴⁸ This chapter further focuses on issues of presence, awareness, and knowledge in relation to footwork in particular and mobility in general, working from a biogrammatic perspective of rhetorical ethnography.

As argued in the previous chapters, biogrammatic rhetoric considers affective relationships of bodies and worlds in terms of movement—or, to borrow Ackerman’s phrase again, “sensorial travel.”²⁴⁹ A biogrammatic approach to rhetorical ethnography resonates with current efforts to study rhetoric *in situ*, and adds a special emphasis on issues of mobility and, in this case, footwork. Michael Middleton and colleagues, for example, argue that *in situ* rhetorical field methods allow researchers to analyze the “rhetoricity of bodies and places,” the “complex intersections between words, places, bodies, and contexts.”²⁵⁰ Movement is presupposed which limits its potential to participate in the rhetoricity of the field. From a biogrammatic perspective, movement would become an explicit part of the research process. It would not only participate in the “complex intersections” that rhetorical ethnographers study; it would also become, as Ingold and

²⁴⁶ Although previously discussed in the dissertation, it bears repeating that walking is a normative practice of human mobility. Critical attention to footwork in ethnographic contexts calls into question the normativity and privilege of bodily ability and disability.

²⁴⁷ Ingold and Vergunst, “Introduction,” 5; Ingold, “Culture on the Ground,” 46.

²⁴⁸ Vergunst, “Taking a Trip,” 114; emphasis in original.

²⁴⁹ Ackerman, “Walking.”

²⁵⁰ Middleton, Hess, Endres, and Senda-Cook, *Participatory Critical Rhetoric*, 19.

Vergunst suggest, a constitutive element of rhetorical-ethnographic research itself. According to biogrammatic materialism, movement is embedded in (human) ontology, and is therefore inseparable from one's ongoing experience, including the mobilities that capacitate fieldwork, such as the footwork of ambulation. This chapter extends the biogrammatic notion of ontological, experiential, sensorial movement to ask how, in rhetorical-ethnographic contexts, ways of moving facilitate ways of knowing.

In this chapter I explore footwork as fieldwork by analyzing a rhetorical ethnography of hiking with Aislinn Sarnacki, an outdoors author, photographer, and videographer in Maine. First I provide some background information about my case study with Aislinn, and then I narrate and reflect on our hike at Borestone Mountain Audubon Sanctuary, taken in November 2017. In this ethnographic analysis, I examine the rhetorical intersection of Aislinn documenting the hike as a journalist, while I was simultaneously documenting the hike as an ethnographer. To assist in navigating this intersection, I focus on three, interrelated concepts of biogrammatic movement: passage, event, and interval. These concepts emphasize different dynamics of footwork and fieldwork, which I discuss more broadly in the conclusion.

Acting Out with Aislinn

Aislinn Sarnacki is a prominent writer and photographer of nature and outdoor recreation in Maine. As a journalist for the Bangor Daily News (BDN), she authors a popular blog named "Act Out with Aislinn" that highlights a variety of hiking trails across the state in what she calls "1-Minute Hikes."²⁵¹ To date she has taken and documented over

²⁵¹ Sarnacki, "Act Out with Aislinn."

300 hikes for the BDN, and her blogs often feature a combination of writing, photos, and videos.²⁵² Drawing on these and other hiking experiences, Aislinn recently published three guidebooks—*Family Friendly Hikes in Maine*, *Maine Hikes Off the Beaten Path*, and *Dog-Friendly Hikes in Maine*—and created another blog, “Adventure with Us: Maine and Beyond,” as well as a YouTube Channel, “Adventures with Aislinn.”²⁵³

In September 2017, I conducted a biographical interview with Aislinn, and she described her journalism as a way to help build community around wilderness and wellness in Maine.²⁵⁴ In the interview, she claimed she tends to hike “very slowly,” and describes herself as “less athletic” than her blog followers generally think. Her slowness is intentional because she tries to document her hikes as best as she can for her blogs, books, and videos. She wants her work to be practical, informative, and educational for her audiences, as they consider exploring different areas across the state. Aislinn patiently records confusing and challenging sections of trail systems with her camera so those who follow her blog can learn what to expect when they go out to hike the trails themselves. She also takes photos and videos of local flora and fauna so her audiences can learn more about the beauty and diversity of Maine’s wilderness, and she captures more creative shots to build additional content for her online portfolio. Furthermore, Aislinn writes personal stories in her blog

²⁵² Sarnacki, “Map Displays.”

²⁵³ Sarnacki, *Family Friendly*; Sarnacki, *Maine Hikes*; Sarnacki, *Dog Friendly*; Sarnacki, “Adventures with Us.”

²⁵⁴ This biographical interview was shaped around what Irving Seidman calls a “Focused Life History” in which “the interviewer’s task is to put the participant’s experience in context by asking him or her to tell as much as possible about him or herself in light of the topic up to the present time,” which in Aislinn’s case was hiking and outdoor recreation in Maine. Seidman, *Interviewing*, 17.

posts and books, and includes quirks, jokes, and mishaps in her videos, which she says her followers especially appreciate and connect with.

In November 2011, Aislinn had hiked Borestone Mountain Audubon Sanctuary with her partner Derek.²⁵⁵ As Maine's Audubon Society describes, the sanctuary "encompass[es] more than 1,600 acres . . . [and] offers a spectacular array of natural features, including rare older forest, three crystalline ponds, exposed granite crags, and sweeping, panoramic views."²⁵⁶ However, while Aislinn and Derek were hiking at Borestone, the sunny weather had suddenly transformed into a fierce wintry storm that forced them to retreat from the trails before they reached the panoramic peaks. In the 1-Minute Hike, the video shows the two standing in awe at the storm, as it unleashed powerful winds and freezing rain. Aislinn had not returned to Borestone Mountain since that day, but was nevertheless excited about hiking there again as part of my ethnographic case study. She desired to re-experience the mountain in more accommodating weather, and capture new and better footage about the trails for her blogs.

In November 2017, I joined Aislinn, her partner Derek, and my partner Amy for a day hike at Borestone Mountain Audubon Sanctuary. This was the first and only time that I participated in a hike with Aislinn for my ethnographic research project. What makes my case study with Aislinn unique is the layering of our documentary practices: I was hiking to document hiking as an ethnographer while Aislinn was hiking to document hiking as a journalist. In what follows, I take a biogrammatic approach to analyzing our hike at

²⁵⁵ Sarnacki, "1-Minute Hike."

²⁵⁶ Maine Audubon, "Borestone Mountain Audubon Sanctuary."

Borestone that focuses on experiential intersections of movement and documentation, footwork and fieldwork.

Biograms at Borestone

Methodologically, a biogrammatic analysis differs from a dialectical analysis of hiking. Dialectics assumes that researchers can carve outdoor recreational experiences into “dual modes of engagement,” like nature-culture or physical-discursive, but biograms focus on intensities or “affective tones” of experiences as they happen, which limits how researchers can and cannot talk about them.²⁵⁷ By implication, a biogrammatic analysis must be localized in an archive of practices. Three concepts to help guide this kind of biogrammatic analysis are passage, event, and interval. Informed by Alfred North Whitehead’s process philosophy, “passages” are continuous flows of experience; “events” are special occasions of experience, similar to punctuations or stoppages; and “intervals” are liminal experiences between events.²⁵⁸ These interrelated concepts express different ideas about movement and mobility, but they are not derivative from, or reducible to, one another.

As a brief example of how these concepts can work together, consider the research archive that I generated for this dissertation. The specific hikes that I studied from 2017-2019 can be understood as “events;” they were special experiences of movement that were unique compared to my day-to-day activities like walking around campus or driving home from work. Such mundane activities would be “intervals” in relation to those ethnographic

²⁵⁷ Schmitt, “Mounting Tensions,” 424; Manning, *Relationescapes*, 40.

²⁵⁸ See for example Whitehead, *Modes*; Shaviro, *Universe*; Massumi, *Parables*; Manning, *Relationescapes*; Stengers, *Thinking*.

events. Both events and intervals are part of “passage,” but passage also extends beyond them, including for instance the other hikes that I have taken before the dissertation and the ones I might take after it. Passage would consider arcs, loops, and trajectories of experience such as taking different hikes at Acadia National Park or travels to different parks entirely. Importantly, passage, event, and interval blur together as conceptual abstractions, each capable of explaining the others, but they become distinct and disclosive once localized in material experiences or archives.

In this particular case study, I focus on Aislinn’s journalistic practice of documenting hiking, which affected the flow and feel of our hike along the trail system at Borestone Mountain Audubon Sanctuary. My biogrammatic analysis examines passages, events, and intervals from our hike, utilizing a variety of archival documents such as audio and video recordings, as well as a method of multimodal feeling rhetoric, as previously discussed in chapter two, to emphasize the intensities and incipencies of documenting hiking and explores the world-making and world-marking capacities of embodied movement.²⁵⁹

Passage

As soon as he parked the truck after the nonstop drive from Dedham to Guilford, Derek ran into the woods to pee. Amy finished lacing up her boots in the truck, and Aislinn grabbed her camera and backpack, and headed toward an old, weathered sign, painted with the words: “Welcome to Borestone Mountain Audubon Sanctuary.” I ducked into the woods for a piss, then rejoined the group near the sign. Just ahead of where we stood on

²⁵⁹ Landau, “Feeling Rhetorical Critics.”

the shale-covered path was a large wooden gate. There, Aislinn started recording herself with her camera, talking about Borestone Mountain, our group, and the weather. I snapped a picture of her documentary-in-progress, while Derek and Amy stood around, waiting for the hike to begin.

“Where does it start?” Rebecca Solnit asks, invoking a sense of mystery about the beginning of a hike.²⁶⁰ Did our hike begin when the truck entered the park? When our feet reconnected with the ground? When Aislinn clicked “record” on her camera? Our bodies were already in transition—in the middle of already coming from one place and incipiently going to another—so a precise beginning seems impossible to locate. Arrivals must be contextualized in relation to *passages*, or continuous flows of movement. These flows are not linear; they arc, loop, and spiral. I write into this nonlinear concept of passage by jumping back and forth between different cycles of movement, rewinding and fast-forwarding the hike in different ways. This way of writing does not freeze movements so as to “read” them semiologically like de Certeau or stop them mid-move like Zeno. Instead, writing biagrammatic jumps affords a dynamic engagement with the materiality of movement. Nonstop.

Fast-forward about four hours, and our group was marching down a rocky access road, heading back toward the parking lot. We were moving quickly, and the truck was finally in sight. It was difficult to hear what Aislinn said because our boots were crunching so forcefully against the gravel. “Well, that was great,” Derek said, as we neared the truck. “Yeah, good hike,” Amy agreed. “Yeah, we’ve wanted to do that again,” Aislinn said. “That was our second 1-Minute Hike, about 5-6 years ago, so obviously the video was bad

²⁶⁰ Solnit, *Wanderlust*, p. 3.

and I took like four photos.” Before I realized it, I was already seated in the truck. The heat was on full blast, and Derek was driving away from the lot. “There’s just so many trails,” Aislinn said, continuing her story, “I don’t visit many of them twice.”

Was the hike over? We were in the truck but had another 75 miles to Bangor, plus 15 to Dedham, and I was still recording audio of our conversation. Maybe the hike had already been over, before we sat in the truck? Both Derek and Amy announced, “good hike,” as if it had already been completed. Invoking a similar sense of mystery about ending a hike as Solnit did about beginning one, Ingold and Vergunst ask: “When will it ever end?”²⁶¹ “Perishing is inevitable,” Erin Manning writes, but “it is not the end.”²⁶² Similar to an arrival, a departure preaccelerates the next move; it exists in the middle of passage. The rewind jumps forward. From a biogrammatic perspective, “there can be no beginning or end to movement.”²⁶³ Methodologically, in analyzing passage as such, the task is not to determine when and where the hike began and ended but to trace how it transitioned.

Rewind back to the wooden gate at the trailhead. Our group crossed the threshold, and came upon a bulletin board displaying a giant, waterproof, topographic map of the mountain. Aislinn took a picture of the map, then traced a route across it, depicting what would become the path of our hike. We would trek from the parking lot to the visitor center on the Base Trail, then ascend to the West and East Peaks on the Summit Trail. From the panoramic peaks, we would descend on the Summit Trail, but instead of returning to the parking lot via the Base Trail, we would scoot over to an access road, which featured the

²⁶¹ Ingold and Vergunst, “Introduction,” 1.

²⁶² Manning, *Relationescapes*, 38-39.

²⁶³ Manning, *Relationescapes*, 13.

Greenwood Overlook. According to the map, the hike would be about 5 miles roundtrip and range over 1,200 feet in elevation.

Our group materially embodied those quantitative values during the course of our hike, but such movement, as Manning argues, is more than the “quantitative displacement from a to b.”²⁶⁴ Produced in the passage between places—between parking lot and East Peak, between 800 and 2,000 feet—is what Brian Massumi calls a “qualitative difference.”²⁶⁵ As Manning writes, passage is “a way of thinking space-time qualitatively without subsuming it to a certain measuring of space.”²⁶⁶ It protests the point-by-point logic of Zeno’s paradox, which cuts the continuity of movement into discrete, linear a’s and b’s: truck → trails → summit, etc. A biogrammatic approach to passage engages the “dynamic unity” of movement as nonlinear, durational, intensive experience that continuously flows and transitions, moves and changes.²⁶⁷

Fast-forward about 2.5 miles from the wooden gate to the East Peak. Our group had finally reached the second summit of Borestone Mountain. Emerging out from a narrow tunnel of trees onto the relatively flat, open area of the summit, we were quickly enveloped by the autumnal sunlight. Previously, when we had reached the West Peak, Derek said, “you wouldn’t wanna stop here” because “the next summit is even better.” He was right. As I strolled onto the sunlit summit, I gazed in awe at the panoramic view. “There’s like no wind today,” Aislinn remarked. “I really thought it was going to be windy,” Amy said.

²⁶⁴ Manning, *Relationescapes*, 6

²⁶⁵ Massumi, *Parables*, 1.

²⁶⁶ Manning, *Relationescapes*, 17.

²⁶⁷ Massumi, *Parables*, 6.

Aislinn flipped her camera back on herself to narrate a brief story about the peak and surrounding landscape.

Quantitatively, the summit was thought to be the halfway point of our 5-mile hike, the turning point of out-and-back loop through Borestone. Qualitatively, the summit was what Conley and Mullen call a “wow” moment, a “combination of visual-aesthetic and spatial-material forces [that] catches hikers off guard,” a form of astonishment or wonder.²⁶⁸ That Aislinn documented the summit was not surprising, for East Peak was of both quantitative and qualitative value to her journalism. Other “wow” moments populated our passage, and I recall one in particular that went undocumented:

Rewind back to our drive before we had reached the parking lot at Borestone. As Derek drove down a logging road, the truck kicked up clouds of dust behind us, and I shifted around in my seat, trying to get more comfortable during the bumpy ride. Then, we crossed a tiny bridge with picturesque scenery: a stream of water ran under the road, and giant trees lined its banks with fall foliage. I witnessed the beautiful scene through the truck’s tinted windows, and Derek slowed the vehicle down, lingering for a moment on the bridge, before hitting the acceleration.

“As we stretch movement (and the movement stretches us),” Manning writes, “we know that its perishing is near, and yet we flirt with this nearness.”²⁶⁹ Creeping across the bridge, we flirted with a temporary view of fall scenery, lingering in wonder at the environment. In this “wow” moment from our drive, there was a sense in which “this is what we came here” for but we were not quite “there” yet. We were still driving, “dancing

²⁶⁸ Conley and Mullen, “Righting the Commons,” 183.

²⁶⁹ Manning, *Relationscapes*, 38.

the not-yet” of our soon-to-be hike while sitting in the here-and-now of the truck, making sense of the environment in passage.²⁷⁰

Fast-forward to our group’s descent of the Summit Trail, as we were climbing down a steep and rocky section. “These are like super shallow,” Aislinn said, referring to the rugged steps, “just like straight down.” “Yeah,” Derek agreed, “my knees are clinking, still shaking.” I was experiencing something similar: each time I shifted my body weight onto one foot and stepped down with the other, my leg almost buckled out from under me. “I don’t remember there being so many steps,” Amy said. “I think we paused a lot,” Aislinn replied. “Is that what happened?” Amy asked, “I feel like there wasn’t this many.” “Yeah, I agree,” Derek said, “I feel like it’s a lot of steps. Where did all this stuff come from? I must’ve taken us a different way up.”

Our way of going down the mountainous trail produced a different affective tone, a different sense of place than our way of going up it. This “qualitative difference” is part of the dynamism of biagrammatic passage.²⁷¹ “We perceive, in short, not from a fixed point,” Ingold argues, “but along . . . a continuous itinerary of movement.”²⁷² From Ingold’s perspective of duration, our group’s perception and knowledge of Borestone was contingent upon our intensive itineraries of footwork. Even though our itinerary looped us back through the “same” trail, it was materially, biagrammatically different. As another example, take this loop:

Rewind earlier that morning, and I was seated across from Amy at our kitchen table, staring out the window at the road. We were waiting for Aislinn and Derek to drive by our

²⁷⁰ Manning, *Relationescapes*, 14, 28.

²⁷¹ Massumi, *Parables*, 1.

²⁷² Ingold, “Culture on the Ground,” 46.

apartment and pick us up for the hike. They were already behind schedule. I checked the time on my phone, then peered out the window and waited. Nothing. Amy and I were prepared to walk out the door upon their arrival. I checked my phone again, but the time had not changed. I checked the road again. Nothing. Fast-forward almost 9 hours later, and I was sitting back at the kitchen table, savoring dinner that evening, knees sore from the hike.

Between sitting in the kitchen at morning and night, I had embodied an intensive itinerary of movement. I had looped from home to the park and back, but things changed; I changed. Terry and Vartabedian make a similar observation about thru-hikers on the AT: “Backpackers do not simply return home changed because they saw certain things that meant something to them or tried on new personae that fit them; they return home changed because certain muscles have been strengthened or weakened by months of use or disuse.”²⁷³ Whether it is the AT, Borestone, or “home,” loops are not linear trajectories or closed circuits; they are continuous passages. Take another sedentary loop, as an example:

Fast-forward from Sunday night to Monday morning, and I was seated in my office at the University of Maine, uploading 8 audio recordings, 37 photos, and 7 videos to Google Drive. Combined, I had generated nearly 4 hours of recordings from our group hike at Borestone Mountain on Sunday. Then rewind back to Wednesday, and I was seated in the same office chair, emailing Aislinn about the details of our upcoming hike that weekend. She said our plans would be contingent upon the weather, and Sunday looked fairer than Saturday.

²⁷³ Terry and Vartabedian, “Alone but Together,” 347.

In looping the office, I had also looped Borestone and the kitchen table. Loops within loops, passages within passages. “There is no movement that is not nested within another movement,” Manning writes.²⁷⁴ One = many. From this perspective, many movements move together, and collectively preaccelerate future moves. “In preacceleration,” Manning writes, “there is never simply one movement: different rhythms, different durations coexist.”²⁷⁵ For example, think about the various rhythms and durations in this arc:

Rewind all the way back to November 10, 2011, and Aislinn published a 1-Minute Hike for the BDN called, “Borestone Mountain, near Monson, Maine.” Her video revealed that she hiked Borestone with Derek on November 4 at 12 p.m. Fast-forward to November 19, 2017, and Aislinn published a post on her new website, featuring our group’s hike on the 12th: “Borestone Mountain in Elliottsville Plantation (Maine).” Rewind once more to our carpool back to Bangor, when Aislinn admitted: “There’s just so many trails. I don’t visit many of them twice. I’ve done at least 300, but there’s a bunch I haven’t done yet.”

Between her arrival at Borestone in 2011 and her departure from the parking lot in 2017, Aislinn had taken 300+ hikes and published 300+ blog posts. But this 6-year loop did not “begin” or “end” there. Loops do not close; passages continue to flow. Immersed in intensive itineraries of documenting hiking, Aislinn was already anticipating future moves, future hikes, future documents: “There’s a bunch I haven’t done yet.” This “yet” is key. For Manning, “yet” is an expression of incipiency, a dance that “creates the potential for a passage that will have come to be.”²⁷⁶

²⁷⁴ Manning, *Relationescapes*, 39.

²⁷⁵ Manning, *Relationescapes*, 18.

²⁷⁶ Manning, *Relationescapes*, 24.

Hiking as biogrammatic passage is an ongoing wave of transitions that express different durations, rhythms, and intensities. Within the flux of passage are specific events, “each of which is limited, determinate, and finite,” according to Whitehead.²⁷⁷ “For an event to occur,” Manning writes, “experience has to be pulled out of the indeterminate, activated from the virtuality of the not-yet.”²⁷⁸ In the next section, I shift from passage to event as a way of analyzing particular occasions of Aislinn’s journalistic practice during our hike at Borestone.

Event

Swinging her arms to motion, Aislinn began to walk up the steep terrain of the Base Trail. She had just handed her camera to Derek so he could record her, Amy, and me ascending a major slope. Derek leaned against a birch tree painted with a green blaze, and faced the camera at the trail, recording Aislinn as she climbed the stone stairs. He nodded in our direction, and Amy and I quickly filed into line behind Aislinn. The three of us marched up the rugged stairs, breathing heavily, a few strides apart from one another. Then, Aislinn slowed, pivoted, and rested on a nearby tree, waiting for us to catch up. This kind of journalistic event, in which Derek or Aislinn would stop along the trail to record something while the rest of us hiked or mulled about the trail, punctuated our passage through Borestone.

Events must be considered in relation the passages or processes that create them. “Each process of becoming gives rise to *novelty*,” Steven Shaviro writes, “it produces

²⁷⁷ Shaviro, *Universe*, 4.

²⁷⁸ Manning, *Relationescapes*, 37.

something new and unique, something that never existed before.”²⁷⁹ This “novelty” is the event. However dependent on passage, Manning argues that events are dynamic in their own right. From her perspective, an event is actually an “event-the-making” that feeds back into process, and “continues to collaborate in future events.”²⁸⁰ In the context of our hike, journalistic events like the above example emerged from our continuous itinerary of movement through Borestone, but each time Aislinn (or Derek) paused to take a photo or video of our hike, the eventfulness of her (or his) documentary practice incipiently affected our experience of hiking. It changed the possibilities of what we could and could not do next. To write into these events is to write into the novel occasions of experience that the arcs, loops, and spirals of passage produce. It is not writing into cycles that jump back and forth, constantly in flux. Instead, it is writing into the production of new, distinct experiences of hiking that take form in relation to other ongoing, fluctuating moves.

From my rhetorical-ethnographic fieldwork at Borestone, I generated an archive of Aislinn’s journalistic events, and noticed that her work encompassed a variety of elements, including but not limited to:

- Acts of hiking, especially on challenging sections like the major slope at Base Trail, as narrated above;
- Trail signs and intersections;
- Buildings like the visitor center;
- Scenic environments including forests and overlooks, as well as particular rock and ice formations;

²⁷⁹ Shaviro, *Universe*, 4.

²⁸⁰ Manning, *Relationescapes*, 7; emphasis in original.

- And finally, signs of wildlife, like trees marked by beavers or birds.

Aislinn's practice of journalism punctuated our passage through Borestone and palpably inflected our individual and collective experiences of hiking. These punctuations were not static like Zeno's arrow but aesthetic events-in-the-making. In what follows, I explore the novelty of a specific event that emerged from and affected our ascent of the Summit Trail.

During our ascent, Aislinn stopped to record Derek, Amy, and me climbing a steep section of trail, and then mid-climb, she instructed us to "pause" so that she could reorient her camera to continue documenting our ascent. At the same time, I was recording a continuous video of our hike on my phone, which was strapped to chest using my backpack, a modified documentary technique that Quiring and colleagues call "embodied video."²⁸¹ Below is a montage that intermixes *both* Aislinn's footage of this event of "pausing hiking," which I excerpted from the 4-minute video about our hike at Borestone that she published on her blog, *and* my footage of the same event, excerpted from a 17-minute embodied video of our ascent on Summit Trail. In our videos, there are clear differences of documentary style—between Aislinn's edited footage and my continuous footage—but here, I am more interested in the biogrammatic eventfulness of "pausing hiking" that occurred during our ascent.

Video 5: Pausing Hiking. Montage of Aislinn's and author's footage of the pause.

²⁸¹ Quiring, McGreavy, and Carter, "Working Rhetoric's Material." On videography as method, see also Pink, *Doing Sensory Ethnography*.

For Aislinn, the idea of recording video from this part of our hike had emerged upon our arrival at this section of the trail. As Shaviro would say, something about our transition there “lured” an event of documentation, “propos[ing] some sort of *potentiality*” to Aislinn.²⁸² In response to this proposition, Aislinn scurried up the trail to record our group’s ascent.

Meanwhile, at the base of the slope, there was a strong sense of incipency—something was about to happen, or was already happening, that would involve Derek, Amy, and me, yet nothing was explained to us in advance from Aislinn. “Incipency,” Manning writes, “opens experience to the unknowable.”²⁸³ Sensing this incipient potential, this biogrammatic event-in-the-making, I was lured into documenting this part of our hike. In this regard, Aislinn’s journalistic practice preaccelerated my ethnographic practice, and our videos were emergent, or co-emergent, in relation to our group’s continuous passage through Borestone.

By affixing herself in the surrounding landscape to record our hike, Aislinn positioned herself relative to where she imagined Derek, Amy, and me climbing the trail so she could capture appropriate footage of our ascent. Anticipating how and where our hike would take place, Aislinn created a relational field of potential between herself, us, and the trail. As Manning would say, this field produced an “intensity of an opening, the gathering up of forces toward the creation of space-times of experience.”²⁸⁴ Aislinn’s field of surveillance preaccelerated our bodies, luring Derek, Amy, and me into a future movement that was already taking form.

²⁸² Shaviro, *Universe*, 54; emphasis in original.

²⁸³ Manning, *Relationescapes*, 7.

²⁸⁴ Manning, *Relationescapes*, 34.

This unfolding event also implied a future audience that would eventually view Aislinn's edited footage of our hike. This audience, in turn, shaped how Aislinn recorded our hike. Earlier in the day, Aislinn had explained this relationship between her journalism and her audience: "It's hard to make things look as big as they are sometimes. That's why I put people in the photos a lot, cause that helps scale. . . if you just get video of the slope, it doesn't really look like much of a slope. I realized that early on, was like crap! Now we're gonna have to do the video again." As depicted in the edited video of our "paused" passage on the Summit Trail, Aislinn featured hikers coming toward the camera, then going away from it, thereby communicating a sense of scale, direction, and intensity about this particular section of the hike. Her journalistic practice was thus preaccelerated by her potential, external audience.

As the journalistic event unfolded in space-time, Aislinn engaged in biagrammatic acts of stabilization, pausing herself along the trail and steadying her camera. Aislinn had previously commented on the importance of such stability in relation to her journalistic work: "I find that, if I walk with the camera, I think it's gonna be cool footage . . . then I never use it because it's a little too bumpy." If she or the camera wavered too much, her footage would become blurry and incoherent, unusable for her blog. According to Manning, stabilization is a function of movement. She argues that "stillness demands precise adaptation to the micro-movements of a shifting equilibrium. To stand still you have to move."²⁸⁵ As Aislinn crouched along the trail documenting our ascent, she enacted corrective micro-movements, biagrammatically balancing her body and the camera while recording the ongoing flow of our hike.

²⁸⁵ Manning, *Relationescapes*, 43.

Reflexively, as Aislinn recorded our ascent, I modified my own documentary work. As previously mentioned, I had my camera strapped to my chest and was recording video of our climb. As I followed behind Amy in our single-file line, I knew from previous experience that, if I were right on her heels, my camera would only capture footage of her back—and not much else. Earlier in the hike, Amy and Aislinn discussed this specific documentary issue: “Gotta avoid the butt shots,” Amy said. To which Aislinn replied, “Yeah, I try to get videos of side shots, but that’s not always possible.” Aware of this negative potential, I adjusted my gait relative to Amy as our group climbed the trail.

Before Aislinn instructed us to begin hiking toward her, Derek, Amy, and I stood at the base of the slope, witnessed Aislinn run up the hill and prepare her camera, and joked about her disappearing into the forest, since her location was difficult to see from our vantage point. Then, almost as soon as we hit the trail, we fell silent. Our silence was to an extent marked by the intensity of the climb, but it is interesting to note that, once “paused,” the three of us immediately started speaking again, yet we had not been talking since we had left the base. Aislinn’s journalistic field of surveillance had preaccelerated us to hike in a particular way, enabling some movements but constraining others. This was the event-in-the-making, the event taking form. Derek, Amy, and I had spontaneously funneled a single-file line instead of spreading out to walk two or three abreast; and rather than veer off course to examine the landscape, we stayed directly on the trail, and continued our ascent without any rest, until Aislinn instructed us to pause. “When movement converges into its form-taking,” Manning writes, “very little potential for creative expression remains.”²⁸⁶ We just hiked.

²⁸⁶ Manning, *Relationescapes*, 8.

Mid-hike, Aislinn's quasi-choreographed "pause" produced a biagrammatic interruption that became something of an event within an event. As soon as Derek, Amy, and I marched past Aislinn, she instructed us to pause. The force of the pause was palpably arrhythmic to our moving bodies, which were already prepared to take the next step, already preaccelerated to continue the climb. Suddenly stopped mid-hike, we responded to the emergent event of "pausing" through forms of mockery, performing humorous micro-movements: Amy flung out her wrists, I extended my arms, and Derek faked a fall. As micro-responses to the journalistic practice that had interrupted our flow, our passage, these micro-movements transformed the pause into a spectacle. A moment of playful rest for us, the pause became a moment of micro-adaptation and re-stabilization for Aislinn, who was actively reorienting herself and her camera to continue recording our ascent. Thus, rather than a time of inactivity, the pause was full of micro-movements, micro-responses and micro-adaptations to the shifting circumstances of this journalistic event. The stoppage was moving.

Exemplified in "pausing hiking" is a complex event-in-the-making. Biagrammatically, this event involved moving bodies "shifting between thousands of micromovements in the making."²⁸⁷ Our pause was full of motion, and as such, it cultivated the potential for future moves, which we later enacted by continuing our ascent up the trail, lingering there, waiting for Aislinn to rejoin the group, and then moving on again. As forms of stillness, pauses are less about absences of movement than transitions of movement. Embodied stillness is "always on its way to movement," as Manning argues.²⁸⁸ Lingering,

²⁸⁷ Manning, *Relationescapes*, 44.

²⁸⁸ Manning, *Relationescapes*, 44, 43.

pausing, and stopping are intensive experiences that preaccelerate how hikers interact with and document environments. By emphasizing the transitional qualities of stoppage, pauses like this event constitute novel experiences of hiking—and in this case, novel documentaries of hiking experience.

The flux of passage produces novelty in the form of events, those occasions of experience that punctuate the continuity of movement. “Interval” is a way of conceptualizing the liminal experiences that take place between the punctuated events of passage. “It exists in the between of movement,” Manning writes.²⁸⁹ If Aislinn’s journalistic practice of documenting hiking at Borestone constituted “events,” then the parts of our passage between this journalism are “intervals,” and must be understood in dynamic relation to both events and passages.

Interval

At the Base Trail, Derek had just finished recording the video of Aislinn, Amy, and me ascending that major slope. Aislinn rested on a tree and talked with Amy and me about a comparably steep trail at Acadia National Park. Amy drifted past Aislinn, continuing to climb up a few steps, then paused and said, “We just did that trail in October.” She returned to climbing, followed by me, Aislinn, and Derek, who had just rejoined the group. Our conversation faded as we took to the trail again, and Amy had quickly opened a lead of about 10 yards on us. “Uphill is my strength!” she touted. “Is it really?” I asked. “Nope!” Derek and Aislinn laughed. “Hey, either recorder,” Amy said, pausing and turning back to the group, “feel free to stop me at any point.” This transitional scene—the pausing and

²⁸⁹ Manning, *Relationescapes*, 17.

resting, the talking and joking, the drifting and hiking—exemplifies the intervals of Aislinn’s journalistic practice, the “between” of her recordings.

In this context, intervals are liminal experiences that occur between Aislinn’s journalistic events—those intervening moments from our hike in which Aislinn was *not* recording photos or videos for her blog or website. Here, I differ from Manning’s conceptualization of intervals as split-second potentialities that preaccelerate events.²⁹⁰ Localized in Aislinn’s journalistic practice, my concept of interval poses the question: What happens to our hike once her camera is off? This way of thinking about intervals emphasizes the duration of intervals by making them relative to events, specifically in relation to Aislinn’s documentary journalism, rather than presupposing a fixed temporality for them, which opens the possibility for a dynamic interplay between events and intervals within the ongoing flow of passage. This does not mean that intervals are not themselves novel or active. According to Manning, intervals enact a creative capacity, “coloring the particular actual occasion with a qualifier that distinguishes it from the plethora of other actual occasions.”²⁹¹ Intervals thus function biogrammatically, qualifying and shaping the potential of mobile, embodied experience, affectively felt by bodies in motion. To write intervals of movement requires that scholars engage and preserve the in-between-ness of events, without assuming intervals (or events) are given. Intervals are emergent, relational, and mutually affective, and must be written as such.

At Borestone, the four of us were collectively taking audio, photo, and video recordings of our hike, and there were various experiences that existed as intervals between

²⁹⁰ See for example Manning, *Relationescapes*, 16-21.

²⁹¹ Manning, *Relationescapes*, 21.

Aislinn's journalistic practice. For instance, as previously discussed, during our carpool to the park, we had lingered momentarily across a bridge to witness the beautiful, autumnal scenery. Despite this remarkable view, none of us took any notes, photos, or videos about it in the moment. How many other, less remarkable places had we passed en route without documenting them during the drive? The same goes for our passage through the trail system. Aislinn documented specific parts of our hike, such as the trail entrance, the challenging sections of trail, the visitors center, the summit, the scenic overlooks, etc., but other experiences and places were not documented, and those undocumented moments can be understood as intervals of her journalistic practice because they emerged between the punctuations of her journalism.

By recording almost 4 hours of continuous audio and video that day, I had documented many of these intervals, such as the transitions *after* Derek recorded us ascending the Base Trail and *after* Aislinn recorded us pausing on the Summit Trail. I also recorded other intervals of our ascent, including our time mulling about the visitor center, our hand-over-foot climb to the West Peak, and our slow segue to the East Peak. Additionally, I documented our descent of the "super shallow" steps on the Summit Trail, and our walk along the access road back to the truck, as well as part of our ride back to Bangor, as previously mentioned. From this archive of intervals, one of the most interesting durations occurred when our group happened to walk in unison down part of the access road.

This instance of synchronized walking emerged from our descent of Borestone Mountain. In general, our group went down the mountain much faster than we went up it, in part, because Aislinn paused more frequently for documentary work during our ascent.

As we climbed down the Summit Trail, Derek explained this sense of pacing or speed to her documentary practice: “It’s usually that we kinda are pretty slow going up, and she [Aislinn] does a lot of the videos going up, and then we go pretty quick down. That’s like the theme of how things go.” This “theme,” this rhythmic pacing to journalistic work, created an experiential arc to our hike at Borestone. On the way down the mountain, as we moved quickly and seldom paused for pictures or videos, the intervals between Aislinn’s journalism became more pronounced, especially on the access road.

The access road preaccelerated a rapid, rhythmic movement. Unlike the Summit and Base Trails, the road was wide and open, such that we could walk four abreast instead of single-file. Here, the slope was gradual and the turns were wide, designed more for vehicles than for hikers. Giant trees lined the road, and their dried leaves littered its stony banks. A few large tree limbs had fallen in the middle of the road, and our group would fan around them without missing a beat. Our pace was fast, and the rocky road amplified the noise of our footwork, which made it difficult to hear one another on the descent.

As previously noted, Aislinn had opted for the access road over the Base Trail because she wanted to document the Greenwood Overlook for her blog. To reach the overlook from the access road, our group had ducked into a cramped, wooded area, and climbed around a couple of fallen trees, then followed a short, very narrow trail to a rocky ledge. There, some dangling tree branches seemed to form a window onto the distant landscape and sky. Amy, Derek, and I huddled around the ledge, as Aislinn snapped a few photos of the small opening between the trees. Here was the articulation of a journalistic event, a punctuation in the flow of our hike. “As events become and perish,” Manning

writes, “they create openings for new events.”²⁹² This “opening” is the interval, and once Aislinn finished her photographic work, it came into effect. The photographic event at the scenic overlook transformed into an interval, a liminal experience in which Aislinn was no longer recording anything with her camera but might record something in the future.

In the meantime, we returned to the access road. Our conversation focused on the issue of benefits packages at work, and how health care was becoming less comprehensive as coverage was becoming more expensive. This discussion grew very personal very quickly; and in relation to the many lighthearted stories about outdoor recreation that we shared throughout the day, this was one of our most serious conversations of the hike. Then, Aislinn made a sarcastic comment about breaking an arm, and our conversation quickly faded away. Without the chatter of voices filling the air, the constant crunching sound of our footsteps became prominent, and suddenly, we were walking in unison down the access road.

Audio 1: Access Road. Audio recording of group walking in unison on the access road.

This was one of the only (if not *the* only) occasions in which the four of us walked in sync during our hike. In this emergent, ambulatory interval, our group had been walking in unison for a few strides before anyone articulated it as such in language. “I think we’re all,” Aislinn said, bringing attention to the movement that had already been taking place, signaling to it without exactly naming it. “I was just thinking that,” Amy confirmed, “we’re all in step here.” These statements exemplify the idea that being-in-motion cultivates a way

²⁹² Manning, *Relationescapes*, 39.

of thinking in relation to the world, a form of thought connected to passage. Or as Solnit writes: “The rhythm of walking generates a rhythm of thinking, and the passage through a landscape echoes or stimulates the passage through a series of thoughts.”²⁹³ Such was the case in this biagrammatic interval, as our rhythmic activities of walking and thinking echoed and stimulated one another.

Aislinn and Amy’s statements about our group’s shared rhythm became part of the emergent experience of walking-in-step. They brought into linguistic expression an embodied recognition of collective, rhythmic ambulation. “Language does not replace the sensual exploration of the relational environment,” Manning argues, “it moves with it, becoming one more technique for composition.”²⁹⁴ As the interval persisted, their verbalized statements about our unified stride, their naming of it, became a technique for composing our collective experience of hiking, orienting us through linguistic devices to our shared bodily rhythm—our “bodily art.”²⁹⁵

Like the uttered words, the resounding footsteps functioned as another dynamic in this rhetorical ecology of movement. Our boots’ forceful interactions with the gravel produced a sound that, through its intensity, preaccelerated our ongoing ambulatory experience. Biagrammatically, the rhythmic pounding of our synchronized strides became an intensive experience that lured future steps into being. This is an interval within an interval, the split-second interval of stepping within the more durational interval of journalism. In this particular interval of Aislinn’s journalistic practice, there were millisecond, liminal experiences between each forceful, rhythmic, collective stride.

²⁹³ Solnit, *Wanderlust*, 5-6.

²⁹⁴ Manning, *Relationescapes*, 215.

²⁹⁵ Hawhee, *Bodily Arts*.

According to Manning, these “intervals—fed by the preacceleration that is the feeling of movement-to-come—are the virtual nodes through which each initiated movement becomes the invitation of a step.”²⁹⁶

And the invitation of a joke: Derek responded to this intensive feeling of preacceleration by mocking his ability to maintain our group’s rhythm. “I’m trying to stay on step,” he said. “Don’t break it!” Then he faked a fall and briefly stumbled out of rhythm before resuming stride. “Got distracted,” he confessed, adding, “Can’t hold back, gotta keep going!” Here, Derek’s humorous performance was a “technique for composition,” a constitutive element in this biogrammatic experience of synchronized walking that—like the sound of footwork and the sound of language—affected our group’s ongoing relationship to one another and the walk itself.

The synchronization of our walk dissolved suddenly, as we approached a unique tree on the side of the road.²⁹⁷ Compared to the others around it, this one looked different. “That tree got dressed up for Halloween,” Amy said. “Spooky,” I replied. “A massacre,” Derek added. By this time, we had stopped walking, and were standing in front of the tree, paused from our descent along the access road. From the looks of it, sapsuckers seemed to have pecked the tree to death, as there were several holes drilled into the trunk, and columns of sap dried onto the bark. Derek and Amy joked about the tree’s morbidity, saying, “I’m still alive” and “I’m not dead yet.”

As our group’s passage along the road stalled, the interval itself was transitioning, incipiently preaccelerating a journalistic event, producing a sense of stillness conducive for

²⁹⁶ Manning, *Relationescapes*, 31.

²⁹⁷ Sarnacki, “Hike.”

Aislinn's journalism. In this newly created moment of stoppage, Aislinn said to Derek, "Can you get my phone out? I think this will be good for the black-and-white photo of the day," referring to a photographic featurette on her blog. In perishing, the interval cultivated and colored the potential of Aislinn's soon-to-be journalistic event.

Between Aislinn's journalistic events at the scenic overlook and the spooky tree was an emergent, biagrammatic interval of walking in unison. Except for the spooky tree, there was nothing special enough about this section of the access road to make it particularly worthy of documentation. It was relatively uninteresting by contrast to the scenic overlook and other sections of trail, like the steep slope of the Base and Summit Trails. This non-documentary aspect of hiking is part of the ideology and valuation of nature, and how some environments and experiences, such as summits and overlooks, trees and landscapes, seem important and worthy of documentation, but others, like a bland stretch of roadway, do not.²⁹⁸ Although undocumented, such intervals biagrammatically preaccelerate hiking experience and documentary practice, rhetorically shaping the potential of what bodies can and cannot do, can and cannot become.²⁹⁹

Flows of Fieldwork

By rethinking rhetorical ethnography in terms of ambulation, fieldwork in terms of footwork, I have taken a small step in examining how knowing is contingent on moving. However, in my research about documenting hiking at Borestone Mountain, movement is not a method. My goal is not to conceptualize movement as a tool that could be

²⁹⁸ Cronon, "Trouble with Wilderness."

²⁹⁹ Manning, *Relationescapes*, 126.

implemented or choreographed in future research projects. Instead, building from my case study of biagrammatic passages, events, and intervals, I consider movement a mode of experience that is fundamental to research processes. Movement is not frozen, fixed into external points that rhetoricians can analyze and interpret from a distance but an experience that embodies and emplaces researchers as researchers. It is part of their becoming and they cannot be separated from it.³⁰⁰ From this methodological approach, movement does not wait on researchers; it already goes, moving and changing in different ways, preaccelerating the researcher, the participants, the fieldwork towards some possibilities but not others. Samantha Senda-Cook and colleagues make a similar argument about the “field” as a physical place that acts as a participant in fieldwork.³⁰¹ So it is with movement. Diverse movements of passages, events, and intervals actively participate in fieldwork itself. Their materialities and materializations—their dynamisms—rhetorically shape the potential of research. Therefore, the locus of the authorship of the research itself *moves*, becoming more “ambient” or distributed across, within, and through different movements.³⁰² This poses an ethical tension for rhetoricians: How to grapple with the ecological role of movement in the production of knowledge?

As scholars continue to study material interactions between people and places in and beyond outdoor recreation, I call for greater awareness of how diverse movements—and the conditions, potentialities, and transformations of movements—shape participatory and observational experiences and practices of fieldwork. As I discuss below,

³⁰⁰ Stormer, “Rhetoric’s Diverse Materiality;” Barad, “Posthumanist Performativity.”

³⁰¹ Senda-Cook, Middleton, and Endres, “Interrogating,” 37.

³⁰² Rickert, “House of Doing,” 901-905, 920-921; Rickert, *Ambient Rhetoric*, 100-107; see also Gries, *Still Life*.

biogrammatic concepts of passage, event, and interval can be particularly useful for future studies in rhetorical ethnography, as they express different qualities of movement and mobility.

First, the biogrammatic concept of passage examines nonlinear, continuous, durational movement in relation to fieldwork. In anthropology, Thomas Widlock warns against couching fieldwork between arrivals and departures, between acts of “going to” and “coming from” the field.³⁰³ Instead, deviating from “conventional, bidirectional movement,” Widlock claims ethnographic researchers embody acts of “moving around” fields, continuously engaged in passage.³⁰⁴ In hiking contexts, this continuity of movement takes on significance relative to particular locations of interest in park systems, such as the major slopes, peaks, and overlooks at Borestone Mountain. But as this chapter argues, passage extends beyond one’s footwork in the park to encompass other “systems of mobility,” including vehicles, roads, residences, and tourism industries more broadly.³⁰⁵ In Aislinn’s case as a reporter, digital and online technologies like phones, cameras, computers, and blogs also constitute these mobility systems. Biogrammatically, the enactment of wilderness ideology depends on interrelated systems, technologies, and modes of passage. “How far do we wanna drive” is, for Aislinn, a primary factor that influences where in Maine she decides to hike. To think about hiking in terms of drivability is to think ecologically about movement. Thus, as a guiding concept in a biogrammatic approach to rhetorical field methods, passage can attune ethnographers to relational flows of movement that take place within and beyond their fields of study.

³⁰³ Widlock, “Dilemmas,” 64.

³⁰⁴ Widlock, “Dilemmas,” 64.

³⁰⁵ Urry, *Mobilities*, 12-16.

A biagrammatic approach to rhetorical ethnography conceptualizes events as punctuations of fieldwork that preaccelerate the field's ongoing activities. In this case study at Borestone Mountain, Aislinn's documentary practices punctuated the flow of our hike and shaped how Derek, Amy, and I responded to her work with movements and micro-movements in the moment. Focusing on unfolding events such as Aislinn's journalistic activity is nothing new for rhetorical ethnographers who already utilize a suite of observational and participatory methods to analyze the eventfulness of bodies, discourses, and ideologies.³⁰⁶ But as demonstrated in this chapter's metaphor of footwork, rhetorical ethnographers can cultivate a greater awareness of movement and mobility in relation to the production of novelty within the fields they study. Kathleen McGill, for instance, recognizes the importance of "learning to walk and sit not *looking for* something, but rather allowing 'something' to emerge on its own," an ethnographic practice she calls "selective inattention," which resonates with other embodied methods, like Donal Carbaugh's "listening."³⁰⁷ From a biagrammatic perspective, what I want to emphasize is the sense in which one's bodily acts of walking and sitting, as McGill indicates, can shape one's attentiveness to emergent events. McGill's idea of movement as attention or awareness extends beyond ambulation to other mobilities, and, as this chapter explores through the event of "pausing hiking," even encompasses forms of stillness or stoppage. Driving, climbing, pausing, and other movements are not themselves ethnographic methods but modes through which fields become sensed, known, and documented—or not. Movements

³⁰⁶ Middleton, Hess, Endres, and Senda-Cook, *Participatory Critical Rhetoric*, 19.

³⁰⁷ McGill, "Reading the Valley," 398; Carbaugh, "Just Listen."

can thus attune researchers to emergent events, or what Tim Edensor calls “the rhythmicity of the moment.”³⁰⁸

Finally, from a biogrammatic perspective, rhetorical ethnographers’ ways of moving can also function as an embodied attunement to intervals, or what happens between the punctuations of fieldwork. In analyzing biogrammatic intervals, rhetorical ethnographers can access what Michael Middleton and colleagues call “otherwise unrecorded movements, uncaptured decisions, and undocumented interactions.”³⁰⁹ For example, drawing from my ethnographic research archive, consider how Park Loop Road at Acadia National Park shuttles visitors in a Zeno-like fashion from Cadillac Summit to Sand Beach, Thunder Hole, and the Jordon Pond House. People cannot teleport to these locations; they have to move between them by walking, driving, or biking, etc. The biogrammatic concept of interval allows rhetorical ethnographers to analyze affective experiences of traveling between touristic destinations, in relation to the continuous flow of outdoor recreational practice. Although intervals exist in the durations between events or activities, they are eventful or productive in their own right. In studying intervals at Borestone, undocumented moments from our hike—like our walk in unison on the access road—were formative of our ongoing experience of hiking, and even preaccelerated Aislinn’s ongoing journalistic events. As Samantha Senda-Cook and colleagues argue, “the spaces in between” the emergent events of fieldwork “are inevitably messy, fluid, and polysemous.”³¹⁰ As a guiding concept for rhetorical ethnography, the interval equips

³⁰⁸ Edensor, “Walking in Rhythms,” 72.

³⁰⁹ Middleton, Hess, Endres, and Senda-Cook, *Participatory Critical Rhetoric*, 64.

³¹⁰ Senda-Cook, Middleton, and Endres, “Interrogating,” 38.

researchers to engage with the messiness, fluidity, and polysemy of fieldwork, specifically in terms of movement and mobility.

Building from my ethnographic research on journalistic practices at Borestone, slipping at Norumbega, and thru-hiking at Katahdin, the next and final chapter of the dissertation explores broader interconnections between rhetoric, mobility, and ethnography, and identifies possible lures, or preaccelerations, for future study.

CHAPTER 5

LURES FOR THOUGHT:

ARCHIVAL AFFECTS, MOBILITY SYSTEMS, AND AESTHETIC RHETORIC

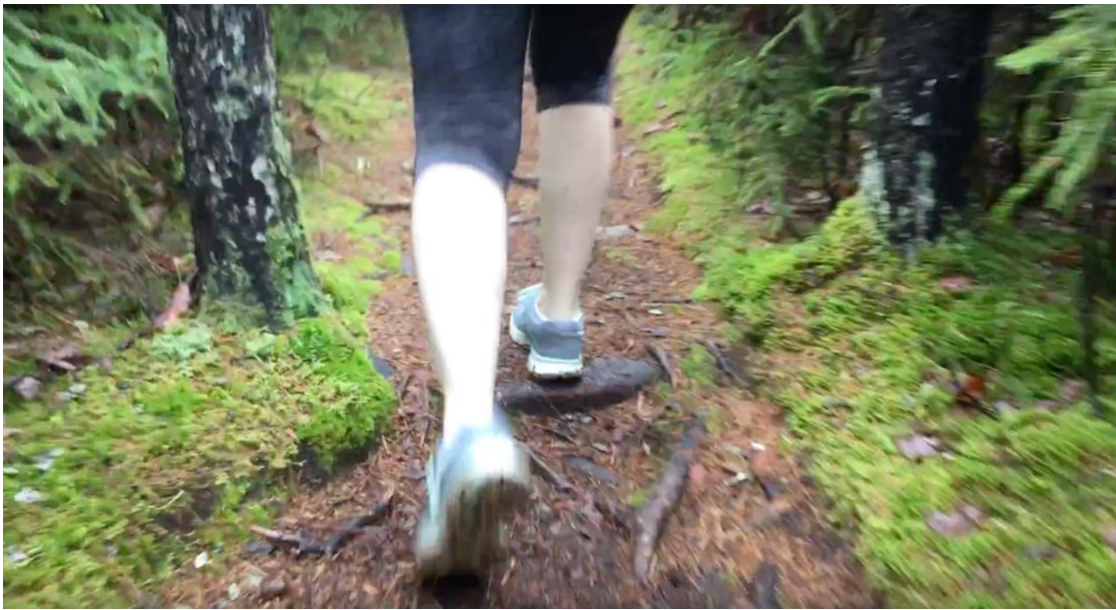


Figure 3: Footwork. Screen-shot from video of Ellen hiking Norumbega Mountain Trail.

“It feels unlike Acadia,” Ellen confessed while zipping up her backpack, and I asked, “Why?”³¹¹ “Well, I can’t really see very far,” she answered, referring to the dense fog sweeping across the forest that was blurring the landscape around us. After hoisting up her backpack, she began strolling along the trail. “I’m used to seeing the ocean or, like, big slabs of granite,” she explained, slowing down to examine the surroundings. “It’s incredibly mossy and there are pine needles everywhere,” she said, regaining speed. “It’s—I guess it’s not as, like, taken care of, like, pristine.” Her footfall became more

³¹¹ See Appendix H for Transcript of “Unlike Acadia” Interview. Research participants are identified by pseudonyms.

prominent, more rhythmic. “How would you say that?” she asked, unsatisfied by her own description of the trail. “It’s not maintained?” I guessed. “Maintained,” she repeated, mulling over the word, continuing to pick up speed. “Or like, I wanted to say cultured.” The word clicked. “Like steps and guard rails,” Ellen emphasized. “Stuff like that doesn’t exist here.”

This dissertation has been punctuated by ambulatory events with Ellen at Norumbega Mountain Trail in Acadia National Park. The first chapter opened with her feeling the fog drift across the mountainous ridge, spotting reflections of its aerial movements in puddles on the ground; the middle chapter witnessed her zigzagging over mud before accidentally slipping; and this fifth and final chapter joined her midstride in the tension of translating her sense of place into words. Between these events, in chapters two and three respectively, were intervals in which a group of hikers rushed through the chaotic cloud at Mount Katahdin in Baxter State Park and another group documented their rugged hike at Borestone Mountain Audubon Sanctuary.

In the above event, Ellen struggled to articulate how the ubiquitous pines, rampant moss, and blinding fog as well as the apparent lack of ocean, granite slabs, stone stairs, guard rails, and “culture” itself were affecting her ongoing experience of Acadia. Many rhetoricians would be quick to engage Ellen’s articulation of “culture”—a term that convokes a confluence of social norms, practices, and institutions. “To focus on discourse is not wrong,” Thomas Rickert writes, “but it subtly obscures rhetoric’s profoundly worldly character, in which all that *is* already shares in any rhetoricity achieved through human beings.”³¹² This dissertation has purposefully slowed down rhetoric’s engagement with

³¹² Rickert, *Ambient Rhetoric*, 222-223; emphasis in original.

symbolicity to analyze its “profoundly worldly character” in terms of movement and mobility, biogram and preacceleration, intensity and incipency. Importantly, as I have argued along the way, the materiality of movement is not the dialectical other of language; symbols of “culture” are as ecologically constitutive of experience as slick terrain, fallen pines, rolling fog, and hoisted backpacks. Like Rickert’s ambient rhetoric, my nondialectical study of processual rhetoric argues that “materiality conditions us, affects us, attunes us in an originary way.”³¹³ Movement lures us into being.

Two lures for rhetoricians studying the materiality of movement have been the legacy of Michel de Certeau and the tradition of Kenneth Burke. While these conventional lines of scholarship offer a productive starting place for rhetorical analyses of movement, sensation, embodiment, and environment, their dialectical grammars ultimately reinforce an anthropocentric ontology of inertial matter that restricts the dynamism of motion. For rhetoric to attain its “profoundly worldly character,” as Rickert puts it, motion must not necessarily or only be understood in relation to semiosis or symbolicity. Erin Manning’s biogrammatic materialism, I believe, facilitates a transition from and transformation of rhetoric’s conventional, dialectical, humanistic, inertial modes of thought. Guided by processual concepts for motion like biogram and preacceleration as well as passage, event, and interval, Manning’s “shifting perspective” proposes that “the world lives differently.”³¹⁴ Biogrammatic materialism—a lure for thought.

In Alfred North Whitehead’s process philosophy, which deeply informs Manning’s own philosophy of movement, lures are felt expressions of potentiality. The chaotic cloud

³¹³ Rickert, *Ambient Rhetoric*, 222.

³¹⁴ Manning, *Relationescapes*, 14-15.

at Katahdin, the slick trail at Norumbega, the journalistic practice at Borestone were all lures for hiking. A lure, Steven Sharivo explains, “holds forth the prospect of a difference.”³¹⁵ According to Manning, lures “create enabling constraints for the opening of a relational process.”³¹⁶ Biogrammatic materialism, I argue, is a conceptual lure (or field of lures) for the study of rhetoric. What openings and prospects, what enabling constraints and differences might a biogrammatic materialism offer rhetoricians? Based on the previous chapters, I identify and explore three lures for thinking biogrammatically about rhetoric: archival affects, mobility systems, and aesthetic rhetoric. First, in relation to the extensive multimodal research archive that I composed for this dissertation, how might archival practices, documents, and collections affect research processes? Second, in relation to analyzing embodied acts of hiking at state and national parks in Maine, how might rhetoricians study movement, outdoor recreation, and other mobility systems? And finally, in relation to rhetoric’s conventional and traditional understandings of movement, how might a new materialist concept of movement itself move rhetoric?

Archival Affects

As its most mundane level, this dissertation has explored how multimodal research archives matter to rhetorical analysis. From 15+ hikes in and beyond Maine I have generated 1,000+ audio, photo, and video recordings. An important implication of this archive is its materiality. Similarly interested in the materiality of archives, Laurie Gries argues rhetoricians “must ask not what a text or artifact means but rather we ought [to] be

³¹⁵ Shaviro, *Universe*, 54.

³¹⁶ Manning, *Relationescapes*, 227.

asking what a text does and what happens as a result of its existence.”³¹⁷ In the context of my dissertation what do all my audio, photo, and video recordings do? How do their material existences affect the conceptual work of this dissertation? In response to these guiding questions, I discuss my own poetic approach to rhetorical fieldwork, and explore the biagrammatic implications of archival practices, documents, and collections in relation to research and knowledge production.

As I participated in a rhetorical ethnography of hiking, I approached my fieldwork as a documentary poetics where “poetics” is a process, “an act that embodies a theory of becoming.”³¹⁸ In doing rhetorical fieldwork, I utilized different modes of documentation in response to emergent conditions for hiking. For example, as discussed in chapter four, I used continuous video to record the passages of Aislinn’s journalistic practice at Borestone; in chapter three, I used audio to record an interview about Ellen’s conversation of zigzagging across the trail at Norumbega; and in chapter two, I used a time-lapse to record the chaos of the cloud at Katahdin. My multimodal practices were lured into being by the material conditions of the fieldwork, preaccelerated by the people, landscapes, and weather patterns with which I hiked. Biagrammatically, my documentary poetics was not an additional component of experience layered onto fieldwork but a constitutive element of the fieldwork itself. This poetic practice required that I, as a researcher with finite, clumsy capacities, learn how to move while simultaneously documenting movement. If my camera could talk, it would tell stories of being dropped and crashing onto the ground again and again. As I practiced experimental techniques of documentation-in-motion, I have

³¹⁷ Gries, *Still Life*, 48.

³¹⁸ Hawhee, “Burke and Nietzsche,” 138.

generated a series of documents that tell such stories, depicting various drops and crashes mid-hike.

According to Justine Wells and colleagues, a key tension for rhetoricians doing fieldwork is learning “how to immerse ourselves with(in) the world and articulate with it.”³¹⁹ My poetic approach to fieldwork engages this dynamic tension, as I experimented and adapted my practices of documenting movement throughout the entire research process, opening my work to new possibilities and emergences along the way.³²⁰ As an extended example, consider how I recorded time-lapse to analyze the speed of movement in different ways throughout my project. Some of my earliest time-lapses focused on my own footwork where I held the camera down in front of me to record my boots striking the ground. From these recordings, I noticed my feet appeared stationary while the ground seemed to rapidly twist and turn around them. I adapted my time-lapse practice to think more about the environment and hiked with the camera facing the horizon, scanning the scenery as I moved through it, shifting the camera back and forth. In the time-lapse format, this constant scanning and shifting produced footage of hiking that was almost too quick for viewers to perceive recognizable forms: bodies, trees, horizons, sky, and ground blurred together. This was an interesting finding because it suggested that perception is contingent upon movement but requires a relative slowness or stability of movement that allows forces to become recognizable as such.³²¹ Intrigued by this notion of becoming, I adapted my documentary practice again and experimented with Quiring’s technique of “embodied video,” fastening my camera to my chest to record time-lapses of my passages through

³¹⁹ Wells, McGreavy, Senda-Cook, and McHendry, Jr., “Introduction,” 20.

³²⁰ McGreavy, “Intertidal Poetry.”

³²¹ Ingold, *Being Alive*; Whitehead, *Modes*.

various environments, such as chapter two's time-lapse at the Tableland.³²² Articulated in these examples is the development of a particular poetic practice, materially affected by the very documents it produced.

According to Gries, archival documents including time-lapses “have potential to *become* rhetorical as they crystallize, circulate, enter into relations, and generate material consequences.”³²³ But how to conceptualize the rhetoricity of the aggregate of these documents? I turn to Massumi and Bennett, to respectively think about the organization of archival documents and their rhetorical capacities. First, Massumi: “When you place a brick against another brick you are not placing matter against matter. You are placing effect against effect, *relation against relation*.”³²⁴ Similarly, in building an archive of ethnographic documents, researchers are not placing document against document; they are placing “effect against effect, *relation against relation*.” Think of the organization of the archive. I grouped my documents in specific folders on a computer, according to the site and date of the fieldwork, such as Borestone (Nov. 2017), Katahdin (Aug. 2017), Norumbega (Jun. 2017). Additionally, I experimented in grouping parts of the archive by modality (audio, photo, video). However, there are other ways to group and regroup documents that could be further explored such as the social setting of the hike (solo, partner, group, etc.), weather (sunny, windy, rainy, foggy, etc.), feelings (pain, excited, anxious, bored, etc.), and so on. Such diverse groupings would produce new relations

³²² Quiring, McGreavy, and Carter, “Working Rhetoric’s Material.”

³²³ Gries, *Still Life*, 11; emphasis in original.

³²⁴ Massumi, *Parables*, 204; emphasis in original.

against relations, modifying how researchers engage with individual and collective documents.³²⁵

Now, Bennett: Archival documents are not just expressions of poetic practices. They are not stagnant things, waiting to be activated by researchers. They also express. They *matter*. Bennett refers to such capacity as “thing-power,” “the curious ability of inanimate things to animate, to act, to produce effects dramatic and subtle.”³²⁶ The thing-power of archival documents can be understood biagrammatically. As a humorous example think about the intensive experience of watching and re-watching body-cam-style videos of hiking, such as climbing Hunt Trail in Baxter or walking the Base Trail in Borestone, some of which contain nearly 40 minutes of continuous footage. Materially, to view these documents again and again is an exercise in motion sickness. Those archival documents made me extremely woozy; I could only watch them in small spurts at a time before feeling ill. Talk about biagrammatic tension! Like footage of hiking producing motion sickness, archival documents materially affect the bodies of researchers. Using Bennett’s term, this affective capacity is a form of “thing-power” that shapes the possibilities of embodying archival research.

As another form of thing-power, archival documents can also generate new documents out of already existing ones. For instance, I have taken screen-shots from videos of hiking to analyze particular aspects of a shot, thereby creating new photographic documents, such as the photograph of Ellen’s footwork used to introduce this chapter. At times, I layered multiple screen-shots on top of one another and decreased their opacity to

³²⁵ This relational approach to archival work compares to the concept of “assemblage” as articulated by Bøhling, “Field Note Assemblage.”

³²⁶ Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, 6.

examine the phases of a movement, like a jump over a puddle, in a singular image. Similarly, I also trimmed continuous recordings of audio and videos into shorter excerpts, which helped attenuate the noxiousness of some of the videos. In addition, I created montages of videos, as exemplified in chapter four, which paired Aislinn's recording with my own, and I paired audio with photos to further reflect on experiences of hiking. These examples accentuate the creative thing-power of archival documents as they take on new forms and relationships, and shape the possibilities of the research in different ways throughout the course of a project.

A biogrammatic approach to archival work thereby opens rhetoricians to the various moves and movements of archival practices, documents, and collections. This approach proposes that archives are themselves dynamic processes and each practice, document, and collection is an "enabling constraint" for how the research itself takes form throughout the project. A poetic emphasis to archival work preaccelerates rhetoricians toward possibilities for research processes they might not have otherwise anticipated, poetically shaping the production of knowledge.

Mobility Systems

Rhetorical analyses of walking and hiking have been directly informed by Michel de Certeau's semiological concept of movement, and this dissertation has applied new materialist philosophy, via scholars like Erin Manning and Brian Massumi, to analyze and transform the discourse of de Certeau's "walking rhetoric." What does the theoretical shift from de Certeau to new materialisms offer rhetorical analysis, and how might Manning's

biogrammatic materialism be adapted to study movement and mobility in and beyond the context of hiking?

The shift from semiological to biogrammatic concepts of movement affords rhetoricians a unique focus on the materiality of movement in which the matter of motion need not be defined in terms of dialectical tensions. This dissertation's biogrammatic critique of de Certeau's enduring legacy of "walking rhetoric" has emphasized various "sensorial travels" at Norumbega, Katahdin, and Borestone in an effort to enliven the multifarious tensions of hiking such as slipping midstride at Norumbega, leaning into a climb at Katahdin, and marching in unison at Borestone.³²⁷ Bennett claims such "a cultivated, patient, sensory attentiveness to nonhuman forces operating outside and inside the human body" must be incorporated into critical practice if scholars are to disrupt conventional, anthropocentric, inertial assumptions about materiality. "Without proficiency in this countercultural kind of perceiving," she writes, "the world appears as if it consists only of active human subjects who confront passive objects and their law-governed mechanisms."³²⁸ The new materialist concept of biogram, I argue, equips rhetoricians to do this kind of perceptual analysis by drawing attention to the ecological forces, intensities, and incipencies that compose and recompose how bodies move.

A biogrammatic concept of movement does not banish semiosis, just accesses it in a different way than de Certeau. Ellen for example struggled in verbalizing her perception of Acadia while she paced the pine-covered trails at Norumbega. An "ideology of wilderness" was certainly part of her process of making meaning, yet so were the fallen

³²⁷ Ackerman, "Walking."

³²⁸ Bennett, *Vibrant Matter*, xiv.

pine needles, the drifting fog, the rhythmic strides.³²⁹ As mentioned above, a biogrammatic approach considers the “profoundly worldly character” of hiking, irreducible to forms of meaning. As Timothy Edensor argues, hiking “can never be conceived purely as shaped (or constrained and enabled) by performative conventions, ideological and romantic presuppositions or other social and cultural understandings, for this is to abstract walking from the material world.”³³⁰ Conversely, the materiality of walking itself cannot be abstracted from society, ideology, or convention. A biogrammatic approach, as I have argued throughout the dissertation, works within the indeterminacy of mobile experience, but does not conceptually reduce materiality to semiosis or semiosis to materiality, or ontologically frame them in dialectical relationship. Instead, the biogram contributes a new (materialist) orientation to the rhetorical analysis of movement.

One way for rhetoricians to explore the biogrammatic indeterminacy of movement is through the study of mobility systems. John Urry argues mobility systems are composed of various elements, conditions, processes, and institutions that enable bodies to move in safe, efficient, and repetitive ways.³³¹ From his perspective, hiking would not just be a movement of human bodies; it would be a movement of society. Based on my rhetorical fieldwork, a preliminary sketch of a mobility system of hiking could include such elements as gear (boots, clothing, water bottles, backpacks, etc.), documentary technologies (cameras, computers, internet, social media, etc.), park management systems (entrance fees, maintenance, preservation, signage, etc.), and tourism industries (money, consumption, ideology, travel, gas etc.), among many other components. Studying mobility

³²⁹ Cronon, “Trouble with Wilderness;” Drennig, “Taking a Hike.”

³³⁰ Edensor, “Walking through Ruins,” 131.

³³¹ Urry, *Mobilities*, 12-16.

systems à la Urry resonates with rhetorical scholarship on networks, circulation, and ambience, which similarly draw attention to complex social structures, but Urry adds an emphasis on issues of movement and mobility.³³² Paired with Manning's biagrammatic materialism, the concept of mobility systems could be further adapted for analyzing preaccelerations on a systemic scale that connects to embodied experience.

For example, I am developing a future research project that explores walkability as a mobility system that preaccelerates urban life.³³³ This project stems from a participant observation that I performed in September 2017 at a public forum about walkability, hosted by GrowSmart Maine, a statewide organization committed to urban development projects. Named "The Case for Walkability: Health, Economic Development, and Sustainability," the forum aimed to "inspire and prepare communities to diversify modes of transportation as a way to boost health, economic development, and sustainability for citizens, businesses, and institutions."³³⁴ From my rhetorical fieldwork at this event, I am using a mobility systems approach to critique how walkability, which includes a variety of other mobilities, functions as a technology of urban development. In terms of biograms, I am particularly interested in analyzing the modes of movement that constituted the activity of the public forum itself, and how bodies were (im)mobilized during the process of the forum to talk about urban mobilities.

A biagrammatic materialism can also expand Urry's concept of mobility systems to encompass other nonhuman, transhuman, and more-than-human forces that ecologically

³³² Gries, *Still Life*; Rickert, *Ambient Rhetoric*.

³³³ I presented this project at the 2017 Urban Communication Pre-Conference to the National Communication Association Convention. Picciotto, "Walkability as Urban Communication."

³³⁴ GrowSmart, 2017.

materialize movements.³³⁵ While rhetoricians studying walking and hiking attend to technologies like maps, trails, sidewalks, and environments, I argue that atmospheric, meteorological, and planetary processes could also be considered in rhetorical analyses of movement and mobility.³³⁶ In outdoor recreational contexts for instance, hiking primarily takes place during daylight hours, and tourism ebbs and flows with different seasons of the year. Tim Ingold argues for greater consideration of the weather specifically, claiming it is “always unfolding, ever changing in its moods, currents, qualities of light and shade, and colours, alternately damp or dry, warm or cold, and so on.”³³⁷ Working with Ingold’s “weather-world” and Rickert’s “ambient rhetoric,” this dissertation has explored how variant atmospheric conditions affect how bodies can and cannot move about environments. Harsh winds at Katahdin burned my neck, dense fog at Norumbega propelled Ellen’s slip, and sunshine at Borestone enabled Aislinn to produce quality photos and videos for her blog. From this research on hiking, I argue that one’s (dis)ability to move can be understood as preaccelerated by such ambient, weatherly, worldly processes.

I am further exploring the idea of atmospheric mobility by analyzing bodily ability and disability in hiking contexts, for a future project.³³⁸ As I have previously mentioned, part of the conversation around rhetorical practices of hiking addresses the issue of trail accessibility, which I believe could be further developed as a critique of ableism in hiking culture. Historically, hiking has made certain kinds of bodily abilities compulsory,

³³⁵ Stormer and McGreavy, “Thinking Ecologically;” Rogers, “Overcoming;” McGill, “Reading the Valley.”

³³⁶ Senda-Cook, “Rugged Practices;” Senda-Cook, “Materializing Tensions;” Schmitt, “Mounting Tensions;” Topinka, “Resisting the Fixity.”

³³⁷ Ingold, “Eye of the Storm,” 103; see also Rickert, *Ambient Rhetoric*.

³³⁸ I presented this project at the 2018 Capacious Conference. Picciotto, “Atmospheric Affects.”

especially in terms of movement and perception, privileging human bodies that can walk around rugged trails on foot and see the natural world with their own eyes.³³⁹ For this project, I am using my research archive to “index moments of disjuncture” in normative hiking practices, and to examine how the weather-world disrupted the bodily abilities of hikers, modifying the ways in which hikers moved about trails and perceived their surroundings.³⁴⁰

Finally, an emergent finding from my rhetorical fieldwork that I chose not to pursue in the dissertation, given space and time limitations, was animals and wildlife. Recall that the dissertation opened with Ellen walking into the fog at Norumbega as birds chirped and hovered about the trees. During that same hike, Ellen and I were chomped by flies and mosquitoes near Lower Hadlock Pond. If we paused or stopped hiking for more than a minute, the bugs swarmed and attacked us, and so they ecologically participated in propelling us through the trail system that day. As a point of contrast, during a group hike at Lily Bay State Park in September 2017, the people I hiked with were slowly and cautiously walking about the lakeside trails, after discovering hoof marks on the beach. Following the tracks, the hikers silently split up and wandered off the trail system to find what they hoped would be moose but were actually deer. And lastly, I return to one of the first walks I took for my research archive, a short stroll around the city park near my apartment where I happened upon a moth. I decided to follow the moth, allowing it to guide me through the park, so that I could experiment with it, moving in a moth-like motion. This moth led me onto the grass, cutting here and there across the park in small flights. Marilyn

³³⁹ Urry, *Mobilities*; Solnit, *Wanderlust*; Cronon, “Trouble with Wilderness;” Drennig, “Taking a Hike.”

³⁴⁰ Ackerman, “Walking,” 120.

Cooper writes of a similar experience with a dragonfly, an encounter that “infected me with a new tale that might be told, a proposition that shook my certainties about the importance of my role and that of humans in general.”³⁴¹

Animals, weather, ableism, urban development, systems—all possible lures for thinking with this dissertation on issues of movement and mobility, working from within the indeterminacy of sensorial travel.

Aesthetic Rhetoric

Guided by the concepts of biogram and preacceleration, this dissertation contributes a new materialist theory of rhetoric in terms of movement.³⁴² These concepts articulate the “primacy of process,” the idea that bodies fundamentally exist within motion.³⁴³ Motion, however, as I have argued, is a troubled term in rhetoric, a discipline that has historically privileged the study of persuasive techniques of language, such that rhetoric’s conventional, disciplinary emphasis on language has stacked the deck against motion. As elaborated in chapters two and three, on one hand, rhetoric in the legacy of de Certeau conceptualizes movement as speech act, while on the other hand, rhetoric in the tradition of Burke dialectically opposes nonsymbolic motion from symbolic action. In this theoretical context, motion is at best a precondition for rhetoric and at worst, an altogether non-rhetorical activity. The concepts of biogram and preacceleration intervene in this discourse about movement to question and rethink the expulsion of movement from rhetoric. As concepts that embrace the primacy of process, they provide ways of thinking

³⁴¹ Cooper, “Listening to Strange,” 20.

³⁴² Massumi, *Parables*; Manning, *Relationescapes*.

³⁴³ Massumi, *Parables*, 7-9.

the rhetoricity of movement without presupposing that movement is less important than language or the dialectical other of language. The question for rhetoricians is not, how does movement relate to symbolicity, but how does movement relate to rhetoricity?

First, as introduced in chapter two, the concept of biogram affords an understanding of rhetoric as an intensive experience of becoming. Biograms are not species or preconditions of rhetoric; they are rhetorical processes themselves. They are not language, or the dialectical other of language, but they can facilitate and respond to linguistic events, although they are not reducible to them as such. Instead, biograms are active forces that work in and between embodied movements, organizing the flow of ongoing experience. Manning writes they are more verb than noun: bodies *biogram*.³⁴⁴ Biogrammatic movement is fundamental to embodied experience, from this perspective. The “how” of moving *is* the “how” of living, hence the “bio-” prefix. Biograms compare to what Rickert calls “styles of being” and Shaviro, “manners of being.”³⁴⁵ Biograms *move* bodies into being, and such movement is ontological as well as rhetorical.

Second, the concept of preacceleration is to biogram what mobility is to movement. As discussed in chapter three, preacceleration explores the incipency of movement—how it takes form, how it becomes. Like biogram, preacceleration presupposes the primacy of process. It is continuously at work, enabling and constraining ongoing experiences of movement. Preacceleration is the activity of transition—the movements that move movements. Rhetoric as preacceleration is this ongoing process of making movement, inventing it and worlding it. Preacceleration thereby articulates an *aesthetic* ontology in

³⁴⁴ Manning, *Relationescapes*, 126.

³⁴⁵ Rickert, *Ambient Rhetoric*, 285; Shaviro, *Universe*, 18.

which being is an ongoing process rather than a finished product.³⁴⁶ Being is not fixed to a sign, symbol, or image; it just goes. Invariably, motions can become meaningful to bodies that move, bodies that biogram. Preacceleration however is not meaning nor is it opposed to meaning; it is more like the phasing of meaning as well as the phases between meanings. It propels meaning's potential, its prearticulation.

Taken together, preacceleration and biogram argue that movement is rhetorical and ontological process, a mode of being contingently animated by material relationships within the world. This is a world of “lures”—for moving, feeling, thinking, becoming—that “addresses [one] from beyond” and “propose some sort of *potentiality*.”³⁴⁷ Bodies are endlessly propositioned by the worlds that preaccelerate them, the worlds with which they biogram. Bodies thus engage in difference, novelty, and transformation through movement and mobility. This aesthetic ontology of rhetoric presupposes that *bodies can be moved*, relying on a fundamental notion of affectability: to change and respond.³⁴⁸ To paraphrase Massumi, movement as aesthetic rhetoric is “belonging in becoming.”³⁴⁹ Bodies exist in open, affective relations with the world and these relationships are also ethical. The ethicality of motion entails consideration of how bodies move and are moved in some ways but not others, selectively making and marking worlds. This is an ethical issue, in part, because movement's emphasis on becoming displaces humanistic notions of control within rhetoric. Concepts like biogram and preacceleration emplace bodies in motion without

³⁴⁶ Manning, *Relationescapes*; Massumi, *Parables*; Shaviro, *Universe*; Whitehead, *Modes*.

³⁴⁷ Shaviro, *Universe*, 54. See also Manning, *Relationescapes*.

³⁴⁸ Seigworth and Gregg, “Inventory of Shimmers;” Davis, *Inessential Solidarity*; Stormer and McGreavy, “Thinking Ecologically;” Stormer, “Rhetoric's Diverse Materiality.”

³⁴⁹ Massumi, *Parables*, 79.

waiting on humans to first make decisions about the ethicality of movement. Motion just goes. This processual approach allows the materiality of movement to be active and does not require human motive, choice, or intentionality to initiate or sustain its ongoing activities. That said, human intent is not oppositional to movement; it is another technique for composition, another element that ecologically participates in and punctuates the creation, adaptation, and transformation of motion.

By exploring and reconceptualizing the rhetorical, ontological, and ethical qualities of movement through the concepts of biogram and preacceleration, this dissertation intersects with contemporary discussions of aesthetic rhetoric. Taken up by rhetoricians in the late twentieth century via the philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche, the burgeoning area of rhetorical scholarship called the “aesthetic turn” has since expanded to include a host of other aesthetic philosophies, such as those articulated by Francis Bacon, Martin Heidegger, and Jacques Rancière.³⁵⁰ According to Ronald Walter Greene, what holds these diverse perspectives of aesthetic rhetoric together is a shared focus on “world disclosure”—what this dissertation has theorized as world-making.³⁵¹ Though studies of aesthetic rhetoric frequently examine the effects (and affects) of performance, language, and discourse, this dissertation proposes a new direction for rhetoric’s aesthetic turn, one specifically attentive to the incipencies and intensities of motion. Following the process philosophies of Manning, Massumi, and Whitehead in particular, this dissertation offers a fundamentally *materialist* aesthetic rhetoric in which the rhetorical activities of matter, bodies, and

³⁵⁰ Greene, “Aesthetic Turn;” Whitson and Poulakos, “Nietzsche;” Poulakos, “Depths of Rhetoric;” Scott, “Bacon to Bacon;” Crick and Engles, “Effort of Reason;” Reeves and Stoneman, “Heidegger;” Paliewicz, “Making Sense.”

³⁵¹ Greene, “Aesthetic Turn;” 19.

ecologies are understood in terms of movement and sensation. Until rhetoric comes to terms with the aesthetic materiality of movement, it will not fully engage with new materialism.

By problematizing hiking and enacting a shift to biogrammatic analyses of movement within hiking, I have intervened within studies of walking in rhetoric, and in the broader problems of rhetoric beyond the human. The dissertation thus addresses the rhetoric of rhetoric as well as the rhetoric of hiking, so it operates on the direct level of walking and on a meta-level of fieldwork as a form of rhetoric. If fieldwork tries to get past certain humanist preoccupations with language relative to movement, then fieldwork itself should try to not replicate a dialectical materialism that presupposes an action-motion binary in regard to rhetoricity itself. Doing so not only opens a rich set of possibilities for the study of hiking and walking, but it also offers new avenues for exploring the archival poetics of fieldwork, for understanding mobility systems as integral to rhetoricity, and for expanding the field's engagement with aesthetics.

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APPENDIX A:

IRB APPROVAL

APPLICATION FOR APPROVAL OF RESEARCH WITH HUMAN SUBJECTS
Protection of Human Subjects Review Board, 400 Corbett Hall

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Bryan Picciotto EMAIL: bryan.picciotto@maine.edu
CO-INVESTIGATOR: N/A EMAIL: N/A
CO-INVESTIGATOR: N/A EMAIL: N/A
FACULTY SPONSOR: Nathan Stormer EMAIL: nathan@maine.edu
(Required if PI is a student):
TITLE OF PROJECT: Movement as Rhetoric: New Materialism, Rhetorical Ethnography, and Outdoor Recreation
START DATE: 8/31/2017 July 10 17 PI DEPARTMENT: Communication & Journalism
FUNDING AGENCY (if any): N/A

STATUS OF PI: GRADUATE

1. If PI is a student, is this research to be performed:

- checkbox for an honors thesis/senior thesis/capstone?
checkbox for a master's thesis?
X for a doctoral dissertation?
checkbox for a course project?
checkbox other (specify)

2. Does this application modify a previously approved project? No.
If yes, please give assigned number (if known) of previously approved project:

3. Is an expedited review requested? Yes.

Submitting the application indicates the principal investigator's agreement to abide by the responsibilities outlined in Section I.E. of the Policies and Procedures for the Protection of Human Subjects.

Faculty Sponsors are responsible for oversight of research conducted by their students. The Faculty Sponsor ensures that he/she has read the application and that the conduct of such research will be in accordance with the University of Maine's Policies and Procedures for the Protection of Human Subjects of Research. REMINDER: if the principal investigator is an undergraduate student, the Faculty Sponsor MUST submit the application to the IRB.

Email this cover page and complete application to UMRIC@maine.edu

FOR IRB USE ONLY Application # 2017-08-06 Review (F/E): E

ACTION TAKEN:

- X Judged Exempt; category 2 Modifications required? Y Accepted (date) 8/18/17
checkbox Approved as submitted. Date of next review: by Degree of Risk:
checkbox Approved pending modifications. Date of next review: by Degree of Risk:
checkbox Modifications accepted (date):
checkbox Not approved (see attached statement)
checkbox Judged not research with human subjects

FINAL APPROVAL TO BEGIN

8/31/2017
Date

01/2017

APPENDIX B:

INFORMED CONSENT FOR HIKING PROJECT

Informed Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a research project being conducted by Bryan Picciotto, a graduate student in the Department of Communication and Journalism at the University of Maine. The faculty sponsor for this project is Dr. Nathan Stormer, professor and chair of the Department of Communication and Journalism. The purpose of the research is to better understand how and why people walk and hike.

What Will You Be Asked to Do?

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to allow Bryan to accompany you on a walk or hike, and/or tell him stories about your experiences of walking or hiking. Walks or hikes could take 30 minutes to 3 hours, and interviews could take 5-20 minutes. Walks or hikes will be recorded with notes, audio, photos, and/or videos, and interviews will be recorded with notes, audio and/or video. Recordings will be transcribed by Bryan.

Risks

By participating in this study, you risk your time and inconvenience.

Benefits

While this study will have no direct benefit to you, this research may help us learn more about outdoor recreation, wildlife, and tourism in Maine.

Confidentiality

Notes will be taken based on your participation in this project. Only Bryan will have access to the notes, which will be stored on his password-protected computer. Your name or other identifying information will not be reported in any publications. After the project is completed, the notes will be stored indefinitely with Bryan on his password-protected computer. This information will contribute to his long-term research program about outdoor recreation, wildlife preservation, and tourism industries.

Voluntary

Your participation is voluntary. If you choose to take part in this study, you may stop at any time, and you may skip any interview questions you do not wish to answer.

Contact Information

If you have any questions about this study, please contact Bryan Picciotto at 315-430-0012; 442 Dunn Hall; or bryan.picciotto@maine.edu. You may also reach Dr. Stormer, the faculty advisor on this study, at 207-581-1938; 430 Dunn Hall; or nathan@maine.edu.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact Gayle Jones, Assistant to the University of Maine's Protection of Human Subjects Review Board; 207-581-1498; or gayle.jones@umit.maine.edu.

APPENDIX C:

INFORMED CONSENT FOR JOURNALISM PROJECT

Informed Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a research project being conducted by Bryan Picciotto, a graduate student in the Department of Communication and Journalism at the University of Maine. The faculty sponsor for this project is Dr. Nathan Stormer, professor and chair of the Department of Communication and Journalism. The purpose of the research is to better understand outdoor recreation in Maine.

What Will You Be Asked to Do?

If you decide to participate, you will be asked to participate in two interviews about outdoor recreation, and allow Bryan to accompany you on at least two of your planned hikes.

1. The first interview is biographical. It will focus on your personal and professional history with hiking in Maine.
2. The hikes will help Bryan study hiking in action. During the hike, he may ask you interview questions about your gear, trail choices, experience of nature, etc.
3. The second interview is reflective. It will allow you to debrief the hikes you took with Bryan, and think more broadly about hiking culture in Maine.

Each interview will take 1-2 hours and will be recorded with notes, audio, and/or video. Recordings will be transcribed by Bryan. Hikes will take 1-4 hours and will be recorded with notes, audio, photos, and/or videos. Recordings will be transcribed by Bryan. Interviews and hikes will not take place on the same day, unless that is most convenient for you.

Risks

By participating in this study, you risk your time and inconvenience.

Benefits

While this study will have no direct benefit to you, this research will help scholars learn more about outdoor recreation, wildlife, and tourism in Maine.

Confidentiality

Notes will be taken based on your participation in this project. Only Bryan will have access to the notes, which will be stored on his password-protected computer. Your name will not be reported in any research publications, but given your public standing, people may figure out your identity. After the project is completed, the notes will be stored indefinitely with Bryan on his password-protected computer. This information will contribute to his long-term research program about outdoor recreation, wildlife preservation, and tourism industries.

Voluntary

Your participation is voluntary. If you choose to take part in this study, you may stop at any time, and you may skip any interview questions you do not wish to answer.

Contact Information

If you have any questions about this study, please contact Bryan Picciotto at 315-430-0012; 442 Dunn Hall; or bryan.picciotto@maine.edu. You may also reach Dr. Stormer, the faculty advisor on this study, at 207-581-1938; 430 Dunn Hall; or nathan@maine.edu.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact Gayle Jones, Assistant to the University of Maine's Protection of Human Subjects Review Board; 207-581-1498; or gayle.jones@umit.maine.edu.

APPENDIX D:

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR JOURNALISM PROJECT

Semi-Structured Biographical Interview

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. I appreciate your willingness to contribute your thoughts to my research. This interview is part of my dissertation, which is focused on outdoor recreation in Maine. Today my intent is to learn about your personal and professional history with hiking in Maine. I plan to integrate your comments into my research.

Hiking Memories and Identity

- How long have you been a hiker?
- What do you enjoy most about hiking?
- What do you enjoy least or what challenges you the most about hiking?
- How did you first learn about hiking?
- What was one of your earliest experiences of hiking (in Maine)?
- When growing up, what did “hiking” mean to you? How has this meaning changed for you, if at all, since then? What does “hiking” mean to you now?
- Tell me about one of your favorite / most meaningful hiking experiences.
- Tell me about one of your worst / least favorite hiking experiences.
- How did you become an outdoor and wildlife reporter?
- How has this job changed your perspective of hiking (in Maine), if at all?
- How do you go about writing your reports about hiking in Maine?
- How do you go about photographing and filming your reports about hiking in Maine?
- Since you became an outdoor and wildlife reporter, how has your writing, photography, and videography about hiking changed, if at all?
- How did you come to publish a book about hiking in Maine?

Hiking Practices

- Tell me about a recent hike you took.
- How often do you hike throughout the year?
- How do you plan out a hike, if at all?
- Who, if anyone, do you go hiking with?
- Where do you go hiking and how do you get to those places?
- What kind of gear and supplies do you bring when you hike?
- What footwear and clothing do you wear when you hike?
- What do you think about when you hike?
- How do you feel when you hike?
- What do you most look forward to when you hike?
- What do you least look forward to when you hike?
- How would you describe a “good hike” / “bad hike”?

APPENDIX E:
INFORMED CONSENT FOR WALKABILITY PROJECT

Informed Consent

You are invited to participate in a research project being conducted by Bryan Picciotto, a graduate student in the Department of Communication and Journalism at the University of Maine. The faculty sponsor for this project is Dr. Nathan Stormer, professor and chair of the Department of Communication and Journalism. The purpose of the research is to better understand walking and hiking in Maine.

For this component of his research, Bryan plans to attend, observe, participate in, and document the public forum hosted by Grow Smart Maine, called, “The Case for Walkability: Health, Economic Development, and Sustainability.” The event takes place in Bangor on Tuesday, September 18, 2017, from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

What Will You Be Asked to Do?

If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked to allow the researcher to make observations about the event; take notes, audio, photos, and/or videos recordings at the event; and integrate this information into his research project.

Risks

By participating in this study, you risk only your time and inconvenience.

Benefits

While this study will have no direct benefit to you, this research may help us learn more about walking and hiking in Maine.

Confidentiality

Notes will be taken about the public forum. Only Bryan will have access to the notes, which will be stored on his password-protected computer. Your name or other identifying information will not be reported in any publications. After the project is completed, the notes will be stored indefinitely with Bryan on his password-protected computer, and will contribute to his long-term research program about hiking and walking.

Voluntary

Your participation in this research is voluntary. If you choose to take part in this study, you may stop at any time. If you do not wish to be recorded by the researcher, please notify him immediately. He will take a photo of you on his phone at the event. He will use that photo to avoid recording you at the event. The researcher will edit all of his recordings from the event, and he will use the photo of you to permanently remove you and any identifying information about you from his recordings. After he effectively removes you from his research, he will permanently delete the photo of you from his phone.

Contact Information

If you have any questions about this study, please contact Bryan Picciotto at 315-430-0012; 442 Dunn Hall; or bryan.picciotto@maine.edu. You may also reach Dr. Stormer, the faculty advisor on this study, at 207-581-1938; 430 Dunn Hall; or nathan@maine.edu.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact Gayle Jones, Assistant to the University of Maine's Protection of Human Subjects Review Board; 207-581-1498; or gayle.jones@umit.maine.edu.

APPENDIX F:

TRANSCRIPT OF “DEFINITE CLEARING” INTERVIEW

- Ellen** [slows walk] well we're at a definite clearing but [bird chirp] it might not be the best term
- Bryan** haha why not
- E** because we're surrounded by fog [bird chirp]
- B** you can see it move [strong gust]
- E** I feel it move too I can feel the breeze it's like cold breeze because the fog [bird chirp] and you can see like we're on some granite and there's like random clumps of trees that continually go down off the side of this hill or mountain [bird chirp] but then it just disappears and you can't see any further [bird chirp]
- B** yeah [bird chirp]
- E** disappears into the fog [long pause] it's like we're surrounded by white
- B** mhmm
- E** [quickens walk] it's interesting with the fog moving you can see it in the puddles the reflection of the sky moving or the fog moving
- B** hmm [bird chirp]
- E** [slows walk] but you can't really see the sky [strong gust] I guess you can feel it though [quickens walk]
- B** what's it like to hike through this [strong gust; bird chirp]
- E** I don't know it's like still refreshing to get to this point where it's open and you feel the breeze [bird chirp; strong gust] you can hear it [slows walk] did you hear the bird
- B** yeah [bird chirp]
- E** [quickens walk] was that the summit there wasn't a marker wow look at those little flowers [slows walk]

APPENDIX G:

TRANSCRIPT OF “THINKING ABOUT SLIPPING” INTERVIEW

Ellen [slow walk] it's really wet so I'm looking for places that are flat like to step on

Bryan mhm

E big enough for my foot or most of my foot or like covered in leaves instead of stepping on like the rock

B mhm

E like that's kind of flat [long pause in conversation; walk continues]

B it seems like it especially on the uphill here it changes so much between like pines and flat ground to roots leaves rocks

E yeah and I think the weather influences like what I'm looking for because [Ellen slips]

B oop [laughter]

E exactly like if it was drier

B yeah

E I wouldn't need to be like thinking about slipping

B right

E as much as I am right now

APPENDIX H:

TRANSCRIPT OF “UNLIKE ACADIA” INTERVIEW

- Ellen** well part of it is I can't really see very far [zips backpack] so I can't really tell like I don't know [transition to walk] I'm not I'm used to seeing the ocean or like that big slabs of granite or something and
- Bryan** mhm
- E** here [slows down walk] it's incredibly mossy and there are pine needles everywhere [regains speed of walk] it's like I guess it's not as um like taken care of like pristine it's more like I don't know [prominent speed]
- B** hmm
- E** how would you say that like it's not um
- B** it's not maintained
- E** maintained [gains speed] or like I wanted to say
- B** like clear
- E** cultured
- B** oh
- E** I don't know
- B** cultured in what sense
- E** like how
- B** like a clearly demarcated trail
- E** yeah and and like steps and guard rails and stuff like that doesn't exist here
- B** yeah

BIOGRAPHY OF AUTHOR

Bryan Picciotto was born in Syracuse, New York in 1990. He graduated from Liverpool High School in 2008, and earned a B.A. in Communication with a minor in Biblical and Theological Studies from Roberts Wesleyan College in 2012 and a M.A. in Communication from the College at Brockport, State University of New York in 2014. He has published articles in the *Atlantic Journal of Communication* (2019) and *Explorations of Media Ecology* (2016) and presented research at regional, national, and international conferences. He is a candidate for the Doctor of Philosophy in Communication from the University of Maine in August 2019.