

# Rhetorical Bodies

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*Edited by*

Jack Selzer and Sharon Crowley

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### Contemporary U.S. Memorial Sites as Exemplars of Rhetoric's Materiality

If we require justification for rethinking rhetoric as material, there is enough in our ordinary idiom. It is not unusual to hear the language of activity or of physicality used to describe rhetoric. Rhetors occupy "ground" and take "stances." They "pose," "posture," or "hold" to an idea. Rhetors "buttress" their arguments and sometimes use "colorful" language to express their ideas. Phrases are "turned" and ideas "taken up." Audience members assume a "position," "feel" a particular emotion, "grasp" an idea, or "see" a point. Minds are "opened" (or "closed") in and by means of rhetoric, and we are sometimes "touched" or "moved" by it. This is all commonplace language, and its very commonness ought to call our attention to it. What it suggests *at least* is that a heuristic of materiality is useful for understanding rhetoric—a practice that Friedrich Nietzsche once described suggestively as a "plastic art" (35).

Yet when we have theorized rhetoric, the "material" or "real" most often has been understood as characteristic of the rhetorical context—the physical setting, or sociocultural environment, of the rhetorical text—rather than of the text itself.<sup>1</sup> There is little doubt that all rhetoric appears within a material context that, at least in part, prompts it, shapes its character, and offers it the opportunity for significance (or oblivion). While those conditions are important, they are not what this chapter is primarily about. Instead, it offers some openings for rethinking rhetoric as itself material, just as substantial and consequential as any element of its setting.<sup>2</sup>

#### Memorial Sites

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Public commemorative art in the United States provides the material for my provisional attempt to rethink rhetoric. It certainly is not the same as the written and oral discourses that more typically draw rhetoricians' attention. Despite the fact that memorials are not encompassed by rhetoric's central domains of written and spoken discourses, they are unquestionably rhetorical, except perhaps under the most narrow object characterizations of rhetoric—for example, as oral speech. Memorials are centrally, although not exclusively, epideictic, as Neil Michel and I have shown elsewhere, they do the work (often more than the work) that we expect eulogies to do. Precisely because they are different from our usual rhetorical models—speech and writing—these memorials seem useful to consider, because they summon attention to their assiduous materiality. These are structures, for the most part, that remain in our perceptual fields as long as we are nearby. They do not fall into silence like oral speech, nor are they (in most cases) "put away" like the writings that we read and then store in bookshelves out of our way.<sup>3</sup> Because of their recalcitrant "presentness," I believe memorials are particularly revealing for an inquiry into rhetoric's materiality.

I cannot pretend to advance any declarations or fully developed theories about the material character of rhetoric, even working with such strong exemplars. All I can offer are some tentative openings for thinking about it. But even that seems a reasonable start, given the difficulty of the task. We face two significant obstacles in retheorizing (or even thinking about) rhetoric materially. Following a discussion of those two challenges, and relying primarily on the imprints of five contemporary public memorial sites, I will advance some questions that offer some openings for reconsidering rhetoric as material. In doing so, I will discuss similarities and differences among rhetorical media, because degrees, kinds, and consequences of materiality seem to differ significantly, but rather unpredictably, depending in part on whether the "rhetoric" we describe is made of sound, script, or stone.

#### Challenges To Theorizing a Material Rhetoric

Two challenges immediately present themselves in rethinking rhetoric as material, but the consequence of each is the same: we lack an idiom for referencing talk, writing, or even inscribed stone as material. It has been instructive, and somewhat reassuring, to watch the likes of Michel Foucault, Jean-François Lyotard, and Michel de Certeau grapple with ideas for which they—and we—have no language.<sup>4</sup> Each of them, in very different efforts, has struggled with the lack of a materialist language about discourse. At least as interesting are writers on architecture and landscape who attempt to describe the influence exerted by physical structures and places, often by reaching for the languages of rhetoric and semiotics; these, however, still fail in my view to describe adequately how the places they study do rhetorical work.<sup>5</sup> The challenges that

these writers have faced, and that we too must confront, are first, the obstinacy of the language of symbolicity in referencing rhetorical texts of any kind, and second, the naturalized, residual effects of liberal humanism in rhetoric.

### The Language of Symbolicity

In speaking or writing about a commemorative rhetoric of architecture or sculpture, I take "rhetoric" to be any partisan, meaningful, consequential text, with the term "text" understood broadly as a legible or readable event or object. I am aware of the dangers of definition, and thus I offer this one as conditional; it serves the purpose to the degree that the characterization seems at least reasonable. If we shift our focus further back to question the *source* of the stipulated characteristics—partisanship, meaningfulness, consequence, and even legibility—we must identify what makes these characteristics possible. And perhaps the most basic answer is the materiality of the text. No text is a text, nor does it have meaning, influence, political stance, or legibility, in the absence of material form. Rhetoric is not rhetoric until it is uttered, written, or otherwise manifested or given presence. Thus, we might hypothesize as a starting point for theorizing rhetoric that at least one of its basic characteristics (if not the *most* basic) is its materiality.

Materiality, however, has rarely been taken as a starting point or basis for theorizing rhetoric, despite the frequent cues in our language about its material character.<sup>6</sup> In recent memory, rhetoric has been defined by, and theorized according to, its most ephemeral quality: its symbolicity. At least in speech communication's renditions of rhetoric, one does not have far to look for a near consensus about its basic character; it is treated definitively, even exhaustively, as symbolic. For example, enlarging Donald Bryant's classic formulation of rhetoric as the "rationale of informative and suasive discourse" ("Rhetoric"), Douglas Ehninger defined it as "the rationale of symbolic inducement" (3). Richard Johannesen argues that rhetoric is concerned with "the use of verbal and nonverbal symbols by man and his institutions to influence human behavior" (1). Sonja Foss, Karen Foss, and Robert Trapp define it as "the uniquely human ability to use symbols to communicate with one another" (11). Gerard Hauser describes rhetoric as an "instrumental use of language," suggesting the entailment of the view that "one person engages another in an exchange of symbols to accomplish some goal." (2). Martin Medhurst and Thomas Benson claim that when critics address how a text functions as rhetoric, they are inquiring about the text "as a symbolic form whose structure and context lead the audience to think, feel, believe, understand, or act in an arguably predictable way" (xx). Although it is not impossible to find a contemporary rhetorician defining rhetoric without reference to symbols, it is at least unusual,<sup>7</sup> whether

the rhetorician works in speech communication, in English, or in some other field.

Why should we describe symbolicity as ephemeral? After all, symbols are articulated (materialized) members of a language system, those elements that combine and recombine in actual utterances or writings. But even if we grant that symbols themselves are material, it is rarely their material manifestation that we attend to; symbols refer us consistently beyond themselves to their referential or meaning domains. The material articulation of the symbol itself seems of no more than vehicular interest, as a means of transport to its *relais*—its meaning. Paradoxically, the symbol is the material element of rhetoric, but the very notion of a "symbol" teaches us to reach outside it for its meaning and to treat that meaning as if it were the real dimension of rhetoric, or at least the most important one. This is not to suggest that it is somehow wrong or incorrect to attend to rhetoric's symbolicity and its capacity to generate meaning; rather, I mean to suggest that it is problematic to treat rhetoric as if it were exclusively or essentially symbolic or meaning-ful. There are some things that rhetoric's symbolicity simply cannot account for. One is its consequence. Even if we were to accomplish the impossible and catalogue the full range of meanings referenced by a symbolic formulation, we would not *therefore* be in any better position than when we began to account for its consequence in use. And if rhetoric is, as I have suggested, defined in part by its potential for consequence, then there is a problem if understanding rhetoric as essentially symbolic.

That seems to be the difficulty addressed by a number of rhetoricians and communication theorists who have advanced other "units" of analysis to describe rhetorical formulations. The fact that they would sense a need to offer these alternatives at all suggests that there is some flaw in using the heuristic of symbolicity. Karl Wallace suggested in 1970 that we turn to the *speech act* as a way of describing rhetoric that might help us to address its consequence. Michael McGee in 1980 forwarded the concept of the *ideograph*—a language construction that is understood, in part, by its use and its capacity to accrete meanings. Thomas Farrell suggests that we attempt to understand rhetoric as an activity, hence his suggestion that we attend to the *utterance* (148, 152).<sup>8</sup> Finally, John Waite Bowers introduced the *pragmeme* in the mid-1980s in his Speech Communication Association presidential address, insisting that communication's domain is, "in a semiotician's view of the universe, [*'pragmatics': the study of the mutual influence between and among people and their signs and symbols*]" (2). He proposed a program of "*'pragmatics'*" as an analogue to phonemics and morphemics in the syntactic and semantic branches of semiotics, and he suggested that issues like power and status "are probably important features for [such] a theory of pragmatics" (3).<sup>9</sup>

These alternatives were offered in different contexts, each with its specific concerns and solutions, but they have this in common: they recognize that rhetoric's potential for consequence is a problem that has been only inadequately addressed. Although none of these authors goes so far as to suggest that symbolically is at the root of the difficulty, their proposals of other formulations—speech act, ideograph, utterance, or *pragmeme*—make the case seem plausible. That is, their alternative constructions for understanding instances of rhetorical practice imply that the notion of the symbol is neither adequate to rhetoric nor coterminous with it, and they hint that the heuristic of symbolicity falls short of grasping rhetoric's characteristic of potential consequence.

Symbolicity is also a dubious language for understanding the partisan character of rhetoric. To the extent that we understand politics or partisanship as a symbolic content or as a substance that can be contained in symbols, symbolicity is an adequate model. That is, if we take politics as a genre of rhetoric, symbolicity addresses it effectively. But if we take seriously what Lyotard articulates so elegantly—that politics is not a genre, but “the state of language” (138)—we are again faced with a difficulty in using the heuristic of the symbol. Any language (or other practice) enacts political effects that are not reducible to its resident meanings, as Foucault makes clear in a discussion of governmentality and power:

In itself the exercise of power is not violence; nor is it a consent which, implicitly, is renewable. It is a total structure of actions brought to bear upon possible actions; it incites, it induces, it seduces, it makes easier or more difficult; in the extreme it constrains or forbids absolutely; it is nevertheless always a way of acting upon an acting subject or acting subjects by virtue of their acting or being capable of action. (“The Subject” 220)

Hence, Foucault enjoins that we “distinguish power relations from relationships of communication which transmit information by means of a language, a system of signs, or any other symbolic medium” (“The Subject” 217). His point is that we cannot account for power, even as enacted or enabled by discourse, by resorting to understanding symbols and meanings.

In sum, rhetoricians' excessive reliance on a model of rhetoric as symbolic is simply inadequate to account for some of its most fundamental—arguably, definitive—characteristics: its capacity for consequence, and its partisanship. It is doubtful that such a model can account even for its legitimacy, but that is open to question and probably the topic for further investigation. What is clear is that the language of symbolicity has become stiflingly dominant in relation to rhetoric; it is treated as our exclusive heuristic, to such a degree that we are rendered virtually aphasic in attempting to deal with rhetoric in other ways. That there *are* other ways—even rudimentary attempts to access the material character of rhetoric—suggests that we make the attempt.<sup>10</sup>

### The Residue of Liberal Humanism

If we look back again to the definitions of rhetoric advanced by contemporary theorists, we see their most obvious common feature: their description of rhetoric as symbolic. But another common element finds its way into most of those definitions—the assertion that rhetoric (or symbolizing) is used to accomplish particular ends: “to influence human behavior,” “to communicate with one another,” or “to accomplish some goal.” This is a common enough way of thinking about rhetoric, and it is probably a reasonably accurate description of the motivations people have for engaging in rhetorical practices; however, it describes a motivation rather than an essential or definitive characteristic of rhetoric. Moreover, it creates additional difficulties for rethinking rhetoric as material.

It is almost certain that the goal orientation linked to rhetoric in these definitions is constituted by rhetoric's imbrication throughout the twentieth century with liberal humanism. Certainly, rhetoric's associations with humanism have been multiple and extremely divergent during their phases of historical circulation and recirculation. Generally speaking, however, humanism in the twentieth-century academic world has come to be associated with the impulses that enhance the individual's enlightened freedom and responsibility of action and thought, tempered by a concern for the same freedoms and responsibilities of others. In rhetoric, as in other fields it has touched, humanism has offered its adherents an optimistic but perhaps too comfortable world view. Liberal humanism has enabled and perpetuated a view of rhetorical practice as a (symbolic, meaning-full) instrument under the control of the rhetor. We use rhetoric *in order to* accomplish goals. We use it for *effect*—or at least so the story goes. But because the story goes that way, it leads us to attend to particular aspects of rhetoric and not to others. In fact, it seems to have led us to an overemphasis on rhetorical production and an exceptionally narrow understanding of effect. It surely may be granted that rhetorical study in the twentieth century, and perhaps always, has focused on producing rhetorical performances of some kind. It seems equally unproblematic to assent to the proposition that we teach and theorize rhetorical production as goal-oriented, as aiming for some particular outcome (Cherwitz and Theobald-Osborne 52–56). Again, these tendencies are not necessarily wrongheaded, but they are at least incomplete.

Even rhetorical critics, whose own role is reception, return their readers to questions of invention, contextual contingency, and the construction of the rhetorical text far more than they ever deal with what happens to or with a text, once it has been produced. Rarely is consequence taken up as the central focus of our study. When it is addressed at all, it is typically advanced as a reason to study the construction (production values, if you will) of a particular text; and

it is frequently understood narrowly as "success" or goal fulfillment. That is, critics typically argue that a particular rhetorical text is worth our attention because it was successful: it achieved the goal of its maker. Such an argument refers us to the goal of the rhetor as if it were the only possible or legitimate measure of effect (Chervitz and Theobald-Osborne 56).

This is an inordinately narrow view of what happens when rhetorical texts are mobilized. True, rhetoric achieves, fails to achieve, or only partially accomplishes the goals of its maker. But what about the things that happen as a result of texts that lie outside the goal orientation, or even the perceptual field, of a rhetor? Karl Wallace posed the question almost thirty years ago: "Does one distinguish between the effect and the consequence of an act of communication?" (20). Nilsen had already answered the question and diagnosed the problem in the 1950s: "It is the viewing of the social act, the speech, so predominantly from the point of view of the individual—the speaker and his purposes—rather than from the point of view of society and its purposes . . . that has led to much of the conflict and confusion about effects as an object of criticism" (quoted in Medhurst xxix). Even now, consequences beyond the scope of goal fulfillment are rarely, if ever, addressed, despite the fact that even pedestrian, clichéd understandings of motivation (e.g., "The road to Hell is paved with good intentions") suggest that we may be overlooking something significant. Everyone seems to know that rhetoric is not exclusively about production, and more specifically, that it has consequences that exceed goal fulfillment, but hardly anyone seems able or willing to address it as anything else. That "anything else" surely is located in rhetoric's materiality. Foucault is helpful in diagnosing the silence as anxiety about materiality, describing it as

anxiety as to just what discourse is, when it is manifested materially, as a written or spoken object; but also, uncertainty faced with a transitory existence, destined for oblivion—at any rate, not belonging to us; uncertainty at the suggestion of barely imaginable powers and dangers behind this activity, however humdrum and grey it may seem; uncertainty when we suspect the conflicts, triumphs, injuries, dominations and enslavements that lie behind those words, even when long use has clipped away their rough edges. ("Discourse" 216)

As a result of such anxiety, Foucault argues, societies find ways of dealing with the production of discourse "to avert its powers and dangers . . . [and] to evade its ponderous, awesome materiality" (216). One way to do that is to accept, or at least not to question, the premise that rhetoric's effects are delineated by its maker's goals. It is not an easy assumption to disengage, because there is a certain comfort in it. But rhetoric has material force beyond the goals, intentions, and motivations of its producers, and it is our responsibility as rhetoricians not just to acknowledge that, but to try to understand it. Unfortunately, we do not

have much of a language for doing that, as evident in Foucault's (and others') struggles with discussing it.

Understood in the way that Lyotard and Foucault discuss them, partisanship and consequence are nearly indistinguishable. While I see no particular reason to question their linkage, at least in a consideration of materiality, it is important to retain the different emphases they entail. "Potential consequence" broadens the consideration of effect, but it does not imply a particular tilt to the consequences rhetoric may enact, as "partisanship" does. Rhetoric enables some actions and prohibits or at least discourages others; it promotes particular modes of identity and not others. Sometimes this "tilt" is purposeful, and sometimes not. Nonetheless, the narrow study of effect, understood as goal fulfillment, diverts us from the partisan character of rhetoric, except for the constricted arena of ends-means assessments.

★ How do we begin to theorize materiality, in the face of these obstacles? If the material character of rhetoric is not reducible to its symbollicity, and if materiality implicates us in issues of consequence and partisanship beyond that of the rhetor's goals, where do we begin? Two answers are already available in the question itself. If rhetoric's materiality is not a function of its symbolic constructions of meaning, then we must look elsewhere: we must ask not just what a text means but, more generally, what it does and we must not understand what it does as adhering strictly to what it was supposed to do. Both these directives open a vast field for us to contemplate, and thus I believe that we can begin most effectively by attending to instances of rhetoric and what they can tell us about their own materiality. In the following section, I attempt to do just that, with the understanding that the attempt is preliminary and provisional.

### Openings in Rethinking Rhetoric: Cases of Material Commemorative Rhetorics

Since the Vietnam Veterans Memorial was dedicated in 1982, a remarkable number of public commemorative sites have been proposed in the United States, and a rather large number of those have actually been constructed. The most prominent are those that have evoked the sharpest controversy—for example, the Korean War Veterans Memorial and the recently dedicated Franklin Delano Roosevelt Memorial, both in Washington, D.C. Many more have been built with less overt public conflict, including the U.S. Navy Memorial and the U.S. Law Enforcement Officers Memorial in Washington; the Freedom Forum Journalists Memorial in Arlington, Virginia; the Civil Rights Memorial in Montgomery, Alabama; the Astronauts Memorial at Cape Canaveral, Florida; the May 4 Memorial at Kent State University in Ohio; and the Witch Trials Tercentenary Memorial in Salem, Massachusetts. The NAMES Project AIDS

Memorial Quilt, though not set in a particular place or made of stone or metal, is an immense memorial that has been displayed in various locations around the world. The U.S. World War II Memorial is now under construction in Washington, D.C. This list is far from exhaustive; it represents only a few memorials actually constructed, from among hundreds, perhaps thousands, that have been proposed in the United States since 1982.

The late twentieth-century surge of public memorial building is itself an interesting rhetorical phenomenon, but rather than focus on it macroscopically, I will use five of these contemporary memorial sites individually (and occasionally in relation to one another and others) as resources for understanding rhetoric's materiality. The five that I focus on here—the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the AIDS Memorial Quilt, the Civil Rights Memorial, Kent State University's May 4 Memorial, and the Witch Trials Tercentenary Memorial—are not necessarily representative of contemporary memorials. I have chosen them not because of what they tell us about their genre, but because of what they propose about the materiality of rhetoric.

Before turning to what they tell us about rhetoric's materiality, we should take a brief tour of the five sites. The Vietnam Veterans Memorial is situated in Constitution Gardens on the West Mall in Washington, D.C., northeast of the Lincoln Memorial. The original structure, dedicated in 1982 and so familiar that I need not illustrate it here, is a chevron of black granite, about 450 feet long, built into a rise. The reflective surface bears the inscribed names of the more than fifty-eight thousand U.S. personnel killed in the Vietnam conflict. The memorial was supplemented in 1984 by a figurative sculpture of three U.S. soldiers and a flagstaff (figure 2.1). It was augmented again in 1993 by the addition of the Vietnam Women's Memorial, another figurative sculpture (figure 2.2)

The NAMES Project began small in 1987, as the idea of Cleve Jones, a San Francisco AIDS activist. His plan was to commemorate each individual who died of AIDS with a four-by-six-foot quilt (approximately the size of a coffin); each quilt was to be made by a friend or loved one of the deceased (figure 2.3). The full AIDS Memorial Quilt has been displayed four times in Washington, D.C., and various portions of it have been displayed in locations throughout the world—in department stores, in high school gymnasiums, and in state capitols. During its more recent visit to Washington in 1996, the Quilt included more than forty thousand individual quilt panels and covered an area reaching from the U.S. Capitol almost to the Washington Monument. Most of the quilts are decorated with the name of the deceased and often incorporate significant symbols of the individual's life.

The Civil Rights Memorial in Montgomery, Alabama, was dedicated in 1989, on the entrance plaza of a new building housing the Southern Poverty Law Center, its commissioning organization (figures 2.4, 2.5, 2.6). The SPLC,



Figure 2.1. *Three Fighting Men*, Vietnam Veterans Memorial (Permission to reprint by Axiom Photo Design)

established by Morris Dees, is a not-for-profit organization that takes on cases of discrimination, usually racially based; the new SPLC headquarters was built following a 1983 Ku Klux Klan firebombing of its former office space. The memorial is composed of two black granite pieces, both water features. The first is a convex, curved wall fronting the SPLC building. Through falling water appears the inscription, "... UNTIL JUSTICE ROLLS DOWN LIKE WATERS AND



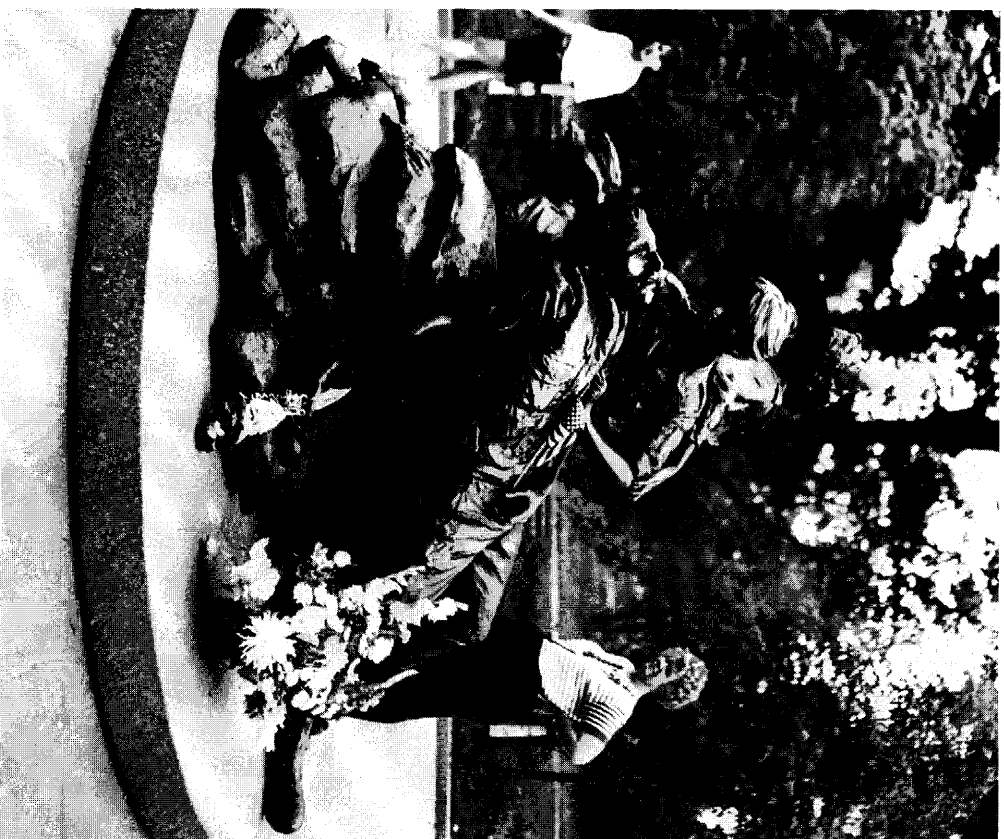


Figure 2.2. Vietnam Women's Memorial (Permission to reprint by Axiom Photo Design)

RIGHTEOUSNESS LIKE A MIGHTY STREAM. MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR." The other is a circular but off-balance pedestal with water flowing smoothly off the top, with fifty-three inscriptions around the perimeter of the circle. The inscriptions form an annular time line from 1954 to 1968, noting forty racially motivated murders as well as events and advances in the civil rights movement. The first inscription is the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision, and the last is the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr.

Kent State's May 4 Memorial, dedicated in 1990, marks the events of 4 May



Figure 2.3. A section of the AIDS Memorial Quilt (Permission to reprint by Axiom Photo Design)

1970, when National Guardsmen opened fire during an antiwar demonstration on campus, following President Nixon's 30 April announcement of the invasion of Cambodia. Four students were killed and nine others wounded. The memorial is situated near the site of the shootings, on a wooded, shadowy slope of Blanket Hill. A long bench facing two pylons marks the entrance to the memorial's plaza (figure 2.7). Between the two pylons, in the granite walkway, is the only inscription: "INQUIRE, LEARN, REFLECT." Four polished black granite ground inserts mark a path to four more pylons; both sets of four mark the four student deaths (figure 2.8). A fifth black inset, removed from the focal four, is intended to acknowledge the many other victims of the 4 May events. As an augmentation, 58,171 daffodils were planted on the site, to commemorate each of the U.S. servicemen killed in Vietnam (figure 2.9).

The Witch Trials Tercentenary Memorial in Salem, Massachusetts, was dedicated in 1992; it marks the events of 1692, when nineteen men and women were hanged and one man crushed to death, following extraordinary witchcraft trials undertaken by a tribunal of questionable legal authority. A weathered stone wall surrounds a small square adjoining the old Salem burial ground, but a sightline is opened to the point where some of the accusers, judges, and other townspeople of the time are interred (figure 2.10). Inside the perimeter of the square are placed twenty cantilevered stone benches, each bearing the name of one of the accused witches, the person's date of death, and the way the death



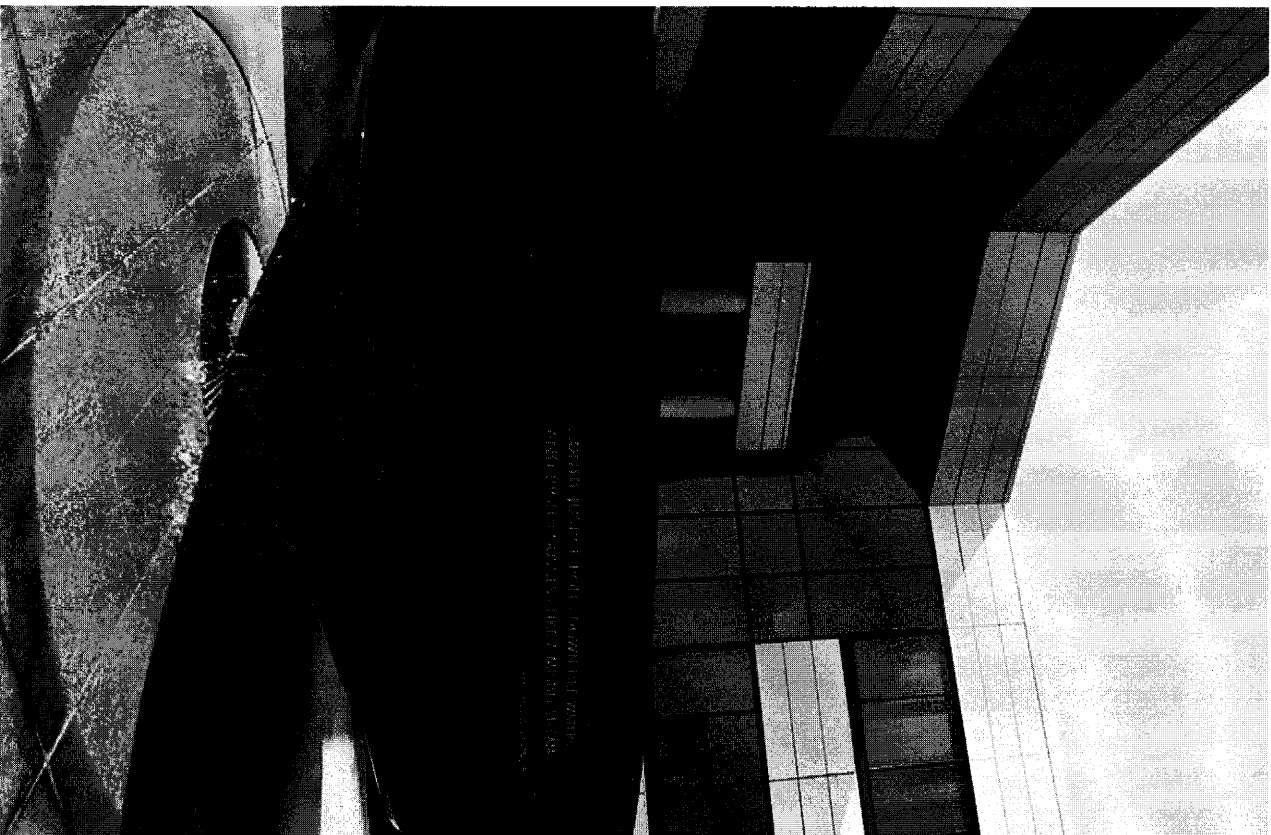


Figure 2.4. Civil Rights Memorial (Permission to reprint by Axiom Photo Design)

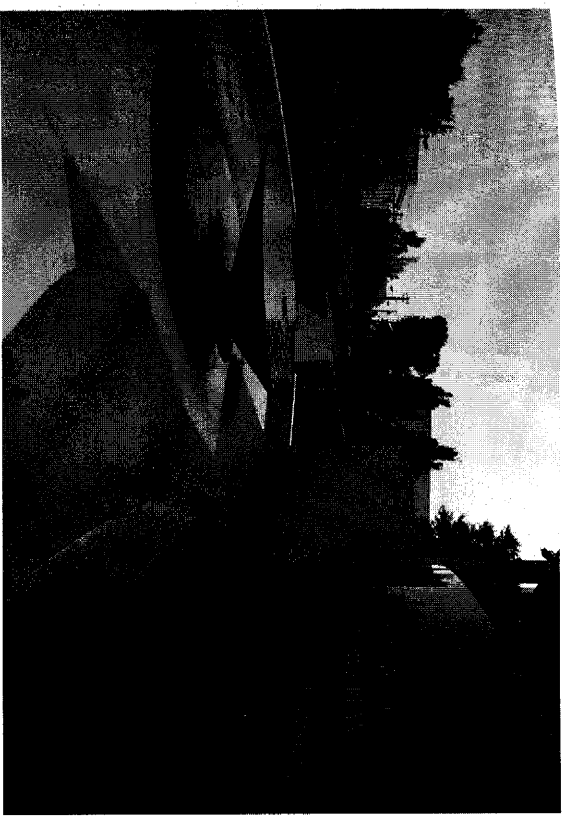


Figure 2.5. Civil Rights Memorial (Permission to reprint by Axiom Photo Design)

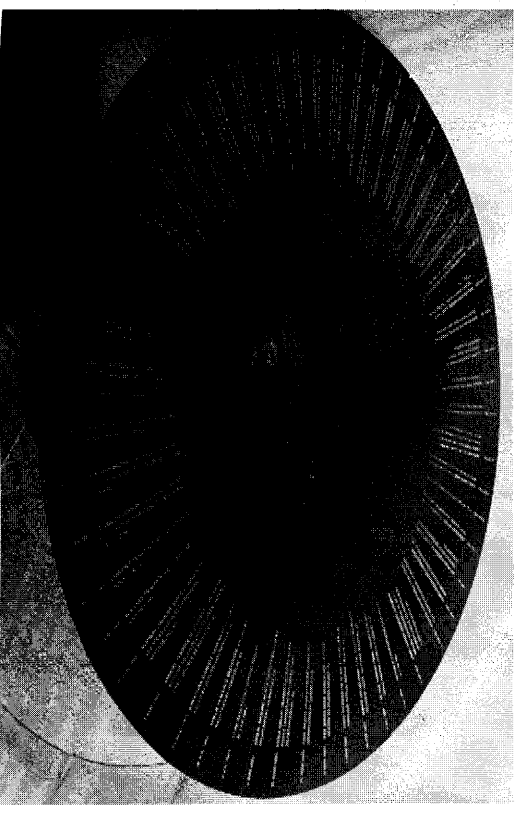


Figure 2.6. Civil Rights Pedestal (Permission to reprint by Axiom Photo Design)



Figure 2.7. Entrance to May 4 Memorial, Kent State University (Permission to reprint by Axiom Photo Design)

sentence was carried out (figure 2.11). These death markers are arranged in chronological order. The center of the square is planted with locust trees (Story and Venditti). Inscriptions—protests of innocence made by the accused—appear in the threshold walkway to the square, but they are cut off abruptly by the walls on either side (figure 2.12). Interestingly, another memorial was erected in nearby Danvers—old Salem Village—site of the trials (figure 2.13).<sup>11</sup>

These memorial sites, taken as rhetorical texts, invite us to consider at least five questions that arise from their materiality: (1) What is the significance of the text's material existence? (2) What are the apparatuses and degrees of durability displayed by the text? (3) What are the text's modes or possibilities of reproduction or preservation? (4) What does the text do to (or with, or against) other texts? (5) How does the text act on people? In raising these particular questions, I do not mean to imply that others might be less important; moreover, each of the issues raised by these questions is a complicated one, deserving far more attention than I can give it here. It is my goal, however, not to exhaust this topic but to stimulate further discussion of it, so my hope is that the exemplars will provoke such exploration.

### What is the Significance of the Text's Material Existence?

Charles Jencks suggests that "architecture really is a verb, an *action*" (*Language* 104). The same might be said of any rhetorical text. The entry of a text



Figure 2.8. A portion of the May 4 Memorial (Permission to reprint by Axiom Photo Design)



Figure 2.9. May 4 Memorial (*detail*) (Permission to reprint by Axiom Photo Design)

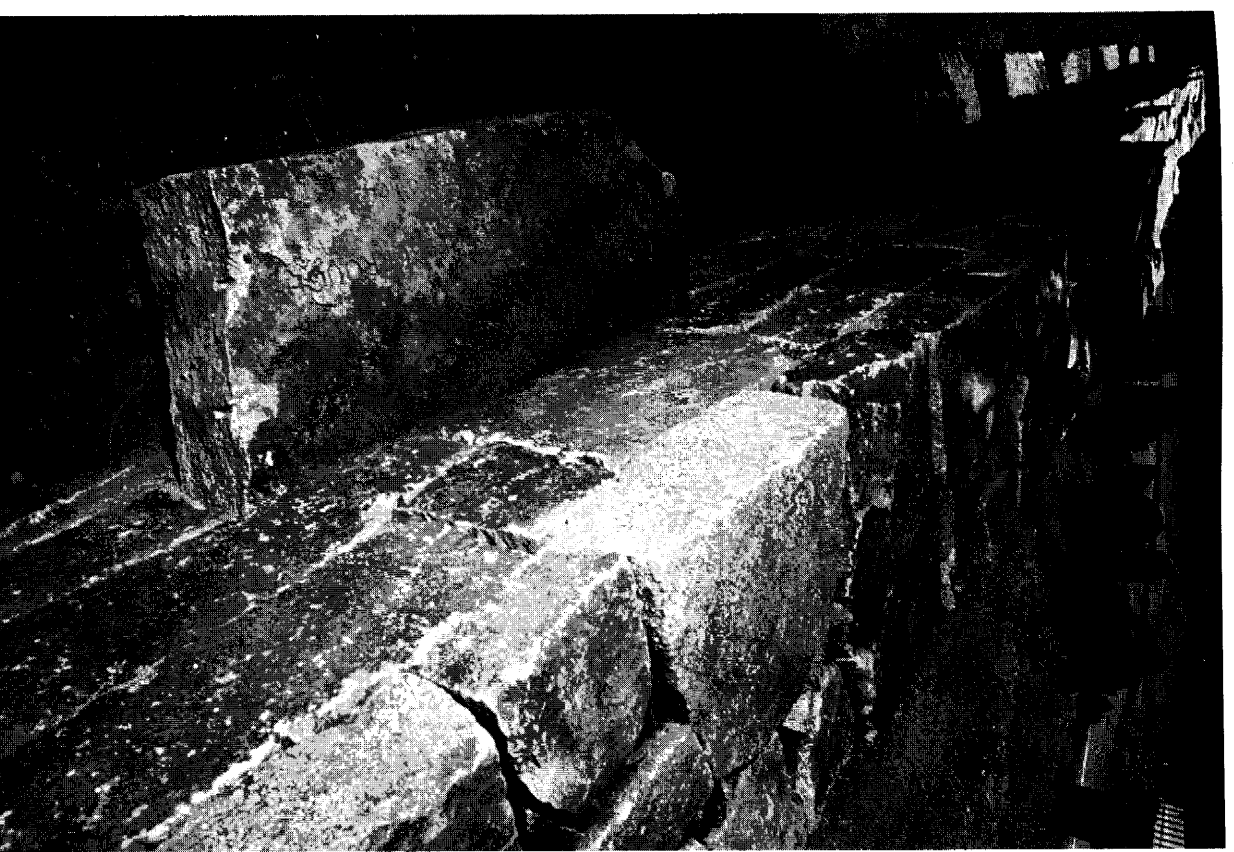


Figure 2.10. Which Trials Tercentenary Memorial (Permission to reprint by Axiom Photo Design)

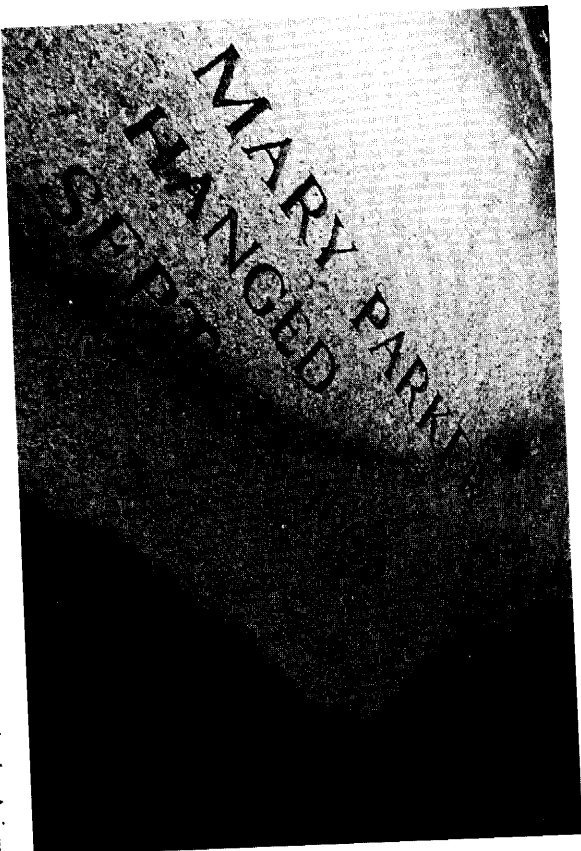


Figure 2.11. Wich Trials Tercentenary Memorial (*detail*) (Permission to reprint by Axiom Photo Design)

within a particular context is a move on that context that changes it in some way. Perhaps the best way to think about this notion is to ask what is different as a result of the text's *existence*, as opposed to what might be the case if the text had not appeared at all. Architecture, like natural language use, expresses degrees of significance not just through its symbolic substance but by its very existence. That a memorial to U.S. Vietnam veterans was built at all marked an important change in the U.S. national cultural context. Although the United States had been defeated, the construction—the spare existence—of a memorial to those who had served in the armed forces did at least two things. First, it announced that those who had served their country were worthy of memory, despite the embarrassing military outcome. Second, it marked a place for the veterans and the survivors of the dead (as well as others) to come together to form a community of recognition, grieving, healing, and activism that had been all but missing from the public sphere (Marling and Wetenhall; Ochsner). The AIDS Memorial Quilt has served similar functions more recently, calling stark attention to the grave threat of the epidemic and offering a gathering point for activists and survivors. Both memorials, by their presence, do something closely akin to what has been called the agenda-setting function of televised news, because a topic appears on the news, it is *thereby* deemed newsworthy (McCombs and Shaw). Similarly, when a memorial (or any other text) appears on the landscape, it is thereby deemed—at least by some, and at least for the

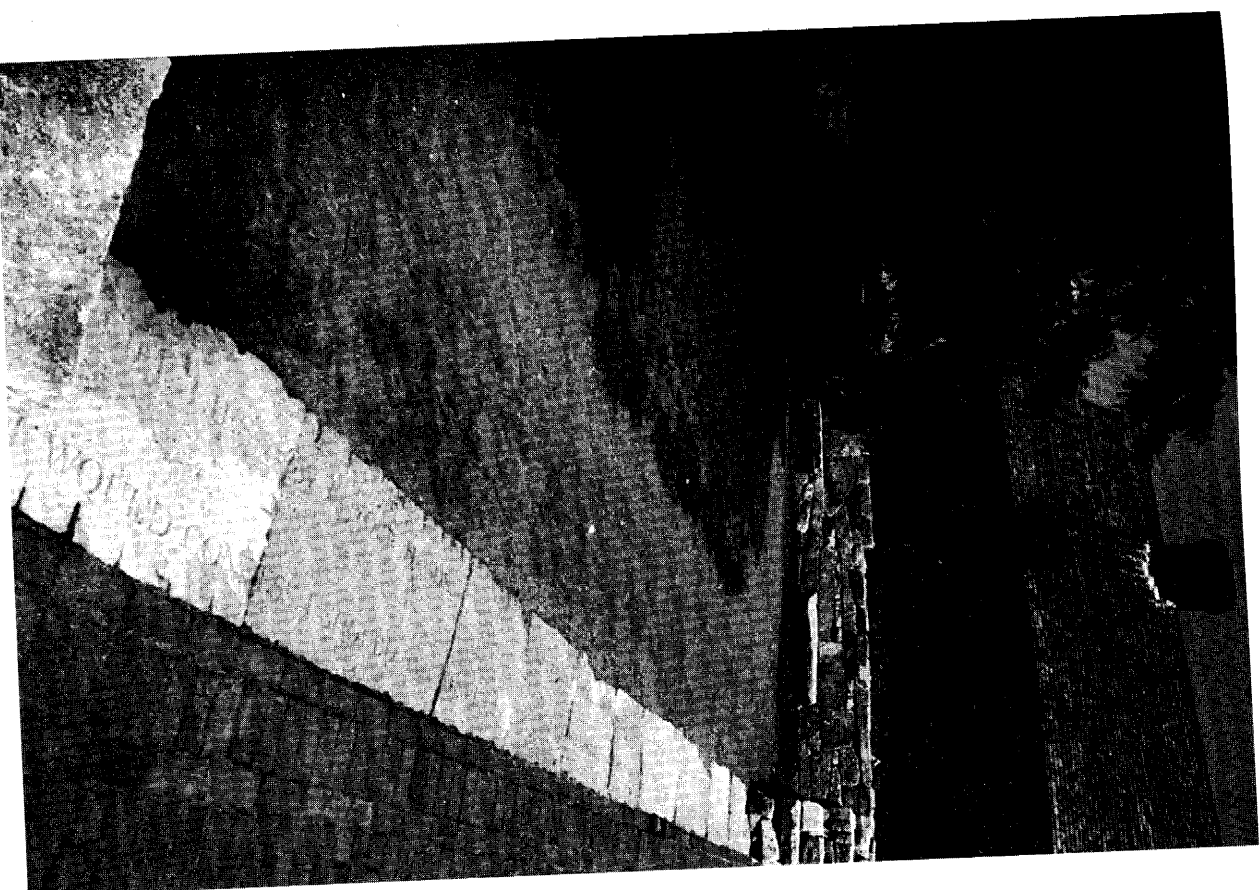


Figure 2.12. Wich Trials Tercentenary Memorial entrance (Permission to reprint by Axiom Photo Design)





Figure 2.13. Wich Trials Memorial, Danvers, Massachusetts (Permission to reprint by Axiom Photo Design)

moment—attention-worthy. This is not to say that all such texts actually achieve attention, but rather that their existence marks them with at least a potential for public attention that would not be available in their absence.<sup>12</sup>

The existence of a text may generate other kinds of consequences as well. Some people are worried that the introduction of multiple new memorials on the Mall in Washington, D.C., will diminish the structures' impact, not because of the particularities of their designs or messages, but simply because of overpopulation.<sup>13</sup> Since 1982, the three Vietnam Veterans Memorial structures and the large, complex Korean War Veterans Memorial have been added to the West Mall, and the World War II Memorial will be in place there by the end of the 1990s. The Roosevelt Memorial now augments the Tidal Basin perimeter once left completely to the Jefferson Memorial, and a Black Revolutionary War Patriots Memorial has been approved for a West Mall site as well, should its foundation be able to raise funds to erect it. So acute have been the worries over this tendency to overpopulate commemorative space that the National Commemorative Works Act (P.L. 99–652) was passed in 1986, severely restricting what kinds of memorials may be built in the monumental core of Washington, D.C. The concern that animates this legislation reminds us that texts simply by their existence, compete with one another for attention. In this instance, the worry is that they will compete to the degree of mutual distraction—a possibility that has analogues with other kinds of discourses, although the distract-

tions in other cases may involve something other than sightlines. In any case, these and other consequences are made possible not by the symbolic gestures of these texts or the goals of their makers, but by their material existence.

### What Are the Apparatuses and Degrees of Durability Displayed by the Text?

Even if we take all rhetoric to be characterized by materiality, we must also acknowledge that its materiality varies in both degree and kind, with differential entailments of durability and vulnerability. The kind of material the text is composed of must be a serious consideration. Some texts, by virtue of their constitutive material, are obviously intended to endure; and it seems a natural assumption, if not always a correct one, that such longevity is granted to texts that communities see as more important than others. Granite and bronze are more durable than ink on paper, and paper lasts longer than the moment of oral discourse. It is an interesting paradox of materiality, however, that durable materials may actually render a text more vulnerable. For example, any stone or metal structure, though composed of a hard, lasting substance, is more vulnerable to destruction by hostile forces than is a book or even oral speech. Natural weathering, vandalism, lack of maintenance, and even bulldozing (as we have seen vividly in news accounts from the republics of the former Soviet Union) are more or less constant threats to public memorial sites. The Civil Rights Memorial in Montgomery is patrolled constantly by a security guard, no doubt to protect it against destruction by vandals or hate groups. Some of these threats, of course, have parallels in the cases of other kinds of texts; however, it is difficult to think of a close parallel to bulldozing or weathering in the case of oral speech. About the only threat of actual destruction to an oral text is that its speaker might be shouted down by a "vandalizing" crowd—a possible but rather atypical event. Certainly the mode of preservation may intervene to salvage a speech even if it is overcome by hecklers, but the event of its orality is destroyed nonetheless. Because this is a less likely outcome than either the vandalism or the inevitable physical decay of a public memorial, however, the paradox remains.

The paradox does not, however, entail a perfect correlation between durability of material and vulnerability. Cases vary considerably. The original AIDS Memorial Quilt panels, now just over ten years old, have become so fragile that they will probably not be part of many future displays of the Quilt. Many of the mid-1980s panels were not sewn quilts but were made of simple cotton sheeting, spray-painted with names (see figure 2.3); they are wearing out as a result of travel, cleaning, and exposure to natural elements. In this case, their vulnerability is a direct result of the lack of durable material. They are not unlike rare documents or books that can be reproduced but that lose originality

status in the reproduction. Such loss leads directly to a consideration of the third issue.

### What Are the Text's Modes or Possibilities of Reproduction or Preservation?

The link between reproduction of a text and memory is substantial. It seems uncontroversial to suggest that a text and its reproduction constitute different objects or events, yet it is relatively rare that we *practice* a distinction between original and copy, or among different kinds of copies (transcriptions, translations, etc.). What happens when the first of the Quilt's panels disintegrates? The NAMES Project will preserve all panels to the extent possible and reproduce them in photographs and in photo representations on its web site; however, the literal feel of the panels will be lost, as will the rendered work of therapy for survivors that those panels contain. Reproduction is an intervention in the materiality of the text, and it is important to grapple with the degrees and kinds of change wrought by it.

Reproduction has realized a number of possibilities, often democratizing access to texts of various kinds. However, the access offered by reproduction may be very different from interaction with an original or another kind of copy. It is unlikely that reproduction of a novel much changes the nature of the involvement or response of the reader; however, visiting one of the scaled-down, traveling reproductions of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial is an experience distinctly different from visiting the memorial in Washington. Similarly, the photographs accompanying this chapter cannot replicate the experiences of making a memorial a destination, traveling to it, touching it, seeing it, walking through and around it with others, and even hearing its distinctive sounds. The photographs two-dimensionalize and freeze an experience of three dimensions and movement, accommodating a kind of sharing of experience, but only a limited kind.

This is not unlike the problem faced by critics of public address. It is so unusual, in fact, for such critics to deal with events of which they were a part that it is widely remarked when it occurs (Osborn 149–51; Wenzel 167–68). More typically, when critics study oral rhetorical events that are historically completed, they study reproductions—tape or transcript—of an event, which is thus no longer the same event. Even more radically than with a standing memorial, all opportunity to study the original event has evaporated with time. That is a function not of any imperfection of critical procedures or choices, but of materiality. However, the critic who will attend to rhetoric's materiality—whether dealing with rhetoric that is sewn, sculpted, scripted, or spoken—must acknowledge and even work with (instead of struggle against or ignore) the facts of textual reproduction. Sometimes what appears to be the rhetorical

text is not the rhetorical text, but an altogether different one; and what counts as *the* text is open to question, in any case. Even the bare materiality of a memorial site does not guarantee that it is the same text on a cloudy day as on a sunny one, on a crowded day as when almost deserted, at dawn as at midday. In fact, its capacity to be engaged physically actually determines its extreme mutability.

### What Does the Text Do to (or with, or against) Other Texts?

This is one of the more difficult questions to address because the linkages among texts can be so varied and numerous. In offering examples here, I will address only relationships among memorial sites, and between the memorial sites and their immediate contexts. I recognize that the memorials do work on other kinds of texts as well, and that other kinds of texts do work on them (Blair and Michel); however, because the question is almost unmanageable except in a fully developed critical analysis, I will limit the domain artificially here, for illustrative purposes.

Here are some of the linkages that stand out in attending to these memorials: enabling, appropriating, contextualizing, supplementing, correcting, challenging, competing, and silencing. As I have suggested, the contemporary spate of memorial-building in the United States began after the Vietnam Veterans Memorial was built, and the new commemorative enthusiasm seems to have been inspired by it. Granted, some of the memorials that have been built since—for example, the U.S. Navy Memorial and the Roosevelt Memorial—had been proposed long before the Vietnam Veterans Memorial appeared, but most others had not. In fact, a persuasive case can be made that this famous landmark *enabled*, or at least encouraged, the construction of others (Abramson 679; Blair, Jeppeson, and Pucci 281–82; Haines 18n.).

More significant, perhaps, is the fact that its principal (and at the time unusual) features have been *appropriated* for incorporation into a number of other memorials. These cannot be coded simply as the signature gestures of Maya Lin, the designer of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial and the Civil Rights Memorial, although both these memorials make use of black granite, temporal arrangement of inscribed events, and inscription of names of the dead. Those characteristics have been incorporated in other designs as well. For example, the Witch Trials Tercentenary Memorial uses the names of the convicted “witches” and arranges their representations in chronological order of death. The AIDS Memorial Quilt originated as a naming project; most of the quilt panels carry the name of one or more people the disease has claimed.<sup>14</sup> At the October 1996 display in Washington, D.C., the quilt panels were arranged in a chronology of receipt by the NAMES Project—not quite the same as an arrangement by date of death, but parallel to it. These are not the only memo-

trials to have appropriated various features of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial,<sup>15</sup> but they are not uncharacteristic in this respect. This appropriation has various consequences. One is that each of these newer memorials depends on its audience's familiarity with the syntax of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Another is that each more or less explicitly refers to its famous forerunner, possibly even recalling it to the consciousness of visitors and encouraging an intertextual reading (Blair and Michel).

The May 4 Memorial at Kent State University goes a step farther in ~~meaning a relationship to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial~~. It appropriates the use of black granite for the ground insets leading to the structures representing the four student deaths: that the visitor follows a path of black granite to these structures is a reminder that the deaths at Kent State took place within the context of U.S. involvement in Vietnam (see figure 2.8). The *contextualizing* is even more pronounced with the introduction on the May 4 site of the daffodils planted in memory of those killed in Vietnam. The particular dimensions of this context of linkage to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial and to the U.S. military casualties in Vietnam carries a valence of reconciliation. Here victims of a war protest gone sour and military personnel are placed side by side, not in opposition, as they were often understood to be during the 1960s and 1970s (Morgan 278).

The activity of *supplementing* is an old one at commemorative sites; the practice of decorating graves and other personal memory sites with flowers and intimate tokens is not uncommon. Recently, however, that practice has been transferred to public commemorative sites, beginning with the Vietnam Veterans Memorial. Visitors leave flowers, clothing, letters, and other personal items at the wall every day (figure 2.14); the National Park Service collects the items, and they are stored and cataloged as museum pieces. The custom has become common at other new commemorative sites. Such supplemental commemorations transmute the commemorative site from a completed text to a context for individual, but still public, memory practices.

A different kind of supplemental rhetorical activity has occurred at Kent State University. Over the years since the campus murders, there have been numerous attempts to commemorate the students killed and wounded. A metal sculpture with bullet holes has been left as a marker at the site. A small stone marker was placed first near the location of the shootings (figure 2.15). Two academic programs were dedicated to the memory of the student victims. A student sculpture project was offered as a gift to the university as a memorial, and it still stands on campus. The university's library contains a resource center dedicated to May 4 memory and a commemorative May 4 collection. There is a public commemorative ceremony every year on the anniversary of the killings. And now there is the university's "official" memorial. Although the kinds of supplemental memory work that have gone on at Kent State and at

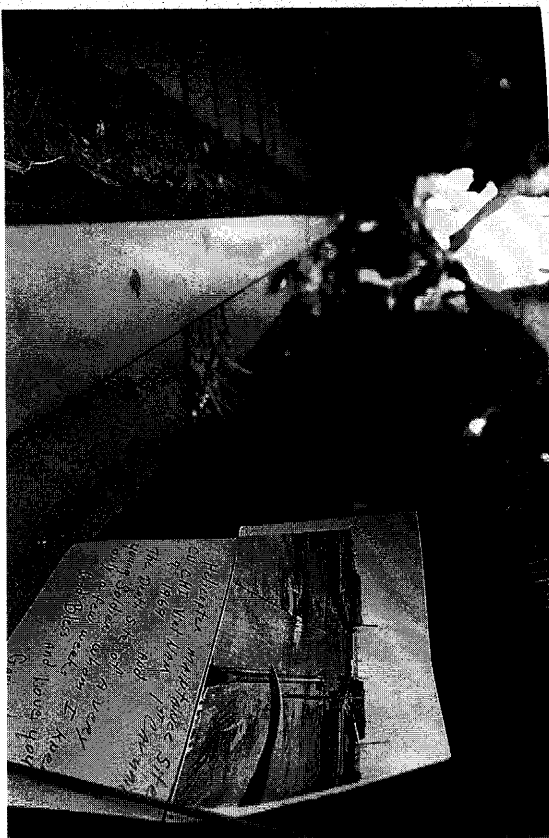


Figure 2.14. Decorations at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial (Permission to reprint by Axiom Photo Design)



Figure 2.15. Plaque commemorating Kent State shootings, May 4, 1970 (Permission to reprint by Axiom Photo Design)

interview  
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the Vietnam Veterans Memorial site are very different, they both point to a struggle over memory and its representation, and perhaps also to the inadequacy of any unitary text to mark a contested memory.

The Wich Trials Tercentenary Memorial offers an interesting case of *correcting*, in this case correction of nearby historical geography. For three hundred years there had been no public site recognizing the accused and condemned in the seventeenth-century trials. No one is even sure where Gallows Hill was located, although it is nearly certain that it was in Salem Village, now Danvers. Unmarked, too, were the sites of the remains of those put to death, although it seems probable that their bodies were dumped into anonymous trenches near the site of their deaths. The placement of the memorial adjacent to the old burial ground and with visual access to it seems to rectify the imbalance of scene in some measure. Not only does it mark the deaths publicly, but it also places the markers of those condemned alongside the townspeople who condemned them—those who at the time were considered worthy of community-marked, sacralized burial. Of course, the representations of those put to death for witchcraft remain segregated from the other townspeople's graves, separated from them by a wall. Their difference and removal from the community are maintained, even as they are allowed to re-enter it conditionally.

The effect of correcting other texts may be difficult to separate from another function, that of *challenging* other texts; however, there seem to be different consequences, at least in degree. The Civil Rights Memorial in downtown Montgomery, Alabama, is set in a cityscape awash in symbols of the Confederacy. Prior to its construction, the only prominent structures that marked the civil rights movement in Montgomery were the King Memorial Baptist Church, two blocks away, and some deteriorating historical markers in various locations. By contrast, immediately surrounding the Civil Rights Memorial there are extremely well-maintained and sacralized historical sites dedicated to preserving the public memory of Confederate leaders, soldiers, and solidarity. A sizable portion of the Alabama State Capitol is a dedicated history site; the debate over secession was convened there. Nearby is the "First White House" of the Confederacy, where Jefferson Davis resided for the first few months after secession. The most prominent outdoor sculpture in the downtown area is the Confederate soldiers statue on the Capitol grounds (figure 2.16).

The Civil Rights Memorial is not very large, but it occupies a relatively prominent position geographically with respect to these other history sites. It is also without doubt the most impressive and physically attractive structure in downtown Montgomery. Water features there are nearly nonexistent, and no other structure calls such attention to itself by virtue of the fame of its designer or the costliness of its materials. Although it does not oppose itself explicitly to Montgomery's nineteenth-century preservation sites or address the racism institutionalized in the multiple legacies of the Confederacy, it stands nearly alone as a reminder of the "other," more recent history of Southern and national

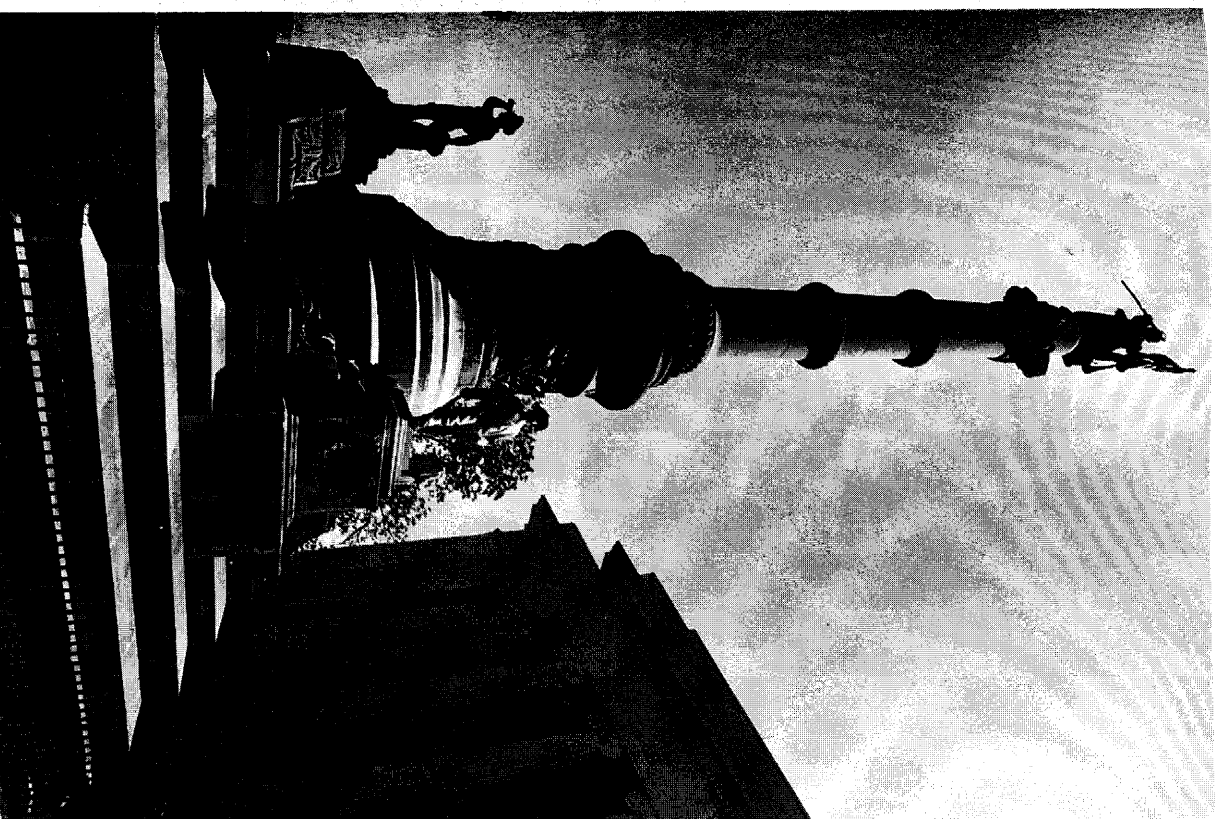


Figure 2.16. Confederate Soldiers Monument, Montgomery, Alabama (Permission to reprint Axiom Photo Design)

racism. It is an interloper in the commemorative context, but it is also readable as a challenge to it.

Texts compete not only for attention by virtue of their existence or proximity, but also on more specific levels of materiality. The two memorials—in Salem and Danvers—commemorating the Salem witch trials offer a useful example. There has been considerable tension historically, sometimes reaching the pitch of hostility, between the two communities. In fact, some historians argue that it was precisely these tensions that set off the paroxysm of accusations, trials, and prosecutions in the 1600s (Boyer and Nissenbaum). As the tertiary date approached, the two communities again split ranks, and each dedicated its own memorial. Salem's memorial has a higher profile, but Danvers residents point with seeming pride to the fact that theirs was dedicated first.<sup>16</sup> In any case, both towns have benefited in the end; at the least, they are both now ornamented by beautiful commemorative artworks.

Another case of less pointed, but perhaps more unfortunate, competition is that articulated in relation to the planned memorial for the victims of the 1995 Oklahoma City Murrah Federal Building bombing. As Jesse Katz reports, "The project's size and scale and spiritual magnitude is [sic] most commonly compared to that of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial or the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum" (A23). Such comparisons inevitably pit sites like the planned Oklahoma City memorial measure for measure against the memorials with which they are compared. At the risk of seeming to minimize the great suffering and loss induced by the Oklahoma City bombing, comparisons to Vietnam or to the Holocaust, or to the memorials that mark them in Washington, are absurd at best and crudely self-absorbed at worst. No doubt such competitive renderings are unintended by those making the comparisons, but the effect remains.<sup>17</sup>

The final case I will take up here, silencing, has several less restrictive variants that simply make the rendering of other texts more difficult. For example, the AIDS Memorial Quilt has not actually silenced discourses about the "gay plague," but its juxtaposition of representations of deceased two-year-olds, hemophiliacs, and heterosexual women with those of gay men certainly makes such positions difficult to maintain. The most obvious case of actual silencing is the Witch Trials Tercentenary Memorial's lopping off of the inscribed defenses of the accused witches. Of course, this is to be read ironically, as a material manifestation of the court's inability or unwillingness to listen charitably, and it indeed renders a powerful indictment of that failure. There are those who argue, however, that the irony runs deeper. The memorial advocates a spirit of tolerance explicitly, yet the large community of witchcraft practitioners currently residing in Salem maintains that their town is anything but tolerant; the absurd, made-for-tourists representations of witches, witchcraft, and the supernatural in Salem seem to bear them out (figure 2.17). Nonetheless, the presence of the memorial and its explicit aim of tolerance limit the ability of the witches



Figure 2.17. Sign on municipal vehicle, Salem, Massachusetts (Permission to reprint by Axiom Photo Design)

to complain credibly about objectionable attitudes without appearing to be carping. So, they say, they often simply remain silent about what they see as bigotry.<sup>18</sup>

Texts may also serve to silence or limit other texts by means of their own exclusions. This is a troubling issue that might be raised in regard to the Civil Rights Memorial. Its employment of civil rights–related deaths and activities leaves out all mention of sacrifices made or actions taken by black nationalist or separatist groups, for example, functionally writing them out of its history. Moreover, the inscriptions that announce historic civil rights successes are represented as actions taken by institutional authority—presidential order, Supreme Court decisions, and paramilitary enforcement. Some argue that such exclusions reinforce conciliatory attitudes and institutional authority (Abramson 707), and silence others by excluding them from rhetorical presence.<sup>19</sup> am not inclined to read the Civil Rights Memorial this way, but it is a legitimate reading that might limit and exclude particular formulations of racial activism.<sup>19</sup>

### How Does the Text Act on Person(s)?

Perhaps the largest "miss" of a symbolic heuristic for rhetoric is its understanding of rhetoric as appealing rather exclusively to the mind of a reader or listener.

Rhetoric of all kinds acts on the whole person—body as well as mind—and often on the person situated in a community of other persons. There are particular physical actions the text demands of us: ways it inserts itself into our attention, and ways of encouraging or discouraging us to act or move, as well as think, in particular directions. The most obvious demands rhetoric makes on the body are the very physical ones required for one to pay attention. Rhetoric, regardless of its medium, is introduced into a space that would be different in its absence. By being introduced, it nominates itself for the attention of potential listeners, readers, or viewers. To read a book, one must physically open it, usually sit down, and gaze at the inscribed words. To attend to a speech is to sit or stand still, usually facing the speaker, and be quiet in order to hear.

Memorials (and other constructed sites) do perhaps even more obvious work on the body. They direct the vision to particular features, and they direct—sometimes even control—the vector, speed, or possibilities of physical movement. Touching them is different from touching a book (except perhaps a rare or deeply significant book), and that touch sometimes yields profound responses. Being prohibited physically from touching them, because they occupy a chained-off space, may be just as important. The point is, though, that rhetoric acts on the whole person, not just on the “hearts and minds” of its audience. Any attempt to theorize rhetoric materially must come to grips with that fuller range of consequence. Again, illustrations from the memorial sites suggest that the material aspect of rhetoric does significant work to shape the character of rhetorical experience.

For one thing, memorial sites are *destinations*.<sup>20</sup> As such, they demand physical labor of a would-be audience member. Some kind of motion is required to go to the sites, and most require mobility to negotiate their spatial dimensions. Memory sites are not the only texts that are treated as destinations, however: people plan their days so that they can finish reading books; they forgo other activities and purchase tickets to hear a speaker; they rush home to see a television show. When we treat texts in such ways, we have already allowed them to affect our material lives as well as our mental activities. Of course, not all texts are granted such status, but it is important to explore the kinds of discursive networks that create such affiliations for some texts, and the consequences of treating particular texts as objects of desire while functionally ignoring others.

There are any number of ways that rhetorical texts may hail or *summon* the person, and some of these means are clearly material. The Civil Rights Memorial asserts itself onto the attention of passersby in two important ways. First, it literally interrupts the path of pedestrians. Its pedestal structure is situated in a plaza that is little more than a broadened sidewalk (see figure 2.5). To walk straight along the vector of the sidewalk is to collide with the structure; thus, it has to be negotiated—a pedestrian has to attend to it to avoid bumping into it. But from there, one must decide whether to stop, look at, walk around, and

touch the physical structures of the memorial, or to go out of one's way to avoid doing so. While this first summons transgresses the path of the pedestrian, the second is less aggressive. The presence of water on the site is a lure to visitors in the area. Montgomery's climate is warm and humid, and the sound, sight, and feel of water relieve the dreariness of the heat. Whether one is brought up short while walking or is enticed by the refreshing water, the rhetoric acts on the person to garner attention.

Almost the opposite is true of the Witch Trials Tercentenary Memorial. I imposes on attention so little that sightseers in Salem often pass right by it. The site appears from the outside to be nothing more than a public, shaded rest area with some uncomfortably hard stone benches. However, those who follow the maps to the site or enter it for respite find themselves enrolled in the intolerance of seventeenth-century Salem, because entry means walking on the entrances of the accused inscribed in the threshold area of the memorial. Some who step on the words are horrified by their own actions as well as by the interrupted nature of the inscribed statements by the walls on either side; others never notice the inscriptions at all, their walks reproducing the Salem townspeople's disregard of the protests of the accused. Even if unwittingly, the directed path into the area enlists visitors in its own rhetoric of displayed intolerance.

These sites also suggest—sometimes *prescribe*—pathways for a visitor to traverse, and those pathways influence reception significantly. The most common entry for visitors to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial is from the Lincoln Memorial side. For those who follow that route, the most common pattern is to stop at the *Three Fighting Men* sculpture first. The black wall of names is visible in its entirety from the sculpture's location, and many turn from the statue for that panoramic view of the wall. To gaze on the wall first offers a preparation for the visitor about to enter its space, an experience unavailable to others who enter the site from the east side, opt for the path to the wall first, or miss the path to the sculpture.

The walkway that follows the wall at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial moves the visitor downward as the wall grows in height. The visitor is encompassed bodily by the wall and its inscribed names and is mirrored in its polished surface—visually incorporated by it. There is no alternative to the paved walkway. It is chained in, and pedestrians are prohibited from moving onto the grassy area fronting the wall to gain distance or a longer view. Visitors become increasingly aware of the scale of the wall of names by walking its length. As the visitor turns the corner of the wall's chevron and walks back on an upgrade, the experience seems to come to a close, and for some visitors, the rhetoric of the memorial may end there. There is no sign of any other destination; the second sculpture—the Vietnam Women's Memorial—is barely visible, situated on what appears to be a secondary byway. Most people do find it, usually by following others to it, but often only after their experience of the memorial has been punctuated. The Vietnam Women's Memorial becomes an appendage.

experientially separate from the Vietnam Veterans Memorial because of its placement.<sup>21</sup>

Memorial sites, by their very existence, create communal spaces. Although it is possible to describe an individual's encounter with a site, it is almost always part of a collective experience.<sup>22</sup> One may seem to be alone with one's thoughts but still be moving among others. That experience of the group's presence is significant, even if not wholly conscious. The 1996 display of the AIDS Memorial Quilt in Washington just *felt* important. Certainly that feeling was overdetermined, but it was created in part by the presence of so many other people; this clearly was an *event*. That collectively inspired feeling was not lost on the display's organizers. One of only a few interruptions in the reading of names of the dead was made to announce that CNN had reported attendance at the weekend display to have reached 2.2 million.

But it is not just the presence of others that lends character to the rhetoric of these sites. Others' actions also help to construct the messages constituted by the memorials' rhetoric. The large AIDS Memorial Quilt displays in Washington generated dozens of spinoff activities—celebrity appearances, candlelight vigils, prayer services, and disruptions of traffic by illegal (but carefully planned) ACT UP marches. Some of the high-impact, memorable moments are the comforting gestures between strangers—the hug, offer of a tissue, or word of condolence. The 1996 Quilt display was not an event that visitors could experience “fully.” Because of its magnitude, they took fragments of its rhetoric with them when they left—perhaps the frame of a grieving, anonymous man (figure 2.18), or the chance glimpse of the first U.S. president to see the Quilt, Bill Clinton. In any case, other visitors constitute part of the rhetoric by their presence and activity in the scene.

Although the physical experience of place and communal participation may not be so pronounced in other rhetorical forms, it is by no means absent. Just as the construction of a memorial site offers space for particular (and directed) kinds of activity and contemplation, other rhetorical media do similar kinds of work, if not so obviously. Lisa Flores offers an excellent example in her discussion of the border culture of Chicana feminism and the rhetorical constructions of space:

While confined geographically as a border culture between the United States and Mexico, Chicana feminists can cross rhetorical borders through the construction of a discursive space or home. By employing a rhetoric of difference . . . Chicana feminists use their creative works as a tool in the discursive construction of a space of their own. (143)

By Flores's analysis, this space is much more than a metaphorical one. It is an actual place to occupy and to act in and from.

Rhetoric's materiality constructs communal space, prescribes pathways, and summons attention, acting on the whole person of the audience. But it also



Figure 2.18. Grieving man at the AIDS Memorial Quilt, 1996 (Permission to reprint by Axiom Photo Design)

allows a rhetorical text to "speak" by its mere existence, to endure by virtue of the durability of its composition, to be preserved by particular modes of reproduction, and to act on other texts. I suspect that its material character allows it to do much more, but it has at least these functions, suggesting that we should attend to its material character far more than we have.

This analysis is limited by the same constraints harbored by any self-consciously inductive attempt to theorize. Even the illustrations offer only examples of rhetoric's material dimension. The scope of the space opened by exploring rhetoric's materiality is untraversable in any brief encounter. But among the many things that I have learned from my experience with these memorial sites—often in spite of my own "educated expectations"—is the fact that they construct valenced reaction and depths of visitor experience that cannot be described, much less explained, in terms of their symbolism or by reference to the intentions of their makers. We have a long trek before we reach the point of even rudimentary understanding of rhetoric's material nature.

I do not mean to deny the significance to rhetoric of its symbollicity or its goal-oriented agents. Its symbollicity and purposefulness are significant, but they are features of rhetoric, not its definitive essence. I am not (quite) certain that materiality is a *more* fundamental characteristic of rhetoric than symbollicity, or that the belief that rhetoric is "made" by goal-oriented users. But I am quite sure that rhetoric's characteristic materiality cannot be reduced to either of those attributes. One of the forgone opportunities of this analysis is a consideration of how the material, symbolic, and purposeful dimensions of rhetoric may interact, interfere, or intersect with one another. For now, though, it is imperative that these three characteristics not be allowed to cede their own functions and that their division of rhetorical labor not be conflated.

### Notes

1. When I use the term "real," I wish it were avoidable, because it smacks of a realist philosophical position that I am anxious to eschew. Although there are points of contact between some realist and some materialist positions, the principal difference, in my view, is that materialism is not beholden to a metaphysical defense of a reality independent of perception or interpretation. Materialist positions, instead, typically take "realities" or material phenomena as historically and contextually accreted understandings that assume the status and force of a natural or independent reality; see Silverman and Torode 28–29. The distinction can be made clear by attending to James Hinkins's justifications for a realist position vis-à-vis rhetoric: "Because rhetoric is ensconced in the pedestrian world, and because its most direct consequences bear on issues of human conduct and welfare, any theory of rhetoric must eventually land squarely on its feet in the pedestrian world. However esoteric the theorist's view, it must adequately account for what we know about the natural world in which we all reside" (24). Although some materialists might find such a position perfectly acceptable (see McGuire 189–93), a

minor but consequential adjustment is necessary, in my view. Because rhetoric occurs in a pedestrian world and exerts its most important consequences in the realm of human affairs, it seems to me that we must be mindful of the *social* world, which would include the only meaningful characterizations we have available of the "natural world in which we all reside." Whether the physical world has an independent existence is simply a question of very little interest or significance to this brand of materialism—roughly what McGuire would call "social" materialism (193).

2. I undertake this project, even acknowledging the warnings issued by Dana Cloud. This is not the place for a critique of her position. I believe, however, that it is possible to avoid the two extremes she attributes—rightly or wrongly—to some theories of rhetoric as material: that rhetoric "transcend[s] and determin[e]s material relations of power (idealism)," or that it "constitute[s] reality and that therefore there are no ontological or epistemological grounds for moral or political critique (relativism)" (158). It seems to me that we can simply argue that rhetoric is one (important, though not exclusive) practice by which realities and relations of power are constituted. I am not certain that any of the theorists Cloud has targeted actually argues for a more excessive position than that, but I will not.

3. There is an exception that I will discuss later, the NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt. Because it is mobile, and portions of it are displayed in various venues and for varying lengths of time, other portions are stored in a warehouse in San Francisco. That is a very unusual case, but I do not mean to dismiss it because it is atypical. Instead, as I will suggest, it seems important to discuss various types of materiality and how they shift with and by means of the kind of material.

4. Although any of their works could be read as dealing with issues relevant to the materiality of rhetoric, those that take up these issues most centrally are de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*; Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge* and *The Discourse on Language*; and Lyotard, *The Differend*. All three of these writers, not just these central works, have profoundly influenced this chapter.

5. The most obvious examples, but certainly not the only ones, are Umberto Eco, Charles Jencks, and W. J. T. Mitchell.

6. There are of course exceptions, including Charland, McGee's "A Materialist's Conception," McGuire, and Railsback.

7. One example is Hart's characterization of rhetoric as the "art of using language to help people narrow their choices among specifiable, if not specified, policy options" (4).

8. I disagree with Farrell's assessment of the problem as the use of the term "text." He is correct, I believe, in his view that "text" as a term does imply an inert product. However, his complaints ignore the numerous theorizations of text over the past twenty years, which can hardly change the ordinary sense of the term itself but which do attempt to address the problem of its apparent immobility at a theoretical level.

9. See also Bowers and Bradac, 871–93.

10. Stewart makes the case most explicitly, in suggesting as a conclusion at least worthy of additional study, that "it is an overgeneralization to characterize language as essentially or uniformly representational or symbolic. . . . [The ordinary language philosophers] stress the importance of studying meaning by focusing not on the extralinguistic elements utterances allegedly represent or symbolize, but on the language games that are engaged in or the speech acts that are performed in and by making an ut-



terance" ("Concepts" 132). Although I think there remains a probative issue about whether the result of studying illocutions or performances is an understanding of meaning, rather than of power or politics, the description gets at the distinction between studying language uses of any kind from the point of view of the ephemeral symbolic heuristic versus one that takes up the activity of rhetoric, its partisanship, and its potential for consequence.

More recently, John R. Stewart has intensified his critique of what he calls "the symbol model," arguing for what amounts to a substitution of an ontological understanding of language for an epistemological one. See Stewart, *Language*, and Stewart, ed., *Beyond*. Although Stewart's critique gets at many of the problems of a heuristic of symbolism, his solution—a re-understanding of language as "articulate contact"—neglects issues of power, precisely those that a materialist position insists on engaging.

11. The Danvers memorial is less publicized and is of local design and construction, but it was actually dedicated before its more famous counterpart in 1992. Information and observations about each of these memorials are based primarily on fieldwork conducted at each site by Neil Michel and me, except as noted. However, I would be remiss not to note the strong, general influence on my thinking about these memorial sites, of Berman, Bodnar, Carr et al., Dickinson, Foote, Fryd, Griswold, Linenthal, Prielner, Schama, Sturken, Mike Wallace, Young, and the collections edited by Linenthal and Engelhardt, Mitchell, and Senie and Webster.

12. The general point here is very similar to one made by Kenneth Foote, that sites of death may be sanctified, rectified, designated, or obliterated. Any of the first three, in my view, are typically different from the fourth. However, even that is not always true, as Foote points out: "A curious feature of obliterated sites I noticed is that, once stigmatized, they stand out as much as sacred spaces" (25). Foote's point is worth noting, but so is his qualification "once stigmatized." Not all sites that evoke public forgetfulness are stigmatized. Moreover, many memorials do not occupy the actual space of the events they represent. In fact, none of the memorials considered here occupies the specific site of tragedy or death. The May 4 Memorial comes closest, but even it occupies a different location on Blanket Hill than did the actual shootings in 1970.

13. See, for example, testimony on S. 2522 and H.R. 4378 (99th Congress, 2d session). Advocates of this legislation, which ultimately became P.L. 99-652, almost universally expressed concern that memorials would get in one another's way, competing for attention among themselves and against the landscaped beauty of the Mall. See also George Will's "Statue Sweepstakes." Will is concerned not only about the presence of too many memorials but also with the particular character of some of them, that is, their symbolic gestures.

14. There are a few quilt panels labeled "anonymous," and some represent only the first name of the deceased. Letters that accompanied some of these contributions to the Quilt suggested that the name was omitted or abbreviated to protect the reputation of the deceased or of his or her survivors. See Ruskin 78-84.

15. The Astronauts Memorial appropriates both the use of black granite and inscriptions of names of the dead. The U.S. Law Enforcement Officers Memorial lists the names of those killed in the line of duty. The U.S. Navy Memorial does not inscribe names but has begun a computerized roster of names of its service personnel. The Ko-

ran War Veterans Memorial replaces names with numbers, although a computerized roster of the dead is planned at that site as well; it appropriates the use of mirror-finished black granite. A large number of state and local Vietnam memorials also incorporate features of the national memorial.

16. Both memorials were dedicated in 1992, but the Danvers work was constructed and dedicated before the Salem site. Reaction of local townspeople is based on my discussions with visitors to the Danvers memorial and with others around the town.

17. Something like historical proportion *must* be maintained in communities like Washington, D.C., that contain numerous, prominent memory sites in close proximity. For example, it is unthinkable that the Vietnam Veterans Memorial could have been of a scale akin to the Lincoln Memorial or even the Jefferson Memorial. Similarly, the World War II Memorial site is relatively close to the Vietnam and Korean War Veterans memorials, and there has been considerable concern expressed that it should represent the scale of World War II reasonably vis-à-vis the two Cold War actions commemorated nearby. Oklahoma City has less experience with such balancing, but it could easily encounter charges of tastelessness or worse if its memorial is perceived as out of all proportion to others in the country that represent tragedies of far more massive scale.

18. This is a very complex issue, especially for an outsider to take up. The interpretation is based on interviews with several residents of Salem who are members of a coven, and on my own observations of other "witch" representations in Salem.

19. I am sympathetic in principle to these arguments, although I think they may be based on a reductive reading of the Civil Rights Memorial. Since reductive or partial readings at memorial sites are actually to be expected on the part of visitors, it may be that those who render these readings have a legitimate cause for concern. However, other features of the memorial, in my view, urge the visitor to see the future of race issues very differently than they have been seen in the past.

20. Some are the endpoints of modern-day pilgrimages, as an audience member at the Penn State conference pointed out. This observation is an important amendment, because it implies the sacralized character of some but not all public commemorative sites.

21. It is arguable that the Vietnam Women's Memorial also sets itself apart from the remainder of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial because of its design features. Whereas the *Three Fighting Men* sculpture refers the visitor by sightline back to the wall (the figures in the statue appear to be gazing at it), there is no such interaction between the Women's Memorial and the wall or between the two statues. See Christopher Knight for a fine commentary on the Women's Memorial; see also Marling and Werenhall.

22. It is an odd feeling, in fact, to occupy alone what is clearly communal space, whether a commemorative site or some other usually populated place. Having visited a number of these memorial sites late at night or in predawn hours, I know that the experience is radically different than during the day when other people are present.

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