

“We didn’t need superheroes, we had dialogue:”

Mememes, morphic fields and memorable movie lines

Submitted for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

by

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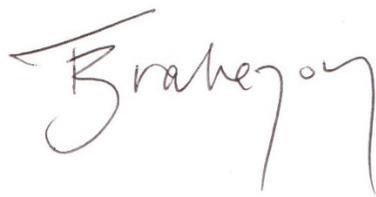
Declaration

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

William Michael Winter

Date: March 10, 2017

We log that a full check of academic and research integrity has been implemented on this thesis

Handwritten signature of Brabazon in cursive script.Handwritten signature of S.C. Redhead in cursive script.

Signed by Professors Brabazon and Redhead on the behalf of Mick Winter (deceased) July 15, 2017

Acknowledgments

Although I am solely responsible for the accuracy and integrity of the content of this thesis, its production was not a solitary effort. I would like to thank the Government of Australia, and the staff and faculties of Flinders University and Charles Sturt University for their valuable and essential support, and especially the keepers of the digital libraries without whom this research would have been impossible. Thanks also to Tim Berners-Lee, without whose creation of the World Wide Web there would have been no easy access to those online digital libraries. I would particularly like to thank Peter Simmons and Umar Umanguay for their support of, and advice on, my initial research proposal. And, most of all, I would like to thank Tara Brabazon and Steve Redhead for their three years of patience, advice, supervisory expertise, and, most of all, their inspiring encouragement and morale-steadying confidence in both me and my research.

I would also like to thank my furry friend Sophie for her recognition (usually before I realized it) that there were times when I absolutely needed to take a break and pet a cat, not to mention her patience in teaching me how to type with one finger. RIP, Sophia.

Finally, and absolutely most importantly, my heartfelt thanks and love to my wife Kathryn, who for three years put up with my immersion in this project with the conviction that even though I was frequently off in my own world, I would eventually permanently return and interact with her within that greater world that awaited my completion of this research. The entire process has been fascinating, enjoyable, and rewarding. Thank you everyone.

Supervisory Commentary

Mr William ‘Mick’ Winter died on January 14, 2017. Professor Steve Redhead and Tara Brabazon – the authors of this commentary – were his supervisors at both Charles Sturt University and Flinders University.

Before his death, Mick completed a full draft of the thesis and the document had passed through three editing cycles before his death. From this point, we have edited this final draft once more to confirm consistency, rigour and academic integrity. We present this draft for examination.

This is the version of the thesis that Mick presented, with one final edit from his supervisors. We confirm that this is his work – his research – and commend this scholarship to his examiners.

To verify research integrity for examiners, we also list the podcasts conducted with Mick Winter throughout his candidature. Particularly, we log **Podcast 38**, where we discuss how we prepared this thesis for examination.

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We thank the examiners for their assessment of this posthumous doctorate.



Professor Tara Brabazon

15/7/2017



Professor Steve Redhead

15/7/2017

Abstract

What is it about some words and phrases that enable their entry into popular culture? If that question can be answered, then can that information be useful to the field of communication studies? There is scattered and disparate information, disciplines, research and theory that can enable the answer to these questions. This thesis aligns these disparate approaches and paradigms. In this thesis, I investigate the structures of popular textual *memes* and *memorable movie lines*. I examine current and past literature on memes, with a focus on the qualities theorized to be useful in producing success and popularity. Yet my research does not remain nested in this literature. I also investigate *morphic fields*, as theorized by British biologist Rupert Sheldrake, and I apply his theories to a study of how memes and movie lines are removed from their context in their originating text and resonate in diverse contexts. As examples of texts that have become popular over the years, I examine some of the best-known movie lines, focusing primarily on those from *Casablanca*, *Gone with the Wind*, and *The Wizard of Oz*. I discuss the (limited) literature on film dialogue and then apply studies of textual memes to selected lines of movie dialogue that have become especially well-known and used in everyday conversation.

My intent with this thesis was not to become *the* expert on memes, on morphic fields, or on screenwriting. What I have investigated is the *intersection* of memes, movies and morphic fields as seen through the most memorable lines in Hollywood cinema. This thesis probes the meme/movie dialogue nexus, and what occurs in the overlap between memes, morphic fields, and movie dialogue. My desire is to understand how and why movie lines remain memorable and circulate in popular discourse.

This research project is the first to inquire into the relationship between memes, morphic fields, and memorable movie lines. Using an integrated literature review approach and unobtrusive research methods, I reshape the scholarship on memes. My research also sheds new light on the structures of successful textual memes and movie lines, applying Sheldrake's morphic field theory to other non-biological areas including memes, movies, movie lines, and even movie theatres; and on so-called movie "misquotes."

The original contribution to knowledge offered by this thesis is to provide an innovative, interdisciplinary and unusual approach to understanding why some film lines gain traction, momentum and a place in popular culture. To enact this study, I offer three steps to research and map this memorability: memes, morphic fields and an historical analysis of filmic dialogue. This doctoral research aligns these three approaches to offer strategies for scholars in communication studies, media studies, film studies, screen studies and cultural studies to understand how dialogue becomes memorable.

Introduction

This thesis grew out of a desire to explore why some words and phrases become popular. If those reasons can be found, then so can a system, protocol or model be developed that would assist writers and researchers in communication studies. My first intent was that those words and phrases can be considered *memes*, not specifically the memes of the Internet— which are frequently accompanied by images—but rather textual memes, which spread throughout and linger, to be used, and referred to, in conversations, and through various media: print, film, television and, yes, even the Internet. Thus memes became the first component of my exploration.

I wondered if *memorable movie lines* might be evocative examples of these popular—likely memetic—textual words and phrases. I questioned why, out of perhaps one thousand lines in the average movie script, only one or two lines (and seldom even that) travel beyond their original use and positioning. As famous lines of movie dialogue are commonly familiar and often used in everyday conversation, I assumed—wrongly, it turned out—that there would be considerable research into those types of lines.

I had also been intrigued by British biologist Rupert Sheldrake's concept of *morphic fields* and wondered if such fields—not in their biological form but rather in a social manifestation—might have a role in the popularity of some movie lines, and of memes in general. Sheldrake is the originator of the concept of *morphic fields*. Although there is little academic literature on morphic fields other than that by Sheldrake, I have researched a wide variety of academic research in other disciplines to determine many examples of fields which I consider to be at least similar to Sheldrake's concept of morphic fields.

In short, this thesis investigates three areas: *Morphic Fields* (as a component of Rupert Sheldrake's *Hypothesis of Formative Causation*); *Memes* (based on the original concept of Richard Dawkins and now theorized by many others); and *Memorable Movie Lines* (using as my source the American Film Institute's list of the "100 Greatest Movie Quotes of All Time.") The subject of memes accesses an extensive literature, and I have researched books and journal articles by a wide variety of writers from highly diverse disciplines who discuss memes. Because this thesis is developing new knowledge from the distinctive literatures, I have deployed an integrated literature review throughout this doctorate. Each chapter – to maintain the integrity of the approach and paradigm – presents its distinctive literature around a topic, then leading to my analysis and – finally – integration of a new way of thinking about memes and movie lines.

I open my first chapter with a detailed overview of current and past literature on memes by researchers and professional writers including Richard Dawkins, Susan Blackmore, Robert Aunger, Richard Brodie, Aaron Lynch, Daniel Dennett, Kate Distin, Peter Richerson and Robert Boyd. Other influential scholars include Henry Jenkins, Sam Ford, and Joshua Green, Chip Heath and Dan Heath, Francis Heylighen, Geoff Ayling, John Gunders and Damon Brown, Michele Knobel and Colin Lankshear, Limor Shifman and Ryan Milner. I have also investigated the research on memes which has sought to determine those qualities that successful memes have in common. Those conducting this research include Jonah Berger and Katherine Milkman, Marco Guerini, Janez Brank and Jure Leskovec, Chenhao Tan, and Matthew Schulkind. Although scholarship on memes has appeared to have lessened over the past fifteen years or so, I note two very recent books that show there is still active academic interest in memes: Ryan

Milner's *The World Made Meme*,¹ and Karl Spracklen and Beverley Spracklen's *The Origin and Deeds of the (New) Goths: From Alternative Space to Fashion Style and Meme*.²

My second chapter is focused on Rupert Sheldrake's *Hypothesis of Formative Causation*, and its components of *morphic units*, *morphic fields*, and *morphic resonance*. There is no academic literature of note by other researchers beyond Sheldrake, so I move into considerable depth in his own writings and how and where it has been cited, as I look for applications of his theory which may be of use into the key research questions of this thesis. After presenting his ideas and perspectives in a wide range of areas, I delve into the non-biological applications of these tropes and probe the efficacy and appropriateness of these deployments. This is challenging interdisciplinarity. The results are not always simple or easily applicable

For my research into memorable movie lines in my third chapter, I limit the movie lines studied to those in English-language cinema and particularly to those chosen by the American Film Institute, which in 2005 released a list of the "100 Greatest Movie Quotes of All Time." I have also instigated an extensive study of books and journal articles on film dialogue, and on the history of three major films: *Gone with the Wind*, *The Wizard of Oz*, and *Casablanca*. As I note further in this thesis, the study of film dialogue—particularly the structure of dialogue rather than simply its role as a minor supporting actor to the

1 Ryan Milner, *The World Made Meme: Public Conversations and Participatory Media* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2016).

2 Karl Spracklen and Beverley Spracklen, *The Origin and Deeds of the (New) Goths: From Alternative Space to Fashion Style and Meme* (Bingley: Emerald, 2017).

leading character of the visual in the film—is minimal at best. Fortunately, there are two excellent books; one by Sarah Kozloff and the other edited by Jeff Jaeckle. There are also a number of books on the three films on which I focused. Their authors include Aljean Harmetz (on each of the three films), Harlan Lebo and Julius Epstein, Charles Francisco, Harold Meyerson and Ernie Harburg, and Richard Harwell. There was one invaluable research study of memorable movie lines and their shared qualities, thanks to Cristian Danescu-Niculescu-Mizil and his colleagues at Cornell University, and another led by Stuart Fischhoff on why people use popular movie quotes in everyday conversation.

In my fourth and final chapter, I explore the nexus between memes, morphic fields, and memorable movie lines. I note the many similarities between successful memes and famous movie quotes, discuss the roles of context and genre, and propose that morphic fields have an effect in “going to the movies”—suggesting that there are morphic fields of the film, of the audience, and of the movie theater itself.

These chapters are large, long and incremental. Each chapter is based on the research that precedes it. The goal is to align three concepts/tropes/paradigms that have not been conflated and probe a complex epistemological question: why does one line of dialogue survive through time? This is a theoretical thesis, creating and building new relationships between memes, morphic fields, and memorable movie lines. I have also investigated and cited many fields other than those obviously connected with my three main topics. As a result, I have uncovered considerable information which, I suggest, can also be applied to understanding these topics.

Although this project investigates a wide number of fields, investigation in each field has been limited to those areas most pertinent to the core research subject: the interaction of memes, morphic fields, and memorable movie lines. Thus, this thesis is not specifically ‘about’ cinematic studies, but it does focus on film dialogue, particularly memorable movie lines. Other than relevant basic analysis of the American Film Institute’s Top 100 movie quotes, I have not conducted quantitative measurements of any kind, but I have explored existing studies of the effects of memes and film on individuals and audiences.

My intent with this thesis was not to become *the* expert on memes, on morphic fields, or on screenwriting. What I have investigated is the *intersection* of memes, movies and morphic fields as seen through more some of the most memorable lines in Hollywood cinema. This thesis is about the meme/movie dialogue nexus, and what occurs in that overlapping area between memes, morphic fields, and movie dialogue to produce movie lines that remain memorable and often useful in conversation for many members of the public.

There has been minimal examination of memorable movie lines. The fields of film studies, media studies and cultural studies are large, yet this specific topic is highly under-researched within these disciplines. Further, I have found no academic studies that examine the relationship between memes, morphic fields, and memorable movie lines. The purpose of this research project is to fill that void, and to bring together those strands of other studies which are relevant to this subject. In the Cornell research project headed by Cristian Danescu-Niculescu-Mizil, researchers studied scripts of one thousand films and the memorable lines from those films as quoted in the Internet Movie Database.³ They found that

3 “IMDb - Movies, TV and Celebrities,” IMDb, accessed June 20, 2016, <http://www.imdb.com/>.

“memorable quotes consist of unusual word sequences built on common syntactic scaffolding.” They also found that “memorable quotes tend to be more general in ways that make them easy to apply in new contexts—that is, more portable.”⁴ The qualities that made such quotations more portable were fewer third-person pronouns, more indefinite articles (such as *a* and *an*) and more verbs in present tense than past. They also discovered that “memorable quotes use words with significantly more syllables.”

In Fiscoff’s study, and along with Esmeralda Cardenas and Angela Hernandez, they investigated a number of popular movie quotes, and their use by people to “fill in the gaps in our imagination.” As they state, “We use phrases created by wordsmiths superior to us, to impress others, if not so much with creativity, then in our recognition of eloquence and the facility to conjure up the [bon mot]. Certain quotes exquisitely capture the mood or feeling we wish to communicate to someone. We hear them in movies and store them away for future use.”⁵ I suggest that the desire to “store them away for future use” is a key factor in the memorability of certain movie lines, and that *portability* is an essential characteristic of memorable movie lines. Fiscoff et al. created a number of categories of memorable quotes, including *moment of truth*, *zeitgeist*, *fad*, *wisdom and advice*, *romance*, *cool*, and *niche*. These and a number of other categories were analyzed in this project. Importantly, the researchers stated: “Clearly then, movies put words in the mouths of audiences and serve a multitude of social and individual purposes. Moreover, it would seem that movies have replaced books as the chief source of

4 Cristian Danescu-Niculescu-Mizil et al., “You Had Me at Hello: How Phrasing Affects Memorability,” in *Proceedings of the 50th Annual Meeting of the Association for Computational Linguistics: Long Papers - Volume 1, ACL ’12* (Stroudsburg, PA, USA: Association for Computational Linguistics, 2012), 892–901.

5 Stuart Fiscoff et al., “Popular Movie Quotes: Reflections of a People and a Culture” (*Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association*, Washington, D.C., 2000).

memorable lines in contemporary Western cultures. If we look at what are the currently popular and/or most memorable quotes from films, it might provide us with some sense of what our culture thinks about and highlight the social agendas that film dialogue often has an uncanny way of revealing. After all, it can be argued, we are what we find memorable.”⁶ The researchers suggested that “a clever and well-crafted or contextually moving and impactful quote will continue to appeal to movie goers of all ages, long after the value of shock for its own sake has receded from popular culture’s memory; long after young minds have become seasoned with experience and a change of values as to what is important and what is simply outrageous and upsetting to adults.”⁷ This research indicates what I suggest is an essential quality of a truly memorable movie line. It is a meme (or at least it is meme-like) that lasts. Or as Richard Dawkins, creator of the meme neologism and concept, would say about a meme, it has “longevity.”

The research questions for this doctoral research are: Is there a relationship between memes and morphic fields, and do they play a role in the fact that some movie lines become memorable? Why, among perhaps one thousand lines in the average feature-length film, and hundreds of films produced each year, do a few lines stand out? Throughout this project, I investigate the origin and current uses of the term *meme*, with the goal of determining what exactly is a meme and what qualities does it need to have to become successful? Even if memes do not exist, can the *concept* of memes still be a useful tool, and if so, how? I also conduct a similar study of morphic fields, in order to determine if cultural morphic fields are likely to actually exist, and if so, what exactly is a *morphic field* and what is its role in our

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid.

culture? As with memes, if morphic fields do not exist, can the *concept* of morphic fields still be a useful tool and, if so, how?

In the area of memes, this doctorate examines the occurrence of memes in contemporary media (including the Internet) and quotidian life, referencing sources not only from academia but from business, journalism and entertainment. I analyze the current definitions, structure, and use of memes, and their relationship, if any, to morphic fields and film dialogue. I show that in many areas of our culture the concept of meme is common. With the basic foundation of memes established, I begin to investigate whether there is a connection between memes, morphic fields, and memorable movie lines. Are all three of these elements in fact connected and do memes and morphic fields contribute to certain lines of movie dialogue becoming truly memorable? I determine that there can be a nexus between these three elements, and that nexus is the final focus of study of this project.

This section opens with a discussion of one such hypothesis: *morphic resonance* and its related element *morphic fields*. Both are parts of the *Hypothesis of Formative Causation*, as developed by British scientist Rupert Sheldrake. In the course of this research, I apply the hypothesis of morphic fields to memes, to movie audiences, and to movie theatres. Analyzing the characteristics of the famous movie lines discussed in this thesis leads to clues as to why certain movie dialogue becomes memorable. I determine also that, regardless of those results, memorable lines “resonate” in some way with movie viewers. It may be past experiences, it may be their world view, it may be a current situation, it may be a need or problem for which they are seeking an answer or solution. It may be the realization that the line might be useful in conversation at some time in the future. If a very large number of people respond to that line, it is clear that there is something very broadly cultural that responds to, even attracts—or is

even “hooked” by—that line. The line becomes part of a large-scale resonance that can vibrate through many, many people as it becomes a lasting part of the cultural memory. As Ryan Milner writes, “The nature of that resonance is difficult to articulate definitively or universally, as individual texts resonate with different people for different reasons. Texts carry personal meaning and importance; that meaning and importance motivates the creation, circulation, and transformation essential to memetic media.”⁸ One possible explanation for this resonance—or better, *description* of this resonance—is Barthes’ “punctum.” In *Camera Lucida*, Barthes describes his reaction to images, but I suggest his description could easily apply to one’s reaction to a particular line of dialogue in a film. “A specific photograph reaches me; it animates me, and I animate it ... It is this element which rises from the scene, shoots out of it like an arrow, and pierces me. A Latin word exists to designate this wound, this prick, this mark made by a pointed instrument ... [This] element ... I shall therefore call *punctum*; for *punctum* is also: sting, speck, cut, little hole—and also a cast of the dice. A photograph’s *punctum* is that accident which pricks me.”⁹ Whether one feels hooked, pricked, or simply suddenly more attentive, certain lines can affect certain people in certain ways. If a line of dialogue has this effect on enough members of audiences, the line may be on its way to becoming a classic movie quote.

The third major element of this thesis is memorable movie lines. This project investigates the characteristics of the “100 Greatest Movie Quotes of All Time” as determined in 2005 by the *American Film Institute*. It also includes additional lines of dialogue chosen for their demonstration of power or

⁸ Ryan M. Milner, *The World Made Meme: Public Conversations and Participatory Media*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2016.

⁹ Roland Barthes, *Camera Lucida: Reflections on Photography*. Translated by Richard Howard. Reprint edition. (New York: Hill and Wang, 2010), 245-246.

humour. Subjects of study related to memorable movie lines included dialogue and narrative, screenwriting, motion pictures, and the motion picture audience. Key theorists examined include the following: Mikhail Bakhtin (*The dialogic imagination*); Jeff Jaeckle (*Film dialogue*); Henry Jenkins, Sam Ford and Joshua Green (*Spreadable media: creating value and meaning in a networked culture*); and Sarah Kozloff (*Overhearing film dialogue*).

Unobtrusive research propels this thesis, evaluating existing materials including monographs, trade books, journal articles, newspaper and magazine articles, websites, and films (streaming, DVDs, and YouTube video clips). Reference materials on methodology that I have used in this thesis include Allan Kellehear, *The unobtrusive researcher: A guide to methods*, Earl Babie's *The practice of social research*; Bruce Berg and Howard Lune's *Qualitative research methods for the social sciences*; and Eugene Webb, Donald Campbell, Richard Schwartz, and Lee Sechrest's *Unobtrusive measures*. Because unobtrusive research methods have been deployed, no ethics clearance is required for this project, as no research subjects or participants were deployed. Only non-reactive data sets were utilized.

My long-term goal is to produce results which are of interest to academics, to screenwriters, and to all those in the communications field who wish to produce lasting ideas expressed in text. Screenwriters seldom have *any* influence over casting, cinematography (including type and length of shot), background music, editing, and all of the many other elements of a motion picture. What they do have influence over is the dialogue: its words, its structure, and its rhythms. This is an initial assessment. Once a screenwriter turns the script over to the director or producer it is out of his/her hands. Anything may happen to the dialogue between that time and the release of the finished film—and likely will. So I focus only and specifically on the structural qualities of popular lines such as sentence length, rhythm,

and alliteration in this thesis. However, because I believe that context remains critically important, I also discuss in detail the production environment of three films: *Gone With the Wind*, *The Wizard of Oz*, and *Casablanca*. I choose these three films because together they are responsible for twelve percent of the one hundred memorable movie lines on the AFI list. *Casablanca* has six, the other two each have three.

I suggest that my unobtrusive research methods can be considered as a mode of *bricolage*. One reason is that this thesis deals with three separate areas, none of which is normally associated with the others. The first major chapter deals with memes, a concept coined by a British evolutionary biologist who himself was engaging in bricolage as he proposed that the biological concept of gene had an analogy in the totally different field of culture. The second major chapter deals with morphic fields. This is a concept created by another British biologist, one who first studied the area of *morphogenetic fields*, morphogenesis meaning the coming-into-being of form. This biologist then proposed that morphogenetic fields were a subset of a higher level field, which he terms *morphic fields*, which also include behavioural, social and perceptual fields. The third major chapter deals with *memorable movie lines*, those lines from films which have become famous and are used by many people in their own conversations. The result of this bricolage of memes, morphic fields, and memorable movie lines is this thesis. But there is more.

The second reason I consider this thesis to be an example of bricolage is that it is also an outgrowth of some of this author's own varied personal experiences. Although the word *meme* was not fashionable at the time, for a number of years I was an advertising copywriter. Much of my work involved creating catchy headlines and catchy tag lines. Most print ads, and many radio and television ads, require "grabbing" the attention of readers/viewers. One way is through images, but the most common—and

often the most effective—method is through words. Headlines and taglines need to be short, punchy, intriguing, and unusual enough to attract attention but not so unusual as to conflict with the existing ideas and beliefs already in the minds of potential readers, viewers, or listeners. In short, those advertising devices need to have the same qualities that this thesis shows are necessary for successful memes. Further, morphic fields and morphic resonance are concepts that have intrigued me for a number of years in terms of group energy and my direct experience is that a gathering of people (the larger, the more effective) can intentionally create an energy that is palpable and can have a strong effect on those producing it. Finally, I was employed as a screenwriter, creating scripts for feature-length wildlife films. Thus, I have a comfortable familiarity with—and fondness for—screenplays and, particularly, their dialogue. I consider that these areas of advertising, group energy, and screenwriting serve to combine in me an *internal* bricolage that manifests in the structure and content of this thesis, and in my research into, approach to, and presentation of, the topics of this thesis.

When using the term “bricolage” I do not refer to Dick Hebdige’s bricolage of subcultures,¹⁰ but rather the bricolage of Claude Lévi-Strauss, who wrote: “The bricoleur creates with whatever is at hand” as a painter unites “internal and external knowledge.”¹¹ Another relevant description is “psychological bricolage,” which Sanchez-Burks et al. define as “the process through which an individual integrates previously unrelated knowledge to create novel solutions.”¹² While I suggest that fan organizations

10 Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, New edition (London: New York: Routledge, 1979).

11 Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1962), 17-25.

12 Jeffrey Sanchez-Burks, Matthew Karlesky, and Fiona Lee, “Psychological Bricolage,” in *Oxford Handbook of Creativity, Innovation, and Entrepreneurship*, ed. Christina Shalley, Michael Hitt, and Jing Zhou, Oxford Library of Psychology (Oxford University Press, 2016). Abstract

such as the Lebowsky Fest (which I discuss later in this thesis) are not subcultures but rather *subsets* of culture, I do note that some movie lines can exhibit the qualities about which Hebdige writes: “The bricoleur re-locates the significant object in a different position within that discourse, using the same overall repertoire of signs, or when that object is placed within a different total ensemble, a new discourse is constituted, a different message conveyed.”¹³ I propose that an excellent example of this is the cliché line “I’ll have what she’s having” which when used at the conclusion of the fake orgasm scene in a New York City diner in *When Harry Met Sally* surely conveys a very different message than it does in its ordinary usage.

I also suggest that in reference to my gathering of source materials, Michel de Certeau’s comment is applicable: “Everyday life invents itself by poaching in countless ways on the property of others.”¹⁴ In the area of movie quotes, my data collection and analysis is based on a list of the “100 Greatest Movie Quotes of All Time,” released in 2005 by the *American Film Institute* (AFI). The institute is a non-profit educational and cultural organization established to “preserve the history of the motion picture, to honour the artists and their work and to educate the next generation of storytellers.” AFI’s top 100 list was chosen by “A jury of over 1,500 leaders from the creative community, including film artists, critics and historians. Selection criteria included choosing quotes from American films which circulate through popular culture, become part of the national lexicon and evoke the memory of a treasured film, thus ensuring and enlivening its historical legacy.” AFI distributed a ballot with 400 nominated movie

13 Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, New edition (London: New York: Routledge, 1979), 103-104.

14 Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), xii.

quotes¹⁵ to a jury of over 1,500 leaders from the creative community, including film artists (directors, screenwriters, actors, editors, cinematographers), critics and historians. Jury members were asked to choose up to 100 movie quotes from this comprehensive list, including entries such as "Here's lookin' at you, kid" (*Casablanca*), "Frankly, my dear, I don't give a damn" (*Gone With The Wind*), "Why don't you come up sometime and see me?" (*She Done Him Wrong*), "May the Force be with you" (*Star Wars*), "Houston, we have a problem" (*Apollo 13*), "Snap out of it!" (*Moonstruck*), "You can't handle the truth!" (*A Few Good Men*), "I'll be back" (*The Terminator*) and "Show me the money!" (*Jerry Maguire*). Due to the extensive number of memorable movie lines in American film, jurors could also write in votes for up to five quotes that may not already appear on the ballot. Clips from all films discussed in this thesis are available on YouTube, a medium which also contributes to their popularity and spread throughout society.

Jurors were asked to consider the following criteria in making their selections:

Movie Quote

A statement, phrase or brief exchange of dialogue spoken in an American film.* (Lyrics from songs are not eligible.)

15 American Film Institute, "American Film Institute's 400 Nominated Movie Quotes," 2005, *American Film Institute*, <http://www.afi.com/Docs/100Years/quotes400.pdf>.

Cultural Impact

Movie Quotes that viewers use in their own lives and situations; circulating through popular culture, they become part of the national lexicon.

Legacy

Movie Quotes that viewers use to evoke the memory of a treasured film, thus ensuring and enlivening its historical legacy.

*AFI defines an American film as an English language motion picture with significant creative and/or financial production elements from the United States. Additionally, only Movie Quotes from feature-length American films released before January 1, 2004, will be considered. AFI defines a feature-length film as a motion picture of narrative format that is typically over 60 minutes in length.

Working from these results, my original contribution to knowledge is to build and test the relationship between the three areas of memes, morphic fields, and memorable movie lines. A second contribution is to provide an up-to-date review of current and past literature on memes. A third contribution is to investigate the possibility that the concept of morphic fields can be seen in many different disciplines. A fourth contribution is to determine if Sheldrake's hypothesis of morphic fields can be seen to include the morphic fields of movies and memorable movie lines. My fifth contribution is to compile a detailed study of the qualities which many memorable movie lines have in common. My sixth contribution is to investigate so-called movie "misquotes" to discover why the public has often changed the original word

of quotes in popular usage. A seventh contribution is to investigate if morphic fields can have an effect on viewing a film in a physical theater that is different than that when viewing at home, or on a small digital screen. These contributions align to create a thinking space about popularity, resonance and memes.

Chapter One - Memes - A unit of cultural transmission?

In this chapter, I investigate memes. It is not intended to be a comprehensive presentation of everything known, proposed, or theorized about memes. It is a presentation of meme-related information that is pertinent to the topic of this thesis: What is the relationship between memes and morphic fields, and do those two concepts contribute to some lines of movie dialogue becoming famous? Internet users consider anything that goes “viral” to be a meme, *viral* meaning acceleratingly popular, and frequently and quickly re-transmitted through Facebook, Twitter, Pinterest, Instagram and Snapchat, or even the more archaic e-mail. An Internet meme can be a video clip or image. In fact, Internet memes seem to be consistently visual, rather than simply audio or text. Although I discuss Internet memes, I focus primarily on memes in general, particularly textual memes, and most particularly, in the latter part of this thesis, famous movie lines as possible memes.

I also discuss the history of the term *meme*, the key theorists of the concept, and studies into the qualities of successful memes. Memes can be visual, sonic or dialogic. Visual memes include images, symbols, works of art, concepts that are expressed in the material world including Platonic archetypes, written phrases, and advertising copy lines. Sonic memes can be musical passages, or unique man-made or natural sounds. Dialogic memes occur in movies, television, video and/or popular slang. Many of these can be in digital form as well as analogue, and all may have certain qualities in common—including the ability to be consciously re-transmitted—to a greater or lesser degree.

The term *meme* was coined by English evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins in his 1976 book *The Selfish Gene*. In Dawkins' definition, a meme is a “a unit of cultural transmission, or a unit of imitation.” Dawkins wrote: “Examples of memes are tunes, ideas, catch-phrases, clothes fashions, ways of making

pots or of building arches. Just as genes propagate themselves in the gene pool by leaping from body to body via sperms or eggs, so memes propagate themselves in the meme pool by leaping from brain to brain via a process which, in the broad sense, can be called imitation.”¹ It is obvious that Dawkins’ definition of meme is quite inclusive. Since Dawkins created the term, *meme* has become a common concept, and it has been used more and more frequently since the term first appeared. Dawkins considered the meme to be the cultural equivalent of the biological gene. He was convinced that the Darwinian theory of evolution applied not only to biology but to all areas of science, and that looking for the equivalent evolutionary process in human culture was a natural and obvious action. He decided that there were units of culture which not only evolved, but which exhibited the same evolutionary characteristics as did genes: fecundity, fidelity and longevity. Others, including biologists, philosophers and various observers of cultures, soon deployed the new term and concept, producing books and papers exploring the world of memes. This chapter presupposes either that 1) Memes exist, no matter whether or not evidence of that existence can be found, or that 2) Memes do not exist, but the concept of memes is still a valuable theoretical tool for examining the transmission, imitation and use of information through society.

What is a Meme?

Memes are one of the three major elements of this thesis. This chapter is not intended to be an exhaustive study of memes, which could easily—and has—filled lengthy monographs, but rather provides the information required to support the basic investigation into the possible relationship between memes, morphic fields, and memorable movie lines.

1 Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene*, First Edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976).

Richard Dawkins won naming rights to “meme” when he introduced both concept and word in his 1976 book *The Selfish Gene*. In that book, he proposes a definition of meme as “a unit of cultural transmission, or a unit of *imitation*,”—and states that examples of memes are “tunes, ideas, catch-phrases, clothes fashions, ways of making pots or of building arches.” Dawkins further states “As my colleague N. K. Humphrey neatly summed up an earlier draft of this chapter: ‘memes should be regarded as living structures, not just metaphorically but technically. When you plant a fertile meme in my mind you literally parasitize my brain, turning it into a vehicle for the meme's propagation in just the way that a virus may parasitize the genetic mechanism of a host cell.’”² This reference to “virus” and “parasitize” has led to a widespread belief that memes are viral, and that they not only have agency, but in many cases that agency is *greater* than—or at least influences—*human* agency. I discuss this possible agency later in this chapter.

Dawkins sees memes as the cultural equivalent of biological genes; simply another example of natural selection—Universal Darwinism—at work. He therefore believes that some memes survive—and replicate—better than others. “Imitation, in the broad sense, is how memes can replicate. But just as not all genes that can replicate do so successfully, so some memes are more successful in the meme-pool than others. This is the analogue of natural selection. I have mentioned particular examples of qualities that make for high survival value among memes. But in general they must be the same as those discussed for [genes]: longevity, fecundity, and copying-fidelity.”³ Dawkins cautions that reproductive success in memes is no more intended to benefit the host organism (humans, in the case of memes)

2 *Ibid.*

3 *Ibid.*, 194.

than is the success of genes. Just as a gene reproduces itself for its “own sake,” so do memes. I do not intend to enter the biological argument as to who intends what in the spread of genes, but I do point out that it appears that the Dawkins’ “meme as analogue” argument advocates that memes are equally as “selfish” as he considers genes to be. As Dawkins writes, “When we look at the evolution of cultural traits and at their survival value, we must be clear whose survival we are talking about... a cultural trait may have evolved in the way that it has, simply because it is advantageous to itself... Once the genes have provided their survival machines with brains that are capable of rapid imitation, the memes will automatically take over. We do not even have to posit a genetic advantage in imitation, though that would certainly help. All that is necessary is that the brain should be capable of imitation: memes will then evolve that exploit the capacity to the full.”⁴ In *The Selfish Gene*, Dawkins explained why he decided to apply the biological concept of natural selection to the study of culture. He believed that Darwinism was “too big” a theory to be restricted solely to biology and the biological gene. The key is that genes are replicators, and Dawkins believed there is a “new kind of replicator” appearing on the planet, a replicator that is at home in the “soup of human culture.” Dawkins felt that that new replicator needed a new name, a word that conveyed the concept of a unit of cultural transmission or imitation. Wanting a short word that sounded similar to *gene*, he coined the neologism “meme.”

What did Dawkins consider this new cultural replicator to be? It appeared to be anything that could “leap from brain to brain” in the process of imitation. As I note above, this included “tunes, ideas, catch-phrases, clothes fashions, ways of making pots or of building arches...If a scientist hears, or reads about, a good idea, he passed it on to his colleagues and students. He mentions it in his articles and his

4 Ibid., 199-200.

lectures. If the idea catches on, it can be said to propagate itself, spreading from brain to brain.”⁵ In the glossary of his 1989 book *The Extended Prototype*, Dawkins defines a meme in more detail as: “A unit of cultural inheritance, hypothesized as analogous to the particulate gene, and as naturally selected by virtue of its ‘phenotypic’ consequences on its own survival and replication in the cultural environment.”⁶ Here Dawkins again suggests that a meme is an *analogy* of gene in a cultural context, but not necessarily its exact equivalent.

In a 1999 radio interview, renowned linguist Noam Chomsky responded to a listener’s question about the value of memes: “Well, Dawkins is an important scientist, and his notion of memes is—it was intended as a metaphor, and metaphors are useful insofar as they make you think in an innovative and constructive way. If you find those metaphors useful, great. Personally ... I don’t. But...there’s no real ... right or wrong about it.”⁷ This was not a ringing endorsement by one of the world’s most preeminent linguists, but scholars should keep in mind that Dawkins is an evolutionary biologist, and neither a linguist nor a sociologist. He is, however, or at least was with his creation of the term *meme*, highly skilled (or lucky) at creating a new meme: the *meme meme*. As a result, over the years after publication of *The Selfish Gene*, a number of writers and scholars began to produce books and articles on the subject of memes, and their interpretations and analyses of Dawkins’ concept. (For an idea of just how successful the “meme meme” has been, see the *Popularity of Memes* appendix at the end of this thesis.)

5 Ibid., 192.

6 Richard Dawkins, *The Extended Phenotype: The Long Reach of the Gene*, New edition (Oxford: New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 290.

7 “False, False, False, and False,” *Talk of the Nation*, January 20, 1999, <http://www.chomsky.info/interviews/19990120.htm>.

I suggest that what Chomsky likely meant was not that memes themselves are metaphors, but that Dawkins’ view that memes are the cultural equivalent of genes is a metaphor.

While Chomsky's comments on Dawkins' meme theory were less than rave reviews, others were enthusiastic—even breathless. One writer, Robert Aunger, referred to it as a “startling idea...a brainstorm...based on an important insight relevant to social species like humans.”⁸ Another writer, Richard Brodie, stated that “the long-awaited scientific theory unifying biology, psychology, and cognitive science is here,”⁹ and the science of memetics is a “major paradigm shift in the science of the mind.”¹⁰ Aaron Lynch saw Dawkin's memes as a “new way to understand phenomena,” agreeing with Brodie that it was indeed a paradigm shift.¹¹

In the late 1990s, books devoted to memes began to appear. Susan Blackmore's influential book *The Meme Machine* appeared in 1999. In that book she referred to the *Oxford English Dictionary's* definition of meme which was “an element of a culture that may be considered to be passed on by non-genetic means, esp. imitation.” As she wrote, “Although many authors use widely differing definitions I suggest we stick to this simple one. Doing so avoids many problems. It also becomes clear why no existence proof is required. As long as we accept that people do, in fact, imitate each other, and that information of some kind is passed on when they do then, by definition, memes exist.”¹² Blackmore's resulting use of that definition is quite expansive, as shown in *The Meme Machine*: “If, for example, a friend tells you a story and you remember the gist and pass it on to someone else then that counts as imitation ...

8 Robert Aunger, *The Electric Meme: A New Theory of How We Think* (New York: Free Press, 2002), 2.

9 Richard Brodie, *Virus of the Mind: The New Science of the Meme* (Seattle, Wash.: Integral Press, 1996), 13.

10 Ibid., 15.

11 Aaron Lynch, *Thought Contagion*, Paperback edition (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1998), 17.

12 Susan Blackmore, “The Memes' Eye View,” in *Darwinizing Culture: The Status of Memetics as a Science*, ed. Robert Aunger, First edition (Oxford: New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 25.

Everything that is passed from person to person in this way is a meme. This includes all the words in your vocabulary, the stories you know, the skills and habits you have picked up from others and the games you like to play. It includes the songs you sing and the rules you obey. So, for example, whenever you drive on the left (or the right!), eat curry with lager or pizza and coke, whistle the theme tune from *Neighbours* or even shake hands, you are dealing in memes.”¹³ Blackmore’s definition would seem to include nearly everything that humans do, say, or create. This is not a very limiting or helpful definition. Her view of memes is nearly a direct match (and analogy) to her view of “science,” which for her in this context is neo-Darwinism. As she writes, “My own view is that the idea of memes is an example of the best use of analogy in science. That is, a powerful mechanism in one domain is seen to operate in a slightly different way in an entirely new domain ... In this case, the most powerful idea in all of science—the explanation of biological diversity by the simple process of natural selection—becomes the explanation of mental and cultural diversity by the simple process of memetic selection. The overarching theory of evolution provides a framework for both.”¹⁴ Blackmore’s dedication to Darwinism and particularly Universal Darwinism is strong, and is the basis for her equally strong belief in the natural selectionist concept of memes. However, when she states that the “most powerful idea in all of science” is natural selection, one could point out that *her* “all of science” includes only biology, and that there may be other fields of science with their own powerful ideas. Blackmore’s Darwinian view of memes extends to emulate the three primary qualities of genes. “If we define memes as transmitted by imitation then whatever is passed on by this copying process is a meme. Memes fulfill the role of replicator because they exhibit all three of the necessary conditions, that is, heredity (the form and details of the behaviour are copied), variation (they are copied with errors, embellishments or other

13 Susan J Blackmore, *The Meme Machine* (Oxford [England]; New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 6-7.

14 *Ibid.*, 18.

variations), and selection (only some behaviours are successfully copied). This is a true evolutionary process.”¹⁵ Whether intentionally or not, Blackmore suggests that a meme is not a meme *until it becomes a meme*. That is, it is a *something*—perhaps a new idea, a new word, a new type of fabric or style of clothing—which, as soon as it is imitated, is officially declared by reality—or at least by her memetic theory—to be a meme. She settles on a general definition which I would sum up as basically, “if it’s imitable, it’s a meme.” As Blackmore writes, “I shall use the term ‘meme’ indiscriminately to refer to memetic information in any of its many forms; including ideas, the brain structures that instantiate those ideas, the behaviours these brain structures produce, and their versions in books, recipes, maps and written music. As long as that information can be copied by a process we may broadly call ‘imitation’, then it counts as a meme.”¹⁶ Conversely, she mentions Daniel Dennett’s view of memes, which appears to be far less broad than her own. “Dennett defines the unit of memes as ‘the smallest elements that replicate themselves with reliability and fecundity.’¹⁷ A blob of pink paint is too small a unit for memetic selection pressures to apply—to be enjoyed or disliked, photographed or thrown away. A whole gallery of paintings is too large. The single painting is the natural unit for most of us and that is why we remember Van Gogh’s Sunflowers or buy postcards of Edvard Munch’s The Scream.”¹⁸ Dennett’s point is valid and indicates there are likely parameters on the “size” of a meme. We could perhaps refer to it as the *Goldilocks Law of Memetics*; not too large, not too small, but just right. Perhaps, as with Goldilocks, it depends on whose needs need to be satisfied.

15 Ibid., 51.

16 Ibid., 66.

17 Daniel C. Dennett, “Memes and the Exploitation of Imagination,” *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 48, no. 2 (Spring 1990): 127–35.

18 Susan J Blackmore, *The Meme Machine* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 54.

Richard Brodie is author of the book *Virus of the Mind: The New Science of the Meme*; thus it is obvious from his title that he sees memes as viral and less than desirable: “taking over bits of your mind and pulling up in different directions, mind viruses distract you from what’s most important to you in life and cause confusion, stress, and even despair.”¹⁹ Brodie appears to view memes just as broadly as Blackmore. As he says, “The universe is full of stuff. However, anything we say about that stuff is purely a concept—a set of memes—invented by human beings. All concepts are composed of memes...A meme is a unit of information in a mind whose existence influences events such that more copies of itself get created in other minds.”²⁰ In a few short words, just as Blackmore stated that anything passed on from one human to another is a meme, Brodie states that *any concept* invented by a human is composed of memes. If possible, this is an even broader definition than Blackmore’s. Brodie also believes that memes have *agency* (or at least causality)—as he states that their “existence influences events”—and *virality*, as their influence leads to copies of themselves being created in other minds.

Science philosopher Daniel Dennett, in his 1996 book *Darwin’s Dangerous Idea: Evolution and the Meanings of Life*, gave support to the view of memes as nasty little contagious creatures that “invade” and “infest,” as he wrote: “Following Dawkins, I call the invaders memes, and the radically new kind of entity created when a particular sort of animal is properly furnished by—or infested with—memes is what is commonly called a person.”²¹ However, Dennett sees also that these invaders can be very sophisticated and complex ideas. “These new replicators are, roughly, ideas. Not the ‘simple ideas’ of

19 Richard Brodie, *Virus of the Mind: The New Science of the Meme* (Seattle, Wash.: Integral Press, 1996), 20.

20 Ibid., 32. .

21 Daniel C. Dennett, *Darwin’s Dangerous Idea: Evolution and the Meanings of Life*, Reprint edition (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), 341.

Locke and Hume (the idea of red, or the idea of round or hot or cold), but the sort of complex ideas that form themselves into distinct memorable units—such as the ideas of...arch, wheel, wearing clothes, vendetta, right triangle, alphabet, calendar, the Odyssey, calculus, chess, perspective drawing, evolution by natural selection, impressionism, “Greensleeves”, deconstructionism.”²² While Dennett refers to memes above as “ideas,” he also uses the term “meme vehicle,” which is an artifact that “conveys” a meme concept. Dennett writes, “[Like genes] memes are also invisible, and are carried by meme vehicles—pictures, books, sayings (in particular languages, oral or written, on paper or magnetically encoded, etc.). Tools and buildings and other inventions are also meme vehicles. A wagon with spoked wheels carries not only grain or freight from place to place; it carries the brilliant idea of a wagon with spoked wheels from mind to mind. A meme’s existence depends on a physical embodiment in some medium; if all such physical embodiments are destroyed, that meme is extinguished.”²³ Dennett’s insistence on a meme’s requiring a “physical embodiment in some medium” for its existence would seem to exclude such concepts as democracy, tyranny, utopia, heaven or hell. However, it would also seem to exclude such ideas as “vendetta” which Dennett *does* consider [above] to be a meme.

Kate Distin, in her 2005 book *The Selfish Meme: A Critical Reassessment*, discusses the possibility that memes—and their necessary imitation—have been too broadly defined [see Blackmore and Brodie above], and points out that Henry Plotkin’s suggestion of two different categories of meme might deal with that problem.

It may be, as Henry Plotkin has claimed, that in Blackmore’s work ‘the notion of imitation has been expanded beyond the point of meaning.’ ...Plotkin suggests two different sorts of memes. ‘The first category comprises memes that are “informationally narrow in scope”: these are short-lived, situation-specific memes such as the knowledge that a particular restaurant is good,

22 Ibid., 344.

23 Ibid., 347-348.

or the lyrics to a currently popular song. Memes of the second sort are made up of “high order memories and knowledge structures”, and are “of much wider scope informationally, and of much greater longevity, with transmission normally restricted to just once in a lifetime”.²⁴

I suggest, however, that rather than producing a less broad definition of meme, Plotkin’s two-category concept simply divides that very broad definition into two slightly less broad categories. However, I suggest also that these two categories may reflect the difference between memes that simply *have meaning* and those memes that *are meaningful*. I discuss this distinction later in this thesis.

Peter Richerson and Robert Boyd, in their 2006 book *Not by Genes Alone: How Culture Transformed Human Evolution*, propose an alternative to *meme* (“cultural variant”) and suggest also that there are already many suitable English words that do *not* need to be replaced by “meme.” As they write, “We need some expedient agreement about what to call the information stored in people’s brains...we can’t go on saying ‘information stored in people’s heads’—it’s too awkward. Some authors use the word *meme* coined by the evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins, but this connotes a discrete, faithfully transmitted genelike entity, and we have good reasons to believe that a lot of culturally transmitted information is neither discrete nor faithfully transmitted. So we will use the word *cultural variant*.”²⁵ I discuss the success of their term “cultural variant” later in this thesis, but I suggest that simply replacing “meme” with “cultural variant” does not avoid the argument that there are already suitable words that do not need to be replaced by either term.

24 Kate Distin, *The Selfish Meme a Critical Reassessment* (Cambridge, U.K.; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 101-102.

25 Peter J. Richerson and Robert Boyd, *Not by Genes Alone: How Culture Transformed Human Evolution* (Chicago, Ill.: University Of Chicago Press, 2006), 63.

For many Internet users—particularly those who use such Web services as Facebook, YouTube, Pinterest, and other social media that I mentioned earlier—“meme” means videos, images and text that can be imitated, modified, and/or parodied, frequently to humorous effect. Limor Shifman’s 2013 book *Memes in Digital Culture* focuses on Internet memes (which I discuss in more detail later in this section), and considers them an important element in contemporary digital communication. Shifman writes, “We should look at memes from a communication-oriented perspective... Until the twenty-first century, mass communication researchers felt comfortable overlooking memes. As units that propagate gradually through many interpersonal contacts, memes were considered irrelevant for understanding mass-mediated content, which is often transmitted simultaneously from a single institutional source to many people. But this is no longer the case in an era of blurring boundaries between interpersonal and mass, professional and amateur, bottom-up and top-down communications. In a time marked by a convergence of media platforms, when content flows swiftly from one medium to another, memes have become more relevant than ever to communication scholarship.”²⁶ Shifman’s book on Internet memes is an excellent example of communications scholarship, and she makes a strong argument for considering Internet memes as worthy of serious study. In that book she also considers high-level memes, noting that pure concepts—that is, ideas without actual (and obvious) physical manifestations—can legitimately be considered memes, or in many cases, *memeplexes*—a cluster of memes. As she writes, “Democracy, for instance, can be regarded as a memeplex that includes several submemeplexes such as human rights and free regular elections, which can further be broken down to respective memes.”²⁷ Democracy, as a memeplex, would be an example of a high-level meme.

26 Limor Shifman, *Memes in Digital Culture* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2013), 6-7.

27 Ibid., 10.

James Gleick entered the discussion with his 2011 article *What Defines a Meme?* Gleick claims that objects (artifacts) are not memes but *meme vehicles* (Dennett's term), supporting Dawkins' revised opinion that memes are in the brain; they are internal rather than external. Gleick writes "An object is not a meme. The hula hoop is not a meme; it is made of plastic, not of bits. When this species of toy spread worldwide in a mad epidemic in 1958, it was the product, the physical manifestation, of a meme, or memes: the craving for hula hoops; the swaying, swinging, twirling skill set of hula hooping. The hula hoop itself is a meme vehicle. So, for that matter, is each human hula hooper—a strikingly effective meme vehicle...The meme is not the dancer but the dance."²⁸ In addition to seeing *meme as concept* rather than *meme as expression*, Gleick suggests features that may aid a meme in becoming more memorable. Gleick writes: "Tinker, tailor, soldier, sailor ... Rhyme and rhythm help people remember bits of text. Or: rhyme and rhythm help bits of text get remembered. Rhyme and rhythm are qualities that aid a meme's survival, just as strength and speed aid an animal's. Patterned language has an evolutionary advantage."²⁹ Gleick's "rhyme and rhythm" and "patterned language" are referred to later in this thesis as possible key components of memorable movie lines.

Matteo Mameli, in his 2005 review of Kate Distin's book *The Selfish Meme*, suggests an interesting relationship between the study of memes and the study of a particular culture at any given time." Memes can be typed in terms of their informational content (the information they carry) and informational format (the way the information is coded). On the memetic approach, a given culture at a given moment in time is best described by listing the memes present in that culture at that time and the

28 James Gleick, "What Defines a Meme?," *Smithsonian*, May 2011, <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/what-defines-a-meme-1904778/>.

29 Ibid.

(relative and absolute) frequencies of these memes. Cultural change is captured in terms of changes in meme frequencies.”³⁰ Mameli is suggesting that a statistical analysis of successful cultural memes over time can reveal information about the state of a culture at any given time as well as any changes to that culture over a period of time. A *memeshot* would theoretically freeze and reveal active—and particularly the dominant—memes in a culture at the time of the “shot.”

The website *Knowyourmeme.com*³¹—which focuses on Internet memes—defines a meme as “a set of images, videos or discussions that may have mutated from another, but is still bound by a single theme or motif.” It further states that a meme is “a theoretical unit of culture, representing information spreading from one mind to another. In common usage it refers to fads, in-jokes, catchphrases and other cultural tidbits that spawn, grow, and eventually decline into obscurity as they are supplanted by newer memes.” In answer to the question “why do memes spread?” Knowyourmeme responds (and please note that they are referring to *Internet* memes): “Memes spread due to their inherent values. If a meme has the power to grab a person’s attention, convince them to help spread it, or inspire them to create a derivative work, it can grow. Different types of memes appeal to different types of people, and different memes are born out of different cultures, or memetic hubs. A meme’s exploitability, or ease of replication and/or manipulation is also a large contributing factor. This, like macro generators, typically increase a meme’s chances of spawning derivatives, but this is usually secondary to the meme’s ability to evoke an emotional response (humour, disgust, offense, intrigue,

30 Matteo Mameli, “The Selfish Meme: A Critical Reassessment (Book Review),” *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews*, September 16, 2005.

31 “Know Your Meme,” *Know Your Meme*, accessed July 25, 2014, <http://knowyourmeme.com/>.

etc.) from the viewer.” The website also states that “Every meme has to be viral.” This contrasts with Shifman’s view (which I discuss later) that “Internet memes”—as defined by her—are derivatives of an original video/image, but are not viral.

Knowyourmeme.com suggest that memes cannot be created, only a meme’s *content* can be created. “Memes aren’t created -- they occur when a particularly interesting piece of content floats around the internet and begins to be passed around, written about, talked about, remixed, and generally absorbed into our cultural consciousness. Although it is possible for a person to create the conditions that would be ideal for a meme to form, it is impossible to guarantee that others will participate...Do not confuse memes with the content itself -- memes live outside the content, above it, and around it. Very often the meme involves numerous pieces of content: the original, reposts of the original, as well as the remixes and derivatives; all of which reflect the spread of the meme.” Again, it is important to keep in mind that Knowyourmeme.com discusses only “Internet memes,” which I discuss in more depth in a later section.

Csaba Pleh writes that “any cultural items are subsumed under the term of memes, from silly tunes through religious ideas to scientific theories” and he suggests that memes can be interpreted as “the external forces that shape the human mind.”³² As Pleh specifically writes “*the* external forces,” I take that to mean the “*only*” external forces and ask 1) Are memes really forces?, and 2) are there no other “forces” (such as events) that shape the human mind?

32 Csaba Pleh, “Thoughts on the Distribution of Thoughts: Memes or Epidemics,” *Journal of Cultural and Evolutionary Psychology* 1, no. 1 (2003), 28.

From analyzing these theories and observations made by memeticists over a period of more than forty years, it is clear that while the concept of meme may have much to offer in the study of communication and human culture, an agreed-upon and workable definition of meme still evades the meme community. As I show later in this paper, a definition is not required in order to explore a key theme of this thesis, which is the relationship between memes, morphic fields, and memorable movie lines and the often shared characteristics of popular memes and movie lines.

Key qualities of most successful memes

In this section, I investigate the various qualities proposed by memeticists to be necessary—or at least desirable—for the success of memes. I also view these qualities in their possible relationship to memorable movie lines. Not only did Richard Dawkins coin the word meme, but he—not surprisingly—provided the first list of “qualities that make for high survival among memes.” Dawkins proposed that those qualities were basically the same as for successful genes: “longevity,” “fecundity,” and “copying-fidelity” (more frequently referred to as “fidelity.”)³³ Dawkins considers fecundity to be more important than longevity as strong fecundity will lead to longevity. As he wrote in *The Selfish Gene*:³⁴

As in the case of genes, fecundity is much more important than longevity of particular copies. If the meme is a scientific idea, its spread will depend on how acceptable it is to the population of individual scientists...If it is a popular tune, its spread through the meme pool may be gauged by the number of people heard whistling it in the streets. If it is a style of women's shoe, the population memeticist may use sales statistics from shoe shops. Some memes, like some genes, achieve brilliant short-term success in spreading rapidly, but do not last long in the meme pool. Popular songs and stiletto heels are examples. Others, such as the Jewish religious laws, may

33 Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene*, First Edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 194.

34 Ibid.

continue to propagate themselves for thousands of years, usually because of the great potential permanence of written records.

While Dawkins' proposed qualities may indeed lead to success for memes, he does not discuss the qualities that *underlie and support* these qualities, the qualities that are necessary for the *existence* of those three top-level qualities. More specifically, what qualities *lead* to longevity? What qualities *lead* to fecundity? What qualities *lead* to fidelity? Although Dawkins suggests only these three qualities, other memeticists have added additional items to his list—and these are just the qualities of the *memes*. Many researchers consider memes themselves as just one of several “entities” involved in the entire meme process; there is also the individual who is, or becomes, a “host” of a meme; and there is the context for that individual—the group or larger society within which an individual identifies and lives. It is important to note that a meme creator cannot make an individual or society more receptive to a meme, but *understanding* their receptivity may be an asset to successful meme creation.

In analyzing memes, one method is to categorize them. Henry Plotkin suggests that one way of categorizing memes is to divide them into short-term “surface” memes and much longer term “deep-level” memes, depending on their level of “scope.” *Surface memes* are of short duration and “informationally narrow;” examples being which shop is selling bargain computers on a specific day, which restaurant is (at least currently) offering good food, or which dentist one might wish to avoid. Plotkin considers such memes as the “small change” of culture: very specific, very short-lived. Opposed to these are *deep-level memes* with a much wider scope and much greater longevity. Plotkin suggests that transmissions for these memes can normally be once in a lifetime. For example, in the case of the computer shop, the related deep-level meme is that there are places called shops where people can obtain things in exchange for money, paying with cash, credit cards or checks. As Plotkin writes, “these deep-level, culture-specific memes are essential for the existence of surface memes. They are not

acquired by imitation but by a complex process of construction and integration.”³⁵ Plotkin’s two classes of memes are primarily *temporal*. One is quite ephemeral: a popular song or restaurant, a style of fashion, a child’s toy. The other has more to do with long-term concepts, ideas, movements, which I suggest are more *meaningful* than the more temporal category. More useful for the purposes of this section, however, is to determine which specific characteristics are connected with successful memes.

“Repetition” is often proposed by memeticists as an important characteristic of a successful meme. As Eigen and Winkler-Oswatitsch write: “Consider, for instance, one of Mozart’s compositions, one that is retained stably in our concert repertoire. The reason for its retention is not that the notes of this work are printed in a particularly durable ink. The persistence with which a Mozart symphony reappears in our concert programmes is solely a consequence of its high selection value. In order for this to retain its effect, the work must be played again and again, the public must take note of it, and it must be continually re-evaluated in competition with other compositions.”³⁶ The two authors propose that the reason a Mozart symphony appears on concert programs so frequently is that it has “high selection value.” They state that the cause of the high selection value is that it is “played again and again,” and that the public “takes note of it.” I consider this to be circular reasoning. The symphony appears on programs frequently because it has a high selection value. It has a high selection value because the public takes note of it. The public takes note of it because it is played again and again, as a result of its appearing frequently on programs. It appears on programs frequently because it has a high selection

35 Henry Plotkin, “Culture and Psychological Mechanisms,” in *Darwinizing Culture: The Status of Memetics as a Science*, ed. Robert Aunger, First edition (Oxford: New York: Oxford University Press, 2001, 78-79.

36 Manfred Eigen and Ruthild Winkler-Oswatitsch, *Steps towards Life: A Perspective on Evolution*, trans. Paul Woolley, First Edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 15.

value, and so on. However, there is no suggestion as to why the symphony was initially considered to be worthy of “playing again.” This suggests to me that the repetition characteristics mentioned here (high selection value, frequent appearance on programs, public awareness) are still at too high a level and we need to look deeper to find the actual qualities that support—and help produce—these characteristics and a successful meme, while not forgetting that *repetition* can indeed be an important element in a successful meme.

For Henry Jenkins, Sam Ford, and Joshua Green in their 2013 book *Spreadable Media: Creating Value and Meaning in a Networked Culture*, memes are *movement*: they are “spreadable.” The authors investigate “the multiple ways that content circulates today, from top down to bottom up, from grassroots to commercial. As we explore circulation, we see the way value and meaning are created in the multiple economies that constitute the emerging media landscape. Our message is simple and direct: if it doesn’t spread, it’s dead.”³⁷ For the authors, “spreadability” depends on the technical resources and economic structures that affect circulation, the attributes of the text itself, and the social networks through which the text flows.³⁸ They also recognize the importance of the audience in causing (or perhaps *allowing*) a meme to spread, noting that the audience is as important—and perhaps even more so—to the spread of text as is its commercial distribution. If the audience likes, or is intrigued by the text, it will spread it; if not, its spread is limited, regardless of the commercial efforts behind it.³⁹

37 Henry Jenkins, Sam Ford, and Joshua Green, *Spreadable Media: Creating Value and Meaning in a Networked Culture* (New York: NYU Press, 2013), 1.

38 *Ibid.*, 4.

39 *Ibid.*, 195-196.

Jenkins, Ford and Green state that content is more likely to be shared if it is “available when and where audiences want it ... portable, easily reusable in a variety of ways, relevant to multiple audiences, and part of a steady stream of material.”⁴⁰ The authors write that “content spreads, then, when it acts as fodder for conversations that audiences are already having.” As they mention, this is in line with what Douglas Rushkoff has written: “We think of a medium as the thing that delivers content. But the delivered content is a medium in itself. Content is just a medium for interaction between people. The many forms of content we collect and experience online, I'd argue, are really just forms of ammunition - something to have when the conversation goes quiet at work the next day; an excuse to start a discussion with that attractive person in the next cubicle.”⁴¹ Spreadability is an essential quality of famous movie lines, and Rushkoff's comments about a discussion with the person in the adjacent cubicle are very relevant to the use of famous movie lines, as they are often dropped into conversation (frequently humorously) when appropriate (in some manner) to that conversation. It may be a menacing “I'll be back” from *The Terminator*, or *Casablanca's* “Here's looking at you, kid” over a glass of wine.

In their book, Jenkins and his co-authors pay tribute to media scholar John Fiske who discusses how “material from mass culture” enters the popular culture. Such an argument can be translated and transformed to explore how *memes* enter (if they do not first originate there) popular culture, and move about within that culture. Jenkins et al. write “Under the producer's control, it [content] is mass culture. Under the audiences' control, it is popular culture. Grassroots circulation can thus transform a

40 Ibid., 197-198.

41 Douglas Rushkoff, “Second Sight,” *The Guardian*, June 28, 2000, sec. Technology, <http://www.theguardian.com/technology/2000/jun/29/onlinesupplement13>.

commodity into a cultural resource.”⁴² This transformation may be the point—or process—whereby a text becomes a meme, at least in the case of a text produced by commercial interests. Fiske writes: “If the cultural commodities or texts do not contain resources out of which the people can make their own meanings of their social relations and identities, they will be rejected and will fail in the marketplace. They will not be made popular.”⁴³ The phrase above “out of which the people can make their own meanings” is one of Fiske’s key concepts—that concept being “producerly.” As Fiske says, “[producerly text] offers itself up to popular production...It has loose ends that escape its control, its meanings exceed its own power to discipline them, its gaps are wide enough for whole new texts to be produced in them—it is, in a very real sense, beyond its own control.”⁴⁴ Jenkins and his co-authors suggest that producerly text (or in this thesis’ context: a meme, or “potential” meme) “leaves open space for audience participation, provides resources for shared expression, and motivates exchanges through surprising or intriguing content.”⁴⁵ Thus we can suggest three new possible qualities for meme success: “encourages participation,” “supports shared expression,” and “surprising or intriguing.” It is clear, however, that as the first two qualities become stronger, one of Dawkins’ key qualities—fidelity—could become weaker. If movie lines can be seen as “producerly,” then use of those lines in popular culture would see them evolve (or, perhaps better, *devolve*) into variations. Yet, other than a few commonly misquoted movie lines (discussed in my third chapter), I suggest that most well-known movie lines are faithful to their source—and, in fact, must be in order to have their effect. “I’ll drop by again later”—no

42 Henry Jenkins, Sam Ford, and Joshua Green, *Spreadable Media: Creating Value and Meaning in a Networked Culture* (New York: NYU Press, 2013), 201.

43 John Fiske, *The John Fiske Collection: Understanding Popular Culture*, 2 edition (London: Routledge, 2010), xxvii.

44 *Ibid.*, 84.

45 Henry Jenkins, Sam Ford, and Joshua Green, *Spreadable Media: Creating Value and Meaning in a Networked Culture* (New York: NYU Press, 2013), 227.

matter how menacingly delivered—does not have the same punch as “I’ll be back.” However, “producerly” can mean not just *text* change but *context* change, and a movie line’s text can remain the same while the context in which it is used can vary widely from its original film context.

In a similar vein to “spreadable,” Stanford organizational behaviour professor Chip Heath and business consultant Dan Heath, in their 2008 book *Made to Stick: Why Some Ideas Survive and Others Die*, use the word “sticky” to describe those ideas (memes) that not only survive but are successful. In their book (which, interestingly, never uses the word “meme”), the authors demonstrate how to create “sticky” ideas. By “sticky,” they mean ideas that are easily understood and remembered, and that have a lasting impact by changing the opinions or behaviours of their audience.⁴⁶ In their study of sticky ideas, the Heath brothers repeatedly saw six principles of memetic success at work: Simplicity, unexpectedness, concreteness, credibility, emotions, and stories.⁴⁷ As they write: “A sticky idea is understood, it’s remembered, and it changes something. Sticky ideas of all kinds—ranging from the “kidney thieves” urban legend to JFK’s “Man on the Moon” speech—have six traits in common. If you make use of these traits in your communication, you’ll make your ideas stickier. (You don’t need all 6 to have a sticky idea, but it’s fair to say the more, the better!)”⁴⁸ Note that Heath and Heath write that a sticky idea “changes something.” Change is the goal of many who attempt to intentionally create memes. Their goal may be convincing someone to buy a product, to vote for a politician, to support an environmental movement, or to view life and themselves differently. In these cases, the “message” or “informational content” of

46 Chip Heath and Dan Heath, *Made to Stick: Why Some Ideas Survive and Others Die* (New York: Random House, 2008), 8.

47 *Ibid.*, 16-18.

48 Chip Heath and Dan Heath, “Made to Stick Model,” *Heath Brothers*, 2008, <http://heathbrothers.com/download/mts-made-to-stick-model.pdf>.

the meme is much more than is obvious from a simple literal interpretation of the meme. The meme is meaningful. Note also that at least some of the Heaths' six principles can easily apply to memorable movie lines. For example, I would suggest simplicity: "Rosebud" (*Citizen Kane*); unexpectedness: "I'll have what she's having" (*When Harry Met Sally*); and emotions: "We'll always have Paris" (*Casablanca*). The *Casablanca* line can even be seen as a mini-story (or at least its representation) in itself. When audience members hear that line, I suggest (speaking from personal experience) that it can act as a trigger to remind them of the montage of shots of Rick and Ilsa earlier in the film, in love and in Paris. I discuss these lines in more detail in my memorable movie lines chapter.

James Gleick, writing in the *Smithsonian*, suggests features that may aid a meme (and, quite possibly, a movie line) in becoming more memorable, when he writes: "Rhyme and rhythm are qualities that aid a meme's survival, just as strength and speed aid an animal's. Patterned language has an evolutionary advantage."⁴⁹ Rhyme and rhythm of movie lines is analyzed in my movie line chapter, but for now consider "I love the smell of napalm in the morning"—iambic pentameter from *Apocalypse Now*. Or note the alliteration in the first line of this quote from *The Silence of the Lambs*: "A census taker once tried to test me. I ate his liver with some fava beans and a nice Chianti." Even in the second sentence, the "t" in "ate" and the "ti" in "Chianti" continue the alliteration.

Francis Heylighen also suggests that the concept of patterns is intertwined with the concept of memes, when he writes: "A meme can be defined as an information pattern, held in an individual's memory, which is capable of being copied to another individual's memory. This includes anything that can be

49 James Gleick, "What Defines a Meme?," *Smithsonian*, May 2011, <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/what-defines-a-meme-1904778/>.

learned or remembered: ideas, knowledge, habits, beliefs, skills, images, etc.”⁵⁰ An “information pattern” can include poetic and rhythmic qualities and, as I mention above, I later investigate their role in the success of famous movie quotes.

Daniel Dennett states that a successful meme—in fact *any* meme—must have a *physical expression* to survive, when he writes, “A meme’s existence depends on a physical embodiment in some medium; if all such physical embodiments are destroyed, that meme is extinguished.”⁵¹ Dennett is careful to state, however, that the meme is not its expression, and the physical expression is not the meme—a concept that is likely not shared by many Internet users who consider a YouTube video or an image of a cat to be the actual and complete meme. There is a difference between memes (which Dennett considers invisible) and meme vehicles (pictures, books, sayings, tools, buildings, and, I would add, Internet images and videos) which carry and/or demonstrate the memes. Dennett would presumably then consider movie lines to be meme expressions. While those particular memes may be at home in brains (of someone who has seen a movie, or initially in that of the screenwriter—or perhaps of the film’s director), they also more importantly exist in the audio-visual presentation of the movie (and on the physical paper of a movie script.)

50 Francis Heylighen, “What Makes a Meme Successful? Selection Criteria for Cultural Evolution,” in *Proc. 15th Int. Congress on Cybernetics* (Namur, 1999), 418–23.

51 Daniel C. Dennett, *Darwin’s Dangerous Idea: Evolution and the Meanings of Life*, Reprint edition (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), 347-348.

Richard Brodie sees two types of memes: Distinction, and Strategy. He describes *distinction* memes as “labels;” as “ways of carving up the world by categorizing or labelling things.”⁵² Brodie defines *strategy* memes as “rules” of society: “beliefs about cause and effect. When you are programmed with a strategy-meme, you unconsciously believe behaving a certain way is likely to produce a certain effect. That behaviour may trigger a chain of events that results in spreading the strategy-meme to another mind.”⁵³ Specific movie lines would no doubt fall into Brodie’s “distinction” category. While a movie line or its movie source may have some relatively long-term existence, neither can hardly be considered to have the quality of a “rule of society,” although a movie itself may provide support for certain beliefs.

Geoff Ayling considers successful memes to be “contagious.” In his 1998 book *Rapid Response Advertising*, Ayling states that three factors are necessary to produce a successful (contagious) meme: *Extreme simplicity; emotional impact; and critical mass* (of dissemination).⁵⁴ Here we again see simplicity, emotions, and what (“critical mass”) could also be described as spreadability or repetition, all very pertinent to the popularity of certain movie lines. A movie line which can be seen to combine both simplicity and emotions is “Soylent Green is people!” from *Soylent Green*; as does “It’s alive! It’s alive!” from *Frankenstein*.

52 Richard Brodie, *Virus of the Mind: The New Science of the Meme* (Seattle, Wash.: Integral Press, 1996), 41.

53 Ibid., 43.

54 Geoff Ayling et al., *Rapid Response Advertising* (Warriewood, N.S.W.: Business & Professional Publishing, 1998), 14.

No meme is an island. Many other memes already exist in our physical environment, and in the human brain. As the saying goes, “you have to go along to get along.” This is not to suggest that a new meme must “give in” to older, established memes, even if they are contradictory. Rather it means that a new meme must mesh well enough with already present memes to be initially accepted, or at least not thrown out of the game. As Kate Distin writes, “a new meme will have a greater chance of penetrating the existing meme pool if it is consistent with the others in that environment.”⁵⁵ Distin explains “There are two reasons for this. First, novel ideas that accord with accepted theories are more likely to be remembered than those which do not...Secondly, information is more likely to be replicated if it is absorbed into a network of accepted ideas or is useful in the context of much-used skills: we tend to pass things on more when we approve of them than when we do not.”⁵⁶ As is discussed later, novel ideas catch the attention of people and, if they are comfortable with those ideas, they pass them on to others. They do this because research shows that—in ordinary situations—people tend to prefer sharing positive information and ideas rather than negative, and to pass on information which will be useful to the recipient and reflect well on the information “passer.” Distin summarizes the three factors of meme success, recognizing both the meme and its environment. “So what is the general fitness criterion for the cultural population of traditions, ideas, tunes and designs? It makes sense to say that, as for genes, memetic success will depend on three separate factors: the content of the meme itself; the way in which it fits with other memes; and the external environment—the minds and surroundings of the people whose attention it is trying to attain.”⁵⁷ However, Distin’s comments are general and do not provide suggestions as to the specific causes of those factors. What qualities must the content have?

55 Kate Distin, *The Selfish Meme a Critical Reassessment* (Cambridge, U.K.; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 44.

56 Ibid., 44-45.

57 Ibid., 57.

How must a meme be to fit in with other memes? Exactly how does the external environment affect the potential new hosts? For an example of a movie line meme that fits in with other memes (in this case, the memetic logic of the room in which the scene takes place), consider “Gentlemen, you can’t fight in here! This is the War Room!” from *Dr. Strangelove*; or the line from *The Godfather*—which in a different context could simply refer to an ordinary, everyday financial transaction: “I’m gonna make him an offer he can’t refuse”. I point out that Richard Dawkins also recognized the need for a new meme to be compatible with existing memes. As he wrote in *The Extended Prototype*, “an important aspect of selection on any one meme will be the other memes that already happen to dominate the meme-pool. If the society is already dominated by Marxist, or Nazi memes, any new meme’s replication success will be influenced by its compatibility with this existing background.” 58

John Gunders and Damon Brown, in their book *The Complete Idiot’s Guide to Memes*, state that a meme “must be *original, digestible, easily understood*.”⁵⁹ Their definition of original is “an individual unit that is distinct and repeatable.” I would suggest that “easily identifiable” might be a better term. They define “digestible” as “not too big,” using the example of the first four notes of Beethoven’s *Fifth Symphony* as an example of a meme, with the entire symphony being too big to itself be a meme. As to “easily understood,” they stress that “The less detail memes have to carry, the easier they are understood and the faster they are passed on. The simpler story always seems to stick.”⁶⁰ For an example of an easily identifiable movie line, I would suggest “E.T. phone home” from *E.T. The Extra-*

58 Richard Dawkins, *The Extended Phenotype: The Long Reach of the Gene*, New edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 111.

59 John Gunders and Damon Brown, *The Complete Idiot’s Guide to Memes* (New York: Alpha, 2010), 4-5.

60 *Ibid.*, 88.

Terrestrial. This memorable line is original, digestible, easily understood, and has the added bonus of including and promoting the film's title in the line itself.

Jay Conrad Levinson, in his book *Guerrilla Creativity: Make Your Message Irresistible with the Power of Memes*, proposes the following "requirements of a meme." Although he is discussing marketing *slogans*, he makes it clear that he is suggesting how to write slogans that have the potential to *become* memes. These requirements include quick understanding of the meme, reason to pass on the meme, re-transmitting of the meme requires technology that is "as trivial as possible," and ability of the meme to cross "cultural and linguistic lines."⁶¹ Note that his primary focus is on the movement potential of the meme. However, Levinson also suggests that for effective slogans, one should use "shirtsleeve English,"—clear and simple words such as "cars on the road" instead of "automobiles on the highway."⁶² As he writes, "A meme is neither a meaningless slogan nor a clever play on words...Memes should never confuse. They should clarify. With a meme, you unconsciously say, 'I get it!' ...Slogans, headlines, tag lines, and other marketing messages aren't necessarily memes. Usually they're just clever phrases built on a play on words, or they're so general that they communicate very little. 'Overnight delivery' isn't much of a meme...But the longer but memorable and effective slogan 'When you absolutely, positively have to have it overnight' built a multimillion-dollar business."⁶³ It is clear that he, too, advocates simplicity, clarity, brevity, and the need to design memes that fit in comfortably with already-existing memes.

61 Jay Conrad Levinson, *Guerrilla Creativity: Make Your Message Irresistible with the Power of Memes* (Boston: Mariner Books, 2001), 64-65.

62 *Ibid.*, 89.

63 *Ibid.*, 128-129.

Aaron Lynch, in his 1998 book *Thought Contagion*, points out that Everett Rogers' work in *The Diffusion of Innovations*⁶⁴ could apply also to memes. To quote Lynch: "Rogers reveals a number of factors affecting how far and fast an innovation spreads. Any increased benefit of the new way over the old hastens its spread, as does compatibility with a community's existing values. If people can easily try the innovation on a limited basis, or easily observe others doing so, it also spreads faster. Too much complexity, on the other hand, slows the meme's transmission, an observation that applies to ideological thought contagions as well."⁶⁵ Thus Lynch suggests the probable value of three meme qualities: *benefit from using the new meme rather than the old*; *availability for trial use*; and *avoidance of complexity*, i.e. *simplicity*. Lynch's conclusions, while useful when applied to memes in general, do not seem applicable to movie lines as the concepts of trial use, as well as the replacement of new lines for old, do not seem relevant. Simplicity, however, is a quality which we see throughout this study.

Francis Heylighen, in his 2015 conference paper *What makes a meme successful? Selection criteria for cultural evolution*, discusses "subjective" criteria, which have to do with the person *assimilating* the meme. The criteria include *novelty* (to attract attention), *simplicity* (easy to understand), *coherence* (fits in with existing attitudes), and *utility* (practical—can be effectively used). Heylighen highlights key uses of memes which I have already discussed, and indicates that these are important characteristics of successful memes in general and, I suggest, of movie lines specifically. "Utility" is an important criterion, already suggested by Rushkoff and, to some extent by Jenkins et al. (and Fiske.) *Utility* for movie lines is their ability to fit into conversations, equipping the speaker to bring (frequently) humour into a

64 Everett M. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*, Fourth edition (New York: Free Press, 1995).

65 Aaron Lynch, *Thought Contagion*, Pbk. Ed edition (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1998), 32.

conversation as well as demonstrate (if the other person in the conversation shows their prior awareness of the line) that those conversing have something in common. One example might be—in an abbreviated version of the actual line—“I don’t think we’re in Kansas anymore.” (Original: “Toto, I’ve a feeling we’re not in Kansas anymore” from *The Wizard of Oz*.)

In their chapter “Online Memes, Affinities, and Cultural Production”⁶⁶ in their edited book *A New Literacies Sampler*, Michele Knobel and Colin Lankshear propose that *susceptibility* is a key supporter of a meme’s fecundity. They write that “susceptibility refers to the ‘timing’ or ‘location’ of a meme with respect to people’s openness to the meme and their propensity to be infected by it.” They suggest that this susceptibility is “enhanced by the meme’s relevance to current events, its relation to extant successful memes, and the interests and values of the people using spaces in which the meme is unleashed.” They write, “Ideal conditions of susceptibility will let the ‘hooks’ and ‘selection attractors’ built consciously or unconsciously into the design and function of a meme take hold more easily and in ways that maximize the possibilities for the meme to “catch on” and be transmitted rapidly from person to person without being hindered or slowed by mental filters or other forms of cultural immunity.” I emphasize, however, that the term “susceptibility” actually applies to the people who *receive* a meme, not the meme itself, and that “relevancy” might be a more appropriate term for the meme itself.

Knobel and Lankshear also touch on the difference between what I call *meaningful* memes, and those phenomena on the Internet which are considered memes but are unlikely to have significant influence or longevity, when they write: “There are some broad surface similarities between theorized

66 Michele Knobel and Colin Lankshear, “Online Memes, Affinities, and Cultural Production,” in *New Literacies Sampler*, 2006.

conceptions of memes within memetics and ‘popular’ appropriations of ‘meme’ as a word to describe particular ‘infectious’ phenomena (and which tends to conflate the message/idea and the idea ‘carrier’ or ‘vehicle’ under the same term). These similarities, however, do not run very deep. It seems to us very unlikely that many, if any, so-called internet memes of the kinds we talk about in this chapter will have even remotely the kind of shelf life and cultural influence that serious memeticists assign to memes.”⁶⁷ As Knobel and Lankshear write, *longevity* is another key characteristic of successful memes. As they suggest, the longer a meme survives, the more time there is for it to be imitated. This, of course, is a virtuous circle, in that the longer it survives the more apt it is to continue surviving.⁶⁸

French jurist and social observer Gabriel Tarde also recognized that the *more compatible the new is with the existing*, the more likely it is that the new will be accepted. He also discussed the importance of “opinion leaders.” As Everett Rogers writes: “What French jurist and social observer Gabriel Tarde called “imitation” in his book *The Laws of Imitation*⁶⁹ is today called the “adoption” of an innovation...Tarde identified the adoption or rejection of innovations as a crucial research question. He observed that the rate of adoption of a new idea usually followed an S-shaped curve over time... Very astutely, Tarde recognized that the take-off in the S-curve of adoption began to occur when the opinion leaders in a system used the new idea. ...Tarde proposed as one of his most fundamental laws of imitation that the more similar an innovation is to ideas that have already been accepted, the more likely the innovation will be adopted (today we say that the perceived compatibility of an innovation is related to its rapid

67 Michele Knobel and Colin Lankshear, eds., *A New Literacies Sampler* (Peter Lang International Academic Publishers, 2007), 199.

68 Ibid., 202.

69 Gabriel Tarde, *The Laws of Imitation*, trans. Elsie Clews Parsons (New York: Henry Holt, 1903), <https://archive.org/details/lawsimitation00tard>.

rate of adoption).”⁷⁰ I have suggested that the role of opinion leaders is considerably less important for movie lines that it may be for selling cars, deodorant, or political candidates. However, Tarde’s key observation appears to be the need for a new meme to mesh with existing memes, as is discussed several times earlier in this section.

In addition to the qualities of fidelity, fecundity, and longevity for meme success suggested by Dawkins, others have proposed such characteristics as spreadability, producerliness, simplicity, stickiness, emotional impact, compatibility, originality, and relevancy. I suggest that a meme also requires the quality of *attractiveness*. I propose that that attraction has to do more with a type of “magnetic” attraction, or a *resonance*, which I discuss in my chapter on morphic fields. No meme requires all of these qualities to be successful, but it is likely that the more of these qualities it does possess, the more likely it is to find success.

Internet Memes - Are they really memes?

One of my goals of this thesis is to restore the recognition that the original and rightful home of *true* memes is in the non-digital world. This is not to say that memes cannot exist online. They of course can, as can any text, image or sound. However, “Internet memes” by definition exist only online. They are simply enticing shadows on the digital wall, one-dimensional, lacking depth and meaning. They are ephemeral. They flicker and are gone.⁷¹ “Internet memes” are ordinarily videos or images (often with

70 Everett M. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*, Fourth edition (New York: Free Press, 1995), 40.

71 As a “meme librarian” (with a master’s in library science) stated, “I studied under [a professor] who did amazing work with Flickr tagging.” Julia Carpenter, “Meme Librarian Is a Real Job — and It’s the Best One on the Internet,” *The Washington Post*, December 21, 2015,

text). They seldom require any context other than that which they offer through their own images and text, and seldom contain any deeper meaning other than that which is obvious at a glance. Rather than call them memes, I would suggest that the term “trope” is more accurate, however I have no illusions that *trope* will ever replace *meme* for Internet users, so I will continue to use *meme*. I propose that Internet memes are simply a subset of meme, and that they are extremely ephemeral, having little if anything to do with Richard Dawkins’ initial concept, which was to apply the theory of biological evolution to culture, a meme therefore being the equivalent of gene and “something” which contributes to the evolution of the culture. I suggest that few if any Internet memes contribute to such an evolution—recognizing that despite Dawkins’ original concept, evolutionary contribution is not necessarily a meme requirement.

Limor Shifman in her book *Memes in digital culture* proposes that there are two different types of memes on the Internet: *Internet memes* and *virals*.

The main difference between Internet memes and virals thus relates to variability: whereas the viral comprises a single cultural unit (such as a video, photo, or joke) that propagates in many copies, an Internet meme is always a collection of texts...A single video is not an Internet meme but part of a meme—one manifestation of a group of texts that together can be described as the meme...I would argue that Chris Crocker’s video [Leave Brittany Alone] can be defined as a viral video that became a memetic video only with the emergence of its derivatives.”⁷²

Shifman’s “Internet memes” are those which Fiske and Jenkins would consider to be *extremely* “producerly.”

https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-intersect/wp/2015/12/21/tumblrs-meme-librarian-has-the-best-job-on-the-internet/?utm_term=.5fb3e40bd1f4.

72 Limor Shifman, *Memes in Digital Culture* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2013), 55-56.

An example of an Internet *text* meme is the phrase “Keep calm and...” (the original was “Keep Calm and Carry On” on a British government morale-boosting poster prepared for World War II) in which Internet users add their own completion to the phrase, such as “Keep Calm and Call Batman,”⁷³ “Keep Calm and Hate Microsoft,”⁷⁴ or “Keep Calm and Blog On.”⁷⁵ The “pepper-spraying officer” is an example of an Internet *image* meme. The original image (a photo) showed a campus policeman (John Pike) at the University of California, Davis spraying peacefully sitting “Occupy” protesters with pepper spray directly into their faces. Derivatives of the photo quickly started appearing on the Internet, with—among many other situations—the officer spraying: the diners at Leonardo da Vinci’s *The Last Supper*, the *Peanuts* cartoon character Snoopy, a woman in Seurat’s *A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte*, and the “Abbey Road” Beatles.

Elsewhere, Shifman defines a *viral video* as “a clip that spreads to the masses via digital word-of-mouth mechanisms *without significant change*,” and a *memetic video* as “a popular clip that lures *extensive creative user engagement* in the form of parody, pastiche, mash-ups or other derivative work.”⁷⁶ To sum up, in Shifman’s view, *virals* do not (significantly) change but are seen by many, and *Internet memes* are changed and the original’s *many derivatives* are seen by many.

73 “New Batman Easter Egg from ‘Man of Steel’ Revealed - *Batman News*,” accessed July 30, 2016, <http://batman-news.com/2013/07/09/new-batman-easter-egg-from-man-of-steel-revealed/>.

74 “KEEP CALM AND Hate Microsoft,” accessed July 30, 2016, *Keep Calm-o-matic*, <http://www.keepcalm-o-matic.co.uk/p/keep-calm-and-hate-microsoft-10/>.

75 Knowyourmeme.com, “Keep Calm and Carry On,” *Know Your Meme*, accessed July 30, 2016, <http://knowyourmeme.com/photos/58053-keep-calm-and-carry-on>.

76 Limor Shifman, “An Anatomy of a YouTube Meme,” *New Media & Society* 14, no. 2 (March 1, 2012), 187–203.

I suggest that in addition to the “Internet memes” (with derivatives), and the viral memes (which do not change), the Internet also serves as a carrier/distribution system for “traditional” memes; that is, text, visual (still and moving), and audio (seldom) memes that prior to the Internet were carried in newspapers and magazines, and on radio and television. They are not viral, they do not necessarily result in derivatives, but they have excellent fidelity, longevity, and over the years a slow but steady fecundity. The Internet is not a medium; it is a metamedium; a polymedia distribution channel. It is not constrained by the specificity theory. Its contents are polymediac: sounds, images, texts, videos.

Richard Dawkins, in the video *Just for Hits*, describes Internet memes as “a hijacking of the original idea. Instead of mutating by random chance before spreading by a form of Darwinian selection Internet memes are altered deliberately by human creativity...In the hijacked version, mutations are designed, not random, with the full knowledge of the person doing the new mutating.”⁷⁷ If we continue Dawkins’ gene/meme analogy, his original idea for memes was “natural selection,” but what has resulted on the Internet has been a form of *digital eugenics*. Dawkins says his original idea has been hijacked. I suggest it has been mugged.

Shifman would consider the “Hitler video” to be an Internet meme. It is a video clip of a scene from the film *Der Untergang* (*Downfall*) on the final days of Adolf Hitler’s life. Internet users modify the subtitles to produce a new meaning, usually humorous. The Hitler clip’s original meaning (in the film) was simply as stated—the dialogue and faces/responses of people as that dialogue provided information and

77 *Just for Hits - Richard Dawkins*, 2013, <https://youtu.be/GFn-ixX9edg>.

moved the narrative along. However, with humorous subtitles added by the public, it serves as a commentary on a wide variety of current events from new mobile phone or game releases to elections in various countries. For an example of a typical Hitler video, see the YouTube video *Boris Johnson's HQ as the EU referendum result comes in*.⁷⁸

The Hitler video is a popular Internet meme known for its humour. But Adolf Hitler serves another function on the Internet. In many online discussion groups, if someone dislikes what a person has posted, they will compare that person—or the person’s topic—to Hitler and Nazis. As a reaction to this common phenomenon, author/lawyer and Internet pioneer Mike Godwin developed *Godwin's Law of Nazi Analogies: As an online discussion grows longer, the probability of a comparison involving Nazis or Hitler approaches one*.⁷⁹ As Godwin writes, “I seeded *Godwin's Law* in any newsgroup or topic where I saw a gratuitous Nazi reference. Soon, to my surprise, other people were citing it - the counter-meme was reproducing on its own! And it mutated like a meme, generating corollaries like the following: *Van der Leun's Corollary: As global connectivity improves, the probability of actual Nazis being on the Net approaches one*.” Over time, Godwin noted that discussion groups in which he had seeded his counter-meme appeared to have fewer uses of the Hitler/Nazi-comparison meme. He considered his experiment to be a success. However, Godwin’s success left him with unanswered questions: “If it's possible to generate effective counter-memes, is there any moral imperative to do so? When we see a bad or false meme go by, should we take pains to chase it with a counter-meme? Do we have an obligation to improve our informational environment?” I suggest that a future research study could be not to only

78 Steve C, *Boris Johnson's HQ as the EU Referendum Result Comes In.*, accessed July 23, 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=36&v=-a6HNXtdvVQ.

79 Mike Godwin, “2.10: Meme, Counter-Meme,” *Wired*, 1994, http://www.wired.com/wired/archive/2.10/godwin.if_pr.html.

investigate the moral obligation to produce a counter-meme but to determine what features need to be built into a constructed meme to successfully counter a particularly repugnant meme that is common on the Internet.

Textual Memes - Yes, there are memes without images of cats

I have discussed memes in terms of definition, existence, and the qualities which appear to make them “successful.” This section focuses specifically on research that may be helpful when analyzing *textual* memes; that is, short memes composed solely of words. Studies of popularity, memorableness, and transmission of other types of word groups suggest some possible qualities through which the success of text memes might also be aided.

Jonah Berger and Katherine Milkman in their paper “*What Makes Online Content Viral*” suggest that “*surprising and interesting content is highly viral,*” as is “*practically useful and positive content.*” They also indicate that “more emotional, positive, interesting, and anger-inducing and fewer sadness-inducing stories are likely to make the most blogged list.” Despite some research reports and common marketing practices by many companies, Berger and Milkman found that targeting “influentials” or “opinion leaders” is likely *not* cost-effective, and that “current research suggests that it may be more beneficial to focus on crafting contagious content.”⁸⁰ Berger and Milkman’s research reinforces meme (and movie line) qualities already discussed, such as *surprising, interesting, and useful*. Unexpected movie lines grab the attention of audiences, and, as I have already mentioned (as did Rushkoff) and as I

80 Jonah Berger and Katherine Milkman, “What Makes Online Content Viral?,” *Journal of Marketing Research*, no. Ahead of print (2011), 10-12.

show in the movie line chapter of this thesis, one of the common reasons for people to remember movie lines is so that they are able to re-use those lines in their own conversations—a very useful personal goal.

In their paper “*The Download Estimation Task on KDD Cup 2003*,” which reports on their study of 29,014 documents from the area of high-energy physics, Janez Brank and Jure Leskovec record their research into some of the most frequently downloaded papers, in order to determine what sets them apart from others. One obvious characteristic is that all have relatively short titles. They investigated abstract length and title length, both in characters and words and found that title length in characters was more useful than its length in words, and that the length of the abstract had no effect on a paper’s download rate. They determined that the titles of the ten most frequently downloaded papers have a “relatively short” average of 32.3 characters; that seven of the ten papers with the shortest titles are among the fifty most frequently downloaded papers during a particular period; and that the titles of these papers range from just seven to fifteen characters.⁸¹ I suggest that short academic paper titles correspond to short and punchy movie lines, and note that simplicity is one of the qualities deemed desirable by many memeticists.

Marco Guerini et al. asked “*Do Linguistic Style and Readability of Scientific Abstracts Affect Their Virality?*” They had assumed that a scientific article’s success depended on its abstract’s *content*, rather than its linguistic style. However, they discovered instead that the abstract’s *style* was critical to an article’s popularity: “Most bookmarked papers have abstracts that are harder to read and most

81 Brank, Janez, and Jure Leskovec. “The Download Estimation Task on KDD Cup 2003.” *SIGKDD Explor. Newsl.* 5, no. 2 (December 2003). <http://doi.acm.org/10.1145/980972.980997>.

downloaded papers have abstracts easier to read,” and that “the most downloaded papers are those that are easier to read and probably get more initial attention and understanding.”⁸² Here again, we see the importance of simplicity, reported in this research into scientific article abstracts as “easier to read.”

In their paper “*Why Do Urban Legends Go Viral?*,” Marco Guerini and Carlo Strapparava studied *urban legends*, “a genre of modern folklore consisting of stories about some rare and exceptional events plausible enough to be believed.” They consider urban legends to be “a form of ‘sticky’ deceptive text, marked by a tension between the credible and incredible.” Specifically they argue that urban legends should mimic news reporting with a focus on “who, where, when,” while at the same time being “emotional and readable like a fairy tale” in order to be memorable and viral.⁸³ The work of Guerini et al. stresses the importance of emotionality and readability (simplicity) in producing “sticky” urban legends. That emotionality will establish a connection with the reader (or listener) and the readability will make it easier for the receiver to absorb the story.

Marco Guerini et al. studied “*Echoes of Persuasion: The Effect of Euphony in Persuasive Communication*,” defining euphony as “the inherent pleasantness of the sounds of words, phrases and sentences...utilized to achieve pleasant, rhythmical and harmonious effects.” They evaluated the

82 Marco Guerini, Alberto Pepe, and Bruno Lepri, “Do Linguistic Style and Readability of Scientific Abstracts Affect Their Virality?,” in *Proceedings of the Sixth International AAAI Conference on Weblogs and Social Media*, 2012.

83 Marco Guerini and Carlo Strapparava, “Why Do Urban Legends Go Viral?,” *Information Processing & Management*, accessed June 12, 2015, <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0306457315000540>, 9.

importance of rhyme, alliteration, homogeneity and plosives on various types of persuasiveness. The authors reported that their experiments “show that phonetic features play an important role in the detection of persuasiveness and encode a notion of ‘melodious language’ that operates both within and across datasets.” The authors found that the average rhyme scores and the average alliteration scores are higher in persuasive sentences, concluding that “persuasive sentences are generally euphonic.”⁸⁴ The general euphony of movie lines, no matter how short, and such possible qualities as rhythm and alliteration are examined in this thesis’ chapter on movie lines.

In their study “*What’s in a Name? Understanding the Interplay between Titles, Content, and Communities in Social Media*,” Himabindu Lakkaraju et al. posted images to Reddit, a popular online community which rates postings, in order to test the popularity of images that were submitted with a variety of titles. They find that “a successful title is one that employs novel words, yet at the same time conforms to the linguistic norms of the community to which it is submitted.” This research reinforces observations by various memeticists that a meme must be original or attention-getting, yet not so surprising and unexpected that it conflicts (too much) with existing memes or the norms of the (in this thesis’ context) movie audience community. The authors additionally find that “‘positive’ sentiment contributes to a title’s popularity in certain communities,” and that “the length of a title does not significantly impact the popularity of a submission’s success, unless the title is either extremely long [more than sixteen words] or extremely short” [fewer than four words]. They also find that “nouns and adjectives impact the success of a title more than verbs and adverbs,” and that the “most successful titles have positive attributes, while the least successful titles do not.” The researchers also find that a

84 Marco Guerini, Gözde Özbal, and Carlo Strapparava, “Echoes of Persuasion: The Effect of Euphony in Persuasive Communication” (*Human Language Technologies: The 2015 Annual Conference of the North American Chapter of the ACL*, Denver, Colorado, 2015), 1483-1491.

title “should match a community’s expectations—yet not be too dissimilar to other titles within that community.”⁸⁵

As is clear, studies that can apply to textual memes indicate the advantage of some of the characteristics discussed earlier: surprising, interesting, useful, novel yet compatible, shortness, and simplicity. Why is it so important for a potential meme to have as many key qualities as possible? Because any new meme faces a world of competition.

Meme Competition - It's a meme-eat-meme world out there

In his 1859 book *On the Origin of Species*, Charles Darwin used the phrase “natural selection.” Five years later, in his 1864 book *The Principles of Biology* Herbert Spencer wrote: “This survival of the fittest, which I have here sought to express in mechanical terms, is that which Mr Darwin has called ‘natural selection, or the preservation of favoured races in the struggle for life.’”⁸⁶ In 1866, Darwin’s friend Alfred Russel Wallace wrote Darwin of his concern that the phrase “natural selection” suggested—and was so seen by many—that there was an intelligence, thought and direction on the part of nature in that selection, and that Darwin should take care not to “personify nature” “too much.” Wallace wrote “Now I think this arises almost entirely from your choice of the term “Nat. Selection” & so constantly comparing it in its effects, to Man’s selection, and also to your so frequently personifying Nature as “selecting” as

85 Himabindu Lakkaraju, Julian McAuley, and Jure Leskovec, “What’s in a Name? Understanding the Interplay between Titles, Content, and Communities in Social Media,” in *Seventh International AAAI Conference on Weblogs and Social Media* (Boston, MA, 2013), 313-319.

86 Herbert Spencer, *The Principles of Biology*, vol. I (London: Williams and Nobgate, 1864), 444-445.

“preferring” as “seeking only the good of the species.” Wallace suggested “I wish therefore to suggest to you the possibility of entirely avoiding this source of misconception in your great work, (if not now too late) & also in any future editions of the “Origin”, and I think it may be done without difficulty & very effectually by adopting Spencer’s term (which he generally uses in preference to Nat. Selection) viz. ‘Survival of the fittest.’”⁸⁷

In response, Darwin wrote to Wallace “I fully agree with all that you say on the advantages of H. Spencer’s excellent expression of “the survival of the fittest... I wish I had received your letter two months ago for I would have worked in ‘the survival etc’ often in the new edition of the Origin which is now almost printed off & of which I will of course send you a copy. I will use the term in my next book on Domestic Animals...The term Natural selection has now been so largely used abroad & at home that I doubt whether it could be given up, & with all its faults I should be sorry to see the attempt made. Whether it will be rejected must now depend ‘on the survival of the fittest’.”⁸⁸ In the first edition of *Origin*, chapter four was headed “Natural Selection.” In the fifth edition, Darwin added “Survival of the Fittest” to that heading, and inserted that same phrase at seven places in the chapter’s text, and at six other places throughout the book.⁸⁹

87 A.R. Wallace, “Letter #5140 - | Darwin Correspondence Project,” July 2, 1866, <https://www.darwinproject.ac.uk/letter/?docId=letters/DCP-LETT-5140.xml;query=%22survival%20of%20the%20fittest%22;brand=default>.

88 Charles Darwin, “To A. R. Wallace 5 July 1866,” July 5, 1866, *Darwin Correspondence Project*, <https://www.darwinproject.ac.uk/letter/?docId=letters/DCP-LETT-5145.xml;query=%22survival%20of%20the%20fittest%22;brand=default>.

89 A.R. Wallace, “Letter #5140 - | *Darwin Correspondence Project*,” July 2, 1866, <https://www.darwinproject.ac.uk/letter/?docId=letters/DCP-LETT-5140.xml;query=%22survival%20of%20the%20fittest%22;brand=default>.

It appears that one hundred and five years before Dawkins introduced the term *meme*, Darwin was well aware of the concept of meme competition. As I note above, he realized that whether or not his term “natural selection” survived depended on the “survival of the fittest.” He also wrote in his 1871 book *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex*, “As Max Müller has well remarked: ‘A struggle for life is constantly going on amongst the words and grammatical forms in each language. Here the better, the shorter, the easier forms are constantly gaining the upper hand, and they owe their success to their own inherent virtue.’”⁹⁰ Müller’s longer quote was: “A struggle for life among words and grammatical forms which is constantly going on in each language. Here the better, the shorter, the easier forms are constantly gaining the upper hand, and they really owe their success to their own inherent virtue...What seems at first sight mere accident in the dropping of old and the rising of new words, can be shown in most cases to be due to intelligible and generally valid reasons. Sometimes these reasons are purely phonetic, and those words and forms are seen to prevail which give the least trouble to the organs of pronunciation.”⁹¹ Müller’s observations such as “shorter” and “easier” are completely compatible with current ideas about the qualities of successful memes.

Meme competition did not, of course, end in the 1860s. As I mentioned earlier in this thesis, Peter Richerson and Robert Boyd, in their 2006 book *Not by Genes Alone: How Culture Transformed Human*

90 Charles Darwin, James Moore, and Adrian Desmond, *The Descent of Man*, Reprint edition (Princeton, N.J.: Penguin Classics, 2004), 113.

91 Max Müller, “The Science of Language,” *Nature*, January 6, 1870, <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/HistSciTech/HistSciTech-idx?type=article&did=HistSciTech.Nature18700106.MullerScience&id=HistSciTech.Nature18700106&isize=M>, 257.

Evolution, proposed an alternative to meme ("cultural variant") and suggested also that there were already many suitable English words that do not need to be replaced by "meme." As they wrote, "We need some expedient agreement about what to call the information stored in people's brains...we will use the word *cultural variant*. We will also sometimes use the ordinary English words idea, skill, belief, attitude, and value"⁹² To conceptualize the success of Richerson's and Boyd's "cultural variant," in a Google search in July 2016, results for that two-word phrase were 7, 210. Google Scholar showed 1,510. (A search at the same time for "meme" (English results only) resulted in 328,000 for Google Scholar, and 121,000,000 for Google, (searching for "meme" -même.)

In 1981, biologists E. O. Wilson and Charles Lumsden in their book *Genes, Mind, and Culture: The Coevolutionary Process* introduced the term *culturgen*, which they defined as "The basic unit of culture. A relatively homogeneous set of artifacts, behaviours, or mentifacts (mental constructs having little or no direct correspondence to reality) that either share without exception one or more attribute states selected for their functional importance or at least share a consistently recurrent range of such attribute states within a given polythetic set."⁹³ In 1999, however, Wilson graciously acknowledged the success of Dawkins' *meme* over Wilson and Lumsden's *culturgen*. "The notion of a cultural unit, the most basic element of all, has been around for over thirty years, and has been dubbed by different authors variously as mnemotype, idea, idene, meme, sociogene, concept, culturgen, and culture type. The one label that has caught on the most, and for which I now vote to be winner, is meme, introduced by Richard Dawkins in his influential work *The Selfish Gene* in 1976." Wilson did, however, point out that

92 Peter J. Richerson and Robert Boyd, *Not by Genes Alone: How Culture Transformed Human Evolution* (Chicago, Ill.: University Of Chicago Press, 2006), 63.

93 Charles J. Lumsden and Edward O. Wilson, *Genes, Mind, And Culture: The Coevolutionary Process*, 25 Anv edition (Hackensack, NJ: World Scientific Publishing Company, 2005), 27.

their definition was “more focused and somewhat different” than that of Dawkins. “ We recommended that the unit of culture—now called meme—be the same as the node of semantic memory and its correlates in brain activity. The level of the node, whether concept (the simplest recognizable unit), proposition, or schema, determines the complexity of the idea, behaviour, or artifact that it helps to sustain in the culture at large.”⁹⁴ A Google Scholar search for “culturgen” in July 2016 showed 323 results.

I discuss the “competition” between various academic terms above not to suggest that there is an active battle between academics to produce the most lasting and spreadable memes, but simply to point out that as with all memes, some are more successful than others. Even Richard Dawkins’ own meme went to places he had not imagined, and perhaps did not sanction or validate. Dawkins stated that his term *meme* had been “hijacked by the Internet,” so that for many it now means silly videos and cute kittens. In an interview with *Wired* magazine, Dawkins was asked how he felt about his word meme “being re-appropriated by the Internet.” Dawkins responded: “The meaning is not that far away from the original. It's anything that *goes viral*. In the original introduction to the word meme in the last chapter of *The Selfish Gene*, I did actually use the metaphor of a *virus*. So when anybody talks about something going viral on the Internet, that is exactly what a meme is and it looks as though the word has been appropriated for a subset of that.” When asked if he saw many Internet memes, Dawkins replied: “I suppose I do. It's viral. I get infected by viruses as much as anybody else, so yes I pick them up from time to time.”⁹⁵ As we can see, even the *meme meme* has trouble with fidelity. While the word remains the

94 Edward Osborne Wilson, *Consilience: The Unity of Knowledge*, Reprint edition (New York: Vintage, 1999), 148.

95 Olivia Solon, “Richard Dawkins on the Internet’s Hijacking of the Word Meme,” *Wired*, June 20, 2013, <http://www.wired.co.uk/news/archive/2013-06/20/richard-dawkins-memes>.

same, its meaning has morphed and expanded to encompass hundreds of millions of instances of a new form of meme on a system of communication that did not even exist when Dawkins originally coined the term. However, Dawkins' other two meme qualities have served him well. Both fecundity and longevity of the term *meme* are alive and well.

Meme as Virus - Are they contagious?

I suggest that it is unfortunate that the term and current concept of *meme* was invented by a biologist, and even more so that it was invented by an evolutionary biologist. While interdisciplinary insights can produce remarkable new approaches to problems and valuable new theories, it is apparent that with memes, for example, there are also dangers of confusion and over-metaphorization. As a believer in the *theory of evolution* (and not just the theory of *biological evolution*), Dawkins was convinced that evolutionary theory could be applied to anything. Thus, he proposed applying that theory to human culture and coined the term *meme* as the cultural equivalent of a gene.

As an evolutionary biologist, Dawkins considered that successful memes were another example of the "survival of the fittest." Noting that in biology viruses were the best example of that determination, Dawkins described memes as viral. Although he stated that this virality was an analogy, its use led to the common belief that memes sought new brains in which to replicate and further spread to yet other brains, often without the awareness of their human hosts. Thus, Dawkins in the sentence "When you plant a fertile meme in my mind you literally parasitize my brain, turning it into a vehicle for the meme's propagation in just the way that a virus may parasitize the genetic mechanism of a host. And this isn't just a way of talking -- the meme for, say, "belief in life after death" is actually realized physically,

millions of times over, as a structure in the nervous systems of individual men the world over”⁹⁶ attributed a viral nature to memes, intended analogy or not. Unsurprisingly, this led to books by other researchers entitled “Virus of the Mind,”⁹⁷ “Media Virus,”⁹⁸ and “Thought Contagion”.⁹⁹ Indeed the view that Internet memes “go viral” is a result of this virus metaphor.

The misunderstanding continues, as the following examples of Dawkins’ “memes as virus” statements show.

Memes travel...like viruses in an epidemic. Indeed, it is largely horizontal epidemiology that we are studying when we measure the spread of a word like memetic, docudrama or studmuffin over the internet.¹⁰⁰

Our minds are invaded by memes, as ancient bacteria invaded our ancestors' cells and became mitochondria. Cheshire Cat-like, memes merge into our minds, even become our minds.”¹⁰¹

The meaning [of meme is] is... anything that goes viral...In the original introduction to the word meme in the last chapter of *The Selfish Gene*, I did actually use the metaphor of a virus. [my emphasis] So when anybody talks about something going viral on the Internet, that is exactly what a meme is and it looks as though the word has been appropriated for a subset of that.¹⁰²

96 This was actually a summation by his colleague N. K. Humphrey of an earlier draft of the chapter, but as Darwin used it in his book, I take it that he endorsed the comment.

97 Richard Brodie, *Virus of the Mind: The New Science of the Meme* (Seattle, Wash.: Integral Press, 1996).

98 Douglas Rushkoff, *Media Virus! Hidden Agendas in Popular Culture* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1996).

99 Aaron Lynch, *Thought Contagion*, Pbk. Ed edition (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1998).

100 Richard Dawkins, *A Devil's Chaplain: Reflections on Hope, Lies, Science, and Love*, Reprint edition (Boston: Mariner Books, 2004), 121.

101 Richard Dawkins, “The Selfish Meme,” *Time*, accessed June 23, 2015, <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,22988-1,00.html>.

102 Olivia Solon, “Richard Dawkins on the Internet’s Hijacking of the Word Meme,” *Wired*, June 20, 2013, <http://www.wired.co.uk/news/archive/2013-06/20/richard-dawkins-memes>.

While Dawkins is insistent that his use of the term virus is only a metaphor, the continued use of such phrases as quoted above make it clear that the general public (and a number of memeticists) have taken the metaphor seriously. For example, Douglas Rushkoff writes: “Media events provoking real social change are ... media viruses. This term is not being used as a metaphor. These media events are not *like* viruses. They *are* viruses. Media viruses spread through the datasphere the same way biological ones spread through the body or a community.”¹⁰³ Thus the terms *meme* and *virus* are now linked in the minds of millions. However, I emphasize that, despite popular understanding, meme virality is only a metaphor. Virality suggests that a meme has agency, and that humans are unwitting vectors for passing memes to other humans. On the contrary, memes are transmitted (and received) by humans wittingly. Memes are units of human culture. Humans are not units of meme culture.

Meme as Agent - Are they plotting to get us?

One of results of Dawkins’ original proposal of memes in *The Selfish Gene* was that the public (and many memeticists) decided that memes had agency; that their “leaping from brain to brain” was a conscious act. Not only that, but as memes were given agency it was taken away from humans, who were seen by many as unwitting vectors (and victims) of the viral memes. As genes are, in Dawkins’ mind (and as he wrote in his book *The Selfish Meme*) “selfish”—that is, determined to survive and thrive regardless of their effect on other genes—he assumed that memes shared that same determination to survive and spread. By using the gene analogy, Dawkins set the tone for most future meme discussion, wherein he and many others ascribed the same qualities to memes as they believed were inherent to genes. Although Dawkins emphasized that neither genes nor memes have agency (he wrote that they are

¹⁰³ Douglas Rushkoff, *Media Virus! Hidden Agendas in Popular Culture* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1996), 9-10.

“unconscious” and “blind”), unfortunately, as with genes, the words that Dawkins (and many others) use in connection with memes are far too frequently words that, at the very least, *imply* agency, and this has created the impression in many students of memes that memes do have some sort of will. Examples of such words and phrases are “achieving,” “propagate themselves,” “leaping from brain to brain,” “external forces that shape the human mind,” “[their] existence influences events,” and “self-replicating.”

Dawkins himself, by the time he wrote *The Extended Phenotype*, was aware of this problem:

“Throughout this book, I have emphasized that we must not think of genes as conscious, purposeful agents. Blind natural selection, however, makes them behave rather *as if* they were purposeful, and it has been convenient, as a shorthand, to refer to genes in the language of purpose. For example, when we say ‘genes are trying to increase their numbers in future gene pools’, what we really mean is ‘those genes that behave in such a way as to increase their numbers in future gene pools tend to be the genes whose effects we see in the world’. Just as we have found it convenient to think of genes as active agents, working purposefully for their own survival, perhaps it might be convenient to think of memes in the same way...In both cases the idea of purpose is only a metaphor, but we have already seen what a fruitful metaphor it is in the case of genes. We have even used words like ‘selfish’ and ‘ruthless’ of genes, knowing full well it is only a figure of speech. Can we, in exactly the same spirit, look for selfish or ruthless memes?” Dawkins further emphasized that “Selfish genes (and, if you allow the speculation of this chapter, memes too) have no foresight. They are unconscious, blind, replicators.”¹⁰⁴ Yet his protests—thirteen years after *The Selfish Gene*—were too late and usually ignored.

104 Richard Dawkins, *The Extended Phenotype: The Long Reach of the Gene*, New edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 196 – 200.

In his introduction to the thirtieth-anniversary edition of *The Selfish Gene*, Dawkins wrote: “*The Selfish Gene* has been criticized for anthropomorphic personification and this too needs an explanation, if not an apology ... Personification of genes really ought not to be a problem, because no sane person thinks DNA molecules have conscious personalities, and no sensible reader would impute such a delusion to an author. I once had the honour of hearing the great molecular biologist Jacques Monod talking about creativity in science. I have forgotten his exact words, but he said approximately that, when trying to think through a chemical problem, he would ask himself what he would do if he were an electron.”¹⁰⁵

In that same introduction, Dawkins referred to his fellow evolutionary biologist W.D. Hamilton, who in 1972 wrote: “A gene is being favoured in natural selection if the aggregate of its replicas forms an increasing fraction of the total gene pool. We are going to be concerned with genes supposed to affect the social behaviour of their bearers, so let us try to make the argument more vivid by attributing to the genes, temporarily, intelligence and a certain freedom of choice. Imagine that a gene is considering the problem of increasing the number of its replicas, and imagine that it can choose between.” As Dawkins observed, “That is exactly the right spirit in which to read much of *The Selfish Gene*.” I note that this problem of personification (in Dawkins’ case both biological and memetic) is the same problem that Charles Darwin encountered with his own book *Origin of the Species* and his use of the term “natural selection.”¹⁰⁶ Darwin, however, made an attempt to correct the problem by also adopting the use of Spencer’s phrase “survival of the fittest.”

105 Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), x.

106 *Ibid.*, xi.

Some memes matter. Some do not.

From the beginning of this research, I have felt that there is a major difference between memes that simply *have meaning* and memes that are also *meaningful*, between memes that simply *denote* and memes that *both denote and connote*. Every meme, of course, has a meaning. In its physical (sensible) form it is an icon, a sign, a symbol that circulates through society. In many cases, that meaning is obvious, in others less so. In most cases, when the meaning is less obvious, someone who has just encountered the meme for the very first time can be informed as to the deeper meaning of that meme, and understand it in full. However, some memes are *more meaningful* than others.

Despite the fact that Richard Dawkins and many others consider memes to be the cultural equivalent of genes—and therefore contributors to cultural evolution—I have found little in the literature that discusses the contribution of specific memes (as *memes*) to specific roles and achievements in the evolution of culture. There is simply the assumption that since memes are *defined* as units of cultural evolution, therefore anything considered as a meme has indeed *contributed* to that evolution. Nonetheless, I do see memes as *artifacts* of culture, and likely sometimes contributors to its evolution.

My definition of Meme

A meme is a mental concept (information pattern) that has a physical (sensible) expression and is well-known within society. That

expression may be a physical object or gesture, a sound, a spoken or printed word or phrase, or a moving or still image. Memes can be *minor* (shallow, brief and only *denote*) or *major* (deep, meaningful, long-lasting, and also *connote*.) They can also be open (changeable) or closed (unchangeable.)

My rationale for this definition is as follows. A meme is both concept and physical (sensible) expression because the two are inseparable. It is unlikely to have a human-created expression without a concept that precedes that expression. It is equally unlikely to have a meme concept without an expression, for if it remains a concept solely in the mind, no transmission or spread into and through culture can take place. It will simply be an idea which never manifests in perceivable form. Memes are not born, they “become.” A potential meme becomes a meme when it has been transmitted through the culture to a significant, but unmeasurable, number of people.

All memes have meaning, but some are *significantly* meaningful. I consider those which simply “have meaning” to be *minor memes* (they denote only), and those which are “meaningful” to be *major memes* (they both denote and connote.) Major memes can also serve as frames. I suggest that major memes require memory, context, or explanation to be fully understood.

Referring to Dawkins’ three meme qualities, major memes have *longevity*. Although they may be modified for some purposes, the major meme itself has *fidelity*. Many can be seen as metaphors, even

as invisible ideology. The Swastika, Catch-22, the Holocaust, freedom, national security, Whole Earth, the Australian flag, democracy, free enterprise, and imperialism are such memes/metaphors. Many of these can be seen as memeplexes—higher level memes (higher level *holons* in Arthur Koestler’s terminology, or higher level *morphic units* in Rupert Sheldrake’s [see the following chapter].) By definition, a major meme also has *fecundity*, for it must be known to many people in a society. Memes circulate through the culture vertically (parent/authority to child, or through mass media) or laterally (person-to-person(s), or social media.) As a meme moves through society, it may retain its exact form, or it may retain its structural pattern while its internal components change. A meme may go through a viral period (or periods), or may be relatively static for some time, but still remain in the common consciousness.

Shifman’s *Internet memes* and *virals* are what I consider to be *minor* memes; they are short-term, ephemeral. They seldom have any meaning other than what they state. They denote only. Employing a different terminology, memes (particularly digital memes) are *open* (memetic) or *closed* (viral.) The open are containers. They are patterns which remain constant while their contents can be modified at any time. *Open* memes can be considered to be what John Fiske calls “producerly.” *Closed* memes simply move through society intact. If one *derivative* of an open meme begins to be circulated intact (that is, *closed*), it can become viral. An example would be one particular derivative of the Hitler video meme which becomes hugely popular and goes viral on the Internet without change.

Mememes can also be seen as ranging from liquid to solid; that is, the more liquid (changeable, producerly, open) is a meme, the more fecundity (spreadability) but the less fidelity it has. Conversely, the more

solid (fixed, closed, unchangeable) a meme, the greater its fidelity and the more it tends toward greater longevity.

In addition to Shifman's Internet memes and virals, there are other memes that are on the Internet as well but that also appear (and often originate) in many non-digital forms. Memorable paintings (Edvard Munch's *The Scream of Nature*), photographs ("Napalm Girl"), buildings (Frank Lloyd Wright's *Fallingwater*), landscapes (Ayers Rock), music compositions (opening of Beethoven's Fifth Symphony), lines from books ("It was the best of times, it was the worst of times"), movies ("I'll be back"), and political slogans ("Make America great again") may become memes but they are not automatically memes. Most are simply "memorable" or "popular." If they are intertextual, they can possibly become Internet memes. These also include such memes as I discuss below: Whole Earth, Guy Fawkes Mask, Drink the Kool Aid, and others. There is also a category of memes which are open to interpretation. By that I mean anyone can interpret the meme however they wish, with an unspecified range. Such memes include *freedom*, *democracy*, and *globalism*.

Major Memes

The following are examples of memes that generally *retain* their form, and that I consider to be *major* memes, that is, ones that are *meaningful*.

Toto, I've a feeling we're not in Kansas anymore

This line from *The Wizard of Oz* is a textual meme. Shortened by the public to "I don't think we're in Kansas anymore," despite sometimes slight variations it has remained constant, as an expression of being in a very different or unexpected environment or situation than normal.

Drink the Kool-Aid

This phrase arose out of the disaster in Jonestown, Guyana, when more than nine hundred members of the Peoples Temple voluntarily took (or, in many cases including senior citizens, children and babies, were *forced* to take) poison (potassium cyanide mixed in with a grape-flavoured drink) because they were told that authorities would soon come to destroy the community they had built in the Guyanese jungle. The quote that has come from that event is that they all “drank the Kool-Aid.” It lives on in the concept that anyone who has blind obedience to the propaganda (party line) of a government, a corporation, a spiritual or political organization, or any type of ideology or belief system, has “drunk the Kool-Aid.”¹⁰⁷

The Matrix

*The Matrix*¹⁰⁸ is the first of a series of three films whose theme is that humanity is trapped in a simulated reality and unable to see its true reality. This simulation is referred to as “The Matrix.” The hero of the films—Neo—meets a man named Morpheus. Morpheus offers Neo two pills: a blue one which will return him to his everyday world and a red pill which will reveal the true reality. Neo takes the red pill. The phrase “take the red pill” is a meme in itself, and is now synonymous with “waking up,”

107 Kraft Foods, the manufacturers of Kool-Aid, would like you to know that what the people at Jonestown actually drank was likely Flavor-Aid, a cheaper “imitation Kool-Aid” (which is ironic in that Kool-Aid is already an imitation fruit juice) under another brand and was not the company’s actual product. However, reports from Jonestown before and after the massacre were that both Flavor-Aid *and* Kool-Aid were present in the community.

108 Lana Wachowski and Lilly Wachowski, *The Matrix*, Action, Sci-Fi, (1999), <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0133093/>.

whether it be a spiritual awakening, or a political or social awakening. Similar to “take the red pill” is “down the rabbit hole” referring to Alice’s adventures in Wonderland, a very different reality than that which she experienced on the ground above.

Catch-22

This term was created by Joseph Heller in his book *Catch-22*, later transformed into a film of the same name. It is used to describe double-bind situations, such as “you can’t work in this field without experience, and you can’t get the experience without working in this field.” As Heller used it in the book, it was expanded beyond a simple double-bind. “Catch-22 says they have a right to do anything we can’t stop them from doing,” and “[Yossarian] knew there was no such thing. Catch-22 did not exist...but it made no difference. What did matter was that everyone thought it existed, and that was much worse, for there was no object or text to ridicule or refute, to accuse, criticize, attack, amend, hate, revile, spit at, rip to shreds, trample upon or burn up.” As the phrase is used early in the book, when Yossarian, a bombardier in the U.S. Army Air Force during World War II, wants to get out of combat duty, he is told by his unit’s doctor that if Yossarian asks to be relieved of flying further missions, he (the doctor) will be required to approve the request. Except he can’t.

'You mean there's a catch?'

'Sure there's a catch,' Doc Daneeka replied. 'Catch-22. Anyone who wants to get out of combat duty isn't really crazy.' There was only one catch and that was Catch-22, which specified that a concern for one's own safety in the face of dangers that were real and immediate was the process of a rational mind. Orr was crazy and could be grounded. All he had to do was ask; and as soon as he did, he would no longer

be crazy and would have to fly more missions. Orr would be crazy to fly more missions and sane if he didn't, but if he was sane he had to fly them. If he flew them he was crazy and didn't have to; but if he didn't want to he was sane and had to. Yossarian was moved very deeply by the absolute simplicity of this clause of Catch-22 and let out a respectful whistle.

Swastika

One of the most powerful symbols of the twentieth century is the swastika. Although an age-old symbol, it was adopted by Germany's Nazi party in 1920, and the symbol is now synonymous with the Nazi party, with Fascism, and with the destruction of Europe and the deaths of tens of millions of people during World War II. It is so powerful, so hated, and so feared that displaying it is illegal in a number of countries. (In most cases, however, it can be used for historical and educational purposes.) Well-known American graphic designer Steven Heller created a book on the history and design elements of the swastika which no major publisher would touch, even though he had already been the author and editor of more than one hundred books on graphic design, satiric art and popular culture. As he was resigning himself to self-publish, a small publisher did accept the book, and it appeared in 2008 as *The Swastika: Symbol Beyond Redemption?*¹⁰⁹ While the swastika is occasionally modified—more frequently by neofascist organizations—its form generally remains intact. It is instantly recognizable and, I suggest, few can see the symbol without also recalling its World War II significance.

9/11

109 Steven Heller, *The Swastika: Symbol Beyond Redemption?* New York, NY: Allworth Press, 2000.

This meme is simply two numbers separated by a forward-slash. For those who know its significance, it represents a date, September 11, 2001; the day that several buildings of the World Trade Center in New York City were destroyed.¹¹⁰ The American president George W. Bush shortly thereafter declared a “War on Terror” (itself another meme). In the more than fifteen years since that time, 9/11 has been used to justify attacks by the American government on a number of countries in the Middle East, and to justify strict security controls on its citizens. The 9/11 meme can be seen not just as a reminder of the attack but, as it is frequently used by American politicians, one that connotes horror, death, treachery, evil, terrorists, revenge, anti-Islam, war, patriotism, unity, and the need to relinquish certain civil rights in the name of national security.

Conspiracy Theory

A term used to describe the theories of people who believe that certain events attributed to accidents or “lone wolves” have actually been covertly planned and carried out by a conspiracy of powerful people. Such contemporary subjects include the assassination of US president John F. Kennedy, the “alleged” landing of a man on the moon, the 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon, suppression of a cure for cancer, and the suppression of the existence of “free energy.” Some have questioned if the theories themselves (such as “man did not really land on the moon”) are the conspiracy theories, or if the term itself is a higher-level conspiracy theory, a meme intended to belittle and negate all of the so-called “conspiracy theories.”¹¹¹ Regardless, it remains a frequently used meme.

¹¹⁰ Chileans are aware of this date (day and month) as the day in 1973 when their democratically elected government was overthrown in a military coup and their president Salvador Allende died.

¹¹¹ DeHaven-Smith, Lance. *Conspiracy Theory in America*, 2013.

As professor of religious studies Barbara Moore writes, “The phrase ‘conspiracy theory’ is not neutral. It is value-laden and carries with it condemnation, ridicule, and dismissal. It is a lot like the word ‘cult,’ which we use to describe religions we do *not* like. We don’t call Baptists or Methodists cultists, but we do call Scientologists and Moonies and members of Peoples Temple cultists. In a similar fashion, we don’t refer to official reports about the terror attacks of September 11, 2001 or about the John F. Kennedy assassination as conspiracy theories, but that’s how we identify the alternative explanations of those events.”¹¹² In short, government and other official explanations are fact; theories which contest those explanations are conspiracy theories.

Ugly American

I consider the meme “Ugly American” to be a “flipped meme,” that is, one that has become the opposite of its original meaning. Today this term refers to American tourists traveling abroad and their (perhaps unfair) reputation as loud, rude, arrogant, and ignorant of and indifferent to local customs. The original use of the term was very different. It was the title of a 1958 book by William Lederer and Eugene Burdick, which was later made as a film. In their story, the “ugly American” was an engineer advising people in a southeast Asian country. He wore work clothes, lived with the local people, and was rather homely. He was “ugly” only in the sense that his appearance and dress contrasted sharply with that of the American diplomats in the country who dressed elegantly, dined in fine restaurants, and had minimal contact with the ordinary citizens of the country. In short, the “ugly American” was the hero of

¹¹² Rebecca Moore, “Contested Knowledge: What Conspiracy Theories Tell Us – Alternative Considerations of Jonestown & Peoples Temple,” accessed August 6, 2016, http://jonestown.sdsu.edu/?page_id=40220.

the story who actually helped the people. The book was extremely popular and was a contributing factor to the formation of the American Peace Corps.¹¹³

Open Major Memes

The above are major memes which *do not change*. The other type of major memes I suggest are those that retain their basic structure—which serves as a container—but the *contents of that structure change*. They are *open* memes.

We had to destroy the village in order to save it

One example is the quote from an American military officer after a “village” (Bến Tre)¹¹⁴ in Vietnam was destroyed in 1968 in the soldiers’ hunt for Viet Cong forces: “We had to destroy the village in order to save it.” The original line, as reported by New Zealand journalist Peter Arnett, was actually “It became necessary to destroy the town to save it.”¹¹⁵ This meme has been used since as “We had to destroy the xxx in order to save it.” Examples include: “We had to destroy the city in order to save it”¹¹⁶ (weaken zoning regulations in order to increase densification and provide more housing), “We had to

113 John Hellman, “Vietnam as Symbolic Landscape: The Ugly American and the New Frontier - Hellmann - 2009 - Peace & Change - Wiley Online Library,” July 1983, <https://web.archive.org/web/20160106162822/http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1468-0130.1983.tb00494.x/abstract>. P. 1.

114 Bến Tre at the time had a population of 35,000.

115 Peter Arnett, “Major Describes Move,” *New York Times*, February 8, 1968.

116 Aaron Renn, “We Had To Destroy the City In Order to Save It | Newgeography.com,” *New Geography*, February 26, 2014, <http://www.newgeography.com/content/004191-we-had-to-destroy-city-in-order-save-it>.

destroy Fallujah in order to save it”¹¹⁷ (a similar situation in Iraq to that earlier in Vietnam), “We had to destroy [fill in country name] in order to save it” (countries instead of towns), “We had to destroy this party in order to save it”¹¹⁸ (on “saving” a political party), “We had to destroy it in order to save it” (Artists returning to traditional non-multimedia painting styles in New York City in the 1970s),¹¹⁹ and “We had to destroy the library in order to save it” (a library in Canada).¹²⁰

Potemkin Village

Another open major meme is the phrase coined by Georg von Helbig, a Saxon envoy to the court of Empress Catherine the Great of Russia. He ridiculed Prince Grigory Potemkin’s preparations for the 1787 visit to Crimea by Catherine to inspect what Potemkin had accomplished since she had named him governor of the region. Von Helbig claimed that Potemkin had created fake villages and had even brought in peasants from other areas to pretend they were inhabitants of those villages. He announced that the villages were simply “Potemkinsche Dörfer,” —Potemkin Villages. Von Helbig went so far as to claim that they were simply painted screens on pasteboard with no actual buildings behind them, and that each night Potemkin had them taken down and moved further along the Dnieper river so that as Catherine and her entourage sailed along the river the next day, they unknowingly saw the same

117 “We Had To Destroy Fallujah in Order to Save It,” *Global Policy Forum*, November 8, 2004, <https://www.globalpolicy.org/component/content/article/168/37006.html>.

118 “We Had to Destroy This Party in Order to Save It,” *Shadowproof*, February 16, 2006, <https://shadowproof.com/2006/02/16/we-had-to-destroy-this-party-in-order-to-save-it/>.

119 Christie’s Press Center, “‘We Had to Destroy It in Order to Save it,’ Painting in New York in the 1970s,” *Christie’s*, September 6, 2012, <http://www.christies.com/about/press-center/releases/pressrelease.aspx?pressreleaseid=5775>.

120 David Reevely, “We Had to Destroy the Library in Order to Save It,” *Ottawa Citizen*, January 16, 2008, <http://ottawacitizen.com/news/local-news/we-had-to-destroy-the-library-in-order-to-save-it>.

buildings and the same peasants they had seen the day before. It would have been an ingenious scheme—if von Helbig’s charges were true. However, the fraud was not Potemkin’s, it was von Helbig’s. He had not visited the area, had not accompanied Catherine’s party, and, in fact, Prince Potemkin had actually accomplished great achievements in the area, building a port in Sevastopol with a large fleet of ships, establishing a number of orderly and prospering villages, and indeed completing everything he had claimed to have done. Nevertheless, von Helbig’s efforts, which included a magazine article and a later book, established in European minds that Potemkin’s efforts were a fraud¹²¹. Today “Potemkin” means phony, a false facade, a pretence of success and positivity hiding failure and negativity. “Potemkin” is used as an adjective in such examples as “Potemkin Economy,”¹²² “Potemkin

121 Sebag Montefiore, *The Prince of Princes: The Life of Potemkin*, 1st edition (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2001).

122 “France’s Potemkin Economy—Fake Companies, Fake Jobs, Fake Prosperity,” *David Stockman’s Contra Corner*, May 31, 2015, <http://davidstockmanscontracorner.com/frances-potemkin-economy-fake-companies-fake-jobs-fake-prosperity/>.

Campaign,”¹²³ “Potemkin Patients,”¹²⁴ “Potemkin Ideologies,”¹²⁵ “Potemkin Democracy,”¹²⁶
“Potemkin Capital,”¹²⁷ and “Potemkin Presidency.”¹²⁸

Major memes have longevity, with examples being the swastika or whole earth. They also have fecundity, with the swastika again an example, as is 9/11. Their fidelity varies; *closed* memes such as 9/11 or the Guy Fawkes mask have remained faithful to their original; *open* memes such as “We had to destroy...” and “Potemkin...” keep their original wording and structure but are modified to fit a particular situation. All of the examples, however, are *major* memes, whether open or closed, and all major memes are meaningful—they connote as well as denote.

Memes, Frames, and Metaphors

123 2016, “The Potemkin Campaign Comes to the Potemkin Convention,” accessed August 15, 2016, <http://thefederalist.com/2016/07/19/the-potemkin-campaign-comes-to-the-potemkin-convention/>.

124 “Potemkin Patients in Pyongyang,” *Wall Street Journal*, May 9, 2016, sec. Opinion, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/potemkin-patients-in-pyongyang-1462834965>.

125 Paul Krugman, “Potemkin Ideologies,” *New York Times*, January 26, 2016, <http://krugman.blogs.nytimes.com/2016/01/26/potemkin-ideologies/>.

126 Charles King, “Potemkin Democracy: Four Myths about Post-Soviet Georgia,” *The National Interest*, no. 64 (2001) p. 93–104.

127 Matt Schiavenza, “Egypt’s New Potemkin Capital,” *The Atlantic*, March 15, 2015, <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2015/03/egypt-to-build-a-potemkin-capital/387826/>.

128 “The Potemkin Presidency: What Obama and Hillary Are Preparing for America,” *The Daily Caller*, accessed August 15, 2016, <http://dailycaller.com/2016/08/05/the-potemkin-presidency-what-obama-and-hillary-are-preparing-for-america/>.

"The way in which the world is imagined determines at any particular moment what men will do." Walter Lippmann, *Public Opinion*, 1921¹²⁹

"It's not what you say that counts. It's what people hear." Frank Luntz, April 2009¹³⁰

"Frames are the mental structures that allow human beings to understand reality – and sometimes to create what we take to be reality." George Lakoff, 2006¹³¹

A frame is a mental window through which we observe the world. A frame has two functions: one, it is *inclusive*, focusing attention (and the corresponding interpretation) on what is inside the frame. Second, it is *exclusive*, ignoring (and indeed, denying) what is outside the frame. That frame can be considered a morphic field, ever-present yet unseen, holding inside it all that is "common sense." As Michael Billig notes, it is important to notice what a frame excludes. "An everyday ideology is not characterized only by the topics that are discussed and argued about. It will also be characterized by silences. To argue on one theme means to be silent on others. Thus, ideologies, by encouraging certain forms of

129 Walter Lippman, *Public Opinion* (New York: Greenbook Publications, LLC, 2010). P. 19.

130 Frank Luntz, "The Israel Project's 2009 Global Language Dictionary" (The Israel Project, 2009). P. 3.

131 George Lakoff, *Thinking Points: Communicating Our American Values and Vision* (Macmillan, 2006). P. 25.

argumentation, also silence other arguments and other possible critiques.”¹³² It is clear that a dominant ideology frames the discussions of the state’s subjects, and that organs such as Althusser’s Ideological State Apparatuses clearly, but often unobtrusively, establish what may be discussed (after all, it’s only “common sense”) and, by default, what may not. I suggest that such framing is operative also on the Internet. The general focus on Internet memes (inventing captions for images) and viral memes (LOL cats and terrible amateur singers), distracts from the frequent (but vastly in the minority) political and societal memes that frame the actions and policies of governments and corporations. There are many potentially effective anti-government policies memes on the Internet but they often get lost in the pack, victims of attention hit-and-run by pictures of cute cats, puppy dogs, and someone’s latest meal.

There is a close relationship between some memes and frames. Memes (although more often, *memeplexes*) can be frames, and an “incoming” meme must be able to mesh not just with a person’s existing storehouse of memes, but with that person’s frames, in order to be comfortably received. As Erving Goffman writes, whenever we encounter a particular event, we tend to employ a framework or schemata to interpret that occurrence. This allows us to “locate, perceive, identify, and label” that event, even though, as Goffman notes, we are likely to be unaware of, and unable to describe, this framework, yet have no problem applying it fully.¹³³ As the Frameworks Institute states, “A frame isn’t simply a slogan repeated over and over again; rather a frame is a conceptual construct capable of

132 Michael Billig, “Rhetorical Psychology, Ideological Thinking, and Imaging Nationhood,” in *Social Movements and Culture*, ed. Hank Johnston and Bert Klandermans (University of Minnesota Press, 1995). P. 80

133 Erving Goffman, *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of Experience* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1986). P. 21

helping us organize our world. When frames fail to do so, they are discarded in favour of other frames. But more often, when new facts are submitted that do not resonate with the frames we hold in our heads, it is the facts that are rejected, not the frames.”¹³⁴ We view the world in frames, and frames “protect” us from facts which do not mesh with those frames.

George Lakoff writes that most people consider a rhetoric device to be “words rather than thought.” He states, however, that metaphor “is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language, but in thought and action. Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature...down to the most mundane details.” He also points out that this basis for our conceptual system is “not something we are normally aware of” as an estimated ninety-eight percent of thought is unconscious, and that “it is the people who are in power who get to impose their metaphors on the rest of us There is a basic truth about framing. If you accept the other guy’s frame, you lose.”¹³⁵ Lakoff also writes that “frames come in hierarchical systems [we can also see this as Sheldrake’s nested morphic units], and political frames are defined in moral terms.”¹³⁶ When Lakoff was once asked how he himself had avoided being caught in Republican [political party] frames, he responded “Because I’m a linguist, I recognize them.” But a moment later he responded: “Occasionally... I’ve caught myself.”¹³⁷ None of us are invincible.

134 Frameworks Institute, “A Five Minute Refresher Course in Framing” (Frameworks Institute, n.d.), http://www.frameworksinstitute.org/assets/files/eZines/five_minute_refresher_ezine.pdf. P. 4.

135 George Lakoff, “Words That Don’t Work,” December 11, 2011, <https://georgelakoff.com/2011/12/11/>.

136 George Lakoff, “Words That Don’t Work,” December 11, 2011, <https://georgelakoff.com/2011/12/11/>.

137 Matt Bai, “The Framing Wars,” *The New York Times*, July 17, 2005, sec. Magazine, <http://www.nytimes.com/2005/07/17/magazine/17DEMOCRATS.html>.

David Barnhizer writes that many terms used as frames have no real intellectual content but instead provide *emotional* impact on audiences. His suggested examples include feminism, machismo, hate speech, hate crimes, undocumented, gay rights, traditional marriage, white privilege, racism, sexism, capitalism, freemark, globalization, war on terror, Republican, Democrat, Liberal, Conservative, and Socialist, among many others. He notes that the above words vary on their effects depending on who uses them and who hears them. For example “Tea Party” means very different things to liberals than to conservatives. A liberal might think of white, racist, homophobic gun owners, and a conservative of patriotic, Constitution-protecting, Christians.

Manuel Castell writes that “wherever there is power, there is counterpower,”¹³⁸ leading Brian Spitzberg to state that wherever there are memes and frames, there are likely to be countermemes and counterframes.¹³⁹ Pamela Oliver and Hank Johnston note that Turner and Killian observe the same about ideologies, observing that “movement and anti-movement ideologies develop in dialectic with each other,” noting that racism was a response to racial stratification and the divine right of kings developed in response to the challenges to monarchy.¹⁴⁰ I suggest that in turn, democracy developed in response to the divine right of kings.

138 Manuel Castell, “A Network Theory of Power,” *International Journal of Communication* 5 (2011).

139 Brian Spitzberg, “Toward a Model of Meme Diffusion,” *Communication Theory* 24 (2014). P. 315

140 Pamela Oliver and Hank Johnston, “What a Good Idea! Frames and Ideologies in Social Movement Research,” n.d., https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Hank_Johnston/publication/228818250_What_a_good_idea!_Frames_and_ideologies_in_social_movement_research/links/55271b280cf2e486ae40ecaf.pdf. P. 6.

Oliver and Johnston write that “Ideologies can function as frames, but there is more to ideology than framing¹⁴¹....and not all frames are ideologies.”¹⁴² I suggest that to achieve its greatest influence, a frame needs to mesh with the existing higher level ideology, and agree that while ideologies can be frames, and frames can be ideologies, the two terms are not synonymous. Snow and Benford also point out that “framing, in contrast to ideology, is a more readily empirically observable activity¹⁴³.” I suggest that just as there are levels of nested memes, there are levels of nested frames, and that ideology may simply be a higher level and less-accessible frame. Snow and Benford also discuss “master frames,” citing such examples as the “rights frame” and the “psychosalvational frame.” These master frames are simply high-level frames, what could also be called “metaframes¹⁴⁴.”

What we see in all of the above is that there is often a relationship between frames and memes (and that often a *memeplex* can be seen as a frame), and sometimes between frames and ideology. All are

141 Pamela Oliver and Hank Johnston, “What a Good Idea! Frames and Ideologies in Social Movement Research,” n.d., https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Hank_Johnston/publication/228818250_What_a_good_idea!_Frames_and_ideologies_in_social_movement_research/links/55271b280cf2e486ae40ecaf.pdf. P. 6.

142 Pamela Oliver and Hank Johnston, “What a Good Idea! Frames and Ideologies in Social Movement Research,” n.d., https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Hank_Johnston/publication/228818250_What_a_good_idea!_Frames_and_ideologies_in_social_movement_research/links/55271b280cf2e486ae40ecaf.pdf. P. 13.

143 David A. Snow and Robert D. Benford, “Clarifying the Relationship between Framing and Ideology in the Study of Social Movements: A Comment on Oliver and Johnston,” n.d., https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Robert_Benford/publication/228588409_Clarifying_the_Relationship_Between_Framing_and_Ideology/links/55b67d7f08aec0e5f437f289.pdf. P. 10-11.

144 Robert D. Benford and David A. Snow, “Master Frames and Cycles of Protest,” in *Frontiers in Social Movement Theory*, ed. Aldon Morris and Carol McClurg Mueller (Yale University Press, 1992).

involved in how one sees reality: what we do see, what we do not see, and how we apply labels to make sense of that reality.

This chapter has not been intended to provide an exhaustive study and literature review for memes. I have discussed the key theorists, the key theories, the key components of the memetic discussion. However, this thesis is not specifically on memes, but on their relationship to morphic fields and memorable movie lines. I have extensively investigated the concept of memes because I theorize that that concept provides strong hints, if not positive leads, to an understanding of shared characteristics of famous movie lines.

A meme is not born as a meme, although many practitioners may attempt to create Internet memes or advertising/marketing memes. A “something” becomes a meme only when it begins to move through the culture, and reaches a point where it has become sufficiently well-known and lasting to be considered a “meme.” This is likely a similar process to that through which some lines of movie dialogue pass as they move from screenplay to the presentation of the line in the context of a film shown in theatres (or, as frequently occurs these days, on a home television or computer tablet), and then, through some magical mix of circumstances, into the everyday dialogue of people familiar with the line as they themselves use (and hear) the line in their own conversations on appropriate occasions. I do not investigate *why* or *how* some memes or movie lines become famous, but rather seek an understanding of what qualities are shared by those memes and movie lines that *have become* well-known.

There has been a great deal of movement in the field of memes since Richard Dawkins first coined the term. Whether that movement has made any progress is open to question. There have been a number of monographs and many journal articles, but the definition of meme still eludes consensus; and how—and perhaps why—a unit of text becomes an imitated unit of culture is still unknown, although frequently theorized. Even the very existence of memes is debated. If we were to ask the average person in many countries—certainly the average person in the 18 to 30 year old bracket—what a “meme” is, I suggest that most would immediately respond with examples of *Internet* memes: photos and videos of cats, dogs, amateur singers, and the like which have all “gone viral.” *Meme = Internet* is something that Dawkins would never have imagined, nor should he have, as his book *The Selfish Gene* came out in 1976, more than a decade before the Internet and even longer before the World Wide Web became available to the public in the early 1990s.

However, as I have specified, this thesis is not ‘about’ memes per se, but rather about their relationship to morphic fields and movie dialogue, and specifically those relatively few lines of dialogue that become memorable. To enable the research in this thesis, it is sufficient to be familiar with the various theories and examples of memes in order to examine memorable movie lines through a memetic filter and discover whether or not that filter helps provide clarity to the exploration of a specific collection of movie quotes—the American Film Institute’s *100 Greatest Movie Quotes of All Time*. In a review of the contents of this chapter, certain observations come to mind which are useful when reading the chapter on memorable movie lines. These observations are based on the often overlapping appearance in various studies of certain qualities which give hints to a meme’s existence and success. As we explore movie lines, we see that at least some of these qualities appear to manifest as characteristics of famous movie lines.

It is clear from the research presented in this chapter that there are no iron-clad rules on how to make words (a title, a Twitter message, online content, rumours and stories) more likely to be received or shared with others. However, certain qualities continue to appear: *brevity*, *simplicity*, and *novelty* (yet not so novel that it does not mesh with existing standards). *Useful* information and *emotional* resonance are other possible qualities. There are also suggestions that, where appropriate, the use of pleasing sounds (*rhyme*, *rhythm*, *alliteration*) can also contribute to the success of a meme. All of the qualities suggested here will return to this research and be evaluated in chapter three. The study now progresses to an unusual suite of theories to explore the context/s encircling these movie lines.

Chapter Two - Morphic Fields - Is the force with us?

Morphic fields are one of the three major fields of study in this doctoral project. In this research, I probe the role of morphic fields in enabling the receptivity of memes, particularly by motion picture audiences. To summon this unusual choice of theory, I deploy the controversial research proposed by British biologist Rupert Sheldrake in his book, *A new science of life* in 1981.¹ His *Hypothesis of Formative Causation* consists of three key elements. *Morphic Unit* is a unit of form or organization, such as atom, molecule, cell, plant, animal, human, pattern of instinctive behaviour, element of culture, social group, or planet. *Morphic Field* is a field within and around a morphic unit which organizes its structure and behaviour. It contains a cumulative memory and tends to become increasingly habitual. *Morphic Resonance* is the influence of previous morphic units on subsequent similar morphic units. In this chapter, I offer an in-depth study of Sheldrake's theory. I then move this theory between disciplines to enable its application later in the thesis to the study of memes and memorable movie lines.

Sheldrake offers a concise definition of morphic fields. Our analysis begins with his work.

I propose that memory is inherent in nature. Most of the so-called laws of nature are more like habits. Habits are subject to natural selection; and the more often they are repeated, the more probable they become, other things being equal. Animals inherit the successful habits of their species as instincts. We inherit bodily, emotional, mental and cultural habits, including the habits of our languages.

Social groups are likewise organized by fields, as in schools of fish and flocks of birds. Human societies have memories that are transmitted through the culture of the group...The memory processes are due to morphic resonance. Basically, morphic fields are fields of habit, and they've been set up through habits of thought, through habits of activity, and through habits of speech. Most of our culture is habitual, I mean, most of our personal life, and most of our cultural life is habitual. The whole idea of morphic resonance is evolutionary, but morphic resonance only

1 Rupert Sheldrake, *New Science of Life: The Hypothesis of Formative Causation*, New edition (London: Saunders of Toronto Ltd, 1981).

gives the repetitions. It doesn't give the creativity. So evolution must involve an interplay of creativity and repetition. Creativity gives new forms, new patterns, new ideas, new art forms.² Sheldrake's hypothesis does not deal with creativity—with the origin of new morphic fields. His hypothesis focuses on morphic fields only after they have been created, and proposes that these fields are fields of habit which through morphic resonance are transmitted through the culture of each species, whether they be fish, humans or other mammals. In this manner, "memory" is passed on from the past to the present. I suggest, as I have earlier also suggested with memes, that whether or not morphic fields "exist" —and Sheldrake himself recognizes that there is no proof of their existence—the concept of those fields can still be useful in studying memes (and in the context of this thesis, movie lines) and, in particular, the receptivity of humans to memes (and movie lines). Sheldrake was not satisfied with the idea that genes and DNA are the sole cause of phenotypes, and he theorizes another explanation—that of habit and memory. His specific hypothesis—the *Hypothesis of Formative Causation*—proposes that "nature is habitual." As Sheldrake suggests, "The regularities of nature are not imposed on nature from a transcendent realm, but evolve within the universe. What happens depends on what has happened before. Memory is inherent in nature. It is transmitted by a process called morphic resonance, and works through fields called morphic fields."³ Sheldrake states also that "the hypothesis is concerned with the repetition of forms and patterns of organization; the question of the origin of these forms and patterns lies outside its scope."⁴ To repeat, Sheldrake offers no "Big Bang" (or perhaps more aptly "Little Bang") explanations for the origin of morphic fields. He simply presents his

2 Rupert Sheldrake, "Articles and Papers - Scientific Papers - Morphic Resonance - Morphic Fields," *Rupert Sheldrake*, accessed March 11, 2015, http://www.sheldrake.org/Articles&Papers/papers/morphic/morphic_intro.html.

3 Rupert Sheldrake, "Articles and Papers - Scientific Papers - Morphic Resonance - Morphic Fields," *Rupert Sheldrake*, accessed March 11, 2015, http://www.sheldrake.org/Articles&Papers/papers/morphic/morphic_intro.html.

4 Rupert Sheldrake, *Morphic Resonance: The Nature of Formative Causation* (Rochester, Vt.: Park Street Press, 2009), 4.

hypothesis of the action of already-existing morphic fields and their influence through time to the present.

As Sheldrake points out, the word *morphic* is derived from the Greek *morphe*, meaning *form*. *Morphic fields* are patterns which organize the “form, structure and patterned interactions” of those phenotypes under the influence of a particular morphic field. This immediately puts Sheldrake in (apparent) opposition to the working theory in evolutionary biology which is that “form, structure and patterned interactions” are the results of genetics, not some nebulous and (currently) unmeasurable field. Sheldrake states that his hypothesis applies to all “animals, plants, cells, proteins, crystals, brains and minds.” Each “living” system—called by Sheldrake a *morphic unit*, regardless of size—is a member of a nested hierarchy. That is, it has smaller components, and is itself a component of a larger system. Thus, there are “organelles in cells, cells in tissues, tissues in organs, organs in organisms, organisms in social groups.” Each system, no matter its size, has its own morphic field, which “gives each whole its characteristic properties, and coordinates the constituent parts.” Sheldrake emphasizes that fields “are not a form of matter; rather, matter is energy bound within fields.” Different fields fall into different categories. Those that deal with the form of plants and animals are frequently referred to by biologists as *morphogenetic* fields. However, Sheldrake goes beyond these accepted fields and proposes more far-reaching categories: “behavioural and mental fields that organise animal behaviour and mental activity, and social and cultural fields that organise societies and cultures.” He further states, “all these kinds of fields are morphic fields. All morphic fields have an inherent memory given by morphic resonance.”⁵ In

5 *Ibid.*, xxii.

short, every morphic unit has a morphic field, and every relationship between morphic units has its morphic field.

Sheldrake recognizes that the most radical element of his concept has to do with memory. As he writes, “The most controversial feature of this hypothesis is that the structure of morphic fields depends on what has happened before. Morphic fields contain a kind of memory. Through repetition, the patterns they organise become increasingly probable, increasingly habitual. The force these fields exert is the force of habit... All nature is essentially habitual. Even what we view as the fixed “laws of nature” may be more like habits, ingrained over long periods of time.”⁶ Sheldrake directly challenges the belief that laws of nature are fixed and eternal, and instead theorizes that these “laws” are simply habits which have been established over very long periods of time. While he does not address the origin of these habits, he is very clear that the more often these patterns are repeated, the greater the probability that they will again repeat. That is, the more often they occur, the more often they *will* occur. These habits of nature recur so often that they appear to be fixed, and thus, to us, appear to be permanent laws.

Hypothesis of Formative Causation - We go way back

Sheldrake’s *Hypothesis of Formative Causation* is that “organisms or morphic units at all levels of complexity are organized by morphic fields, which are themselves influenced and stabilized by morphic resonance from all previous similar morphic units.”⁷ This hypothesis supports Sheldrake’s concepts of

6 Rupert Sheldrake, “Morphic Resonance and Mophic Fields an Introduction,” accessed June 4, 2016, <http://www.sheldrake.org/research/morphic-resonance/introduction>.

7 Rupert Sheldrake, “Glossary,” *Rupert Sheldrake*, accessed May 5, 2014, <http://www.sheldrake.org/research/glossary>.

morphic units, morphic fields, and morphic resonance. Sheldrake's original research involved the causation of the form of plants (morphogenesis) but his hypothesis evolved to encompass not just plants and animals but behavioural, mental and cultural patterns.

The hypothesis of formative causation proposes that morphogenetic fields play a causal role in the development and maintenance of the forms of systems at all levels of complexity. This suggested causation of form by morphogenetic fields is called formative causation in order to distinguish it from the energetic type of causation with which physics already deals so thoroughly. Although morphogenetic fields can only bring about their effects in conjunction with energetic processes, they are not in themselves energetic.⁸

The idea of nonenergetic formative causation is easier to grasp with the help of an architectural analogy. In order to construct a house, bricks and other building materials are necessary; so are the builders who put the materials into place; and so is the architectural plan that determines the form of the house. The same builders doing the same amount of work using the same quantity of building materials would produce a house of different form with a different plan. Thus the plan can be regarded as a cause of the specific form of the house, although of course it is not the only cause: it could never be realized without the building materials and the activity of the builders. Similarly, a specific morphogenetic field is a cause

⁸ Rupert Sheldrake, *Morphic Resonance: The Nature of Formative Causation* (Rochester, Vt.: Park Street Press, 2009), 62-63.

of the specific form taken up by a system, although it cannot act without suitable “building blocks” and without the energy necessary to move them into place.⁹

Sheldrake here is describing patterns, whether they be architectural patterns for a building or, as I show later, patterns of thinking and behaviour. In his metaphor, he is not discussing the materials of the house, nor even the workers who put the various components of the house into its final structure. He acknowledges their necessity but emphasizes that *the pattern is predominant*; a different pattern could produce a different house—in both internal and external structure and appearance—while still using the same workers and construction materials. As Sheldrake writes, “this analogy is not intended to suggest that the causative role of morphogenetic fields depends on conscious design, but only to emphasize that not all causation need be energetic. The plan of a house is not in itself a type of energy. Instead, it is a kind of information. Even when it is drawn on paper, or finally realized in the form of the house, it does not weigh anything or have any energy of its own...Likewise, according to the hypothesis of formative causation, morphogenetic fields are not in themselves energetic; but nevertheless they play a causal role in determining the forms of the systems with which they are associated. If a system were associated with a different morphogenetic field, it would develop differently.”¹⁰ This is an important piece of Sheldrake’s hypothesis. Morphogenetic fields and all other types of morphic fields are *non-energetic*, although they do affect energy—as well as matter. Using the metaphor of the construction of a house, Sheldrake refers to a pattern (the plan of a house) which is neither energy nor matter. It is simply information—which can be expressed in form, be it a building or, as he points out below, a human. Morphic fields are simply holders of data, of information, of patterns. Sheldrake writes “We know what

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid.

DNA does: it codes for proteins; it codes for the sequence of amino acids which form proteins. However, there is a big difference between coding for the structure of a protein—a chemical constituent of the organism—and programming the development of an entire organism. It is the difference between making bricks and building a house out of the bricks. You need the bricks to build the house. If you have defective bricks, the house will be defective. But the plan of the house is not contained in the bricks, or the wires, or the beams, or cement...Analogously, DNA only codes for the materials from which the body is constructed: the enzymes, the structural proteins, and so forth. There is no evidence that it also codes for the plan, the form, the morphology of the body.”¹¹ Sheldrake’s comments demonstrate why there is considerable resistance—even hostility—towards his theories from evolutionary and genetic biologists. His hypothesis applied to biology proposes that DNA builds proteins, but that there is no evidence that DNA in any way contributes to how those proteins are assembled into a body. That is, DNA has to do with *genotype* but not with *phenotype*. The phenotype is determined by a morphic field; specifically by the morphic field of the relevant species.

Morphic Unit - Boxes within boxes

Sheldrake defines a “morphic unit” as a “unit of form or organization, such as an atom, molecule, crystal, cell, plant, animal, pattern of instinctive behaviour, social group, element of culture, ecosystem, planet, planetary system, or galaxy. Morphic units are organized in nested hierarchies of units within units: a crystal, for example, contains molecules, which contain atoms, which contain electrons and nuclei, which contain nuclear particles, which contain quarks.”¹²

11 Ibid., 14.

12 Rupert Sheldrake, “Glossary,” *Rupert Sheldrake*, accessed May 5, 2014, <http://www.sheldrake.org/research/glossary>.

He notes that all morphic units have form and energy, and writes: "All actual morphic units [note: not morphic *fields*] can be regarded as forms of energy...But although these aspects of form and energy can be separated conceptually, in reality they are always associated with each other. No morphic unit can have energy without form, and no material form can exist without energy."¹³ Sheldrake equates his concept of morphic units with that of holons. In his website glossary explanation of holons, Sheldrake credits Arthur Koestler with the concept of holons and their multi-levelled nested hierarchies. He defines holon as "A whole that can also be part of a larger whole. Holons are organized in multi-levelled nested hierarchies or holarchies. This term, due to Arthur Koestler, is equivalent in meaning to morphic unit."¹⁴

In his "Some General Properties of Self-Regulating Open Hierarchic Order,"¹⁵ Arthur Koestler described the nested hierarchy that later manifested as an integral part of Sheldrake's hypothesis of formative causation. "The organism is to be regarded as a multi-levelled hierarchy of semi-autonomous sub-wholes, branching into sub-wholes of a lower order, and so on. Sub-wholes on any level of the hierarchy are referred to as holons...Parts and wholes in an absolute sense do not exist in the domains of life. The concept of the holon is intended to reconcile the atomistic and holistic approaches." This is a key element of Sheldrake's hypothesis; every morphic unit contains parts (sub-morphic units) and is itself

13 Rupert Sheldrake, *Morphic Resonance: The Nature of Formative Causation* (Rochester, Vt.: Park Street Press, 2009), 105.

14 Rupert Sheldrake, "Glossary," *Rupert Sheldrake*, accessed May 5, 2014, <http://www.sheldrake.org/research/glossary>.

15 Arthur Koestler, "Some General Properties of Self-Regulating Open Hierarchic Order," 1969, *Panarchy*, <http://www.panarchy.org/koestler/holon.1969.html>.

part of higher level morphic units. Koestler continues: “Biological holons are self-regulating open systems which display both the autonomous properties of wholes and the dependent properties of parts. This dichotomy is present on every level of every type of hierarchic organization, and is referred to as the ‘Janus phenomenon’... More generally, the term ‘holon’ may be applied to any stable biological or social sub-whole which displays rule-governed behaviour and/or structural Gestalt-constancy. Thus organelles and homologous organs are evolutionary holons; morphogenetic fields are ontogenetic holons; the ethologist's ‘fixed action-patterns’ and the sub-routines of acquired skills are behavioural holons; phonemes, morphemes, words, phrases are linguistic holons; individuals, families, tribes, nations are social holons.”¹⁶ Koestler seems to consider holons to be what we can now see as a combination of Sheldrake's morphic units *and* morphic fields. That is, they can include the physical as well as the behavioural and linguistic. However, he also writes “Functional holons are governed by fixed sets of rules and display more or less flexible strategies...The rules—referred to as the system’s canon—determine its invariant properties, its structural configuration and/or functional pattern.” This would suggest that Koestler’s holons seem to be morphic units, yet his rules appear to be for morphic fields.

Morphic Field - The force is within...and around

According to Sheldrake’s theory, each *morphic unit* (Koestler’s *holon*) has a field within and around it “which organizes its characteristic structure and pattern of activity. Morphic fields underlie the form and behaviour of holons or morphic units at all levels of complexity. The term morphic field includes morphogenetic, behavioural, social, cultural, and mental fields. Morphic fields are shaped and stabilized by morphic resonance from previous similar morphic units, which were under the influence of fields of

16 Ibid.

the same kind. They consequently contain a kind of cumulative memory and tend to become increasingly habitual.”¹⁷

Sheldrake’s hypothesis was derived from his studies into *morphogenesis*, which he defines on his website glossary as “the coming into being of form.” It is accepted by many evolutionary biologists that the key agents in the “coming into being of form” are “morphogenetic fields.” Sheldrake defines a *field* as: “A region of physical influence. Fields interrelate and interconnect matter and energy within their realm of influence. Fields are not a form of matter; rather, matter is energy bound within fields. In current physics, several kinds of fundamental field are recognized: the gravitational and electromagnetic fields and the matter fields of quantum physics. The hypothesis of formative causation broadens the concept of physical fields to include morphic fields as well as the known fields of physics.”¹⁸ It follows, therefore, that he considers morphogenetic fields to be a subset of morphic fields, ones that are integral to the formation of physical characteristics. These fields “play a causal role in morphogenesis. This term, first proposed in the 1920s, is now widely used by developmental biologists, but the nature of morphogenetic fields has remained obscure. In the hypothesis of formative causation, they are regarded as morphic fields stabilized by morphic resonance...The hypothesis put forward in this book is based on the idea that morphogenetic fields do indeed have measurable physical effects...It proposes that specific morphogenetic fields are responsible for the characteristic form and organization of systems at all levels of complexity, not only in the realm of biology, but also in the realms of chemistry and physics.”¹⁹ As

17 Rupert Sheldrake, “Glossary,” *Rupert Sheldrake*, accessed May 5, 2014, <http://www.sheldrake.org/research/glossary>.

18 Ibid.

19 Rupert Sheldrake, *Morphic Resonance: The Nature of Formative Causation* (Rochester, Vt.: Park Street Press, 2009).

Sheldrake states, morphogenetic fields (a *type* of morphic field) are active in chemistry and physics as well as biology. These fields are all *nested*; that is, there are fields within fields within fields. Sheldrake writes

Each species has its own fields, and within each organism there are fields within fields. Within each of us is the field of the whole body; fields for arms and legs and fields for kidneys and livers; within are fields for the different tissues inside these organs, and then fields for the cells, and fields for the subcellular structures, and fields for the molecules, and so on. There is a whole series of fields within fields...These fields, which are already accepted quite widely within biology, have a kind of in-built memory derived from previous forms of a similar kind. The liver field is shaped by the forms of previous livers and the oak tree field by the forms and organization of previous oak trees. Through the fields, by a process called morphic resonance, the influence of like upon like, there is a connection among similar fields. That means that the field's structure has a cumulative memory, based on what has happened to the species in the past. This idea applies not only to living organisms but also to protein molecules, crystals, even to atoms. In the realm of crystals, for example, the theory would say that the form a crystal takes depends on its characteristic morphic field. Morphic field is a broader term which includes the fields of both form and behaviour; hereafter, I shall use the word morphic field rather than morphogenetic.²⁰

This statement provides the shape of the *morphic field* concept. Morphogenetic fields establish form, but they are simply subsets of morphic fields, which can establish both *form* and *behaviour*. All fields gain in influence through repetition. Sheldrake emphasizes that through repetition a pattern becomes stronger and stronger, eventually to be seen as not just a repeating pattern but a *habit*. "Whatever the explanation of its origin, once a new morphic field, a new pattern of organization, has come into being, through repetition the field becomes stronger. The same pattern becomes more likely to happen again. The more often patterns are repeated, the more probable they become. The fields contain a kind of cumulative memory and become increasingly habitual. Fields evolve in time and form the basis of habits. From this point of view nature is essentially habitual. Even the so-called laws of nature may be

20 *Ibid.*, 15-16.

more like habits.”²¹ As he states, another subset of morphic fields is the *behavioural field*, a type of field that influences and organizes social groups, whether animals or humans.

Whereas morphogenetic fields influence form, behavioural fields influence behaviour. The organizing fields of social groups, such as flocks of birds, schools of fish, and colonies of termites, are called social fields. All these kinds of fields are morphic fields. All morphic fields have an inherent memory given by morphic resonance...²²

While Sheldrake has not developed a theory of the how and why of morphic field creation, he does recognize that a new field can be seen as either arising “bottom up” from lower level morphic units (holons) to encompass those units at a higher level, or appearing “top down” to become a new form that is more specific in nature; a new subset (or subsets) of an existing morphic unit.²³

As Richard Dawkins applied evolutionary biology theory to memes (his cultural equivalent of genes), so does Sheldrake apply evolutionary biology theory to morphic fields and morphic resonance. Regardless of how a new behavioural or other type of morphic field might arise, once it appears Sheldrake sees natural selection determining that new patterns survive and expand their influence only if they prove themselves to be superior in some unstated manner to other less viable patterns.

Morphic Resonance - All is in tune

The force, or influence, which connects morphic fields is morphic resonance. This is defined by Sheldrake as “The influence of previous structures of activity on subsequent similar structures of activity

21 Rupert Sheldrake, “Morphic Fields,” *World Futures* 62, no. 1–2 (2006), 31–41.

22 Rupert Sheldrake, *Morphic Resonance: The Nature of Formative Causation* (Rochester, Vt.: Park Street Press, 2009), xxii.

23 Rupert Sheldrake, *The Presence of the Past: Morphic Resonance and the Memory of Nature* (Rochester, Vt.: Park Street Press, 2012), 385-386.

organized by morphic fields. Through morphic resonance, formative causal influences pass through or across both space and time, and these influences are assumed not to fall off with distance in space or time, but they come only from the past. The greater the degree of similarity, the greater the influence of morphic resonance.”²⁴ In his article on *Morphic Fields in World Futures: The Journal of New Paradigms*, Sheldrake writes “Morphic resonance involves the influence of like on like, the influence of patterns of activity on subsequent similar patterns of activity, an influence that passes through or across space and time from past to present... Morphic resonance gives an inherent memory in fields at all levels of complexity. Any given morphic system, say a squirrel, ‘tunes in’ to previous similar systems, in this case previous squirrels of its species. Through this process each individual squirrel draws on, and in turn contributes to, a collective or pooled memory of its kind. In the human realm, this kind of collective memory corresponds to what the psychologist C. G. Jung called the ‘collective unconscious.’”²⁵

As a possible example of morphic resonance, Sheldrake provides the case of the bluetit, a common bird in Britain. In 1921 it was observed that the cardboard caps on milk bottles left at the front doors of homes in Southampton had been shredded and the cream from the bottle tops was gone. It was discovered that bluetits had pierced the cardboard top and drunk the cream. The phenomenon was soon observed in other areas up to one hundred miles away. Bluetits seldom travel more than five miles so it was felt that the method of access to the cream was being discovered independently by bluetits a considerable distance away. By 1947, it was common throughout Britain and researchers concluded that the technique had been discovered at least fifty times. The instances even spread into Scandinavia and

24 Rupert Sheldrake, “Glossary,” *Rupert Sheldrake*, accessed May 5, 2014, <http://www.sheldrake.org/research/glossary>.

25 Rupert Sheldrake, “Morphic Fields,” *World Futures* 62, no. 1–2 (2006), 32–33.

Holland. Even more interesting, milk delivery was stopped in Holland during the German occupation and did not resume until 1948, a period of time that exceeded the lifespan of individual bluetits. When delivery resumed, within a year or two bluetits were again drinking the cream, and this “rediscovery” continued throughout Europe. Sheldrake suggests this is an example of a habit which was spread by collective memory rather than by genetic transmission.²⁶

Sheldrake proposes that morphic resonance is outside time and space, and that morphic fields have neither mass nor energy: “Morphic resonance is nonenergetic, and morphogenetic fields themselves are neither a type of mass nor energy. Therefore there seems to be no a priori reason why it should obey the laws that have been found to apply to the movement of bodies, particles, and waves. In particular, it need not be attenuated by either spatial or temporal separation between similar systems; it could be just as effective over 10,000 miles as over an inch, and over a century as over an hour.²⁷ The assumption that morphic resonance is not attenuated by time and space will be adopted as a provisional working hypothesis, on the ground of simplicity. It will also be assumed on the ground of simplicity that morphic resonance takes place only from the past, that only morphic units that have already actually existed are able to exert a morphic influence in the present. The notion that future systems, which do not yet exist, might be able to exert a causal influence “backward” in time may perhaps be logically conceivable; but only if there were persuasive empirical evidence for a physical influence from future morphic units would it become necessary to take this possibility seriously.”²⁸ Sheldrake also notes that,

26 Ibid.

27 Rupert Sheldrake, *Morphic Resonance: The Nature of Formative Causation* (Rochester, Vt.: Park Street Press, 2009), 86.

28 Ibid.

“The amount of influence a given system has on subsequent similar systems seems likely to depend on the length of time it survives: one that continues to exist for a year may have more effect than one that disintegrates after a second.”²⁹

Building on the previous chapter and Sheldrake’s comments, the longer in time that a meme is repeated, the more powerful the field of that meme becomes, and thus it may be repeated at an ever-increasing rate. As Sheldrake sees morphic resonance as involving a sort of “frequency tuning,” he suggests that the tuning does not have to be exactly on frequency, but that the closer it is to that frequency—that is the closer the resonance from the past coincides with the natural frequency of a field’s present—the greater the effect.

Energetic resonance is not an 'all-or-none' process: a system resonates in response to a range of frequencies that are more or less close to its natural frequency, although the maximum response occurs only when the frequency coincides with its own. Analogously, morphic resonance may be more or less finely 'tuned,' occurring with greatest specificity when the forms of past and present systems are most closely similar.³⁰

After a period of time, the field becomes stabilized and self-maintaining, in that it resonates with, and is supported by, previous states of *itself*, those states being more like its current self than those of previous, but similar, fields: “Insofar as the system resembles its own past states more closely than those of other systems, this self-resonance will be highly specific, and may be of considerable importance in maintaining the system's identity.”³¹ Sheldrake also notes that “If memory is inherent in the nature of things, then the inheritance of collective habits and the development of individual habits can be seen as different aspects of the same fundamental process, the process whereby the past

29 Ibid., 91.

30 Ibid., 103.

31 Ibid., 109.

becomes present on the basis of similarity...Thus, our own personal habits may depend on cumulative influences from our past behaviour to which we 'tune in.'"32

Sheldrake emphasizes that exact similitude is not required, but that the greater the similarity, the greater the probability that the pattern (field) will repeat itself: "Like all morphic fields, those underlying perceptions, categories, and concepts are not rigidly defined in terms of exact positions and dimensions and frequencies but are probability structures. This is why categorization takes place on the basis of similarity and does not depend on exact identity."33 By morphic resonance, structures of thought and experience that were common to many people in the past contribute to morphic fields. These fields contain as it were the average forms of previous experience defined in terms of probability. This idea corresponds to Jung's conception of archetypes as "innate psychic structures."34 Sheldrake's comments about commonality connect with Jung's concept of the "universal consciousness." These are patterns that become so habitual as to be seen as archetypes which establish the pattern for future forms, but which are more likely "averages" of mental and cultural fields experienced by humans in the past.

In his 1992 book *Morphic Resonance*, Sheldrake states that: "The idea of a process whereby the forms of previous systems influence the morphogenesis of subsequent similar systems is difficult to express..." Because there is yet no known way of measuring the process of morphic resonance, as Sheldrake theorizes that morphic resonance is neither matter nor energy (though both matter and energy are

32 Rupert Sheldrake, *The Presence of the Past: Morphic Resonance and the Memory of Nature* (Rochester, Vt.: Park Street Press, 2012), 2.

33 Ibid., 241.

34 Ibid., 306-307.

involved in the resulting pattern *effects* of morphic resonance), he relies instead upon analogy.

Sheldrake suggests that the most appropriate analogy is that of resonance such as the “‘sympathetic’ vibration of stretched strings in response to appropriate sound waves; the tuning of radio sets to the frequency of radio waves given out by transmitters.”³⁵ Sheldrake writes that “A resonant effect of form upon form across space and time would resemble energetic resonance in its selectivity, but it could not be accounted for in terms of any of the known types of resonance, nor would it involve a transmission of energy. In order to distinguish it from energetic resonance, this process will be called morphic resonance.”³⁶ He notes that “in any given society the activities of individuals tend to fall into a limited number of standard patterns. People usually repeat characteristically structured activities that have already been performed over and over again by many generations of their predecessors. These include the speaking of a particular language, the skills associated with hunting, farming, weaving, tool-making, cooking, and so on; songs and dances; and the types of behaviour specific to particular social roles. All of these can be thought of as morphic fields.”³⁷

Sheldrake posits that every form (what he terms *morphic unit*), be it the smallest cell or an entire planet, has its own morphic field; its own energy field which through habit and memory set the form, behaviour and other characteristics of its physical manifestation. The morphic field is a pattern, a pattern that is not limited by time or space, and through morphic resonance is connected with all other physical manifestations of a similar nature. That is, the morphic field of a giraffe sets the pattern for the shape,

35 Rupert Sheldrake, *Morphic Resonance: The Nature of Formative Causation* (Rochester, Vt.: Park Street Press, 2009), 84.

36 *Ibid.*, 86.

37 *Ibid.*, 189.

characteristics and behaviour of that giraffe, and through morphic resonance a giraffe is connected with all other physical manifestations with the same or very similar morphic field. That is, with all other giraffes, past and present.

The quantifiable scientific evidence for the existence of morphic fields, and for the existence of morphic resonance, does not currently exist. That evidence may or may not appear, but that does not mean that the concepts are not useful in enabling theoretical approaches and frameworks—particularly for this research project. Scientists agree that gravitational fields, electromagnetic fields and quantum fields exist. Anyone who has attended a large event—be it a political rally, a music concert, a sports event, or any other occasion in which hundreds if not thousands of humans participate—knows that an energy exists at that event which affects one's own energy level and emotional state—an energy that is magnified proportionally by the size of the event. Although this energy is not a morphic field itself, the patterns of the energy—the thoughts, emotions and behaviour of those at the event—are established by a morphic field. An example of such an event on a very large scale is the Live Aid concert on 13 July 1985 at Wembley Stadium in London.³⁸ The Wembley event was attended by 72,000 people as simultaneous events were held in other areas of the world. The concerts were televised throughout the world reaching an estimated 1.2 billion people in one hundred and fifty countries.³⁹ According to Sheldrake's hypothesis, the morphic field would have encompassed the entire planet.

38 *Queen - Live Aid - Wembley 13 July 1985 - Complete*, 2013, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EPHJFnob8p8&feature=youtube_gdata_player.

39 Graham Jones, "Live Aid 1985: A Day of Magic," *CNN.com*, July 6, 2005, <http://edition.cnn.com/2005/SHOWBIZ/Music/07/01/liveaid.memories/index.html>.

Habit as Morphic Field - Creatures of habit

A key Sheldrastian phrase is: “We really are creatures of habit.” In fact, all creatures are creatures of habit, and all behaviour common to individuals and a society is a result of habitual patterns which resonate through time from the distant past to the present. The pressures of those habitual patterns cause morphic fields to be inherently conservative, repetitive, and stable, with some flexibility but with limits to that flexibility. What we consider to be creativity is an exception, a disruption to the normal pattern. Most creativity allows morphic fields to find new ways of finding familiar goals. True creativity would open up new goals—new attractors—which would require new ways of behaving, thinking and acting. As Sheldrake writes, “Morphic fields contain goals or attractors that are indeed habitual and conservative; the creativity that occurs within them involves finding new ways of reaching these goals. The expression of any habitual pattern of development or activity requires flexibility; habits could not be viable without a creative adaptation to circumstances.”⁴⁰ He continues “The evolutionary radiations or explosive phases that seem to occur fairly early in the history of a new phylum, order, family, genus, or species involve various differentiations or adaptations of the ancestral form. Comparable explosive phases may have occurred in the evolution of patterns of instinctive behaviour, as well as in the evolution of human languages and social, political, and cultural forms. Similar processes occur in the evolution of religions, arts, and sciences when distinct sects, schools, and traditions arise within them. In the realm of technology, there is often a comparable proliferation of versions and models following the invention of a new kind of machine: think, for example, of the variety of cars on the market, or the variety of mobile phones ... There is an obvious reason why the appearance of new variations on basic themes tends to become less frequent as time goes on: the number of possible variant forms is finite. As

40 Rupert Sheldrake, *The Presence of the Past: Morphic Resonance and the Memory of Nature* (Rochester, Vt.: Park Street Press, 2012), 384-386.

new versions appear and either die out or become increasingly habitual, there are progressively fewer remaining potentialities that have not already been explored...However, no amount of creativity expressed within the context of any morphic field at any level of complexity can explain the appearance of a new field itself for the very first time.”⁴¹ Again, Sheldrake emphasizes that nothing in his hypothesis explains, or proposes to explain, the First Instance—the creative appearance of an entirely new morphic field.

Memory as Morphic Field – As in past, so in present

Sheldrake’s definition of memory does not involve the neurological embedding of past experiences, but rather the ability of the brain to “tune into” the past through the process of morphic resonance. As he writes, “What we remember is not inscribed in the brain but depends on morphic resonance. We remember because we resonate with ourselves in the past.”⁴² He continues “When we consider memory, this hypothesis leads to a very different approach from the traditional one. The key concept of morphic resonance is that similar things influence similar things across both space and time. The amount of influence depends on the degree of similarity. Most organisms are more similar to themselves in the past than they are to any other organism. I am more like me five minutes ago than I am like any of you; all of us are more like ourselves in the past than like anyone else...If I start riding a bicycle, for example, the pattern of activity of my nervous system and my muscles, in response to balancing on the bicycle, immediately tunes me in by similarity to all the previous occasions on which I have ridden a bicycle. The

41 Ibid.

42 Rupert Sheldrake, *The Presence of the Past: Morphic Resonance and the Memory of Nature* (Rochester, Vt.: Park Street Press, 2012), 237.

experience of bicycle riding is given by cumulative morphic resonance to all those past occasions. It is not a verbal or intellectual memory; it is a body memory of riding a bicycle.”⁴³

Sheldrake views short-term memory as the remembering of patterns rather than specifics. These patterns provide us with mental concepts, or with the key components of spoken sounds, “Our short-term memory for words and phrases enables us to remember them long enough to grasp the connections between them, and understand their meanings. We most often remember meanings – patterns of connection – rather than the actual words. It is relatively easy to summarize the gist of a recent conversation, not to reproduce it verbatim. The same with written language: you may be able to recall facts and ideas from the preceding chapters of this book, but you are unlikely to recall a single sentence word for word.”⁴⁴ However, as I discuss later in this thesis, remembering movie lines is (usually) very specific. Although some famous movie lines have been slightly changed in popular memory, most remain true to the lines as spoken in the film. Sheldrake would consider these lines to be recalled rather than recognized when spoken by a person, but (at least) recognized when heard by a listener. “Familiarity usually results in a habituated unawareness. It is experienced consciously through recognition. Recognition is the awareness that a present experience is also remembered: we know that we were in this place before, or met this person somewhere, or came across this fact or idea. But we may not be able to recall where or when, or recall a person’s name. ...Normally we recognize more easily than we recall. I may recognize a plant but not recall its name. But if someone reminds me of the name,

43 Rupert Sheldrake, “Part I - Mind, Memory, and Archetype Morphic Resonance and the Collective Unconscious,” *Psychological Perspectives: A Quarterly Journal of Jungian Thought* 18, no. 1 (1987), 22.

44 Rupert Sheldrake, *The Presence of the Past: Morphic Resonance and the Memory of Nature* (Rochester, Vt.: Park Street Press, 2012), 245.

I recognize it at once.”⁴⁵ I return to this recall/recognition difference later when discussing well-known movie lines. While recognition is an important factor in the use by the public of well-known lines, recall is absolutely essential in their retransmission and their ability to become memes. In this context, both recall and recognition will optimally involve not just remembering the line itself, but also the film in which it was spoken, the context of the line and the actor and/or character who spoke the line.

Society as Morphic Field - Society as memory

A key part of Sheldrake’s hypothesis of morphic resonance and morphic fields is that there are social and cultural morphic fields which maintain, instruct, reinforce, and provide cohesion to societies and their members, whether those societies be animal or human. As he writes, “My hypothesis is that societies have social and cultural morphic fields which embrace and organize all that resides within them. Although comprised of thousands and thousands of individual human beings, the society can function and respond as a unified whole via the characteristics of its morphic field...The concept of morphic fields containing in-built memory helps to explain many features of society: for example, there are traditions, customs, and manners which enable societies to retain their organizing principles—their autonomy, pattern, structure, and organization—even though there is a continuous turnover of individuals through the cycles of birth and death. This is similar to the way in which the morphogenetic field of the human being coordinates the entire body even though the cells and tissues within the body are continuously changing.”⁴⁶ Just as a human body replaces many of its cells over a period of years, so

45 Ibid., 243.

46 Rupert Sheldrake, “Part II - Society, Spirit & Ritual: Morphic Resonance and the Collective Unconscious,” *Psychological Perspectives: A Quarterly Journal of Jungian Thought* 18, no. 2 (1987), 320-331.

does a society replace every one of its members over a longer period of time? Both human and societal bodies, however, still continue to function as a whole. In each case, Sheldrake's theory would suggest that it is a morphic field which keeps that functioning form as a stable and viable unit. He also emphasizes that no morphic field is an island; all fields are components of nested hierarchies of fields, all mutually influencing each other through morphic resonance.

Morphic fields have a stabilizing and conservative effect; they cannot in themselves account for the initiation of change. Such changes depend on a variety of factors, including contact or conflict between different societies, classes, or cultural systems; on changes in the environment; on the spread of new technologies like television and mobile telephones; and so on. Here, as elsewhere, the origin of new fields depends on circumstances and on creative processes that cannot be explained in terms of repetition. But once new patterns of activity have arisen, the spread and adoption of these innovations may well be facilitated by morphic resonance.⁴⁷ ..Morphic fields have some of the characteristics that Dawkins attributes to memes: they are 'living structures,' propagated within societies by a process that in a broad sense can be called imitation. But cultural morphic fields are not atomic units of culture; like all other types of morphic fields, they are structured in nested hierarchies of fields. And they are not passed on solely by imitation, but their acquisition is favoured by morphic resonance.⁴⁸

As Sheldrake confirms, a society is a morphic field, a self-perpetuating entity with a life and collective mind of its own.

A society, when it enjoys a long life and becomes highly organized, acquires a structure and qualities which are largely independent of the qualities of the individuals who enter into its composition and take part for a brief time in its life. It becomes an organized system of forces which has a life of its own, tendencies of its own, a power of moulding all its component individuals, and a power of perpetuating itself as a self-identical system, subject only to slow and gradual change.⁴⁹

47 Rupert Sheldrake, *The Presence of the Past: Morphic Resonance and the Memory of Nature* (Rochester, Vt.: Park Street Press, 2012), 299-301.

48 Ibid., 296-297.

49 Ibid., 302-303.

To maintain the collective life and mind of a society, it is necessary that new members be initiated into the appropriate behaviour system of the society. This is done initially by imitation, followed increasingly by morphic resonance: “All the patterns of activity characteristic of a given culture can be regarded as morphic fields. The more often they are repeated, the more strongly stabilized they will be. But because of the bewildering variety of culture-specific morphic fields...all have to be learned. An individual is initiated into particular patterns of behaviour by other members of the society. Then as the process of learning begins, usually by imitation, the performance of a characteristic pattern of behaviour brings the individual into morphic resonance with all those who have carried out this pattern in the past. Consequently, learning is facilitated as the individual 'tunes in' to specific morphic fields.”⁵⁰ Sheldrake proposes that a member of a society learns the appropriate patterns of behaviour from other members, and that this is done initially by imitation. As the learning process continues, the member enters into (morphic) resonance with all those who have carried out those patterns of behaviour in the past, and that resonance facilitates the further learning of those behaviours. In effect, the individual is taught by fellow members both present and past.

Schools as Morphic Field - Sharing tradition

Sheldrake sees “schools” as morphic fields which evolve and strengthen over time, as a result of contributions of previous members of the school. While “school” can also include actual, physical schools, Sheldrake refers here to schools of philosophy or art or other shared approaches of common intellectual and artistic endeavour. He states that, “‘Schools of thought’ or ‘schools of art’ [are] another area of traditions in which groups of people share in a common ideal and a common pattern of activity. Here again, artistic and philosophical traditions make more sense when considered in terms of

50 Rupert Sheldrake, *Morphic Resonance: The Nature of Formative Causation* (Rochester, Vt.: Park Street Press, 2009), 190.

organizing and enduring morphic fields ... If we think of paintings as having morphic fields for their actual structures, we can then see how a kind of 'building up' occurs through morphic resonance. A painting in a given school is created; other people see it. Every time a new painting in that school is made, it alters the field of the school. There is a kind of cumulative effect."⁵¹ The same can be said of schools of architecture, sculpture, literature, and music...The effects of different schools on each other involve an influence – literally, a flowing in – of forms, styles, and spirit. Such transfers between traditions as well as transmission within a tradition are morphic resonances."⁵² Later in this thesis, I investigate the possibility that dialogue in various genres of film can have a certain resonance as a result of the morphic fields of those genres just as Sheldrake describes the morphic fields of various schools of art and their paintings. Over the years various genres have arisen (or been developed) in the film industry. These genres resonate with those who create the films, and with the audiences which experience them, resulting in an affinity by many people toward specific genres.

Similar to schools with their styles of art are fields of science with their own paradigms. Sheldrake notes that paradigms in science can be seen as morphic fields, in that once those paradigms—the consensus as to the nature of reality and how problems should be solved—are established, they (and the social groups which have adopted those paradigms) become strongly conservative (entrenched habits) with a very powerful resistance to change.⁵³

51 Rupert Sheldrake, "Part II - Society, Spirit & Ritual: Morphic Resonance and the Collective Unconscious," *Psychological Perspectives: A Quarterly Journal of Jungian Thought* 18, no. 2 (1987), 320-331.

52 Rupert Sheldrake, *The Presence of the Past: Morphic Resonance and the Memory of Nature* (Rochester, Vt.: Park Street Press, 2012), 321-322.

53 Rupert Sheldrake, "Part II - Society, Spirit & Ritual: Morphic Resonance and the Collective Unconscious," *Psychological Perspectives: A Quarterly Journal of Jungian Thought* 18, no. 2 (1987).

Crowds as Morphic Field - The group as one

Sheldrake has gone beyond physical manifestations in his hypothesis of morphic resonance to inquire into the possible existence of morphic fields for thoughts and emotions. I suggest that an example would be the emotionally-charged morphic field of a lynch mob which can affect other humans who enter the range of that field. In short, a human's potential for anger is supported and increased if he or she enters the vicinity of an angry mob and its morphic field. Of course, the same applies when one enters a cathedral where worshippers are chanting or praying; this time with a positive, soothing effect on the person's emotions. These fields of mob and worshippers are fields of the moment, but include the emotional memories of past lynch mobs or past worshippers in cathedrals.

Sheldrake suggests that when people group together—crowds, mobs, social movements, religious gatherings—each of those groups has its own morphic field. The idea of a crowd consciousness which exhibits a collective, unified behaviour is well-studied. Sheldrake sees such behaviour as a collective experience of collective feelings and actions influenced by a collective impulse, resulting from the coming together of those in the group. He states that, "If we think of societies and social groups as being coordinated by morphic fields, then we realize that the groups themselves come together and dissolve as teams do—but their fields are more enduring. We are in these fields virtually all the time: family fields, or national fields, or local fields, the fields of various groups to which we belong. We are contained within these larger collective patterns of organization much of the time but because they are

always present, we cease to be aware of them.”⁵⁴ Elsewhere he writes “The behaviour of schools, flocks, herds, and packs of social animals suggests the idea that fields embrace all the individuals within them. The idea of such fields of influence may also shed much light on human collective behaviour. Crowds, for example, have often been compared to composite organisms, with their own laws and properties. A useful classification of crowds by Elias Canetti distinguishes several types with quite distinct properties, which from the present point of view can be taken to represent different types of crowd field. One type is the open crowd.”⁵⁵ As Canetti writes, “The crowd, suddenly there where there was nothing before, is a mysterious and universal phenomenon ... As soon as it exists at all, it wants to consist of more people: the urge to grow is the first and supreme attribute of the crowd ... The open crowd exists so long as it grows; it disintegrates as soon as it stops growing.”⁵⁶ Canetti contrasts this extreme type of the spontaneous crowd with the closed crowd: “The closed crowd renounces growth and puts the stress on permanence. The first thing to be noticed about it is that it has a boundary ... The boundary prevents disorderly increase, but it also makes it more difficult for the crowd to disperse and so postpones its dissolution. In this way the crowd sacrifices its chance of growth, but gains in staying power. It is protected from outside influences which would become hostile and dangerous and it sets its hope on repetition.”⁵⁷ Despite their differences, Canetti sees that a critical element of both types of crowds is *equality*. Moreover, the crowd has a goal or direction: “A goal outside the individual members and common to all of them drives underground all the private differing goals which are fatal to the

54 Rupert Sheldrake, “Part II - Society, Spirit & Ritual: Morphic Resonance and the Collective Unconscious,” *Psychological Perspectives: A Quarterly Journal of Jungian Thought* 18, no. 2 (1987), 320-331.

55 Rupert Sheldrake, *The Presence of the Past: Morphic Resonance and the Memory of Nature* (Rochester, Vt.: Park Street Press, 2012), 304.

56 Elias Canetti, *Crowds and Power*, trans. Carol Stewart (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1984), 16.

57 *Ibid.*, 17.

crowd as such. Direction is essential for the continuing existence of the crowd ... A crowd exists so long as it has an unattained goal...Crowds are temporary, and precisely for this reason can reveal to us some of the features of collective social organization that are so easily taken for granted in more permanent groups.”⁵⁸ We can see that the goal to which Sheldrake (and Canetti) refer can also be labelled as the *attractor*—the focal point of a morphic field that attracts everything which that morphic field encompasses. Canetti considers the need for a goal (direction) to be one of the key attributes of a crowd.⁵⁹ It is not necessarily the goal of every member of the crowd, but it is the goal of the crowd as a whole. Sheldrake refers also to William McDougall’s work on the group mind, which is discussed later in this chapter: “William McDougall...theorized that a group mind existed which included all members of a society and which had its own thoughts, its own traditions, and its own memories. If we think of such a group mind as an aspect of the morphic field of the society, it would indeed have its own memory since all morphic fields have in-built memory through morphic resonance.”⁶⁰ I suggest, and discuss later, that such a group mind would indeed have its own morphic fields which could resonate with the morphic fields of motion picture dialogue.”

Traditions as Morphic Field - Resonating with the past

Sheldrake sees culturally-transmitted tradition as providing numerous examples of morphic fields, fields which not only teach but maintain order and cohesiveness within a society. As he writes, “Like the

58 Rupert Sheldrake, *The Presence of the Past: Morphic Resonance and the Memory of Nature* (Rochester, Vt.: Park Street Press, 2012), 305.

59 Elias Canetti, *Crowds and Power*, trans. Carol Stewart (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1984), 29.

60 Rupert Sheldrake, “Part II - Society, Spirit & Ritual: Morphic Resonance and the Collective Unconscious,” *Psychological Perspectives: A Quarterly Journal of Jungian Thought* 18, no. 2 (1987), 320-331.

morphic fields of systems at all levels of complexity, social and cultural fields are stabilized by morphic resonance from similar systems in the past, including self-resonance from the systems' own past.”⁶¹ He probes the transmission of language and behaviour via imitation, arguing that, “According to the hypothesis of formative causation all such learning is facilitated by morphic resonance, both from those who are directly imitated and from all those who have done the same things before.”⁶² A frequent theme in many initiation rites is the death of a person's previous social or religious identity and the birth of the new, with behaviours maintained by “morphic resonance from previous members of the society.”⁶³ For Sheldrake, morphic fields are the glue that holds society together. They provide connection with the society's past and its traditions, and interconnectivity with all fellow members of the society's present. The society's morphic field is not just shared but celebrated as that which binds its members together, and which provides the stability to allow all members to live together, work together, and share in that society's heritage, present and future.

Place as Morphic Field - The power of place

Sheldrake suggests that if we consider that there are morphic fields for “minds, societies, animals, and plants, it would also seem sensible to think of fields for ecosystems, or even for particular places.” In fact, he notes, there is a “science of places.” As he writes, “Geomancy is an ancient system for exploring the interrelationship of places and features of places; for locating power spots for building cathedrals and churches and temples, and for avoiding unsuitable places which have harmful influences. In ancient

61 Rupert Sheldrake, *The Presence of the Past: Morphic Resonance and the Memory of Nature* (Rochester, Vt.: Park Street Press, 2012), 311.

62 Ibid., 317.

63 Ibid., 318-319.

Europe there is no doubt that stone circles such as Stonehenge (and other places of ritual importance) were chosen geomantically, in relation to the lay of the land, the flow of water, the direction of wind, the vegetation, and the orientation to the sun.”⁶⁴ I suggest that not only do morphic fields exist in such places as Sheldrake describes, but that they can be found in far more mundane locations—such as movie theatres. I pursue this idea later in this thesis.

Sports as Morphic Field - The field of the team

Sheldrake sees groups and crowds of people gathered together as one form of morphic field with *teams* being a particular subset of that type of field. The difference between team morphic fields and group morphic fields is that teams are groups of people that not only come together but also share specific goals and train to achieve a cooperative unity which randomly-collected groups do not, and cannot, have. As Sheldrake writes, “Teams are another kind of temporary group of which most of us have had direct experience. Here too, although a team is more structured and disciplined than a crowd, the individual is subordinate to the collective behaviour directed towards a common goal – in many games, such as football, quite literally the scoring of goals.”⁶⁵ Michael Novak expressed that, “When a collection of individuals first jells as a team, truly begins to react as a five-headed or eleven-headed unit rather than as an aggregate of five or eleven individuals, you can almost hear the click: a new kind of reality comes into existence ... A basketball team, for example, can click in and out of this reality many times during the same game; and each player, as well as the coach and fans, can detect the difference ...

64 Rupert Sheldrake, “Part III - Society, Spirit & Ritual: Morphic Resonance and the Collective Unconscious,” *Psychological Perspectives: A Quarterly Journal of Jungian Thought* 19, no. 1 (1988), 64–78.

65 Rupert Sheldrake, *The Presence of the Past: Morphic Resonance and the Memory of Nature* (Rochester, Vt.: Park Street Press, 2012), 304-305.

For those who have participated in a team that has known the click of communality, the experience is unforgettable.”⁶⁶ Whether they are aware of it or not, teams purposely work to create strong morphic fields. The “click of communality” to which Novak refers is the sudden “surrender” of the team’s members to the larger morphic field of the team; the greater field which combines the potential and skills of all team members and includes the combined power of all of the nested morphic fields of those members.

Another example that demonstrates morphic fields in the context of audience reaction/participation is my own personal experience at a sports event. For some years I lived in Vancouver, Canada. One day friends invited me to join them that evening at an ice hockey game in the local arena. I knew nothing about hockey. I had no interest in watching sports, and had not been to any sports event—or even watched one on television—in many years. Yet, I did not want to reject their generosity, and I accepted their offer to join them. That evening I sat next to them in the stands as we watched the game. I had never seen a hockey game, neither live nor on television. I had no idea of the rules. I did know that the object seemed to be to knock something called a *puck* into one of the goals at the ends of the playing area. However, the action was so fast that my untrained eye could seldom even see *where* the puck was. At the end of the evening I was hoarse. I had spent most of the evening on my feet, screaming, yelling and waving my arms. I had become a (very) active member of the audience—with almost no idea of what was happening on the ice. I had been totally immersed in the morphic field of the event.

66 Michael Novak, *Joy of Sports, Revised: Endzones, Bases, Baskets, Balls, and the Consecration of the American Spirit*, Rev Sub edition (Lanham, Md: Madison Books, 1993), 143.

John Hocking appears to have an explanation for my behaviour at the hockey game. He has studied crowd behaviour and spectators' reactions at sporting events and argues that the resulting "intra-audience" effects at a "stadium event" may contribute to the degree of arousal, excitement, and enjoyment experienced by crowd members. These intra-audience effects are a major factor in making attendance at a live sports event a very different experience from viewing the same event on television. Hocking suggests that "All else being equal, a large crowd would be expected to produce greater effects than a smaller one," "A tightly packed crowd would generally contribute to larger effects than a less dense crowd," "greater intensity/volume would produce greater effects than less," and "Indoor arenas...should contribute to greater audience effects than outdoor arenas." He suggests that "Such effects probably account for the large numbers of people who invest considerable resources to attend sports events even when they are televised."⁶⁷ I suggest that underlying this observation is that at a stadium a spectator is immersed in an extremely strong morphic field, while at home he is lacking the experience of that field.

Arthur Marr writes that "the meme of football is not just a compendium of rules, but comprises the memory of the somatic responses that occur while watching (excitement, depression), the natural feeling of elation that occurs with a high state of alertness, the virtual extension of control over all those partisans of the losing team, the constantly changing and stimulating prediction error that occurs as one play after another unfolds, the smell and taste of hot dogs and beer, the camaraderie of friends, and so

⁶⁷ John E. Hocking, "Sports and Spectators: Intra-Audience Effects," *Journal of Communication* 32, no. 1 (March 1, 1982), 100–108.

on.”⁶⁸ Although Marr uses the word “meme,” I propose that a more apt word for the *experience* at an actual football game is “morphic field.”

Theatre as Morphic Field

These are not Sheldrake's thoughts but rather this author's own observation. In 1952, American author, editor and columnist Clifton Fadiman attended two events in New York City, each of which I consider to superbly describe the experience of a powerful theatrical morphic field. I briefly highlight selections from his column here and include most of his entire column in an appendix for two reasons: one is that I feel it does a marvellous job of capturing the electrifying experience of being a member of an audience at two extraordinary events, and the other is that this writing from the past is so brilliant that it deserves to be displayed to as many people as possible.

Fadiman began his column noting that, “English scholar and poet A. E. Housman once said he felt confident a line of poetry was good if reading it made the skin of his face prickle. A similar phenomenon has often been noted in the theater. When something great is happening onstage you can almost feel a kind of electrical discharge from the audience. This is generated only when the attention is so condensed, so absolute, and so uniform that it creates a force peculiar to itself.”⁶⁹ The first event that Fadiman attended was a performance by singer (and actress) Judy Garland, discussed elsewhere in this thesis for her starring role in *The Wizard of Oz*. As Fadiman wrote,

68 Arthur Marr, “Dawkin’s Bad Idea: Memes, Genes and the Metaphors of Psychology,” accessed July 7, 2016, <http://www.lycaenum.org/~sputnik/Memetics/zzdawkins.html>.

69 Clifton Fadiman, *Party of One: The Selected Writings of Clifton Fadiman* (The World Publishing Company, 1955).

She led off with a song about the great performers who have played the Palace in the past...She sang half a dozen of the melodies, gay or sad, that she had introduced in various Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer musicals...[and] she finished how else? with 'Over the Rainbow.' By that time you were pretty well convinced that Judy Garland could sing anything except suggestive songs and the phonier kind of operatic aria...Where lay the magic? ... She breathed the last phrases of "Over the Rainbow" and cried out its universal, unanswerable query, "Why can't I?" it was as though the bewildered hearts of all the people in the world had moved quietly together and become one, shaking in Judy's throat, and there breaking. 70

A week or so later, Fadiman attended another event. It was a reading ("half read, half talked") by the First Drama Quartette, comprised of actors Charles Laughton, Charles Boyer, Cedric Hardwicke, and Agnes Moorehead. The reading was from "Don Juan in Hell," a two-hour dialogue within George Bernard Shaw's *Man and Superman*. Fadiman wrote, "Judy Garland...had been pure feeling...and here was Shaw at his most unconcessive, writing...for a highly intelligent posterity...Yet the same lightning struck both audiences... In both cases attention was so condensed, so absolute, so uniform as to become raptness, the feeling of being unexpectedly greater than oneself...The result: great theater and the audience knew it...The theater dead? I have rarely seen it more alive than when Judy Garland, crouched on the edge of the stage in a darkened vaudeville house that had seen a thousand animal acts and brassy comedians, voiced a lost child's pitiful lament; than when three men and a woman, assisted by nothing but their brains and throat boxes, thought aloud for two solid hours while we animal creatures joyed in the revelation that we were also rational souls."⁷¹ When examining Clifton Fadiman's article through the lens of Sheldrake's theory, Judy Garland (or the Shaw troupe) can be seen as a morphic unit, the theater as a morphic unit, and the audience itself as a morphic unit—composed of hundreds of smaller morphic units (the individual members of the audience). All of these morphic units—performers, the theater, and the audience—combine to form the higher level morphic unit with its own morphic field which forms the experience so powerfully described by Fadiman.

70 Ibid.

71 Ibid.

Theories in other disciplines related to morphic fields and morphic resonance

Although Rupert Sheldrake's hypothesis of formative causation arose out of the field of biology and his study of plants, his concepts of morphic fields and morphic resonance are not foreign to other fields of study. Over time, philosophers, scientists, and theorists have proposed a wide range of related theories. This section presents a few of these theories and I suggest that many, if not all, correspond at least in part to those of Sheldrake.

Architect Christopher Alexander recognizes the significance—and necessity—of patterns. In his book *The Timeless Way of Building*⁷² he proposes that in designing environments for humans, it is necessary to honour those patterns (I would call them morphic fields) which have been followed throughout the world for many centuries. He states, "There is one timeless way of building. It is a thousand years old, and the same today as it has ever been. The great traditional buildings of the past, the villages and tents and temples in which man feels at home, have always been made by people who were very close to the centre of this way. It is not possible to make great buildings, or great towns, beautiful places, places where you feel yourself, places where you feel alive, except by following this way. And, as you will see, this way will lead anyone who looks for it to buildings which are themselves as ancient in their form, as the trees and hills, and as our faces are."⁷³ It is important to note that Alexander is discussing architectural and design memes, patterns which can be thousands of years old. Alexander observed that

72 Christopher Alexander, *The Timeless Way of Building* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979).

73 Ibid., 7.

these building patterns reflected the process of morphogenesis, and can even be seen to recognize the process of morphic self-resonance.

In real morphogenesis the form of what is coming, or what is about to be, is always drawn from the form of what was in the moment just before. That is, things are always going like that. If a tree is growing for 500 years, it is continuously unfolding from its previous state, and then what we see and recognize is first of all in itself a process. But even if you just look at it in its static state, it is at that moment the end product of transformations that have been going on, and on, and on. And these are the things which give it shape, form, and substance...Traditional society also managed to do something very much like that – that is to say, morphogenesis -- with buildings, plazas, streets, fences, windows and so forth.⁷⁴

Alexander further noted that these patterns were not simply atomistic but that morphogenesis involved nested hierarchies, exactly as Sheldrake's hypothesis describes morphic fields.

Morphogenesis is of the essence in the way a thing achieves not only its beauty, but its adaptive resources and its organization, which is beautifully adapted internally. And this morphogenesis happens at a tremendous number of levels. ... I mean that hundreds of systems at different levels of scale are all adapting, moving forward, adapting again, and so forth and getting their shape in this way⁷⁵

Every place is given its character by certain patterns of events that keep on happening there.... These patterns of events are locked in with certain geometric patterns in the space. Indeed, each building and each town is ultimately made out of these patterns in the space, and out of nothing else; they [patterns in the space] are the atoms and molecules from which a building or a town is made.⁷⁶

Alexander sees these patterns as being solutions used “a million times over” whenever individuals and communities have encountered problems during their course of their building, whether of an individual home or an entire community. It is interesting to note that Alexander sees the same solution as being

74 Christopher Alexander, “Sustainability and Morphogenesis: The Birth of a Living World” (*Schumacher Lecture*, Bristol, UK, October 30, 2004).

75 Ibid.

76 Christopher Alexander, *The Timeless Way of Building* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), x.

able to be repeated “without ever doing it the same twice.” This demonstrates what Sheldrake proposes about morphic fields, in that they allow for extensive creativity in the many different paths that can be followed in order to arrive at the same goal—the attractor—or endpoint—of the morphic field. “The elements of this language are entities called patterns. Each pattern describes a problem which occurs over and over again in our environment, and then describes the core of the solution to that problem, in such a way that you can use this solution a million times over, without ever doing it the same way twice.”⁷⁷ Alexander codified these patterns in his books *A Pattern Language*⁷⁸ and *The Timeless Way of Building*.⁷⁹ As the PatternLanguage.com website states: “A pattern language is a network of patterns that call upon one another. An individual house might, for example, call upon the patterns described under the names of half-hidden garden, light from two sides in every room, variation of ceiling height, bed alcove, etc. Patterns help us remember insights and knowledge about design and can be used in combination to create designs.”⁸⁰ Alexander’s work is an example of not only an awareness of morphic fields (patterns) but the creative application of those fields to create homes, neighbourhoods and communities that reflect the humanness of these age-old patterns and their compatibility with the everyday life of the people who inhabit those built areas.

Attractor as Morphic Field

77 Christopher Alexander, et al., *A Pattern Language: Towns, Buildings, Construction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977), x.

78 Christopher Alexander et al., *A Pattern Language: Towns, Buildings, Construction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977).

79 Christopher Alexander, *The Timeless Way of Building* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979).

80 *Pattern Language*, <https://www.patternlanguage.com/aims/intro.html>

Sociologist John Urry has written about attractors in a manner which suggests they have a quality similar to that of the term *attractors* as used by Rupert Sheldrake. Sheldrake sees the attractor as the end-point of the patterning activity of morphic fields. As Urry writes, “The emergence of patterning within any given system stems from 'attractors'. If a dynamic system does not move over time through all possible parts of a potential or phase space but instead occupies a restricted part of it, then this is said to result from an attractor.”⁸¹ I suggest that one could simply replace “An attractor and set of feedback mechanisms” with the phrase with “The Fordist morphic field.” Instead of “feedback mechanisms” what can be seen instead is the continual pull of the attractor to keep the attracted (society, in this case) within the boundaries of the morphic field.

Collective Conscious as Morphic Field

Rupert Sheldrake considers that Emile Durkheim’s “conscience collective” is another term for Sheldrake’s own morphic field as it pertains to a society. As he writes, “Many anthropologists have commented on an almost indefinable "something" which holds the members of the society together. French sociologist Emile Durkheim spoke of this as the ‘conscience collective’ (in French, the word conscience means both conscience and consciousness). He believed that one of the major functions of the ‘conscience collective’ was to maintain the cohesion of the social group. It behaved similarly to a group field, and many of the activities of the group consciousness were concerned with maintaining and stabilizing the continued existence of the group field itself.”⁸²

81 John Urry, *Global Complexity*, First edition (Malden, MA: Polity, 2002), 26.

82 Rupert Sheldrake, “Part II - Society, Spirit & Ritual: Morphic Resonance and the Collective Unconscious,” *Psychological Perspectives: A Quarterly Journal of Jungian Thought* 18, no. 2 (1987), 320-331.

Collective Mind as Morphic Field (Sigmund Freud)

Sheldrake writes that “Sigmund Freud, too, was driven to the conclusion that there are not just individual but collective minds.” As Freud wrote, “I have taken as the basis of my whole position the existence of a collective mind, in which mental processes occur just as they do in the mind of the individual ... This gives rise to two further questions: how much can we attribute to psychic continuity in the sequence of generations? And what are the ways and means employed by one generation in order to hand on its mental states to the next one?”⁸³ Sheldrake comments that “Freud concluded that an important part of this collective mental inheritance was transmitted unconsciously.”⁸⁴ Freud proposes two insufficiently answered questions of psychic continuity, and suggests that there is some sort of “inheritance of psychical dispositions.” Sheldrake would suggest that this inheritance is transmitted through morphic resonance.

Collective Unconscious as Morphic Field (Carl Jung)

Sheldrake sees Carl Jung’s collective unconscious as “very similar” to his own theory of morphic resonance. However, where Jung appeared to limit his theory to humans (and perhaps animals to some extent), Sheldrake sees the overall theory as applicable to the “entire universe.” Jung discussed his view in his commentary to Richard Wilhelm’s *The Secret of the Golden Flower: A Chinese Book of Life*. He stated that, “It must be pointed out that just as the human body shows a common anatomy over and

⁸³ Sigmund Freud, *The Freud Reader*, ed. Peter Gay, Reissue edition (W. W. Norton & Company, 1995), 511.

⁸⁴ Rupert Sheldrake, *The Presence of the Past: Morphic Resonance and the Memory of Nature* (Rochester, Vt.: Park Street Press, 2012), 302-303.

above all racial differences, so, too, the psyche possesses a common substratum transcending all differences in culture and consciousness. I have called this substratum the collective unconscious.”⁸⁵ There is no way of knowing where their roots first began, but Jung is clear about their continuity through the history of humanity to the present.

Sheldrake discusses the similarities—and differences—of their two theories in his article in *Psychological Perspectives: A Quarterly Journal of Jungian Thought*: “The approach I am putting forward is very similar to Jung's idea of the collective unconscious. The main difference is that Jung's idea was applied primarily to human experience and human collective memory. What I am suggesting is that a very similar principle operates throughout the entire universe, not just in human beings.”⁸⁶ Sheldrake sees Jung’s archetypes as composite or averaging of previous patterns. Sheldrake sees Jung’s archetypes, which have been “built up by collective repetition,” as the same as morphic fields, which have become habitual through repetition. Just as Jung saw archetypes as “pooled or averaged,” Sheldrake sees morphic fields as establishing “probabilities” of forms and patterns, those probabilities increasing the more frequently that morphic resonance causes the pattern to be repeated.

Doxa as Morphic Field

85 Wilhelm Richard, *International Library of Psychology: The Secret of the Golden Flower: A Chinese Book of Life*, Revised edition (London: Routledge, 1999), 87.

86 Rupert Sheldrake, “Part II - Society, Spirit & Ritual: Morphic Resonance and the Collective Unconscious,” *Psychological Perspectives: A Quarterly Journal of Jungian Thought* 18, no. 2 (1987), 320-331.

Pierre Bourdieu discusses three interlocking terms which can be seen as related to Sheldrake's theory: *Field*, *Doxa*, and *Habitus*. Wacquant's description of Bourdieu's fields makes very clear how similar they are to those proposed by Sheldrake, as does Bourdieu's own writing: "The various spheres of life, art, science, religion, the economy, the law, politics, etc., tend to form distinct microcosms endowed with their own rules, regularities, and forms of authority – what Bourdieu calls fields. A field is, in the first instance, a structured space of positions, a force field that imposes its specific determinations upon all those who enter it."⁸⁷ A "field of forces" that "imposes its specific determinations upon all those who enter it," can certainly be seen as the equivalent of Sheldrake's societal, cultural and behavioural morphic fields.

Doxa can be seen as the top level morphic field of a society, composed of all the sub-fields representing the various components of that society. These can include—to mention only a very few—such areas as economic classes, professions, social and ethnic groups, religious organizations, and areas of study. *Doxa* can be seen as a complex of morphic fields which together create a "self-evident" reality. As Rodney Benson writes, "Bourdieu defines *Doxa* as 'the universe of the tacit presuppositions that we accept as the natives of a certain society. But there is also a specific *doxa*, a system of presuppositions inherent in membership in a field: when we belong to the sociological field, we accept a whole series of scientific or semi-scientific oppositions that are often oppositions belonging to the encompassing social world."⁸⁸

87 Loïc Wacquant, ed., *Pierre Bourdieu and Democratic Politics: The Mystery of Ministry* (Malden, MA: Polity, 2005), 7-8.

88 Rodney Benson, *Bourdieu and the Journalistic Field* (Malden, MA: Polity, 2005).

Bourdieu wrote that doxa is “an adherence to relations of order which, because they structure inseparably both the real world and the thought world, are accepted as self-evident.”⁸⁹

Habitus is doxa at the individual level, although Bourdieu suggests it can also apply to a collective consciousness. It is the internal structures through which we view external structures. *Habitus* sets limits on our thoughts and actions but it does not generate those thoughts and actions. As Bourdieu has written, “The habitus is not only a structuring structure, which organizes practices and the perception of practices, but also a structured structure: the principle of division into logical classes which organizes the perception of the social world is itself the product of internalization of the division into social classes. Each class condition is defined, simultaneously, by its intrinsic properties and by the relational properties which it derives from its position in the system of class conditions, which is also a system of differences.”⁹⁰ According to Bourdieu, habitus has the potential to influence our actions and to construct our social world as well as being influenced by the external. The internal and external worlds are viewed by Bourdieu as interdependent spheres and because of the fluid nature of habitus (changing with age, travel, education or parenthood) no two individual’s habitus will be the same. A key point within Bourdieu’s theory is that habitus constrains but does not determine thought and action, if an individual is both reflective and aware of their own habitus they possess the potential to observe social fields with relative objectivity. Bourdieu claimed that the ability to reflect upon ones habitus is essential to social theoretical discourse and research by the premise that all fields are interdependent and not separate from the ‘other’. *Habitus* can be seen as our own specific, unique, individual morphic field, and

89 Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, trans. Richard Nice (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984), 166-167.

90 Ibid.

doxa as the more general morphic field at the level of society but which has its important, and constricting, influence on our own individual doxa. Both consist of complexes of morphic fields.

Frame as Morphic Field

Framing is a window, a mental structure, a paradigm through which we perceive and judge a person, a situation, a choice, an opportunity, even reality itself. It is important to note that framing demarks what we see, and what we do not see; what is true, and what is not true. Inside the frame is truth and reality; outside is untruth and the non-real. If we suddenly flip and view our world through a different frame, we now know a different truth, and are likely not to notice that we have switched frames. "Common sense" is determined by the frames we unconsciously acquire.⁹¹ That frame can be seen as a type of morphic field, ever-present yet unseen. As George Lakoff writes, "Frames are the mental structures that allow human beings to understand reality—and sometimes to create what we take to be reality. Frames facilitate our most basic interactions with the world—they structure our ideas and concepts, they shape the way we reason, and they even impact how we perceive and how we act. For the most part, our use of frames is unconscious and automatic—we use them without realizing it."⁹² Lakoff also notes that "repetition can embed frames in the brain."⁹³ Repetition is a key feature of morphic fields; the more they are repeated, the stronger they become, thus the more habitual they become. As the reader can probably testify, this observation about repetition is well-known to advertisers, and it offers a clear explanation of why we see and hear so many repetitive radio and television advertisements. As Lakoff

91 Mick Winter, "A Sonic Trilogy: Sound, Ostranenie and Social Consciousness," *Master's Thesis*, University of Brighton, 2011), 25.

92 George Lakoff, *Thinking Points: Communicating Our American Values and Vision* (Macmillan, 2006), 25.

93 *Ibid.*, 37.

stresses, it is not information or data that changes minds; it is the creation of replacement frames.⁹⁴ Repetition can be a major factor in replacing those frames.⁹⁵ Frames (morphic fields) can be so powerful that people will die for them, and countries will go to war on their behalf, i.e., under their influence.

Frames can be changed, as other types of morphic fields can be changed, or better—replaced. But first the power of the frame and its resistance to change must be acknowledged. Bertolt Brecht was a pioneer in “breaking” the theatrical frame. With his *Verfremdungseffekt*, Brecht broke the invisible wall between actors and audience. When a Brechtian actor turned and talked directly to the audience, the audience in effect became part of the play, even if that audience was passive and merely heard itself being addressed “as audience.” “Breaking the fourth wall” has become a convention in itself. However, Brecht and others had more in mind than just entertainment. Brecht’s goal was to cause the audience to break out of their absorption with the play and to stop and think. Brecht’s plays were plays of ideas, and he hoped that the breaking of the frame would cause the audience to ponder the questions and observations posed by the actor who at that moment was breaking the frame. Breaking the fourth wall, breaking the frame, can be seen as Brecht’s attempt to disrupt an existing morphic field—created by a combination of the theater and the play itself—and replace it with a new, more involved, more participatory, morphic field.

94 George Lakoff, *Thinking Points: Communicating Our American Values and Vision* (Macmillan, 2006).

95 George Lakoff, *Don’t Think of an Elephant* (White River Junction, Vt: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2004), 17.

The breaking of frames, both visual and dialogic, can be seen as a factor in producing powerful cinematic memes. Superimposing one frame (dialogue) over a contrasting frame (visual)—or visual over incongruous music—is also a factor. As well, staying in-frame, when the frame itself is very powerful and reinforcing, can also lead to memorable dialogue. All of these techniques have to do with the manipulation—or at least the awareness of—morphic fields.

Genre as Morphic Field (Mikhail Bakhtin)

For Russian formalist Mikhail Bakhtin, all words have a past, a taste, a genre. As he wrote: “All words have the “taste” of a profession, a genre, a tendency, a party, a particular work, a particular person, a generation, an age group, the day and hour. Each word tastes of the context and contexts in which it has lived its socially charged life; all words and forms are populated by intentions. Contextual overtones (generic, tendentious, individualistic] are inevitable in the word.”⁹⁶ Compare Bakhtin's observations with this realization from Rupert Sheldrake: “Basically, morphic fields are fields of habit, and they’ve been set up through habits of thought, through habits of activity, and through habits of speech. Most of our culture is habitual, I mean most of our personal life, and most of our cultural life is habitual. We don’t invent the English language. We inherit the whole English language with all its habits, its turns of phrase, its usage of words, its structure, its grammar.”⁹⁷ Sheldrake writes that morphic fields contain a collective memory, and he proposes that everything has its own morphic field.

96 Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. Holquist, Michael (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1981).

97 Ken Weathersby, “Hootenanny Editor Ken Weathersby Talks with Rupert Sheldrake,” *Hootenanny Magazine*, Winter 1995-1996, <http://hootenannymagazine.org/hootenanny-archive/hootenanny-3-winter-19956/hootenanny-editor-ken-weathersby-talks-with-rupert-sheldrake/>.

Group Mind as Morphic Field (William McDougall)

Social psychologist William McDougall recognized that individuals enter into the world of, and are moulded by, a pre-existing and collective mental system which he termed in his book “The Group Mind.” As McDougall wrote, “I have argued that we may properly speak of a group mind, and that each of the most developed nations of the present time may be regarded as in process of developing a group mind.”⁹⁸ McDougall proposed that *most developed* nations develop a group mind and, as he writes, individual minds do not construct this group mind but indeed are already part of it, whether they are aware of this or not. As he wrote, “My point is that the individual minds which enter into the structure of the group mind at any moment of its life do not construct it; rather, as they come to reflective self-consciousness, they find themselves already members of the system, moulded by it, sharing in its activities, influenced by it at every moment in every thought and feeling and action in ways which they can neither fully understand nor escape from, struggle as they may to free themselves from its infinitely subtle and multitudinous forces. This system, as Maciver himself forcibly insists in another connection, “does not consist of relations that exist external to and independently of the things related, namely the minds of individuals; it consists of the same stuff as the individual minds, its threads and parts lie within these minds; but the parts in the several individual minds reciprocally imply and complement one another and together make up the system which consists wholly of them; and therefore, as I wrote, they can ‘only be described in terms of mind.’ Any society is literally a more or less organised mental system; the stuff of which it consists is mental stuff; the forces that operate within it are mental forces.”⁹⁹

98 William McDougall, *The Group Mind: A Sketch of the Principles of Collective Psychology* (Cambridge University Press, 1920), ix.

99 *Ibid.*, 11.

McDougall also states that societies are organized mental systems. One can see these mental systems as morphic fields, fields which set the patterns for how the members of the society think, feel and act.

Ideology as Morphic Field

Dick Hebdige discusses ideology, and particularly Stuart Hall's labelling of ideology as *transparent*.

Ideology can be seen as a morphic field. However, those under the influence of that morphic field do not see it at all. To them, it reveals itself as "common sense," as "natural", as "the way things are." As Hebdige writes, "Ideology by definition thrives beneath consciousness. It is here, at the level of 'normal common sense', that ideological frames of reference are most firmly sedimented and most effective, because it is here that their ideological nature is most effectively concealed. As Stuart Hall puts it: It is precisely its 'spontaneous' quality, its transparency, its 'naturalness', its refusal to be made to examine the premises on which it is founded, its resistance to change or to correction, its effect of instant recognition, and the closed circle in which it moves which makes common sense, at one and the same time, 'spontaneous', ideological and unconscious. You cannot learn, through common sense, how things are: you can only discover where they fit into the existing scheme of things. In this way, the very taken-for-grantedness is what establishes it as a medium in which its own premises and presuppositions are being rendered invisible by its apparent transparency."¹⁰⁰

Ideology is not simply a morphic field, it is a morphic field complex. It includes all of those related—and supportive—morphic fields below it; all of the lower level fields nested into it. Thus a society's morphic

¹⁰⁰ Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, New Edition (London ; New York: Routledge, 1979).

field—its overall ideology—can include religious beliefs, political views, scientific paradigms, etiquette, and a multitude of other sub-morphic fields. As Hebdige writes “Since ideology saturates everyday discourse in the form of common sense, it cannot be bracketed off from everyday life as a self-contained set of ‘political opinions’ or ‘biased views’. Neither can it be reduced to the abstract dimensions of a ‘world view’ or used in the crude Marxist sense to designate ‘false consciousness’.¹⁰¹ Instead, as Louis Althusser has pointed out: “Ideology has very little to do with ‘consciousness’. . . It is profoundly unconscious. Ideology is indeed a system of representation, but in the majority of cases these representations have nothing to do with ‘consciousness’: they are usually images and occasionally concepts, but it is above all as structures that they impose on the vast majority of men, not via their ‘consciousness’. They are perceived-accepted-suffered cultural objects and they act functionally on men via a process that escapes them.”¹⁰² While we can see the effects of biological morphic fields manifested as the form of animals and plants, we do not as easily see the effects of societal and cultural morphic fields. The deeply embedded morphic fields which have the most influence on us are invisible and we have no awareness of their existence, let alone their influence over our lives.

Ideology as Morphic Field

Slovenian philosopher Slavoj Žižek was asked: “You wrote that the only surprising thing about the 2008 financial meltdown is that it was considered a surprise. Why do you think these warnings and protests keep failing?” Žižek’s response demonstrated his understanding of how powerful a morphic field can be:

101 Ibid., 12.

102 Louis Althusser, *For Marx*, trans. Ben Brewster (New York: Verso, 2006).

“This is proof of how ideology is a lie. I don't always agree with him, but the Nobel Prize guy, Paul Krugman, I quote him. He made a very intelligent comment. A journalist asked him “Now that we know, Paul, the mistakes we were doing before, allowing banks these crazy credit schemes, do you think if we were to know all this twenty, thirty years ago that we would have done it in a different way?” He said, “No, exactly the same. It wouldn't have mattered.”...That's a very deep insight, you know? This is the power of ideology. You may know it, but you don't take it seriously. You nonetheless act in that way. I'm very much a pessimist here. I really believe in the material deficiency of ideology.”¹⁰³ Žižek makes the power of a societal morphic field very clear; that those caught up in the field are controlled by the field, whether they “know” better or not. Žižek confirms that a morphic field such as ideology controls not only how we think about something, but how we do *not* think about that “something.” Our behaviour in relation to that particular field is automatic, totally habitual, even if that behaviour conflicts with how we *think* we think about the field.

Interpellation as Morphic Field

Louis Althusser writes that “Ideological State Apparatuses (as opposed to the Repressive State Apparatuses—the Government, the Administration, the Army, the Police, the Courts, the Prisons, etc.) include Churches, Parties, Trade Unions, families, some schools, most newspapers, cultural ventures, etc. Etc.” He then describes ideology in terms which could also describe a morphic field: “I shall then suggest that ideology ‘acts’ or ‘functions’ in such a way that it ‘recruits’ subjects among the individuals (it recruits them all), or ‘transforms’ the individuals into subjects (it transforms them all) by that very precise operation which I have called interpellation or hailing, and which can be imagined along the

103 J. Nicole Jones, “Six Questions for Slavoj Žižek,” *The Stream - Harper's Magazine Blog*, November 11, 2011, <http://harpers.org/blog/2011/11/six-questions-for-slavoj-zizek/>.

lines of the most commonplace every day police (or other) hailing: 'Hey, you there!'"¹⁰⁴ I suggest that the ISAs support (are part of) the ideological morphic field of the society, and that interpellation is the very powerful "pull" of that morphic field.

Law of Mind as Morphic Field

Charles Sanders Peirce, in the late 1800s, foresaw that "laws" were likely only habits that had been acquired over the life of the universe, and were still continuing to evolve. He stated that, "Logical analysis applied to mental phenomena shows that there is but one law of mind, namely, that ideas tend to spread continuously and to affect certain others which stand to them in a peculiar relation of affectability. In this spreading they lose intensity, and especially the power of affecting others, but gain generality and become welded with other ideas."¹⁰⁵ By induction, a habit becomes established. Certain sensations, all involving one general idea, are followed each by the same reaction; and an association becomes established, whereby that general idea gets to be followed uniformly by that reaction.¹⁰⁶ Peirce suggests that the laws of the universe are simply acquired habits, as does Sheldrake one hundred years later. Interestingly, though, Peirce suggests that as ideas spread, they lose intensity and especially the power of affecting others. This would not appear to be the case with morphic fields, at least as Sheldrake sees them.

104 Ibid.

105 Charles S. Peirce, "The Logic of Interdisciplinarity. 'The Monist'-Series: Herausgegeben von Elize Bisanz," *The Monist* 2, no. 4 (July 1892), 534.

106 Ibid., 552.

Literature as Morphic Field

George Orwell's book *1984* contains an excellent example of a shared emotional morphic field. It illustrates not just a morphic field but a morphic field *intentionally* created by those who control Orwell's fictional society. As he states, "The horrible thing about the Two Minutes Hate was not that one was obliged to act a part, but that it was impossible to avoid joining it...A hideous ecstasy of fear and vindictiveness, a desire to kill, to torture, to smash faces in with a sledgehammer, seemed to flow through the whole group of people like an electric current, turning one even against one's will into a grimacing, screaming lunatic."¹⁰⁷ When the two-minute film that activates the morphic field of hate is screened on home or group *telescreens*, those watching are caught up in that hate directed towards "archenemy" Emmanuel Goldstein and his followers.

Meme as Morphic Field

In his website glossary, Sheldrake defines *meme* as: A term coined by Richard Dawkins, who defines it as "a unit of cultural inheritance, hypothesized as analogous to the particulate gene and as naturally selected by virtue of its 'phenotypic' consequences on its own survival and replication in the cultural environment."¹⁰⁸ Sheldrake sees a close similarity between his concept of morphic fields, and Dawkins' concept of memes. But he disagrees with Dawkins' apparent view of a meme as an independent unit. Dawkins defined memes specifically as "units of cultural inheritance." Later, however, after he was criticized by those with a larger view of society, he allowed as how there could also be "meme

¹⁰⁷ George Orwell, *1984*, accessed March 10, 2015, <http://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks01/0100021.txt>.

¹⁰⁸ Rupert Sheldrake, "Glossary," *Rupert Sheldrake*, accessed May 5, 2014, <http://www.sheldrake.org/research/glossary>.

complexes,” clusters of associated and mutually relevant memes. As Sheldrake notes, “Dawkins at first appeared to regard memes as atomistic units of cultural inheritance, just as he regarded genes as atomistic units of biological inheritance; and this aspect of his proposal was widely attacked by social scientists and anthropologists, most of whom think of cultures organismically, as wholes with coherent patterns of interconnection between their various elements. Dawkins responded by proposing the existence of ‘co-adapted meme complexes’, a term that Susan Blackmore shortened to ‘memplex’.¹⁰⁹ What is missing in Dawkins’ theory of memes is Sheldrake’s wider concept of morphic fields and morphic resonance: the relationship and connection through time and space of past and present morphic fields.

Mentalité as Morphic Field

The Annales School focused on the study of ordinary people with ordinary lives rather than the rich, famous and powerful. It can be seen to have illustrated the morphic fields of society, including the “human conceptions of intimate relationships, basic habits of mind, and attitudes toward the elemental passages of life.” As Patrick Hutton writes, “Briefly stated, the history of mentalities considers the attitudes of ordinary people toward everyday life. Ideas concerning childhood, sexuality, family, and death, as they have developed in European civilization, are the stuff of this new kind of history...While Annales historians are most likely to address the material realities conditioning man through economic processes, social structures, and environmental influences, those historians investigating mentalities prefer to consider the psychological realities underpinning human conceptions of intimate relationships,

¹⁰⁹ Rupert Sheldrake, *The Presence of the Past: Morphic Resonance and the Memory of Nature* (Rochester, Vt.: Park Street Press, 2012), 296-297.

basic habits of mind, and attitudes toward the elemental passages of life.”¹¹⁰ Noteworthy here is that those associated with the school recognized that shared morphic fields (mentalitiés) existed for a society, and that these fields were the foundation of relationships, mental habits, and all stages of life.

Paradigm as Morphic Field

Paradigms are “big frames”; frames on a meta level which establish the (generally unspoken) ground rules for viewing reality, whether it be by members within a specific scientific field or by an entire society. Sheldrake has written that Thomas Kuhn’s concept of changing scientific paradigms caused him to realize that the current paradigm of the genetic theory of morphogenesis was only a way station to the next paradigm change. In fact, Kuhn’s “paradigms” themselves can be seen as morphic fields, which are eventually replaced by newer morphic fields. Sheldrake writes about Kuhn “I was fortunate to get a fellowship at Harvard where I spent a year studying philosophy and history. Thomas Kuhn’s book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* had recently come out and it had a big influence on me, gave me a new perspective. It made me realize that the mechanistic theory of life was what Kuhn called a paradigm, a collectively held model of reality, a belief system. He showed that periods of revolutionary change involved the replacement of old scientific paradigms by new ones. If science had changed radically in the past, then perhaps it could change again in the future. I was very excited by that.”¹¹¹ Elsewhere, Sheldrake discusses Kuhn’s concept of paradigms further: “Science works within frameworks of belief or models of reality. Whatever does not fit in is denied or ignored; it is anomalous. The

110 Patrick H. Hutton, “The History of Mentalities: The New Map of Cultural History,” *History and Theory* 20, no. 3 (October 1, 1981), 237.

111 Rupert Sheldrake, “Rupert Sheldrake’s Autobiography,” *Rupert Sheldrake*, accessed March 12, 2015, <http://www.sheldrake.org/about-rupert-sheldrake/autobiography>.

historian of science Thomas Kuhn called these thought-patterns paradigms. During periods of what he called normal science, scientists work within the paradigm and ignore or deny anomalies. In scientific revolutions orthodox paradigms are challenged and replaced with new, larger models of reality that can incorporate previously rejected anomalies. In due course these new thought patterns become standard orthodoxies.”¹¹²

For Sheldrake, it is very clear why paradigms are so powerful, and so resistant to change. He suggests that the term “field”—as in the field of biology or the field of metallurgy—should be taken very literally. It is not just an “area” but rather a morphic field that establishes the permitted ways of seeing and doing, and is very resistant to change or replacement. As he writes, “A view of paradigms as morphic fields helps us to understand why they are so strongly conservative in nature, for once the paradigms are established, there is a large social group contributing to the consensual reality of the paradigm. A very powerful morphic resonance is evolved by this way of doing things; and that is why paradigm changes tend to be rather rare, and why they meet with strong resistance.”¹¹³ It is not just in the sciences that morphic fields for subsets of society exist. Sheldrake sees morphic fields at work in all types of professional groups.

In some ways, paradigms establish not only the permitted questions for research but the permitted answers and solutions as well. Robert K. Merton commented about the danger of paradigms when he

¹¹² Rupert Sheldrake, *Dogs That Know When Their Owners Are Coming Home: Fully Updated and Revised*, Upd Rev edition (New York: Broadway Books, 2011). Appendix.

¹¹³ Rupert Sheldrake, “Part II - Society, Spirit & Ritual: Morphic Resonance and the Collective Unconscious,” *Psychological Perspectives: A Quarterly Journal of Jungian Thought* 18, no. 2 (1987), 320-331.

wrote: "Equipped with a paradigm, sociologists may shut their eyes to strategic data not expressly called for by the paradigm...Misuse results from absolutizing the paradigm rather than using it as a tentative point of departure."¹¹⁴ Sheldrake, too, comments about built-in solutions provided—even demanded—by scientific paradigms. "But a paradigm also includes a model of the way problems can and should be solved. The Newtonian paradigm has a model of the way to solve physical problems; Newton's gravitational equations are an example of such a model. As students' progress through the stages undergraduate, graduate, and post-doctoral work, they are given increasingly difficult problems to solve. But they are always given examples of how these problems should be solved—a "style" of doing the solving—which is acceptable within the paradigm."¹¹⁵

Ship of Theseus as Morphic Field

Plutarch asked the question "if every part of a ship is replaced, is the resulting ship still the same ship as it was at the beginning?" As Plutarch wrote, "The ship wherein Theseus and the youth of Athens returned had thirty oars, and was preserved by the Athenians down even to the time of Demetrius Phalereus, for they took away the old planks as they decayed, putting in new and stronger timber in their place, insomuch that this ship became a standing example among the philosophers, for the logical question of things that grow; one side holding that the ship remained the same, and the other contending that it was not the same."¹¹⁶ Applying the morphic field theory, one could suggest

114 Gerald Holton, "Biographical Memoir Robert K. Merton," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 148, no. 4 (December 2004), <http://www.amphilsoc.org/sites/default/files/proceedings/480411.pdf>.

115 Rupert Sheldrake, "Part II - Society, Spirit & Ritual: Morphic Resonance and the Collective Unconscious," *Psychological Perspectives: A Quarterly Journal of Jungian Thought* 18, no. 2 (1987), 320-331.

116 Plutarch, *Theseus*, trans. John Dryden, 75 A.C.E., <http://classics.mit.edu/Plutarch/theseus.html>.

that even the *original* Ship of Theseus was not the Ship of Theseus. That is, it was simply a temporal/spatial expression of the actual Ship of Theseus Morphic Field — the pattern for the physical, but ephemeral, ship(s). And, if a second ship had been constructed from all of the original (and replaced) parts of the first ship, *neither* of the ships would have been the Ship of Theseus as each would still have been merely an *expression* of the Ship of Theseus Morphic Field.

Socialization as Morphic Field

For social psychologist George Herbert Mead, socialization was “the process whereby individuals unconsciously and consciously learn to act, feel, and think dependably together but not necessarily alike in behalf of human welfare outside their own, and in so doing experience intrinsic changes involving an increasing degree of social self-control, of social responsibility, and of personal enrichment and expansion.”¹¹⁷ Mead’s socialization is immersion and habit-acquisition within the large all-encompassing morphic field of a society. Mead says that this acting, feeling, and thinking is not necessarily in lockstep, which is in concert with Sheldrake’s morphic fields, which deal in probability and allow a range of inner and outer expression within their perhaps rather permeable boundaries.

Walking Fossil as Morphic Field

Antonio Gramsci, in his *Prison Notebooks*, writes that one should “‘know thyself’ as a product of the historical process to date which has deposited in you an infinity of traces,” noting that “The personality is strangely composite: it contains Stone Age elements and principles of a more advanced science, prejudices from all past phases of history at the local level and intuitions of a future philosophy which

117 Emory Bogardus, *Fundamentals of Social Psychology* (New York: Century, 1924), 229-238.

will be that of a human race united the world over.”¹¹⁸ He asks “How is it possible to consider the present, and quite specific present, with a mode of thought elaborated for a past which is often remote and superseded? When someone does this, it means that he is a walking anachronism, a fossil, and not living in the modern world, or at the least that he is strangely composite.” Later, Gramsci writes that “Language is at the same time a living thing and a museum of fossils of life and civilisations. When I use the word ‘disaster’ no one can accuse me of believing in astrology, and when I say ‘by Jove!’ no one can assume that I am a worshipper of pagan divinities. These expressions are however a proof that modern civilisation is also a development of paganism and astrology.”¹¹⁹ I suggest that Gramsci’s comments can be seen as a description of the human cultural morphic field, or perhaps more specifically, the European cultural morphic field. They express an amalgam of past, present, and even “intuitions” of the future.

Zeitgeist as Morphic Field

Hegel recognized that great leaders rose out of, and represented, the World Spirit of their place and time. Although Hegel did not use the actual term *zeitgeist*, he did use the phrase *der Geist seiner Zeit* (the spirit of its time) when he wrote, “Plato is not the man to dabble in abstract theories and principles; his truth-loving mind has recognized and represented the truth, and this could not be anything else than the truth of the world he lived in, the truth of the one spirit which lived in him as well as in Greece. No man can overleap his time, the spirit of his time is his spirit also; but the point at issue is, to recognize

118 Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks* (London: Electric Book Company, 1999), 627-628.

119 *Ibid.*, 813-814.

that spirit by its content.”¹²⁰ Further, in the preface to his *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel wrote “As for the individual, everyone is a son of his time; so philosophy also is its time apprehended in thoughts. It is just as foolish to fancy that any philosophy can transcend its present world, as that an individual could leap out of his time or jump over Rhodes.”¹²¹ World Spirit and Zeitgeist can both be seen as high-level morphic fields. In the sense of World Spirit, it is locational and encompasses an entire society or, more precisely, an entire global culture. As Zeitgeist, it refers specifically to the time and thus focuses on the temporal aspect of the morphic field; a field which is of the time. However, that time can be lengthy and, because of the power it contains as a result of its influence over millions of people, very slow to change.

Based on the research presented in this chapter, I observe that the subject of morphic fields encompasses far more than simply biology. I have provided examples in a variety of segments of society (schools, crowds, and sports, among others) as well as briefly highlighted many examples from a variety of disciplines (such as psychology, sociology, theoretical physics, literature and philosophy) which I suggest show that morphic fields (or at least their equivalents) have long been discussed in academic literature, or can be observed in everyday situations. In the next chapter, I discuss memorable movie lines, and in the final chapter I propose that there is a strong relationship between morphic fields and memorable movie lines as well as memes.

120 George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, trans. E.S. Haldane, vol. II (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co., Ltd, 1894), https://archive.org/stream/lecturesonthehis02hegeuft/lecturesonthehis02hegeuft_djvu.txt., 96

121 George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Philosophy of Right: Preface*, trans. S.W. Dyde, Preface, accessed March 9, 2015, <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/hegel/works/pr/preface.htm>.

Chapter Three

Memorable Movie Lines - "Frankly, my dear..."

Gentlemen, you can't fight in here! This is the War Room!

Dr. Strangelove, 1964

Pay no attention to that man behind the curtain!

The Wizard of Oz, 1939

What hump?

Young Frankenstein, 1974

This chapter explores motion picture dialogue lines that are considered within popular and critical discourse to be *memorable movie lines*. Memorable movie lines are those lines of dialogue that stand out not just during a film, but also *after* one has seen the film. Those lines that over time permeate the culture, to be used in everyday conversation whenever it is felt that the line is appropriate. These lines may be called "memorable," "famous," "sticky," "movie catchphrases," or "bumper sticker quotes." As Noelle Buffam of The Script Lab writes, these "can be as simple as a phrase, a word, or even a name ("Bond. James Bond.") that becomes a social phenomenon. A famous movie quote bleeds into the social consciousness as viewers use it in their own lives and situations. It becomes ingrained in popular culture, and eventually becomes a part of the national lexicon."¹²² Script consultant Pippa Best defines "catchphrase" as "a line from a film that you can quote to friends (in an alternative context), and they'll

¹²² Noelle Buffam, "Top 10 One-Liners," *The Script Lab*, accessed November 11, 2015, <http://thescriptlab.com/features/the-lists/881-top-10-one-liners>.

know what you're talking about." She sees a catchphrase as "a bite-sized way to share film references... [that] offer an opportunity for us to connect - through shared references and humour, sometimes even providing a space to acknowledge difficult emotions like love, sadness and anger."¹²³ In short, memorable movie lines are lines we cite, whenever in our conversations we consider them useful— frequently for humorous purposes.

I propose that there are discoverable qualities shared by certain movie lines that have become memorable. An intentional line of film dialogue (there can also be spontaneous lines that appear during shooting) starts with a screenwriter—or sometimes a director or actor—and ends up written on a page in the script. An audience first encounters that line when it hears it spoken during the film. Then something happens. For some reason, some lines are remembered. Such a line stands out among most other lines in the film. It remains in the mind of the moviegoer after he or she has left the theater. It may remain there for a long period of time—particularly if other movie goers were similarly affected. The more audience members—and possibly film critics—who remember the line, and who use it in conversation or write about it later, the more likely it is to become not just a popular line, but a full-fledged famous movie quote.

This thesis investigates the characteristics of a number of the "100 Greatest Movie Quotes of All Time" as determined in 2005 by the *American Film Institute*. It also examines additional lines of dialogue chosen for their proven memorability. In 2005, the *American Film Institute* (AFI) released a list of the

123 Pippa Best, "What Makes a Great Movie Catchphrase?," *Pippa Best*, April 23, 2010, http://www.pippabest.com/PippaBest/Blog/Entries/2010/4/25_What_makes_a_great_movie_catchphrase.html.

“100 Greatest Movie Quotes of All Time.”¹²⁴ AFI's top 100 list was chosen by “A jury of over 1,500 leaders from the creative community, including film artists, critics and historians. Selection criteria included choosing quotes from American films which circulate through popular culture, become part of the national lexicon and evoke the memory of a treasured film, thus ensuring and enlivening its historical legacy.” Please refer to the introduction to this thesis for full information on the selection process.

For my study of memorable movie lines, I have chosen to limit movie lines to those in English language cinema and particularly to those chosen by the American Film Institute.¹²⁵ Although I have researched film organizations in Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Ireland, Scotland, Wales, and England, I have found no list of memorable movie quotes comparable to the American list. The US film industry appears to be the only national industry which has created a professionally-selected list. India (“Bollywood”) is the largest producer of feature films in the world—with Nigeria (“Nollywood”) being second¹²⁶—and “Hollywood” is only third in film production. More importantly, however, is that Hollywood dominates the world's movie awareness in that its films are popular—and profitable—throughout the world. Its

124 American Film Institute, “100 Greatest Movie Quotes of All Time,” *American Film Institute*, accessed March 17, 2016, <http://www.afi.com/100Years/quotes.aspx>.

125 Clips from all films discussed in this thesis are freely available on YouTube.

126 United Nations News Service Section, “UN News - Nigeria Surpasses Hollywood as World’s Second Largest Film Producer – UN,” *UN News Service Section*, May 5, 2009, http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=30707#.V2hxb_krKhe.

annual Academy Awards television show is broadcast live in more than two-hundred countries and territories.¹²⁷

Memorable Movie Lines Methodology

In this chapter I employ unobtrusive research methods to investigate specific movie quotes that have become well-known in the culture over the years. This study uses—but transcends—content analysis and discourse analysis, with the goal of placing movie lines in context. A meme is not derived from a text in and of itself, but from its context and how it is received in society. As previously mentioned, I use as my source the American Film Institute’s (AFI) list of 100 Greatest Movie Quotes of All Time,¹²⁸ which I henceforth refer to as the “AFI list” or the “AFI 100.” I include quotations from three specific films, even if those quotes were simply among the four hundred nominees¹²⁹ for that list. Those films are *Gone With the Wind*, *Casablanca*, and *The Wizard of Oz*. I do this because those three films alone represent twelve percent of the quotes of the final top one-hundred. For that reason, I view them as having significant importance in a study of memorable film lines, and therefore devote considerable presentation and analysis of the creative forces (studios, cast, crew, and particularly writers) behind those films. The methodologies I have chosen are non-reactive. New data sets are not developed. Instead, innovative interpretations are derived from this material.

127 Jim Donnelly, “When Are the Oscars 2016: Start Time and Date for the 88th Academy Awards! | 88th Academy Awards,” *Oscar.com*, accessed June 20, 2016, <http://oscar.go.com/news/oscar-news/when-are-the-oscars-2016-start-time-and-date-for-the-88th-academy-awards>.

128 American Film Institute, “100 Greatest Movie Quotes of All Time,” *American Film Institute*, accessed March 17, 2016, <http://www.afi.com/100Years/quotes.aspx>.

129 American Film Institute, List of the 400 Nominated Movie Quotes, *American Film Institute*, accessed March 17, 2016, <http://www.afi.com/Docs/100Years/quotes400.pdf>.

The Most Quotable Three

I begin this chapter with a detailed look at three films. They are *Casablanca*, *Gone with the Wind*, and *The Wizard of Oz*. As stated previously, I chose these films because they alone contribute a total of twelve quotes (12%) to the American Film Institute's *100 Greatest Movie Quotes of All Time*. *Casablanca* has six quotes on the list, and the other two each have three. My intention is to investigate the behind-the-scenes creative process that occurred in each film, with the hope that this investigation may give hints as to not only why these three films have become so popular but, more importantly for this thesis, why each of these films produced so many lines of dialogue that remain a part of our culture. Each of these, it should be noted, has still other quotes which are also well-known in the culture, but did not make it to the AFI Top 100 list. In my inquiry into these three films, I investigate not only their memorable lines but the people behind the films that produced those lines: the cast, the production crew, the producers, and, of course, the writers. I reveal much of this through anecdotes. Not all of these anecdotes speak directly to the film quotes themselves, but I believe they all contribute to create a portrait of the various personalities and events which produced the unique blending of creative talents that brought forth these three legendary films.

Each of these three films did not have *original* screenplays but were instead adapted from other works. *The Wizard of Oz* was based on the book *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* by L. Frank Baum, published in 1900 and the first of a long series of Oz books which were extremely popular with children (and many adults) even when the film was made thirty-nine years later. *Gone with the Wind* was based on the book of the same name by Margaret Mitchell. It was published in summer of 1936 and by the end of that year had sold more than one million copies. The film version received an Academy Award for Best

Screenplay. At the time, there was no distinction between adapted and original screenplays. *Casablanca* was based on an unproduced stage play by Murray Burnett and Joan Alison entitled *Everybody Comes to Rick's*. It, too, received an Academy Award for Best Screenplay.

Casablanca

Casablanca was the winner of the Academy Awards for Best Picture, Best Director, and Best Screenplay in 1944. It had seven lines on the AFI's 400-quote ballot list. Six of these ended up on the final AFI 100, four of which were spoken by Humphrey Bogart, one by Ingrid Bergman, and one by Claude Rains. Credited screenwriters: Julius J. Epstein, Philip G. Epstein, Howard Koch. Based on an unproduced play (*Everybody Comes to Rick's*) by Murray Burnett and Joan Alison.

AFI 100 (with position number)

- 5 – “Here's looking at you, kid” (Humphrey Bogart, *Rick*)
- 20 – “Louis, I think this is the beginning of a beautiful friendship” (Humphrey Bogart, *Rick*)
- 28 – “Play it, Sam. Play 'As Time Goes By.'” (Ingrid Bergman, *Ilsa*)
- 32 – “Round up the usual suspects” (Claude Rains, *Louis*)
- 43 – “We'll always have Paris” (Humphrey Bogart, *Rick*)
- 67 – “Of all the gin joints in all the towns in all the world, she walks into mine” (Humphrey Bogart)

On Ballot (but not selected to Top 100)

“Ilsa, I'm no good at being noble, but it doesn't take much to see that the problems of three little people don't amount to a hill of beans in this crazy world” (Humphrey Bogart, *Rick*)

The Lines of *Casablanca*

5 – “Here’s looking at you, kid”

The film’s flashback montage—known as “the Retrospect”—consisted of brief scenes in and around Paris where Rick Blaine (Bogart) and Ilsa Lund (Bergman) first met. According to Aljean Harmetz, the scene at the Montmartre café involved two separate shootings. The second time, Bogart and Bergman did retakes as well as some new dialogue. In one shot, Rick toasted Ilsa with the words “Here’s looking at you, kid.” It had not been in the script previously (the phrase “Here’s good luck to you” had been used), but it was a phrase Bogart said to Bergman occasionally while some of the staff taught her how to play poker during frequent waiting periods on the set.¹³⁰ However the published script shows that the line was used not at the café but in Rick’s Paris apartment, and then three other times in the film, including in the final scene at the airport.

Pulitzer Prize-winning film critic Roger Ebert wrote about that montage, and the different experience of viewing the film a second time, particularly Ilsa’s sudden arrival at Rick’s café in *Casablanca*, saying “The first time we see the film we know nothing of the great love affair between Rick and Ilsa in Paris...The next time we see it, every word between Ilsa and Sam, every nuance, every look or averted glance, has a poignant meaning. It is a good enough scene the first time we see it, but a great scene the second time.”¹³¹ This is an interesting example not only of a movie line’s context, but of its “context yet to come.”

¹³⁰ Aljean Harmetz, *The Making of Casablanca: Bogart, Bergman, and World War II*, First edition (New York: Hachette Books, 2002), 187.

¹³¹ Roger Ebert, “As Time Goes By, It’s the Still the Same Old Glorious ‘Casablanca’ | *Roger Ebert’s Journal* | Roger Ebert,” accessed November 12, 2015, <http://www.rogerebert.com/rogers-journal/as-time-goes-by-its-the-still-the-same-old-glorious-casablanca>.

20 – Louis, I think this is the beginning of a beautiful friendship

Producer Hal Wallis came up with two options for the final line in the film. He initially proposed “Luis, I might have known you’d mix your patriotism with a little larceny” and “Luis, I think this is the beginning of a beautiful friendship.” Wallis finally chose the second, less cynical, version. (The name Luis was changed to Louis.)¹³²

28 – Play it, Sam. Play “As Time Goes by”

This line may be the most misquoted of all of Hollywood’s most memorable lines. Common usage has it as “Play it again, Sam.” In the film, after Ilsa and Victor enter Rick’s café, she asks Sam:

ILSA

Play it once, Sam, for old time's sake.

SAM

I don't know what you mean, Miss Ilsa.

ILSA

Play it, Sam. Play "As Time Goes By."

132 Aljean Harmetz, *The Making of Casablanca: Bogart, Bergman, and World War II*, First edition (New York: Hachette Books, 2002), 10.

Later in the film, after the club has closed, Rick sits at a table with a drink. Suddenly he [Rick] pounds the table and buries his head in his arms. Then he raises his head, trying to regain control.

RICK

Of all the gin joints in all the towns in all the world, she walks into mine.

He holds his head in his hands.

RICK

What's that you're playing?

SAM

Just a little something of my own.

RICK

Well, stop it. You know what I want to hear.

SAM

No, I don't.

RICK

You played it for her and you can play it for me.

SAM

Well, I don't think I can remember it.

RICK

If she can stand it, I can. Play it!

SAM

Yes, boss.

Sam starts to play "As Time Goes By."

Rick just stares ahead as orchestra MUSIC slowly joins Sam's playing.

32 – Round up the usual suspects

This line is first used early in the film after two German couriers (who have been carrying the fabled “letters of transit”) are murdered. Captain Renault has ordered his men to “Round up the usual suspects.” (Actually *twice* the usual number in order to impress the Germans.) As mentioned at the beginning of this film’s section, it was the Epstein brothers inspiration to use it also at the end of the film. Julius Epstein has said that every one of the seventy-five writers at the studio was trying to come up with an ending, and they were all panic-stricken.¹³³ The ending appeared out of the blue. As Epstein related to Harnetz, “My brother and I were driving down Sunset Boulevard, and we looked at each other and said, 'Round up the usual suspects.' Somebody must have been murdered. Who was murdered? Major Strasser. Who killed him? Rick! That was the way we got our ending.”¹³⁴

133 Harlan Lebo and Julius Epstein, *Casablanca: Behind the Scenes*, Second edition (New York: Touchstone, 1992), 156.

134 Aljean Harnetz, “Julius Epstein, Prolific Screenwriter Who Helped Give ‘Casablanca’ Its Zest, Dies at 91,” *The New York Times*, January 1, 2001, sec. N.Y. / Region, <http://www.nytimes.com/2001/01/01/nyregion/julius-epstein-prolific-screenwriter-who-helped-give-casablanca-its-zest-dies-91.html>.

In the film, Rick tells Ilsa that she must go with Victor, but that he and Ilsa will always share their memories of their time together in Paris.

RICK

I'm saying it because it's true. Inside of us we both know you belong with Victor. You're part of his work, the thing that keeps him going. If that plane leaves the ground and you're not with him, you'll regret it.

ILSA

No.

RICK

Maybe not today, maybe not tomorrow, but soon, and for the rest of your life.

ILSA

But what about us?

RICK

We'll always have Paris. We didn't have, we'd lost it, until you came to Casablanca. We got it back last night.

Rick's line “We got it back last night” referred to Ilsa's visiting Rick's apartment late the previous night, while Victor was off at an underground meeting. The censors¹³⁵ did not want any suggestion that Rick

135 The Production Code Administration was an agency set up by the Hollywood film industry to censor itself before they were even more heavily censored by some other external body. Its head was Joseph Breen, an influential Roman Catholic layman. The agency's “moral guidelines” were stated in the Hays Code.

and Ilsa had sex together that evening—Ilsa being married to another man—so the studio had to be very careful. Joseph Breen, who enforced the Hays Code (moral guidelines) in Hollywood, insisted that the set have no bed or couch, “or anything whatever suggestive of a sex affair.”¹³⁶ Audiences are not as naive as the censors might have hoped, and I come back to this example in the “morphic fields of movies” section.

67 – Of all the gin joints in all the towns in all the world, she walks into mine

This line was originally written as “Of all the cafés in all the towns in the world, she walks into my café.”

Bogart allegedly complained about the line and suggested the now-classic “gin joints” line.¹³⁷ Although Rick refers to *Rick’s Café Americain* as both a gin joint and a saloon (“I’m a saloon keeper”), it was hardly a seedy North African dive. The film’s script describes its patrons as “Europeans in their dinner jackets, their women beautifully begowned and bejeweled. There are Moroccans in silk robes. Turks wearing fezzes. Levantines. Naval officers. Members of the Foreign Legion, distinguished by their kepis.”

Rick/Bogart chose to denigrate his night club—and himself—by his use of the words gin joint and saloon.

Did he do this out of irony? Did it also Americanize it? Was he simply betraying how he felt about

himself and his life after he left Paris, as he now—perhaps truthfully—refers to himself as a “drunkard?”

Or was he simply indicating that running a café in Morocco was a poor substitute for his loss of a great

Motion Picture Association of America, “Motion Picture Production Code (1930-1967),” accessed February 23, 2016, http://productioncode.dhwritings.com/multipleframes_productioncode.php.

136 Steven Mintz and Randy Roberts, eds., *Hollywood Goes to War: How Politics, Profits and Propaganda Shaped World War II Movies*, Reprint edition (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 141.

137 Charles Francisco, *You Must Remember This: The Filming of Casablanca*, First Edition (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1980), 163.

love in Paris, or the loss of his idealism which he had earlier exhibited in Spain and Ethiopia? Regardless of his attitude, Rick's Cafe was no gin joint.

Ilsa, I'm no good at being noble, but it doesn't take much to see that the problems of three little people don't amount to a hill of beans in this crazy world

This line, as long and as complex as it is, has become extremely well-known, although I would suggest it is not one that can be easily dropped into conversation around the office water cooler. At thirty-two words, it is one of the longest lines on the AFI 100 List (the longest is forty), well above the mean of 8.15 words and the median of 5.

But wait, there's more...Other Lines in *Casablanca*

Other lines of dialogue in *Casablanca* deserve consideration for their memorability—and their brilliance—although they were not on either the AFI 100 list or the 400 list. When Rick has one of his staff take his sometimes companion Yvonne home (against her will), Captain Renault comments on how wasteful Rick is with women “How extravagant you are, throwing away women like that. Someday they may be scarce.” The original had read “Someday they may be rationed”¹³⁸ but Joseph Breen at the Production Code Administration had required that the word “rationed” be changed to “scarce.”

In another key line, at the café Rick holds his gun on Renault, as he tells him to phone the airport.

¹³⁸ Harlan Lebo and Julius Epstein, *Casablanca: Behind the Scenes*, Second edition (New York: Touchstone, 1992), 163.

RICK

... And remember, this gun's pointed right at your heart.

RENAULT

That is my least vulnerable spot.

The continually witty dialogue exchanges between Captain Renault and Rick Blaine are attributed to the Epstein brothers, as it was one of their specialties. Another exchange between Renault and Blaine is "Shocked, shocked," which has become an oft-used quote in our culture to indicate feigned surprise or blatant hypocrisy.

RICK

How can you close me up? On what grounds?

RENAULT

I am shocked, shocked to find that gambling is going on in here!

This display of nerve leaves Rick at a loss. The croupier comes out of the gambling room and up to Renault. He hands him a roll of bills.

CROUPIER

Your winnings, sir.

RENAULT

Oh. Thank you very much.

He turns to the crowd again.

RENAULT

Everybody out at once!

The screenwriting Epstein brothers tried to come up with a good reason why Rick could not go back to America but finally gave up, even though producer Hal Wallis initially pushed for an explanation. "After reading the scene in which Claude Rains's character asks Bogart, 'I've often speculated why you don't return to America.' Wallis said, 'Yeah, why can't he go back to America? The audience will want to know.' 'We sat around and came up with a lot of excuses, and they were all so...weak,' Epstein said. "As an explanation, I...suggested 'unpaid parking tickets...Finally we told Wallis to leave the explanation as it is. The lack of explanation may be weak, but it will be better for the viewers to use their own imagination than to pinpoint the reason and have the audience disappointed in it."¹³⁹ The following dialogue is as close as they came to giving a reason for Rick's not returning to the United States. Julius Epstein considered this to be his favourite scene.¹⁴⁰

RENAULT

I've often speculated on why you don't return to America. Did you abscond with the church funds? Did you run off with the senator's wife? I'd like to think that you killed a man. It's the romantic in me.'

RICK

It was a combination of all three.

RENAULT

And what in Heaven's name brought you to Casablanca?

139 Ibid.

140 Howard Koch, Julius Epstein, and Frank Miller, Epstein, Koch, Miller Interview - *Hollywood Hotline*, interview by Eliot Stein, May 1995, <http://www.vincasa.com/indexkoch.html>.

RICK

My health. I came to Casablanca for the waters.

RENAULT

Waters? What waters? We are in the desert.

RICK

I was misinformed.

Those lines of dialogue came from the writers. Although there is some (actually considerable) dispute as to how much each writer involved (or semi-involved) in the film contributed, it is generally thought that twins Julius and Philip Epstein contributed most, if not all, of the witty banter in the film, particularly that between Rick Blaine and Captain Renault. Howard Koch¹⁴¹ is said to have focused on the political element in the film, and Casey Robinson reportedly contributed to the love story. This thesis makes no attempt to determine this issue.

141 In 1938, Howard Koch had written the radio adaptation of H. G. Wells *War of the Worlds* for Orson Welles' *CBS Mercury Theater of the Air*.

In 1995, Julius Epstein¹⁴² was interviewed on *Hollywood Hotline*, an online show on CompuServe hosted by Eliot Stein.¹⁴³

STEIN: Julius...how did you and your brother decide that great humour and satire...was going to making this film work? After all -- it was a very serious subject!

EPSTEIN: It worked for us in other pictures...it doesn't matter how serious a film is....the right kinds of laughs can work in any film!

AUDIENCE QUESTION: Mr. Epstein, I understand that there were actually 4-5 writers working on *Casablanca* at various times including your brother. Was this typical for that era and how did it feel not having complete control over the material, and finally, was there a rivalry between the writers.

EPSTEIN: There was just one other writer--Casey Robinson... Casey came on at the end...basically editing our scenes...we never worked with Howard Koch in the same room...so there was never a rivalry!

British poet and literary critic Ian Hamilton in his book *Writers in Hollywood* described Julius Epstein's feelings about *Casablanca*, although it must be remembered that this was many years later.

"*Casablanca* is one of my least favourite pictures. I'm tired of talking about it after 30 years. I can explain its success only by the Bogie cult that has sprung up after his death. I can recognize that the picture is

142 According to...another Warner Brothers screenwriter, the [Epstein] twins won every wisecracking competition during lunch. When Julius's two-story house was burned in a 1963 fire in Bel Air as he watched the destruction on television, he rose to the occasion with, "Well, we always wanted a one-story house."

Aljean Harmetz, "Julius Epstein, Prolific Screenwriter Who Helped Give 'Casablanca' Its Zest, Dies at 91," *The New York Times*, January 1, 2001, sec. N.Y. / Region, <http://www.nytimes.com/2001/01/01/nyregion/julius-epstein-prolific-screenwriter-who-helped-give-casablanca-its-zest-dies-91.html>.

143 Howard Koch, Julius Epstein, and Frank Miller, Epstein, Koch, Miller Interview - *Hollywood Hotline*, interview by Eliot Stein, May 1995, <http://www.vincasa.com/indexkoch.html>.

entertaining and that people love it. But it's a completely phony romance, a completely phony picture. For instance, nobody knew what was going on in *Casablanca* at the time. Nobody had ever been to *Casablanca*. The whole thing was shot in the back lot. There was never a German who appeared in *Casablanca* for the duration of the entire war, and we had the Germans marching around with medals and epaulets. Furthermore, there were never any such things as letters of transit around which the entire plot revolved....The movie is a complete phony!"¹⁴⁴ Harnetz reported something similar: "Every script is concocted," [Julius] Epstein says. "But *Casablanca* was really concocted. We sat down and tried to manipulate an audience."¹⁴⁵ However, as Harnetz suggested elsewhere, Epstein may have been a little disingenuous about the film. He did not mind accepting an Academy Award for his participation in the screenwriting.

Casey Robinson, who was considered by many to have contributed to the love story element of the film, later regretted not accepting a screen credit (so he claimed). "About that credit. I am angry still. I was pretty smart-assed in those days, too. I wouldn't put my name on the screen with another writer. I was very proud of the fact of my solo screenplays...to go on the screen with three other writers with my piece—because I regarded it as *my piece*! And I wouldn't put my name on the screen. It was a very bad mistake, because the boys proceeded to earn an Academy Award."¹⁴⁶ When Julius Epstein was asked about Casey Robinson's claimed that he wrote a first draft too, Epstein responded "Let me clear that up.

144 Ian Hamilton, *Writers in Hollywood, 1915-1951*, First Edition Thus edition (New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, 1991), 245.

145 Aljean Harnetz, *The Making of Casablanca: Bogart, Bergman, and World War II*, First edition (New York: Hachette Books, 2002), 42.

146 Patrick McGilligan, *Backstory 1: Interviews with Screenwriters of Hollywood's Golden Age*, First Edition (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 308.

Casey Robinson did not write a first draft. He never did a draft of it—never. He wrote some test scenes for the actors, which we rewrote to fit the script. The only line of his that remained that I can remember is, “A franc for your thoughts,” which I always thought was a terrible line. We fought to get it cut. Let me just say this. As I say, the studio knows who did what. They made us producers after *Casablanca*...”

The Epstein brothers left Warner Bros. not long after the project started to work in Washington, D.C. with Frank Capra on a series entitled *Why We Fight*. Julius Epstein said “We never did a line before we went to Washington. And we went. We were there four weeks. 147 And when we came back, they had maybe thirty to forty pages written by Howard Koch. Just between us, they were very unhappy with it. His stuff was not used. If there was an arbitration panel in those days—if such a thing had existed—Howard Koch would not have received a credit. Because you have to have at least 30 percent of a script to get credit. He never would have come close. No way.” Yet Ian Hamilton notes that “Koch was brought in to work on a script already drafted by Julius and Philip Epstein, and he saw it as his task to “shape the film’s politics.” When pressed, he could not recall which lines, precisely, were by him.148

It is clear that memories and the record are jumbled, and it is unlikely they will ever be *unjumbled*. As I state above, I make no attempt in this thesis to determine who wrote how much of the screenplay for *Casablanca*. As Ian Hamilton wrote when discussing both *Citizen Kane* and *Casablanca*, “Indeed, one could say that the more successful the film, the more lingering the doubt about who wrote it.” 149 What

147 Elsewhere, Epstein states “As a matter of fact, we wrote our first couple scenes in Washington.”

148 Ian Hamilton, *Writers in Hollywood, 1915-1951*, First Edition (New York: Carroll & Graf Publishers, 1991), 243.

149 Ibid., 236.

I demonstrate above is how difficult it is to determine which, and even how many, writers actually contributed to the final script of *Casablanca*. We must also remember that even actors and producers were creating and modifying lines ultimately appearing in the film. As Charles Francisco writes, “An analysis of the original play and the screenplay reveals that Burnett, Alison, Philip Epstein, Julius Epstein, and Howard Koch all deserve credit for the success of the *Casablanca* story. The Epsteins and Koch...because of their arduous care in shaping, polishing and expanding the original play...and Burnett and Alison...as the writers who started it all. Without their basic plot, characters[and, I would point out, much of their dialogue], setting, and idea of using “As Time Goes By,” there would have been no *Casablanca*.”¹⁵⁰ What can safely be said is that *Casablanca* was the work of a particular studio, with a particular group of actors, writers and crew, at a particular time in Hollywood and in history. And...somehow...it all worked.

***Casablanca* is The Movie**

Casablanca is unique. It has a great love story, a battle against evil, brilliantly-crafted characters, deeply atmospheric cinematography, and some of the finest film dialogue ever created. The film garnered more positions on the AFI Top 100 list than any other film, and it contained many others that in my mind should have been on the AFI 100 list, but since it already had twice as many as any other film, it is understandable that AFI voters wanted to share the honours. I doubt if there are few people who have seen the film who have not used one of those quotes in their own conversation, and in fact it may be that there are few people who have seen the film who have not gone back and seen it again, perhaps over and over. As Roger Ebert has said, it is *The Movie*.

¹⁵⁰ Charles Francisco, *You Must Remember This: The Filming of Casablanca*, First Edition (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1980), 204.

Gone with the Wind

Gone with the Wind won eight Academy Awards including Best Picture, Best Actress (both in Leading and Supporting Roles), Best Director, and Best Writing, Screenplay. *Gone with the Wind* featured five times in the American Film Institute's 400-quote ballot list. Three of them ended up on the Top 100, one spoken by Clark Gable, the other two by Vivien Leigh. Credited screenwriter: Sidney Howard. Based on the book *Gone with the Wind* by Margaret Mitchell

AFI 100 (with position numbers)

- 1 - "Frankly, my dear, I don't give a damn" (Clark Gable - *Rhett*)
- 31 - "After all, tomorrow is another day!" (Vivien Leigh - *Scarlett*)
- 59 - "As God is my witness, I'll never be hungry again" (Vivien Leigh - *Scarlett*)

On Ballot (but not selected for Top 100)

- "Fiddle dee" (Vivien Leigh, *Scarlett*)
- "I don't know nothin' 'bout birthin' babies" (Butterly McQueen, *Prissy*)

1 – Frankly, my dear, I don't give a damn

The #1 position on the AFI's list of 100 Greatest Movie Quotes, and Rhett Butler's final words in both book and film. In the film, the word "Frankly" was added to the line.

SCARLETT

Rhett! If you go, where shall I go? What shall I do?

RHETT

Frankly, my dear, I don't give a damn.

Producer David Selznick had to fight with the Production Code Administration to retain Rhett's final line.

The head of the censor's office Joseph Breen wanted the word "damn" changed to "care." Selznick argued that after what Rhett had gone through with Scarlett, the word "care" would be woefully inadequate. Selznick prevailed and *damn* stayed in.¹⁵¹

The censors were not the only opposition the studio had over the final dialogue between Scarlett and Rhett. Vivien Leigh protested to director Victor Fleming that she didn't like her lines in the final scene with Clark Gable and wanted them rewritten. Fleming responded that they were doing the book, that the line was right out of the book, and that Scarlett really was a bitch. Leigh responded that she just wouldn't do it. Gable jumped in and told Fleming that he thought "Frankly, my dear, I don't give a damn" was a "little strong." Fleming "looked at Clark with contempt, rolled up his script, and said, 'Miss Leigh, you can stick this script up your royal British ass!'" and walked off. Two nights later, Selznick, Gable and Leigh went to Fleming and the two actors said "Come back, Vic. We'll do the scene."¹⁵²

31 – After all, tomorrow is another day!

151 Kalie Rudolph, "The Golden Era of Hollywood: The Making of The Wizard of Oz and Gone with the Wind," *Voces Novae: Chapman University Historical Review* 3, no. 1 (June 28, 2011), <http://journals.chapman.edu/ojs/index.php/VocesNovae/article/view/203>, 174.

152 Patrick McGilligan, *Backstory 1: Interviews with Screenwriters of Hollywood's Golden Age*, First Edition (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 256-257.

The last line of both the book and the film. In the film it is

SCARLETT

Tara! Home!... I'll go home - and I'll think of some way
to get him back.

She lifts her chin higher. We see the stuff of which Scarlett O'Hara is made, and we thrill with the knowledge that she won't be defeated for long.

SCARLETT

After all, tomorrow is another day!

This line is character-driven: Scarlett as optimistic, strong, and determined to achieve what she wants—sooner or later.

59 – As God is my witness, I'll never be hungry again

This line is almost exactly the same in both and film. In the film it is:

(Exhausted and hungry as Scarlett is, she goes out to the open field, digging out the leftover radishes in the ground, swallowing.)

SCARLETT

As God is my witness....as God is my witness...they're
not going to lick me...I'm going to live through this
and when it's over, I'll never be hungry again...

No, nor any of my folks!...If I have to lie - steal - cheat - or *kill!*

As God is my witness, I'll never be hungry again!

This well-known line is similar to "Tomorrow is another day." Both express Scarlett's spirit and determination to survive and triumph.

Fiddle-dee-dee

Scarlett says this line four times in the book, and three times in the film. An example from the film is

RHETT

Did you ever think of marrying just for fun?

SCARLETT

Marriage, fun? Fiddle-dee-dee. Fun for men you mean.

As the previous lines "Tomorrow is another day" and "As God is my witness, I'll never be hungry again," which both appear much later in the film, express the determination and spirit of Scarlett *after* the Civil War, the line "Fiddle-dee-dee" captures the *pre*-Civil War Scarlett, a spoiled and immature young woman whose life consists of dancing and working her way through a succession of beaux.

I don't know nothin' 'bout birthin' babies

This line is almost the same in both book and film. In the film, it is delivered as:

PRISSY

Lawdsy, we've got to have a doctor! I don't know
nothin' bout birthin babies.

This line (delivered by Prissy, the maid who was played by actress Butterfly McQueen) has become a classic. Much to Scarlett's horror, who needed to help Melanie in labour, Prissy had previously (and falsely) claimed that she had helped birth babies many times.

Gone with the Wind had advantages producing memorable movie lines because the book on which it was based had already been read by millions, and in a poll prior to the film's release more than fifty-six million people said they were looking forward to seeing the film. When audiences sat down to watch the film for the very first time, most were already familiar with all of the lines which would become famous. Each of the three lines that made the AFI 100 list had already appeared in the book, as had two other lines that were among the four hundred quotes on the AFI ballot. Combine that familiarity with the book with the mammoth star power of Clark Gable, as well as the spectacular visuals of the Civil War story, and it is no surprise that the result was a film whose popularity and memorability is still ongoing more than seventy-five years later. Plus, those key lines that have become famous lend themselves to frequent use in many situations—as readers of this thesis might well know from personal experience.

The Wizard of Oz

Walt Disney Productions had major commercial and critical success the previous year with their animated film *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, and MGM wanted to counter that success with their own. *The Wizard of Oz* would be the first feature-length live-action musical filmed in colour. The cost did not matter. As Yip Harburg, the lyricist for *The Wizard of Oz* said, "Once a year MGM did a loser for

prestige.” In 1939 that prestigious loser film would be *Oz*.¹⁵³ The film, however was—and remains—a great success, and received Academy Awards (1940) for Best Song, and Best Original Score. Credited screenwriters for the film were Noel Langley, Florence Ryerson, Edgar Allan Woolf. Based on the book *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* by L. Frank Baum.

The Most Famous Lines of *The Wizard of Oz*

Six lines from *The Wizard of Oz* were on the original ballot of proposed four hundred quotes. Of these six, three were voted into the *100 Greatest Movie Quotes of All Time*. Two of them were spoken by Judy Garland (*Dorothy*), and the third by Margaret Hamilton (*Wicked Witch*).

AFI 100 (with position number)

4 – “Toto, I’ve a feeling we’re not in Kansas anymore” (Judy Garland, *Dorothy*)

23 – “There’s no place like home” (Judy Garland, *Dorothy*)

99 – “I’ll get you, my pretty, and your little dog, too!” (Margaret Hamilton, *Wicked Witch*)

On Ballot (but not selected for AFI 100)

“Lions and tigers and bears, oh my!” (Judy Garland, Jack Haley, Ray Bolger, - *Dorothy, the Tin Man, the Scarecrow*)

“I’m melting! Melting! Oh, what a world! What a world!” (Margaret Hamilton - *Wicked Witch*)

153 Harold Meyerson and Ernie Harburg, *Who Put the Rainbow in The Wizard of Oz?: Yip Harburg, Lyricist*, First edition (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993), 119.

‘Pay no attention to that man behind the curtain!’ (Frank Morgan - *Wizard*)

Song Titles as Famous Lines

For this thesis, I include the above lines as well as additional lines from some of the film’s songs. The rules of the American Film Institute were that lines nominated could *not* include lyrics of songs. However, *The Wizard of Oz* was unique among musicals at that time in that its songs contained information that was important to the characters and the plot, and were designed not only to entertain, but to move the story along. Because of their importance to the narrative, and because of the creativity of their wording and melodies, many song titles in the film are as memorable as—or even more than—spoken lines of dialogue. There is no doubt that they have “circulated through popular culture and become part of the national lexicon.” The song titles (which are also phrases in the songs themselves) that I consider to be memorable movie quotes from *The Wizard of Oz* are:

Over the Rainbow
Ding-Dong! The Witch is Dead
Follow the Yellow Brick Road
We’re Off to See the Wizard
If I Only Had a...
Come Out, Come Out, Wherever You Are

All songs in *The Wizard of Oz* written by: Composer: Harold Arlen

Lyricist: E. Y. (Yip) Harburg

In the case of many motion pictures, it is quite simple to determine who wrote specific lines of dialogue: the screenwriter. The one and only screenwriter. Although even then it is likely that the director, or an actor, has created, ad libbed or modified a line which was kept in the final version. With other films,

there are frequently several writers, and possibly an uncredited script doctor who “cleans up” areas of the script.

Authorship of specific lines is considerably more complicated with *The Wizard of Oz*. Ten different writers were involved in this film—not one of them from the very beginning to the very end. As Aljean Harmetz writes: “Writers [at MGM] were assigned in relays, rather as though they were pieces of sandpaper to be used up and replaced. Scripts resembled nothing so much as a seven-layer cake, and it often took an archaeological expedition to discover who was responsible for which layer.”¹⁵⁴ In the case of *Oz*, the archaeologists never could figure it out.

The lines discussed are well-known and memorable, but there are yet others perhaps not frequently used but immediately recognizable. One example is the Wicked Witch’s skywritten message “Surrender Dorothy,” which director Victor Fleming had shortened from “Surrender Dorothy or Die WWW.”¹⁵⁵ Another line is in the poppy field where Dorothy and the Lion have both fallen asleep. Glinda comes to the rescue, and the two awake to find it snowing. Director Victor Fleming asked the actors for a line at that point, and Bert Lahr came up with “Unusual weather we’re havin’, ain’t it?”¹⁵⁶

154 Aljean Harmetz and Margaret Hamilton, *The Making of The Wizard of Oz, 75th Anniversary Updated Edition* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2013), 28-29.

155 Michael Sragow, *Victor Fleming: An American Movie Master* (New York: Pantheon, 2008), 308.

156 John Lahr, “The Lemon-Drop Kid,” *The New Yorker*, September 30, 1996.

In this section of my thesis, I discuss the above dialogue lines and song titles in an exploration of their origin and in pursuit of an understanding as to why they have become so popular and memorable. *The Wizard of Oz* had four different directors and ten different writers. Most movies made at that time were a far cry from the eventual rise of the later *auteur* system. At the time of *The Wizard of Oz*, one could say “this was an MGM film” or a “Warner Bros. film” but seldom would one say in those days that “this was a Victor Fleming” or “George Cukor” film. What is remarkable about *The Wizard of Oz*, however, is that there is a unique “stamp” on that film, not just a studio stamp but a stamp that resulted from the combined efforts of several hundred people who somehow produced—to the surprise of almost everyone who worked on the film—one of the greatest and most popular films to ever come out of Hollywood.

4 – Toto, I've a feeling we're not in Kansas anymore

This classic line is not in the book, but is spoken by Dorothy in the movie as she comes out of her house after being carried to Oz by the cyclone. Holding Toto in her arms, she looks around at the beautiful multi-colored landscape and says “Toto, I’ve a feeling we’re not in Kansas anymore.” This is immediately followed by “We must be over the rainbow!” Dorothy then looks around, sees the good witch Glinda and says, “Now I -- I know we're not in Kansas.”

This line has become an oft-used slogan in San Francisco, particularly in the city’s best-known gay district, the Castro.¹⁵⁷ Elsewhere in San Francisco, tourists can climb the stairs up Telegraph Hill to Coit Tower overlooking the San Francisco Bay, and rest on benches along the way. On one of them is a

157 William Booth, “Out Man’s Odds,” *Washington Post*, December 13, 1999, <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/WPcap/1999-12/13/000r-121399-idx.html>.

bronze plaque which reads “Toto, I have a feeling we’re not in Kansas anymore.”¹⁵⁸ The film *Avatar* used the line when greeting arrivals to the military base on the planet of Pandora: “You’re not in Kansas anymore. You’re on Pandora, ladies and gentlemen.”¹⁵⁹

23 – There's no place like home

This line does occur one time in the book, but it is not at the very end as it is in the movie. In the film, Glinda speaks the phrase three times, as she instructs Dorothy as to what she must think to herself after she closes her eyes and taps the heels of her red slippers together. Dorothy clicks her heels together three times and repeats the line several times.

When Ryerson and Woolf were brought in to work on the script that Noel Langley had thought he had completed, one of their focuses was on Dorothy’s wish to return to Kansas—because “there’s no place like home.” After they left the project and Langley returned, he did what he could to restore the script to what he had written before Ryerson/Woolf had been brought on board. Unfortunately, associate producer Arthur Freed liked the focus on home and indeed it had been Freed’s idea for Dorothy to have to say “There’s no place like home” three times before she was able to go back to Kansas.

99 – I'll get you, my pretty, and your little dog, too!

158 Roger Rapoport, *The Getaway Guide to California* (RDR Books, 2000), 165.

159 James Cameron, *You’re Not in Kansas Anymore! You Are on Pandora!*, accessed December 16, 2015, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5nOIFYF3Lf4>.

This line is not in the book. In fact, the Wicked Witch of the West does not even appear in the book until Dorothy and her friends have left the Emerald City and headed west to obtain her broomstick. In the film, the witch says the line after Glinda has told her to “begone” from Munchkinland, shortly before Dorothy goes off on her quest. The witch does leave—in a “cloud of fire and smoke”—but not before she has threatened Dorothy with this line.

There is one character in the film whose role is woefully underrated (but is, at least, mentioned in this famous quote). This may be because the actor is small in stature—even smaller than the Munchkins (who were paid less by the studio than he was)—but, nevertheless, his performance is vital in many scenes. His actions move the story line forward more than any other actor—including Dorothy. I speak, of course, of Toto, Dorothy’s faithful canine companion. Dorothy simply responds (albeit bravely) to nasty neighbours, bad weather conditions, unpleasant people on broomsticks, flaming scarecrows, and charlatans. Toto is absolutely essential to the film. His biting of Miss Gulch launches the entire story. (And after seeing Miss Gulch, it is likely that many in the audience would have done the same.) When he jumps out of her bicycle basket and returns to Dorothy, it is inevitable that he and Dorothy must leave the farm. When he jumps out of her arms and runs into the house as the cyclone approaches, he sets up the voyage to Oz as Dorothy must follow him into the soon-to-be-airborne house. When he barks at the Wicked Witch of the West, he further aggravates her already nasty nature. Much further on in the film, Toto escapes from the Wicked Witch’s castle and makes his way back to Dorothy’s three companions to let them know where to find Dorothy. In the Great Hall of Oz, he pulls back the curtain to reveal to everyone that The Great and Powerful Oz is simply a little old man. When he jumps out of the balloon just before the now-retired wizard is to fly back to Kansas, Dorothy is forced to leave the balloon to catch him and the balloon sails off without her. Without that situation, she would never have learned the power of the red slippers.

On Ballot but not on the AFI 100

Lions and tigers and bears, oh my!

This line was on the AFI's four hundred quote ballot, but failed to make the AFI 100. The line itself is not in Baum's book, but there are references in the book to those three animals. In the film, the line is used when Dorothy, the Scarecrow, the Tin Man, and, of course, Toto, walk through a "dark and creepy" forest.

DOROTHY

Do -- do you suppose we'll meet any wild animals?

TIN MAN

Some -- but mostly lions, and tigers, and bears.

DOROTHY

Lions?

SCARECROW

And tigers?

TIN MAN

And bears.

DOROTHY

Oh! Lions and tigers and bears!

(they react to growl off-screen)

DOROTHY

Oh, my!

[repeated four times]

I'm melting! Melting! Oh, what a world! What a world!

While this line does not appear in the book, the situation does. In the film, Dorothy grabs a bucket of water, and throws the water onto the Scarecrow—who has been set on fire by the witch—accidentally splashing water onto the witch. The witch “screams as the water hits her” and Dorothy and her friends watch her as she begins to melt away. This is the witch’s final moment:

WITCH

Ohhh -- you cursed brat! Look what you've done! I'm melting! Melting! Oh - - what a world -- what a world! Who would have thought a good little girl like you could destroy my beautiful wickedness!? Ohhh! Look out! Look out! I'm going. Ohhhh! Ohhhhhh....

And she melts away until nothing but her cloak and hat are left on the floor.¹⁶⁰

One might wonder why someone who was deathly allergic to water would keep a bucket of the stuff around the castle, but it did help to move the plot forward and certainly disposed of the witch. It also led to a good pun when they returned to the Emerald City. (When Dorothy reports the fate of the witch to the Wizard, he replies, “You liquid-ated her.”)

Pay no attention to that man behind the curtain!

160 Lyn and Tom Davis Genelli, in their book *Death at the Movies*, write, “In the instinctive act to save her friend, Dorothy unwittingly stumbles on the way to kill the witch and take her broom. Here is the open secret—that action taken from compassion is what liberates us from our dilemma of self-involvement. It is in freeing others that we are freed.” Lyn Davis Genelli and Tom Davis Genelli, *Death at the Movies: Hollywood’s Guide to the Hereafter* (Wheaton: Quest Books, 2013).

This line was on the four hundred quote ballot, but did not make it to the AFI 100. In the film, after Dorothy, The Tinman, The Cowardly Lion and Toto enter the Throne Room and demand that the Wizard keep his promises, Toto runs to a curtain hanging near the throne. As the “Great and Powerful Oz” tells them to “come back tomorrow,” Toto starts to pull the curtain back. He reveals a wizened old man pulling levers and talking into a microphone.

OZ'S VOICE

Oh - I - Pay no....

Dorothy goes over to the curtain and starts to pull it aside —

OZ'S VOICE

...attention to that man behind the curtain. Go - before I lose my temper! The Great and Powerful ---....

The Wizard starts to speak into the microphone -- then turns weakly back to Dorothy

OZ'S VOICE

... -- Oz -- has spoken!

DOROTHY

Who are you?

OZ'S VOICE

Well, I -- I -- am the Great and Powerful -- Wizard of Oz.

DOROTHY

You are?

WIZARD

Uhhhh -- yes...

DOROTHY

I don't believe you!

WIZARD

No, I'm afraid it's true. There's no other Wizard except me.

SCARECROW

You humbug!

LION

Yeah!

WIZARD

Yes-s-s -- that...that's exactly so.

This line was not in the book although Toto does knock over a screen to reveal the "wizard." However, as an aside, I note that every year Baum would decorate the family Christmas tree in the front parlour while he was hidden behind closed drapes. He would do this all his life. His family would even hear him

talking to Santa: “Everything ready? Well, thanks for the presents, Santa. Have a good trip. See you next year!”¹⁶¹

Friend of Dorothy

Although not a line in the film (and Dorothy certainly had three close friends in the film), “Friend of Dorothy” is a slang term for “gay.” (The British equivalent is—or at least was when homosexuality was illegal in the UK—“friend of Mrs. King”, i.e. “queen.”¹⁶²) As Donald Reuter writes in his book *Gay-2-Zee: A Dictionary of Sex, Subtext, and the Sublime*:¹⁶³ “‘Friend of Dorothy, a’ - Phrase meaning someone is gay, and rooted in: 1) our fondness for Judy Garland, the iconic entertainer who played Dorothy Gale in the classic film musical *The Wizard of Oz* with her trio of sexless male buddies; 2) our association to and admiration for sharp-tongued writer Dorothy Parker, whose famed “vicious circle” of pals included gay men; and 3) the need for gay men, during much of the twentieth century, to speak in code (for fear of being found out).” Reuter also defines another Oz-related term: “‘Dorothy and Toto’ - A gay man and his dog, an effeminate man who’s in control in a relationship with a masculine partner. [as in] *If Dorothy and Toto come over, I can have one watch the soufflé while the other helps me move the couch.*”¹⁶⁴

161 Katharine M. Rogers, *L. Frank Baum: Creator of Oz*, First edition (Cambridge, Mass.; London: Da Capo Press, 2003), 49.

162 John Richardson, “The Sorcerer’s Apprentice Picasso, Provence, and Douglas Cooper,” *New York Times - Books*, 1999, <http://www.nytimes.com/books/first/r/richardson-apprentice.html>.

163 Donald F. Reuter, *Gay-2-Zee: A Dictionary of Sex, Subtext, and the Sublime*, First Edition (New York: St. Martin’s Griffin, 2006), 81.

164 *Ibid.*, 58.

In 1981 the U.S. Navy launched “a purge of what they presumed to be a massive network of homosexuals at Great Lakes [Naval Training Center]. In the course of their investigation, NIS [Naval Investigative Service] agents made a startling discovery—that homosexuals sometimes referred to themselves as “friends of Dorothy.” This code term had originated in the 1940s and 1950s and referred to Judy Garland’s character in the film *The Wizard of Oz*. Ever since, gay men had identified themselves as “friends of Dorothy.” The NIS, however, did not know the phrase’s history and so believed that a woman named Dorothy was the hub of an enormous ring of military homosexuals in the Chicago area. The NIS prepared to hunt Dorothy down and convince her to give them the names of homosexuals in the Navy.¹⁶⁵

As mentioned in Reuter’s book, some believe that the “Dorothy” originally referred to in this phrase was American writer Dorothy Parker, a well-known and witty (as were all) member of New York’s famous Algonquin Round Table which included Robert Benchley, George S. Kaufman, Alexander Woollcott, and others as well as occasional visitors including Edna Ferber, Harpo Marx, and Noel Coward. In the documentary film “Coming out under Fire” (1994), based on the book by Allan Bérubé, a former American soldier describes hanging out with a group of fellow gay soldiers on their transport ship as they sailed from the U.S. to England during World War II. “Every day we’d read stories by Dorothy Parker...When we left the ship and all of us separated, we’d correspond with each other, we’d use the vernacular of Dorothy Parker.¹⁶⁶

165 Randy Shilts, *Conduct Unbecoming: Gays & Lesbians in the U.S. Military*, 1st Ballantine books edition (Open Road Media, 2014).

166 Arthur Dong, *Coming Out Under Fire*, 1994, <https://www.facebook.com/michael.billow/videos/10150337832482187/>.

In their daily schedules, cruise ships list announcements of meetings for many interest groups, such as bridge players, singles, or “Friends of Bill W.”—which is for members of Alcoholics Anonymous. Also common these days are meetings for passengers who are “Friends of Dorothy” or “FOD” for short. This generally means not only for gay men, but for the entire LGBT community.¹⁶⁷ Gay passengers make up a significant percentage of cruise ship passengers. One travel agency in San Francisco which specializes in vacations for gay and lesbian travellers is called “Friends of Dorothy Travel.”¹⁶⁸

As Ben Brantley wrote in the *New York Times*, “[Garland’s] version of *“Somewhere Over the Rainbow”* became an anthem of pain for homosexuals who perceived themselves as belonging to a despised minority.”¹⁶⁹

Oz

In the original book as written by L. Frank Baum, there is the *Land of Oz*, and there is simply *Oz*, which is the name of the Great Wizard of Oz who lives in the Emerald City in the centre of the Land of Oz. Today, even the name “Oz” is a movie meme of its own. One merely need say “I feel like I’m in Oz” and most listeners will immediately understand the reference. It is the complement to “we’re not in Kansas

167 “FOD FAQ’s, or Who Are the Friends of Dorothy?,” *Cruise Critic*, accessed December 18, 2015, <http://www.cruisecritic.com/articles.cfm?ID=188>.

168 “Friends of Dorothy Travel,” accessed December 18, 2015, <http://www.fodtravel.com/>.

169 Ben Brantley, “Critic’s Notebook; Why Oz Is a State of Mind In Gay Life and Drag Shows,” *The New York Times*, June 28, 1994, sec. Movies, <http://www.nytimes.com/1994/06/28/movies/critic-s-notebook-why-oz-is-a-state-of-mind-in-gay-life-and-drag-shows.html>.

anymore." American author John Updike pointed out that the name Oz "resonates with a Shelley poem known to most Victorians" 170

And on the pedestal these words appear:

"My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:

Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!"

Nothing beside remains.

However, Baum was very explicit as to how he came up with the name for his imaginary land. "Well," he said, "I have a little cabinet letter-file on my desk that is just in front of me. I was thinking and wondering about a title for the story, and had settled on 'Wizard' as part of it. My gaze was caught by the gilt letters on the three drawers of the cabinet. The first was A-G; the next drawer was labelled H-N; and on the last were the letters O-Z. And 'Oz' it at once became." 171 Because of the pronunciation similarity between "Oz" and the first three letters of "Australia" or "Aussie," Oz is often used as a nickname for that country. Consider John Fiske's *Myths of Oz: Reading Australian Popular Culture* 172 , Australia's *Oz Magazine* 173 in the 1960s, and that the national lottery in Australia is referred to as *Oz Lotto*. 174

The Songwriters

170 John Updike, "Oz Is Us," *The New Yorker*, September 25, 2000, <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2000/09/25/oz-is-us>.

171 *Book News*, vol. 21 (Philadelphia, PA, 1903), 700.

172 John Fiske, *Myths of Oz: Reading Australian Popular Culture* (Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1988).

173 Richard Neville and Richard Walsh, "OZ Magazine, Sydney | Historical & Cultural Collections | University of Wollongong," accessed January 23, 2016, <http://ro.uow.edu.au/ozsydney/>.

174 "Oz Lotteries," *Oz Lotteries*, accessed January 23, 2016, <https://www.ozlotteries.com/>.

Composer Harold Arlen and lyricist E. Y. (Yip) Harburg had already worked together before uniting again on *The Wizard of Oz*. Their past songs included *It's Only a Paper Moon*, *Last Night When We Were Young*, and *Down with Love*, and after *Oz* they would write *Lydia, the Tattooed Lady* for the Marx Brothers movie *At the Circus*. Once they got to work at MGM, the first songs they wrote were what Harold Arlen called the “lemon-drop songs,” —“light, emotionally undemanding, and easy to write.” These included “*Ding Dong! The Witch Is Dead*,” “*We’re Off to See the Wizard*,” “*The Merry Old Land of Oz*,” and “*If I Only Had a Brain ... a Heart ... the Nerve*”¹⁷⁵ These and other songs—particularly “*Over the Rainbow*”—are discussed further in this section.

Although Arlen and Harburg won an Academy Award for Best Song for *Over the Rainbow*, it was Herbert Stothart who received the Oscar for Best Original Score. Stothart simply used music to connect the songs that Arlen and Harburg had written. Those songs occupied forty-five minutes of the one hundred and two minute film, and under the rules of the Academy today, Arlen and Harburg would have shared that Oscar with Stothart.¹⁷⁶

When MGM hired Harburg and Arlen on May 19, 1938 for a fourteen-week contract, the script was not yet finished and the only actor that had been cast was Judy Garland. When their contract was up they still hadn’t finished their last (the film’s first) song: “*Over the Rainbow*.” That Oscar-winning song was finished on their own, unpaid time.

175 Aljean Harmetz and Margaret Hamilton, *The Making of The Wizard of Oz*, 75th Anniversary Updated Edition (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2013).

176 Ibid., 62.

When Arlen and Harburg began work on *The Wizard of Oz*, Harburg became the “show doctor” and the editor of all the scripts. Although his only screen credit was “Lyrics by E. Y. Harburg,” as Harnetz points out, the final shooting script was Harburg’s blend of Langley, Ryerson and Woolf, along with Harburg’s own writing. His own writing was extensive, including all the transitions, the Wizard’s speech awarding the symbols of brains, heart and courage, the lines for the Cowardly Lion and the Wizard, and all the dialogue that led into the songs themselves. And of course he wrote the lyrics to every one of those songs.¹⁷⁷

Over the Rainbow

Over the Rainbow was the key song in *The Wizard of Oz*, but creating it—and keeping it in the film—involved a great deal of struggle. First was the problem of writing it. “The ballad is always the hardest song to write in any structure,” according to Harburg, “because a ballad is pure melody. Also, the ballad is the one that has to hit the Hit Parade, the one everybody sings, the one that must be easy enough to sing.” Arlen and Harburg agreed it should be “a song of yearning. Its object would be to delineate Dorothy and to give an emotional touch to the scene where she is frustrated and in trouble.”¹⁷⁸ Note that while a screenwriter may not overtly look for a line of dialogue that everyone will quote, every songwriter (particularly at the time when everyone knew the songs played on radios—and later televisions—*Hit Parade*) was always looking for a song that would make the top ten.

177 Ibid., 57-58.

178 Ibid., 77.

Arlen found his inspiration for the tune under circumstances that would likely be too corny even for a Hollywood film. His wife Anya was driving them along Sunset Boulevard toward Hollywood Boulevard where they would see a movie at the famous and majestic Grauman's Chinese Theatre. They were on Sunset Boulevard opposite the equally legendary Schwab's drugstore (where an untrue legend has it that actress Lana Turner was discovered) when Arlen told his wife to stop the car so he could write down the tune.¹⁷⁹ Harlen later phoned Harburg and asked him to come over and hear what he'd written. It was after midnight but this was not unusual for the two colleagues. They preferred to work at night so they could have their days to enjoy the sunshine; Arlen playing golf, Harburg playing tennis. Harburg listened and found the song "too symphonic," suitable for someone such as operetta star Nelson Eddy but not for a little lonely farm girl yearning to be somewhere else. As Harburg later said: "A song that's done for a movie is custom-made. You have to write something that will fit a singer's style and ability, but you also have to know the character that is being played... I knew Judy could sing 'Over the Rainbow,' but I thought it was too old for the character."¹⁸⁰ After trying to come up with a tune that satisfied them both, Harburg and Arlen asked their friend Ira Gershwin to come over and listen to the tune. After he'd heard Arlen play the tune, Gershwin asked him to try it "with a little more rhythm." Arlen did, and everyone was pleased with the result.

The next step was to come up with a bridge in the song. Arlen did not think it was necessary but he was willing to do it for Harburg. But they could not develop the bridge tune. Then Harburg was inspired. As he said, "Well, Harold had a little dog, Pan... [and] Harold had a little whistle for him that went like this [whistles middle tune—"Someday I'll wish upon a star"]. I said 'Harold...' This is the crazy life we lead.

179 *Ibid.*, 78.

180 *Ibid.*

This is the way songs are written.”¹⁸¹ Next was the problem of matching words to the first two notes of the song, which were an octave apart. “Over the rainbow is where I want to be” didn’t work, and neither did “I’ll go over the rainbow.” But, eventually, “Somewhere over the rainbow” did.¹⁸² Later, it was Ira Gershwin who suggested that they reprise “If happy little bluebirds fly . . .” as a final tag.

Though “*Over the Rainbow*” was the first song in the picture, it was actually the last to be written and the last to be filmed. Once Arlen had finished the tune and turned it over to Harburg for the words, Harburg thought about the purpose of the song. “The girl was in trouble, but it was the trouble of a child... This little girl thinks: My life is messed up. Where do I run? The song has to be full of childish pleasures. Of lemon drops. The book had said Kansas was an arid place where not even flowers grew. The only colourful thing Dorothy saw, occasionally, would be the rainbow. I thought that the rainbow could be a bridge from one place to another. A rainbow gave us a visual reason for going to a new land and a reason for changing to colour.” Harburg’s son Ernie pointed out that Yip did something with the lyrics that made it a classic Yip song: “Yip put in....’and the dreams that you dare to dream really do come true.’ You see? And that word ‘dare’ lands on the note, and it’s a perfect thing, and it’s been generating courage for people for years afterwards.”¹⁸³ For further verification, see and hear Yip Harburg sing the song many years later.¹⁸⁴

181 Harold Meyerson and Ernie Harburg, *Who Put the Rainbow in The Wizard of Oz?: Yip Harburg, Lyricist*, First edition (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993), 131.

182 Aljean Harmetz and Margaret Hamilton, *The Making of The Wizard of Oz*, 75th Anniversary Updated Edition (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2013), 132.

183 Amy Goodman, “A Tribute to Yip Harburg: The Man Who Put the Rainbow in The Wizard of Oz,” *Democracy Now!*, November 25, 2004, http://www.democracynow.org/2004/11/25/a_tribute_to_yip_harburg_the.

184 Yip Harburg sings Over the Rainbow, <https://youtu.be/eNiXnzh3abk>.

After the film's first sneak preview—in San Bernardino, California—L. B. Mayer removed the song from the film. “Why does she sing in a barnyard?” other producers at the preview had asked. The reason, of course, was because she lived on a farm. That farm in Kansas was what she would escape *from* as she began her journey in the Land of Oz. The song was the key to the entire black and white (actually turned to sepia in the lab) opening of the film. Freed, Arlen, and—according to LeRoy later—LeRoy all protested to Mayer, and the song was restored.¹⁸⁵ *Over the Rainbow* was later to be removed and finally restored two more times. A week before the film opened in general release, it was already Number Four on the top ten sheet-music sales. (At the top of the list was Beer Barrel Polka.)¹⁸⁶

Laurence Maslon, writing in *The American Interest*, offers some suggestions as to why *Over the Rainbow* has remained so popular for more than seventy-five years.

Over the Rainbow has transcended its origins to become the quintessential American song ...Perhaps the key to “Over the Rainbow” is that it’s the only adult song in the popular canon to be sung by a child... In the gifted renditions of Judy Garland throughout her career, the song’s emotional intention proved elastic enough to convey both the hopefulness of innocence and the wistfulness of despair... “Over the Rainbow” is the only great song in the American canon that can be sung movingly from both sides of the rainbow.¹⁸⁷

Garland always retained reverence for the song that made her a star. In a newspaper interview from 1969, the year she died, she said, “‘Rainbow’ has always been my song. I get emotional—one way or the

185 Aljean Harmetz and Margaret Hamilton, *The Making of The Wizard of Oz, 75th Anniversary Updated Edition* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2013), 80-81.

186 Ibid., 284.

187 Laurence Maslon, “The Wizards of Oz,” *The American Interest* 2, no. 6 (July 1, 2007).

other—about every song I sing. But maybe I get more emotional about ‘Rainbow.’ I never shed any phony tears about it. Everybody has songs that make them cry. That’s my sad song.”¹⁸⁸

Over the Rainbow may have been Garland’s sad song, but *Ding-Dong! The Witch is Dead* was one of joy. Sung by the Munchkins in celebration after Dorothy’s house has crushed the Wicked Witch of the East, it has become a tribute to the liberation from tyranny. The Munchkins launch a joyful parade with marching soldiers, as the people cheer, sing, and dance.

Ding Dong! The Witch is dead.

Which old witch?

The Wicked Witch!

Ding Dong! The Wicked Witch is dead!

In 2013, after former UK Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher’s death on April 8, this song leapt to the number two position on the BBC’s weekly popular song chart. The popularity of the song was the result of an ongoing Facebook campaign which had the goal of making it the number one song once Thatcher died. The BBC was not pleased, but refused to ban the song as many in the UK had been demanding. As the Controller of Radio 1 stated: “Nobody at Radio 1 wishes to cause offence but nor do I believe that we can ignore the song in the chart show, which is traditionally a formal record of the biggest selling singles of the week. That in turn means that all songs in the chart become an historic fact. I’ve therefore decided exceptionally that we should treat the rise of the song, based as it is on a political campaign to denigrate Lady Thatcher’s memory, as a news story. So we will play a brief excerpt of it in a short news

188 Ibid.

report during the show which explains to our audience why a 70-year-old song is at the top of the charts. To ban the record from our airwaves completely would risk giving the campaign the oxygen of further publicity and might inflame an already delicate situation.”¹⁸⁹

The New York Times asked Ernie Harburg, the son of Yip Harburg who had written the lyrics to *Ding Dong*, what his father might have thought of the controversy. Harburg responded: “Yip Harburg, lyricist of ‘The Wizard of Oz’ film, would have been amused that ‘Ding Dong! The Witch Is Dead’ rose to the top of the charts when Margaret Thatcher died. W. S. Gilbert and George Bernard Shaw taught Yip Harburg, democratic socialist, sworn challenger of all tyranny against the people, that ‘humour is an act of courage’ and dissent.... ‘Ding Dong! The Witch Is Dead’ is a universal cry against the cruelty of tyrants and a protest against the ban on laughter at that cruelty. For the 99 percent, laughing and joy are required at the funeral of a tyrant. According to Yip, humour gives us hope in hard times.”¹⁹⁰ The Facebook campaign did not get *Ding Dong* to the number one position, but the controversy over their effort gave their cause notable publicity.

Follow the Yellow Brick Road

¹⁸⁹ Ben Cooper, “Why We’re Playing ‘Ding Dong The Witch Is Dead’ on Radio 1’s Sunday 14 April 2013 Chart Show,” *About the BBC*, April 12, 2013, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/aboutthebbc/entries/7a999806-2d92-3b87-9b3d-75dc5229a877>.

¹⁹⁰ Robert Mackey, “BBC Won’t Ban ‘Ding Dong! The Witch Is Dead,’ Adopted as Anti-Thatcher Anthem,” *The Lede - New York Times*, April 12, 2013, <http://thelede.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/04/12/bbc-wont-ban-ding-dong-the-witch-is-dead-adopted-as-anti-thatcher-anthem/>.

The phrase *Follow the Yellow Brick Road* is not in the book but in the movie. The line is used fourteen times, first spoken, then sung, as Dorothy heads down the road on the beginning of her journey. Once she teams up with the Scarecrow, however, the key song shifts to “*We’re Off to See the Wizard.*”

This phrase—“*We’re Off to See the Wizard*”—is used six times, always as a line in the song. It does not appear in the book.

We're off to see the Wizard
The Wonderful Wizard of Oz
We hear he is a whiz of a Wiz
If ever a Wiz there was
If ever oh ever a Wiz there was,
The Wizard of Oz
Is one because
Because, because, because, because, because
Because of the wonderful things he does.
We're off to see the Wizard
The Wonderful Wizard of Oz!

In his book *Their Finest Hour*, Winston Churchill wrote about Australian troops in the January 1941 attack on the Italian-held town of Bardia in eastern Libya: “They sang at that time a song from an American film, which soon became popular also in Britain.”¹⁹¹ That song was *We're off to see the Wizard*.

191 Winston S. Churchill, *Their Finest Hour*, Reissue edition (Boston: Mariner Books, 1986), 543-544.

Another versatile melody, "*If I Only Had a ..Brain/Heart/the Nerve*" which in the film is used by the Scarecrow, by the Tin Man, and by the Cowardly Lion, as each sings about his plight and what he believes he needs to be whole. The tune had originally been written for—but not used in—the Broadway show *Hooray for What?* by Harold Arlen.¹⁹² Yet another is "*Come Out, Come Out, Wherever You Are,*" spoken and sung by Glinda, the Good Witch of the North.

GLINDA

The Munchkins are happy because you have freed them from the Wicked Witch of the East.

DOROTHY

Oh. But, if you please -- what are Munchkins?

GLINDA

The little people who live in this land - it's Munchkinland, and you are their national heroine, my dear. It's all right -- you may all come out and thank her. It's all right now - you may all come out.

(sings)

Come out, come out, wherever you are. And meet the young lady who fell from a star.

While there is no direct connection in the film between the song and the term "coming out (of the closet)" in the gay community, many have adopted this phrase including San Francisco member of the

¹⁹² Harold Meyerson and Ernie Harburg, *Who Put the Rainbow in The Wizard of Oz?: Yip Harburg, Lyricist*, 1st Paperback edition (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), 141.

Board of Supervisors and gay activist Harvey Milk in his successful 1978 state-wide campaign against an anti-gay bill in California.¹⁹³ Milk and Mayor George Moscone were assassinated later in 1978.

The writing process for *The Wizard of Oz* was a complicated one, and it is useful to examine it closely. Throughout pre-production and filming, MGM assigned ten different writers to the project. Some lasted a few days, others a number of months. The first writer was Herman Mankiewicz, assigned by MGM to the project on February 28, 1938. Three days later he turned in a seventeen-page treatment. The treatment dealt with the beginning of the film—Dorothy in Kansas—and it was the first recorded mention of one key theme of the film: Kansas is in black-and-white, and when Dorothy opens the door of her cyclone-carried home, she sees the full-colour splendour of Oz.¹⁹⁴ Four days later, Mankiewicz turned in a fifty-six page partial script. As Aljean Harmetz reports, Mankiewicz was known for being an extremely fast writer but the script he produced was, as described by her, “saccharine and eccentric.” She suggests that Mankiewicz deliberately wrote a quickie and unsatisfactory script because he wanted off the picture. As Harmetz points out, there was a precedent. “Once, when Mankiewicz was punished by being assigned to a Rin-Tin-Tin picture, he retaliated by writing a script that ended with a cowardly Rin-Tin-Tin carrying a baby into a burning building.”¹⁹⁵

193 Erin McHugh, *Political Suicide: Missteps, Peccadilloes, Bad Calls, Backroom Hijinx, Sordid Pasts, Rotten Breaks, and Just Plain Dumb Mistakes in the Annals of American Politics*, First edition (Pegasus Books, 2016), 82.

194 Aljean Harmetz and Margaret Hamilton, *The Making of The Wizard of Oz, 75th Anniversary Updated Edition* (Chicago: Chicago Review Press, 2013), 26-27.

195 Ibid., 30-31.

The same day that Mankiewicz turned in his script, light-verse poet Ogden Nash was assigned to write a treatment for the film, as was another writer, Noel Langley, four days later. Mankiewicz did not know that Nash and Langley had been assigned as Langley did not know that Mankiewicz had preceded him. As Harnetz writes: “It was customary for three, four, or even five writers to be assigned to write for the same film at the same time. One treatment or script would be accepted, the others discarded and their writers sent to write treatments for some other film.”¹⁹⁶

Eleven days later, Langley turned in a forty-three page treatment for the film, and the next day Mankiewicz was taken off the project. (He was to write the Academy Award-winning screenplay for *Citizen Kane* the following year.) Nash remained another three weeks but submitted nothing further. Much of the material in Langley’s treatment would remain in the film all the way to the final movie. On June 10, 1938 Langley left the film after having written one treatment and four scripts. The last script—dated May 14—was considered by Langley, by Freed, and by the songwriters Harold Arlen and Yip Harburg, to be the final “do not make changes” script. Naturally, they all continued to make changes to the script, ending up with another “do not make changes” script on June 4. During Langley’s tenure, two other writers had come and gone. Herbert Fields worked on the film for four days in April but did not contribute to the script, and Samuel Hoffenstein did the same for four days until June 3 producing a two-page outline of the sequence in Kansas.

Although Langley left the “completed” script on June 10, one week earlier Florence Ryerson and Edgar Allan Woolf had been assigned on June 3. They felt the script needed more emotion, and that Dorothy

196 *Ibid.*, 31.

needed to be highlighted more. They turned in their first script on June 13 and a second script on July 27. Just after Ryerson and Woolf had submitted their first script, Langley found out that they were rewriting his script. He was furious; particularly since Freed, Arlen and Harburg had all liked his script.¹⁹⁷ He was then reassigned to the film. He proceeded to go through the Ryerson-Woolf script “crossing out as much of their dialogue as he could and replacing his own.”¹⁹⁸ Langley left the film again on October 31.

The passage of writers was not yet finished. MGM brought in gag writer Jack Mintz, who worked for a month and came up with four pages of suggested lines. Writer Sid Silver appeared shortly after the film went into production, and his job was to make any changes that director Richard Thorpe might want during shooting. However, Thorpe was soon fired and Silver left also. The very last writer was John Lee Mahin, who came to work when his good friend Victor Fleming became director of the film. Mahin made contributions throughout the film, particularly in the opening scene, but he refused to take any screen credit.¹⁹⁹

The final combined script gave “screenplay by” credit to Ryerson, Woolf and Langley; and “adaptation by” credit to Langley. The Ryerson-Woolf script introduced the theme “there’s no place like home.” Langley’s earlier script had created the “Oz as dream” theme, the opposite of how Baum had written the story which described a very real Oz. Both of these themes have been criticized by many commentators

197 Ibid., 53-54.

198 Ibid., 51.

199 Ibid., 58.

over the years, and I discuss this later in this thesis. The key result of this coming and going of writers was that there was no specific writer responsible for writing the film's script. Other than the Ryerson/Woolf team, none of the writers worked together. However all did work back and forth with the songwriters Arlen and Harburg, as well as associate producer Alan Freed and producer Mervyn LeRoy. But something—or someone—was needed to bring all of this creative work together into one final ready-to-shoot screenplay. That someone was the “unseen (and uncredited) writer”—E. Y. (Yip) Harburg—who served as script doctor bringing all the various rewrites together into a final usable script, agreed upon by the key members of the production team.

The books are magical. The movie is magical. As Roger Ebert said above, “As adults, we love it because it reminds us of a journey we have taken. That is why any adult in control of a child is sooner or later going to suggest a viewing of “The Wizard of Oz.”²⁰⁰ The film's famous movie quotes—and equally famous song titles—live on in everyday use. One does not have to be Dorothy to say “I’ve a feeling we’re not in Kansas anymore,” nor to click one’s heels together (even without ruby red slippers) and say “There’s no place like home.” Having once seen *The Wizard of Oz*, the morphic fields of the film and land of Oz remain in the hearts of all who have loved the film—and continue to use the magically transporting lines as well.

Other key movie quotes of significance

200 Roger Ebert, “The Wizard of Oz Movie Review (1939) | *Roger Ebert*,” accessed November 12, 2015, <http://www.rogerebert.com/reviews/great-movie-the-wizard-of-oz-1939>.

I'll have what she's having (*When Harry Met Sally*)

#33 on the AFI 100

During the making of *When Harry Met Sally*, the filmmakers felt there was too much focus on Harry (Billy Crystal) and not enough on Sally (Meg Ryan.) In a recorded conversation on the film's DVD, screenwriter Nora Ephron and director Rob Reiner recalled that Reiner had said "We've told you all this stuff about guys, you tell us something about women that we don't know" and Ephron had responded "Okay, women fake orgasms" and Reiner had replied "Not with me." Ephron replied back "Absolutely with you, and everyone does it," prompting Reiner to say "No way." Reiner had then done a "little unscientific survey around the office," gathering the women in the Castle Rock production office and asking them if they had ever faked an orgasm, and discovered that Ephron was unanimously right.²⁰¹

Ryan said "Why don't I just fake one, just do one." Crystal suggested doing the scene in a restaurant and came up with the scene's classic punchline – "I'll have what she's having" – delivered by a woman at an adjacent table, played by Reiner's mother, Estelle.²⁰² After the first test screening, Reiner told Ephron that in the audience "all the women were laughing wildly and the men were completely silent."²⁰³

I'll be back (*The Terminator*)

201 In the DVD conversation, Ephron and Reiner agreed that there was another "fake" they could have included in the film: not only do "women fake orgasms but men fake listening.

202 Billy Crystal, *Still Foolin' 'Em: Where I've Been, Where I'm Going, and Where the Hell Are My Keys?*, First Edition (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 2013), 130.

203 Rob Reiner, *When Harry Met Sally...* (MGM (Video & DVD), 2008).

#37 on the AFI 100

The original film treatment for *The Terminator* had this line as “I’ll come back.” As director and co-writer James Cameron has said “I don’t remember why I changed it. It just sounded better.” Actor Arnold Schwarzenegger in his autobiography *Total Recall* said “Our biggest disagreement was about ‘I’ll be back’. I was arguing for ‘I will be back’. I felt that the line would sound more machine-like and menacing without the contraction.”²⁰⁴

Go ahead, Make my day (*Sudden Impact*)

#6 on the AFI 100

Clint Eastwood was not the only actor to use this line, as he did in *Sudden Impact*. Former actor—and at the time president of the United States—Ronald Reagan was also very fond of the line, which fit in nicely with his self- and highly-promoted image as the good sheriff come to bring safe and peaceful living to his people.²⁰⁵

204 Richard Crouse, “Best Lines Ever! ‘I’ll Be Back.’ The Terminator,” accessed February 12, 2016, *Richard Crouse*, <http://www.richardcrouse.ca/best-lines-ever-ill-be-back-the-terminator-arnold-schwarzenegger-in-the-terminator-1984-by-richard-crouse/>.

205 This could be seen as an actor/politician’s line, as Eastwood in 1986 was elected to a two-year term as mayor of the small but scenic town of Carmel-by-the-Sea, California.

I have my veto pen drawn and ready for any tax increase that Congress might even think of sending up. And I have only one thing to say to the tax increasers. Go ahead--make my day.²⁰⁶

As someone who had created movie trailers and poster tag lines for earlier Clint Eastwood films, Joseph Stinson knew that the film he was called in to write—*Sudden Impact*— needed a “Do you feel lucky, punk?” moment to please the audiences. When asked how he came up with the line, “Make my day”, he responded “Once a method actor, always a method actor,” he said. “I thought about the character. He lives by a code: ‘This is what I am, this is what I’m going to do. You decide.’ I’ll be honest, I thought it was a pretty good line,” Stinson said. “I walked around L.A. testing it out in my imagination. If someone cut in front of me at midnight in the eight items or less line, I’d give ‘em the squint.”²⁰⁷ His testing at the supermarket worked, and the line became a classic.

I’m walking here (*Midnight Cowboy*)

#27 on the AFI 100

The scene in *Midnight Cowboy* where street hustler Ratso Rizzo (Dustin Hoffman) slaps the hood of a taxi about to run into him and yells, “I’m walkin’ here!” may look planned but it was entirely improvised. “They didn’t have the money to close down a New York street,” Hoffman said. “It was a difficult scene logistically because those were real pedestrians and there was real traffic ... We got to the signal just as

²⁰⁶ George J. Church, “Go Ahead - Make My Day,” *Time*, accessed February 12, 2016, <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,964091,00.html>.

²⁰⁷ Donald Liebenson, “Famous Quotes: They Put the Words in Actors’ Mouths,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 2, 2010, <http://articles.latimes.com/2010/jan/02/entertainment/la-et-movie-quotes2-2010jan02>.

it was turning green, so we could keep walking. But it just happened—there was a real cab trying to beat the signal. Almost hit us. John [Schlesinger—the director], who couldn't see anything in the van, came running out, saying, 'What was that all about? Why did you ruin it by hitting the cab? Why were you yelling?' I said, 'You know, he almost hit us.' I guess the brain works so quickly, it said, in a split of a second, 'Don't go out of character.' So I said, 'I'm walking here,' meaning 'We're shooting a scene here, and this is the first time we ever got it right, and you have fucked us up.' Schlesinger started laughing. He clapped his hands and said, 'We must have that, we must have that.'" 208

Bond, James Bond (*Dr. No*)

#22 on the AFI 100

This line first appeared in the initial James Bond movie, *Dr. No*. It had previously been used in the series of James Bond books, beginning with the first, *Casino Royale*. Author Ian Fleming originally wanted Bond to be "an extremely dull, uninteresting man to whom things happened." As Fleming said, "One of the bibles of my youth was 'Birds of the West Indies,' by James Bond, a well-known ornithologist, and when I was casting about for a name for my protagonist I thought, My God, that's the dullest name I've ever heard, so I appropriated it...Mrs. Bond once wrote me a letter thanking me for using it." 209

208 Richard Crouse, "Best Lines Ever! 'I'll Be Back.' The Terminator," *Richard Crouse*, accessed February 12, 2016, <http://www.richardcrouse.ca/best-lines-ever-ill-be-back-the-terminator-arnold-schwarzenegger-in-the-terminator-1984-by-richard-crouse/>.

209 Joshua Rothman, "Lunch with Ian Fleming," *The New Yorker*, November 9, 2012, <http://www.newyorker.com/books/double-take/lunch-with-ian-fleming>.

Intentional Catchphrases - Great dialogue doesn't always "just happen"

Sometimes catchphrase dialogue lines don't "just happen." As Philip Brophy points out, Clint Eastwood ensured that "each *Dirty Harry* movie had at least one pivotal action scene where he says some dialogue that alone could sell the movie - the most famous being lines like 'Do I feel lucky? Well, do you, punk?' and the one President Ronald Reagan quoted a few times 'Go ahead—make my day'.²¹⁰ Arnold Schwarzenegger did the same with his highly identifiable lines of "I'll be back" and "Hasta la vista, baby." Brophy comments that Schwarzenegger is "clearly the figure who popularized the marketability of the 'trailerscript'- the 'one-liner' approach to dialogue initiated by Clint Eastwood in the 1970s."²¹¹

Another intentional line occurs in the 2010 film *Clash of the Titans*, in which Liam Neeson as Zeus cries out "Release the Kraken!" As one of the writers, Matt Manfredi, stated: "When we came on, one of our conditions was that the line had to be in the movie." A predecessor film had used a line calling for the Kraken to be "let loose," but Manfredi commented "In terms of poetry, 'release' worked for us."²¹²

Screenwriter Frank Pierson created a line for *Cool Hand Luke* which had not been in the book on which the movie had been based. It was used twice in the film—the second time as Luke's (Paul Newman) last line in the film—and was used *five* times in the film's theatrical trailer. The line was "What we got here is failure to communicate." Pierson said that he couldn't tell where that line came from. "I can still

210 Philip Brophy, "Read My Lips: Notes on the Writing and Speaking of Film Dialogue," *Continuum* 5, no. 2 (1992): 247–66.

211 Ibid.

212 Michael Cieply, "Longing for the Lines That Had Us at Hello," *The New York Times*, October 19, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/20/movies/20lines.html>.

visualize where I was [when I wrote it]. I was typing on my old Underwood in my house overlooking the sea in Malibu. In the scene, Luke has been recaptured and the warden wants to teach him a lesson. This whole thing has to do with getting Luke's mind right. And suddenly it materialized on the page in front of me.”²¹³

The (lack of) Study of Dialogue

“We didn’t need dialogue. We had faces.”

Gloria Swanson (Norma Desmond) in *Sunset Blvd.*

Dialogue is usually discussed in terms of its context in the *visual* art of film, how a scene with dialogue is shot, how dialogue reflects the characters, and the plot, theme and genre of the film. There appears to have been little study of dialogue *itself*; its structure, lexical components, phonetic effects, and rhythm; its use of poetic devices such as repetition, alliteration and assonance; its effect on audiences, and its mnemonic qualities.

Steven Price points out that that even screenwriting manuals—of which there are many—devote few pages to actual dialogue, noting that Hollywood screenwriting guru Robert McKee’s book *Story* contains

²¹³ Donald Liebenson, “Famous Quotes: They Put the Words in Actors’ Mouths,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 2, 2010, <http://articles.latimes.com/2010/jan/02/entertainment/la-et-movie-quotes2-2010jan02>.

only six pages on dialogue, concluding with “the best advice for writing film dialogue is don’t.” (McKee obviously eventually decided that six pages was not sufficient, and in 2016 came out with a book titled *Dialogue: The art of verbal action for page, stage, and screen*.²¹⁴ This 336-page book is entirely devoted to dialogue, although only a few pages deal with the areas of dialogue that I examine in this thesis.) Price continues that other similar books contain only twelve or even seven pages devoted to dialogue, and writes that “The ostensible reason for this is that as far as the screenwriter’s job is concerned, story or structure are assumed, no doubt rightly, to take priority over dialogue. This view is often accompanied by some variant of the *specificity thesis*: ‘never write a line of dialogue when you can create a visual expression’, as McKee puts it.”²¹⁵ Perhaps even more surprising is that “Claudia Sternberg’s chapter on the dialogue text [in her book *Written for the Screen: The American Motion-Picture Screenplay as Text*] occupies just fifteen pages...noticeably sketchier than her analysis of the *scene* text [including descriptions of the set, characters, and action], which at 121 pages takes up around half of her book.”²¹⁶ Price also notes that “In short, the screenplay’s dominant element proportionally is also, apparently, the least important critically. [Mary] Devereaux puts it succinctly: ‘Film dialogue is presumed to lack literary value or to possess it and lack cinematic value.’”²¹⁷ ²¹⁸

214 Robert McKee, *Dialogue: The Art of Verbal Action for Page, Stage, and Screen* (New York: Twelve, 2016).

215 Steven Price, *The Screenplay: Authorship, Theory and Criticism*, 2010 edition (Basingstoke, Hampshire England; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 137.

216 Ibid.

217 Ibid.

218 Perhaps the attitude of how little value dialogue has in a film was best expressed by Norma Desmond (Gloria Swanson) in *Sunset Blvd.* “We didn’t need dialogue. We had faces!”

This author conducted a survey of eighteen books on screenwriting (and one 600-page book on motion picture films) which showed that dialogue is seldom discussed as an integral part of a film *even in books specifically on screenwriting*. Only half of the authors considered dialogue important enough to be included in their table of contents. Although fifteen out of eighteen books did mention *dialogue* in their index, in most cases the index listing referred to an *instance* of the word dialogue rather than any actual information on the subject of dialogue. In almost all cases where information on dialogue was provided, it concerned such areas as function (establishing character, moving plot forward), genre limitation, style of language, and the privileging of image over dialogue. There was almost no mention of the structure and content of dialogue such as words, phrasing, stress, rhythm, or parts of speech. One 228-page book does devote a total of one and a half pages to the “Speech Structure and Design” of dialogue.²¹⁹ Another has a chapter entitled “The Pulse of Screenplay Dialogue” which discusses the rhythmic pulse of iambic meter, as well as paired construction (parallelism).²²⁰ The extremely detailed 600-page book which covers all stages and components of filmmaking has only one listing in the index for “dialogue.” That single listing leads to a section titled “Vocal Sounds” which has three paragraphs about dialogue.^{221 222}

219 Wells Root, *Writing the Script* (Holt Paperbacks, 1980).

220 Bill Boyle, *The Visual Mindscape of the Screenplay* (All That Sky Productions, 2012).

221 Richard Barsam and David Monahan, *Looking at Movies: An Introduction to Film*, Third Edition (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2010), 379.

222 Books surveyed were *A Quick Guide To Screenwriting* (Ray Morton), *Crafty Screenwriting: Writing Movies That Get Made* (Alex Epstein), *Creating unforgettable characters* (Linda Seger), *Dialogue: The Art of Verbal Action for Page, Stage, and Screen* (Robert McKee), *How To Write A Movie In 21 Days: The Inner Movie Method* (Viki King), *Looking At Movies: An Introduction To Film*, 3rd Edition: (Richard Barsam, David Monahan), *Making A Good Script Great* (Linda Seger), *Save The Cat! Goes To The Movies: The Screenwriter's Guide To Every Story Ever Told* (Blake Snyder), *Save The Cat! The Last Book On Screenwriting You'll Ever Need* (Blake Snyder), *Screenplay: The Foundations Of Screenwriting; A Step-By-Step Guide From Concept To Finished Script* (Syd Field), *Screenwriting Updated: New (And Conventional) Ways Of Writing For The Screen* (Linda Aronson), *Screenwriting: Behind The Silver Screen: A Modern*

Sarah Kozloff's monograph *Overhearing Film Dialogue* (2000)—referred to by Jeff Jaeckle as the “first and only monograph of its kind”—superbly filled a void which few had even noticed existed. Her work inspired Jaeckle's own edited book *Film Dialogue* (2013) in which Jaeckle said about Kozloff that her “contributions to the study of film dialogue in general and this anthology in particular cannot be overstated.” These two books seem to be both the beginning and the end of this approach to dialogue. Another book which, while not devoted to dialogue, discusses it as an integral part of its study of screenplays is Steven Price's *The Screenplay: Authorship, Theory and Criticism* (2010). This author also investigated related journal articles.²²³

As Sarah Kozloff writes “Although what the characters say, exactly how they say it, and how the dialogue is integrated with the rest of the cinematic techniques are crucial to our experience and understanding of every film since the coming of sound, for the most part analysts incorporate the information provided by a film's dialogue and overlook the dialogue as signifier. Canonical textbooks on film aesthetics

History Of Filmmaking (Andrew Horton), *Story: Substance, Structure, Style And The Principles Of Screenwriting* (Robert McKee), *The Screenwriter's Workbook: Exercises And Step-By-Step Instruction For Creating A Successful Screenplay* (Syd Field), *The Tools Of Screenwriting: A Writer's Guide To The Craft And Elements Of A Screenplay* (David Howard, Edward Mabley), *The Visual Mindscape Of The Screenplay* (Bill Boyle), *Writing Screenplays That Sell* (Michael Hauge), *Writing The Romantic Comedy: From "Cute Meet" To "Joyous Defeat" How To Write Screenplays That Sell* (Billy Mernit), *Writing The Script* (Wells Root).

223 Cristian Danescu-Niculescu-Mizil et al., *You Had Me at Hello: How Phrasing Affects Memorability* (2012);²²³ Stuart Fischhoff et al., *Popular Movie Quotes: Reflections of a People and a Culture* (2000);²²³ John Fawell's *The Musicality of the Filmscript* (1989),²²³ and Jack Shadoian's *Writing for the Screen...Some Thoughts on Dialogue* (1981).²²³ Barbara Klinger's journal article *Pre-cult: Casablanca, radio adaptation, and transmedia in the 1940s* (2015)²²³ offers insight into the dialogue of the classic film *Casablanca*, while her article *'Say It Again, Sam: Movie Quotation, Performance and Masculinity'* (2008)²²³ discusses the phenomenon of dialogue quotation.

devotes pages to editing and cinematography but barely mention dialogue.²²⁴ “How to” primers on screenwriting discuss dialogue superficially; their treatment is invariably prescriptive rather than analytical. Analyses of individual screenplays focus on the genesis and development of the text...rather than on dialogue technique.”²²⁵

Jeff Jaeckle emphasizes that “that film is not a visual medium... but an *audio-visual* medium replete with research possibilities”²²⁶ and stresses the need to quote the actual *wording* of dialogue rather than simply writing *about* what is said. “Whereas screen shots aid analyses of cinematic images, quotations of film dialogue aid analyses of cinematic language. Yet few scholars take advantage of quotation, choosing instead to describe dialogue to summarise plot or articulate themes...This approach gleans surface-level content at the expense of word choice, sentence structure and literary and/or rhetorical qualities, not to mention aural elements of pitch, pacing and volume that affect every line’s delivery. Quotation of dialogue is therefore essential to grasping *what* characters say as well as *how* they say it; it is the means by which scholars can appreciate aesthetic, narrative and ideological details only glimpsed in descriptions.”²²⁷

Sarah Kozloff believes that there is a bias against “too much” dialogue in films. “I believe that all dialogue (regardless of the gender of the speaking character) is associated with femininity, that films that speak “too much” are punished (with criticism from reviewers and academic disdain, and

224 Sarah Kozloff, *Overhearing Film Dialogue* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 6.

225 Ibid.

226 Jeff Jaeckle, *Film Dialogue* (New York: Wallflower Press, 2013), 1.

227 Ibid., 3.

sometimes even low box office receipts).²²⁸ Perhaps the most noteworthy consequence of this anti-dialogue bias is that it has led to misconceptions in our model of how films actually work. Many of the ways in which narrative is communicated, empathy elicited, themes conveyed, and visuals interpreted come from the interaction of the words with the visual images. Ignoring the role of the words has led to overestimation of what viewers understand from the visuals or the editing alone.”²²⁹

Steven Price considers the attitude toward dialogue to be a result of the specificity thesis. In his book *The Screenplay: Authorship, Theory and Criticism*, he writes that “Although the prominence of the specificity thesis in film studies helps to explain the scant critical attention to screenwriting dialogue, even those scholars who have attempted to establish the screenplay as a serious form of writing have tended either to accord dialogue a relatively marginal status, or to have distinguished it insufficiently from stage dialogue, everyday conversation, or the film actor’s vocal delivery.”²³⁰ While the specificity thesis may suggest that motion pictures are—and are only—*moving images*, it would seem that the battle to maintain the non-dialogic purity of moving pictures was lost long ago. In 1928, Joseph Farnham received the first (and, since sound films were introduced at the same time, the last) Academy Award for “Best Title Writing,”—the dialogue and expository intertitles used in silent films. Farnham won his

228 Sarah Kozloff, *Overhearing Film Dialogue* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 13.

229 Ibid., 14.

230 Steven Price, *The Screenplay: Authorship, Theory and Criticism*, 2010 edition (Basingstoke, Hampshire England; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 136-137.

Oscar for his titles on the films *Fair Co-Ed*; *Laugh, Clown, Laugh*; and *Telling the World*.²³¹ After 1928 intertitles began to disappear and spoken dialogue rapidly became the norm.

As Kozloff writes, dialogue is important and modern audiences are dependent on it: "Despite all the arguments that have been made on behalf of film as a visual medium, the common viewer hangs on dialogue. We whisper, sometimes frantically, to our next-seat neighbour, "What did she say?" and really hope to get an answer, because we sense that a lot hinges on our knowing what was said. We squint to hear better. When nothing is said for a long time we can grow tense... or uneasy... or curious... We always want to understand, and what characters say to each other or to themselves is crucial to our desire for a firmer grasp of what's going on. And since film is a medium in which "writing" (i.e., most commonly talk) could be dispensed with, its appearance is always meaningful. A page would be blank without words, but the screen would still contain the meaning(s) of its images. Every instance of dialogue can be seen as a means of enhancement. It could be left out, but there it is-and the wish behind it is to improve on what's already there."²³²

In their book *The Tools of Screenwriting*, David Howard and Edward Mabley stress the importance of dialogue *to the screenwriter*: "Dialogue is the one area where a screenwriter has anything approaching the direct communication with the audience that the novelist enjoys. A good line, a well-turned phrase delivered in just the right way by an actor, can have a very powerful impact on the audience. Though

231 Awards & Shows, "Oscar Award for Best Title Writing - Academy Award for Best Title Writing," *Awards & Shows*, accessed March 1, 2016, <http://www.awardsandshows.com/features/best-title-writing-33.html>.

232 Jack Shadoian, "Writing for the Screen...Some Thoughts on Dialogue," *Literature Film Quarterly* 9, no. 2 (June 1981), 86

rumours always circulate that the great lines were made up on the set by the actor, this is rarely accurate. More often than not, these are the lines that survived from the script through the production and editing processes, and thus are a reasonably direct link between the screenwriter and the audience. From “Frankly, my dear, I don’t give a damn,” to “I made him an offer he couldn’t refuse,” completely effective and memorable moments delivered in dialogue have two things in common—they are short and sweet. They have all the attributes listed above, and in addition, they are to the point and enjoy a simplicity that is inspiration itself.”²³³ Dialogue is an essential component of the modern motion picture experience, despite the current emphasis in Hollywood on superhero action blockbusters and other tent-pole sequels based on time-tested brands rather than originality. Audiences do not live by car chases alone. Screenwriting and filmmaking are above all story-telling, and words are still a vital part of that tradition.

Functions of Dialogue

Despite the views of some who consider film dialogue unnecessary, or at best something for the actors to speak while the real story is occurring as moving images, dialogue is essential. It performs many functions that the visual could never perform, including commenting on, or contrasting with, the visual. Many books on screenwriting contain lists of dialogue function and I combine some of those lists into a single more comprehensive list here, along with examples from the AFI 100 to demonstrate that a single line can perform that function. These dialogue function lists come from Billy Mernit’s *Writing the*

²³³ David Howard and Edward Mabley, *The Tools of Screenwriting: A Writer’s Guide to the Craft and Elements of a Screenplay*, Reprint edition (New York: St. Martin’s Griffin, 1995), 87.

Romantic Comedy,²³⁴ and Syd Field's two books *The Screenwriter's Workbook*²³⁵ and *Screenplay: The Foundations of Screenwriting*.²³⁶

Move the story forward: "Houston, we have a problem." "It's alive! It's alive!" "If you build it, he will come."

Set the scene: "Toto, I've got a feeling we're not in Kansas anymore."

Reveal the past: "A census taker once tried to test me. I ate his liver with some fava beans and a nice Chianti."

Reveal character: "Mama always said life was like a box of chocolates. You never know what you're gonna get." "As God is my witness, I'll never be hungry again." "I feel the need — the need for speed!"

Reveal theme: "Forget it, Jake, it's Chinatown" "There's no place like home." "I'm going to make him an offer he can't refuse."

Set the mood/define tone: "You know how to whistle, don't you, Steve? You just put your lips together and blow."

Create tension: "I'll be back."

234 Billy Mernit, *Writing the Romantic Comedy: From "Cute Meet" to "Joyous Defeat" How to Write Screenplays That Sell* (New York: HarperResource, 2001), 191-193.

235 Syd Field, *The Screenwriter's Workbook: Exercises and Step-by-Step Instructions for Creating a Successful Screenplay*, Revised updated edition (New York: Delta, 2006), 71-72.

236 *Ibid.*, 184.

Do more than one thing at a time: “A martini. Shaken, not stirred,” in which we see both a simple request for a cocktail, and the subtext that the speaker, a gentleman by the name of James Bond, is a very cool and precise person.

Foreshadow what is to come: “I’ll get you, my pretty. And your little dog, too.” “I’ll be back.”

Communicate facts and information: “You’re going to need a bigger boat.” “Soylent Green is people.” “Bond. James Bond.”

Establish relationships between characters: “Mrs. Robinson, you’re trying to seduce me. Aren’t you?” “I’ll get you, my pretty, and your little dog, too!” “Why don’t you come up sometime and see me?” “You had me at ‘hello.’”

Comment on the action: “I love the smell of napalm in the morning.” “I’m walking here! I’m walking here!” “Cinderella story. Outta nowhere. A former greenskeeper, now, about to become the Masters champion. It looks like a mirac...It’s in the hole! It’s in the hole! It’s in the hole!”

Connect scenes: “Round up the usual suspects.” “I’ll be back.” “Rosebud” (serves as a “book end” connecting the beginning and the end of *Citizen Kane*.)

Make characters real, natural and spontaneous: “I’m walking here! I’m walking here!” “It’s alive! It’s alive!” “Snap out of it!”

Reveal the conflicts of story and character: “You can’t handle the truth!” “I see dead people.” “All right, Mr. DeMille, I’m ready for my close-up.”

Reveal emotional states of characters: “I’m king of the world!” “Of all the gin joints in all the towns in all the world, she walks into mine.” “I’m as mad as hell, and I’m not going to take this anymore!”

As is clear from these examples, many famous quotes serve at least one if not more of the functions of dialogue. They serve the film and its story but fortunately in a way that remains in the minds of audiences.

The Screenplay

A memorable movie line is at home in two separate contexts. One is in the film itself, where the line is spoken and surrounded by images of actors and sets, and by the sounds of the voices of other actors, music, and sound effects. However, before the film exists, a memorable movie line resides in its *first* home—on a piece of paper as part of a (generally) 100+ page screenplay. Here the line is surrounded by other dialogue, the names of characters, descriptions of time of day and the sets, and instructions to the actors. These are the two contexts: film and screenplay.

The screenplay is a unique form of writing. As Jill Nelmes states “Screenwriting seems to be a complex mix of inspiration and creative ideas, a synthesis of art and craft.”²³⁷ The art is the creation of the storyline, the personalities of the characters, and the interaction between those characters. The craft is in observing—or at least being aware of—the traditional conventions of film and of screenplay format. Nelmes writes that “Screenplays may appear simple in form with lots of space on the page but screenplay writing can be compared to poetry; it is a sparse, minimal form, where dialogue is kept to a minimum, where visual metaphors are often as important as dialogue in communicating an idea, where what is not said carries great emotional weight.”²³⁸

237 Jill Nelmes, “Some Thoughts on Analysing the Screenplay, the Process of Screenplay Writing and the Balance between Craft and Creativity,” *Journal of Media Practice* 8, no. 2 (September 2007), 107–13.

238 Ibid.

Matt Marshall notes that, “The script is a written text designed for adaptation into a filmic text. This notion of design for adaptation is a critical characteristic of the film script. Unlike a novel or a poem, a scriptwriter does not write a script to speak directly to cultural consumers...The script’s linguistic frame is addressed...towards a specific, small, skilled and knowledgeable set: filmmakers...a script is not simply turned into a film, but adapted into one. In the process it crosses from one text type to another, from one communicative mode to another, from one form to another.”²³⁹ One can conclude from Marshall’s comments that even an “original screenplay” film is an adaptation. The script is not an adaptation, but the film made from that script—or any script—is an adaptation from paper to film (or these days most often to digital format). An “adapted screenplay” film can be seen as doubly adapted; first from book, play, graphic novel, comic book or other previously published source to paper (script); and then from that script to its final existence as a movie. Marshall emphasizes that it is the film that is marketed and consumed, not the screenplay. “There is a longstanding practice of placing the film into prominence at the expense of its different stages of production. Foregrounding the film means that audiences consume the film, not the script.” He suggests that the screenplay can be seen as a blueprint, noting that while the screenwriter is frequently not seen as the “author” of a film, an architect is seen as “the author not only of the blueprint, but of the building based on the blueprint. In fact it would seem ludicrous to ascribe authorship to the site foreman. And yet, I could very well argue that, in the case of film production, this is precisely what happens.” More specifically, he summarizes that “A screenplay is a

239 Matt Marshall, “The Script Writer Is Not a Writer and Is,” in *The & Is Papers | Australasian Association of Writing Programs* (Canberra), accessed February 27, 2016, <http://www.aawp.org.au/publications/the-is-papers/>.

multi-type text: a written text that acts as a blueprint for a further cultural product, which is cast in images and sounds, not written words.”²⁴⁰

In defense of screenwriters, it is helpful to remember a statement made by American screenwriter Ernest Lehman: “The amazing thing about screenwriting is that the screenwriter does not, unlike the stage dramatist, hear his dialogue spoken until it’s too late [for him] to know whether it plays or not.”²⁴¹

Moviespeak - It only has to *sound* real

The world portrayed in Hollywood films is not “real.” As Michael Wood writes in *America in the Movies*, “Hollywood’s signature in the cinema [is] not life...not art, not realism, not even fantasy. It is *the movies*, an independent universe, self-created, self-perpetuating, a licensed zone of unreality, affectionately patronized by us all.”²⁴² If the world we see onscreen is not real, neither is the dialogue. It is not real; it is *Hollywood Real*. As William Martell writes, “No one really wants realistic dialogue in their film, what they want is dialogue that appears to be realistic, but really serves a story and character purpose. Movie dialogue should be all of those great lines we come up with the day after the argument. Every line should be a ‘I wish I’d thought of that!’ line.”²⁴³ As Thomas Leitch noted, “Just as the novel emerged

240 Ibid.

241 David Howard and Edward Mabley, *The Tools of Screenwriting: A Writer’s Guide to the Craft and Elements of a Screenplay*, Reprint edition (New York: St. Martin’s Griffin, 1995), 84.

242 Michael Wood, *America in the Movies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 8.

243 William Martell, “Bumper Sticker Dialogue,” *Script Secrets*, accessed February 11, 2016, <http://www.scriptsecrets.net/tips/tip351.htm>.

from an insurgent, anti-institutional mode of discourse to blossom into a mode with its own distinctive heteroglossia, the movies—or at least ‘the movies’— flourished under the rule that every character in a movie should sound like a character in a movie.”²⁴⁴

What are some of the qualities of moviespeak? As Todd Berliner writes “Dialogue in Hollywood movies abides by conventions that do not pertain to regular conversation...Not all dialogue follows the conventions, but they pervade Hollywood cinema because they keep film narration on course.”²⁴⁵ Berliner notes five of these key characteristics of moviespeak that set it off from normal everyday conversation in the “real” world.²⁴⁶

1. Dialogue in American movies either advances the plot or supplies pertinent background information.
2. American movie dialogue tends to move in a direct line, often toward one character's triumph and another's defeat. Characters frequently win or lose a scene by means of what they say, and the lines of some characters are designed to make those characters look bad and other characters look good.
3. Characters in Hollywood movies communicate effectively through dialogue. Conversations in movies tend to stay on subject, and, unlike real people, movie characters usually listen to one another and say what they mean.

244 Thomas Leitch, “You Talk like a Character in a Book: Dialogue and Film Adaptation,” in *Film Dialogue*, ed. Jeff Jaeckle (Wallflower Press, 2013), 99.

245 Todd Berliner, “Killing the Writer: Movie Dialogue Conventions and John Casavetes,” in *Film Dialogue*, ed. Jeff Jaeckle (Wallflower Press, 2013), 104.

246 Ibid., 4-5.

4. Whereas most real people adjust what they are saying as they speak, movie characters tend to speak flawlessly.

5. When a film breaks one of movie dialogue's rules, the transgression normally serves a direct narrative function.

Berliner notes that “These five conventions point to a curious paradox about Hollywood movie dialogue: such dialogue may strike us as realistic, but it is most unlike real speech. This contradiction becomes more intelligible, though no less curious, once we understand “realism” to be not the authentic representation of reality but rather a type of art that masks its own contrivance. Movies may be no more real than other kinds of art, but they tend to feel more real.” Alex Epstein also emphasizes the difference between *real dialogue* (on the screen) and *real conversation* (in our real lives). “Real dialogue is not only realistic. It is striking, fresh, and expressive...Real conversation is full of clichés. Good realistic dialogue uses the repetitions, silences, and apparent aimlessness of real talk to create an effect that is much more powerful than ordinary talk. Characters may come up with surprisingly inventive turns of speech, but they come up as if by accident...Realistic dialogue can be lyrical, almost spoken poetry, but it must feel like the characters discovered it as they reached for their thoughts²⁴⁷...Hollywood has always had a fondness for snappy dialogue...[which] doesn’t pretend very hard to seem accidental. We know it’s dialogue. But if it’s crisp, fresh, and insightful, we don’t care. We know it’s a movie, too, and we came to be entertained.”²⁴⁸

247 Alex Epstein, *Crafty Screenwriting: Writing Movies That Get Made* (New York: H. Holt, 2002), 137.

248 *Ibid.*, 137-138.

Jill Nelmes in *Analysing the Screenplay* writes that “Film dialogue is a complex mix of the everyday and the poetic; it creates the illusion of being natural by using colloquial words yet its actual language construction is anything but; each word is carefully chosen, more artifice than natural, a contrivance which conspires to seem real but is not. Dialogue is a central part of the film, drawing the audience further into the story world, allowing us to identify with the characters while making the world they inhabit appear as seamless as possible.”²⁴⁹ Nelmes also states that “The dialogue works alongside the visual image, often enhancing meaning, undercutting or providing new information while helping us to build up a picture of the characters; their accent tells us where they are from and the tone and tempo of the dialogue discloses mood and what the characters are feeling. The syntax and grammar, the actual words spoken and whether they are contrived or naturalistic, also build detail about the world of the film and differentiate between the characters who inhabit that world.”²⁵⁰

What appears on a screen is deception. Those are not real people on the screen, they are images of real actors pretending that they are real people. There is not really an orchestra in the theater, there is simply a recording of an orchestra. The story line of the film is not really truthful, even if it is based on true incidents and people. The lines that the actors speak are not real, they were created by writers to sound as if they are real and then provided on pages of paper for the actors to memorize and then speak in front of cameras. Nothing is real. Yet the motion picture experience is not a fraud. Or rather, it is not an unrecognized fraud. The audience shares in this deception. They know that what they watch and

249 Jill Nelmes, “Realism and Screenplay Dialogue,” in *Analysing the Screenplay*, ed. Jill Nelmes (London ; New York: Routledge, 2010), 236.

250 *Ibid.*, 218.

what they hear is not real but they came to the theater not for those experiences that are shown on the screen but for the experience that they feel internally as they sit in their theater seats and are pulled into the world of *the movies*. That internal experience—its emotions, its fears, its tears, its laughs, its inspirations and its terrors—is very real. Which is why audiences keep coming back for more.

Genre - Staying within the box (usually)

Genre serves audiences. A moviegoer knows his genre preferences and what he expects to see when he goes to a theater to see a specific film or actor. As screenwriter/screenwriting teacher John Truby writes “Genres tell the audience up front what to expect from the product they are buying. If they like a particular kind of story, chances are they will like this particular film, especially if the writer and director give the expectations a little twist” Truby also notes that most current films are a combination of two or three genres.²⁵¹ Examples are romantic comedies (*romcoms*—*When Harry Met Sally*), Western comedies (*cowcoms*—*Blazing Saddles*), although no type of Western is doing well at the box office these days—and horror comedies (*horrcoms*—*Young Frankenstein*, (or a more recent subgenre, the vampire comedy, an example of which is the New Zealand film *What We Do in the Shadows*.) I suggest that audiences go to see genres, sometimes actors, occasionally directors (which usually means genres), and likely never screenwriters.

Genre frames most motion pictures. I say most because there are exceptions. Some films are genre-bending, others are genre-breaking, still others are so creative/experimental/confusing that they cannot

²⁵¹ John Truby, “What’s My Genre?,” *Writers Store*, accessed December 22, 2014, <http://www.writersstore.com/whats-my-genre>.

be labelled by any specific genre or even genre combinations. Generally, genre defines and sets the parameters for all the components of a film: sets, costumes, music, plot, style of cinematography, editing, characters, style of acting, the marketing materials (trailers, one-sheets) that promote a film, the emotions evoked in the audience, and most importantly for this thesis, the dialogue.

A film's genre limits a character's vocabulary and style of speech. If a character's speech strays from that genre, there must be an explainable reason. In most cases, though, this does not happen. A character can even be seen as trapped within a *mini-genre*—a character genre, i.e. the stereotypical character. For example, if he is a bad guy in a Western, he is limited in his actions, his movements, and his speech, including his word choices. In most cases, if he has a major role in a Western, he is either the hero, the hero's sidekick, the villain, or a key townsman. As screenwriting guru Robert McKee writes, each character "speaks with a syntax, rhythm, tonality, and most importantly, word choices that no one but that character would use. Ideally, every character is a walking dictionary of his or her unique collection of words."²⁵² In short, each character's dialogue is limited not only by the genre of the film, but by his or her own personal genre.

As Jack Shadoian writes "We expect certain people (military captains, wealthy playboys, unshaven outlaws, ladies of the night, etc.), depending on their dress, age, the situation they find themselves in, and a bunch of other cues and factors, to speak accordingly. Hence dialogue is generally keyed to

252 Robert McKee, *Dialogue: The Art of Verbal Action for Page, Stage, and Screen* (New York: Twelve, 2016).p. xvii

propriety, and this 'law' makes it possible to exploit incongruity.”²⁵³ Shadoian continues that “Dialogue locates stages of civilization. In westerns, those who come from or have visited the East, talk smoothly and lengthily. Native Westerners speak less ably and less frequently. Urban films, ranging from gangster to comedy, have aggregates of articulate people with a few marginal slow-witted types for contrast/relief.”²⁵⁴

Story and script consultant Michael Hauge, in his book *Writing Screenplays That Sell*, writes that “Dialogue is far less important than character development or plot structure, and any skilled filmmaker knows that dialogue is the easiest thing to change in a screenplay.”²⁵⁵ Yet he also knows that dialogue is still important, and that it must be “consistent with the speech patterns of the character...The Fortune 500 crowd...will exhibit distinctively different vocabulary and syntax than if they are junior high school students, soldiers, or art history professors.”²⁵⁶ In obvious examples, “I coulda been a contender” would not flow appropriately out of the lips of James Bond, nor would “Badges? We ain’t got no badges!” work well for Forrest Gump.

Why do people quote movie lines?

253 Jack Shadoian, “Writing for the Screen...Some Thoughts on Dialogue,” *Literature Film Quarterly* 9, no. 2 (June 1981), 85.

254 Ibid., 90.

255 Michael Hauge, *Writing Screenplays That Sell* (New York: Collins Reference, 2011), 154.

256 Michael Hauge, *Writing Screenplays That Sell* (New York: Collins Reference, 2011), 160.

In a survey at Kansas State University, questionnaires were administered to two samples of 478 young adult university students, asking them to list movie quotes that they had used socially. Men and women both quoted far more lines from comedies than from any other movie genre (70% overall), with drama and action-adventure films a distant second and third. There were no significant gender differences in movie genre quoted...The most common emotion felt by both men and women when quoting was “happy” (77%). Twenty-two percent quoted the movie in order “to amuse oneself”, followed closely by 21% “to amuse others.” This did not differ by gender and differed very little across movie genres, with 86% of the participants reported viewing the quoted movie at least three times.²⁵⁷

Jim Silverstein, author of *Movie Quotes to Get You Through Life*,²⁵⁸ suggests that quoting movie dialogue “is a way to break the ice.” As he says, “I think it's a matter of lightening up conversation, maybe finding a better way to say it than you would have said yourself...It's meant to help you be clever. ... Sometimes, when you don't know what to say, why not say what James Caan said? Why not pull out a Marlon Brando: 'Make me an offer I can't refuse'? Everybody understands.”²⁵⁹ That “everybody” is important here – it signals literacy. In a similar vein, Donald Liebenson in the *Los Angeles Times* writes that “Dropped into conversation, cinema phraseology also gives us the perfect words to make us appear witty or sage.”²⁶⁰

257 Richard Harris et al., “Social Movie Quoting,” *Ciencias Psicologicas* 2, no. 1 (2008):

258 Jim Silverstein, *Movie Quotes To Get You Through Life*, Third edition (La Vergne, TN: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2010).

259 A. Pawlowski, “You Talkin’ to Me? Film Quotes Stir Passion - *CNN.com*,” accessed February 12, 2016, <http://www.cnn.com/2009/SHOWBIZ/Movies/03/09/film.quotes/index.html?eref=ew>.

260 Donald Liebenson, “Famous Quotes: They Put the Words in Actors’ Mouths,” *Los Angeles Times*, January 2, 2010, <http://articles.latimes.com/2010/jan/02/entertainment/la-et-movie-quotes2-2010jan02>.

In a 2000 conference paper, Stuart Fischhoff et al. presented their research into *Popular Movie Quotes: Reflections of A People and A Culture*.²⁶¹ Fischhoff and his fellow researchers worked with a “nation-wide independent, cross-sectional, convenience sample of 1,083 respondents, ranging in age from 10 years old to 90 years old,” composed of 449 Whites, 263 Latinos, 174 African-Americans, 151 Asians, and 46 others/no ethnic affiliation. There were 562 males and 521 females in the sample, and all were divided into three age groups: 25 and under (389), 26 to 49 (385), and 50 and over (303). There were also six respondents who did not provide an age. Respondents were asked to list up to fifteen of their favourite film quotes. The researchers coded the quotes into sentiment categories, with three different valences: positive, negative, and neutral. Sentiments such as affection, attachment and romance (“Here’s looking at you, kid”) were coded as positive valences; sentiments of irritation, disrespect, anxiety, physical/verbal aggression (Frankly, my dear, I don’t give a damn”) were coded as negative valences. Neutral valences were assigned to quotes that were neither positive nor negative (“You gonna finish that?”).

Their research indicated that “we often borrow quotes from films to fill in the gaps in our imagination...we use phrases created by wordsmiths superior to us, to impress others, if not so much with creativity, then in our recognition of eloquence and the facility to conjure up the *bon mots*. Certain quotes exquisitely capture the mood or feeling we wish to communicate to someone. We hear them in movies and store them away for future use.” They suggest that there are different classifications of

261 Stuart Fischhoff, Esmeralda Cardenas, and Angela Hernandez, “Popular Movie Quotes: Reflections of a People and a Culture” (*Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association*, Washington, D.C., 2000).

memorable movie quotes. Some encapsulate the drama of an entire film in an “instantly relatable and recognizable way” that they refer to as *moment of truth* quotes. Another category captures the mood of a country. For example, “Go ahead, make my day” expresses the attitude toward what is seen as a violent country. This they term a *zeitgeist* quote. Yet others are likely to be short-lived, tend to be “funny, raunchy, sexy, hostile,” and move rapidly but briefly through the culture. The phrase “Yeah, baby” from the comedy series Austin Powers is an example of this category, which they term *fad* quotes.

Other lines appeal to a particular subgroup of a society and are insider phrases that identify one as a member of that subgroup. The researchers’ example was the quote “Give me Librium or give me death” from the gay-themed movie *Boys in the Band*. Another gay-focused example is “I’d like to kiss ya, but I just washed my hair,”²⁶² (*Cabin in the Cotton*) not only for the line itself but its context in the film and the satisfaction of imitating Bette Davis. This category of quotes the researchers refer to as *niche* quotes.

Fischhoff and his team found that “Americans are most partial to quotes that are both negative-valenced and expressive of negative sentiments, with males somewhat more partial than females, [that] while people of all ages are negatively disposed, younger respondents are rather more partial to physical and verbally aggressive quotes while older respondents are more partial to quotes that express sarcasm and defiance and various states of non-violent agitation. But at the same time, all respondents are partial, although less so, to quotes which express the sentiments of attachment, sex, romance, and verbal affection. They also have a strong fancy for quotes which express advice and wisdom.” The researchers

262 Cabin in the Cotton, *YouTube*, <https://youtu.be/ndSEWPQIYjU>

questioned why negative quotes were the most popular, and suggested that “we long for the perfect word or phrase to stop people in their tracks when they are annoying or threatening us. Phrases like ‘Make him an offer he can’t refuse,’ or ‘Do you feel lucky, punk?’ or even ‘You can’t handle the truth,’ provide us with the verbal bravado we are unable to generate by ourselves on the spur of the moment.” While they suggested that phrases like “Show me the money” and “Greed is good” reflect the current focus of the United States on money and the economy, they pointed out that quotes of wisdom and advice such as “There’s no place like home” and “Hakuna Matata” are still popular in the same country. They also suggested that the James Bond quotes “Shaken, not stirred” and “Bond, James Bond” reflect an attraction to being “irresistibly cool.”

In their conclusion, the researchers reported that although there were generational preferences for various quotes there was also a “generational meeting of the minds.” The following lines were popular across all three age groups

“Here’s looking at you, kid.” *Casablanca* (1942)

“Go ahead, make my day.” *Sudden Impact* (1983)

“There’s no place like home.” *The Wizard of Oz* (1939)

“I’m mad as hell and I’m not going to take it anymore.” *Network* (1976)

“Frankly, my dear, I don’t give a damn.” *Gone With The Wind* (1939)

“I’ll be back.” *The Terminator* (1984)

“(I’ll) make him an offer he can’t refuse.” *The Godfather* (1974)

“Mama always said life was like a box of chocolates...” *Forrest Gump* (1994)

“You can’t handle the truth.” *A Few Good Men* (1992)

“Show me the money.” *Jerry Maguire* (1996)

"May the force be with you." *Star Wars* (1977)

I have added release years to this film list so that it can be seen that when the study was reported (2000) the oldest of these films were sixty-one years old (*The Wizard of Oz* and *Gone with the Wind*), and the newest (*Jerry Maguire*) had only been in release for four years. Yet their appeal (and presumably their viewing) was cross-generational. Note also that each of these quotes is on the AFI 100 list.

Cornell Study. You Had Me at Hello: How Phrasing Affects Memorability

This study is a major key to the analysis of movie lines in this chapter as it proposes certain qualities which contribute to making some movie lines more memorable than others. A research team at Cornell University obtained scripts from more than 1,000 films, and created a database of 1,100 memorable quotes taken from the Internet Movie Database. They paired each quote with another (non-memorable) quote from the same movie script, a quote of about the same length, and spoken by the same character in the same scene. The team selected only single sentence quotes, in order to avoid any confusion that might arise from multi-sentence quotes, or a block of lines by multiple characters. They then asked a group of people who had *not* seen the films to choose which quote in the pairs they considered to be more memorable. The subjects felt that there were two characteristics of the quote they chose: *distinctiveness* and *generality*. Below is an example of "quote pairs."

Movie	First Quote	Second Quote
<i>Jackie Brown</i>	Half a million dollars will always be missed.	I know the type, trust me on this.

Star Trek: Nemesis

I think it's time to try some unsafe velocities.

No cold feet, or any other parts of our anatomy.

Ordinary People

A little advice about feelings kiddo; don't expect it always to tickle.

I mean there's someone besides your mother you've got to forgive.

The researchers then created a computer program with linguistic rules that reflected those two characteristics. Distinctive language would be identified by its relative frequency in a database of news stories (from the Brown corpus)—fewer appearances made them more *distinctive*—and *generality* if it contained fewer third-person pronouns and definite articles, and used less past tense.

The study indicated that “human subjects are effective at recognizing the more IMDb memorable of two quotes, even for movies they have not seen [and that] subjects felt that memorable quotes often involve a distinctive turn of phrase; and memorable quotes tend to invoke general themes that aren't tied to the specific setting they came from, and hence can be more easily invoked for future (out of context) uses.” More specifically, the Cornell team proposed that memorable movie quotes consist, “in an aggregate sense, of unusual word choices built on a scaffolding of common part-of-speech patterns.” They also found that memorable quotes conveyed greater generality (than non-memorable quotes), through their patterns of verb tense, personal pronouns, and determiners” being more “free-standing” with fewer markers that indicate references to nearby text.

The researchers also determined that “from a lexical perspective, memorable quotes are more distinctive than their non-memorable counterparts” as in about 60% of the quote pairs, the memorable line was more distinctive. Their findings indicated that the opposite case was true with syntax, as the

memorable quotes appeared to “follow the syntactic patterns of “common language” as or more closely than non-memorable quotes.” Even more specifically, they found that:

As personal pronouns commonly refer to a person introduced earlier in the discourse, dialogue lines that use fewer personal pronouns are easier to adapt to new contexts, and can be considered more general.

Indefinite articles like “a” and “an” are more likely to refer to general concepts than [are] definite articles. Lines that contain more indefinite articles are considered by the researchers to be more general.

Past tense verbs are more likely to refer to specific previous events than do present tense verbs, and therefore lines that use fewer past tense verbs (and more present tense verbs) can be considered more general. 263

They also found that memorable quotes are more complex in that they use words with significantly more syllables than “common language” and that memorable quotes use fewer coordinating conjunctions. I discuss these and other results in more detail in the next sections of this chapter, where I will refer to the above research as the “Cornell Study.” I do wish, however, to address one other side comment that the research team made in their paper. The researchers state, “we...face the challenge of devising an evaluation setting that separates the phrasing of a message from the conditions in which it was delivered — highly-cited quotes tend to have been delivered under compelling circumstances or fit an existing cultural, political, or social narrative, and potentially what appeals to us about the quote is really just its invocation of these extra-linguistic contexts. Is the form of the language adding an effect

263 Cristian Danescu-Niculescu-Mizil et al., “You Had Me at Hello: How Phrasing Affects Memorability,” in *Proceedings of the 50th Annual Meeting of the Association for Computational Linguistics: Long Papers* - Volume 1, ACL ’12 (Stroudsburg, PA, USA: Association for Computational Linguistics, 2012), 897.

beyond or independent of these (obviously very crucial) factors?”²⁶⁴ The researchers felt the need to find a way of controlling—as much as possible—the surrounding context of memorable quotes so that they could more purely analyze the quotes themselves. I recognize the necessity for that separation in order to study the structure of a movie line itself. However, I point out that the critical importance of context for memorable movie lines might suggest one major difference—and perhaps reason to not consider most famous movie lines as memes—between those quotes and such well-known non-Internet memes as the swastika, Whole Earth, and the Guy Fawkes mask. Famous movie lines almost always require an elaborate context; they need a setting (actors, setting, plot, preceding dialogue) to provide their true meaning; not just their denotation but their connotation, whereas major *memes* largely carry their own meaning.

Articles and Personal Pronouns

The Cornell Study indicated that *more* use of indefinite articles such as “a” and “an” (and less use of definite articles), as well as *less* use of third-person pronouns such as “he,” “she,” and “it” (“therefore containing fewer markers that indicate references to nearby text”) contributed to greater generality (therefore portability) for a movie quote, thus providing more reason for its memorability and re-use. “More” and “fewer” were not quantified in the study but were used in comparing the memorable quote to the non-memorable quote in each quote pair.

An analysis of the quotes on the entire AFI 100 list shows that the 100 movie lines on the list contain in total 815 words. “a” appears nineteen times, and “an” twice. “The” is used thirty-four times, “that”

264 Ibid., 892-901.

three times, and “this” four times. The conjunction “and” occurs ten times, and “with” three times. The more specific personal pronoun “he” appears three times and “she” two times, while the more general personal pronoun “it” is used eighteen times. Lastly, “his” appears two times, while “her” and “its” do not appear at all. While the Cornell Study did not specify desirable percentages or ratios of articles, conjunctions, and pronouns, it would appear that those one hundred movie lines are overall good examples of the results of that study.

Word	Number of instances
a	19
an	2
the	34
that	3
this	4
and	10
with	3
he	3
she	2
it	18
his	2
her	0

its	0
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I emphasize that the Cornell Study compared memorable movie lines to non-memorable movie lines spoken in close proximity by the same actor in the same scene. Because the Cornell Study does not, and was not able to, quantify a desirable *percentage* of definite/indefinite articles, not does it quantify the same for conjunctions or third-person pronouns, there is no way to determine the “rightness” of the one hundred movie lines nor their 815 words. Because of the obvious “success” of these popular lines and their “portability,” I can only assume that their use of these parts of speech falls within a desirable percentage or range.

Tense

As the Cornell Study reported, “Past tense verbs are more likely to refer to specific previous events than present tense verbs, and therefore utterances that employ fewer past tense verbs (and more present tense verbs) will be considered more general.”²⁶⁵ The team did not quantify “fewer” and “more.” One way in which movie lines can be portable is to be either in present tense (preferably) or future tense so that the lines can be easily adaptable to real-time situations. Of the one hundred lines on the AFI 100, seventy are in present tense (*There’s no place like home*), twelve are in future tense (*We’ll always have Paris*), and only five are in past tense (*You had me at hello*), the rest being either a mix of two tenses (*I am big! It’s the pictures that got small*) or having no indication of any tense (*Rosebud*).

Syllables

265 Ibid.

The Cornell Study reported in connection with “word complexity” that memorable movie quotes use words with significantly more syllables than do non-memorable quotes.²⁶⁶ The entire list of one hundred quotes on the AFI 100 contains a total of 815 words, for a mean of 8.15 syllables per quote. The researcher’s article does not report the mean number of syllables per quote in their study. The research team felt that this “auxiliary observation” was in keeping with their findings on *distinctiveness*.

Conjunctions

The Cornell Study reported that in connection with “phrase complexity” memorable movie quotes use words with significantly fewer coordinating conjunctions than do non-memorable quotes.²⁶⁷ In the entire AFI list of one hundred lines, the word “with” is used only three times, and the word “and” only eleven times. The researchers’ article does not report any statistics on the specific number of coordinating conjunctions per quote in their study. The research team felt that this “auxiliary observation” was in keeping with their findings on *distinctiveness*.

Vocal Sounds

The Cornell Study found that memorable movie quotes use significantly more “front sounds” (labials or front vowels such as represented by the letter “i”) and significantly fewer “back sounds” (such as represented by “u”).²⁶⁸ Richard Klink, writing in *Marketing Letters*, points out that “Vowel sounds where the highest point of the tongue is in the front of the mouth are considered front vowels. Back vowels, on the other hand, are those vowel sounds produced where the highest point of the tongue is in

266 Ibid.

267 Ibid.

268 Ibid.

the back of the mouth.” Klink notes that “research has found wide support for front vowels communicating smaller size, while back vowels communicate larger size.” He elaborates that “products with brand names containing front vowels, as opposed to back vowels, are perceived as smaller, lighter (relative to darker), milder, thinner, softer, faster, colder, more bitter, more feminine, friendlier, weaker, lighter (relative to heavier), and prettier.”²⁶⁹ While this thesis does not pursue this topic, I suggest that sound symbolism may be a useful area of research in regard to memorability of movie lines.

Repetition

Repetition is a key element in memorability. It can be the repetition of a word, a phrase, or an entire sentence within a section of dialogue. It can be the repetition of a word or phrase several times throughout a film. David Bordwell emphasizes the importance of repetition: “Any narrative text must repeat important story information, and in the cinema, repetition takes on a special necessity, since the conditions of presentation mean that one cannot stop and go back, most films reiterate information again and again...Three is in fact a mystical number for Hollywood dramaturgy, an event becomes important if it is mentioned three times. The Hollywood slogan is to state every fact three times, once for the smart viewer, once for the average viewer, and once for the slow Joe in the back row. Leo McCarey recalls ‘Most gags were based on “the rule of three.’ It became almost an unwritten rule. Irving Thalberg is reported to have said, “I don’t mean tell ‘em three times in the same way. Maybe you tell ‘em once in comedy, maybe you tell ‘em once directly, maybe you tell ‘em next time with a twist.’”²⁷⁰

269 Richard R. Klink, “Creating Brand Names with Meaning: The Use of Sound Symbolism,” *Marketing Letters* 11, no. 1 (February 2000), 11.

270 David Bordwell, Janet Staiger, and Kristin Thompson, *The Classical Hollywood Cinema: Film Style & Mode of Production to 1960*, Reprint edition (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985), 31.

Screenwriter William Martell proposes something similar which he refers to as “echo lines.” These are repeated sentences, or variants of a sentence, that have a slightly different meaning (or significance) each time they are used. Martell suggests echo lines can include “double-entendres, figures of speech, quips, witticisms, and assorted catchphrases.²⁷¹ In discussing the film *Something Wild*, John Fawell writes: “The most memorable lines in the film are simple ones that are repeated, as a line of poetry might be, or a phrase in a musical score, and which through this repetition achieve a dramatic resonance that is central to the meaning of the film... Each time these phrases are repeated in different situations they become a little more suggestive. A little more ambiguous and haunting.”²⁷²

Examples of lines repeated several times in a movie include

“I’ll think about it tomorrow”	<i>Gone with the Wind</i>	Used twice.
“Fiddle dee”	<i>Gone with the Wind</i>	Used three times.
“E.T. phone home”	<i>E.T. The Extraterrestrial</i>	Used four times.
“If you build it, he will come”	<i>Field of Dreams</i>	Used six times (and three more times as simply “If you build it.”)
“Who are those guys?”	<i>Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid</i>	Used four times.
“Here’s looking at you, kid.”	<i>Casablanca</i>	Used four times.

As Sarah Kozloff confirms about repeated dialogue lines, “In each case, the viewer’s familiarity with the line makes each appearance more significant, so that the repeated lines take on resonance and power...Viewers regularly take these tag lines out of movies and make them their own, for similar

²⁷¹ William Martell, “Distinctive Dialogue,” *Gideon’s Screenwriting Tips: So Now You’re a Screenwriter...*, March 25, 2011, <https://gideonsway.wordpress.com/2011/03/25/distinctive-dialogue/>.

²⁷² John Fawell, “The Musicality of the Filmscript,” *Literature Film Quarterly* 17, no. 1 (March 1989), 45.

reasons.”²⁷³ Of the one hundred lines on the AFI list, twenty-one have some form of repetition, ranging from the exact same word being repeated in a row “Toga. Toga.” or the same word (“badges”) repeated several times within a longer line “Badges? We ain't got no badges! We don't need no badges! I don't have to show you -any stinking badges!” to the same phrase (“all the”) used several times “Of all the gin joints in all the towns in all the world, she walks into mine.”

Short length

One of the key qualities of many (but absolutely not all) textual memes is short length of lines and words. This characteristic applies also to many memorable movie lines. Lines such as “Make my day” and “I’ll be back” are both short and memorable, and can be considered “bumper sticker” lines. As short lines tend to be spoken faster, if the intention is to have a line more slowly delivered, a longer line may be more effective. However, if a short line is desired, one should “consider clipping the first and second words from a line, or even removing a word in the middle or end...or even clip the endings or beginnings of certain words.”²⁷⁴ Screenwriter Linda Aronson concurs that dialogue lines should “in general” be kept short, with one or two sentences being a normal length.²⁷⁵ Examples include “May the Force be with you” and “Mrs. Robinson, you’re trying to seduce me? Aren’t you?”

273 Sarah Kozloff, *Overhearing Film Dialogue* (Berkeley: of California Press, 2000), 86.

274 William Martell, “Distinctive Dialogue,” *Gideon’s Screenwriting Tips: So Now You’re a Screenwriter...*, March 25, 2011, <https://gideonsway.wordpress.com/2011/03/25/distinctive-dialogue/>.

275 Linda Aronson, *Screenwriting Updated: New (and Conventional) Ways of Writing for the Screen* (Los Angeles, Calif.: Silman-James Press, 2001), 257.

I refer again to biologist Max Müller's statement in *The Science of Language* (1870): "A struggle for life among words and grammatical forms which is constantly going on in each language. Here the better, the shorter, the easier forms are constantly gaining the upper hand, and they really owe their success to their own inherent virtue ... Those words and forms are seen to prevail which give the least trouble to the organs of pronunciation."²⁷⁶ Müller also saw that words and grammatical forms were more likely to be adopted if they were "shorter" and "easier."

Portability

Portability can be seen as one aspect of generality, and refers to a line of film dialogue's ability to be used in conversation in a number of situations. Quote length is not analyzed in the Cornell Study, but I note that shortness is generally a high quality for portability with memes and suggest that short length can also apply (generally) to movie lines. As Jeff Jaeckle points out, quotes that appear on the AFI 100 list or in the "Quotes" section of films listed on the Internet Movie Database (www.imdb.com) "are often one-liners that are chosen for their pithy portability, not for their subtle characterisations or narrative import."²⁷⁷ The Cornell study indicates that other factors which enable portability include use of present tense rather than past, "more" use of indefinite pronouns and "less" use of definite pronouns, and fewer personal pronouns.

²⁷⁶ Max Müller, "The Science of Language," *Nature*, January 6, 1870, <http://digicoll.library.wisc.edu/cgi-bin/HistSciTech/HistSciTech-idx?type=article&did=HistSciTech.Nature18700106.MullerScience&id=HistSciTech.Nature18700106&isize=M>, 257.

²⁷⁷ Jeff Jaeckle, *Film Dialogue* (New York: Wallflower Press, 2013), xiv.

Integral to theme

Some of the most famous quotes are those that are integral to the theme of the film's story. Simply hearing (or using) these lines can trigger and encapsulate the key narrative and theme—and emotions—of a film. Script consultant Pippa Best suggests that a line that is desired to reflect the key theme of the film should “appear in a key scene and describe the core story or themes in some way.”²⁷⁸ Quotes that have this quality include “E.T. phone home,” “Good morning, Vietnam,” “Toto, I’ve a feeling we’re not in Kansas anymore” and “There’s no place like home,” “We rob banks,” “I see dead people,” and “Greed, for lack of a better word, is good.”

Positional characteristics – Location, location, location

The importance of certain words or phrases can be stressed if the word or phrase is placed at the end of a line, at the beginning of a line, at the end of a character's final lines, at the end of a scene, or at the end of a film. Hollywood screenwriter guru Robert McKee, in his book *Dialogue*,²⁷⁹ writes about “line design,” “A line's design pivots around its key term—the word or phrase essential to its meaning. An author can place that key term first, last, or anywhere in the middle. That choice results in one of three fundamental line designs, respectively: cumulative, suspenseful, and balanced.

Key word at end of line

278 Pippa Best, “What Makes a Great Movie Catchphrase?,” *Pippa Best*, April 23, 2010, http://www.pippabest.com/PippaBest/Blog/Entries/2010/4/25_What_makes_a_great_movie_catchphrase.html.

279 Robert McKee, *Dialogue: The Art of Verbal Action for Page, Stage, and Screen* (New York: Twelve, 2016).

William Martell suggests that the word that is most critical to the meaning of the line be at the end of the line,²⁸⁰ such as the word *damn* in the line “Frankly, my dear, I don’t give a damn.” That final word expresses Rhett Butler’s frustration and disgust, and the finality of his relationship with Scarlett. McKee suggests that a word be at the end of the line *if* the writer wants to create a *suspense sentence*, in which the words leading up to that last line create a feeling of anticipation which is answered by that final word. McKee refers to this also as a *periodic sentence*, which “withholds its core idea until the final word.” McKee points out that the periodic sentence serves both dramatic and comedic lines.

Key word at front of line

Robert McKee also offers the concept of the *cumulative sentence*, noting that the idea goes back to Aristotle. This sentence, the mirror opposite of the periodic sentence, puts the core word at the beginning, and then follows it up with phrases that modify or develop that word. I suggest this line as an example, although I note very few cumulative sentences in the AFI 100: “Badges? We ain’t got no badges! We don’t need no badges! I don’t have to show you any stinking badges!”

Key word (or phrase) at end of speech

David Howard and Edward Mabley, in their book *The Tools of Screenwriting*, note that “The most emphatic position in a speech is at the end, the second strongest at the beginning. Putting a modify clause at the end of a speech, or the name of the character addressed, invariably weakens the impact of

280 William Martell, “Distinctive Dialogue,” *Gideon’s Screenwriting Tips: So Now You’re a Screenwriter...*, March 25, 2011, <https://gideonsway.wordpress.com/2011/03/25/distinctive-dialogue/>.

the speech.”²⁸¹ Wells Root illustrates the importance of the end of the line with the example of a joke. “Remember the classic construction of a joke. The punch line is always the tag...In a dramatic speech you are after an emotional rush that corresponds to that responding laugh.”²⁸²

Key words on stress points

Just as with poetry, important words in film dialogue need to be stressed, so they are located at stressed points in a sentence. While some lines of movie dialogue can be seen to follow certain types of poetic meter (more often, mixed meter in longer lines), all lines of dialogue—as do all lines in everyday conversational dialogue—will have their own rhythm and stressed syllables. Making sure that key words are stressed when spoken will emphasize the importance of those words.

Jill Swanson, on her blog *Crafting Shakespeare*, emphasizes the importance of the "operative word," that word which should get the most stress because it is the one that the writer wants the listener to be most aware of. She cautions that there should be no more than two operatives per line (in poetry, but this would apply also to film dialogue). As she writes: “The last word in every metered line is typically the most important. The structure of iambic pentameter is to drive to the last word. So this would indicate that the last word of each verse line is (more often than not) an operative.”²⁸³ This meshes

281 David Howard and Edward Mabley, *The Tools of Screenwriting: A Writer's Guide to the Craft and Elements of a Screenplay*, Reprint edition (New York: St. Martin's Griffin, 1995), 86.

282 Wells Root, *Writing the Script* (Holt Paperbacks, 1980), 119.

283 Jill Swanson, “*Crafting Shakespeare: Analyzing Scansion*,” accessed February 2, 2016, <http://craftingshakespeare.blogspot.com/p/analyzing-scansion.html>.

with the concept of stressing the last word in a line of film dialogue if that is an important word intended to be remembered by the audience.

Last line of character

Using “Frankly, my dear, I don’t give a damn” as an example again, we can note that the focus is not only on the *last word in the line*, but the entire line is also Rhett Butler’s (Clark Gable) *final line* in *Gone with the Wind*. It is his final exit line—not just from the scene, but from the entire film.

Powerful line at end of scene

Placement of a powerful line at the end of a scene enhances the effect of that line by giving the audience more time to think about it before the next scene begins. This is demonstrated by a line from the crime film *The Drop*. A detective is convinced that an “apparently dimwitted” bartender is actually far sharper than people think and that the bartender is actually a murderer. But the detective has no proof. At a scene towards the end of the film, the detective “sidles up” to the bartender and “with his mouth practically in the man’s ear” says “They never see you coming, do they, Bob?”

As Lewis Beale points out in his article “What Was Bogey Thinking When He Said ‘Here’s Looking At You, Kid’?” that line is “one of those lines that comes out of nowhere, makes you go ‘wow,’ and is so indelible, it will probably define *The Drop* for all time. It’s a ‘make my day’ or ‘you talkin’ to me?’ moment.” Dennis Lehane, the screenwriter agrees, saying “It’s a great summation line, it says what the movie is driving for the whole time. It’s the movie in a nutshell. And when Torres [the detective] says that, he’s speaking for the audience as well, because they don’t see Bob coming.” Lehane had moved the line from a scene in

the *middle* of the film to another at the *end* in order to heighten its impact. “I knew when I wrote the line there was a thrill to it,” Lehane said, “and we knew in the screenings, you could feel the audience, that it hit their blood. And in one of the screenings people did clap [after hearing it].” Lehane believes that “Great lines don’t exist without context,” and that very few lines stand on their own. He points to “You talkin’ to me,” as a line that meant nothing prior to its film *Taxi Driver*. Now it has become iconic “because of the richness of the entire film experience.”

The actor who played the detective, John Ortiz, commented on the power of the line: “I think what allows it to be iconic is when you have an emotional ride as an audience, you’re tense for an hour and a half, it’s a release, whether it’s emotional, physical or psychological, or an ‘ah ha!’ moment....It’s a result of all that release of tension. And sometimes it doesn’t have to be that dramatic, it’s just a little opening, but it allows the experience of the film to enter you, and you take that home, and never let go of it. You keep saying that line, you love that line. I think that’s what makes it iconic.”²⁸⁴

Last line at end of movie

“Louis, this could be the beginning of a beautiful friendship” is not only Rick Blaine’s (Humphrey Bogart) final line in *Casablanca*, it is the last line of the entire film. Other last lines of the film on the AFI 100 list include: “All right, Mr. DeMille, I’m ready for my closeup” (*Sunset Blvd.*); “There’s no place like home” (*The Wizard of Oz*); “After all, tomorrow is another day!” (*Gone with the Wind*); “Well, nobody’s perfect” (*Some*

²⁸⁴ Lewis Beale, “What Was Bogey Thinking When He Said ‘Here’s Looking At You, Kid’?,” *The Daily Beast*, September 27, 2014, <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2014/09/27/what-was-bogey-thinking-when-he-said-here-s-looking-at-you-kid.html>.

Like it Hot); “Forget it, Jake, it’s Chinatown” (*Chinatown*); and “Oh, no, it wasn’t the airplanes. It was beauty killed the beast” (*King Kong*).

Surprise

Sarah Kozloff suggests that “surprise” is a quality of many memorable quotes, which she defines as “employing an unusual or unexpected turn of phrase for a special effect.” She writes that “the placement of a single expletive can be used for singular shock value and emphasis, most memorably in ‘Frankly, my dear, I don’t give a damn,’ where the refinement of the slightly antiquated ‘Frankly, my dear’ contrasts sharply with ‘damn’ at the sentence’s end.”²⁸⁵ Quotes with this quality of unexpectedness also include “I love the smell of napalm in the morning,” “They call me Mister Tibbs,” “Well, nobody’s perfect,” “One morning I shot an elephant in my pyjamas. How he got in my pyjamas I don’t know,” and “Gentlemen, you can’t fight in here. This is the War Room,”

Musicality

John Fawell suggests that film has less to do with literature and more to do with music (“in the uninterruptibility of its time and in the importance of its pacing”) and with cartoon strips (“in its succession of blocks of information”). Fawell writes that “If it [film] is at all like literature it is probably most like poetry, in the spareness of its language, its need for each line to be polished cleanly, its need for hard, simple language.”²⁸⁶ Linda Seger, in *Making a Good Script Great*, notes the same musicality

285 Sarah Kozloff, *Overhearing Film Dialogue* (Berkeley: of California Press, 2000), 87.

286 John Fawell, “The Musicality of the Filmscript,” *Literature Film Quarterly* 17, no. 1 (March 1989), 44.

and writes that “Good dialogue is like a piece of music. It has a beat, a rhythm, a melody. Good dialogue tends to be short, and spare. Generally no character will speak for more than two or three lines.”²⁸⁷

Seeger’s and Fawell’s focus on musicality and rhythm is echoed by Bill Boyle in his book *The Visual Mindscape of the Screenplay*. Boyle writes that “Rhythmic pulse makes...dialogue easy to speak and hear. The fluid sound of the words can be clearly understood by a listener, because in addition to the tones and pitches, rhythmic clues help convey the message.” Boyle also notes that this pulse “is iambic meter.” I suggest that his word “is” might better be replaced by “is frequently.” Much of film dialogue is iambic, but much also consists of other meters, has no obvious meter, or perhaps more often, has no single meter at all, as several meters can appear in one or two sentences. Nevertheless, what Boyle says about iambic certainly holds true; that “There is something about it that pleases us. We align with it. The sound placates or stirs use in a very primal way...it is the rhythm of a heartbeat.”²⁸⁸

Beat

A beat is a short silence, often indicated in a screenplay’s dialogue personal directions as (beat).

Although shorter in time than a silence, a beat also emphasizes the line just spoken, and can suggest to the audience that some sort of nonverbal exchange may be taking place. Placing a beat after the last line of a character’s dialogue, or after the last line in a scene, can result in even greater memorability.²⁸⁹

287 Linda Seeger, *Making a Good Script Great* (Samuel French, Inc., 1987).

288 Bill Boyle, *The Visual Mindscape of the Screenplay* (All That Sky Productions, 2012), 198-199.

289 “Crafting Your Character’s Dialogue in Your Screenplay - *For Dummies*,” accessed July 9, 2014, <http://www.dummies.com/how-to/content/crafting-your-characters-dialogue-in-your-screenpl.html>.

Alliteration

Studies by Boers and Lindstromberg of the mnemonic effects of alliteration show that alliterative phrases are more memorable than phonologically non-repetitive ones, and that “alliteration is indeed mnemonic.”²⁹⁰ Their analysis of entries in the Oxford Dictionary of Idioms (Speake, 2000) show that prototypical alliteration occurs in 12.7% - 17% of the entries, depending on how alliteration is defined.²⁹¹ Kozloff points out that “Most scripts will occasionally smuggle in instances when a turn of phrase is offered for its intrinsic appeal.” It likely does not move the plot forward and may embellish a character, but it is there primarily for the aural entertainment of the listener. Kozloff gives the example of the Wizard’s response to the request for help from the Tin Man and Scarecrow. “Step forward, Tin Man. You dare to come to me for a heart, do you? You clinking clanking, clattering collection of collagenous junk? . . . And you, Scarecrow, have the effrontery to ask for a brain, you billowing bale of bovine fodder?”²⁹² As Kozloff states, “The Wizard’s ostentatious alliteration adds to his majesty.”

The *Dummies* guide to crafting dialogue suggests that: “Alliteration is helpful when you want to punch a line or emphasize it for your audience. It also tends to speed a line up.”²⁹³ However, as Howard and Mabley point out, alliteration should be used sparingly for effect as too much alliteration draws

290 Seth Lindstromberg and Frank Boers, “The Mnemonic Effect of Noticing Alliteration in Lexical Chunks,” *Applied Linguistics* 29, no. 2 (June 2008), 211.

291 Frank Boers and Seth Lindstromberg, “Finding Ways to Make Phrase-Learning Feasible: The Mnemonic Effect of Alliteration,” *System* 33, no. 2 (June 2005), 225–38.

292 Sarah Kozloff, *Overhearing Film Dialogue* (Berkeley: of California Press, 2000), 52-53.

293 “Crafting Your Character’s Dialogue in Your Screenplay - *For Dummies*,” accessed July 9, 2014, <http://www.dummies.com/how-to/content/crafting-your-characters-dialogue-in-your-screenpl.html>.

attention to itself or, in worst cases, can result in tongue-twisters that challenge the actors.²⁹⁴ I suggest, however, that as Boers and Lindstromberg indicate, there are mnemonic advantages of alliteration, it could be used perhaps more frequently than Howard and Mabley advise, but done in a way in which the audience is unlikely to notice the alliteration and instead simply be aware of the euphonic qualities of the line.

Of the one hundred lines on the AFI list, forty-nine use some form of alliteration. Examples include the “d” repeated three times in “Frankly, my dear, I don’t give a damn,” or the “t” used three times in the first sentence of “A census taker once tried to test me. I ate his liver with some fava beans and a nice Chianti,” the “m” in “Mother of mercy, is this the end of Rico?” and—although the beginning letters are different, the sounds are alliterative—“win” and “one” in “Tell ‘em to go out there with all they got and win just one for the Gipper.”

Set ups

Some memorable lines are the result of “set ups.” That is, one character says something and the other responds with the punchline. Except in comedies, the set ups should generally not be apparent—they should appear to be simply part of a normal conversation...at least until the punchline has been delivered and the audience might then realize that the previous line set up the opportunity for the

²⁹⁴ David Howard and Edward Mabley, *The Tools of Screenwriting: A Writer’s Guide to the Craft and Elements of a Screenplay*, Reprint edition (New York: St. Martin’s Griffin, 1995), 86.

memorable punchline. As William Martell points out, the set up does the “heavy lifting” for the response line.²⁹⁵

An example of a *set-up* is the exchange between Rick Blaine and Captain Renault in *Casablanca*.

RENAULT

And what in Heaven’s name brought you to Casablanca?

RICK

My health. I came to Casablanca for the waters.

RENAULT

Waters? What waters? We are in the desert.

RICK

I was misinformed.

Another is from *Airplane!*

TED STRIKER

Surely, you can’t be serious.

REMACK

I am serious...and don’t call me Shirley.

295 William Martell, “Distinctive Dialogue,” *Gideon’s Screenwriting Tips: So Now You’re a Screenwriter...*, March 25, 2011, <https://gideonsway.wordpress.com/2011/03/25/distinctive-dialogue/>.

While these setups are integral to the film, I suggest that multi-character blocks of lines such as the above do lend themselves to being appreciated by someone who has not seen their respective films. They are some of the (perhaps very few) lines which do not require the context of their films, although obviously the full appreciation of the dialogue requires experiencing it in full context.

Misquotes? - Well, not really

Some of the most famous movie dialogue lines are often quoted “incorrectly.” I suggest, however, that rather than judging that the public quotes the films *incorrectly*, what we see is that the filmmakers *got the lines wrong* and the public has simply changed those lines to the way they *should have been written*.

The information below illustrates these “actions” by the public by including Google Search results in order to determine the number of hits for various versions of the dialogue lines. The relative Google Search numbers indicate the relative frequency with which the “public” (that is, anyone whose use of various forms of the lines is stored in Google’s database) uses the *original* movie line or a *variation* of that line. I label the original (as spoken in the film) as “Original line” and the variations as “Incorrect” (along with my comments as to why I consider them to be “Improvements.”

Apocalypse Now

Original line (Robert Duvall): “I love the smell of napalm in the morning. You know, one time we had a hill bombed for 12 hours. When it was all over, I walked up. We didn’t find one of ‘em, not one stinkin’ . . . body. The smell, you know that gasoline smell, the whole hill. Smelled like victory.”

Google Search 3,490

Incorrect: “I love the smell of napalm in the morning. It smells like victory.”

Google Search 13,600

Improvement: Punchier, yet retains the essence of the idea with two sentences instead of six, thirteen words instead of fifty-one.

Even better: "I love the smell of napalm in the morning."

Google Search 240,000

Improvement: Much shorter (nine words) yet retains the essence and the most powerful sentence.

Casablanca

Original line (Ingrid Berman): "Play it, Sam. Play 'As Time Goes By'"

Google Search 20,900

Original line (Humphrey Bogart): "You played it for her, you can play it for me. If she can stand it, I can.

Play it!"

Google Search 2,870

Incorrect: "Play it again, Sam."

Google Search 443,000

Improvement: Shorter with just four words, yet it captures the essence of the entire line and can be used by the public in many situations

Dirty Harry

Original line (Clint Eastwood): “You’ve got to ask yourself one question: ‘Do I feel lucky?’ Well, do ya, punk?”

Google Search 40,200

Incorrect: “Do you feel lucky, punk?”

Google Search 127,000

Improvement: Shorter, punchier.

Field of Dreams

Original line (The Voice): “If you build it, he will come”

Google Search 88,7004

Incorrect: “If you build it, they will come.”

Google Search 418,000

Improvement: "They" is more general, "he" is limited because it refers to a specific person (or at least a specific gender.)

Forrest Gump

Original Line (Tom Hanks): "My mama always said life was like a box of chocolates. You never know what you're gonna get."

Google Search 186,000

Incorrect: "Life is like a box of chocolates."

Google Search 438,000

Improvement: Only key phrase is used, and it is shortened. More importantly, "was" is changed to "is" which results in a quote which is in the present and much more usable.

Knute Rockne, All American

Original line (Ronald Reagan): "Win just one for the Gipper"

[Full line: "Tell 'em to go out there with all they got and win just one for the Gipper."]

Google Search 6,850

Incorrect: "Win one for the Gipper"

Google Search 37,600

Improvement: "Win one" is shorter and more alliterative than "Win just one."

She Done Him Wrong

Original line (Mae West): "Why don't you come up sometime and see me?"

Google Search 6,7403

Incorrect: "Why don't you come up and see me sometime?"

Google Search 12,300

Improvement: More rhythmic and euphonic.

Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs

Original line (Evil Queen - voice of Lucille La Verne): "Magic mirror on the wall"

Google Search 112,000

Incorrect: "Mirror, mirror on the wall"

Google Search 1,300,000

Improvement: "Mirror, mirror" is repetitive and more euphonic, thus more memorable.

The Empire Strikes Back

Original line (David Prowse - Voice of James Earl Jones): "No, I am your father"

Google Search 221,000

Incorrect: "Luke, I am your father"

Google Search 299,000

Improvement: Although use of "Luke" is more specific, it is also a direct reminder of the film. This is a case where the line is misquoted much less often than is claimed.

The Treasure of the Sierra Madre

Original line (Alfonso Bedoya): "I don't have to show you any stinkin' badges!"

Google Search: 31,800

Full line: "Badges? We ain't got no badges. We don't need no badges. I don't have to show you any stinkin' badges!"

Google Search: 1,970

Incorrect: "Badges? We don't need no stinkin' badges!"

Google Search: 23,100

Incorrect: "Badges? We don't need no stinking badges!"

Google Search: 27,700

Improvement: Shorter, punchier because of the use of repetition, although the original line shows more search hits than any of the others.

The Wizard of Oz

Original Line (Judy Garland): "Toto, I've a feeling we're not in Kansas anymore."

Google Search: 21,300

Incorrect: "I don't think we're in Kansas anymore."

Google Search: 57,300

Improvement: Shorter, and does not require that the speaker is addressing someone named "Toto." Is also punchier ("I don't think" rather than "I've a feeling.")

Wall Street

Original line (Michael Douglas): "Greed, for lack of a better word, is good"

Google Search 33,100

Incorrect: "Greed is good."

Google Search: 391,000

Improvement: Shorter, expresses full essence of the original sentence, alliteration is more obvious.

Gone with the Wind

From these examples, researchers can conclude that the “misquotes” of memorable movie lines are “better” than the original; that is, shorter, punchier, and more portable. However, one notable apparent exception stands out. That is the most famous line from *Gone with the Wind*—the number one line on the AFI list of top movie quotes. The original line is: “Frankly, my dear, I don’t give a damn.” This line appears on many lists of movie misquotes, these lists indicating that it is generally misquoted as “Frankly, Scarlett, I don’t give a damn.” If the public changes a general term (“my dear”) to a more specific term (“Scarlett), it obviously refutes my suggested theory that the public changes lines from the specific to the general. I was puzzled as to why this particular line would be an exception. Why would so many people misquote this line in a manner that not only does not improve it but in fact makes it *less* useful, *less* portable? However, if we look at the following we see that the public does *not* do this.

Original line (Clark Gable): “Frankly, my dear, I don’t give a damn.”

Google Search 358,000

Incorrect: “Frankly, Scarlett, I don’t give a damn.”

Google Search 6,680

Improvement: None.

Even though the line appears on many lists of movie “misquotes,”—including on Filmsite’s list of top ten misquoted film lines,²⁹⁶ as #13 on BuzzFeed’s list of twenty “famous movie lines that you’ve been saying wrong,”²⁹⁷ and as #7 on a list of memorable movie misquotes on *The Guardian*²⁹⁸—the reality is that this so-called misquote gets less than 2% of the hits that the original line does (6,680 compared to 358,000). It would appear, therefore, that this line is *seldom* misquoted and should *not* appear on any list of frequently “wrong” quotes. The original (“my dear”) was indeed more general and more usable with any woman (or man) who is *not* named Scarlett. Confirmation that there is no improvement with the “incorrect” version may be seen by the fact that in actuality it is *not* misquoted by the general public because it does not need to be improved. The working theory stands.

Using film dialogue in everyday conversations

One does not “replicate” or “imitate” a movie quote in conversation (although one might imitate the *voice* of the actor who delivered the line.) What one does is *quote* the actor, use a *quote* from the movie, or repeat a *quotation* from the movie. When you use a memorable movie line in everyday conversation, you are—for a brief moment—Dorothy Gale clicking the heels of her red slippers together, Rick Blaine saying goodbye to the woman he loves, or Scarlett O’Hara vowing to never go hungry again.

296 “Greatest Film Misquotes,” accessed September 13, 2016, *Filmsite*, <http://www.filmsite.org/moments02.html>.

297 Brian Galindo, “20 Famous Movie Lines That You Have Been Saying Wrong,” *BuzzFeed*, accessed September 13, 2016, <http://www.buzzfeed.com/briangalindo/20-famous-movie-lines-that-you-have-been-saying-wrong>.

298 Ben Child, “Darth Vader Line Is the Daddy of Film Misquotes, Finds Poll,” *The Guardian*, May 11, 2009, sec. Film, <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2009/may/11/star-wars-movie-misquotes-poll>.

But this use of a film line has another function. Using a memorable movie line does not just evoke the speech from the film, it also evokes the atmosphere, the sets, the music, and even the entire movie. In short, the entire experience. It is very difficult to separate the actor from the character in such classic films as *Casablanca*, *Gone with the Wind*, and even *The Wizard of Oz*. As Robert Redford once said about his “indifferent performance” as Jay Gatsby in *The Great Gatsby*: “I could have played the part very well, but I was paid all those millions of dollars to present Bob Redford.”²⁹⁹ When you use a memorable film quote, you are not just Dorothy but also Judy Garland, not just Rick but also Humphrey Bogart, not just Scarlett but also Vivien Leigh. You are both actor *and* character in *Oz*, *Casablanca* or *Tara*—and yes, also yourself in your current situation.

This chapter has investigated the three films which together produced twelve percent of the lines on the AFI 100 list: *Casablanca*, *Gone with the Wind*, and *The Wizard of Oz*; and I have shown some of the processes which created those lines. I have also surveyed a variety of sources, both academic and non-academic, to analyze common shared characteristics among memorable movie lines. In addition, I have analyzed some of the movie lines most frequently referred to as “misquoted,” and have shown that these so-called misquotes are actually improvements by the public. Throughout this chapter I have suggested a strong similarity between the qualities that make memes successful and the qualities that make some movie lines memorable. In the following chapter I investigate the interrelationship between all three of this thesis’ key topics: memes, morphic fields, and memorable movie lines.

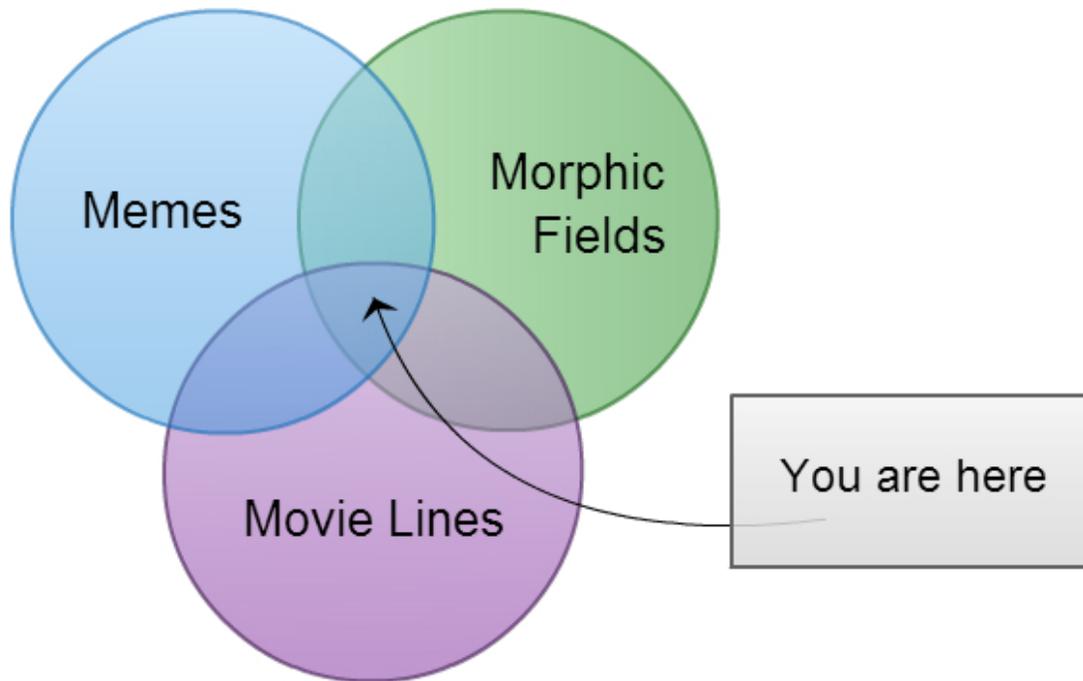
299 Patrick Tucker, *Secrets of Screen Acting*, Second edition (New York: Routledge, 2003), 87.

Chapter Four

The Nexus of Memes, Morphic Fields and Memorable Movie Lines

After investigating memes, morphic fields, and memorable movie lines as separate topics, I now look at all of these topics together, and the relationships between them. Memes and morphic fields are often closely connected, and both can be connected with films in general and memorable movie lines in particular. I suggest that Sheldrake's concept is a valid tool whether it be called *morphic field* (Sheldrake), *socialization* (Mead), *interpellation* (Althusser), *law of mind* (Peirce), *collective conscious* (Durkheim), *collective unconscious* (Jung), *framing* (Goffman, Lakoff), *paradigm* (Kuhn), or *mentalité* (Annales School). I suggest the possibility that a memorable movie line has its own morphic field, and that the strength of this field increases the more that the line is used by the public, and thus the longer it exists. Sheldrake notes that "in any given society the activities of individuals tend to fall into a limited number of standard patterns. People usually repeat characteristically structured activities that have already been performed over and over again by many generations of their predecessors. These include the speaking of a particular language, the skills associated with hunting, farming, weaving, tool-making, cooking, and so on; songs and dances; and the types of behaviour specific to particular social roles. All of these can be thought of as morphic fields."¹ I suggest that one of these many types of social behaviour is the quoting of lines from movies, and that this quoting can be seen as the evocation of the morphic field of the line and often of its film as well.

1 Rupert Sheldrake, *Morphic Resonance: The Nature of Formative Causation* (Rochester, Vt.: Park Street Press, 2009), 189.



Mememes and Morphic Fields – The force behind

If all natural entities (as opposed to man-made) are the result of pattern-setting morphic fields, the actual morphic fields are forces/fields and everything else is an expression of one of those fields (they are morphic units whose forms are expressions of morphic fields). If we replace “forces/fields” with “ideas/concepts,” we have the two-fold structure of a meme: an idea or concept and its expression (often referred to as “meme vehicle”). We could say that the meme itself (the concept) is the morphic field and its expression (an image, a line of text, an object) is the morphic unit. This does not mean that the meme itself inherently contains its morphic field/concept. I suggest this would be the case with the Whole Earth image, but not with the swastika, which despite its thousands of years of existence in the Indian subcontinent as a good luck symbol, acquired an entirely different morphic field after it was adopted as the official symbol of the National Socialist German Workers' Party in Germany after World War I.

Memes and Memorable Movie Lines –Their shared qualities

In this section, I discuss similarities between memes and memorable movie lines based on a compilation of the material I presented in the earlier chapter on memes. I suggest that whether or not memorable movie lines are memes, they exhibit many of the same qualities and characteristics which are required by memes for their own success. In many cases, a theme or story line of a film can also be seen as the meme (*"The Matrix"*), and the lines of dialogue can support that meme, or at least enjoy their position in the context of that filmic meme. Most memorable movie quotes are context-dependent, just as are punchlines of jokes. A punchline without its setup is meaningless, and certainly humourless. Jokes can be seen as memes and their context is created within the joke. They are self-contained. Most movie quotes also require context; that is, a context that is greater than the line alone provides.

Richard Dawkins proposed three key qualities for successful memes: longevity, fecundity, and fidelity. These qualities can also be seen as applicable to many movie quotes. When considering *longevity*, it is more likely that the film is the memplex and the movie lines are lesser memes. The longer the life of a film; that is, the longer it continues to be viewed and experienced by audiences, no matter their size, the longer will audiences be exposed to its lines and particularly to its already popular lines. In short, if the film has "legs," so will its quotes. In terms of *fidelity*, in most cases movie lines are quoted either exactly, or close to the original. When they are not, the quote is either shortened (while still expressing the gist of the quote), or modified to make that quote more "portable." *Fecundity* is less obvious, but can often be observed through a movie quote's intertextuality; for example, its use on clothing, coffee mugs, photographs, calendars and other media, or its use on television or in other films.

Henry Jenkins, et al. consider memes to be *spreadable*, “from top down [media industry to the public] to bottom up [the public up to the media industry], from grassroots to commercial.” They also emphasize the text flow through social networks, i.e. laterally, noting that the audience is perhaps even more important than a text’s commercial distribution in spreading that text, stating that if the audience likes, or is intrigued by the text, it will spread it; if not, its spread is limited, regardless of the commercial efforts behind it.² There is no doubt that lateral approval and recommendation of a *film* through one-on-one conversations, social media, and all other forms of lateral communication are essential in persuading others to see the film—and thus, as a result, hear its memorable quotes in context.

What Jenkins et al. note is that content (in the case of this thesis, movie quotes) is more likely to be shared if it is “available when and where audiences want it...portable, easily reusable in a variety of ways, relevant to multiple audiences, and part of a steady stream of material.”³ To repeat from elsewhere in this thesis: “The authors write that ‘content spreads, then, when it acts as fodder for conversations that audiences are already having.’” As they mention, this is in line with what Douglas Rushkoff has written: “We think of a medium as the thing that delivers content. But the delivered content is a medium in itself. Content is just a medium for interaction between people. The many forms of content we collect and experience online, I'd argue, are really just forms of ammunition - something to have when the conversation goes quiet at work the next day; an excuse to start a discussion with that attractive person in the next cubicle...”⁴ Spreadability/portability is an essential quality of famous movie

2 Henry Jenkins, Sam Ford, and Joshua Green, *Spreadable Media: Creating Value and Meaning in a Networked Culture* (London: NYU Press, 2013), 195-196.

3 Ibid., 197-198.

4 Douglas Rushkoff, “Second Sight,” *The Guardian*, June 28, 2000, sec. Technology, <http://www.theguardian.com/technology/2000/jun/29/onlinesupplement13>.

lines, and Rushkoff's comments about a discussion with the person in the adjacent cubicle are very relevant to the use of famous movie lines, as they are often dropped into conversation (frequently humorously) when appropriate (in some manner) to that conversation. It may be a menacing "I'll be back" from *The Terminator*, or *Casablanca's* "Here's looking at you, kid" over a glass of wine.

One of media scholar John Fiske's key concepts is "producerly." Jenkins and his co-authors suggest that producerly text "leaves open space for audience participation, provides resources for shared expression, and motivates exchanges through surprising or intriguing content."⁵ I suggest that in the case of movie quotes that "producerliness" is very limited; it has much more to do with situation than with content. That is, one of the key qualities of memorable movie lines is that they are "portable;" they can be used in a broad number of situations. In this sense, *usage* is producerly. However, in terms of content, most movie quotes need to be exactly, or nearly exactly, the same as spoken in the film. (As I state elsewhere, "I'll drop by again later"—no matter how menacingly delivered—does not have the same punch as "I'll be back.") There are exceptions, of course, and I discuss this in the previous chapter on memorable movie lines where I present examples of so-called "misquotes"—which I consider in most cases to be *improvements* rather than *mistakes*—where the quality of *producerly* is limited to *correcting* the content, not *expanding* it.

Jenkins, et al. suggest that one form of "producerly" text is parody. I suggest that the quoting of memorable movie lines, often done humorously or ironically, achieves the same results. "Fiske specifically cites parody as a popular form closely associated with the "producerly"—one of the ways

5 Henry Jenkins, Sam Ford, and Joshua Green, *Spreadable Media: Creating Value and Meaning in a Networked Culture* (New York: NYU Press, 2013), 227.

audiences transform brands into resources for their own social interactions. While all humour builds on whether an audience “gets” the joke or shares a sensibility, parody combines that aspect of humour with a specific shared reference. This is precisely what makes parody valuable—it can express shared experiences and, especially when it plays on nostalgic references, a shared history. Those who are creating humour and parody claim specific common experiences with those who are laughing at the joke.”⁶ This sense of shared history and being one of the “in group” that gets the joke is the same as is proposed for one purpose of repeating movie quotes in a group context. It demonstrates that the person repeating the quote has seen the movie, is “cool” enough to know when it is appropriate to use the quote, and that “coolness” is supported—and magnified—by those who appreciate the joke, making sure that the others in that group context know that they also “got it.” An example of “producerly” parody (which I mentioned earlier in this thesis) is an article in *Internal Auditor* which takes classic dialogue from *Casablanca* and turns it into a form of humour—which likely only an auditor would find knee-slapping.⁷

RICK

Of all the audit shops, in all the companies, in all the world, she benchmarks mine.

ILSA

But what about us?

RICK

We'll always have the International Conference.

6 Ibid., 207.

7 J. Michael Jacka, “Casablanca: Almost the Greatest Audit Movie Ever Made,” *Internal Auditor* 68, no. 2 (April 2011), 60–61.

James Gleick wrote that “*Rhyme and rhythm* are qualities that aid a meme’s survival... Patterned language has an evolutionary advantage,”⁸ using the example “Tinker, tailor, soldier, sailor.” Poetic meter of movie lines is not analyzed in this thesis, but I do note that “I love the smell of napalm in the morning” (*Apocalypse Now*) is an example of iambic pentameter and that alliteration is obvious in the first sentence of this quote from *The Silence of the Lambs*: “A census taker once tried to test me. I ate his liver with some fava beans and a nice Chianti.”

Francis Heylighen also suggests that the concept of patterns is intertwined with the concept of memes, when he writes: “A meme can be defined as an information pattern, held in an individual's memory, which is capable of being copied to another individual's memory. This includes anything that can be learned or remembered: ideas, knowledge, habits, beliefs, skills, images, etc.”⁹ An “information pattern” can include rhyme, rhythm, alliteration, and other euphonic patterns which can contribute to the success of a famous movie quote.

Daniel Dennett states that a successful meme—in fact *any* meme—must have a *physical expression* to survive. He writes “A meme’s existence depends on a physical embodiment in some medium; if all such physical embodiments are destroyed, that meme is extinguished.”¹⁰ Dennett is careful to state,

8 James Gleick, “What Defines a Meme?,” *Smithsonian*, May 2011, <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/arts-culture/what-defines-a-meme-1904778/>.

9 Francis Heylighen, “What Makes a Meme Successful? Selection Criteria for Cultural Evolution,” in *Proc. 15th Int. Congress on Cybernetics* (Namur, 1999), 418–23.

10 Daniel C. Dennett, *Darwin’s Dangerous Idea: Evolution and the Meanings of Life*, Reprint edition (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), 347–348.

however, that the meme is not its physical expression. There is a difference between memes (which Dennett considers invisible) and *meme vehicles* (pictures, books, sayings, tools, buildings, and, I would add, films, Internet images and videos) which carry and/or demonstrate the memes. Dennett would presumably then consider movie lines to be meme vehicles. While those particular memes may be at home in the brains (or minds) of someone who has seen a movie, or initially in that of the screenwriter—or perhaps of the film’s director—they also more importantly exist in the audio-visual presentation of the movie (and on the physical paper of a movie script.)

Geoff Ayling considers successful memes to be “contagious,” and that three factors are necessary to produce a successful (contagious) meme: *Extreme simplicity; emotional impact; and critical mass* (of dissemination.)¹¹ Here we again see simplicity, emotions, and what (“critical mass”) could also be described as (sufficient) spreadability or repetition, all very pertinent to the popularity of certain movie lines. Movie lines which can be seen to combine both simplicity and emotions are “Soylent Green is people!” from *Soylent Green*; or “It’s alive! It’s alive!” from *Frankenstein*.

Kate Distin summarizes the three factors of meme success, recognizing both the meme and its environment. “It makes sense to say that, as for genes, memetic success will depend on three separate factors: the content of the meme itself; the way in which it fits with other memes; and the external environment—the minds and surroundings of the people whose attention it is trying to attain.”¹²

11 Geoff Ayling et al., *Rapid Response Advertising* (Warriewood, N.S.W.: Business & Professional Publishing, 1998).

12 Kate Distin, *The Selfish Meme a Critical Reassessment* (Cambridge, U.K.; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 57.

However, her comments are general and do not provide suggestions as to the specific causes of those factors. What qualities must the content have? How must a meme be to fit in with other memes? Exactly how does the external environment affect the potential new hosts? For an example of a movie line meme that fits in with other memes (in this case, the memetic logic—or counterpoint to that logic—of the room in which the scene takes place), consider “Gentlemen, you can’t fight in here! This is the War Room!” from *Dr. Strangelove*; or the line from *The Godfather*—which in the film is menacing but which in a different context could simply refer to an ordinary, everyday financial transaction: “I’m gonna make him an offer he can’t refuse.”

John Gunders and Damon Brown write that, “Dormant memes are ideas that aren’t actively in people’s minds... [but which] can be resurrected...usually through another active meme.”¹³ Applying this idea to film quotes, perhaps another film quote (or film) might pay tribute to a forgotten movie quote and therefore revive it to a role in current public consciousness. One example of this is Woody Allen’s film *Play it Again, Sam*, which not only used (but misquoted) a line from *Casablanca* as its title, but helped renew (but not resurrect, which was not necessary) interest not only in that line but in the film itself, with Humphrey Bogart’s *Casablanca* character acting as a love life consultant to Allen.

Kevin Laland and John Odling-Smee are in agreement with those who suggest the importance of influential individuals. They write, “‘Do-what-the-successful-individuals-do’ is another strategy that

13 John Gunders and Damon Brown, *The Complete Idiot’s Guide to Memes* (New York: Alpha, 2010), 164.

individuals in some species adopt, and which imposes biases on meme transmission.¹⁴ In such cases, whether a meme spreads depends on whether successful, charismatic, or powerful individuals adopt it.”¹⁵ This may be true for marketing products and services, but movie lines are more democratic. Nearly anyone can see a film in some manner, whether in a theater, on a television set, or even on a smartphone, and thus nearly anyone can be exposed to the initial source of potential memes. Although this thesis focuses primarily on the content of movie lines and does not examine their transmission, I suggest that while some well-known people may spread a movie line on a large scale (likely via a television talk show or social media), it is the audiences themselves, and their word-of-mouth, that are critical to the popularity of a line of movie dialogue.

On the other hand, a popular actor’s presence in a film can in effect be seen as an endorsement of that film (otherwise, theoretically at least, they would not be in the film). Influential film critics and various celebrities (no matter why they are celebrated) can also recommend that the public see a film. Again, this is a case of influential people helping the *entire film* itself become popular, but the dialogue lines within the film are still on their own and depend on their own value as dialogue and on their own “role” within the film. There is also no doubt that the charisma of a Clark Gable or Humphrey Bogart contributed immensely to the popularity of *Gone with the Wind* and *Casablanca*, and thus to the popularity—and memorability—of their own dialogue lines within the film.

14 Kevin Laland and John Odling-Smee, “The Evolution of the Meme,” in *Darwinizing Culture: The Status of Memetics as a Science*, ed. Robert Aunger, First edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 135.

15 Ibid.

Francis Heylighen also discusses both “subjective” and “intersubjective” criteria of successful memes. Subjective has to do with the person *assimilating* the meme, and subjective criteria include *novelty* (to attract attention), *simplicity* (easy to understand), *coherence* (fits in with existing attitudes), and *utility* (practical—can be effectively used). I suggest that all of these are suitable qualities for analyzing memorable movie lines. “Utility” is an important criterion, already suggested by Rushkoff and, to some extent by Jenkins et al. (and Fiske.) *Utility* for movie lines is their ability to fit into conversations, equipping the speaker to bring (generally) humour into a conversation as well as demonstrate (if the other person in the conversation shows their prior awareness of the line) that those conversing have something in common. One example might be—in an abbreviated version of the actual line—“I don’t think we’re in Kansas anymore.” (Original: “Toto, I’ve a feeling we’re not in Kansas anymore.” *The Wizard of Oz*)

Michele Knobel and Colin Lankshear propose that *susceptibility* is a key supporter of a meme’s fecundity; that is, “people’s openness to the meme and their propensity to be infected by it.” I suggest that the word “relevancy” is more appropriate than susceptibility, as susceptibility applies to the people who receive a meme but relevancy applies to the meme itself. For example, the line “I’m as mad as hell, and I’m not going to take this anymore!” (*Network*) is one that many people who are currently frustrated with their government, the media, the economy, crime and environmental destruction can still find to be very relevant, even forty years after the release of the film. The less specific and more general the “hook” of a meme, the longer (longevity) it can be useful. This movie line remains very useful.

French jurist and social observer Gabriel Tarde also observed that the *more compatible the new is with the existing*, the more likely it is that the new will be accepted. He, too, discussed the importance of “*opinion leaders*.”¹⁶ I have suggested elsewhere that while opinion leaders may be effective in selling products or candidates, they are likely less effective in promoting movie lines. However, Tarde’s key observation appears to be the need for a new meme to mesh with existing memes, as discussed several times earlier in this section. I suggest that a potential movie line meme must mesh with the other nearby lines in a film and the overall film itself, and with the *audience’s* susceptibility—that is, the audience members’ openness to the line, its relevance to their lives, and perhaps the potential for their future use of the line in their everyday lives.

When looking for explanations of the *longevity* of movie lines, we might also look at the *Lindy Effect*. The Lindy Effect first appeared in 1964 as Lindy’s Law, coined by Albert Goldman. Goldman was referring to a gathering of comedians who met nightly at Lindy’s Delicatessen in New York City. When discussing the comedy business and their own careers, they determined that, as Goldman phrased it, “The future career expectation of a television comedian is proportional to his past exposure.”¹⁷ Mathematician Benoit Mandelbrot described it in his book *The Fractal Geometry of Nature* and renamed it the Lindy Effect. Later, statistician Nassim Nicholas Taleb, in his book *Antifragile*, describes the Lindy Effect as “A technology, or anything nonperishable, increases in life expectancy with every day of its life—unlike perishable items (such as humans, cats, dogs, and tomatoes). So a book that has been a hundred years in print is likely to stay in print another hundred years.” Using books as an example, Taleb comments “If a book has been in print for forty years, I can expect it to be in print for another forty years. But, and

16 Everett M. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*, Fourth edition (New York: Free Press, 1995), 40.

17 Albert Goldman, *The New Republic*, June 13, 1964.

that is the main difference, if it survives another decade, then it will be expected to be in print another fifty years...things that have been around for a long time are not “aging” like persons, but “aging” in reverse.” I suggest the possibility that when applying the Lindy Effect to memorable movie lines, the result is that the longer a movie line is popular, then the *even longer* it will be popular. The memorable quotes from *Gone with the Wind*, *The Wizard of Oz*, and *Casablanca* analyzed in this thesis are excellent examples of this longevity, as those quotes (and their films, of course) are now more than seventy-five years old. There is also a similarity between the Lindy Effect and the Matthew Effect,¹⁸ which when applied to movie lines, might be seen as “The more famous a movie line is, the even more famous it will become.” This is in align with the “more of the same” principle and Sheldrake’s theory that “The more often patterns are repeated, the more probable they become.”

In addition to the qualities of fidelity, fecundity, and longevity suggested by Dawkins, as well as those many qualities suggested by others, I suggest that a meme also requires the quality of *attractiveness*. I suggest that that attraction has to do more with a type of magnetic attraction, or a *resonance*; an openness to the words, meaning, style and delivery of the movie line. For a meme to be attractive, it must in some way attract the attention of, and be desirable to, humans, or at least a segment of a population. I simply note that certain movie lines “click” when heard by members of an audience.¹⁹ They immediately connect with that line. I suggest that this is an example of *morphic resonance*—the morphic field of the line resonates with the morphic field of an audience member, because there is a

18 Robert Merton, “The Matthew Effect in Science,” *Science* 159, no. 3810 (January 5, 1968).

19 As I reported earlier, when the movie *The Drop* was still undergoing test screening, the screenwriter noted about a particular line: “I knew when I wrote the line there was a thrill to it, and we knew in the screenings, you could feel the audience, that it hit their blood. And in one of the screenings people did clap [after hearing it].”

compatibility “within” the audience member—compatibility being also a key quality of successful memes.

Memorable Movie Lines as Textual Memes

Research has been conducted that is helpful when analyzing the structure and semantics of *textual* memes and that research can be applied also to memorable movie lines as they consist simply of one or more words, originally on paper (a screenplay) and then spoken aloud in a film. Studies of popularity, memorableness, and transmission of other types of word groups suggest some possible qualities through which the success of some movie lines might be enhanced.

Jonah Berger and Katherine Milkman suggest that “*surprising* and *interesting* content is highly viral,” as is “*practically useful* and *positive content*.”²⁰ Despite some research reports and common marketing practices by others, Berger and Milkman found that targeting “influentials” or “opinion leaders” is likely *not* cost-effective, and that “current research suggests that it may be more beneficial to focus on crafting contagious content.”²¹ Note that with films, influential individuals—most likely film critics—may influence people to *see* a film. However, it is highly unlikely that no matter how influential the person is, they will be able to convince someone to like and remember a particular movie line.) Berger and Milkman’s research reinforces movie line qualities already discussed, such as *surprising*, *interesting*, and *useful*. Unexpected movie lines grab the attention of audiences, and, as I have already mentioned

20 Jonah Berger and Katherine Milkman, “What Makes Online Content Viral?,” *Journal of Marketing Research*, no. Ahead of print (2011), 10.

21 *Ibid.*, 11-12.

(as did Rushkoff) and as we see in the movie line chapter of this thesis, one of the common reasons for people to remember movie lines is so that they are able to re-use those lines in their own conversations—a very useful personal goal.

Janez Brank and Jure Leskovec noted that journal articles with relatively short titles were downloaded more often than those with long titles.²² Their findings on the higher download rate of articles with shorter titles can be applied, I suggest, to the popularity of many short movie lines. I also point out that many memeticists propose that simplicity is a quality of successful memes. In another study, Marco Guerini et al. made a similar observation about the style of abstracts rather than journal titles. They reported that an abstract's *style* is critical to an article's popularity, and that "the most downloaded papers are those that are easier to read and probably get more initial attention and understanding."²³ Here again, we see the importance of simplicity, reported in this research into scientific article abstracts as "easier to read." Simplicity is a key feature of most memorable movie lines.

Guerini and another group of researchers defined euphony as "the inherent pleasantness of the sounds of words, phrases and sentences, and it is utilized to achieve pleasant, rhythmical and harmonious effects."²⁴ The authors reported that their experiments "show that phonetic features play an important

22 Janez Brank and Jure Leskovec, "The Download Estimation Task on KDD Cup 2003," *SIGKDD Explor. Newsl.* 5, no. 2 (December 2003), 26.

23 Marco Guerini, Alberto Pepe, and Bruno Lepri, "Do Linguistic Style and Readability of Scientific Abstracts Affect Their Virality?," in *Proceedings of the Sixth International AAI Conference on Weblogs and Social Media*, 2012.

24 Marco Guerini, Gözde Özbal, and Carlo Strapparava, "Echoes of Persuasion: The Effect of Euphony in Persuasive Communication" (*Human Language Technologies: The 2015 Annual Conference of the North American Chapter of the ACL*, Denver, Colorado, 2015), 1483.

role in the detection of persuasiveness and encode a notion of “melodious language” that operates both within and across datasets.”²⁵ The authors found that the average rhyme scores and the average alliteration scores were higher in persuasive sentences,²⁶ concluding that “persuasive sentences are generally euphonic.”²⁷ Many memorable movie lines are euphonic and some that are not originally are modified by the public to be so.

Chip Heath proposed that certain memes survive in society not only because they are informational—they provide practical, useful information, but also because they are *emotional*—they mesh with or evoke emotions that are “shared across people.” Heath’s argument can apply equally well to those movie lines that connect emotionally with an audience.²⁸

Lakkaraju et al. posted images to Reddit in order to test the popularity of images that were submitted with a variety of titles. They found that “a successful title is one that employs novel words, yet at the same time conforms to the linguistic norms of the community to which it is submitted.”²⁹ This fits in

25 Ibid., 1484.

26 Ibid., 1487.

27 Ibid., 1491.

28 Chip Heath, Chris Bell, and Emily Sternberg, “Emotional Selection in Memes: The Case of Urban Legends,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 81, no. 6 (2001), 1028–41.

29 Himabindu Lakkaraju, Julian McAuley, and Jure Leskovec, “What’s in a Name? Understanding the Interplay between Titles, Content, and Communities in Social Media,” in *Seventh International AAAI Conference on Weblogs and Social Media* (Boston, MA, 2013), 313.

precisely with the results of the Cornell Study of memorable movie quotes which found they had “unusual word choices built on a scaffolding of common part-of-speech patterns.”³⁰

As I stated in my meme chapter, certain common qualities of memes continue to appear: *brevity*, *simplicity*, and *novelty* (yet not so novel that it does not mesh with existing standards), as well as *Useful* information and *emotional* resonance. It appears also that the use of pleasing sounds (*rhyme*, *rhythm*, *alliteration*) can contribute to the success of a meme. I suggest that many, if not all, of these characteristics are found in a study of famous movie lines.

Movie Lines and Context – Context gives depth and meaning

I suggest that most movie lines need a frame to be understood. If the hearer of a movie quote is not previously provided with a frame, one needs to come with the line. Movie lines by themselves are generally *denotative*. Their meaning is the combined meaning of the words within the context of the line, but they are seldom significant without context. If their context, their frame, is known, they are also usually also *connotative*, they are significant. That necessary context—the frame—encompasses its position in the scene, the character who spoke the line and the relationship of that character to the other actors in the film, and to the entire film itself. As Jaroslav Konvička writes in his doctoral thesis on popular movie quotes, “The contextual meaning is crucial. If a person, who has never seen the movie Terminator and therefore has no knowledge of catchphrases from the movie, says a sentence I’ll be

30 Cristian Danescu-Niculescu-Mizil et al., “You Had Me at Hello: How Phrasing Affects Memorability,” in *Proceedings of the 50th Annual Meeting of the Association for Computational Linguistics: Long Papers - Volume 1*, ACL ’12 (Stroudsburg, PA, USA: Association for Computational Linguistics, 2012), 892–901, <http://dl.acm.org/citation.cfm?id=2390524.2390647>.

back, whereupon walks away, it is merely a sentence. However, if the person says the sentence in the specific low tone with no emotions, the contextual meaning is preserved and it can be called a catchphrase (or a movie quote). This is what catchphrases have in common. Therefore they can function as idioms, euphemism, proverbs, plain sentences or dialogues etc. and, furthermore, as catchphrases.”³¹ In short, for movie lines, context is everything.

The most common ways in which movie memes are passed through society include radio, television, print (magazines, newspapers, books), word of mouth (both in real-world conversation and on social media; and specifically on the Internet (through studio and film websites, and websites which rate and discuss films, as well as marketing by the studios including trailers shown on the Internet.) It is the *film* which is promoted, not specific lines in the film. It is unlikely that if someone was told that “X film has a great line,” or more specifically, *quotes* the line, they would respond by saying “I like that line. I’ll see the film.” (Even worse might be if someone said “X film has two great lines” which would suggest that it has two, and only two, good lines.) But if someone were to say “X film is a great film” or “X film is a great film with great dialogue,” *that* might convince someone to see the film.

I suggest that memorable movie lines (and images) can serve as “cues” which trigger (resonate with) morphic fields of, and associated with, a film. If one has seen the film, it may evoke the film and the experience of seeing the film. It may remind of the plot, the images, the characters, and the music. If one does not remember the film or has not even seen it, one can go to the source, due to the current

31 Jaroslav Konvička, “Popular Movie Quotes: Meaning and Translation” (Silesian University, 2015).

ease of streaming films or renting a DVD. (Although, as I suggest above, one line of dialogue is unlikely to attract most people to a film.)³²

I suggest that there are a very few of the AFI 100 movie quotes that can stand alone without needing their filmic context. For example, the phrase “I’ll have what she’s having” is a frequently used phrase in a restaurant when one person sees another patron eating something and tells the waiter they’d like the same order. However, the phrase’s significance is dramatically different when placed in the context of the restaurant scene in *When Harry Met Sally*.

“Keep your friends close, but your enemies closer” from *The Godfather II* is standard Machiavellian advice, but even more menacing in the film. On the other hand, the Groucho Marx line “One morning I shot an elephant in my pyjamas. How he got in my pyjamas, I don’t know” from *Animal Crackers* is simply a stand-alone joke, quite possibly recycled from Marx’s vaudeville days but certainly in that style. The brief dialogue from the comedy *Airplane!* is another joke—a set up—this time a two-person one.

“Striker: Surely you can’t be serious.”

“Rumack: I am serious...and don’t call me Shirley”

³² I note, however, that movie trailers often include key dialogue lines which the studios think will have an effect on audiences. For example, *Cool Hand Luke*’s “What we got here is failure to communicate” was used five times in the movie’s trailer but only two times in the actual movie.

I suggest, with a nod (and perhaps apology) to Noam Chomsky, that there is a “poverty of the stimulus” in effect with almost all film lines, in that there is no innate knowledge to come to the rescue. Without that prior knowledge, in order to fully understand a movie quote when used by someone else in everyday conversation, the person hearing that quote must already know the context of that line, often by having seen the entire film, although in some cases at least having seen the scene in which the quote exists.

Morphic Fields of Genre – Genre rules

Most memorable movie lines reflect the *genre* of the film in which they appear. This is seen in the context, semantics and structure of the words themselves in a memorable movie line. The idea that words are connected with genre and with the history of their use is not new. As I discuss in my morphic field chapter, Russian formalist Mikhail Bakhtin considered that all words have a past, a genre, a taste of the context and contexts in which it has lived.³³ Similarly, Rupert Sheldrake commented “Basically, morphic fields are fields of habit, and they’ve been set up through habits of thought, through habits of activity, and through habits of speech...We inherit the whole English language with all its habits, its turns of phrase, its usage of words, its structure, its grammar.”³⁴ I suggest that each word has its own morphic field, and that memorable movie lines capitalize on already-known meanings. They either reinforce them or intentionally conflict with them—to great effect—but their relationship to the genre of their film is always restrictive.

33 Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination*, ed. Holquist, Michael (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1981).

34 Ken Weathersby, “Hootenanny Editor Ken Weathersby Talks with Rupert Sheldrake,” *Hootenanny Magazine*, Winter 1995 -1996, <http://hootenannymagazine.org/hootenanny-archive/hootenanny-3-winter-19956/hootenanny-editor-ken-weathersby-talks-with-rupert-sheldrake/>.

Aesthetic framing consists of defining – or not defining – the space in which a creation exists and/or is perceived. A frame surrounding a painting does exactly what its name implies. It frames it. It separates the painting from everything that is not the painting, so that the observer is led to focus on the painting itself. As John Frow discusses in *The Literary Frame*, “The authority of the frame is equivalent to that of the genre expectations which it establishes, and the internal structure of the text may either confirm this authority or react dynamically to it, or at the extreme it may break it. In all of these cases, structure is only made possible by the presence of the frame, as norm or restriction and as the conventional sign of a closure which separates the limitedness of the aesthetic object from the unlimitedness of its environment.”³⁵ Framing in cinema is an important element. A common convention in some genres of film is for a movie to open with expansive, even panoramic, establishing shots. They establish the big picture, the geographic nature of the film's location. This is particularly obvious in the Western genre, where the majority of films open with either a huge expanse of desert and windblown rock formations (usually filmed in the American Southwest), or a ramshackle town of dirt streets and wooden buildings, with horses at hitching posts, and dusty cowboys riding into town or townspeople walking along the raised wooden sidewalks. This does not just tell us where the film takes place. It tell us—in most cases—the type of plot we are likely to see, the variety of characters we will likely encounter, and the type of dialogue that will be spoken. As the opening's establishing shots of a Western will almost always have a “Western” music background, we are also reassured that this is indeed a Western movie and that we will continue to hear this style of music throughout the film.

35 John Frow, “The Literary Frame,” *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 16, no. 2 (July 1, 1982), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3332274>, 27.

We can also assume that what we will see for the next 90 or 120 minutes will be familiar, a variation on the Westerns we have seen before. Conventions will be followed with only twists in plot, action and character to set this film off from all others we have seen in the past. Violations of Western movie conventions, as is true with most other genres, are risky. One example of a failed attempt was the film *Cowboys and Aliens*, an intriguing title and story line that mixed both Western conventions and science fiction/alien invasion conventions. It did not work. As *The Wrap* reports, despite the fact that the film was adapted from a New York Times best-seller, its executive producer was Steven Spielberg, and it starred Harrison Ford and Daniel Craig, all of this talent, experience and exposure was not enough. The audiences apparently could not get their collective minds around the genre mash-up, which featured an Old West town banding together to take down an alien invasion. The \$163 million film grossed just \$174.6 million globally, losing money once prints and advertising costs were factored in.³⁶

In another example of film genre, Roland Barthes noticed that in the film *Julius Caesar* (1953), all of the male characters are signalled to be Romans by their haircuts. "All the characters are wearing fringes. Some have them curly, some straggly, some tufted, some oily, all have them well combed, and the bald are not admitted, although there are plenty to be found in Roman history...What then is associated with these insistent fringes? Quite simply the label of Roman-ness. We therefore see here the mainspring of the Spectacle—the sign—operating in the open. The frontal lock overwhelms one with evidence, no one can doubt that he is in Ancient Rome. And this certainty is permanent: the actors speak, act, torment themselves, debate 'questions of universal import', without losing, thanks to this little flag displayed on

36 Kurt Orzeck, "Gobble Gobble: The Biggest Box-Office Turkeys of 2011," *TheWrap*, November 22, 2011, <http://www.thewrap.com/movies-didnt-make-cut-biggest-turkeys-11-32965/>.

their foreheads, any of their historical plausibility.”³⁷ I suggest that each movie genre has its own morphic field, and that as soon as the setting is established, and the characters clothing and language are established, the audience can settle down into the comfort of a morphic field that they have experienced many times in the past.

Rupert Sheldrake sees schools as morphic fields which evolve and strengthen over time, as a result of contributions of previous members of the school. As Sheldrake writes, "Schools of art" [are] another area of traditions in which groups of people share in a common ideal and a common pattern of activity...If we think of paintings as having morphic fields for their actual structures, we can then see how a kind of "building up" occurs through morphic resonance. Every time a new painting in that school is made, it alters the field of the school. There is a kind of cumulative effect.”³⁸ I suggest that dialogue in various genres of film can have a certain resonance as a result of the morphic fields of those genres, just as Sheldrake describes above with schools. Over the years various genres have arisen (or been developed) in the film industry. These genres resonate with those who create the films, and with the audiences who experience them, resulting in an affinity by many people toward specific genres.

Morphic Fields of Memorable Movie Lines – More is more

37 Roland Barthes, “The Romans in Film,” in *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978).

38 Rupert Sheldrake, “Part II - Society, Spirit & Ritual: Morphic Resonance and the Collective Unconscious,” *Psychological Perspectives: A Quarterly Journal of Jungian Thought* 18, no. 2 (1987), 320-331.

As I apply Sheldrake's theory, the longer over time that a movie line is repeated, the more powerful the morphic field of that line becomes, and thus, the easier it should be for people to remember the line. As Sheldrake sees morphic resonance as involving a sort of "frequency tuning," he suggests that the tuning does not have to be *exactly* on frequency, but that the closer it is to that frequency—that is the closer the frequency of resonance from the past coincides with the frequency of a field's present—the greater the effect. After a period of time, the field becomes stabilized and self-maintaining, in that it resonates with, and is supported by, previous states of *itself*, those states being more like its current self than those of previous, but similar, fields.

Sheldrake views short-term memory as the remembering of *patterns* rather than specifics. These patterns provide us with mental concepts, or with the key components of spoken sounds... "Our short-term memory for words and phrases enables us to remember them long enough to grasp the connections between them, and understand their meanings. We most often remember meanings – patterns of connection – rather than the actual words. It is relatively easy to summarize the gist of a recent conversation, not to reproduce it verbatim. The same with written language: you may be able to recall facts and ideas from the preceding chapters of this book, but you are unlikely to recall a single sentence word for word."³⁹ I suggest, however, that this does not apply to the recollection of a *short* piece of text, such as a favourite movie line from a film. As I show elsewhere in this thesis, memorable movie lines are usually memorized very precisely. Although some famous movie lines *have* been slightly changed in popular memory (usually for good reason, as I propose elsewhere), most remain true to the lines as spoken in the film. Sheldrake would consider these lines to be *recalled* rather than *recognized*

39 Rupert Sheldrake, *The Presence of the Past: Morphic Resonance and the Memory of Nature* (Rochester, Vt.: Park Street Press, 2012), 245.

when spoken by a person, but recognized when heard by a listener. While recognition is an important factor in the use by the public of well-known lines, recall is absolutely essential in their re-use and their ability to become memes, or at least meme-like. In this context, recall and recognition will optimally involve not just remembering the line itself, but also the film in which it was spoken, the context of the line and the actor and/or character who spoke the line.

Shared Media and Society: Does “shared” still exist?

As critic Kenneth Tynan wrote in 1975, "The most powerful influence on the arts in the West is the cinema. Novels, plays and films are filled with references to, quotations from, parodies of—old movies. They dominate the cultural subconscious because we absorb them in our formative years (as we don't absorb books, for instance); and we see them again on TV when we grow up. The first two generations predominantly nourished on movies are now of an age when they rule the media, and it's already frightening to see how deeply in their behaviour—as well as their work—the cinema has imprinted itself on them. Nobody took into account the tremendous impact that would be made by the fact that films are *permanent* and *easily accessible from childhood onwards*. As the sheer number of films piles up, their influence will increase, until we have a civilisation entirely moulded by cinematic values and behaviour patterns."⁴⁰ What Tynan wrote in 1975 is still true, as I discuss below, but I suggest that the Internet is in the process of changing the game. I will not venture to guess where that game might lead. In the meantime, film is still very influential.

⁴⁰ Kenneth Tynan, *The Diaries of Kenneth Tynan*, ed. John Lahr, 1st U.S. edition (New York: Bloomsbury USA, 2001), 283.

The influence of Hollywood is not limited to one country or even to the West. As Marshall McLuhan wrote in *Understanding Media*, “President Sukarno of Indonesia announced in 1956 to a large group of Hollywood Executives that he regarded them as political radicals and revolutionaries who had greatly hastened political change in the East. What the Orient saw in a Hollywood movie was a world in which all the ordinary people had cars and electric stoves and refrigerators. So the Oriental now regards himself as an ordinary person who has been deprived of the ordinary man's birthright.”⁴¹ As the World War I song went, “How ya gonna keep 'em down on the farm, after they've seen Paree'?”⁴²

An acquaintance remarked that he has a family culture that includes classic movies. He specifically mentioned *The Princess Bride*, *The Sound of Music*, and *Star Wars*. When communicating with each other, the members of the family frequently refer to scenes and characters in those films, as well as quote lines from the films. When a European high school exchange student came to stay at their home for a school year, they realized he didn't understand their “movie culture.” They tried to *explain* the lines and scenes to which they frequently referred, but explaining was insufficient. They realized that the only solution was for the student to actually see and experience the films. Once he was inoculated by actually viewing the films, he was able to comfortably merge into the family's culture and join in on the camaraderie. The family recognizes that not only are these and other films part of their own culture, but of the larger society-wide culture as well, and that shared movie experiences help them connect and interact with others in the culture. This acquaintance also feels that movies are the last remaining shared experiences in our culture. He remarked that—at least for his family—religion no longer serves

41 Marshall McLuhan and Lewis H. Lapham, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, Reprint edition (Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, 1994).

42 Andrew Bird, “How You Gonna Keep 'Em Down On The Farm,” *AZLyrics.com*, accessed August 4, 2016, <http://www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/andrewbird/howyougonnakeepemdownonthefarm.html>.

as a connection with others, and that television and music exposure and tastes have become far too fractured to be a unifying factor. For him, and his family, this leaves popular movies as the one major area of shared popular culture. A look back in twentieth century American history shows that this was not always so.

Eight days after taking office in March 1933, U.S. president Franklin Roosevelt began a series of radio “fireside chats” with the people of America. During the war his radio audiences averaged 53.8 percent of radio listeners, more listeners than even the most popular radio shows of that time, which averaged thirty to thirty-five percent. Roosevelt’s radio chat on December 9, 1941—two days after the attack on Pearl Harbor—had an estimated rating of seventy-nine percent, more than sixty-two million people.⁴³ This was at a time when the total population was only 133.4 million.⁴⁴

On Apr 7, 1952 the American comedy show *I Love Lucy* was watched in 10,600,000 households, when there were only fifteen million television sets in the entire country.⁴⁵ In January 1953, the inauguration of U.S. president Dwight Eisenhower drew twenty-nine million viewers. The following day, when *Lucy*

43 Douglas B. Craig, *Fireside Politics: Radio and Political Culture in the United States, 1920-1940* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 156.

44 “U.S. Population 1776 to Present - *Google Fusion Tables*,” accessed April 13, 2016, <https://www.google.com/fusiontables/DataSource?dsrsrcid=225439#rows:id=1>.

45 “*I Love Lucy*,” accessed April 10, 2016, *Tom Enterprises*, <http://tommenterprises.tripod.com/id282.html>.

(Lucille Ball) on the *I Love Lucy* show gave birth to “Little Ricky,” forty-four million viewers (seventy-two percent of all homes with television) watched the show.⁴⁶

On February 28, 1983 American viewers watched the final (and 256th) episode of the Korean War comedy/drama *M*A*S*H*. It was the most-watched single program in U.S. television history, with an estimated total audience of 125 million people.⁴⁷ The population of the United States at the time was 233.8 million.⁴⁸ On May 6, 2004, an estimated 51.1 million people watched the final episode of the popular American television situation comedy series “Friends.”⁴⁹ On September 29, 2013 an estimated 10.28 million people watched the final episode of the American crime drama series “Breaking Bad.”⁵⁰

As my acquaintance noted, and the above examples illustrate, shared media experiences—with the exception of a few major sports and entertainment events, royal weddings and televised disasters—have been dramatically decreasing, even for the most popular television shows. One major reason is that in the United States cable television, which now offers hundreds of channels, has dramatically

46 “The Museum of Broadcast Communications - *Encyclopedia of Television* - I Love Lucy,” accessed April 13, 2016, <http://www.museum.tv/eotv/ilovelucy.htm>.

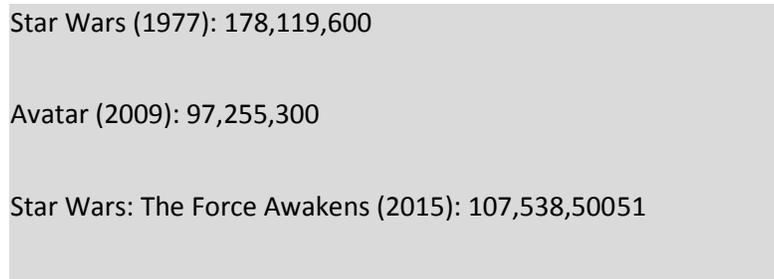
47 “Finale of M*A*S*H Draws Record Number of Viewers,” *New York Times*, March 3, 1983, <http://www.nytimes.com/1983/03/03/arts/finale-of-m-a-s-h-draws-record-number-of-viewers.html>.

48 “U.S. Population 1776 to Present - *Google Fusion Tables*,” accessed April 13, 2016, <https://www.google.com/fusiontables/DataSource?dsrclid=225439#rows:id=1>.

49 “Estimated 51.1m Tune In For ‘Friends’ Finale,” Text.Article, *Associated Press*, (May 7, 2004), <http://www.foxnews.com/story/2004/05/07/estimated-511m-tune-in-for-friends-finale.html>.

50 “Sunday Cable Ratings: ‘Breaking Bad’ Wins Big, ‘Talking Bad’, ‘Homeland’, ‘Boardwalk Empire’, ‘Masters of Sex’ & More | *TV By The Numbers* by zap2it.com | Page 205986,” accessed April 10, 2016, <http://tvbythenumbers.zap2it.com/2013/10/01/sunday-cable-ratingsbreaking-bad-wins-big-talking-bad-homeland-boardwalk-empiremasters-of-sex-more/205986/>.

decreased the audience viewership of individual television programs, even the most popular. This includes television news programs. Where once there were three major evening news programs—on the three main broadcast networks—there are now also three major *cable* news networks. No longer are there one or two esteemed (even avuncular) newscasters on whom the majority of the public depends for information. And of course there is the Internet, which further fractures the number of viewers for any one presentation. Yet movies remain. According to the website *Box Office Mojo*, the following movies had these estimated ticket sales in the United States.



Star Wars (1977):	178,119,600
Avatar (2009):	97,255,300
Star Wars: The Force Awakens (2015):	107,538,50051

The upshot is that as movies are the last refuge of the shared media experience, so the sharing of that experience is an important activity for many members of the culture. What simpler way to share that experience than to share the lines of dialogue that represent and encapsulate those films?

As Erwin Panofsky wrote in 1934, “Whether we like it or not, it is the movies that mould, more than any other single force, the opinions, the taste, the language, the dress, the behaviour, and even the physical appearance of a public comprising more than 60 percent of the population of the earth. If all the serious lyrical poets, composers, painters and sculptors were forced by law to stop their activities, a rather small fraction of the general public would become aware of the fact and a still smaller fraction would seriously

51 Box Office Mojo, “All Time Box Office Adjusted for Ticket Price Inflation,” *Box Office Mojo*, accessed April 14, 2016, http://www.boxofficemojo.com/alltime/adjusted.htm?adjust_yr=1.

regret it. If the same thing were to happen with the movies the social consequences would be catastrophic.”⁵² Panofsky makes the popularity and influence of films very clear; and, unfortunately, also the relative lack of popularity and influence for the more traditional arts such as poetry, classical music, painting and sculpture. Despite the multitude of media options, movies retain—or at least are the closest to fulfill—their role as a shared force for our societies.

Morphic Fields of Movies – Feel the film

As Barbara Klinger writes in *Say It Again, Sam: Movie Quotation, Performance and Masculinity*, two men exchanging movie quotes led to a major annual film fan fest: “A few years earlier, in 2002, friends Will Russell and Scott Shuffitt set up a booth at a tattoo convention to sell T-shirts and other paraphernalia. To kill time during slow periods, the two quoted dialogue to each other from Joel and Ethan Coen’s *The Big Lebowski* (1998); soon, people in adjacent booths joined in, creating a memorable moment of bonding for all.”⁵³ This common interest resulted in the Lebowski Fest,⁵⁴ attended later that year by one hundred and fifty fans in Louisville, Kentucky, and now by thousands of fans. Fests are held in cities throughout the United States, and the Lebowski Fest Facebook page has more than 200,000 “Likers”, all of whom have the opportunity to quote from the movie on the Fest’s Facebook page.⁵⁵ This interest by, and the gatherings of, fans has, I suggest, created a strong morphic field for *The Big Lebowski*. I suggest

52 Erwin Panofsky and Irving Lavin, eds., *Three Essays on Style*, First edition (Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, 1995), 96.

53 Barbara Klinger, “Say It Again, Sam: Movie Quotation, Performance and Masculinity,” *Particip@tions* 5, no. 2 (November 2008).

54 “Lebowski Fest,” *Lebowski Fest*, accessed September 13, 2016, <https://lebowskifest.com/>.

55 “Lebowski Fest,” *Lebowski Fest*, accessed September 13, 2016, <https://www.facebook.com/LebowskiFest/>.

also that this morphic field encompasses not just the film itself but the film *and all its fans*. The result is what some might call a *Big Lebowski* subculture. I would not. If we go by Dick Hebdige's definition of a subculture;⁵⁶ that is, one which resists the normative culture by manifesting its own fashions and style of life, as did the punks, skinheads and teddy boys of England, the *Lebowski* fans do not qualify. They are not rebelling against the culture; they are simply enjoying themselves by gathering and sharing a common interest. I would suggest that they are simply a subset of the greater culture, but one resulting from, and sharing in, the movie morphic field which was begun (or perhaps better, greatly expanded) by those two fans at the 2002 tattoo convention.

Klinger notes that "This [the *Lebowski* Fest] example further indicates that a film's quotability — its existence as a source of catchphrases that become part of a collective discourse — plays a vital role in its attainment of long-term popularity." She also points out that although any source can launch a catchphrase, "Because of cinema's ubiquitous exposure in multiple forums and the audience's ability to watch favourite titles repeatedly, many film phrases, not to mention the films themselves, literally become memorable. Among its other functions, then, replay culture acts as a mnemonic device." Klinger continues: "The kind of familiarity bred by repeated contact with a title enables it to become a part of a viewer's identity, a unit within a repertoire of elements that he or she may draw upon in diverse circumstances to momentarily or in a more sustained fashion occupy different subjectivities...Quoting thus appears to be part of what Eric Havelock has called a 'tribal encyclopaedia', a common idiom that unifies a social group. In any circumstance, movie quotation can operate as the verbal, cinematic

56 Dick Hebdige, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, New edition (London: Routledge, 1979).

equivalent of a secret handshake.”⁵⁷ As I indicate in the memorable movie lines chapter of this thesis, a movie line as “a unit within a repertoire of elements” that one may draw upon in everyday life is exactly one of the key reasons why people remember and use these lines in their own lives.

There is other non-filmic evidence that repeated viewing of a film might lead to increased positive feelings toward that film. Robert Zajonc, in his journal article “Attitudinal effects of mere exposure,” writes that: “Mere repeated exposure of the individual to a stimulus is a sufficient condition for the enhancement of his attitude toward it. By ‘mere exposure’ is meant a condition which just makes the given stimulus accessible to the individual’s perception. Even though the hypothesis seems to be in conflict with such celebrated laws as familiarity breeds contempt and absence makes the heart grow fonder, it is not particularly original or recent.”⁵⁸ Zajonc’s work had to do with word frequency with words as the “stimulus object,” but he states that “vast literature” indicates that this phenomenon “has been demonstrated across cultures, species, and diverse stimulus domains.”⁵⁹ I suggest this phenomenon of ever-growing affinity might equally apply to a film which one has viewed repeatedly (and perhaps also contribute to the value of repetition as a quality of many successful memes and memorable movie lines.)

57 Barbara Klinger, “‘Say It Again, Sam: Movie Quotation, Performance and Masculinity,’” *Participations* 5, no. 2 (November 2008).

58 Robert B. Zajonc, “Attitudinal Effects of Mere Exposure,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 9, no. 2 part 2 (June 1968), 1.

59 Robert Zajonc, “Mere Exposure: A Gateway to the Subliminal,” *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 10, no. 6 (2001), 224.

Political activists have often turned to documentary film as an art form which might activate the citizenry. As Jane Gaines writes, "Although we might not want to make a case for the radical documentary as a body genre, we still need to think the body in relation to films that make audience members want to kick and yell, films that make them want to do something because of the conditions in the world of the audience. And what we want to retain from the body genre is this powerful mirroring effect. Body genres, as [Linda] Williams defines them, feature a sensationalized on-screen body and "produce "on the bodies of spectators an "almost involuntary mimicry of emotion or sensation of the body on screen."⁶⁰ Gaines suggests that films are more effective than printed material in organizing in that film circumvents the intellect and goes "through the senses to the senses." She further suggests that radical film "derives its power (magically) from the political events that it depicts." As she writes, "It seems that the footage of police brutally beating a black man [Rodney King] made disaffected African Americans and Asians in South-Central Los Angeles riot and loot, when it was actually the world of the footage—the world within which police conduct humiliating strip searches on young black men—that made people riot... It is as though these makers are saying, 'Images do incite acts of violence, and we want these images to do just that.'"⁶¹ I suggest that the morphic field of the world on film is what engages the audiences and, sometimes, powerfully leads them to action outside the theater.

Another example of a movie audience morphic field occurred in October 1969 at the Buffalo campus of the State University of New York. Five hundred people watched a film entitled *Columbia Revolt*,⁶²

60 Jane Gaines, "Political Mimesis," in *Collecting Visible Evidence*, ed. Jane Gaines and Michael Renov (Univ Of Minnesota Press, 1999).

61 Ibid.

62 Newsreel, *Columbia Revolt (Part I)*, 1969, <http://archive.org/details/Columbia1969>.

about student anti-war (Vietnam) protests in the spring of 1968 at Columbia University in New York City. As Michael Renov writes, referring to an account in *Rat* ("a New York-based organ of the radical counterculture") Renov relates that at the end of the film "with no discussion, five hundred members of the audience arose and made their way to the University ROTC building [the Reserve Officer Training Corps, target of much campus protest during the Vietnam War]. They proceeded to smash windows, tear up furniture and destroy machines until the office was a total wreck; and then they burned the remaining paper and flammable parts of the structure to charcoal."⁶³ Renov notes that "What the Buffalo student body had observed (and the apocryphal nature of the tale is no hindrance to a discussion of mythic contours) was the vanguard action of their Ivy League cousins, a model of energetic but sustained resistance to malign authority. The analysis contained in *Columbia Revolt* is muted in comparison to the spectacle of solidarity and community it offers. The New Age marriage rites of two students, the support marches of sympathetic faculty members, the pitchandcatch of food stuffs holding intact the supply lines which, like the Ho Chi Minh Trail, meant sustenance for the guerrillas under siege—all these depictions of newly conceived social relations live on long after the immediate gymnasium construction issue is forgotten." I suggest, based on the two examples listed above—the Rodney King footage and the *Columbia Revolt* film—that some films are frame-changing. Not just intellectually but viscerally. They evoke a sudden change in morphic field. It would seem that for the audiences, the experience enabled the morphic fields of those "worlds" to "leak through" to the audience, with powerful, visceral effects on the senses.

63 Michael Renov, "Newsreel: Old and New—Towards an Historical Profile," in *Film Quarterly: Forty Years A Selection*, ed. Brian Henderson and Ann Martin (University of California Press, 1999).

But do the effects of these filmic morphic fields last? Academy Award winning writer and director Oliver Stone, responsible for such films as *Midnight Express*, *Platoon*, and *Wall Street*, is somewhat less confident than Jane Gaines in film's ability to change society. When asked about the lasting social impacts that movies can have on their audiences, he replied "I'm not sure they have much at all...I resigned myself to that answer a while ago. You accept the limited people who are going to respond and do something. People forget movies. We mustn't forget that repetition works in the real world, and when you get the same newscast over and over again, the same words used, the government says this and this, they have the power of repetition that we don't have, there's no way that your message can override theirs." However, Stone was not without hope. "I believe in a future generation. The beauty of film is, unlike theater, it is put on a medium that lasts through time, hopefully, and you can see it again and again. I learn so much from seeing a film a second or third time, so much."⁶⁴ I speculate that a film's morphic field can affect audiences present and future, and in turn have some effect on the greater society.

Morphic Field of *Casablanca* - Will we always have *Casablanca*?

Casablanca has acquired a strong morphic field. This field has been demonstrated—and nourished—by its status as a cult film, and its ability to now be viewed at home through streaming and DVDs. But the film's morphic field results from much more than easy accessibility or having been bestowed with a cult label. David Thompson describes the scene in Rick's café in which Sam, reluctantly, plays *As Time Goes*

64 Kate Erbland and Kate Erbland, "Why Oliver Stone Is Still Hopeful About The Power of Movies After The 'Nightmare' of Making 'Snowden,'" *IndieWire*, June 26, 2016, <http://www.indiewire.com/2016/06/oliver-stone-snowden-nantucket-film-festival-1201699669/>.

By for Ilsa. “So he starts the song and Rick, back in his office, hears it. How long has he been waiting to hear it? How much anger and recrimination is waiting for those few notes? Sure enough he comes striding onto the cafe floor, and he looks as mean and ugly as Bogart could manage, until he sees what there is to see and realizes what Sam is doing.” Thompson continues describing the effect on Rick—and on the audience. “It’s as corny as can be, yet like most movie clichés it’s based on a universal knot of human behaviour: re-encountering someone you loved once and realizing that the effort of forgetting, condemning and turning bitter has had very little effect. You’re ready to be a sucker again.” Thompson then asks some key questions: “But are you falling in love with the person or are you falling for the past, your own passage in time, and the mere idea of love? When you look at an old movie do you really re-examine it—do you look anew?—or are you falling in line with a version of yourself and your pleasure.”⁶⁵ I suggest that the answers to Thompson’s questions are “all of the above.” I, as audience member, am falling in love with love —my past *experience* of love, the *reminder* of love, the *idea* of love, perhaps even the *future* of love. In short, experiencing this scene has caused me to enter the *morphic field* of Love. Not only that, but I am re-entering—as I have previously viewed this film a number of times—the *morphic field* of *Casablanca*. This field can be triggered within (and around?) me by my watching the film, seeing a still from the film, hearing or repeating a line of dialogue from the film, or, perhaps most effectively, by hearing the song *As Time Goes By*—even if only the first few bars of the song. Thomson concludes that “Rick does all the right things—and walks away into the fog with Louis, the Rains character. Love is being able to dream about it forever, instead of actually turning it into an everyday reality. So the song fits the “same old story” of desire being the lasting light.”⁶⁶ Or, as I might

65 David Thomson, *Moments That Made the Movies* (New York, NY: Thames & Hudson Inc, 2013), 69-70.

66 *Ibid.*, 71.

suggest, love is being able to wallow in the morphic field without the discomfort and real-world problems that might result from that morphic field actually manifesting into reality.

As film commentator, Roger Ebert, wrote, "'Casablanca' is The Movie... [It] has transcended the ordinary categories. It has outlived the Bogart cult, survived the revival circuit, shrugged off those who would deface it with colorization, leaped across time to win audiences who were born decades after it was made...The key passages in 'Casablanca'... are unusual among classic movie scenes in being more emotionally affecting on subsequent viewings than they are the first time, and indeed "Casablanca" is one of those rare films that actually improves with repeated viewings."⁶⁷ I suggest that what Ebert is talking about is the result of the *morphic field* of *Casablanca*. The film's morphic field has "legs." It just keeps going and going, becoming ever more popular, unfazed by obstacles and challenges for more than seven decades to become a film that, for those who repeatedly view it, is not just a movie, not just a classic, but an ever-increasingly emotionally powerful experience. As Ebert writes: "The first time we see the film we know nothing of the great love affair between Rick and Ilsa in Paris, and so we are simply following along, and the byplay between Ilsa and Sam has still to be decoded. We know it means something, but as yet we don't fully understand it. Then the film continues, and we experience the memories of Paris, we understand the depth of Ilsa's feelings, and the movie sweeps on to its magnificent conclusion. The next time we see it, every word between Ilsa and Sam, every nuance, every

67 Roger Ebert, "As Time Goes By, It's the Still the Same Old Glorious 'Casablanca' | *Roger Ebert's Journal* | Roger Ebert," accessed March 5, 2016, <http://www.rogerebert.com/rogers-journal/as-time-goes-by-its-the-still-the-same-old-glorious-casablanca>.

look or averted glance, has a poignant meaning. It is a good enough scene the first time we see it, but a great scene the second time.”⁶⁸ And, I suggest, an increasingly greater scene on future viewing.

Tanfer Emin Tunc noted in his article *Casablanca: The Romance of Propaganda* that thanks to the U.S. government, and particularly the Office of War Information, *Casablanca* reflected such desirable themes as glorifying the American way of life, depicting the enemy and their philosophy, and reflecting well on our allies. Tunc writes “Specifically, *Casablanca* was designed to illustrate “that personal desires must be subordinated to the task of defeating fascism” and that the United States “was portrayed as a virtuous ‘safe haven for the oppressed and homeless.’”⁶⁹ All of these themes became components of the film’s morphic field. *Casablanca* even affected the allied war efforts in World War II. It was the city where U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt and British Prime Minister Winston Churchill met in January 1943, not long after the film’s opening on November 26, 1942. The U.S. military’s code for the city was “Rick’s Place.”⁷⁰

Barbara Klinger suggests that radio adaptations of *Casablanca* helped contribute to (what I consider to be) *Casablanca*’s morphic field. She writes that “the film’s frequent adaptation on radio and Bogart’s radio presence in the 1940s produced a soundscape of transmediated voices and dialogue that influenced the practice of audience quotation a decade later and that remains today a hallmark of *Casablanca*’s cult identity.” She notes that in the 1940s, the film “had an immediate second life on radio.

68 Ibid.

69 Tanfer Emin Tunc, “*Casablanca: The Romance of Propaganda -*,” *Bright Lights Film Journal*, February 1, 2007, <http://brightlightsfilm.com/casablanca-romance-propaganda/#.VyOhnTArKhd>.

70 *Library of Congress - American Memory*, “Today in History: November 26,” accessed May 1, 2016, <https://memory.loc.gov/ammem/today/nov26.html>.

Humphrey Bogart, one of the film's leads who would become a cult icon, also had substantial presence on the air. A powerful industry at the time, radio prolifically disseminated Hollywood films and star personas through adaptations. As adaptor, the medium reconfigured films into audio-only narratives and stars into voice-only performers through the relatively new language of radio drama.⁷¹ As Klinger writes, "*Casablanca* has been a major and long-term demonstration of intertextuality. Originally written as a (unproduced) play, it "has been appropriated by media that include radio dramas, cartoons, TV programs, stage plays, novels, musical productions, and other films. In these and other contexts, *Casablanca* has been remade, prequelled, sequelled, reimagined, and 'theme-parked'. In 1992, Colin McArthur called it 'possibly the richest generator of other texts of the past fifty years.'⁷²

Another contribution to the film's morphic field was the showing of *Casablanca* in 1954, three years before Bogart's death. It was screened at the Brattle Theatre in Cambridge, Massachusetts as part of an annual Bogart retrospective at the time of Harvard University's finals week. By 1964, the theater had shown fourteen Bogart films a total of forty-seven times to approximately 15,000 viewers. Over the years, the success of the Brattle led to *Casablanca* and other Bogart films being shown at art and repertory theatres throughout the country.

The well-known *Casablanca* lines of today were frequently used in the days of its radio adaptations. As Klinger points out, radio was a "literal and figurative amplifying system for film dialogue.' The lines capture the essence of the story and the characters and "acted as a public form of preservation of it

71 Barbara Klinger, "'Say It Again, Sam: Movie Quotation, Performance and Masculinity,'" *Particip@tions* 5, no. 2 (November 2008).

72 Ibid.

with mnemonic potential. Bits of dialogue could become catchphrases that lent themselves to quotation. In this, radio was part of larger technological changes that caused media language to be both memorable and quotable. The catchphrase, as its name suggests, has traction in everyday language.”⁷³

It was not just lines from the movie that caught on. Bogart’s bigger than life screen presence produced, for example, the line “Don’t Bogart that joint,” a caution well-known to pot smokers.⁷⁴ Bogart also led to the naming of a shuttle bus that in the 1970s carried passengers from the University of California campus in Berkeley, California to the nearest station for the San Francisco Bay Area’s Rapid Transit system, known by the acronym BART. The shuttle was, of course, named *Humphrey Go-Bart*.⁷⁵

Aljean Harmetz quotes Howard Koch on why he considers *Casablanca* to have such lasting popularity. Koch was one of the three screenwriters to receive an Oscar for the film’s screenplay. “I’ve got almost a mystical feeling about *Casablanca*. That it made itself somehow. That it needed to be made and that we were all conveyors on the belt, taking it there...It’s just a movie, but it’s more than that. It’s become something that people can’t find in values today. And they go back to *Casablanca* as they go back to church, political church, to find something that is gone from our values today.”⁷⁶ Harmetz adds that it is also “a hunger for simplicity, for an era when black and white rarely shaded into gray and for a war

73 Ibid.

74 “Don’t Bogart That Joint History - *Phish.Net*,” accessed August 1, 2016, <http://phish.net/song/dont-bogart-that-joint/history>.

75 “Humphrey Go Bart,” *Flickr*, accessed August 1, 2016, <https://www.flickr.com/photos/ianstock/albums/72157604959272886>.

76 Aljean Harmetz, *The Making of Casablanca: Bogart, Bergman, and World War II*, First edition (New York: Hachette Books, 2002), 238.

when the good guys were firmly distinguishable from the bad guys.”⁷⁷ Although the cast did not wear white hats and black hats, the Manichean theme of *Casablanca* reflects that of the typical good versus evil Western film.

A significant part of *Casablanca*'s morphic field is the question of “Did they or didn't they?” While her husband is off at a resistance meeting, Ilsa comes to Rick's rooms to convince him to give her the letters of transit. He refuses, she threatens him with a gun, but breaks down and, sobbing, tells him why she had left him in Paris, and that she still loves him. They embrace, there is a short dissolve to the Casablanca airport tower, and then another dissolve back to the room, where Rick is looking out the window and smoking a cigarette. As Richard Maltby writes “Half the audience insists that the scene must be understood to be suggesting that Bogart and Bergman had slept together. The other half deny it with as much vehemence. Few viewers acknowledge any uncertainty about what has—or has not—happened.”⁷⁸ While this question certainly contributes for many to the morphic field of *Casablanca*, there is one person who had total certainty as to the answer. That is Julius Epstein, one of the key writers on the film. When asked in an online interview: “Did you really mean to leave the impression with viewers that Rick and Ilsa made love before developing their strategy to leave Casablanca?” Epstein responded: “Of course we did!!!! If we had the freedom we have today....we would have made it so clear... you would have heard the bed squeaking on the sound track!!!!”⁷⁹

77 Ibid.

78 Richard Maltby, “‘A Brief Romantic Interlude’: Dick and Jane Go to 31;2 Seconds of the Classical Hollywood Cinema,” in *Post-Theory: Reconstructing Film Studies*, by David Bordwell and Noël Carroll (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996), 437.

79 Howard Koch, Julius Epstein, and Frank Miller, Epstein, Koch, Miller Interview - *Hollywood Hotline*, interview by Eliot Stein, May 1995, <http://www.vincasa.com/indexkoch.html>.

According to Peter Brooks, melodrama is “the principle mode for uncovering, demonstrating, and making operative the essential moral universe in a post-sacred era,⁸⁰ and another part of *Casablanca’s* morphic field is nobility—morality in action. Rick is willing to sacrifice the great love of his life for the greater good: defeating Germany in World War II. As Keith Oatley wrote, “Love stories are powerful because they resonate with our desire to join lovingly and make common purpose with another person...In *Casablanca* the lovers won't be united physically, but after their painful schism they unite mentally.” However, Oatley also suggested that another powerful component of the film is “elevation,” “a powerful feeling of warmth and inspiration that occurs when one sees someone doing something altruistic.” It is a “moral emotion.”⁸¹ And, I suggest from personal experience, that the feeling of that moral elevation is not only part of the film’s morphic field, but a part which spreads through and affects the audience.

Umberto Eco observed that *Casablanca’s* morphic field (not that he would have called it that) reflected Homeric qualities manifesting archetypal clichés whose interaction reveals “the Sublime.” As Eco writes, “*Casablanca* ... stages the powers of Narrativity in its natural state, before art intervenes to tame it. ...When all the archetypes burst in shamelessly, we reach Homeric depths...Just as extreme pain meets sensual pleasure, and extreme perversion borders on mystical energy, so does extreme banality allow us to catch a glimpse of the Sublime. Nobody would have been able to achieve such a cosmic result

80 Peter Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama, and the Mode of Excess*, Reprint edition (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 15.

81 Keith Oatley, “The Right Thing.,” *PsycCRITIQUES* 56, no. 36 (2011), <http://content.apa.org/reviews/a0025097>.

intentionally. Nature has spoken here in place of men.”⁸² Eco describes the power of something greater than just a motion picture. He captures the force that has been created not just by each person involved in the production of the film, but by the synergistic totality of the people, the time, the story, and the millions of audience members who entered that powerful force over the forty-three years prior to Eco’s writing.

Morphic Field of "The Movies" – Entering the magical world of film

“The difference was astounding, almost magical.” *

*College student Antonio Olivas on seeing *Casablanca* at a movie theater—after seeing it previously only on television.⁸³

Marshall McLuhan confirmed that, “The business of the writer or the film-maker is to transfer the reader or viewer from one world, his own, to another, the world created by typography and film.”⁸⁴ As he continued, “Whatever the camera turns to, the audience accepts. We are transported to another world. As Rene Clair observed, the screen opens its white door into a harem of beautiful visions and adolescent dreams, compared to which the loveliest real body seems defective.”⁸⁵ Lana Wachowski, co-producer of *The Matrix* films, said in an interview: “Movies are matrixes. Movies are things you go inside and they

82 Umberto Eco, “‘Casablanca’: Cult Movies and Intertextual Collage,” *SubStance* 14, no. 2 (1985), 3–12.

83 Tom Stempel, *American Audiences on Movies and Moviegoing* (Lexington, Ky: University Press of Kentucky, 2001), 178.

84 Marshall McLuhan and Lewis H. Lapham, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, Reprint edition (Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, 1994), 285.

85 *Ibid.*, 286.

are immersive...and you are cocooned by them, and they tell you what to see, what to think, what to feel.”⁸⁶ I suggest that we the audience are immersed in the morphic field of *The Movies*.

The Movie Theater - Kidnapped and surrounded by strangers

I suggest that there are three components—each with its own morphic field—that contribute to the “Morphic Field of ‘The Movies’.” These are: The Movie Theater, the Audience, and the Film. As I write in my morphic fields chapter, Sheldrake states that “If we are willing to consider morphic fields for minds and societies and animals and plants, it would also seem sensible to think of fields for ecosystems, or even for particular places. In fact, there is a “science of places,” geomancy, which is concerned with just this kind of field.”⁸⁷ I suggest that a movie theater can be considered one of these places with one of those “kinds of field.”

Roland Barthes provides a key description of “going to the movies” at an actual physical movie theater; about which he writes “Whenever I hear the word cinema, I can't help thinking hall, rather than film.”⁸⁸

Except for the...case of a specific cultural quest ...he goes to movies as a response to idleness, leisure, free time. It's as if, even before he went into the theater, the classic conditions of hypnosis were in force: vacancy, want of occupation, lethargy...There is a "cinema situation," and this situation is pre-hypnotic... the darkness of the theater is prefigured by the "twilight reverie" (a prerequisite for hypnosis, according to Breuer-Freud) which precedes it and leads

⁸⁶ DP30, “Cloud Atlas, Screenwriter/directors Lana Wachowski, Tom Tykwer, Andy Wachowski,” *Movie City News*, October 13, 2012, <http://moviecitynews.com/2012/10/dp30-cloud-atlas-screenwriterdirectors-lana-wachowski-tom-tykwer-andy-wachowski/>.

⁸⁷ Rupert Sheldrake, “Part III - Society, Spirit & Ritual: Morphic Resonance and the Collective Unconscious,” *Psychological Perspectives: A Quarterly Journal of Jungian Thought* 19, no. 1 (1988), 64–78.

⁸⁸ Roland Barthes, “Leaving the Movie Theater - *Café Des Images*,” accessed April 29, 2016, <http://cafedesimages.fr/leaving-the-movie-theater/>, 345-346.

him from street to street, from poster to poster, finally burying himself in a dim, anonymous, indifferent cube where that festival of affects known as a film will be presented...In this darkness of the cinema (anonymous, populated, numerous-- oh, the boredom, the frustration of so-called private showings!) lies the very fascination of the film (any film). 89

I suggest that Roland Barthes' description of his state both entering and leaving a movie theater can be seen as both entering and leaving the morphic field of "the movies;" that a movie theater (as do theatrical and concert venues, and stadiums) has its own morphic field resulting both from the many thousands of people who have sat in that theater in the past, and from the past viewing of films by the members of the present audience themselves over the years. I suggest also that there is research which suggests a change in mental/memory space in an individual as he or she walks into a movie theater. Such research shows that simply "walking through a doorway causes forgetting." Work by Gabriel Radvansky et al. shows that "when people move through doorways, memory for objects that have been interacted with is reduced." Their results showed that "people made more errors if they had moved to a new room," what they refer to as the "location updating effect."⁹⁰ Further research has shown that even reading a book which has a time-shift or spatial-shift transition (such as "An hour later, she was collecting wood for a fire") has the same effect.⁹¹ Even more intriguing, simply mentally *imagining* walking through a doorway has been shown to have the same effect.⁹²

89 Ibid., 345-346.

90 Gabriel A. Radvansky, Andrea K. Tamplin, and Sabine A. Krawietz, "Walking through Doorways Causes Forgetting: Environmental Integration," *Psychonomic Bulletin & Review* 17, no. 6 (December 2010), 900-904.

91 Zachary Lawrence and Daniel Peterson, "Mentally Walking through Doorways Causes Forgetting: The Location Updating Effect and Imagination," *Memory* 24, no. 1 (January 2, 2016), 13.

92 Ibid., 12-20.

I point out that in the process of entering a movie theater one passes through at least one doorway, and generally two or even sometimes three “doorways.” First one walks in from the street through a doorway into the lobby of the theater. After purchasing a ticket, one walks into the actual theater. This involves passing through a door which is kept closed during the film so that sounds from the lobby do not disturb the movie audience. There may even be a curtain between that doorway and the interior of the theater itself to block light when the door to the lobby is opened. The curtain, as another separation of space, can also be seen as a doorway. The result is that one has left several different spaces behind on the journey into the actual viewing theater, so that upon finally arriving in the audience seating area one is deep within the morphic field of the physical theater.

Critic Susan Sontag described the difference between watching a film at home and [within the morphic fields of] a movie theater and “the movies.” “Until the advent of television emptied the movie theatres, it was from a weekly visit to the cinema that you learned (or tried to learn) how to walk, to smoke, to kiss, to fight, to grieve. Movies gave you tips about how to be attractive...But whatever you took home was only a part of the larger experience of submerging yourself in lives that were not yours. The desire to lose yourself in other people's lives...This is a larger, more inclusive form of desire embodied in the movie experience. Even more than what you appropriated for yourself was the experience of surrender to, of being transported by, what was on the screen. You wanted to be kidnapped by the movie -- and to be kidnapped was to be overwhelmed by the physical presence of the image. The experience of "going to the movies" was part of it. ... To be kidnapped, you have to be in a movie theater, seated in the dark among anonymous strangers.”⁹³ Kidnapped...in a dark theater...surrounded by strangers. Truly a

93 Susan Sontag, “The Decay of Cinema,” *New York Times - Books*, February 25, 1996, <http://www.nytimes.com/books/00/03/12/specials/sontag-cinema.html>.

setting for a morphic field far different than the one at home in front of a television set or a mobile phone screen.

As Linda Levitt writes, “Early movie theatres were designed with spectacular exteriors and equally magnificent interiors, intended to transform the moviegoers’ experience even before the film began...The opulence of these theatres was not, however, class-bound: rather than excluding working class audiences unaccustomed to such lavishness, the picture palaces invited them to transcend their everyday experiences not only through engagement with the film but also with their surroundings.”⁹⁴ Levitt notes that “a familiar film can evoke a unique nostalgia as the audience enters into the world of the film, whether the time and space of the narrative, the time and space of a prior screening, or a combination of both. For the brief time of being immersed in that world, one can revisit one’s past self and experiences, although the respite from the present is bittersweet with the realization that it is merely a way of revisiting a time that is no longer accessible.”⁹⁵

Bruce Austin also describes the experience of going to “the movies” at a time when movie theatres were far more luxurious. As he writes, “Movie going was once a communal ritual, often set in an opulent ambience. In 1946, more than one-third of the American public went to the movies more than once a week; by 1983, fewer than one-quarter reported attending a movie once a month. Going to the movies meant being in the company of friends and strangers who would sing songs together by following a white ball that bounced across lyrics projected on the screen. It meant being shepherded to one’s seat

94 Linda Levitt, “Hollywood, Nostalgia, and Outdoor Movies,” *Participation: Journal of Audience and Reception Studies* 13, no. 1 (May 2016), 220.

95 Ibid., 223.

by an usher who was often suited in an elaborate military like uniform, while the mighty Wurlitzer organ played in the background. The huge picture palaces were bedizened with gargoyles and other exotic splendours and bordered by balconies and boxed seats.” As he also notes—and this was written in 1989—“Today most movie theatres are small, boxy, and sterile—except for the popcorn’s “butter flavour” that sticks to your shoes.”⁹⁶

The sterility of the environment of today’s movie theatres has weakened and degraded the resulting morphic field experience. This is not to say there is not a strong morphic field, but that the contrast has lessened between the experience of the space outside the theater and the experience of the space inside the theater. The difference between the area outside—filled with asphalt, cars and noise—and the area inside today’s large boxy, industrial warehouse-style movie theater is minimal compared with the difference in the past between the same exterior and the interior of the lush, opulent and majestic theatres of the past.

The Movie – The seductive spectacle

In his book *In Broad Daylight: Movies and Spectators After the Cinema*, Gabriele Pedulla quotes Italian film director Marco Ferreri on why people go to see films: “Everybody says, ‘You go to the movies to dream.’ That’s a load of crap. In the outskirts, you went to the movies to go to the movies.”⁹⁷ While Ferreri may have been correct that people went to the movies “to go to the movies,” I suggest that it

96 Bruce A Austin, *Immediate Seating: A Look at Movie Audiences* (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth Pub. Co., 1989), 44.

97 Gabriele Pedulla, *In Broad Daylight: Movies and Spectators after the Cinema*, First edition (Verso, 2012), 7.

was more than just *something to do*. If he later became a film director, he no doubt experienced something at those movies that changed his life. It was far more than a simple diversion from everyday life.

As Gabriele Pedulla writes, French movie critic Sergey Daney's "fundamental idea...is that four-fifths of cinema was simply recordings of the live or ad hoc spectacles that the public wanted to see at any cost, even from a distance, as long as the image was clear: something like Brigitte Bardot naked (in *Le Mepris*)... Art, when we can really call it art, would be an exception or a sort of side dish, to such an extent that the film historian might be tempted to speak of it only in the rare cases when the director used the movie camera as something more than a simple recording technology."⁹⁸ One of Daney's last projects before he died (in 1993) was to make a list of those spectacles. He believed that people wanted to see these spectacles without mediation: without any interference by "aesthetic concerns." Some of these spectacles include "The Passion of Christ, kings and queens, exotic landscapes, strongmen, fairs, magic acts, freaks."⁹⁹ I suggest that movie audiences want far more than spectacle, although the contemporary emphasis on blockbuster action films based on comic book superheroes may weaken my case a bit. Nevertheless, the classic films depended (and continue to depend) on narrative. Gabriele Pedulla writes that classical cinema depended on *story*, which developed slowly in the narrative in increasingly engaging scenes until the powerful climax. He comments that contemporary blockbuster films string together many sequences with strong visual impact but little focus on narrative, comparing the film experience to riding a rollercoaster.¹⁰⁰ Perhaps this is why "classic" films are classic. Narrative

98 Ibid., 85.

99 Ibid., 86.

100 Ibid., 94.

is critical—and memorable. This observation is why I chose the title for this thesis, rephrasing the classic *Sunset Blvd.* line by Norma Desmond (Gloria Swanson) “We didn’t need dialogue. We had faces” to read instead: “We didn’t need superheroes, we had dialogue.”

As an example of rollercoaster action rather than developed story, Greg Miller reports that “the average shot length of English language films has declined from about 12 seconds in 1930 to about 2.5 seconds today [2014].”¹⁰¹ As Yuri Tsivian writes: “In verse studies, scholars count syllables, feet and stresses; in film studies, we time shots...Much like martial arts, or like poetry and music, cinema is the art of timing.”¹⁰² For comparison, this thesis’ three key films had these average shot lengths: *Casablanca* (7.47 seconds), *The Wizard of Oz* (8.50 seconds), *Gone with the Wind* (Part 1 11.50 seconds, Part 2 10.00 seconds.)¹⁰³

The Audience – You are not alone

Sheldrake suggests that when people group together—crowds, mobs, social movements, religious gatherings—each of those groups has its own morphic field. He sees such behaviour as a collective experience of collective feelings and actions influenced by a collective impulse, resulting from the coming together of those in the group. “If we think of societies and social groups as being coordinated by morphic fields, then we realize that the groups themselves come together and dissolve as teams do—

101 Greg Miller, “Data from a Century of Cinema Reveals How Movies Have Evolved,” *WIRED*, September 8, 2014, <http://www.wired.com/2014/09/cinema-is-evolving/>.

102 Yuri Tsivian, “*Cinematics* - About,” accessed June 1, 2016, <http://www.cinematics.lv/index.php>.

103 “*Cinematics* - Database,” accessed July 1, 2014, <http://www.cinematics.lv/database.php>.

but their fields are more enduring. We are in these fields virtually all the time: family fields, or national fields, or local fields, the fields of various groups to which we belong. We are contained within these larger collective patterns of organization much of the time but because they are always present, we cease to be aware of them.”¹⁰⁴

Another group of people who come together is a movie audience. I suggest that a movie audience—although short-term—also has its own morphic field. Sheldrake refers to William McDougall’s work on the group mind. “William McDougall...theorized that a group mind existed which included all members of a society and which had its own thoughts, its own traditions, and its own memories. If we think of such a group mind as an aspect of the morphic field of the society, it would indeed have its own memory since all morphic fields have in-built memory through morphic resonance.”¹⁰⁵ I suggest that such a group mind would indeed have its own morphic field which could resonate with the morphic fields of motion pictures and their dialogue. If society has a morphic field, so then does a subset (smaller, lower-level *morphic unit*) of that society: such as a movie theater audience.

As an example of an audience and its group mind, I repeat George Orwell’s description of the Two Minute Hate in his book *1984*.

In its second minute the Hate rose to a frenzy. People were leaping up and down in their places and shouting at the tops of their voices in an effort to drown the maddening bleating voice that came from the screen.... In a lucid moment Winston found that he was shouting with the others and kicking his heel violently against the rung of his chair. The horrible thing about the Two

104 Rupert Sheldrake, “Part II - Society, Spirit & Ritual: Morphic Resonance and the Collective Unconscious,” *Psychological Perspectives: A Quarterly Journal of Jungian Thought* 18, no. 2 (1987), 320-331.

105 Ibid.

Minutes Hate was not that one was obliged to act a part, but, on the contrary, that it was impossible to avoid joining in. Within thirty seconds any pretence was always unnecessary. A hideous ecstasy of fear and vindictiveness, a desire to kill, to torture, to smash faces in with a sledge-hammer, seemed to flow through the whole group of people like an electric current, turning one even against one's will into a grimacing, screaming lunatic.¹⁰⁶

As this thesis is focused on memorable movie lines, I suggest that we can view movie audiences as “inhabitants” of morphic fields. And further, that any form of audience, spectators, or other gatherings—including crowds and mobs—can be seen as being inside morphic fields. I also suggest that gatherings of people attending a “live” performance— theater, sports, political, religious—are not just audiences, not just spectators, but members of a short-term community that includes the “audience”, the performers, and all others attending the event.¹⁰⁷

As Bruce Austin notes, sometimes when a movie audience has particularly enjoyed a film, many members of the audience applaud. Austin asks “Who or what is being applauded? Logically it cannot be the creators, nor the actors, nor the movie itself, because the applause is known only to those in the audience. Perhaps the audience is applauding itself, as if to say “We certainly had a wonderful time, didn't we?” This too is curious, since we do not know the many strangers who surround us in the theater.”¹⁰⁸ Yet, I suggest, that whether or not we know those “strangers,” for one period of time,

106 George Orwell, *1984*, accessed March 10, 2015, <http://gutenberg.net.au/ebooks01/0100021.txt>.

107 See my discussion in the Morphic Fields chapter on sports (hockey) and theatrical events (Clifton Radiman's essays on a singer and a play reading).

108 Bruce A Austin, *Immediate Seating: A Look at Movie Audiences* (Belmont, Calif.: Wadsworth Pub. Co., 1989).

while we all watch the film, we are one organism, one morphic field—even including the actors and filmmakers.

Teresa Brennan opens her book *The Transmission of Affect* with “Is there anyone who has not, at least once, walked into a room and ‘felt the atmosphere’?” I suggest that “the atmosphere” of a physical space can be seen as a morphic field. As Brennan writes, “By the transmission of affect, I mean simply that the emotions or affects of one person, and the enhancing or depressing energies these affects entail, can enter into another. Affects have an energetic dimension.¹ This is why they can enhance or deplete... Simply put, you become energized when you are with some loves or some friends. With others you are bored or drained, tired or depressed. ... the energetic affects of others enter the person, and the person's affects, in turn, are transmitted to the environment. Here lies the key to why it is that people in groups, crowds, and gatherings can often be “of one mind.”¹⁰⁹ Brennan attributes the “affect in the room” to the effects of pheromones, substances that are emitted externally by other members of the same species, and most commonly detected (and absorbed) by smell. While her approach may be quite distinct from the concept of a morphic field, my point here is that there is a shared “field” in any gathering of humans and that in a movie theater that shared field can affect an audience’s viewing of a film.

John Fiske writes that “there is no such thing as ‘the television audience,’ defined as an empirically accessible object, for there can be no meaningful categories beyond its boundaries—what on earth is ‘not the television audience’?” ...That the “ ‘television audience’ is not a social category like class, or race,

¹⁰⁹ Teresa Brennan, *The Transmission of Affect*, First edition (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 1-8.

or gender—everyone slips in or out of it in a way that makes nonsense of any categorical boundaries: similarly when in “it” people constitute themselves quite differently as audience members at different times.” Fiske concludes that “there are only the processes of viewing.”¹¹⁰ I suggest, however, that while there may be no *generalized* “audience,” there is—and particularly there is at movie theatres—a very *specific* audience: those people sitting in a specific movie theater at a specific time together watching a specific movie. The morphic field of that audience, I suggest also, is entrained with the morphic field of the theater and the film to create—for that specific time—a morphic field which creates that unique experience of “going to *The Movies*.”

Memes, Morhic Fields and Memorable Movie Lines - A nexus of art, energy, and memory

I have shown that memorable movie lines frequently share the same characteristics that make memes successful. These qualities include brevity, simplicity, novelty, portability, compatibility, useful information, and emotional resonance. They also often share the quality of *euphony* resulting from such rhetorical devices as rhythm, repetition, and alliteration. As a critical part of most movies, the lines have a narrative function to move the story along or to develop character. As with most significant memes—those that I refer to as *major* memes—they are also dependent on *context*, in their case the scene and film within which they live. Films can acquire their own morphic fields over time, and those that have become all-time favourites (such as *Casablanca* and *The Wizard of Oz*) or have attracted a passionate fan base (such as *The Big Lebowski*) not only have their own powerful morphic field but also help develop and support the morphic fields of many of their best-known lines.

110 John Fiske, *Television Culture*, Second edition (London: Routledge, 2010), 57.

Conclusion

This thesis grew out of a desire to explore the reasons why some words and phrases become popular in society, and if those reasons can be found, would they be helpful to those writers and others in communications who wish to create text that will spread through society. My first thought was that those words and phrases can be considered *memes*, not specifically the memes of the Internet— which are frequently accompanied by images—but rather textual memes, which spread throughout and linger in society to be used, and referred to, in conversations, and through various media: print, film, television and, yes, even the Internet. Thus memes became the first component of my exploration.

In this research I investigate three areas: *Memes* (based on the original concept of Richard Dawkins and now theorized by many others); *Morphic Fields* (as a component of Rupert Sheldrake's *Hypothesis of Formative Causation*); and *Memorable Movie Lines* (using as my source the *American Film Institute's* list of the "100 Greatest Movie Quotes of All Time.") I begin by investigating *memes*, the concept proposed by Richard Dawkins in 1976. I discuss the proposed definitions of memes, and discover that, despite considerable literature, there is no consensus as to their definition. More importantly, I propose that the qualities of successful memes and particularly, successful *textual* memes, can be ascertained, and I provide many examples.

I next investigate the concepts of *morphic fields*, *morphic units*, and *morphic resonance*, as proposed by Rupert Sheldrake. There is minimal research into these ideas, other than that done by the originator of the theory himself. However, I find that there is considerable research—in a variety of fields—into concepts which are *similar* to that of morphic fields. I also propose that morphic fields can be observed

in many other areas of society, and are not restricted to biology or to the research areas on which Sheldrake has focused, and I discuss some of these other areas.

I then delve deeply into *memorable movie lines*. As my database for this research, I employ the *American Film Institute's "100 Greatest Movie Quotes of All Time."* As just three films (*The Wizard of Oz*, *Gone with the Wind*, and *Casablanca*) contribute twelve percent of those one hundred movie quotes, I study the history of those three films and the role of the film industry professionals involved in their production. I also analyze the content and structure of the most memorable twelve lines from those films as well as other well-known lines (and, in the case of *The Wizard of Oz*, song titles) from those same films as well as from several other popular films. This is followed by a study of the literature which concerns the qualities of famous movie lines in order to determine which attributes memorable lines might have in common.

My fourth chapter focuses on the interaction between the topics of my first three chapters: the relationship between memes, morphic fields, and memorable movie lines. I find interesting and varied relationships between all three, in particular morphic fields and movies, movie dialogue, and movie theatres.

As a result of this research, I offer seven original contributions to knowledge. My first contribution to knowledge is the inquiry into the relationship between the three areas of memes, morphic fields, and memorable movie lines. I propose that some memes may have strong morphic fields, and that many memorable lines have the same qualities of popular memes as defined by Richard Dawkins. These

qualities include: *fidelity* (sometimes slightly modified which, as I propose, usually makes them *better* memes), as well as *longevity* (the lines from the three films with the most quotes on the AFI 100 list are each at least seventy-five years old.) They also possess *fecundity*, as by definition their recognition and use has spread throughout society.

My second contribution is to produce an up-to-date review of current and past literature on memes. My third contribution is to propose that the concept of morphic fields is not unique to biology and other related fields as investigated by Rupert Sheldrake. Rather, I propose that that concept exists in a wide variety of disciplines ranging from literature, to psychology, sociology, theoretical physics, and architecture, to name just a few.

My fourth contribution is to expand Sheldrake's theory of morphic fields to include the morphic fields of movies and memorable movie lines, and as an example I discuss the morphic field of the film *Casablanca*. My fifth contribution is a detailed study and compilation of the qualities which many memes and memorable movie lines have in common.

My sixth contribution is to propose that so-called movie "misquotes" are usually corrections or improvements made by the public, resulting in new versions of the original movie lines which are easier to memorize and more "portable" (usable in everyday conversations) than the originals. These improvements result from the fact that the "misquotes" are shorter, in the present or future tense rather than the past, and less specific in terms of the person being addressed or referred to.

My seventh contribution is to propose that movie theatres have their own morphic field, which, I suggest, is one of the major factors why viewing a film in a physical theater is a far different (and, I suggest, more positive) experience than viewing it at home. When a person moves from the street or parking lot outside of a building, through two or more doorways (and in the process undergoing a form of “forgetting”) into a screening room, he or she not only enters the “morphic field of the theater” but also joins his or her morphic field with those of other members of the audience, thereby creating the “morphic field of the audience,” resulting in the morphic field and experience of “The Movies.”

This thesis used unusual theories and theorist to probe, poke and question memorable movie dialogue. Particularly with regard to morphic fields, I mapped this unusual and untested theory onto other more conventional models and approaches from Media, Communication and Cultural Studies. Like these filmic memes, I have offered an intellectual journey that is unconventional and tests the limits and parameters of the social / sciences and the humanities. I have also wrestled back the theorization of memes away from the internet, cats and Donald Trump. Old media and new media, old theory and new theory bubble with the goal to understand why the popular is popular, and why some dialogue moves, bends, twists and survives. Through meme theory and morphic fields, resonance, meaning and memory renew and refresh.

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