On the Pragmatic Poetry of Pose: Gesture, Parallelism, Politics

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ABSTRACT

Poetics matters in gestural pragmatics. The recurrent returns of cospeech manual gesture, which appear as "repetitions" and "parallelisms" of handshape and movement pattern, deserve close attention for their pragmatic potential. To appreciate how poetically dimensionalized gestures can contribute to everything from cohesion to speech-act performativity, we need a turn akin to what Michael Silverstein once called a "pragmatic-poetic turn" for discursive interaction. In domains of sociocultural life where persuasion is self-consciously instrumentalized, the poetics of manual gesture can assume additional significance. In the mass mediatized debates and speeches of presidential campaign politics, poetically dimensionalized manual gesture is not only pronounced but has become a basis for enregisterment, for constituting political gesture as a distinct mode of persuasive, embodied communication: the "political" in political gesture is constituted in part by a reflexive, aesthetico-pragmatic sourcing of poetics as a (if not the) measure of rhetorical "effectiveness" and "eloquence."

The problem is we have politicians who truly, truly, truly don't know what they're doing.

—Donald J. Trump, 2016

Unable to resist the pull of alliteration, linguist Mark Liberman tapped in a 2015 *Language Log* blog entry titled "Donald Trump's Repetitive Rhetoric."[1] That this was both observation and slight was suggested by a pair

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This essay is dedicated to Michael Silverstein, with many felicitous returns. The year 2016 saw the passing of three renowned scholars of the poetic, Barney Bate, Paul Friedrich, and Dennis Tedlock, whom I wish to remember here. For comments, I thank Greg Matoesian, Kristin Gilbert, Constantine Nakassis, a reviewer for *Signs and Society*, and editor Rick Parmentier.

1. Mark Liberman, "Donald Trump's Repetitive Rhetoric," blog post, January 25, 2015, http://languagelog.ldc.upenn.edu/nll/?p=22691.

Signs and Society, vol. 6, no. 1 (Winter 2018). 2326-4489/2018/0601-0007$10.00

of links. The first subjects viewers to a Drunk Trump parody video in which a beer-boozing twenty-something in a sleeveless US flag t-shirt lip-synchs gratingly repetitive Trump lines to his inebriated buddy: "We are going to make our country great again. We are going to. We are going to." The second returns us to a sober 1972 research article on "The Effects of Alcohol on the Speech of Alcoholics" (Sobell and Sobell 1972). An association, real and parodied, between intoxication and repetition. Not that Trump was drunk, Liberman ruefully notes, while leaving open the possibility of some other species of impairment. His point was presumably that parody and commentary—including his own, we might add—sometimes single out repetition in Trump's speech and that this may be no accident.

Liberman leveraged parody as indirect evidence of style; if parodists notice something, it's probably there to be noticed. This casual academic commentary may well reveal something about an individual, but it also betrays a widespread preoccupation with certain aesthetic dimensions of political discourse. If "rhetoric" in his title noted Trump's attempt at persuasion, "repetitive," after all, was a swipe at its poetics. (This was still 2015, when most commentators had no inkling of how persuasive Trump really was or would be.) Linguistic anthropologists know to appreciate the creative, bidirectional force of such reflexive engagements with semiotic form and function, for this is a lesson that Michael Silverstein impressed upon generations of scholars. It is no accident that Trump should be fingered for repetition, not simply because he allegedly does it a lot, but because there is also a long history of observing, evaluating, cultivating, and exhibiting poetic qualities of discourse in public oratory and debate. This history primes our senses to note recurrent returns. While humanist rhetoricians have been all but replaced by the technophilic applied scientists of the political marketing industry, there are still those who hunt for classical tropes, including those based on repetition. It was probably inevitable that a few intrepid rhetoricians would stumble upon and post Trump's occasional anadiplosis, for instance. We expect poetics in self-consciously persuasive speech making, because public discourse genres partake in cultures of the poetic (cf. Bate 2009).

I argue that this culture of the poetic extends to manual political gesture, where poetics appears as prominently as it does in co-occurring discourse. In captioning public discourse gestures in electoral campaign politics as "political gesture," we may imagine a neatly circumscribed repertoire of distinctive handshapes and movement patterns, yet there is no well-developed gestural register here akin to those of the storied Roman orators of antiquity.[2] Political gesture is a misnomer,

2. See Lempert (2017). Some gestures in public oratory and debate are frequently cited as register specific, usually through parodic and dramatic imitation rather than explicit commentary. This has arguably been so

because it detaches cospeech gesture from the speech with which it is coexpressive and hence exaggerates the degree of handshape and movement conventionalization and autonomy. Conventionalization does exist, but it is weak and partial (Lempert 2017). If anything sets political gesture apart as a register, it is precisely the proclivity for repetition and parallelism—parallelism being perceived variation against a baseline of comparability. We may even venture to say that there is no political gesture minus its poetics. Poetics has been used to enregister gesture as a distinctly political modality of communication, weak though this enregisterment seems to be.

Poetics is pronounced and even criterial to manual political communication, but it is of much wider relevance. It is, I submit, a fertile but neglected area in gestural pragmatics generally. The modest literature on the poetics of manual gesture that does exist suffers from limitations. First, there is an unfortunate if familiar taxonomic reflex that segregates out gestural types, in this case by separating semantically empty metricalized gestures that index temporal rhythm (sometimes termed "beats" or "batons") from semantically rich, coexpressive metricalized gestures that feature handshape repetition and parallelism.[3] I resolve this coarse dichotomy into finer, analytically distinct dimensions of formal variation to improve the scope and sensitivity of our observation and to demonstrate how widespread but diverse gestural poetics is. And as for function, poetic dimensions of cospeech gesture can contribute to everything from information-status marking in discourse to seemingly endless varieties of speech-act performativity. Rather than pin a few functions to gestural poetics *tout court*, such as prominence or discourse cohesion, we should trace out variation in form-functional iconicity. To appreciate the true scope of poetics in gestural pragmatics, we need nothing less than what Silverstein (2004, 623) once called a pragmatic-poetic turn.

The Pragmatic-Poetic Turn

Long before Silverstein wrote his punchy *Talking Politics: The Substance of Style from Abe to W* (2003b), back when he was still laboring at the beginning

for the so-called power-grip, a gesture "in which the four digits are curled as in a fist, but the thumb touches the outside of the index finger" (Streeck 2008, 166). Power-grip has occasionally been singled out for ridicule, just as the very distinctiveness and opacity of registers ("psychobabble," "academese," "legalese," etc.) are sometimes jeered at because of their perceived departure from more accessible, "ordinary" registers of speech (Agha 2007).

3. For a recent argument against taxonomic orientations in gesture research and for an appreciation of multifunctionality, see Matoesian and Gilbert (2016). For an overview of these orientations toward gesture, see esp. Kendon (2004).

of the alphabet, he produced what is now an iconic analysis of "Mr. A" and "Mr. B" (1984).[4] These were the two anonymized male University of Chicago graduate students whose sputtering and occasionally awkward getting-to-know-you conversation had been recorded and transcribed in the 1970s by his colleague Starkey Duncan and associated researchers. With a fine-grained transcript that included details such as false starts, filled pauses, and speech overlaps, Silverstein showed how the "poetic" structure of their discourse offered a window onto interactional and cultural drama. In the swatch of transcript he scrutinized, Mr. A, the future lawyer and would-be alpha, fires a battery of questions at Mr. B, the future social worker and would-be beta, in what begins to look like a familiar, gendered game of American style one-upmanship. As he presses Mr. B to disclose his alma mater, Mr. B takes evasive action. And when Mr. B. finally relents—"Loyola" in Chicago, he reveals—Mr. A seems strangely, suddenly delighted. His delight stems in part from the fact that he, too, is a "Jesuit boy"—as he quickly discloses—but especially from the fact that in the status hierarchy of Jesuit colleges Loyola sits several rungs below Mr. A's alma mater, Georgetown, which he also quickly discloses. The asymmetry of their schools must have seemed to confirm the divide between their future professions, law and social work, and their present schools, Chicago's well-heeled law school and its decidedly more modest neighbor, the School of Social Service Administration (Silverstein 2004). Mr. A. soon found his little plot foiled, though, in part because he confessed to finding law school here and now at Chicago "overwhelming." Turning the tables, Mr. B begins to ask probing questions as he adopts the manner of a confident clinician who can soothe a troubled—and now subordinate—Mr. A. Methodologically, Silverstein demonstrated how such rich interactional and cultural emplotment relied on cross-turn lexico-syntactic parallelism and especially on poetic contrasts among paired deictic expressions such as *now* and *then* and *here* and *there*.[5]

In this and subsequent essays, Silverstein illustrated the significance for pragmatics of Roman Jakobson's point that "in every level of language the essence of poetic artifice consists in recurrent returns" (Jakobson 1966, 399; see also Jakobson 1960). Paraphrasing Jakobson, he was at pains to remind readers that "the fundamental poetic principle . . . is sequential measure, or meter, in terms of which the linear signal can be measured off into units of whatever sort." Emphasis on *whatever*, for "meter need not rest on specifically phonological measure; rather, anything in linguistic form can serve as the basis for poetic prag-

4. See also Silverstein (2004). For a reanalysis based on gestural evidence, see McNeill (2005, 151–59).
5. For theoretical reflections on this case, see Silverstein (1997, 2004).

matic structure" (Silverstein 1984, 83). Freed from the confines of culturally recognized poetries, oral and written, the poetic function could now be found anywhere, even in quotidian conversation. Silverstein began to scan transcripts of interaction for metricalization.[6] Felt repetitions and parallelisms became denotationally implicit ethno-methods by which interactants made their communicative action intersubjectively recognizable. Here was a poetically grounded ethnomethodology, in a sense. Or, to use a different research idiom, poetic structure in discourse seemed to be the hidden scaffolding that explained the magic of speech-act performativity (i.e., a denotationally implicit metapragmatic function; Silverstein 1992). Here was a metrically motivated performativity distinct from the ordinal "sequence" organization that had so preoccupied Conversation Analysis (CA) (i.e., adjacency pairs that consist of normative "first" and "second" pair parts); and distinct as well from the blinkered, sentence-size "explicit performatives" of classic Speech Act theory (e.g., "I bet you sixpence," where the verb denotes what it reflexively purports to effectuate).[7] The epistemological object Silverstein found in poetic structure proved resistant to the major traditions of discourse analysis of the day. Much as Silverstein extended Jakobson's extension of poetics within metricalized arrays of linguistic text, I extend this further into cospeech manual gesture.

Gestural Poetics

Rhythm, from batons to *beats*. In 1941 Franz Boas's student David Efron wrote of "baton-like" gestures, "representing a sort of 'timing out' with the hand the successful stages of the referential activity." Batons do not visually depict referents but only "beat the tempo of . . . mental locomotion" itself (Efron 1941, 70; cf. Morris 1977). Efron contrasted these "ideographic" gestures with depictive, "physiographic" ones, because the former represent only the flow, not the content, of discourse and thought. Efron saw empirical support for this

6. For other early work on what we may term discourse poetics, see Keenan (Ochs) (1977); Tannen (1987); Johnstone (1991, 1994).

7. More than being "distinct" from sequence organization, poetic structures may be seen analytically to subsume sequential phenomena like adjacency pairs, where the latter becomes only one manifestation of discourse metricality (Silverstein 2004). For demonstrations of poetic performativity, see Silverstein (2004); for ritual, see also Stasch (2011); on discourse poetics generally, see Fleming and Lempert (2014); Agha (2007). In his early 1984 essay on discourse poetics, Silverstein pointedly reminded readers that such "illocutionary one-liners," as he later put it (1992, 51), were vanishingly rare in everyday talk. And the solution is not to then dump everything else into the residual category of "indirect speech acts" (Searle 1975; see Levinson 1994; Agha 2007; Lempert 2012b) or to try to explain all this performativity by leaning heavily on the Gricean mechanics of inference making—not when there is ample transcript-based evidence with which to motivate pragmatic functions.

distinction in his New York City–based study of ethnic variation. Baton-like gestures stood out among Eastern European Jewish immigrants relative to the florid, depictive gestures of their southern Italian neighbors.

David McNeill's (1992, 2005) influential notion of "beat" resembles Efron's baton in both metaphor and meaning. McNeill treated beats as a distinct class of nonimagistic gesture that is (1) produced prototypically at the peripheries of the gesture space and (2) characterized by a relatively simple, biphasic motor movement: beats are "mere flicks of the hand(s) up and down or back and forth that seem to 'beat' time along with the rhythm of speech" (2005, 40; see also 1992). Typically beat handshapes are not sharply articulated or semantically coexpressive with speech; formally they do not seem to represent anything. And whereas a beat's biphasic movement pattern is also nonrepresentational—the movement does not seem to mean anything beyond the bare fact of its timing (see also Ekman and Friessen 1969)—it does function pragmatically. Like a visual "highlighter," as he put it, beats are said to confer *prominence* to the words with which they co-occur.[8] McNeill defined beats originally as a distinct gesture type but observed that beats were often "superimposed" on other gestures that may indeed feature strongly depictive or deictic handshapes.[9] Since this biphasic movement could be added to any handshape, beats were in effect envisioned as a distinct pragmatic movement type. When it came to functions, McNeill suggested that in contextualized use the prominence conferred by beats could yield a range of pragmatic construals, such as information status marking (e.g., contrastive focus, the introduction of new entities in discourse), even if beat gestures alone could not unambiguously index any one of these (1992, 169–70).[10]

It is one thing to suggest that beats add prominence but quite another to suggest that they also mark rhythm (McNeill 2005, 40). While a single beat may add a pulse of prominence to co-occurring speech, beats usually occur successively, in metricalized series. (It is hard to imagine how one could foreground rhythm without successive beats whose recurrence is made salient. Although this was not spelled out by Efron, it seems clear that he had been observing recurrent beats, for how else could the flow of thought be modeled, as he suggested?) Sim-

8. McNeill 1992, 169–70 et passim. McNeill tends to treat beats as having scope over words rather than larger constituents or discourse units.

9. In speaking of "superimposition," McNeill seems to presume the autonomy of beats as a class, even though in his later work he stresses that his gestural distinctions are not taxonomic; they are "dimensions" rather than "kinds" (2005). Beats are also not limited to manual gesture. Birdwhistell (1970) observed beats in head movements, eyebrow movements, and other kinesic behavior.

10. In McNeill's work it is not entirely clear how these different pragmatic construals arise and whether some involve patterned repetitions of beats.

ply, it is perceived repetitions or metricalizations of beats that can (n.b., a potential) create a sense of rhythmic integration and, indeed, of temporality itself.[11] Metricalization—the construal of "recurrent returns" that Jakobson took to be the basis of the poetic function—has no inherent chronicity. The signs that make up metrical patterns do unfold linearly and in time, but in terms of their construal—as sheer diagrammatic comparability of co-occurring semiotic tokens—they are achronic, out of time (Silverstein 2005a, 9; and see 2004). It is only under certain conditions that metricalized recurrence can be foregrounded to give a sense and quality of time passing.[12] Gestural beats seem to do exactly this: they foreground temporal recurrence by backgrounding any semantic contributions made by recurrent, potentially coexpressive handshapes.

Repetition, from cohesives to *catchments*. McNeill also recognized the recurrence of "the same" or similar handshapes and movements, but he segregated these gestures from beats. At first McNeill (1992, 16 et passim) imagined a separate functional class of "cohesive" gestures, by which he meant, in effect, formal repetitions and parallelisms of any gesture. (McNeill even suggestively noted that politicians use cohesives with abandon.) The proposal, which he tested empirically (McNeill et al. 2001, 10), was that this poetics helped create textual cohesion—and here he took his cue from Halliday and Hasan (1976), who had already argued this about repetition and parallelism in discourse. As McNeill's work evolved, he dropped the category of cohesives and replaced it with the analytic trope of "catchment." Inspired in part by Kendon's (1972) discussion of "locution clusters"—the highest-order level of integration of kinesics, discourse, and prosody—McNeill and colleagues used this notion to have us appreciate the way gestural parallelism created forms of cross-modal integration:

> A catchment is recognized when two or more gesture features recur in at least two (not necessarily consecutive) gestures. The logic is that the recurrence of an image in the speaker's thinking will generate recurrent gesture features. Recurrent images suggest a common discourse theme. . . . Then, working backwards, the recurring features offer clues to the cohe-

11. The prosody-gesture interface is again of likely importance here. It has often been observed that strokes tend to dock on prosodic stresses in discourse (McNeill 1992). Insofar as such prominences are rhythmically integrated—that is, heard to recur at regular intervals (Wennerstrom 2001)—the rhythmic foregrounding of gesture may be calibrated with or even be a function of prosodic rhythmic integration. A question that looms large is the degree to which gestural repetitions and parallelisms lean on poetic structure exhibited in other "modalities." On this problematic, see, e.g., Fleming and Lempert (2014).

12. For other approaches to metricalization and temporality in discursive and cross-modal interaction, see, e.g., Scollon (1982); Wennerstrom (2001); Erickson (2004, 7–20).

> sive linkages in the text with which it co-occurs. A catchment is a kind of thread of visuo-spatial imagery that runs through a discourse to reveal the larger discourse units that emerge out of otherwise separate parts (McNeill et al. 2001, 10; see also 2005).

Gestural metricalization qua catchments do not provide prominence and rhythm; rather, they are said to help differentiate "larger discourse units." And unlike beats, they do not communicate temporality. To be sure, interactants may well make inferences about the chronicity and quasi-aspectual characteristics of catchment-organized discourse, but temporality itself is not what catchments convey.[13] Unlike canonical beat gestures, catchments do not directly communicate time and its qualities, such as its regular "flow" or "passing," in cardinally ordered intervals.

These formal and functional differences may seem substantial and invite us to separate beats and catchments sharply, as McNeill does, yet that separation would obscure their shared reliance on metricalization and make it hard to appreciate that poetics is pervasive and not restricted to special gestural phenomena as these. A dichotomy like this risks obscuring a wider range of pragmatic-poetic phenomena whose diversity becomes visible only when we expand what we expect to see as gestural metricalization. We should open ourselves to additional dimensions of formal variation in gestural poetics, dimensions we miss when we expect to find only temporalizing beats or discourse-integrating catchments.

Let us, then, reapproach poetics expansively in terms of indexical-iconic recurrence and see what empirical purchase this methodological posture gives us. Recognizing that recurrent returns are multidimensional and gradient, admitting of degrees, we may observe and perhaps even scale perceived gestural recurrences along the following dimensions of variation:

- *articulator recruitment*: repetition of handshape features, palm orientation, movement pattern, one or both hands
- *formal, fractional congruence* (cf. Agha 2007; see also Kimbara 2006, 41 et passim; Yasui 2013, 159); degree of formal "likeness" among parallelistic gestural tokens

13. Since catchments involve the juxtaposition of formally like-and-unlike gestural units, juxtapositions that help integrate and differentiate "adjacent" chunks of cross-modal text (adjacency here should not be confused with the normative sequentiality of adjacency pairs, as imagined by CA; on this integration, see below), there may be a wide range of temporalizing and quasi-aspectualizing construals, such as before/after or old/new shifts or the slow or quickened pace of talk and action, which may turn on the perceived rate of alternation in similar–different visuo-spatial imagery.

- *stroke placement and orientation*: parallel strokes performed in 'same' or comparable region of the "gesture space" (McNeill 1992); comparabilities of relative stroke direction (e.g., 'left', 'right', etc.) achieved through bodily orientation and torque (Schegloff 1998)
- *quasi-prosodic comparability*: for example, fractional congruence in stroke "size," where parallelistic gestures are assessed as gradiently similar or different in respect of stroke amplitude or magnitude; stroke "density," that is, the ratio of parallelistic stroke tokens to available docking points (lexical and prosodic stresses) in a verbal intonation unit; and so on
- *formal extent and density of metricalized gestural array*: number of tokens understood as fractionally congruent "recurrences"; density of recurrences per unit time
- *density of cross-modal integration*: degree to which parallelistic gestures co-occur with other metricalized signs, such as lexicosyntactic parallelism or rhythmic integration of prosodic stress.
- *interactional scope and scale of metricalized gestural array*: for example, intra-"turn" parallelism, inter-"turn" parallelism, inter-"event" recurrence; spatiotemporal reach of recurrence; and so on

These parameters are but provisional, observational heuristics meant to enhance the sensitivity and scope of what we see. They are not exhaustive nor should they be subsumed under one or two superordinant pragmatic functions.[14] We cannot usefully consolidate the whole heterogeneous pragmatics of poetics under one or two umbrella functions, such as cohesion. As with his earlier notion of cohesives, McNeill's notion of catchment remained focused on denotational-textual cohesion, as if gestural repetitions and parallelisms always and only helped stitch together running discourse themes, topics, or recurrent referents (Furuyama 2001; Kimbara 2006; Furuyama and Sekine 2007). Compare with Jürgen Streeck, who found that repetitions and parallelisms could contribute to a different kind of cohesion, what we may call "interactional-textual cohesion."[15] In his case study of the 2004 democratic primary debates, Streeck noticed how gestural poetics helped differentiate old and new actions. Candidates tended to produce gestures "as a series, that is, as repetitions of identically patterned strokes" (2008, 168). Although certain handshapes and move-

14. It should go without saying that poetic structures are pragmatic relevant only insofar as they are perceived as such by interactants. See Fleming and Lempert (2014, 492–94). The heuristics supplied here are thus not discovery procedures.

15. See Yasui (2013, 159). On denotational versus interactional textuality, see Silverstein and Urban (1996); Silverstein (1997).

ments appeared more frequently than others, such as slices, precision-grips, and index-finger-extended gestures, these gestures did not seem to have stable form-functional correlations (but see Lempert 2017). These recurrent political gestures did not seem to index or correlate with distinct speech acts, Streeck noted, but their repetition did serve a basic pragmatic function, he argued. Gestural repetition seemed to visually parse the stream of action into like-and-unlike units, such that "*changes* in gestural form—either of handshape or motion pattern or both—indicate that a new speech act or discourse segment is initiated" (Streeck 2008). Comparabilities of gestural form unitize discourse and differentiate adjacent speech acts (cf. Kendon 2014, 12; see also Erickson 1992).

Cohesion, even when expanded into the denotational and interactional, is still but a beginning, because poetically organized or, better, "dimensionalized" gestures can do any number of things—in principle, *anything*.[16] (The trope of dimensionalization here should remind us of the potential multidimensionality of poetic organization, as suggested in the heuristics listed above; it may also remind us that these are only some of the many qualities that can be foregrounded for pragmatic effect.) In what follows I use the aforementioned observational heuristics to tease out pragmatic-poetic complexities from a few empirical cases—all from naturalistic rather than experimental studies—in order to demonstrate why we should explore variation in gestural poetics with more care. Of special note is the capacity of poetically dimensionalized gestures to model reflexively their own pragmatic effectiveness, to serve, in other words, as cross-modal metapragmatic diagrams.

Turn-Internal Poetic-(Meta)Pragmatics

In earlier research on Barack Obama's precision-grip gestures (especially gestures in which the thumb touches the tip of the index finger or interphalangeal

16. Putting the matter this way is misleading, because poetic dimensionalization alone does not account for its performativity. In the early literature on the pragmatics of repetition and parallelism in discourse, diverse functions were cataloged and imputed to poetic structures without explaining how exactly one gets from poetic form to function, as it were. For a critical discussion of this problematic, see Fleming and Lempert (2014); see also Lempert (2008). As for gestural poetics, given the multiple dimensions of overlapping cross-modal metricalization—where gestural parallelism coincides with lexicosyntactic parallelism, for example—it is challenging if not wrong headed to try to isolate what contribution gestural poetics makes. This is, of course, a classic trouble spot in discussions about "multimodality." For reflections on this issue in relation to speech-gesture "composites," see Enfield (2009); Lempert (2012c). The issue of empirically localizing performativity here is compounded by the fact that "cospeech gesture" (which sits on the unconventionalized, improvisational end of the Kendon continuum [McNeill 1992], the other extreme being that of full-blown sign languages) cannot be studied in isolation from co-occurring speech. The degree to which one can speak of an illocutionary gestural source depends in part on the degree to which manual gesture is conventionalized and begins to have cross-modally isolable "meaning" and hence a measure of autonomy (Lempert 2017). Unlike cospeech gesticulation, which cannot be understood independently of the speech with which it co-occurs and is hence "coexpressive," strongly conventionalized "emblems" or "quotable" gestures enjoy a higher degree of autonomy in the sense of being meaningful even in the absence of speech.

joint), I suggested that gestural repetition and parallelism helped foreground precision-grip and motivate its second-order indexical value as a forensic gesture. For Obama and for all the democratic candidates I examined in a corpus of televised debate data, precision-grip tended to be used to mark information status (especially contrastive focus), but in public discourse contexts this gesture seemed to have been reanalyzed as a pragmatic gesture for an act that we may gloss colloquially as making a 'sharp point'—a rhetorically effective, focused utterance issued in an environment of contention.[17] Repetitions and parallelisms of precision-grip were associated with this second-order indexicality, suggesting that the poetic dimensionalization of precision-grip helped motivate this indexicality.

Repetition and parallelism in this case seemed to be in the service only of foregrounding the gesture. Recurrence qua recurrence is what mattered. Compare the case of mere foregrounded recurrence with cases in which the poetic array is internally complex—where the relations among 'parts' are understood to constitute a single, complex sign—and where the array's internal relations reflexively (hence meta-) diagrams its own actional significance (-pragmatics).[18] In a case study of political gesture, Streeck found a recurring form of multidimensional gestural parallelism associated with information status marking. He observed that although a politician's handshapes tended to remain (relatively) consistent upon repetition, the movement patterns often shifted predictably. The first stroke or strokes in a series of successive, similar strokes differed from their repetitions in respect of the aforementioned parameters of movement magnitude and stroke density. About a stretch of discourse by then Senator Joe Lieberman, Streeck observed, for example, how "Lieberman initially produces 'large' versions of the gesture" that dock on prosodic prominences (as one would expect), but then "produces smaller, less emphatic versions of the same gesture, one with each syllable he utters" (2008, 168–69). In effect, Streeck noticed an inverse correlation between the parameters of stroke density and size: initial, bigger, slower strokes contrasted with subsequent, smaller, rapid strokes. This contrast seemed to set off new from old information, respectively. Streeck suggested that this poetic dimensionalization of gestural strokes marked the information status of discourse constituents (see also Kendon 2014). Gestural parallelism diagrammed information status.

17. See Lempert (2011, 2017). On orders of indexicality, see Silverstein (2003a).
18. For introductions to diagrammatic iconicity, see Parmentier (1997); Mannheim (2001).

More elaborate cases of poetic-(meta)pragmatic diagrammaticity have been astutely analyzed recently by Greg Matoesian and Kristin Gilbert (2016) in their research on closing courtroom arguments. In the defense's closing argument of the widely followed 1991 William Kennedy Smith rape trial (see Matoesian 2001), Matoesian and Gilbert demonstrate that what McNeill would call beats can do more than "accentuate rhythm and foreground points of evidentiary significance" (2016, 79). Stressing multifunctionality, the authors trouble McNeill's view of beats as necessarily semantically empty and nondepictive. In demonstrating this, they pay special attention to the attorney's verbal lists—no doubt because we expect heightened metricalization in listing environments (cf. Erickson 1992). From their materials Matoesian and Gilbert distinguish "interdigital" gestures in which the right or left hand counts by touching the tip of the index finger to different fingers of the other hand (e.g., by ascending from little finger to ring finger) from "intradigital" gestures in which one repetitively beats a single finger.[19]

In the closing argument, the defense attorney refutes the account of Patricia Bowman who accused William Kennedy Smith of rape: "The petite and frail Bowman claimed that the large and athletic Smith . . . tackled her on the lawn of the estate after chasing her at 'full tilt,' yet there was neither damage to her clothes nor marks on her body from the 'collision'" (Matoesian and Gilbert 2016, 83). As the defense attorney tries to persuade the jury that her claim cannot be true, he produces a stretch of verbal and gestural cross-modal parallelism capped by a climactic repetition of a two-handed gesture in which one fist strikes the other hand, representing the alleged "collision" of two bodies on the lawn: "the increase in intensity, velocity and force in the rhythmic gestures—the folk-physics of reaction on the fist hitting gestures—provides kinesically an image of the force and collision that *should* have occurred in the sexual assault" (95). His climactic kinesic demonstration offers details absent in the denotational text of the attorney's verbal argument: "By the same token, while '*collide*' describes the action it does not show the magnitude of reaction in the same manner as the fist hitting beats. The motion verb describes the manner of contact; beats visualize the intensity, shape, and consequence of objects coming into contact" (95). Quasi-prosodic variation in the recurring fist-hitting gesture depicts a counterfactual claim. Traced out before the jury is an image of an act

19. On other varieties of "enumerative" gesture, some of which feature variation in use of one or both hands and involve intradigital counting through the interphalangeal joints, see Lempert and Silverstein (2012); see also Lempert (2017).

that did *not* occur. Ergo she was not tackled, it's a lie. This piece of pragmatic-poetic artistry would be lost, were we to ignore this dimension of quasi-prosodic repetition with variation.

Elsewhere in the closing argument the authors find that gestural poetics contributes not to semantic coexpressivity but metapragmatic diagrammaticity. Before his striking kinesic demonstration of the folk physics of collision, the defense attorney unfurled a parallelistic chain of *wh-* relative clauses denoting crucial detail about Smith's size—his height, his weight, his shoe size—detail that he would then use to refute the claim that a man that big could have tackled Bowman without a trace. Tied to this verbal parallelism were equally parallelistic enumerative gestures that culminated with a contrastive two-handed "chopping" gesture: "The digital listing gestures accumulate facts of evidence," explain Matoesian and Gilbert, while the "ensuing two hand chopping gestures begin to evaluate those facts" (2016, 89). The hand as a whole is thus parsed into its digits. Each digit is individuated and metricalized, such that the fingers become a neat pile of accumulated points. Diagrammed before the jury is thus a biphasic forensic sequence of evidence first, evaluation second (n.b., this is an *emergent* sequence, not one based on sequential normativity as with CA adjacency pairs). As the authors put it, the jury was subjected to a "polyrhythmic delivery of factual evidence building up to a crescendo" (88). The rhetorical force of the argument was itself modeled through poetically dimensionalized speech-and-gesture units.

Cross-turn Poetic (Meta)Pragmatics

Writing of a "return gesture," Michel De Fornel (1992) called attention to resemblances that span a speaking-turn boundary and suggested that such cross-turn gestural poetics does, indeed, have a pragmatics. For De Fornel, a return gesture is, in effect, a parallelistic response gesture that, through its formal resemblance with a source gesture produced (simultaneously or, more frequently, sequentially 'first') by another speaker, can index speaker attentiveness or intersubjective understanding.[20] Note that the pragmatic significance of the return gesture turns on the way the parallelism is understood to span a turn boundary; its interpersonal relevance stems from the perceived "extension" of recurrence across an interactionally significant unit. The return gesture builds on the infrastructure of conversational turns of talk. Much of the sociolinguistic interest in "stance" derives from the somewhat belated recognition that cross-turn parallelisms (e.g.,

20. See also Tabensky (2001); Lerner (2002); Kimbara (2006); Streeck (2009, 106–7).

lexicosyntactic parallelism) can serve as tacit denotational-to-interactional diagrams of interpersonal relations and alignment.[21]

Cross-turn parallelism can be exploited to diagram intimacies of many kinds, as has been demonstrated in therapeutic (Ferrara 1994; Perrino 2002), dialogic (Urban 1986; Graham 1993), and self-consciously "collaborative" contexts (Yasui 2013; see also Murphy 2005; Kimbara 2006, 53–57). Cross-turn parallelism can just as easily figurate antagonisms, escalations, even violence. (See, e.g., the parallelistic "format tying" in the verbal duels of young West Philly kids [Goodwin 1990] or the agonistic cross-modal chiasmus of Tibetan Buddhist monks who wrangle over philosophical doctrine [Lempert 2012a].)

Consider an agonistic moment of cross-turn gestural parallelism from the 2016 US televised presidential debates, featuring Democratic candidate Hillary Clinton and Republican candidate Donald Trump. The second of the three presidential debates featured a special town hall–style format in which each candidate stands, walks about the stage, and fields questions "directly" from a studio audience of undecided voters. (A larger but invisible studio audience sat behind this small group of undecided voters, and the whole event was televised nationally.) This format allows candidate bodies to be more visually accessible to each other than when they stand behind lecterns and face the debate moderator and studio audience, as they do in the first and third debates. Visual accessibility affords pragmatically significant cross-turn gestural parallelism. It makes it possible for one person to see and emulate, if only partially, another's hands.

At a certain moment in this town hall debate Trump cuttingly asks Clinton why she has not managed to make any real changes despite her long career in Washington, DC. He pegs her, in effect, as a Washington insider who is all talk and no action. Clinton responds. She first mutters a quiet quip. She reminds him that she had been a Senator under a *Republican* president, George W. Bush; this obviously limited her power to effect change. Turning first to the audience, then back to Trump who is standing and facing her, she then declares that she will be "the president who will get it done" (see fig. 1). Her utterance features two index-finger-extended gestures, the first oriented 'upward', the second 'outward' toward Trump, whom she faces (neither gesture is primarily deictic; on index-finger extended gestures, see Lempert 2017). Applause erupts as she delivers this line.

21. See Du Bois (2007). For critical reflection on the poetics of stance, see Lempert (2008); see also Agha (2007); Fleming and Lempert (2014). For efforts to apply stance to gesture, see, e.g., Warner-Garcia (2013); Arnold (2012).

1C I will be:: the [*president who will=
I-up I-out

2T [you could have done it

3C =[get it done = << applause >>
I-out

4T [if you were an effective-
P

5C = uh::

6C [that's exactly right

7T [if you were an effective senator you could have done it
I-up I-up I-up I-x

8T if (you were an effective senator you could have done it)

9T (but you) were *not* an effective senator
I-out

Figure 1. C = Clinton; T = Trump; I = index-finger-extended strokes, roughly "up"-ward versus "out"-ward; x = atypical, transverse "swiping" movement; P = precision-grip; parenthetical and underlined text (lines 8–9) indicates untranscribed gestures due to cutaway to Clinton; * (asterisk) indicates approximate moment from which the screenshot was taken.

But Trump is right on her heels. He overlaps her speech with the apodosis of a counterfactual conditional: she *could* have gotten things done, he says. Before he can get any further, Clinton slips in, ignoring the protasis to come. "That's exactly right," she inserts, as if Trump agreed with her that it's hard to effect change with an uncooperative administration. Trump tries to get to his stinging protasis, "*if* you were an effective [Senator]" (line 4), but finds that he must start again to overcome the din of audience applause and Clinton's own retort. He repeats his charge that she could have been effective while reversing the charge's order (line 7). Twice he says, "if you were an effective Senator, you

could have done it," and then caps his criticism with his biting conclusion: "but you were *not* an effective Senator." On his emphatic *not* Trump delivers his final index-finger-extended-outward gesture, directed at Clinton, just as Clinton had directed her index finger at him when she said she'd get things done as president. His delivery here is arresting, for this final stroke is followed by a very high magnitude retraction phase in which his withdrawing hand arcs high into the gesture space, giving his stroke enormous visual salience. In short, Trump's speech features several iterations of index-finger-extended gestures that parallel the preceding gestures of Clinton and arguably create formal comparabilities that help model his intensified opposition and that turn Clinton's own body against her. He returns "the same" gestures with escalation. This is reminiscent of the artful antagonisms of the West Philly kids documented in Goodwin's classic study (1990), where cross-turn parallelisms—"I don't know what you laughin' at," "I know what I'm laughin' at, your *head*!" (171)—"display their status as escalations of prior actions . . . by making use of the talk of prior speaker and transforming it to their advantage; in essence, they turn the prior action on its head" (181).

Back in the 2012 town hall debate where Democrat incumbent Barack Obama faced Republican challenger Mitt Romney, observers commented on the aggravated manner in which the two sometimes got in each other's face. *The Guardian*'s Washington bureau chief noted: "The extent of the personal dislike between the two was evident in the second presidential debate, held at Hofstra University, Long Island. In one explosive scene, the two, only feet apart, [were] wagging fingers at one another, talking over one another, accusing each other of lying."[22] The scene he recalls looks familiar. Shoving index finger in alter's face is practically a visual cliché of the heated exchange, a scene where wagging fingers bear the stereotypic pragmatic force of mutual 'escalation', of nearly coming to blows.

Interdiscursive Poetics and Boundless Recurrence

The divide customarily called a speaking turn is only the most obvious and common interactional boundary across which poetic resemblances may be felt to reach. During his 2016 primary and presidential campaign, Trump occasionally flashed an emblematic pistol-hand-shape "firing" gesture made famous on his reality show, *The Apprentice*. Hall and colleagues (2016) suggest that this emblem's recurrence in 2016 (assuming that it was recognized as a recurrence

22. "Second US Presidential Debate: Obama versus Romney," *The Guardian*, October 17, 2012, accessed March 22, 2017, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2012/oct/16/obama-romney-second-debate-live.

by those acquainted with its history) made it, in effect, citational; the gesture recalls his show and its performative, proprietary catchphrase, "You're Fired!" Unlike the cross-turn gestural parallelisms that are felt by default to operate "within" the unfolding event, this citational gestural emblem invokes a virtual history of event-to-event relations that harkens back several years.[23] The temporal scale projected exceeds that of ordinary cross-turn gestural parallelisms.[24] Its citational directionality and force are that of a quick retrospective recuperation of a past gesture—a temporal flick, not a flow, of the hands. More than interdiscursive, the pistol-hand gesture also crosses genre boundaries, the authors argue. In speech as well as gesture, Trump forged what historian Paul Friedland (2002, 2) has called, in a Latourian idiom, theatrico-political hybrids.[25]

There is in principle no spatial or temporal limit to this interdiscursivity. It would be disorienting methodologically to entertain this fact at every turn, but we should remember that we cannot assume in advance what the indexical and interactional reach of a given poetic resemblance is. A vivid reminder of this appears in Nakassis's (2017) spirited analysis of south Indian Tamil film star Rajinikanth. Rajini, as he's known, is renowned for his virtuosic index finger. While this finger most often acts as an extended index finger for pointing, or deixis, it also performs astonishing cinematic feats. Feats of object manipulation, for instance: a cigar spun like a top around his upward-extended index finger, then tossed effortlessly, and precisely, into his mouth. So memorable is his dexterous finger that it stands out as one of his trademark gestures. His finger has become a signature kinesic-cinematic emblem of Rajini—but not an emblem in terms of the criteria that gesture researchers use for studying such highly conventionalized "emblematic" or "quotable" gestures as the OK sign or thumbs-up gesture, such as standards of handshape well-formedness, intelligibility without the obligatory presence of speech, and reportable semantic and pragmatic meanings.[26] His emblematic finger has no stable, glossable semantic or pragmatic meaning. Instead, it enjoys strong or "rigid" indexicality (cf. Kripke's

23. On interdiscursivity and virtual speech chains, see Agha (2007); Wortham (2012); cf. Lempert (2009); Nakassis (2013).

24. On the semiotics of scaling, see Carr and Lempert (2016).

25. Politicotainment is hardly new. Friedland (2002) detailed the troubled convergence of politics and theater in late eighteenth-century France, where actors had been forbidden to participate in political life until 1789, when the National Assembly declared them citizens. The National Assembly drew on theater with its newly and proudly showcased "debates" complete with galleries of spectators, and just as there were now actors turned politicians—something that had been unimaginable—so some politicians began to take acting lessons.

26. Criteria used for quotables include standards of handshape well-formedness, intelligibility without the obligatory presence of speech, and reportable semantic and pragmatic meanings (Kendon 1990, 1992; Brookes 2001, 2004, 2011). For a recent overview, see Teßendorf (2014).

rigid designators; Fleming and Lempert 2011, 2014). His finger picks out a singular being—Rajini himself—as a mark of his brand (Nakassis 2017, 29). And his finger has come to enjoy this status thanks in no small part to dense cross-film citationality. Viewers see, have seen, and expect to see Rajini's finger *again*. His digit doesn't point back to any one film. Unlike the relatively shallow, retrospective citationality of Trump's televisual pistol emblem, which had a clear and temporally proximal source,[27] Rajini's digit pushes us backward till we fall into a veritable temporal abyss. For with so very many films in his corpus, the film-to-film intertextual recurrence feels fathomless, as if viewers faced an infinite regress while stuck between two mirrors. Nakassis suggests that this boundless recurrence allows his digit to transcend the diegetic corpus and serve as extradiegetic anchor for Rajini's being and brand. Excessive citationality establishes Rajini's "transtextual identity as the Superstar," someone who transcends the filmic universe so that he may lord over it. To be sure, cinematic depictions of manual gesture are more complexly mediated than gesture in face-to-face interaction—even televisual interactions such as political debates—and cannot be studied in the same manner. But the dizzying, circular citationality on display here should remind us that there is no limit to the reach of repetition and parallelism. Between Trump's pistol emblem and Rajini's index finger, we should appreciate that the interactional scope and scale of the metricalized array can be an interesting variable in its own right.

Poetic Enregisterment and the End of Rhetoric?

For gesture, then, a pragmatic-poetic turn requires that we push past the dichotomy between senseless rhythm and representational repetition and resist the stubborn taxonomic tendency to catalog repetition types and effects—a tendency reminiscent of the way rhetoricians of old cataloged trope after trope after trope—an interminable exercise. A pragmatic-poetic turn would instead benefit from flexible observational heuristics that direct us toward multiple dimensions of formal variation in gestural poetics and open up for us an equally heterogeneous pragmatics.

A deeper reason why poetics matters in gestural pragmatics lurks in domains such as political communication. Whereas emergent poetic structures may reflexively diagram their own effectiveness, in political communication we often find a reflexive engagement with poetics *tout court*. Poetics appears here as a generalized mode of embodied communication that has been objec-

27. See Silverstein (2005a) for a discussion of "token"- versus "type"-sourced interdiscursivity.

tified, if only tacitly, as a measure of what persuasive communication "looks like." A generalized poetic sensibility or "culture"—verbal and gestural—may in this sense constitute political communication.

It is well known that diverse forms of political oratory tend to exhibit high densities of repetition and parallelism.[28] This salience of the poetic may in some cases betray an underlying ethnometapragmatic conception of rhetorical effectiveness, suggesting that there has been a reflexive, aesthetico-pragmatic "sourcing" of poetics (cf. Lempert 2014, 384; see also 2013, 382–87). It is as if poetics in such cases has been picked out and elevated into a defining characteristic of effective, embodied communication in a given register or perhaps even across registers (see also Stasch 2011). This may be true of gesture as well. Recalling the closing arguments from the William Kennedy rape case, we can see this process at work at a smaller scale. The defense attorney may have fashioned his gestural diagrams in a largely ad hoc manner, yet his enumerative gestures—the handshapes and movements recruited for his verbal lists—were surely at least partly conventionalized (Lempert 2017). Are there not specialized gestures used for counting and listing in argumentation here? Might it be that, as a class of pragmatic gesture, enumeratives are imagined to diagram "sound reasoning" by virtue of their metricalized "orderliness"?[29] That is, it may well be that enumeratives enjoy a degree of form-functional regimentation as a class of pragmatic gesture precisely because of their poetically motivated metapragmatic diagrammaticity. If so, it could mean that legal gestural registers of courtroom argumentation are constituted as registers in part by sourcing pragmatic-poetic kinesics. In public discourse genres like political oratory and debate, there is certainly a very long history of prescriptive work that singles out and valorizes poetic dimensions of communication, a history that may well have inspired a reflexive enregisterment of these discursive practices. If poetics has helped define political communication as a distinct register, it would mean that there has already been a pragmatic-poetic turn in political communication that we, as analysts, have been slow to recognize.

Insofar as poetic qualia have been taken as a (or *the*) measure of rhetorically effective speech, we should also expect second-order inferential reflexes that concern speaker intentionality: salient poetic qualities in gesture may be construed as an index of a speaking subject's rhetorical 'calculation' and agentive instrumentalization of semiotic mediation, for example. Once poetics and per-

28. See, e.g., Fox (1974); Rains (1992); Silverstein (2005b); Tannen (2007); Bate (2009); Lempert and Silverstein (2012); Fleming and Lempert (2014).

29. On ritual diagrammaticity in argumentation, see Lempert (2012a).

suasion are fused, the former can become a symptom of the subject who tries, perhaps too hard, to persuade. (Compare this with courtroom wrangling, where "a too conspicuous orientation to 'winning the case' might undermine the persuasiveness" [Komter 2000, 420]).

Now consider this possibility against the backdrop of what we might call a crisis of principalship in US presidential politics (Lempert and Silverstein 2012), which has been intensifying over recent campaign cycles ("principal" in the Goffmanian participant role sense, that is, the person "committed" to what one says [Goffman 1981, 1974]). Feverish, mass-mediatized suspicion has been leveled at political incumbents and candidates—everything they say, do, even wear. And campaigns have responded in kind by trying to domesticate the crisis from inside out. In developing personae for politicians to perform, and to avoid, campaigns have offered up to the electorate moralized figures that dramatize and try to contain the crisis. Two paired figures from campaigns past leap to mind: the effete, feckless "flip-flopper," who epitomizes the failure to be committed to an issue; the "maverick," its mirror image, who remains unbranded, committed, Real. Just a few cycles ago, these were serious, persuasive figures. The Republican Party even used the maverick moniker to brand itself for a time.

How hackneyed these figures now seem. Indeed, the hermeneutics of suspicion directed at politicians has grown so acute that it has become harder and harder for them to break out. This crisis should be understood alongside the many ways in which message mediation and mediatization have come to be widely seen as obtrusive and troubling. Case in point, the professional consulting and political marketing industry, whose cultural visibility increased as the industry expanded dramatically beginning in the early 1990s; more and more consumer voters know of all the personnel and technoscientific methods that mediate campaign messagecraft. Consider, too, the beleaguered Fourth Estate, the ring of normatively "free," "independent" journalists and commentators imagined to surround and separate politicians from their publics. Not only have there been intensified mass-media suspicions—which now include worries if not panics about "fake news"—but these concerns have been coupled with populist stunts of televisual and social media–based im-mediation that make it seem as if one could cut through this "filter"—as Dubya used to call it—and reach voters "directly." Immediacy has become an urgent, cardinal virtue in political communication.[30]

30. On politico-aesthetic im-mediation, see Lempert and Silverstein (2012, 2016).

The methods for demonstrating this virtue in body and speech are not limited to declarations of "straight talk" or reminders that one is being "clear with the American people"—as the self-styled maverick John McCain used to say. McCain's trusty steed was the "Straight Talk Express," a name emblazoned across his star-spangled campaign bus. Emotive outrage about an issue may indirectly suggest directness, or directness may rub off on self by association with alter, as when one talks "like" (i.e., voices) others imagined to be more "direct" than oneself, which include noisy register downshifts into gritty *gonnas* and *gottas* and all the populist sociolinguistic shibboleths of class and race and region. Language whose grating "coarse"-ness suggests not only that the politician is "relatable" but also hints that he or she may not be posing at all. There is even the time-honored "direct" gaze at camera—as Obama did, for instance, in his first presidential debate against Senator John McCain in 2008, when he assured middle-class voters that he understood their pain and plight. Such gazes poke a little hole in the mass-mediatized surround, piercing the event's infrastructure and reaching viewers directly, while allowing the speaker's inner conviction to shine through.

Consider, then, the brash un-candidate and now un-president Donald J. Trump, who is the latest if most extreme iteration of the antipolitics politics that has been intensifying over recent presidential campaign cycles. Unlike the purportedly unbranded Republican mavericks of cycles past who could still be held accountable for gaffes, Trump on the campaign trail seemed able to alchemize even unpresidential behavior into message gold. Communication—speech, tweets—that would otherwise be disqualifying became, at least for his sympathetic spectators, perhaps the most convincing qualification of all. What better evidence of sincere populism than shrill demagoguery? What better proof that one is not beholden to pollsters and handlers—as the feckless career politicians and corrupt Washington insiders are imagined to be—than spectacular breaches of etiquette that no sober, calculating advisor could have possibly scripted? Recall the audible gasps in the final 2016 presidential debate, when Trump hemmed and hawed on the question of whether he would even accept the election results, if they went against him. Or the noisy complaints of his handlers during the primaries as they reported frustration with Trump for him not sticking to his prepared speeches. Many of his supporters found his seemingly off-message behavior refreshingly *on* message. In veering so far off course, Trump just might be real, crazy real. Or so one is invited to infer.

Trump may have been remarkable on the campaign trail for his antipolitics politics, but his manual gesture was, in the final analysis, rather conventional.

Yes, he may have exhibited quasi-prosodic variation that made his gestures more obtrusive than most, such as by increasing visuospatial salience through exploiting the peripheries of the gesture space (Hall et al. 2016). (He was not alone in being, literally, a "fringe" candidate; see, for example, the copious use of wide two-handed gestures by Republican competitor Rand Paul during Trump's debut in the first Republican primary debate of 2015.) As Hall and colleagues (2016) show, Trump was also willing to engage in grossly mimetic behaviors, especially when taunting others—as with his notorious pantomime of a disabled journalist. His cospeech gesture was otherwise unremarkable, however. Most of his handshapes (index-finger-extended gestures, precision-grip, slices, etc.) are common in public discourse genres, and, most importantly, so was his reliance on gestural repetition and parallelism. The poetic dimensions of political communication may well be understood as generally rhetorical, a semiotic technology for persuasion. Poetics may even be an enregistered diacritic of political communication. But this culture of the poetic has not—not yet, anyway—come to trouble politicians like Trump who embrace antirhetoric rhetoric. In the final analysis, Trump really *is* repetitive, as Mark Liberman suggested—but in the deeper sense of respecting the pragmatic institution of poetics in oratory and debate. For Trump, and for everyone else, it seems, poetics remains a privileged aesthetico-pragmatic dimension of political communication that helps make the political a distinct and recognizable register of communication. It is as if poetics has foregrounded itself, a reflexive nod to its own recurrence and bid for us to turn toward it, as Silverstein advised.

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