Quarterly Journal of Speech

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

ISSN: 0033-5630 (Print) 1479-5779 (Online) Journal homepage: http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rqjs20

Myth and Multiple Readings in Environmental Rhetoric: The Case of An Inconvenient Truth

Thomas Rosteck & Thomas S. Frentz

To cite this article: Thomas Rosteck & Thomas S. Frentz (2009) Myth and Multiple Readings in Environmental Rhetoric: The Case of An Inconvenient Truth , Quarterly Journal of Speech, 95:1, 1-19, DOI: 10.1080/00335630802621086

To link to this article: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00335630802621086

Quarterly Journal of Speech
Vol. 95, No. 1, February 2009, pp. 1–19

Myth and Multiple Readings in Environmental Rhetoric: The Case of *An Inconvenient Truth*

Thomas Rosteck & Thomas S. Frentz

Contesting interpretations of An Inconvenient Truth *that treat it as political jeremiad, autobiography, or science documentary, we contextualize the film within Joseph Campbell's monomyth and argue that its rhetorical efficacy arises in part because Al Gore's personal transformation animates the documentary footage with jeremiad advocacy. In turn, this fusion of genres enhances Gore's credibility to assess the dangers of global warming and to advise viewers how to respond to them effectively. Our reading has implications for understanding environmental discourse and for critical practice.*

Keywords: Environmental Rhetoric; Jeremiad; Polysemy; Myth; Documentary

Americans have always had a complicated relationship with the environment. From the colonial Puritans, to the birth of the environmental movement at the turn of the twentieth century, and through annual Earth Day celebrations, we have remained preoccupied with the earth. However, this preoccupation is curiously double sided. On one side, the environment is revered as awe-inspiringly sublime, a synecdoche of our relation to the cosmos—and therefore inviolate; on the other, it is the resilient source of raw material, a wilderness to be mastered—the site of our manifest destiny. Our bifurcated attitude toward nature is thus both spiritual and political, with the dominant trend in any era being a kind of barometer of cultural attitudes.[1]

Partly because of this, environmental discourse is equally complicated. Scholars have noted that such discourse runs the spectrum from "epistemological rhapsody" (the spiritualized attempt to understand our place in the cosmic scheme) to "political jeremiad" (the pragmatic attempt to persuade that the environment is doomed

Thomas Rosteck is Associate Professor and Thomas S. Frentz is Professor in the Communication Department of the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville. An earlier version of this essay won the Top Competitive Paper Award in the Environmental Communication Division at the National Communication Association Annual Convention, San Diego, CA, 2008. Correspondence to: Thomas Rosteck, Communication Department, 417 Kimpel Hall, Fayetteville, AR 72701, USA. Email: trosteck@uark.edu

ISSN 0033-5630 (print)/ISSN 1479-5779 (online)
DOI: 10.1080/00335630802621086

without immediate action).[2] Indeed, in different historical periods, one or the other of these generic tendencies has been in ascendancy. As we might expect, in times when we are moved to glorify nature's grandeur, rhapsodic rhetoric predominates, while when we fear too much use and abuse, jeremiad comes to the fore.[3]

Without question, the most noteworthy recent instance of environmental discourse is the documentary *An Inconvenient Truth* (hereafter *AIT*).[4] By now, the background to this Academy Award-winning film should be familiar: originating as a lecture by former Vice President Albert Gore and updated with a laptop computer slide program, Gore's thesis is that we have about ten years to arrest a warming trend that is not merely cyclical, but is now threatening the planet with environmental disaster.

In what follows, we argue that a close textual reading of this film reveals it to be a very important instance of contemporary rhetorical practice. This importance emerges when a series of generic and intertextual strategies intensify the rhetorical efficacy of this single text—this one film. To develop our position, we first locate existing interpretations of *AIT* within the larger cultural context of environmental rhetoric. Then, using the phases of Joseph Campbell's monomyth as an organizing structure, we offer a reading of the diegesis of the film that brings out the collision of generic conventions within it. Finally, we use our analysis to soften the received, often rigid, dichotomy between textual and intertextual readings and to offer some provisional insights about nature and the sublime.

Contrasting Readings

By any industry measure, *AIT* is an odd "hit": essentially an illustrated lecture, it is on track to become the second top-grossing documentary film of all time, surpassing *March of the Penguins*.[5] In addition, *AIT* was an unexpected success at both the Sundance and the Cannes film festivals.[6] The basics of the filmed lecture are ones that Gore has been presenting in one form or another for nearly three decades. For instance, the book that advances the same thesis, Gore's 1992 *Earth in the Balance: Ecology and the Human Spirit*, has made the bestseller list along with a follow-up, *An Inconvenient Truth: The Planetary Emergency of Global Warming and What We Can Do About It* (2006). A "young person's" edition, *An Inconvenient Truth: The Crisis of Global Warming* (2006) has gone through ten printings. In recognition of his commitment to preserving the environment, Gore was the co-recipient of the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize. While surely he did not win solely because of *AIT*, it is clear that Gore might not have won without the notoriety the film achieved.

Quite understandably, then, the reaction of many popular film reviewers and political commentators has been, well, almost rhapsodic. Roger Ebert says, "In 39 years, I have never written these words in a movie review, but here they are: You owe it to yourself to see this film. If you do not, and you have grandchildren, you should explain to them why you decided not to." Larry King calls it "one of the most important films ever."[7] Amy Taubin describes it as a "clear, low-key presentation of the evidence" that "elicits one audible gasp after another from viewers."[8]

Still, as we might expect given the complexities that surround environmental discourse and the intricacies of interpretation, those who reviewed *AIT* read it in strikingly different ways. First, although none used the term, many apparently saw the film as the most recent enactment of the politicized environmental jeremiad. As a rhetorical genre, the jeremiad has left its mark on environmental discourse, especially in the use of evocative strategies to persuade people to act in certain ways by means of apocalyptic predictions designed to mobilize emotions. In his study of American political culture, Richard Ellis notes that the rhetoric of many activist groups refers to both "impending catastrophe and future redemption," discourses characterized by a simultaneous warning of a coming "cataclysm while holding out hope of a millennial future." We hear, Ellis concludes, "echoes of the American jeremiad" in the rhetoric of many environmental activists.[9] In their work on the rhetorical character of American environmental discourse, John Opie and Norbert Elliot concur, noting that, more than any other, the jeremiad is the rhetorical form prefiguring most environmental discourse.[10]

Clearly, this genre is at work in *AIT* and some commentators lock in on it. Many label the film "sobering stuff," and one quips that it is an "eco-horror" movie, warning that it is clearly "anything but escapist entertainment."[11] Most reviewers seem to recognize what Bret Schulte calls the "frightening future promised by global warming—an apocalyptic world of deadly hurricanes, rising oceans, disease, drought, and famine."[12] In the *New York Times*, A. O. Scott contrasts the "calamities" *AIT* presents with its "scholarly tone," with the result making the peril seem even more frightening.[13] There is ample evidence within *AIT* to support such readings; jeremiad is alive and well in Gore's documentary.

Other viewers concentrate their interpretations on the biographical features of *AIT*. For example, Brian Johnson notes that the film "draws an intimate portrait of Gore, who comes across as warm, engaging—even funny, as he mocks his role as the man who was *almost* president."[14] Still another commentator marvels at how Gore "has found a new and urgent mission: to act as a well-informed Cassandra warning against the very real perils of global warming."[15] Even more hyperbolic, "*Time* magazine's Ana Marie Cox dubs him [Gore] a 'rock star'" for his role in the film.[16] This emphasis on the personal and biographical is sometimes read as an exercise in ethos-building with direct political consequences.[17] Since Greek antiquity, rhetoricians have noted the persuasive impact of character, with Aristotle commending ethos as "the most effective means of persuasion" available to a rhetor, and suggesting ways in which "good" character might be constructed within a discourse.[18] With so much personal narrative, *AIT* certainly invites a reading that highlights the story of Al Gore.

However, the film is also, lest we forget, a documentary, and as such draws on expectations associated with that form. While very few still cling to the belief that documentaries record some pristine objective reality, most still believe that this genre is the closest we can come to that outmoded ideal, and discussions of the genre often reflect the tension between "documentary as record" and "documentary as argument."[19]

Both these senses of documentary capture the attention of reviewers. Some emphasize the clear persuasive intent in *AIT*, and dismiss the film as yet another example of "activist filmmaking."[20] Still others comment on how the film fits with pre-existing environmental rhetoric. Some even go so far as to note that Gore's "campaign to raise public awareness of global warming is reminiscent of Rachel Carson's [influential] 1962 book, *Silent Spring*, about the negative environmental and human health effects of using the pesticide DDT."[21] The focus of these readings usually emphasizes the embellishment or, perhaps better, the "simplification" of the evidence or data on global warming so that it appeals to viewers.

In sum, received interpretations of *AIT* fall into three roughly bounded sets of responses: one seeing *AIT* as a contemporary form of the political jeremiad, another as a character-reinforcing autobiography, and the third as a popularizing (albeit sometimes slanted) documentary treatment of scientific evidence. We are convinced that these readings offer rich, but at best partial, accounts of the film. Few reviewers see any connections among these genres; none suggest how the meaning of the film might indeed be part and parcel of the interaction of environmental jeremiad, personal narrative, and science documentary. By contrast, we think the conventions of these genres are animated in complex and important ways, but that to appreciate their integration, we must first introduce another genre at work within *AIT*—one that catalyzes the others within a larger frame.

What these various readings suggest, but never quite recognize, is that there is a mythic genre at work in *AIT*. When we use the term "myth," we are not referring to some outdated attempt to represent material reality, to some oversimplified ideological structure for reproducing a given set of power relations, or even to some fictional literary genre for structuring discourse (although myths certainly can function in these ways). Rather, we see myth, both in general and as it operates in this film, as a narrative form of personal transformation. As such, myth has a great deal of rhetorical potency; it may well function as a suasory vehicle for political decision by offering its audience a template for action. The particular myth we find working in *AIT* is the hero myth, the general narrative form of which conforms to what Joseph Campbell has called "the monomyth."

> A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man [sic].[22]

Departure, initiation, and return—this ubiquitous pattern is usually understood as a rite of male initiation from adolescence into adulthood—but the monomyth really encapsulates a more general form of individual transformation, one going from innocence through trials to wisdom.

In what follows, we place the genres of science documentary, personal narrative, and political jeremiad within the larger mythic frame of the monomyth. By so doing, we show how elements from all interface with and reinforce the rhetorical efficacy of the entire film. Put somewhat differently, we show how the whole of *AIT* is greater

than the sum of its generic parts. In terms of Gore himself, *AIT* shows his evolution from interested observer to committed activist, and, to the extent that we, the viewers, follow him on his quest, the film invites our own journey of transformation as well.

The Mythic Frame of *An Inconvenient Truth*

There are two dimensions to the mythic narrative within *AIT*: a chronology of archetypal heroism and accomplishment, and a homologous personal chronology of Gore's growth and change. The first provides the film with form and universal appeal; the second provides an experiential template based in one exemplary life story.

The Monomyth: Departure

This doesn't start out like a film about global warming. Rather, it opens with footage of a river; the calming sounds of the riverbank emphasize the images of sunlight glancing off the water and tree branches moving in the slight breeze. We hear a soft sigh, then Gore's voiceover:

> You look at that river gently flowing by. You notice the leaves rustling with the wind. You hear the birds. You hear the tree frogs. In the distance, you hear a cow. You feel the grass. The mud gives a little bit on the riverbank. It's quiet; it's peaceful. And all of a sudden, it's a gearshift inside you. And it's like taking a deep breath and going, "Oh yeah, I forgot about this."

Another sigh.

The next few minutes before the opening credits show Gore on the road, traveling—in airports, taxis, waiting in boarding queues, campaigning for political office. Seated in the rear of a car, his laptop open before him, Gore acknowledges that he has told this story before, but suggests this time may be different. He pauses, then glances out the window while he says, "I've been trying to tell this story for a long time, and I feel as [if] I've failed to get the message across." The voiceover is hushed, intimate, unprotected, and reflexive, almost as if only we, the viewer, are supposed to hear it. Then we cut to a cosmically tranquil image, the now familiar vision of the earth taken from space, the Earthrise photograph. "Earthrise," Gore says, now revealed standing before us on stage. Several more similar images: "Isn't that beautiful?"

In this opening sequence, we experience, visually and through Gore's voiceover, the awe, sublime beauty, and wonder of Earth. As if to shatter our rhapsodic gaze, this tranquil image gives way to Gore's reminiscences about his introduction to climate change, and soon, another image, one more consistent with urgency and peril. Gore, his voice quickening, notes that the most vulnerable part of the earth is its atmosphere. However, whereas we can see directly the Edenic beauty of the opening set of images, we cannot so easily see the atmosphere, and so Gore, in the first of many animated sequences, shows with cartoon simplicity how the "thin coat" is "thickening," eventually trapping "sunbeams" inside. Soon after, in describing the

consequences of this "basic science of global warming," *AIT* runs footage showing glaciers receding, seas becoming deserts, snow melting off mountains, and massive chunks of ice breaking apart and falling into the ocean.

In short, we are taken from the sublime peace of the riverbank and offered the frightening vision of impending global disaster. In the first two sequences of *AIT*, the contrast between the soft river scene (nature as sublime) and the consequences of a thickening ozone layer (environmental crisis as jeremiad) sets up the rhetorical tension within which Gore will leverage his message.

Every hero must hear some call, something so powerful that she or he is jarred out of everyday complacency and leaves home to begin an arduous mythic journey. As Campbell understands, this is not a trivial moment.

> But whether small or great, and no matter what the stage or grade of life, the call rings up the curtain, always, on a mystery of transfiguration—a rite, or moment, of spiritual passage, which, when complete, amounts to a dying and a birth. The familiar life horizon has been outgrown; the old concepts, ideals, and emotional patterns no longer fit; the time for the passing of a threshold is at hand.[23]

In these opening sequences, we are offered that moment in Gore's life. For example, right after the first animation sequence, we see the graphic of a jagged orange line moving upward across the vertical axis of a chart. Gore tells us,

> This is the image that started me in my interest in this issue, and I saw it when I was a college student, because I had a professor named Roger Revelle who was the first person to precisely measure carbon dioxide in the earth's atmosphere. He saw where the story was going after the first few chapters.

At this instant, a seemingly ordinary moment in a college science class, Gore as mythic hero begins to die to his old ways and being. This death, like those of many mythic heroes, does not come quickly or easily. It only occurs incrementally, through a series of personal trials and failures.

The Monomyth: Initiation

Mythically, such trials are often called entering the belly of the whale—an apt image of nature devouring humanity. Here's Campbell's vision of this image:

> The hero . . . discovers and assimilates his [sic] opposite . . . either by swallowing it or by being swallowed. One by one the resistances are broken. He must put aside his pride, his virtue, beauty, and life, and bow or submit to the absolutely intolerable. Then he finds that he and his opposite are not of differing species, but one flesh.[24]

Not yet having put enough aside and armed with little more than Revelle's data, Gore confronts Congress.

> I respected him [Revelle] and learned from him so much, I followed this, and when I went to the Congress in the middle 1970s, I helped organize the first hearings on global warming and asked my professor to come and be the leadoff witness. And I

> thought that would have such a big impact that we'd be on the way to solving this problem, but it didn't work that way.

Consistent with the form, the hero's first trial ends in failure. We will return to this momentarily, but it is important at this point to show how this section of the film is constructed.

Gore stands before a wide graphic that details Revelle's data about the increasing levels of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere. We watch the orange slash of line move across the dark screen, slowly and always upward. Gore mentions his college days, his teacher, his first years in Congress, and inviting his teacher to testify. He also lifts up salient moments in his own political career: election to the House of Representatives—1976, election to the Senate—1984, run for the presidency—1988, and election to the vice presidency—1992. As he speaks, the orange line continues to move upward, showing increasingly dangerous levels of carbon dioxide. It seems that this artfully crafted section layers scientific data with Gore's personal history, suggesting, of course, that Gore was involved in the issue from the very beginning, and narrativizing the story of global warming with the autobiography of Al Gore. The trials and failures of the heroic quest are to be told through the narrative of Gore's political career. As Gore recounts incidents in his political career, the orange line continues moving inexorably upward, tracking the steep increase in greenhouse gases.

Soon, *AIT* offers another, even more moving, personal trial. As we see grainy black-and-white footage, Gore describes the moment when his then six-year-old son pulled away from him, ran in front of a car, and was almost killed. We see a slow montage of candid photos of a dimly lit hospital, Gore leaning over his son's hospital bed, and Gore embracing him. The voiceover is again the hushed, intimate, unprotected one we've heard earlier. "I gained an ability that maybe I didn't have before . . . that what we take for granted might not be here for our children." This event, occurring as it does at an early point in the mythic journey, seems designed to strengthen the hero's resolve. Here, as Campbell forecasts, is the hero's second failure, but this time, significantly, a lesson is learned: never take anything you find important for granted. Shots again of the sublimely beautiful river, a gentle breeze blows. "I felt that we could really lose it." The allusion seems very explicit.

Quickly back to the slide show with the portentous message that danger is upon us. Consistent with the idea that the warming of the earth's atmosphere will inevitably result in more frequently severe tropical weather, Gore presents film loops of Hurricane Katrina as it moved across the Gulf of Mexico toward the U.S. mainland: "Look at that hurricane's eye," an awestruck Gore prompts. Cut to scenes from the streets of New Orleans as the storm makes landfall, then the all too familiar sequences of the aftermath: flooded streets, citizens on rooftops, and overcrowding at the city shelters. "How in God's name could that happen?" Gore muses. Scenes of a devastated New Orleans with chaotic sound effects—calls to federal officials, the mayor on a radio call-in show pleading for assistance—and images of clear disaster. Shortly, we cut to Gore's profile, then pan out of an airplane window—and see the city below. Gore leans toward the window, his voiceover warning: "[M]aking

mistakes in generations and centuries past would have consequences that we could overcome. We don't have that luxury anymore."

Immediately, the *AIT* slide show segues into archival footage from the 2000 presidential campaign. We see a montage of the election and the ambiguity over the result in Florida—the vote count and recount, newscasters summarizing the agonizing uncertainties, and then the final outcome. Suddenly, George W. Bush is president—discordant music plays under footage of Gore's concession speech. We see Gore and his family; he hugs them, and we cut to a grim-faced Gore at the Bush inaugural—then on a plane leaving Washington. Finally, having witnessed this quickly compressed account of the election, we hear once more, in contrast, the quiet, candid voiceover: "That was a hard blow, but what do you do? You—you make the best of it," Gore confesses. Then, more upbeat: "It brought into clear focus the mission that I had been pursuing for all these years, and I started giving the slide show again." For hero-Gore, this trial—the political/professional "disaster" of the 2000 election, his contesting the results, his concession—even that seems ordained to have set him on his current effort to spread the message he has taken as truth for decades.

It is clear, consistently, in these sections of *AIT*, that the matter of global warming and the personal and professional trials of Al Gore are threaded together so that they mirror one another. In this, not only is the ethos of Gore as a long-time advocate enhanced, but also, because of these depicted trials, Gore's status within the film as our source of information and evidence changes. This is enhanced, of course, by the sheer abundance of "data," "evidence," and "example" displayed in *AIT*.

AIT unmistakably bears the marks of "objectivity" with its emphasis on statistics, facts, graphs, and studies, which prompts its interpretation as a science document. *AIT* begins with those photographs of planet Earth from space, then offers graphs (e.g., carbon dioxide levels, global temperature change), film footage and photographs (e.g., changes in glaciers, snowpack levels, thawing in the polar regions), satellite imagery (e.g., weather patterns, deforestation), animation (e.g., the flooding of lower Manhattan), computer models, radio broadcasts (e.g., Mayor Ray Nagin of New Orleans), maps, aerial flyover footage (e.g., Antarctic ice shelf), transcripts and copies of official government documents (e.g., the "altered" reports), and a montage of Hurricane Katrina footage.

However, there is also a subset of "factual" material revolving around Al Gore himself. This includes footage of Gore traveling (e.g., Gore in planes, airport terminals, baggage check, taxicabs), Gore family photos and film (e.g., the family farm, Gore as a child, photos of the family at the hospital attending to son Albert), Gore presentation sequences (e.g., preparing for presentations, arriving on stage, taking questions), footage of Gore meeting with experts (e.g., in China, in Antarctica, on a submarine at the North Pole, looking at ice core samples), and Gore on news films (e.g., political speeches, the concession statement, presidential swearing-in ceremonies, the 2000 presidential race, bus tours, rallies, Gore in Congress). These images stand in a way as "proof" and evidence of Gore's quest and his commitment to it.

As we have noted, everything we "know" about the problem of climate change comes to us through Gore. For, unlike many conventional documentaries, there are no interviews; no scientists are directly consulted; no variety of voices offers insight, comment, or context as we might expect from the prototypical science documentary. Instead, the film and photo footage invites us to certify the credentials of Al Gore himself as we come to understand how he has transformed himself into someone who is qualified to speak on the basis of his travels and his conversations—in short, Gore is constructed as "expert" and is thus able to relay what he has learned from "being there" to the rest of us.

Again on stage before us, Gore discusses changes in rainfall and in ground moisture in the U.S. Using comparative charts on the screen behind him, Gore notes that such change is slow and, as such, hard to recognize. Quickly, we find ourselves inside a car, with Gore taking us to the family farm: here's the "Carthage exit" where, when he was fourteen years old, he "totaled the family car." There are shots of the farm, the Gore family, young Al helping with chores, and a 1940s vintage tractor. The footage seems amateurish—grainy, jerky, and frequently out of focus, like home movies. However, the pastoral images are clear, and Gore tells us how he spent his summers on "this big, beautiful farm" with his dog, pony, rifle, and the river, where he "lay down in grass." We see the river again—flowing quietly.

Back to the slide show, and Gore introduces what he calls "two canaries in the coal mine": the Artic and Antarctica. He lays out, through images and statistics, the severity of the change in the ice levels. And while this section does not tell of another personal failure, it concludes with a political failure, and is laced throughout with an increasing sense of Gore's frustration and impatience. After a moving account of the consequences of ice melt in the Artic, emotionally heightened by an animation of the polar bear that will undoubtedly drown for lack of ice, the slide show cuts to a travel montage of a fatigued Gore moving through airports. Again, the hushed voiceover tells us,

> It's *extremely* frustrating to me to communicate over and over again, as clearly as I can, and we are still by far the worst contributor to the problem. I look around, and look for really meaningful signs that we're about to really change. I don't see it right now.

As in other places, we begin to recognize the formal pattern of *AIT*: "factual" documentary images and data on global warming integrate with personal images of frustration and failure. The earth is failing, we see, and so is Gore's attempt to convince us of that fact.

Not long after, another jump cut takes us out of the slide show and back to the Gore ranch, a place we visited briefly earlier when he spoke nostalgically of his youth. This time the farm is bleaker. Black and white footage shows workers chopping tobacco, then the film cuts to a black-and-white photo of Gore's sister. Gore says that Nancy began smoking as a teenager and never quit. She died of lung cancer, and his voiceover tells what he learned from this most tragic of trials.

> The idea that we had been part of that economic pattern that produced the cigarettes that produced the cancer, it was *so*—it was so painful on so many levels. My father—he had grown tobacco all his life; he stopped. Whatever explanation had seemed to make sense in the past just didn't cut it anymore.

Working from the analogy, it seems that the lesson for Gore, as for us, is that whatever explanation we might have used to deny the reality of global warming in the past just doesn't "cut it anymore." The implication may be that having learned his lesson about systemic causation through personal loss, Gore is ready to take on the establishment, no matter what the cost. This section of *AIT* represents, within the narrative of Gore's life, the process of coming to environmental consciousness and the nascent nurturing of the political will to act against it.

So far, we've concentrated on the personal trials and failures of a hero in training. The recounting of Gore's story suggests his commitment and simultaneously associates his story with the story of global warming. Gore family tragedies are lessons learned: the stories of his son, Albert, and sister, Nancy, suggest that there are issues bigger than ourselves and form, in the terms of the myth, a salvation experience. Thus, Gore is both hero and object of the myth: he is constructed as someone worthy of listening to and as someone we can identify with as we follow his quest tale and biography. This may well inflect interpretation of the scientific data that saturate *AIT*, because by vicariously sharing in these events of Gore's life story, we are also invited to experience the scientific data in a radically novel way. Rather than being isolated graphs, charts, and numbers that might leave a lay audience glassy eyed and confused, they have become laden with the emotional suffering our would-be hero had to endure in order to become the person he now appears to be. If the film works in this way, this time Gore has found a way to get his message across. More importantly, we, too, are in a position to hear the demand for action in a more sympathetic light. In short, the narrative humanizes the science. However, this is a movement that also reverses its polarity, and the assumed "objectivity" of the science presented in the film may also ground the mythic frame. It is important to understand how this might work.

The discourse of science is commonly characterized as a discourse of logic and reason, of evidence and objectivity, relying on "hard" fact and "cold" logic to support its findings. This common-sense idea has come increasingly under scrutiny as more and more scholars take seriously the idea that science itself may be a persuasive discourse.[25] Indeed, nowadays science is more often understood as needing the strategies of rhetoric in order for it to "persuade," or as being configured by rhetorical tropes at the very center of its intellectual activity.[26] Thus, the science documentary occupies a particularly crucial discursive space in contemporary culture: it mediates between the competing claims of scientific and everyday understanding.[27] It is the translation device between the specialist discourse of science and the generalist discourse of common sense. As Roger Silverstone has argued, "Science has needed non-scientific narratives to legitimate itself."[28] However, science probably does not make it through the documentary discourse unchanged, for turning science to the forms of narrative is not a neutral conversion.

In this case, we may be justified in concluding that just as *AIT*'s narrative humanizes the science, science legitimates the narrative. The transformation of Al Gore into the imagery of myth and narrative requires our assent to the objectivity and "fact-ness" inherent in conventions of the scientific documentary. The "evidence" offered in *AIT*, conforming to expectations more associated with the science documentary, may neutralize suspicions aroused by the casting of Gore as myth-hero. Instead, this moment of access hinges on the assumption of scientific objectivity/truth. *AIT* wields the assumption of the neutral logic of science in a paradoxical fashion—these assumptions "certify" the "facticity" of what we see and hear reported, and they also "naturalize" the frame of the mythic quest, soliciting our assent to this second level of meaning without our necessarily being aware of its status as a project for ethos construction.

The Monomyth: Return

A hero is not a hero unless he or she returns "home" and imparts what has been learned through the trials of initiation. Campbell explains,

> When the hero-quest has been accomplished . . . the adventurer still must return with his [sic] life-transmuting trophy. The full round, the norm of the monomyth, requires that the hero shall now begin the labor of bringing the runes of wisdom . . . back into the kingdom of humanity, where the boon may redound to the renewing of the community, the nation, the planet, or the ten thousand worlds.[29]

In a way, this is not really a "return" because a fully initiated Al Gore has been with us, of course, orchestrating the slide show from the outset of *AIT*—but we have now shared in the trials of this man, watched him become more expert about global warming, as it were, failure by failure, and he has now earned, it might seem, the ethos to offer advice.

Initially, Gore must address more directly those who tell us not to do anything. He does this by posing and then responding to three misconceptions about global warming. First, a rhetorical question: "[I]sn't there a disagreement among scientists about whether the problem [of global warming] is real or not?" And then we see the one statistic that most might remember (or dispute) from the film—namely, that out of a sample of 928 articles in refereed scientific forums on global warming, all of them, without exception, say that global warming is real and getting worse.

Gore then poses the second question of the skeptics: "Do we have to choose between the economy and the environment?" "This is a big one . . . " he admits, but then notes that it is "a false choice." The question, Gore assures us, does not involve a choice between the environment and the economy. He continues, less cleverly, if we "do the right thing," economic opportunities will abound, not disappear.

Then we see Gore in a car, holding his laptop. Once more the intimate voiceover: "I've probably given this slide show," he says, "at least a thousand times," and as if to prove it, we see a map of the world showing presentation sites. Then Gore again, at the airport luggage claim, a limousine, and exiting a taxi, his laptop clutched to his

side. "I set myself a goal," he tells us, to go "city by city, person by person, family by family and I have faith that pretty soon, enough minds are changed that we cross a threshold." The hero-Gore now serves only the community and his quest is to save that community from itself.

It is interesting that at this point, where he addresses what he calls a "big" question, *AIT* turns once more, full-throated, to the biographical. We are moved away from the either/or choice in the question, and focus on Gore demonstrating by his commitment that he is "doing the right thing" on our behalf. This focus on action works against the antithetical choices and replaces the either/or with an emphasis on every individual coming to understand that we can have both.

This juxtaposition shows both the personal and the political themes of climate change. It asks us to realize that the problem, while scientific, is also one that is best addressed politically. Thus, while we are invited to focus on the scientific problem—the data presented are detailed, deeply layered, and vivid—we also are asked to frame the matter as one of personal action—action we see modeled for us in Gore's persona. But he is a politician, and the solution is ultimately one that will be pushed by an interested and involved public. This public must be energized and engaged, and *AIT* is lastly a social discourse and a call for political action. By this route, we have come face to face, of course, with a familiar genre of political rhetoric.

According to the seminal work of Sacvan Bercovitch, as a rhetorical genre in the U.S., the jeremiad began with the arrival of the Puritans.[30] This genre, or as Bercovitch would have it, the "political sermon," intertwined practical spiritual guidance with advice on public affairs.[31] Usually combining lamentation with a firm optimism about the eventual fate of the community, metaphorically figuring the familiar vision of the shining city on a hill, the jeremiad could unite an audience in pursuit of shared goals while reaffirming the values of the community. However, since fulfillment never easily came about, Bercovitch argues that the function of the jeremiad "was to create a climate of anxiety that helped release the restless 'progressivist' energies required for the success of the venture."[32]

Thus, what we hear in the final sections of *AIT* are the residues of this rhetorical form—the jeremiad, the Puritan political sermon.[33] The warning of impending doom is only half the message. The other half is about salvation if we act as we are capable of acting.[34] *AIT* is a discourse that finally suspends us between catastrophe and redemption. As an environmental document, it is a hopeful one, functioning within the interpretive frames of environmental documentary and within the rhetorical context of the environmental jeremiad.

In positioning his appeal in this way, Gore shows that he senses the apocalyptic mood of a post-9/11 era. Tapping into public uneasiness over tragedies that are preventable and the inability of the government either to predict or to manage problems certainly may generate support in his favor. However, scholars have noted that using the jeremiad form is not without its potential liabilities. As Jimmie Killingsworth and Jacqueline Palmer have observed, use of apocalyptic rhetoric is itself a message:

> [T]o employ apocalyptic rhetoric is to imply the need for radical change, to mark oneself as an outsider in a progressive culture, to risk alienation, and to urge others out into the open air of political rebellion. The apocalyptic narrative is an expansive and offensive rhetorical strategy.[35]

It seems to us that just as the personal quest story of Al Gore tempers the potential hyperbole of the mythic persona by offering a real-life model of transformation, so the science documentary returns us to the middle ground counterbalancing the jeremiadic warning. In short, the mythic/personal is integrated with the jeremiadic/scientific, and the integration offers a sort of protection against the liabilities of the jeremiad form. As the narrative of myth adds levels of implication to Gore's biography, so the seemingly objective and factual evidence justifies the apocalyptic appeal. *AIT*, in and through the interplay of genres, may have discovered a rhetorical defense that might insulate its appeal for action from the alienation and extremism that lie just below the discursive surface of the jeremiad.

The final misconception that Gore poses is "If we accept that this problem is real, maybe it's just too big to do anything about." Gore warns us not to move too quickly from denial to despair, and then adds, "We have everything we need, save, perhaps, political will. But you know what? In America, political will is a renewable resource." There is extended applause, and Gore says over the applause, "We have the ability to do this. Each one of us is a cause of global warming, we just have to have the determination" to act both singly and together. Certainly, we can do it, Gore reassures us: "Are we as Americans capable of doing great things?" He offers the historical record to document what we can do when we are committed. Gore ticks off an inspiring list of accomplishments: the American Revolution bringing something new—democracy of the people—to the earth, abolishing slavery, winning two world wars, ensuring civil rights, landing on the moon, and bringing down communism. As before, the graphs and charts showing increases in recycling, more stringent emission standards, and so on, buttress and legitimate this final rhetorical call to action.

This film ends almost as it began—with a vision of the earth from space. This time, the planet is a tiny blue dot, dwarfed within an infinite cosmos. "I believe," the gentle voice intones, "this is a moral issue. It is your time to seize this issue. It is our time to rise again to secure our future." And should we have missed the mythic significance of what we've just experienced, Gore reminds us, "There's nothing that unusual about what I'm doing with this. What is unusual is that I had the privilege to be shown it as a young man." As we watch, we see Gore in silhouette, back lit, looking again like a leader—or a hero—as he emerges from the wings onto another stage to give "the slide show."

Following a montage of nature images, one final jump cut takes us back to the same languid river that opened the film, a stream we now know flows through the Gore farm. The quiet voiceover: "Future generations may well have occasion to ask themselves, 'What were our parents thinking?' 'Why didn't they wake up when they had a chance?' We have to hear that question from them—now."

Conclusion

We have argued that *AIT* is a complicated film interweaving the mythic, in the form of the quest story and the drama of Gore's personal story, with a representation of the world of science and fact, and with a jeremiad's call to action against the effects of global climate change. It may well be that the unlikely success of *AIT* is cultivated from its willingness to criticize politicians and the political process while yet holding out hope for a more grassroots political solution. Its success might also come out of its complex way of intertextually addressing mythic, personal-biographical, scientific, and political reading positions.

Certainly, such a critical perspective would alleviate the various problems of interpretation and alternative readings that we cited early on. If we're right that the scientific data on global warming and the rhetorical call to immediate action both evolve within a living myth of heroic transformation, the apparently disparate parts of this film seem to come together. Those who only "see" the apocalyptic urgency of the jeremiad view *AIT* as little more than a political cry of "wolf" when none may be present; those who only "see" the scientific data either say "been there, seen that" or spend their energies trying to figure out how to refute the data, while those who "see" the film as little more than a personal biography say, "It's about Al Gore's career." However, if all unfold within the larger mythic frame, concluded by the political sermon that warns of disaster but seeks public action to avoid that disaster, then we are no longer forced into that either/or reasoning.

The "objective" science documentary provides the "evidence" for the crisis that initiates the environmental jeremiad. The personal narrative encourages our identification with the quest and with an attitude toward nature and the environment. The mythic structure gives universal appeal and forms the template that anchors Gore's personal story. The biographical suggests a solution to the apocalyptic situation by providing a model of transformation and action. Exploiting the potential of being open to simultaneous interpretations—mythic, scientific, political—this complex text provokes the possibility of understanding and action. Moreover, this realization has implications for our critical practice.

We began our essay with the assumption that we could achieve a better understanding of *AIT* by attending to actual interpretations of the film by real viewers. Drawing on the widely divergent readings of the film found in popular reviews, we tried to use these interpretations as the foundation for our critical reading. In short, we took for granted the polysemy of *AIT*. In an important essay, Leah Ceccarelli has argued that polysemy is an unavoidable feature of discourse that may be recognized by attending to the design of the text and by examining fragments that represent evidence of reception.[36] The aim of such hermeneutic work, Ceccarelli argues, is to activate the latent and unrecognized potential of various readings.[37]

In trying to account for the reception of *AIT*, we conducted close readings of the film and a close reading of the ways in which the film was actually understood. We situated *AIT* within a matrix of discursive contexts: the mythic quest and personal narrative, the environmental documentary report, and the political jeremiad. In making these discourses part of the text itself, we believe that we located a truly postmodern documentary that not only references these discourses—quest myth, personal autobiography, scientific demonstration, and jeremiad—but which uses all of these discourses to encourage action in the real world.

These conclusions directly refer to the relationship between intertextuality and the discrete text. On this question, intertextuality is viewed as a clear break with formalism and the notion of the self-contained text that opens to close analysis.[38] That is, when the point of critical engagement with the text becomes its relationship with other texts, then the notion of the artifact as a self-contained, discrete artistic whole is exploded.

Our analysis of *AIT* suggests that the decision critics must make about intertextual readings does not involve a simply stated dichotomy: either the polysemic, diffuse intertext or the discrete text of traditional criticism. Rather, it suggests that in the nonfiction documentary discourse at least, the text itself blurs if not erases this simplistic bifurcation. For what we have seen is that this documentary text claims a privileged link to a historical situation and its scientific data; it uses our experience of understanding and decoding narrative; it engages our foreknowledge of the signifying power of myth—it is, in short, quintessentially intertextual. At the very same moment, *AIT* exploits those potential levels of intertextuality to assist in the rather local project of transforming the issues of global warming and exhorting its audience to act in the historical world. We may be warranted, then, in concluding that however we may want to distinguish between the discrete text and the intertextual text, in this case, the intertextual relationships may well account for the function of the discrete text as a discourse set in a specific time and place.

An Inconvenient Truth, *Nature, and the Sublime*

At the outset, we noted the linkage between environmental discourse and cultural attitudes toward the environment. Our interpretation of *AIT* suggests a deeper connection between the rhetorical form of *AIT* and the environmental jeremiad than what may be usually acknowledged. It may be that this film directly models the bifurcated representation of nature that is found in our most commonplace and historical sources, because, in a sense, we are pulled toward two apparently contradictory images of the natural world. On the one hand, we see a quiet, contemplative, sublime nature represented, for example in the opening and closing scenes of Gore's riverbank. Here nature is peaceful and restorative—a figure of meditation and salvation. On the other hand, the furies of hurricanes, rising seawater, and the environmental alterations wrought by global warming stand in contrast. In these images, we experience nature as vengeful, powerful, fear inspiring, and

destructive. There is a palpable tension between the aesthetic appreciation of nature and its impending destructiveness.

Christine Oravec notes similar features in what she identifies as "[o]ne of the most important discursive conventions for the study of environmental communication"—the sublime.[39] Oravec notes that as a convention, the sublime "prescribed a set form of language and pictorial elements for describing nature."[40] The sublime, Oravec suggests, seeks at one and the same time to encourage an appreciation of benign nature and to offer a set of implicit warnings about how nature should be treated and mastered. "For more than two centuries, artists and writers used the sublime to evoke emotional responses toward nature, to confirm aesthetic or ethical beliefs about nature, and to call attention to particular landscapes of settlement, tourism, or preservation."[41] In other words, from its very inception, the sublime as a style has been thoroughly moralized.

Most importantly, Oravec argues that sublime discourse "is an integral part of the way we perceive nature, act with reference to it, and construct its relationship to ourselves."[42] It "acts as a screen, or a projection of human preferences upon the natural scene"; in short, we view nature "through the conventions of sublimity."[43]

> Increasingly, however, and often in American views, human figures were portrayed observing the scene and registering their emotional reaction to it. This figuring forth of responses to the scene heightened the effect and provided a model for the viewer's own behavior ... [S]ublime representation always functioned to position the viewer with respect to specific social, political, or ethical issues.... [T]o accomplish this positioning, observers pictured in the landscape often functioned as stand-ins for the viewer.[44]

We believe that Gore's use of the mythic dimension in *AIT* provides, in and through representation of his personal and mythic quest, a model for our own responses. Al Gore himself provides a touchstone for our own desired reactions to the natural world imperiled by our actions. So, by the end, to move to protect the environment is to act as Gore has already acted—to be courageous.

The stylistic conventions require a "model for the viewer's own behavior.... position[ing] the viewer with respect to specific social, political, or ethical issues."[45] Thus, *AIT* rehearses its viewers in the reproduction of the sublime, eliciting particular attitudes and actions in those viewers through the figure of Gore, who functions as a stand-in.

Early on, we noted how environmental discourse in the U.S. has traditionally run the continuum from pastoral to jeremiadic. *An Inconvenient Truth*, drawing deep upon the wellsprings of long-standing cultural perspectives on nature, reproduces the sublime and uses this as a means to develop the contrasting political jeremiad. That we read both forms of our bifurcated environmental rhetoric in the same discourse seems eerily significant. These double-sided readings of *AIT* may themselves suggest the difficulty in formulating any single perspective on nature in our twenty-first-century society. As this popular documentary reflects, our contemporary cultural meanings of nature may not be either one or the other, but may well be as contradictory and as incongruous as the symbolic action that animates this film.

Notes

[1] Lawrence Buell, *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, Belknap Press, 1995).

[2] See, for instance, Kevin Michael DeLuca, "The Possibilities of Nature in a Postmodern Age: The Rhetorical Tactics of Environmental Justice Groups," *Communication Theory* 9 (1999): 189–215; Kevin Michael DeLuca, *Image Politics: The New Rhetoric of Environmental Activism* (New York: Guilford Press, 1999); Mary Douglas and Aaron Wildavsky, eds., *Risk and Culture: An Essay on the Selection of Technological and Environmental Dangers* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982); Carl G. Herndl and Stuart C. Brown, eds., *Green Culture: Environmental Rhetoric in Contemporary America* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996); John Opie and Norbert Elliot, "Tracking the Elusive Jeremiad: The Rhetorical Character of American Environmental Discourse," in *The Symbolic Earth: Discourse and Our Creation of the Environment*, ed. James G. Cantrill and Christine L. Oravec (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1996), 9–37; Scott Slovic, "Epistemology and Politics in American Nature Writing: Embedded Rhetoric and Discrete Rhetoric," in *Green Culture: Environmental Rhetoric in Contemporary America*, 82–110.

[3] Roderick Frazier Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, 4th ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001).

[4] *An Inconvenient Truth*, DVD, directed by Davis Guggenheim, Hollywood, CA: Paramount Classics Home Entertainment, 2006.

[5] Pat Aufderheide, review of *An Inconvenient Truth*, directed by Davis Guggenheim, *Cineaste* 32 (2006): 52.

[6] Anthony Breznican, "Al Gore Savors Day in the Sun: New and Old Fans Warm Up to Former VP and His 'Truth,'" *USA Today*, June 9, 2006, Section E, final edition.

[7] Both quoted in Amanda Gefter, "No Climate Crisis? Watch This Movie," review of *An Inconvenient Truth*, directed by Davis Guggenheim, *New Scientist* 191 (2006): 51.

[8] Amy Taubin, "An Inconvenient Truth," review of *An Inconvenient Truth*, directed by Davis Guggenheim, *Sight & Sound* 16 (2006): 56.

[9] Richard J. Ellis, *American Political Cultures* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 171.

[10] Opie and Elliot, "Tracking the Elusive Jeremiad," 9–10.

[11] "Al Gore's New Mission," *America* 195 (2006): 4; Taubin, "Inconvenient Truth," 56.

[12] Bret Schulte, "Saying It in Cinema," review of *An Inconvenient Truth*, directed by Davis Guggenheim, *U.S. News & World Report*, June 5, 2006, http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=1044009771&sid=1&fmt=3&clientid=13929&rqt=309&vname=pqd/.

[13] A. O. Scott, "Warning of Calamities with a Scholarly Tone," review of *An Inconvenient Truth*, directed by Davis Guggenheim, *New York Times*, May 24, 2006.

[14] Brian D. Johnson, "Now with the Weather—Al Gore," *Maclean's*, May 22, 2006, http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&an=20881612&site=ehost-live&scope=site/.

[15] "Al Gore's New Mission," 4.

[16] Jonah Goldberg, "Same Ol' Gore," *National Review* 58 (2006): 8.

[17] Other viewers of the film seem to suspect that *AIT* is intended mostly to rehabilitate the political fortunes of the former senator and vice president—to present once again, as Jonah Goldberg dubs him, "the new savior of the Democratic party." Likewise, John Tierney wonders about the purposes behind "terrifying the public" with "improbable future catastrophes," and notes that Gore carefully "avoids any call to action that would cause immediate discomfort, either to filmgoers or to voters in the 2008 primaries." John Tierney, "Gore Pulls His Punches," review of *An Inconvenient Truth,* directed by Davis Guggenheim, *New York Times*, May 23, 2006, Section A, final edition. This theme seems to run through many of the interpretations, and is echoed in the assessment of Eleanor Clift that Gore is running for president. See Eleanor Clift, "Gore on the Un-Campaign Trail," *Newsweek,*

March 26, 2007, http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=1239719361&sid=2&fmt=3&clientid=13929&rqt=309&vname=pqd/; Goldberg, "Same Ol' Gore," 8; John Heilemann, "The Comeback Kid," *New York Magazine*, May 29, 2006, http://proquest.umi.com/pqdweb?did=1053640311&sid=3&fmt=3&clientid=13929&rqt=309&Vvname=pqd/.
While it made sense in 2006 to read *AIT* as a campaign film, by 2008 it had become obvious that Gore was not running for president and that these readings were overzealous.

[18] Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, trans. W. Rhys Roberts, Modern Library (New York: Random House, 1954), 1356a12.

[19] Bill Nichols, *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991); John Corner, "What Can We Say About 'Documentary'?" *Media, Culture & Society* 22 (2000): 681–88.

[20] Harlan Jacobson and Paul Arthur, "Movies That Mattered," review of *An Inconvenient Truth*, directed by Davis Guggenheim, *Film Comment* 43 (2007): 39.

[21] Roy W. Spencer, "Al Gore Offers Global Warming Hysteria and Harmful 'Solutions,'" review of *An Inconvenient Truth*, directed by Davis Guggenheim, *Human Events* 62 (2006): 15.

[22] Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1949), 30. John Shelton Lawrence and Robert Jewett have offered an insightful modification of Campbell's original monomyth. Concentrating on American heroes—both real and fictional—in films and novels, they argue that American heroes do not typically begin their heroic journeys within some social group, but rather come in as solitary loners from the outside, fix whatever is wrong in a community, and then depart again alone. While this is certainly a dominant pattern in the texts Lawrence and Jewett examine, it is not the pattern that unfolds in *AIT*. That pattern, as we will demonstrate, conforms more closely to Campbell's original monomyth. See Robert Jewett and John Shelton Lawrence, *The American Monomyth*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1988), and John Shelton Lawrence and Robert Jewett, *The Myth of the American Superhero* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing, 2002).

[23] Campbell, *Hero with a Thousand Faces*, 51.

[24] Campbell, *Hero with a Thousand Faces*, 108.

[25] Bruno Latour and Steve Woolgar, *Laboratory Life: The Social Construction of Scientific Facts* (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage Publications, 1979); John S. Nelson, Allan Megill, and Donald N. McCloskey, "Rhetoric of Inquiry," in *The Rhetoric of the Human Sciences: Language and Argument in Scholarship and Public Affairs*, ed. John S. Nelson, Allan Megill, and Donald N. McCloskey (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1987), 3–18; Herbert W. Simons, "The Rhetoric of Inquiry as an Intellectual Movement," in *The Rhetorical Turn: Invention and Persuasion in the Conduct of Inquiry*, ed. Herbert W. Simons (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 1–31.

[26] John Lyne, "Rhetorics of Inquiry," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 71 (1985): 65–73.

[27] Roger Silverstone, "The Agonistic Narratives of Television Science," in *Documentary and the Mass Media*, ed. John Corner (Baltimore, MD: Edward Arnold Publishers, 1986), 81.

[28] Silverstone, "Agonistic Narratives," 82.

[29] Campbell, *Hero with a Thousand Faces*, 193.

[30] Sacvan Bercovitch, *The American Jeremiad* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1978), 3–9.

[31] Bercovitch, *American Jeremiad*, 132–34.

[32] Bercovitch, *American Jeremiad*, 23.

[33] Opie and Elliot, "Tracking the Elusive Jeremiad," 31.

[34] Stephen F. Cotgrove, *Catastrophe or Cornucopia: The Environment, Politics, and the Future* (Chichester, UK: Wiley, 1982), 5.

[35] M. Jimmie Killingsworth and Jacqueline S. Palmer, "Millennial Ecology: The Apocalyptic Narrative from *Silent Spring* to *Global Warming*," in *Green Culture: Environmental Rhetoric in*

Contemporary America, ed. Carl G. Herndl and Stuart C. Brown (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1996), 41.

[36] Leah Ceccarelli, "Polysemy: Multiple Meanings in Rhetorical Criticism," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 84 (1998): 410.

[37] Ceccarelli, "Polysemy," 409.

[38] This is a rather common point of contrast in theory. See, for instance: Peter J. Rabinowitz, *Before Reading: Narrative Conventions and the Politics of Interpretation* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1987); Beverly Whitaker Long and Mary Susan Strine, "Reading Intertextually: Multiple Mediations and Critical Practice," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 75 (1989): 467–75; Richard Hillman, "The Anxiety of Intertextuality," *Semiotica* 107 (1995): 355–67.

[39] Christine L. Oravec, "To Stand Outside Oneself: The Sublime in the Discourse of Natural Scenery," in *The Symbolic Earth: Discourse and Our Creation of the Environment*, ed. James G. Cantrill and Christine L. Oravec (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1996), 58–75.

[40] Oravec, "To Stand Outside Oneself," 58.

[41] Oravec, "To Stand Outside Oneself," 58.

[42] Oravec, "To Stand Outside Oneself," 58.

[43] Oravec, "To Stand Outside Oneself," 58–59.

[44] Oravec, "To Stand Outside Oneself," 64–65.

[45] Oravec, "To Stand Outside Oneself," 65.